



JAPANESE ROYALTY. Japan's Prince Hisahito, left, is seen with his sisters, Princess Kako, center, and Princess Mako, at a rice field of the Akasaka Detached Palace in Tokyo. Prince Hisahito recently turned 10 years old. (Imperial Household Agency of Japan via AP)

Japanese prince turns 10 amid talk of Emperor's abdication

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's Prince Hisahito turned 10 years old amid national attention over the future of the Japanese monarchy after Emperor Akihito, his grandfather, indicated a wish to abdicate.

Akihito, 82, in a rare public address in August, expressed concern about fulfilling official duties as he ages, suggesting he would like to abdicate.

Hisahito, a fourth-grader who enjoys playing with bugs and helping rice-growing at a palace farm, is third in line to the chrysanthemum throne. His father, Prince Akishino, 50, is second after his brother Crown Prince Naruhito, 56.

The government is reportedly considering enacting a special law allowing Akihito's abdication that would not be applicable to his successors, although discussions over revising the Imperial House Law could reopen debate over the

divisive issue of whether to allow female emperors.

The abdication issue renewed concerns about aging and a shortage of successors in the Imperial family — a 2,000-year-old monarchy — which reflects the overall concern in Japan's declining and rapidly aging population.

Akihito and his wife Michiko have four grandchildren, but only Hisahito is eligible to the throne under Japan's male-only succession system. The three granddaughters — Naruhito's daughter Aiko and Hisahito's two sisters — will lose royal status when they marry.

Current law, set in 1947, is largely inherited from a 19th-century constitution that banned abdication as a potential risk to political stability.

An earlier government panel discussion, launched out of concern about the lack of male offspring, endorsed allowing female emperors, but that thinking was shelved when Hisahito was born in 2006.



CELEBRATING GANESHA. Raju Laljibhai Dipikar offers kheer, an Indian sweet, to an idol of elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesha, in his home on the second day of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Mumbai, India. Every year, Dipikar goes out with his family to choose an elaborate statue of Ganesha and for two days the god "lives" with the family in their tiny apartment in Mumbai, his very presence bringing them joy. And in return for the love the family showers on him, he takes away all their problems, Dipikar says. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

Bustling Mumbai slows for festival to honor Ganesha

MUMBAI, India (AP) — Every year Raju Laljibhai Dipikar goes out with his wife and three daughters and chooses an elaborate statue of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god so dear to devout Hindus.

For two days the god "lives" with the family in their tiny apartment in Mumbai, his presence bringing them joy. And in return for the love the family showers on him, he takes away all their problems, Dipikar says.

So it is for tens of millions of other families across western and southern India when they mark the birthday of Ganesha.

Beautiful idols of the god are purchased and brought home, where they are worshipped. After a few days — every family has its own tradition — the idols, made from plaster of Paris or clay, are carried to a large body of water and ceremonially immersed.

Nowhere is the festival celebrated with more fervor than in Mumbai. For 10 days every year the pace of India's bustling business capital slows to welcome the god, known as the one who blesses new beginnings and removes obstacles.

Apart from the small idols installed in people's homes, massive statues are set up in temporary structures.

Flowers and coconuts and incense are offered to the god as is his favorite sweet treat — dumplings called *modaks* — made of a crude sugar and coconut.

The last day of the 10-day celebration is the biggest day, with massive crowds singing and dancing as they carry their idols through the streets, to immerse them in the water, an act that symbolizes sending the god back to his mythical home in the snow-capped mountains taking all the worries and problems of his worshippers with him.



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