

The Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC) and the Foreign Press Centre of Japan have come together once again to give regional journalists insight into how the country goes about mitigating the effects of natural disasters.

Japan, a country known in recent times for earthquakes and tsunamis, has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on special technology and building methods to protect its citizenry. This year APIC has invited six journalists from the Caribbean and Pacific region to get a first-hand look at those methods.

Associate Editor Barry Alleyne is there representing the **NATION**.



RESIDENTS in Kawasaki can only bring out their garbage on the morning of collection, and apartment buildings have small cans in which the refuse is neatly piled.



CLEAN AS A WHISTLE: Moments after collection, an apartment employee washes down the area and there is virtually no smell in the avenues of Kawasaki City. (Pictures by Barry Alleyne.)

The little city that could

by **BARRY ALLEYNE** in Japan

KAWASAKI CITY, Japan – Just call Kawasaki City the little engine that could.

Japan's seventh smallest city just south of Tokyo has a little over 1.5 million inhabitants, but when it comes to buying into recycling and waste reduction, it's the next big thing.

And Caribbean countries could learn a lesson or two on having its population, starting with children and ending with pensioners, giving 100 per cent support

to the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle.

There is virtually no illegal dumping in the communities, even less rats on the street, and squeaky-clean avenues that would make citizens in other First World countries blush.

That is all supported by a strict adherence to a recycling code that has led to a reduction in overall amounts of garbage produced, which in turn has led to more cost-efficient operations at the two main factories, a collection centre,

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Cleanest smelling garbage

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and a plastic recycling factory in Kawasaki.

The main cogs in Kawasaki City's wheel are efficiency and complete buy-in from residents. Garbage is collected five days per week, with kitchen waste collected on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The other two days are shared for collection of paper, plastic, aluminium cans and bulk waste.

Kawasaki City has arguably the world's cleanest smelling garbage sites, since bags are only brought out on the morning of collection. Even when the trucks come around and busy workers bundle out to clear the mess, breathing deep is easy and comfortable.

A fine of BDS\$200 000 for illegal dumping also works in the municipality's favour, with no residents wishing to find themselves dumped on the wrong side of the law.

A translator in Japanese explained that because no rats interfere with the garbage, the only animals coming around are cats or crows.

Holiday load

Volume only becomes a problem during the Christmas holidays.

"Everything is based on the morale of the people. If the numbers are heavy they can call the municipality to say how much they have. The limit is 100 kilogrammes per person," the municipality's recycling chief, Yasuyuki Ito explains.

To cut down on non-compliance with the separation days, police are allowed to open garbage bags and inspect the contents in an effort to identify culprits.

Municipal officials explained that Kawasaki City, once one of the dirtiest and most polluted cities in Japan, turned the corner a little over a decade ago when government ordered that a holistic waste reduction and recycling programme be implemented.

It earned results by encouraging education of children and adults in the virtues of separation of garbage and producing less. Residents were informed of expected changes a little over a year before the programme became mandatory.

And let's not forget the sounds of music. In Kawasaki City, each garbage truck has a public address system

which blares out music reminiscent of icecream trucks in the Caribbean. The music reminds residents who haven't

put out their garbage that the small green trucks are approaching. And before the final note of the "icecream

sound" plays, the four workers who man each truck have already cleared the neatly heaped garbage mounds.

In Kawasaki City, even clearing garbage brings a happy vibe, both for residents and for the little city.



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