

Government

Since 1947 Japan has been a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is Emperor Akihito, who succeeded to the throne on the death of Emperor Hirohito in January, 1989. The head of Government is Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu. The Diet or National Parliament is divided into the House of Representatives (Commons equivalent) and the House of Councillors (Senate equivalent), elected by universal suffrage. The executive is chosen from the Diet according to the parliamentary cabinet system. The ruling party is the Liberal Democratic Party, which has enjoyed an overwhelming majority and consistently been at the helm of the Government since the Second World War. The Japan Social Democratic Party is the leading opposition party. In addition there are KOMEITO (Clean Government), MINSHATO (Democratic Socialist) and Communist Parties, and two or three fringe minority parties.

Japan, indeed, is one of the most democratic societies in the world. Such important basic ingredients of democracy as freedom of speech, basic human rights, and freedom of religion, etc. have been strictly maintained since the war, thanks to the U.S.A. which reinstated them after years as a militaristic state.

National Holidays

New Year's Day January 1

Adults Day January 15

National Foundation Day February 11

Vernal Equinox March 20 or 21

(lunar calendar)

Arbor Day April 29

Constitution Memorial Day May 3

Kokumin no Kyujitsu May 4

Children's Day May 5

Respect for the Aged Day September 15

Autumn Equinox September 23 or 24

(lunar calendar)

Sports Day October 10

Cultural Day November 3

