

《日本明仁天皇视频讲话暗示退位》

周一，82岁的日本明仁天皇在罕见的对民众的视频讲话中说，他担心他的年纪让他很难履行自己的责任，这番言论被广泛认为他有意退位。

TOKYO - Japanese Emperor Akihito, 82, in a rare video address to the public on Monday, said he worried that age may make it difficult for him to fully carry out his duties, remarks widely seen as suggesting he wants to abdicate.



Public broadcaster NHK reported last month that Akihito, who has had heart surgery and been treated for prostate cancer, wanted to step down in a few years - which would be unprecedented in modern Japan.

once considered divine, the emperor is defined in the constitution as a symbol of the state and the unity of the people. He has no political power.

Akihito stopped short of saying outright that he wanted to abdicate, which could be interpreted as interfering in politics.

"When I consider that my fitness level is gradually declining, I am worried that it may become difficult for me to carry out my duties as the symbol of the state with my whole being, as I have done until now," he said.

Akihito took the throne after the death in 1989 of his father, Hirohito, in whose name Japan fought World War Two. He has sought to soothe the wounds of the war in Asia during trips overseas and tried to bring the monarchy closer to the people.

Akihito feels strongly that an emperor's full performance of his duties is integral to his constitutional role, experts say.

Opinion polls show the vast majority of ordinary Japanese sympathise with the emperor's desire to retire, but such a step would need changes to the law.

Akihito has been cutting back on official duties, with his heir, 56-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito, taking his place. There were limits to how far that could go, he said on Monday.

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The emperor also seemed to cast doubt on whether it was appropriate to use an existing system that would allow Naruhito to take over as regent if his father were incapacitated.

"Even in such cases (of a regency), however, it does not change the fact that the emperor continues to be emperor until the end of his life, even though he is unable to fully carry out his duties as the emperor," Akihito said.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters that, in view of the emperor's age and the burden of his official duties, it was necessary to consider what steps could be taken.

The idea of abdication has sparked opposition from Abe's conservative base, which worries debate of the imperial family's future could widen to the topic of letting women inherit and pass on the throne, anathema to traditionalists.

Naruhito's only child is a daughter. Only males can inherit the Chrysanthemum Throne, which after Naruhito would pass to his brother, Prince Akishino and then to nine-year-old nephew Hisahito.

Other conservatives worry devoting political energy to discussing abdication could sidetrack Abe's push to revise the US-drafted pacifist constitution, which many conservatives see as a symbol of Japan's humiliating defeat in World War II.

With Akihito apparently rejecting a regency, the only options would appear to be revising the Imperial Household Law or enacting a special law allowing him to abdicate, said Naotaka Kimizuka, an expert in monarchies at Kanto Gakuin University.

"They will either revise the law without touching on (female) succession, or pass a special law," he said, adding steps could be taken next year.

"It felt as if the emperor were saying 'Please hurry'."

It was the second time Akihito had addressed the public in a video message. The first was after a massive earthquake, deadly tsunami and nuclear crisis hit northeast Japan in March 2011.

