

Prime Minister Abe's Article contributed to three Myanmar Newspapers

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During my first official visit to Myanmar by a Japanese Prime Minister in 36 years, starting from May 24, I will exchange views with dignitaries, including President Thein Sein. In returning to Myanmar since my last visit in January of last year, I look forward to seeing with my own eyes the dramatic changes sweeping the country.

Japan and Myanmar have established a lasting and friendly bilateral relationship based on mutual trust. The fact that all three generations of my family have visited Myanmar, following the visits of my grandfather, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, and my father, Minister for Foreign Affairs Shintaro Abe, gives me a sense, at a personal level, that I am linked to Myanmar by deep ties that have been woven over the decades. With this visit, Japan strongly hopes to raise to a new height the historical bilateral relationship which has been nurtured by our forefathers, and engage in and offer cooperation in the following four areas.

First, for strengthening our bilateral relations, Japan attaches the most importance to supporting the reform efforts of Myanmar. We believe that it is essential that the current reforms aimed at democratization, national reconciliation, and economic reforms are further promoted and solidified, and that the people of Myanmar enjoy further tangible benefits. Japan will spare no effort to cooperate for the development of Myanmar that has overcome countless hardships. Japan will give its all to offer our support to Myanmar.

Second, Japan will enhance our economic relations which are rapidly gaining momentum, and aim for mutual prosperity. Japan has led the international community in announcing the cancellation of Myanmar's delinquent debt and, furthermore, in being among the first to announce the resumption of full-fledged assistance to Myanmar, including new ODA loans of around 50 billion Japanese yen. In addition, further assistance will be announced at my forthcoming meeting with President Thein Sein. Furthermore, as is evident from the fact that I am accompanied by many of Japan's top business leaders, Japanese companies are paying very close attention to Myanmar. The Japanese Government will fully support the efforts to strengthen economic relations to ensure that win-win outcomes will be brought about to both sides.

Third, in order to lay down a new foundation for Japan-Myanmar relations, it is necessary to further promote exchanges between our peoples who underpin these efforts, as well as cultural exchanges. My wife and I, on a personal level, have been engaged in work to donate elementary schools to Asian nations, including to Myanmar. At the government level as well, Japan will further promote efforts associated with "fostering people."

Lastly, through this visit, I look forward to deepening our shared understanding regarding the regional and security environment facing the two countries and to bolstering our discussion and cooperation.

There are many Myanmar fans in Japan. The two countries enjoy favorable relations. However, without being complacent about this, I will work to elevate our relations to even better relations. I hope that my visit will bring Japan-Myanmar cooperation to even higher levels and serve as an opportunity to lay down a foundation for turning a new page in history.

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