

MESSAGE OF MYANMAR AMBASSADOR H.E. U HLA MYINT FOR
THE 62nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF THE UNION
OF MYANMAR

On behalf of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council His Excellency Senior General Than Shwe, the Government and the people of Myanmar, I am honoured to convey, through the esteemed columns of the Japan Times, our profound respect to Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor and Empress, 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 own monarchs in the global community since time immemorial. In late 19th century, Myanmar lost sovereignty, following the colonialist's 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 exerting bravery, tenacity and vigour launched anti-colonialist struggles sacrificing lives, blood and sweat. So, the Union of Myanmar regained independence and sovereignty. Independence is in its 62nd anniversary today.

We have learnt lessons from the historic political events that in the post-independence period, the people became disunited with conflicts between 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 property of many people.

The Tatmadaw Government (Present Government) came into existence in September 1988 according to the necessities to mend the deteriorating

situation of the nation. Apart from restoring peace and stability, the Government, 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 the unprecedented level after the post-independence period.

Today, the Government is implementing the 24 special regions development project and the rural development project, constructing more and more economic infrastructures, development of human resources and ensuring equitable development of all parts of the nations. At the same time, it is steadfastly implementing the seven-step road map and has made significant progress.

Now, the forth step, the national referendum to approve the new State Constitution, was successfully held on 10th May 2008 with the favourable vote of 92.48% percent of the over 27 million eligible voters. Preparations are well under way for the fifth step, the holding of free and fair general election in 2010. After the general elections, the sixth step, convening of the Parliaments with the representatives elected and the final step, forming the new government by the Parliaments in accordance with the Constitution will be conducted.

After independence, i.e. from 1948 to 1962, Myanmar practiced market economic system. Then, 1962 to 1988, the country was under socialist economic system. Since 1988, market-oriented economic system is adopted to encourage the development of 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. They are: development of agriculture as the base and all-round

development of other sectors of the economy as well; proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system; development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad; and the initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples.

There are tremendous investment opportunities in Myanmar especially in the fields of forestry, tourism, agriculture, mining, energy, livestock breeding and 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 co-existence. Since 1948, Myanmar is a member of the United Nations. Besides, Myanmar is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as 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.

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

Although, Japan and Myanmar established diplomatic relations on 1st December 1954, the relations between our two countries started from historic times. Japan

played a significant role in our struggle for independent from the 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 veteran, who had been to Myanmar during the World War II, help the development of relation between the two countries. In the post-independence 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, Vietnam under the program for development of the Mekong region. In the international fora, Japan has shown its understanding and support for Myanmar's efforts for democratization and national reconciliation. I would like to avail this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government and The people of Japan for the goodwill that Japan has shown towards 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 programmes. 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 heart-

felt wishes to the Government and friendly people of Japan for happy and prosperous New Year, and for the enhancement of long-standing relation between the two countries in the years ahead.