Japan will continue its efforts to further deepen its wide-ranging cooperative relationship with Myanmar

YANGON, 12 Nov—Japanese Prime Minister Mr Shinzo Abe gave an interview to the Global New Light of Myanmar. The following is the full text of the interview.—Ed

CNLM: How are relations between Myanmar and Japan?

Prime Minister Mr Shinzo Abe: This year Japan and Myanmar celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. I am pleased to have this opportunity to visit Myanmar again in this memorable year after my official visit in May last year, which was the first visit for a Japanese Prime Minister for 38 years.

President U Thein Sein also visited Japan last December in order to attend the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting, which I co-chaired. Relations between our two countries have become closer through the mutual visits of me and President U Thein Sein.

I personally feel a deep connection with Myanmar. This is because three generations of my family: my grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi; my father, former Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe; and myself have had the opportunities of visiting Myanmar and my wife, Akie, has been supporting child education in Myanmar as her research subject.

A large number of Japanese companies are now paying close attention to Myanmar. All-Japan initiatives, involving public and private sectors, are starting to make achievements in a wide range of areas, including infrastructure development in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and other locations, financial sector, communication sector and postal services.

Furthermore, the foundation of economic relations which enables our two countries to cooperate and grow together, has rapidly developed through the entry into force of the Japan-Myanmar Bilateral Investment Agreement, the granting of permission to the three Japanese banks to open branches in Myanmar by the Government of Myanmar, and the commencement of efforts aimed at the agreement of a tax convention.

Turning our attention to people-to-people exchanges, there are numerous admirers of Myanmar in Japan. Since last year, the Myanmar Festival has been held in Tokyo for the purpose of introducing Myanmar to Japanese people and expanding exchanges between the two countries. This year, approximately 59,000 people attended the festival. Recently the TV dramas and animations (anime) from Japan started broadcasting in Myanmar. This reminds me that in 1955, approximately 80 years ago, the late film director Niyi Pa, who is known as the father of cinema in Myanmar, shot the film “Japan Yen Thaw” in Japan, which enjoyed great popularity in Myanmar for several years.

Sharing our cultural values, Japan-Myanmar relations have developed and evolved day by day. This year is important not only because we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations but also because Myanmar assumes the Chair of ASEAN.

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