



Panama and Japan: Looking for Closer Maritime Relationships

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Ritter Diaz has been serving in the Panama Embassy in Japan for 15 years and since 2011, he became Economic Counsellor. From November 2014, he was appointed Consul General of Panama in Tokyo. Mr. Diaz has vast knowledge of Japanese culture, which he gained through his studies at a Japanese University and work experience at Panasonic Latin America S.A., before coming to Japan in 1996.



I would like to begin by expressing my thankfulness to Japan Institute for Overseas Investment (JOI) for inviting me to contribute to the JOI magazine 2015 Edition on the Panama Canal Expansion.

In this connection, I would like to inform that by invitation of Mr. Jorge Quijano, Administrator of the Panama Canal, I had the opportunity to participate in the official ceremony to receive the last four gates for the new locks, which arrived on November 12 at the Atlantic side of the Canal. With this shipment, all the gates are in Panama ready for their installation in due course.

After the ceremony, Administrator Quijano personally guided a tour through the new lock under construction, where we could appreciate the advance of the expansion

program, which has reached 80 per cent of completion as of October 2014.

If everything continues as scheduled, we will see the new locks operating in the first quarter of 2016, according to Administrator Quijano.

The Panama Canal Authority is well aware of the importance to conclude the expansion work at the earliest possible date, and in particular for Japan to begin the shipment of shale gas from the east coast of United States to Japan and other Asian countries.

The Panama Canal Authority is also studying the new toll structure, which will be applied in a timely manner. As Administrator Quijano mentioned in his recent visit to Tokyo, the new toll structure will be set in line with the market value of the Panama Canal vis-à-vis other competitors such as the Suez Canal and the intermodal system of the US.

In addition, the timeline for the new toll structure will allow the shipping industry enough time to carry out the proper adjustment in the pricing of their products to their customers.

Understanding that the shipping industry is as cost-sensitive as any other industry, the Panama Canal Authority is developing new services around the Canal to generate other sources of revenues in order not to solely rely on regular toll increases. Such services



SS Ancon, the first ship to transit the Panama Canal on August 15th, 1914.

include energy generation, bunkering, ship repair, new container terminal, among others.

It is important to point out that the Panama Canal Authority has maintained a constant dialogue with major shipping organizations all over the world to hear their opinions in regard to the impact of toll increases as well as the performance of the maritime industry.

On this regard, there has been a close consultation with the Japanese Shipowners' Association, and most recently, the Panama Canal Authority, together with the Panama Maritime Authority engaged in a Policy Dialogue over maritime issues with the Ministry of Transport, Land, Infrastructure and Tourism of Japan to exchange views at the governmental level, deepening the commitment of further co-operation between Japan and Panama in the maritime sector.

I hope that this governmental dialogue contributes to increase the competitiveness of both countries in the international maritime community. I also hope that the Panama Canal will continue to add value to better serve the Japanese shipping businesses.

Thank you.

* This message was contributed in November 2014. 🍎

JOI 特別会員

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During the Photographic Exhibition of the Panama Canal in Tokyo on the occasion of 100th Anniversary of the Panama Canal with the presence of Mr. Jorge Quijano, Administrator of the Panama Canal Authority at Instituto Cervantes, Tokyo.



During a meeting with representatives of the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy of Japan.



Maritime seminar on Panama Canal and Maritime Affairs, hosted by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, which was held on November 21st, 2014 in Tokyo.