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JAPAN

HIROHITO
(Phonetic: heero-heetoh)

Emperor (since 1926)

Addressed as:
Your Majesty



(1975)

According to the Japanese Constitution, the Emperor, who heads the world's oldest ruling house, is the symbol of the state and the unity of the people. He maintains a busy schedule, receiving ambassadors and other dignitaries, signing government documents, and attending public functions. Although the Emperor no longer claims divinity, he is treated with respect and affection by his people. In 1975 the Emperor and Empress visited the United States, where extensive media coverage humanized the imperial couple in the eyes of most Japanese. Upon returning to Japan, the Emperor--for the first time in history--agreed to a televised press interview.

The Emperor is an internationally acknowledged expert in marine biology and has published nine books on that subject. He does not drink or smoke and is in good health for his age (he will be 81 on 29 April). He enjoys hiking with the Empress and watching traditional Japanese sumo wrestling on television. The Emperor has some knowledge of French and reads some English. He prefers Western to Japanese food (he generally eats bacon and eggs for breakfast). The Emperor's personal name is never used in conversation.

Married in 1924, the Emperor and Empress have five living children and 10 grandchildren.

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9 April 1982

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