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National Day SEYCHELLES

Tomorrow, the Republic of Seychelles, a group of 86 islands in the Indian Ocean, inhabited by some 66,000 people, will become the forty-fifth country to celebrate its National Day at Expo'90. At the opening ceremony, to be held in HANAZA Auditorium from 11:00 to 12:00, the audience will be addressed by H.E. Mr. France Albert Rene, President of the Republic of Seychelles. From 11:30 on, conga music and folk dances, presented by two female dancers from the Seychelles, will recreate some of the islands' tropical ebullience.

Forming an independent nation since 1976, the islands of the Seychelles are unanimously described by visitors as "the last paradise of the world". And indeed, the Seychelles are blessed with a cornucopia of flowers and plants; 42% of the national territory being nature reserves, the country boasts 77 endemic species of plants (including the rare, yet well-known, Wright's gardenia), and is home to the world's largest tortoise as well as to the smallest species of frog (*Sooglossus gardineri*) on earth.

The Seychelles' resources and crops speak of its tropical location, too; coconut products, cinna~~mon~~, vanilla, patchouli, guano, and shark fins constitute the country's main exports (which amounted to 4.3 million US\$ in 1984). At Expo'90, visitors to the Seychelles' garden are being greeted by the sweet smell of lemon grass (*Citrus medica*), and by majestic specimens of coco-de-mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*), whose nuts - the biggest in the world - can reach a weight of up to 20 kilograms.

Animal Welfare

Following a Japanese custom, many visitors to the British garden have been throwing coins into the on-site pond. The British Garden Committee has decided to collect this money when Expo'90 ends, and to donate it to Japan Animal Welfare Society. The society has for 30 years been involved in educating people in the better treatment of animals, as well as rescuing abandoned and ill-treated animals. The donation is in keeping with the British tradition of animal welfare.

Yesterday's Attendance

Yesterday, 62,195 people visited the Expo site, increasing the total number of visitors since the opening to 13,132,844.

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