Myanmar independence day

Myanmar focuses on regional cooperation

U Hla Myint
AMBASSADOR OF MYANMAR

On behalf of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council His Excellency Senior Gen. Than Shwe, the government and the people of Myanmar, I am honored to convey through the esteemed columns of The Japan Times our profound respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and the Imperial family and our warmest greetings and best wishes for happiness, prosperity and continued success to the government and friendly people of Japan, as well as Myanmar citizens residing in Japan on this auspicious occasion of the 62nd anniversary of the Independence Day of the Union of Myanmar.

Myanmar has stood tall as a sovereign nation with its own monarchs in the global community since time immemorial. In the late 19th century, Myanmar lost sovereignty following colonialists' aggression. However, national brethren of the union who hated being under the yoke of colonialism equipping themselves firmly with union spirit and patriotic spirit, and showing bravery, tenacity and vigor, launched anticolonialist struggles, sacrificing lives, blood and sweat. So the Union of Myanmar regained independence and sovereignty.

We have learned lessons from historic political events in the postindependence period, when the people became disunited with conflicts among them instead of working together for national development. National brethren were no longer united due to the wedge the colonialists drove among them for more than 100 years and led to armed insurgency that cost lives and the property of many people.

The Tatmadaw Government (Present Government) came into existence in September 1988 due to the necessity of mending the deteriorating situation of the nation. Apart from restoring peace and stability, the government

Senior Gen. Than Shwe, head of state of the Union of Myanmar

— in pursuance of the lofty goal of building a peaceful, modern and developed democratic nation with flourishing discipline — has been making untiring efforts to develop infrastructure, promote economy and uplift the morale of the people. It also gives top priority to national reconsolidation to put an end to the armed insurgency and ensures community peace and the rule of the law. Nowadays, peace and stability have been restored at an unprecedented level after the postindependence period.

Today, the government is implementing a development project for 24 special regions and a rural development project, constructing more and more economic infrastructure, developing human resources and ensuring equitable development of all parts of the nation. At the same time, it is steadfastly implementing a seven-step road map that has made significant progress.

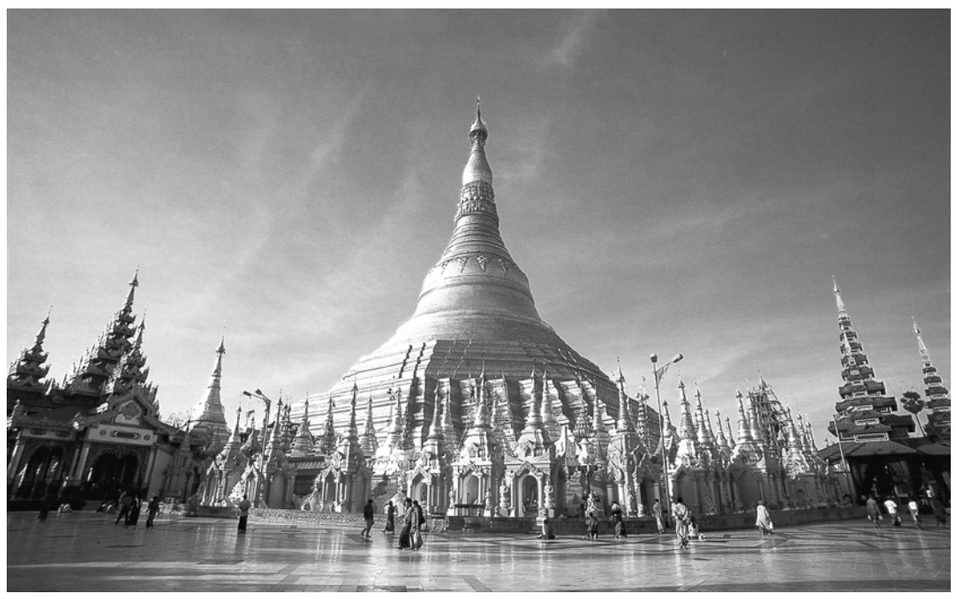
The national referendum to approve the new State Constitution, the fourth step of the road map, was successfully held May 10, 2008, with 92.48 percent of the over 27 million eligible voters in favor. Preparations are well under way for the fifth step, the holding of a free and fair general election in 2010. After the general election, the sixth step, convening of the parliaments with the elected representatives, and the final step, forming the new government by the parliaments in accordance with the constitution, will be conducted.

After independence, from 1948 to 1962, Myanmar practiced a market economic system. Then from 1962 to 1988, the country was under a socialist economic system. Since 1988, a market-oriented economic system has been adopted to encourage the development of the private sector in Myanmar. With the aim of building an industrialized nation, the government has laid down four economic objectives for the improvement of the country's economic situation: the development of agriculture as the base and allaround development of other sectors of the economy as well; the proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system; the development of the economy by inviting participation in terms of technical knowhow and investments from sources inside the country and abroad; and the maintaining of the initiative to shape the national economy in the hands of the state and the nation's people.

There are tremendous investment opportunities in Myanmar especially in the fields of forestry, tourism, agriculture, mining, energy, livestock breeding, fishery and industry. The ASEAN-Japan Center in Tokyo is also promoting trade, investment and tourism opportunities in Myanmar.

Myanmar pursues an active and independent foreign policy based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Since 1948, Myanmar has been a member of the United Nations. Besides, Myanmar is a member of the Nonaligned Movement as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Ayeyawady, Chao Phraya, Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). It has also established diplomatic relations with 100 countries around the world.

City of kings: Bagan, the capital of several ancient kingdoms, has 2,000 pagodas and temples.



Golden landmark: Shwedagon Pagoda, a 98-meter, gilded stupa located in Yangon, is a major tourist attraction in Myanmar.

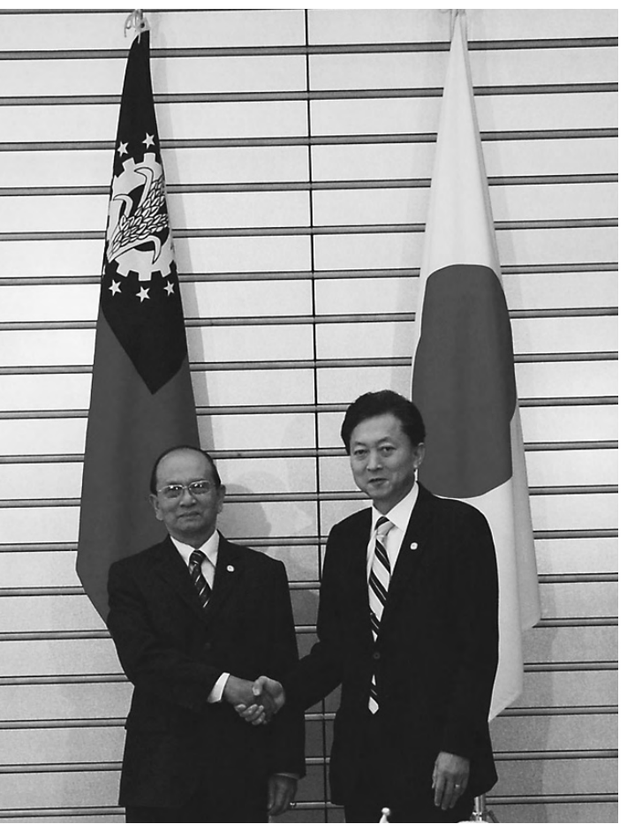
Myanmar gives special emphasis to its relation with its neighbors, cooperating closely in political, diplomatic, economic and social fields. It has joined and working diligently in organizations such as ASEAN, ACMECS and BIMSTEC for the development of the region. At the same time, it acts in concert with the family of nations, supporting and collaborating with the U.N. as well as the international community to overcome the menace of terrorism, narcotic drug trafficking and other transnational crimes.

Although Japan and Myanmar established diplomatic relations Dec. 1, 1954, the relations between our countries started from historic times. Japan played a significant role in our struggle for independence from colonial rule and the Myanmar Armed Forces at its inception was born out of military training and discipline extended by Japan. As most of the population practices Buddhism, Japan and Myanmar have many cultural and religious ties. Japanese war veterans who had been to Myanmar during World War II help the development of relations between our countries. In the postindependence era, Japan was one of the friendly countries that extended economic assistance to Myanmar in its nation-building tasks.

At present, Japan is extending assistance to Myanmar under the ASEAN+3 program, in addition to humanitarian assistance especially in the sectors of health and education. At the same time, Japan also provides technology and economic assistance to Myanmar along with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam under the program for development of the Mekong region. In the international forum, Japan has shown its understanding and support for Myanmar's efforts at democratization and national reconciliation. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the government and the people of Japan for the good will that Japan has shown toward Myanmar.

In the process of transforming Myanmar into a peaceful, modern and democratic state, Myanmar hopes to carry out mutually beneficial development projects with economic and technical assistance from Japan. Myanmar is eager to work hand in hand with Japan in promoting international peace and stability, as well as in realizing regional cooperation programs. By promoting closer cooperation and mutual understanding in the years ahead, I am fully convinced that the traditional cordial ties of friendship and cooperation between Myanmar and Japan will be consolidated.

Through the esteemed columns of The Japan Times, I would like to conclude this message with my heartfelt wishes to the government and friendly people of Japan for a happy and prosperous New Year and for the enhancement of long-standing relations between our countries in the years ahead.



Close ties: During his visit to Japan on Nov. 8, Myanmar Prime Minister Thein Sein meets Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama in Tokyo. MYANMAR EMBASSY

Greenery: The Kandawgyi National Garden in Pyin Oo Lwin maintains a variety of plants and flowers of Myanmar.

Similarities forge stronger relations

Hideo Watanabe
CHAIRMAN OF THE JAPAN-MYANMAR PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Parliamentary League, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on the 62nd anniversary of the Union of Myanmar's independence. The year before last, in May 2008, Cyclone Nargis caused the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar, but now I am relieved to learn that restoration efforts have been making steady and smooth progress. Japan should continue to provide the country with as much assistance as possible and help in stabilizing the people's living, for which I have been doing my part.

A national referendum on the establishment of a new Myanmar Constitution - a democratization procedure that is a matter of concern for the international community, including Japan - was wonderfully held under the leadership of Senior Gen. Than Shwe, chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), amid the restoration efforts. The referendum approved the new constitution, paving the way for a general election to be held in 2010, to which the entire world is looking forward. I am convinced this will make the 62nd anniversary of Myanmar's independence significantly memorable for Myanmar's government and people.

Japan and Myanmar, both essentially Buddhist countries, have many manners and customs in common. National sentiments toward each other have traditionally been good and friendly, but I wish for still better and friendlier relations to develop in the future.

Last but not least, let me express my pledge and determination that the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Parliamentary League will make more efforts to build stronger relations with the Union of Myanmar and promote good will and friendly relations between our countries.

Progress is key for Myanmar

Makoto Koga
MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

On the occasion of the 62nd anniversary of the Union of Myanmar's independence, Jan. 4, I offer my congratulations.

Although a half-century has passed since Japan and the Union of Myanmar restored diplomatic ties, cultural and economic relations between our countries have a far longer history. It appears that private-level exchanges between our nations are being carried out more actively than those at the governmental level, probably because Japan and Myanmar belong to Asia and embrace Buddhism.

For the progress of Asia, I believe that close cooperation between Japan and member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is indispensable. I wish I could do more to help the Union of Myanmar, a member of ASEAN, achieve a peaceful and stable economic progress and promote its democratization, which I think is an essential element for progress and prosperity. I will continue to do what I can for Myanmar's progress.

Congratulations
to the People of the Union of Myanmar on the 62nd Anniversary of Their Independence Day

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