

Myanmar independence day

Entering a new era, to a modern democratic nation

Khin Maung Tin
AMBASSADOR OF MYANMAR

On Jan. 4, on this auspicious occasion of the 64th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I have the great honor to convey the warmest greetings of H.E. President U Thein Sein and the people of Myanmar to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, H.E. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and the government and the great people of Japan.



I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the government and people of Myanmar, to once again express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the government and people of Japan, especially to the victims and members of the bereaved families on the tragic losses and great suffering brought about by the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that severely affected the Tohoku area on March 11. I firmly believe that the hard work and determination of the great people of Japan will be able to overcome the challenges Japan is facing now.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is made up of 135 ethnic groups in the official count.

The main national groups are the Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. About 85 percent of the people of Myanmar are Buddhist and religion plays a significant role in the daily lives of the Myanmar people. The total population is estimated at 58 million with a growth rate of 1.75 percent. Myanmar cover 676,577 sq. km, and has a coastline measuring 2,051 km. The terrain ranges from arid plains to cool, sprawling hills, ice-capped mountains, white-sand beaches, lush farmland, hidden valleys and thick virgin forests. Through Buddhist concepts the people learn to be gentle but proud, dignified yet friendly, reverent of elders, and to enjoy life fully with a spontaneous sense of humor.

Nay Pyi Taw, literally meaning "Royal Capital," was declared Myanmar's new capital on Jan. 1, 2006. It is situated 391 km from Yangon and enjoys a cool climate.

Having a glorious history, Myanmar stood tall with its own monarchs and enjoyed the sovereignty for thousands of years. But in the late Konbaung Period, our country fell under the subjugation of colonialists. However, our national brethren remained united in their struggles to liberate the nation from the colonial rule; as a result, Myanmar regained independence and its sovereignty on Jan. 4, 1948. Japan played a significant role in

our struggle for independence from British colonial rule and the Myanmar Armed Forces was born out of military training provided by Japan. In the post-independence era, Japan extended remarkable economic assistance to Myanmar in its nation-building efforts.

In November 2010, multiparty democracy general elections were held in Myanmar. Thirty-seven political parties including 19 parties from different national ethnic groups contested the general elections. Today, elected representatives are exercising their democratic rights in Hluttaw, the legislative body, to discuss issues of their state affairs.

The president, in his inaugural speech to the first regular session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (the Union Parliament) on March 30, 2011, pledged to improve and promote the socio-economic life and fundamental rights of the citizens. He also outlined the policies and objectives of the new government with a view to building a modern and democratic nation. The priorities of the new government are to achieve good governance, clean government, fundamental rights of the citizens, economic reform and conservation of the environment. Myanmar is determined to promote better standards and equitable development of its people. We believe that every change must be based on reality,

stability and systematic process.

The steps taken by the government of Myanmar are concrete and visible, ensuring that the reform process is systematic and dynamic. Myanmar has strong determination to continue implementing the democratization process amid all the challenges. The work programs will be transparent, accountable and consistent with the provisions prescribed in the constitution and the existing laws. With a view to promoting and safeguarding the fundamental rights of the citizens as prescribed in the constitution, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was formed on Sept. 5, 2011.

Myanmar had adopted a five-point rural development scheme along with two related programs from 2001 to 2010 to be able to attain the U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, a 24-region development project and border region development works were implemented with a view to narrowing the development gaps among regions and states. Thanks to such works, the poverty rate of Myanmar dropped from 32 percent in 2005 to 26 percent in 2010 according to the integrated household living condition assessment (IHLCA) jointly conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Myanmar.

With a view to improve the livelihood of the people, the Na-

tional Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Plan has been adopted and the central committee and work committees were formed to supplement the eight tasks laid down in accordance with the National Plan.

The union government offered an olive branch to all the armed ethnic groups by decreeing an announcement on Aug. 18 and some of those groups have accepted the government's offer. The president also granted amnesty on two different occasions and more than 20,000 inmates were released through the end of July. The president invited people to work together for the interests of the nation despite differences. Accordingly, he received Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Aug. 19 and had cordial and candid discussions to find out potential common ground to work together for the interests of the nation and the people, while putting aside different views.

In regard to foreign relations, Myanmar continues to pursue an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy. Based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, Myanmar always maintains friendly relations with all members of the world, especially with its neighboring countries and those in the region. Myanmar has taken an active part in the regional organizations such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), ACMECS (Ayeyawady- Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) for the all-around development of the region. At the same time, Myanmar has been participating in the U.N. as well as in the international community actively to overcome the menace of terrorism, narcotic drugs, human trafficking and other transnational crimes. As an agro-based country, Myanmar is following with keen interest the issues surrounding the effects of climate change.

Recently, the fourth GMS (Greater Mekong Subregion) Summit was successfully completed in Nay Pyi Taw on Dec. 20, 2011, and attended by the heads of the governments of the six Mekong countries: Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. We are also



Friendly ties: Myanmar President Thein Sein and Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda meet on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia, on Nov. 18. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE



Bilateral relations: Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin (second from left) holds talks with his Japanese counterpart, Koichiro Genba (second from right), in Tokyo on Oct. 21 during his visit to Japan. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN

preparing to host the 27th South-east Asian (SEA) Games in 2013 at Nay Pyi Taw, the first time in 44 years. Moreover, Myanmar was accorded the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014, which we assume as our rightful place to work together in the regional community.

Since late 1988, the economic system of Myanmar has changed from a socialist economic system to a market-oriented one. Myanmar has vast amounts of resources, including arable land, natural gas, mineral deposits, fisheries, forestry and manpower. Wood products such as

Myanmar teak and hardwood are famous in the world timber market. Well-known premium quality jade and rubies are also in Myanmar. The Foreign Investment Law was enacted in November 1988 and foreign investments are permitted since 1989/90. As of May 31, 2011, 454 enterprises from 31 countries have already been permitted to invest in Myanmar with a total amount of \$36 billion. The promising sectors for foreign investments are power, oil and gas, mining, manufacturing, hotels and tourism, real estate, livestock and fisheries, transport and telecommunications, industrial estate, agriculture, construction and other services. The Myanmar Special Economic Zone Law was enacted in January 2011. With the emergence of the SEZ law, the government designated Dawei, Thilawa and Kyaukphyu as Special Economic Zones.

There are tremendous investment opportunities in Myanmar. The ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC) and Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) are also promoting trade, investment and tourism in Myanmar. In the

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Cultural, economic advances help Japan develop ties with Myanmar

Makoto Koga
MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MYANMAR PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

I would like to express my congratulations on the 64th Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I am anticipating from my heart that the new establishment of your beautiful country will progress more than ever.

I will do my best for the advance of cultural and economic communications between Japan and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as before.

I hope for the further development of Myanmar in the future.



Union: The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw complex in Myanmar's new capital has emerged as the seat of the legislative body established by the 2008 constitution. MYANMAR EMBASSY

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
on the 64th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

Association of Japan Myanmar Mutual Cooperation (AJMMC)
Chairman: Susumu ISHII

Congratulations!

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