

Japan celebrates the 20th Anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor's Accession to the Throne

The 7th of January 2009 marked the 20th anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan's accession to the throne. A commemorative ceremony will be held to coincide with the date of Emperor Akihito's enthronement, which took place on 12 November 1990. This year 2009 is also the 50th anniversary of Their Majesties' wedding.

To celebrate the occasion of the 20th anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor's accession to the throne, a wide range of events has been organised. They have been taking place throughout the year, but many events are being held this autumn, particularly in the month of November, the month of the enthronement ceremony and a month which is often considered a perfect time to hold cultural events, with the annual public holiday, Culture Day, falling on 3 November.

So what type of events have been organised? The range of events is to an extent a reflection of the many activities and engagements that Their Majesties undertake as part of their official and ceremonial duties. There are events fostering international relations, such as the Japan-ASEAN Youth Leaders Summit to be held 2-3

November. There will be performances of traditional performing arts such as kabuki and *gagaku* (imperial court music). Special exhibitions of imperial treasures are being held throughout the year, and members of the public will have greater access to important cultural properties such as the imperial palaces and rarely accessible buildings. There will also be free admission to

national museums and national government parks to celebrate 12 November.

There will be tree plantings, various improvement programs to parks and public facilities, commemorative publications, special coin issues and commemorative postage stamps—common ways to mark special events around the world.

However, several others may come as more of a

surprise to readers: an exhibition on the diversity of gobie fishes at the National Museum of Nature and Science will honour Emperor Akihito's research on the species; an exhibition of silkworm research by the National Institute of Agrobiological Sciences will include photos of Empress Michiko raising silkworms; and the Imperial Guard Headquarters, part of the National Police Agency, will publish a compilation of *tanka* poems written by staff members. (Their Majesties write poems themselves; their new year *waka* poems are published each year and can be read online.)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko



To find out more about the Imperial Family, see the Imperial Household Agency website:
www.kunaicho.go.jp

For details about the 20th Anniversary celebrations, see:
www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/japan/imperial/20anniversary/event.html

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko
with the Family

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