

Emperor's birthday

Monarch stays mindful of pain amid pandemic

THE JAPAN TIMES AGENCY

Emperor Naruhito, who turns 62 today, is known for his compassionate and sociable personality, as well as his proficiency in English, as the first emperor to have studied outside Japan.

Born in 1960, the eldest son of Emperor Emeritus Akihito and Empress Emerita Michiko, the emperor made his first overseas trip to Australia in 1974. After he graduated from the Department of History in the Faculty of Letters of Gakushuin University, he traveled to the United Kingdom in 1983 and spent two years living in a dormitory and studying at Oxford University's Merton College. He studied the history of transport on the River Thames, and his interest in issues associated with water and waterways has continued today, as can be seen in his involvement in the United Nations' Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, where he served as honorary president from 2007 to 2015.

In the emperor's recently published book, "Suiunshi Kara Sekai no Mizu e" ("From the History of Water Transport to the World's Water"), which is a compilation of the speeches he made on different occasions over the past three decades, he insisted further efforts are required to make

sanitary facilities accessible by all people and address global warming and natural disasters. He also delivered a 25-minute address in English at a U.N. session on water and disasters held online in June last year and spoke about the importance of passing on the records and stories of the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami to future generations.

In many of the events held both online and offline that the emperor attended by himself or with Empress Masako last year, including the 71st national tree planting festival in Shimane Prefecture in May, he expressed his respect and gratitude for people who are committed to fighting the coronavirus crisis. The fact that the emperor avoided using the word "celebrate" in his declaration of the opening of the Tokyo Olympics out of consideration for the general public seriously impacted by the pandemic was reported widely by media in Japan and abroad.

A former diplomat educated at both Harvard and Oxford, Empress Masako also touched on the challenges brought by the pandemic and expressed sympathy for those suffering in her statement released by the Imperial Household Agency on her 58th birthday on Dec. 9.

Imperial events and ceremonies have

also been either conducted or canceled with ample consideration for the people of Japan. Princess Aiko, the only child of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, attended coming-of-age ceremonies at the Imperial Palace in December wearing a tiara used by her paternal aunt Sayako Kuroda instead of ordering a new one for herself out of consideration for the people struggling amid the pandemic.

This is the emperor's third birthday since he was enthroned on May 1, 2019, but all three of his public birthday events in which the emperor, the empress and other members of the imperial family would otherwise greet well-wishers from a balcony at the Imperial Palace, have been canceled to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Emperor Naruhito recited his *waka* (classical Japanese poem) in the annual New Year Poetry Reading Ceremony held in January. The official translation provided by the Imperial Household Agency is as follows:

*As our contacts with the world
Remain difficult,
I earnestly hope for a day
When the window opens to the world*

It is a common hope of the emperor and all citizens of Japan that the window opens to the world again to a brighter future.



Emperor Naruhito holds a news conference prior to his 61st birthday in February 2021 at the Akasaka Imperial Residence in Tokyo. KYODO



Emperor Naruhito (center, left) and other members of the imperial family wave to the crowd during his first New Year's greeting event as emperor at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Jan. 2, 2020. KYODO



Emperor Naruhito, Empress Masako (right) and their daughter Princess Aiko wave from a car before meeting Emperor Emeritus Akihito and Empress Emerita Michiko for New Year's greetings on Jan. 1. KYODO



Congratulations on the Emperor's Birthday

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Emperor's birthday



Emperor Naruhito declares the opening of the Tokyo Olympics at the new National Stadium on July 23. KYODO




Princess Aiko walks behind her parents Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako on the way to her coming-of-age ceremony at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Dec. 5. KYODO




Prime Minister Fumio Kishida bows to Emperor Naruhito (left) during his formal inauguration ceremony at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Oct. 4 as his predecessor Yoshihide Suga (center) looks on. KYODO

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
H.E. Gursel Ismayilzade
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
H.E. Shahabuddin Ahmed
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Benin
Joseph Houinsonon
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Botswana
H.E. Gotsileene Morake
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday



Embassy of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
H.E. Jerome Kloh Weya
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday



Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
H.E. Sabr Yessimbekov
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Kenya
H.E. Tabu Irina
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

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Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar
Tsilavo M. Randrianjafy
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

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Embassy of the Republic of Maldives
H.E. Ibrahim Uvais
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia
H.E. John Fritz
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

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Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique
H.E. Jose Maria Morais
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the State of Qatar
H.E. Hassan Bin Mohammed Rafei Al-Emadi
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Russian Federation
H.E. Mikhail Y. Galuzin
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania
H.E. Baraka H. Luvanda
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Best wishes to Emperor Naruhito on his majesty's birthday




Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe
Rutendo P. Matsangaise
Charge d'Affaires a.i.




Embassy of the Republic of Angola

On behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Angola, I have the honor to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on his birthday.




H.E. Rui Orlando Xavier
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary




Embassy of the Republic of Haiti

On behalf of the people and government of Haiti, I would like to extend my best wishes to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on this auspicious occasion for his continued well-being.

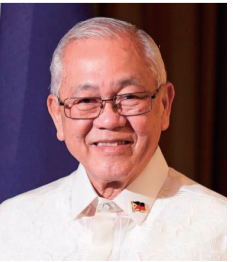


H.E. Helph Monod Honorat
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines

On behalf of the government and people of the Republic of the Philippines, I extend my sincerest congratulations to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on the occasion of his birthday.



H.E. Jose C. Laurel V
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Royal Thai Embassy in Tokyo

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and Thai people, I humbly offer our best wishes and sincere congratulations on the 62nd birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito.



H.E. Singtong Lapisatepun
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary