

Portuguese republic day

Still curious, still learning about each other after 460 years

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On June 10, Portugal celebrates its National Day. It's neither our Independence Day (866 years ago) or the date of a great historical event, or military victory. On this particular day, we celebrate Portuguese culture and identity,

being the anniversary of the death, in 1580, of one of the greatest Renaissance poets, Luis de Camoes, author of "Os Lusíadas (The Lusíads.)"

June 10 is a celebration of Portugal's openness to the world, to other cultures and a celebration of a multicultural vision of life, and mutual learning and understanding, which corresponded in its time to the percussion of the globalization of our days.

Celebrating June 10 in Ja-

pan is the most perfect symbol of this vision of multiculturalism. More than 4½ centuries ago, the first ambassadors from "the West" to reach Japan came from Portugal (1543). They established a deep and broad cultural exchange, and long-lasting friendship between our two nations, separated by more than 10,000 km, and a world apart in language, religion and lifestyle.

It has been a remarkable process that has kept such

different people and cultures so interested and curious about each other. Such interest and curiosity have survived — and indeed increased — up to the present day, when knowledge circulates at unprecedented speed. The abundant information has only made Portuguese and Japanese all the more eager to discover more about each other as is evidenced in areas such as the rapidly growing tourism market or academic exchanges. Our history together sets an example to the world, proving that through tolerance, openness, mutual learning and understanding, different cultures and civilizations will thrive together, and build a safer and prosperous world.

For Japan and its people, Portugal is a symbol of European history and tradition, as well as of a modern and dynamic country with a vibrant culture, one that awakens the interest of many Japanese scholars and artists. A representative number of Portuguese contemporary artists have some of their works all over Japan. Also Japanese companies have long discov-

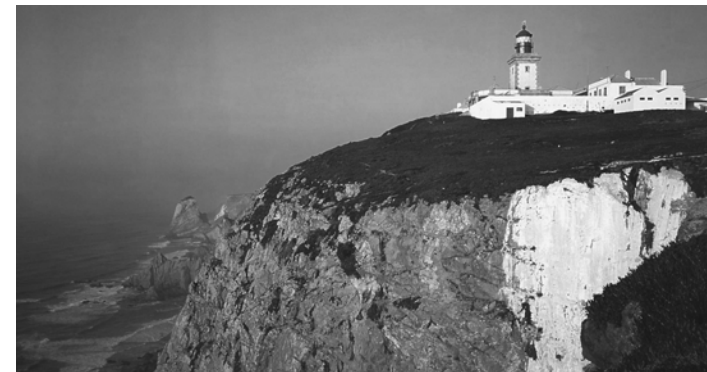
ered the vast opportunities that Portugal offers for investment and trade, and the number of those that choose to base their European businesses there is constantly increasing.

Sharing the same democratic and humanist values and principles, Portugal and Japan are trustful partners, maintaining a regular and fruitful political dialogue at all levels. Indeed, both governments are enthusiastically preparing the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Peace, Friendship and Commerce Treaty between the two countries, with events to be held in Portugal and Japan throughout 2010. The future of the relations between Portugal and Japan is bright.

Although 466 years have passed since the two countries first met, the same curiosity, the same interest about the differences and the surprising similarities, the same strong willingness to learn from "the other," the same respect and affection that are the very groundwork of this friendship prevails, thus showing that Portuguese and Japanese are

deeply committed in further developing this strong centuries-old relationship, looking ahead to the future and embracing modernity.

On the occasion of Portugal's National Day, I offer my best wishes for an ever-deeper and stronger friendship with Japan in the years ahead.



Land's end: Cabo da Roca (Cape Roca) is the westernmost point of mainland Europe and mainland Portugal. RUI MORAES DE SOUSA



"Cradle of Portugal": The 10th-century castle in the city of Guimaraes — the European Capital of Culture 2012 CMG/PPACHECO

Congratulations on Portuguese Republic Day

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