

Panama Canal Celebrates 100th Anniversary Amid Expansion Project



Panama City, August 16 (RHC) -- The Panama Canal, one of the greatest engineering feats in the world, celebrated its 100th anniversary on Friday amid ongoing expansion works and proposals.

At 8:00 a.m. local time, the ship "Lowlands Kamsar" slowly passed by the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal with sirens blaring, commemorating the first ship which passed through the Panama Canal 100 years ago.

Sailors on the deck waved the flags of Panama while dancers and bands performed beside the locks.

A highlight of the ceremony was an oversized cake bearing a replica of the Miraflores locks, where the event was taking place, complete with a passing ship whose deckhands waved miniature Panamanian flags.

The Panama Canal, approximately 80 km long between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, saves about 12,875 kilometers and half the time from a journey around the southern tip of South America, Cape Horn, according to the official website of the canal.

Nowadays, the 100 years old waterway serves more than 144 maritime routes connecting 160 countries and regions, and reaching some 1,700 ports in the world. It manages about five percent of the world's shipments.

Entering the new century, the canal designed nearly 100 years ago to accommodate ships 267 meters in length and 28 meters wide, is too small to handle the post-Panamax ships that are three times as big, making it necessary to expand by building a new set of docks.

In 2007, the Panamanian government began the expansion project of the inter-oceanic canal which will double the capacity of the canal by creating a new lane of traffic.

The expansion works were originally planned to be completed by Friday for the canal's 100th anniversary, but had to be postponed until 2016.

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