

Hungary national day

Pecs: European Capital of Culture

So much to celebrate in a very special year

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AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY

Today we celebrate Oct. 23, 1956, a glorious day in Hungarian history, when the Hungarian people showed courage, strength and great will to revolt against the oppression of the communist regime. The Hungarian Revolution became a cornerstone in modern-day history and the courage of the freedom fighters won worldwide admiration. In the end, their efforts finally bore fruit: In 1990, Hungary joined the community of democratic and free countries, and became a member of the European Union, enjoying the benefits of a borderless Europe.

This year is particularly special in the long history of Hungarian-Japanese relations. 2009 is a dual anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Hungary. Japan and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy established official diplomatic

ties 140 years ago, and they resumed 50 years ago. The peak of the anniversary year will be in December, when Hungarian President H.E. Dr. Laszlo Solyom makes an official visit to Japan.

To commemorate the dual anniversary several cultural programs are taking place throughout Japan under the aegis of the "Hungary-Japan Anniversary Year 2009."

In Hungary one of the biggest events of the year will be the artistic illumination of the world-famous Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest by Japanese lighting design artist Motoko Ishii.

Speaking of culture, I also have to mention the Hungarian city Pecs, which will be the European Capital of Culture next year.

My closing words go out to all Hungarians living in Japan, who contribute so much to strengthen ties between our two nations during their everyday life and work. I wish them a very pleasant national day.

In 2010 the Hungarian city of Pecs will celebrate as European Capital of Culture, presenting its genuine treasure — cultural heritage — to the world.

Pecs, the center of the South Transdanubian region, is a 2,000-year-old city, one of Hungary's oldest settlements, with important relics dating as far back as the Roman Age. The local city center with its early Christian remains from Roman times was designated as a World Heritage site in 2000 by UNESCO. By receiving the European Capital of Culture title Pecs has become one of the most significant centers of art and culture in Hungary.

Colorful, eventful programs and festivals are hosted by the historic sites and buildings of the city. The early Roman burial chambers, the medieval buildings, the different sites of religious history, the streets paved with several thousand-year-old stones all radiate a unique atmosphere. Nevertheless, there is no sensation of a vanished past since taking a step beyond the old-fashioned exhibition halls contemporary forms of art are continuously entering the public spaces of



Cultural center: The Hungarian city of Pecs is European Capital of Culture in 2010. HUNGARIAN EMBASSY

the city as well.

The spirit of modern art saturates Pecs and it has always been that way. Victor Vasarely, the op art artist, was a son of Pecs just like some famous figures of the Bauhaus School, such as Marcell Breuer, the designer of the Wassily chair. New works of art and performances are constantly being created, inspired by the atmosphere of the city, whose unique nature lies in the interaction between the city and art.

Vilmos Zsolnay established in the middle of the 19th century the Zsolnay porcelain company. Zsolnay is also called the co-founder of Pecs since he built up the famous Zsolnay image and its porcelain can be found all over the world nowadays since a famous Zsolnay collection opened the Hungarian Cultural Year in New York this year. Famous Zsolnay pieces will be exhibited in Pecs from 2010.

Music has always played a

very important role in the region as well: the opera performances of the National Theatre, the city's symphony orchestra and the other smaller ensembles playing classical music have been serving music lovers all over the country as well as on international stages. Next year such well-known popular artists as Emir Kusturica, Goran Bregovic and violinist Maxim Vengerov will join us to boost the European Capital of Culture year.

As Pecs is a city where numerous different cultures co-exist, it is only natural that the art of many parts of the world will be represented here next year, including from exciting Japan. Bunraku puppet theater and solo dance artist Hiroaki Umeda will be important parts of the 2010 cultural year in Pecs, as will DJ Krush and the Gocoo Taiko group. The World Haiku Conference and the International Origami Meeting also sound very promising, and last, but not least, the International Young Chorus Workshop, where young and talented singers from the U.S., Romania, Japan and the host city of Pecs

will hold common workshops and performances.

For more information on the programs of Pecs2010 Eu-

ropean Capital of Culture Program, please visit

www.pecs2010.hu or the Pecs2010 profile on Facebook.

Congratulations on the Occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Hungary

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