



Spotlight

EMPEROR'S ENTHRONEMENT

SPECIAL COVERAGE



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shouts "banzai," meaning "long live the emperor," during the enthronement ceremony for Emperor Naruhito at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. AFP

JAPAN

Enthronement of the century

Naruhito vowed to 'stand with the people' in an elaborate ceremony that combined tradition with modernity

Arab News Tokyo

It was a ceremony similar to coronations used by monarchs worldwide, but combining the historical and the spiritual with modernity. Japan's Emperor Naruhito formally completed his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Oct. 22.

Purple curtains were drawn back to reveal Naruhito, 59, and Empress Masako, 55, standing before their imperial thrones as the enthronement ceremony began.

Wearing a dark orange robe, similar to that worn by his father Akihito at his own enthronement in 1990, Naruhito proclaimed his ascension to a 6.5 meter-high, canopied "Takamikura" throne.

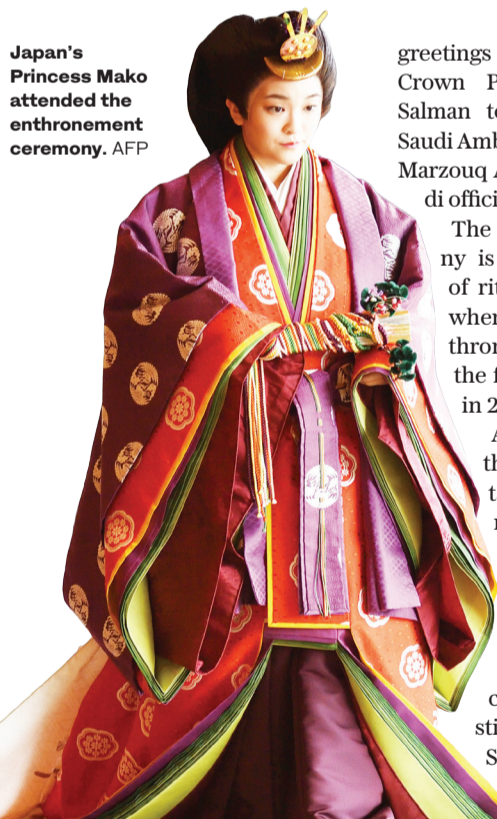
Through the centuries-old ceremony, Naruhito declared himself Japan's 126th emperor and vowed to "stand with the people" before roughly 2,000 guests, including heads of state and officials from Japan and more than 180 countries.

Among the attendees were Japanese royal family members also wearing traditional robes.

In his congratulatory message to the emperor, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised that the people of Japan would "respect (his) highness the emperor as the symbol of the state and of the unity of the Japanese people." He then stood before Naruhito's throne, bowed and raised his hands three times, shouting "banzai," meaning "long live the emperor."

Saudi Arabia was represented by Minister of State Prince Turki bin Mohammed bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, who conveyed

Japan's Princess Mako attended the enthronement ceremony. AFP



greetings from King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the Japanese people. Saudi Ambassador to Japan Naif bin Marzouq Al-Fahadi, and other Saudi officials, were also present.

The enthronement ceremony is a part of a succession of rituals that began in May when Naruhito inherited the throne, after Akihito became the first emperor to abdicate in 200 years.

As Naruhito ascended the throne, boxes containing items of imperial regalia, including an imperial sword and jewel, were presented to him.

"Having previously succeeded to the Imperial Throne in accordance with the constitution of Japan and the Special Measures Law



The new imperial couple is likely to want to further Emperor Akihito's legacy.

on the Imperial House Law, I now ... proclaim my enthronement to those at home and abroad," the Japan Times newspaper quoted Naruhito as declaring.

"I pledge hereby that I shall act according to the constitution and fulfill my responsibility as the symbol of the state, and of the unity of the people of Japan, while always wishing for the happiness of the people and the peace of the world, turning my thoughts to the people and standing by them."

An imperial procession that was

to take place after the ceremony was postponed after Typhoon Hagibis hit Tokyo earlier this month.

On Nov. 10, the emperor and empress will take part in a procession through central Tokyo to the Aka-saka Imperial Residence.

To mark the enthronement, the government has granted pardons to more than half a million people found guilty of petty crimes such as traffic violations.

In an article for Arab News, Shihoko Goto, deputy director for geoeconomics at the Asia Program of the US think tank the Wilson Center, asked a question she believes will be echoed by many in Japan: "Can the country carry on its historical legacy while embracing the opportunities of the 21st century?"

"The new imperial couple is likely to want to further Emperor Akihito's legacy as a conduit for reconciliation."

A warm handshake with history

NAIF BIN MARZOUQ AL-FAHADI

The role of great leaders during major events is critical for the safety of the world.

It requires a strong grip by the hands of the man aspiring to build, and all the achievements, challenges and great scenes are embodied in the dawn of one glorious day, under the flutter of flags that translate people's hopes and dreams of a tomorrow in which hands will be joined and differences dissolved.

Seeing the majestic moment of the enthronement of Emperor Naruhito, the world senses the wisdom of leaders that is necessary for its balance and growth.

The world is united more than ever at a time when the entire planet rushes toward its future at the speed of light.

Borders and distances are merged due to successive industrial and technical revolutions, while challenges grow for international

institutions whose policies are becoming deeper and more sensitive.

Only great peoples, such as our Japanese friends, keep writing their history with the same determination and faith.

I bear an exceptional heritage and a responsibility, of which I feel the enduring gravity, every time history marks an occasion to shape the future of a generation. I remember my homeland's great ancestors — the late King Abdul Aziz, his sons who succeeded him on the throne, and the loyal men who strove all their lives for a glorious future.

Ancient nations share a similar biography, which begins with devotion and sacrifice and is crowned with glory and immortality.

Saudi Arabia and Japan are not only united by their deep-rooted history and the timeless glory of their leaders, they also share an ethos of working devotedly and diligently to shape future policies and adapt to challenges.



Naif bin Marzouq Al-Fahadi is the Saudi Ambassador to Japan.

The vision of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is to work with the Kingdom's historical partners to achieve cultural and human openness, and with its economic partners in a race against time to attain results and accomplishments, promising wealth and prosperity.

The two countries' vision is brought together in international forums through their seats in international institutions, such as in the G20 forum.

Every day I witness harmonious practice and a flexible path, increasingly embodied by the work of the Saudi-Japanese Vision 2030, which is designed to provide a new basis for what our peoples create and deliver in the interests of world peace.

The invitation extended to Prince Turki bin Mohammed bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, minister of state and member of the cabinet,

to the enthronement ceremony highlights the strength of the historical and long-standing relationship between Saudi Arabia and Japan.

The high-level royal representation comes as a Saudi message; that the Kingdom stands where its friends stand around the world, and puts its hand in theirs where goodness, growth and stability are the message, and to which the Kingdom does not accept any alternative.

We will stand, alongside the people of the world and our friends, the people of Japan, to witness the beginning of a new chapter enriched by an ancient ceremony.

This new chapter is a compass pointing toward the future, yet its stories will be told under the heading of successes and glories. We will salute His Majesty the Emperor as we learn, once again, what the stability of prosperous homelands can mean for all the peoples of the Earth.

This is our future, together.