

**Statement delivered by Ms. Kiva Clarke, Deputy Permanent Secretary
(Ag.) at the Reception to celebrate the
Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, March 6, 2026
at the Official Residence of the Ambassador of Japan**

It is a pleasure to deliver remarks on behalf of the Honourable Sean Sobers, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, who is currently on official travel, and therefore could not attend this evening's reception to celebrate the February 23rd birth of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

In that spirit, Minister Sobers has asked that I convey his warmest greetings on this auspicious occasion, as we recognize that a birthday is always a significant observance, but moreso that of the Head of an Imperial Family.

His Majesty serves as a symbol of the State, an upholder of tradition and a unifying force for a nation. In this vein, those of us gathered here join the Japanese people in wishing the Emperor another year of good health, happiness and prosperity.

In one of his first overseas trips, Minister Sobers travelled to Japan to preside over Trinidad and Tobago's National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka. The National Day coincided with World Steelpan Day on August 11, which was fitting due to the important role of Trinidad and Tobago's national instrument in the cultural exchanges between our countries.

Expo 2025 Osaka provided the opportunity for over 150 countries, to give their perspective on the future of humanity to more than 28 million visitors over a six-month period. The Government of Japan must be congratulated for a well-organised and successful event.

During his visit to Japan, Minister Sobers also had the opportunity to meet with the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Takuma Miyaji. Their productive discussions centered on existing bilateral cooperation and opportunities for increased collaboration between our countries. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes these high-level exchanges with Japan and looks forward to similar engagements in the future.

As part of the ongoing technical cooperation between both countries, Japan, *via* the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), donated equipment for the mitigation of sargassum seaweed to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and to the Tobago House of Assembly. The proliferation of sargassum, fueled by the warming of our oceans, is an ongoing challenge for our region and has had a deleterious impact on coastlines, fisheries and tourism.

The Government of Japan has also provided funding, through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), for the project entitled, “*Strengthening the Integrated National Early Warning System in Trinidad and Tobago.*” Japan’s assistance on issues of climate change

and disaster risk management, both in terms of resources and advocacy in international fora, has been well noted and is greatly appreciated.

Public officers continue to benefit from training *via* the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the *Juntos!! - Japan-Latin America and the Caribbean Exchange Programme for Young Diplomats*. These programmes continue to be valuable opportunities for capacity building, best practice and knowledge transfer.

The Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme continues to be popular among Trinidad and Tobago nationals as eighteen (18) participants left for Japan in August 2025. The JET Programme provides a once-in-a lifetime opportunity to not only live and work abroad, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to discover the people, language and culture of Japan.

I wish to note also the work that the Embassy has been doing over the last year, particularly with its collaboration with the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) to participate in the second edition of Asian Nights in May 2025 and to organise Japanese Cultural Days at various libraries across the country.

Further, the Embassy continues to collaborate with the Centre for Language Learning at The University of the West Indies on instruction in the Japanese Language and the staging of the Annual Japanese

Language Speech Contest. Initiatives such as these not only help to bring the people of Trinidad and Tobago and Japan closer together, but also fosters a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

Indeed, those cultural exchanges have played a major role in nurturing the longstanding relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Japan, which has been founded on mutual respect, shared values and common interests. I wish to reiterate the enduring commitment of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to fostering our special relationship.

In closing, I again extend best wishes to His Majesty the Emperor of Japan on his birthday and to the Government and People of Japan for the continued peace and prosperity of their beloved nation.

I thank you.