

Japan eager to help with disaster management

By Barry Alleyne
In Tokyo, Japan

Japan stands ready to lend assistance to CARICOM member states affected by natural disasters, and would also be willing to provide technical assistance in the development of disaster risk management policies.

That word comes from Daisuke Nakano, director of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In a recent briefing here with reporters from Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada, Nakano said Japan already had a good relationship with Caribbean nations and recent trips by delegations to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago had put bilateral wheels in motion.

Japan is considered the country most susceptible to earthquakes and tsunamis, and Nakano said they were aware of just how susceptible to natural disasters the Caribbean had been of late.

“Our doors are open,” he said. “In many ways we share the same interests. We are an island affected by disasters, and we know you are too,” he told the regional journalists at his office in downtown Tokyo.

Because of its history with earthquakes and tsunamis, Japan has spent the last decade producing special technology that detects the slightest movement of tectonic plates, special weather forecasting systems, and a unique community-based disaster preparedness programme, in which mutual assistance by municipalities comes into play without initial assistance from central government.

Catastrophic earthquakes in 2003 and 2011 have kept Japan on its toes, and every resident takes disaster preparedness seriously.

“The government is seeking to help as many countries in your area as possible. The prime minister has an interest in helping too,” Nakano added, reminding journalists that Japan had quickly dispatched aid to both Barbuda and Dominica when those Caribbean islands were affected last month by **Hurricanes Irma and Maria**.

He said apart from being affected by natural disasters, Caribbean countries also shared human rights and bilateral trade concerns, which meant they and Japan were on the same page regarding many social issues.

But Nakano said Japan would pay special interest in helping Caribbean islands to make their countries safer should Mother Nature act up.

“We can cooperate in many different fields. Japan is seeking a bond with the Caribbean. We want to broaden and deepen our relationship.”



Daisuke Nakano
(Picture by Barry Alleyne.)

“We want to talk to their governments, even though we don’t have embassies in every country. That is why we have dialogue with your

CARICOM. We want to hear what are your concerns, which is why we try to hold talks at least once a year,” Nakano said.

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**.



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