

Myanmar national day

Reforms work to ensure peace, stability, democracy

Khin Maung Tin,
AMBASSADOR OF MYANMAR

Jan. 4, 2015, is the 67th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. On this auspicious occasion, 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 Shinzo Abe and the government and great people of Japan.



Myanmar was governed by its own monarch and had long been a sovereign nation until the 19th century, when the country fell under colonial rule and lost its sovereignty. In 1948, Myanmar regained independence through the spirit of unity, sacrifice and national pride of all nationals during the struggle for independence. Taking the lessons of the past events, all our people are sworn to uphold our national duty: the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and the perpetuation of national sovereignty to continue standing as a sovereign state.

The government of President U Thein Sein has been undertaking unprecedented wide-ranging waves of political and economic reforms over the past 3½ years.

The first wave was the peaceful transformation from a military government to a multiparty democratic system where all political forces are working together to overcome differences through dialogue at the Hluttaws (parliament). An all-inclusive political system has been established, bringing in all stakeholders in

the process through national reconciliation. The first wave of reform has brought about national reconciliation, a series of amnesties, the creation of greater political space and the freedom of media, expression, association and peaceful assembly.

It was followed by the second wave of reform, which included an array of political, economic, administrative and private-sector development reforms.

Now, the third wave of reform has been launched and it aims at laying down a firm foundation for a new democratic state, and delivering benefits to the people by fulfilling their socioeconomic needs.

Myanmar is determined to keep the reforms on track through ensuring peace, stability and national reconciliation. Since our democracy is still in its infancy, we are facing a multitude of challenges like other countries in transition. The government is determined to overcome these challenges with its capacity to achieve its objectives. We need the understanding and continued support of the international community in our efforts for economic development and capacity building to lay a solid foundation for a democratic society.

The Union parliament set up a Constitutional Amendment Review Joint Committee last July. After soliciting suggestions and recommendations from the general public and political parties, the committee was formed to address the issue of Constitutional amendment based on the suggestions received.

The government places much emphasis and consideration on the aspirations of our entire population by putting democratic values into practice. Accordingly, we are laying the foundations to successful-



Clockwise from above, Myanmar's President U Thein Sein (right) meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Nov. 12 in Naypyitaw on the sidelines of ASEAN conferences; The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Naypyitaw is the seat of Myanmar's parliament; A coin commemorating the 60th anniversary of Myanmar-Japan diplomatic relations



ly conduct an independent, free and fair election within a legal framework without compromising national sovereignty. In this context, Myanmar recently had a visit from a Need Assessment Mission from the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations. All existing political parties are expected to take part in the elections and the final decision will be made by the people on election day.

Peace and stability is a prerequisite for the political balance and socioeconomic development of the country. Strengthening the national reconciliation is an integral part of our reform process. We are

working together with all ethnic armed groups in good faith to reach a nationwide ceasefire agreement. So far we have already reached such an agreement with 14 out of 16 groups. We are now working on a draft framework for political dialogue which will pave the way to bring an end to the six-decade long conflict. The government is serious in its commitment to the success of the peace process. It is open-minded to discuss all issues except those that could undermine the unity and sovereignty of the state. This political dialogue will also become a historic forum for the discussion of all issues of national concern. We are confident that



we are now getting closer to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The promotion and protection of human rights has been steadily progressing in Myanmar. A series of presidential amnesties have been granted, creating an enabling environment for everyone to participate in parliament, political parties, civil organizations and labour organizations. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), which was first established in 2011, has been reconstituted recently with a view to functioning as an independent entity. Many organizations, including the MNHRC, have been made available to citizens to file complaints in cases of the violation of their rights.

In this new era, the abolishment of the decades-old press censorship and the enactment of a new media law are among

the significant achievements in our media landscape.

The government of Myanmar has been focusing on poverty reduction and rural development with a view to uplifting the living standards of our people. We have achieved GDP growth rates of 5.6, 7.3 and 8.7 percent over the past three years. Myanmar is fully determined and has initiated the internal process to graduate from least-developed country status and we are now working closely with relevant U.N. agencies for the necessary technical assistance.

Regarding foreign relations, Myanmar continues to pursue an independent, active and nonaligned foreign policy. Based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, Myanmar always maintains friendly relations with all members of the world.

Myanmar took on the re-

sponsibility of the ASEAN chairmanship in 2014 and through our best and utmost efforts, the 24th and 25th ASEAN summits and related meetings were successfully carried out.

The 25th ASEAN summit, under the theme "Moving forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community," was held in Naypyitaw, from Nov. 12 to 13, 2014. The summit was attended by the heads of states and governments of ASEAN member states and the secretary-general of ASEAN. Productive discussions focused on strengthening ASEAN institutions and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving regional architecture; maintaining and enhancing ASEAN centrality; and developing the ASEAN community's post-2015 vision. Views on regional and international issues were exchanged for strengthening external rela-

tions and partnerships.

H.E. President U Thein Sein emphasized some important aspects for integration as a community with the establishment of rules and norms for ASEAN, having a strategy to promote ASEAN's central role in existing regional mechanisms, setting up sustainable economic dynamism and enhancing its resilience and competitiveness as the key factors.

Many summits, including the ASEAN-Plus Three; 9th EAS; ASEAN-Japan; 6th Mekong-Japan; ASEAN-China; ASEAN-Korea; ASEAN-India; ASEAN-U.S.; ASEAN-U.N.; ASEAN-Australia Commemorative; and other related meetings were successfully held.

In the 6th Mekong-Japan Summit, the leaders noted with deep satisfaction the significant and substantial progress made in Mekong-Japan cooperation in line with the mid-term review of "Tokyo Strategy 2012 for Mekong Japan Cooperation."

At the 17th ASEAN-Japan Summit, ASEAN leaders were satisfied with the substantive progress and achievements gained in implementing the Joint Declaration for Enhancing the ASEAN-Japan Partnership for Prospering Together, its Plan of Action 2011-2015 and the Vision Statement.

At the Japan-Myanmar Bilateral Summit, H.E. President U Thein Sein and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe discussed cooperation in health and education sectors; development of the construction sector and construction workers; enhancement of SMEs; development of the Thilawa and Dawei industrial zones; reform in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

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Myanmar national day



Located in Yangon, Shwedagon Pagoda is revered as the most sacred temple in Myanmar. EMBASSY OF MYANMAR

Building infrastructure, tourism

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Yangon City transport system; and electricity supply and development. Abe expressed his support for the democratization and peace-making process in Myanmar. He also expressed his expectations of the signing of a nationwide cease-fire agreement in the near future.

Japan's projected economic assistance to Myanmar will go to the improvement of people's livelihoods, capacity building and institutional development to sustain the economy and society and development of infrastructure and related systems necessary for sustainable economic development.

Although Japan and Myanmar established diplomatic relations on Dec. 1, 1954, relations between our two countries began long ago, having had a strong relationship also in cultural and religious ties. The year 2014 marked the 60th Anniversary of Japan-Myanmar diplomatic relations and commemorative festivals, exhibitions and cultural and music performances took place in both countries.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is officially made up of 135 ethnic groups. The main groups are the Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan.

Myanmar has vast resources,

including arable land, natural gas, mineral deposits, fisheries, forestry and manpower. We welcome investors as Myanmar is known as a land of great potential and opportunities.

The amazing sites to visit are numerous in Myanmar. Myanmar's first site added to UNESCO's World Heritage list are the Pyu ancient cities, which include the remains of the three brick-walled and moated cities of Hanlin, Beikthano and Sri Ksetra located in the vast irrigated landscapes in the dry zone of Ayeyarwady River basin. They reflect the Pyu Kingdoms that flourished over 1,000 years between 200 B.C and 900 A.D. Myanmar warmly welcomes visitors to see the picturesque beautiful places for their relaxation and pleasure.

On this auspicious occasion, it is my honor to forward my best wishes to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko for good health and happiness and to the government and great people of Japan for their success and prosperity in the years to come.

In closing, I would like to extend my sincere thanks once again to The Japan Times for giving me this excellent opportunity to address its esteemed readers.

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