

Suga: New era name Reiwa comes from Japanese poetry anthology 'Manyoshu'

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Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga raises a board bearing the new era name "Reiwa" during a press conference in Tokyo on April 1, 2019. (Mainichi)

TOKYO -- Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga announced on April 1 that Japan's new era name after the current Heisei is "Reiwa," raising a board bearing the new name written in ink using kanji characters.

The top government spokesman said the name is derived from the "Manyoshu" (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), the oldest extant anthology of classical Japanese waka poetry.

Suga said the name of the person who devised the new era name is being withheld upon their request, as well as out of concern the name could be strongly associated with one particular individual. He also said the government would not disclose the other candidate era names or how many were considered.

"For the first time in history, we have decided on an era name based on Japanese literature," Prime

Minister Shinzo Abe said, adding that the "Manyoshu," which dates back more than 1,200 years, contains poems made by people regardless of their standing, and represents Japan's rich national culture and long tradition.

"The era name represents a culture being born and nurtured by people's hearts coming together beautifully," he said.

"We have decided the new name to be Reiwa in the hope that Japan will be a country where each Japanese person can achieve success with hopes for the future like plum flowers that bloom brilliantly after the severe cold," Abe said.

"I sincerely hope the new era name will be widely accepted by the public and become deeply rooted in the lives of the people of Japan," he said.

Suga said a government decree on changing the era name and a Cabinet notice about the reading of the new era name were approved at a Cabinet meeting earlier that day. He said the decision came after a meeting of an expert panel on the era name, a hearing with the heads and vice heads of both chambers of the Diet and a meeting of all Cabinet members.

(Mainichi)

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