



Emperor Akihito thanks Japanese in farewell and prays for peace

April 30, 2019

Japanese Emperor Akihito, in his final remarks as his three-decade reign drew to a close on Tuesday, thanked the people for their support and expressed hope for a peaceful future.

1. For the first time in two centuries a Japanese monarch has stepped down.
2. On Tuesday, Emperor Akihito abdicated in a brief and relatively simple ceremony in Tokyo's Imperial Palace's prestigious "Matsu-no-ma", or Hall of Pine.
3. Akihito used his final words to thank the public and pray for peace.
4. About 300 people were there and the event was broadcast live on television - for millions tuning in to **the** historic moment.
5. Akihito's three decade reign saw the Emperor seek to ease the painful memories of World War Two and engage with people, including the marginalized in society.
6. His abdication and unprecedented move for modern Japan has left the public stunned.
7. But at 85 years-old Akihito has had heart surgery and been treated for prostate cancer.
8. And has said he's afraid he can't carry out his duties as a monarch.
9. Many Japanese sympathize with him - but not everyone.
10. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative base had objected to the idea of abdication mainly because the royals don't have many male heirs.
11. They're worried the next step might lead to women on the throne though the current law forbids it.
12. With the enthronement of Akihito's son on Wednesday - 59-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito - there are only 3 possible successors left and his own daughter isn't one of them.
13. When Princess Aiko was born in 2001 there was discussion of possibly changing the rules to let her reign - because there were no male heirs in the younger generation.

14. But still, conservatives resisted.

15. Then, Naruhito's brother Akishino had a son - and lawmakers sighed with relief - sweeping the issue under the rug.

16. Akihito was allowed to step down only after a special law was passed.

17. And an unprecedented 10 day holiday has been given to the public to celebrate Japan's NEW emperor.

18. Akihito will now be known as "joko" - or emperor emeritus.

19. His wife, Michiko will be "jokogo."

20. They will leave the Imperial Palace and soon move into the Togu Palace - where they lived, down the road - before he became emperor.