

Strengthening Myanmar-Japan Friendship to the mutual benefit of both peoples

By U Soe Han

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Today marks the 74th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. On this auspicious occasion, I am pleased to extend, on behalf of the government and the people of Myanmar, our heartfelt appreciation and warm greetings to Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress, and the government and the people of Japan, for their efforts and support in maintaining and further strengthening the historic and long-lasting friendship between Myanmar and Japan.

Since after establishing diplomatic relations in November 1954, Myanmar and Japan have been enjoying cordial relations and close cooperation based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit. Strong people-to-people relations has also contributed in consolidating the long-lasting friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

The government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar sincerely congratulated the efforts of Japanese government and people in successfully hosting the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games in 2021 even under the strains of the Covid-19 pandemic. Myanmar is proud to participate in the Tokyo Olympics by sending athletes to compete in the games. We also congratulate the Japanese athletes for their talents in various kinds of sports, grabbed 58 medals including 27 golds and brought Japan to No. 3 place in international standing. The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics Games will be remembered as the first international Games in promoting friendship and rejoice for the people under the prevailing situation of Covid-19 around the world.

Myanmar Government has been exerting its utmost efforts in protecting public health and mitigating the economic impact by implementing its COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan by stimulating the economy and boosting spending on health and social safety nets.

Myanmar government highly appreciates the government and people of Japan for the technical and financial assistance, together with medical equipments, Avigan medicines, oxygen concentrators and ambulances provided to Myanmar to help support our fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. As of 3 January 2022, nearly 21 million people nationwide have been vaccinated. Myanmar government set the goal of vaccinating 75 percent of the population by the middle of 2022.

The Myanmar Investment Commission approved \$ 3.79 billion in foreign investment in the fiscal year 2020-2021. Approved FDI from Japan as of 31st October 2021 exceeds \$ 518 million. Japan is the 9th largest investor in Myanmar and the 3rd largest export market. The bilateral trade between the two countries has exceeded \$ 1.296 billion in this fiscal year. As situated in the geostrategic location in the region, Myanmar has ample room for economic growth and, as such, we hope Japan's public and private sectors will continue to invest in Myanmar.

Promoting bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and Japan bring mutual benefit to both public and private sectors. The *Thilawa* Special Economic Zone is one of the flagship projects between the two countries. I strongly believe that such cooperation programmes will highly contribute in our government's efforts to narrow the development gap between rural and urban areas.

Myanmar values highly its relations and cooperation with Japan. Therefore, as an ambassador of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Japan, I would like to express my firm commitment to further strengthen the existing friendship and cooperation both with public and private sectors of Japan to the continued benefit of our two countries and peoples.

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