

What is happening in Burma?

What is happening in Burma? That's the question. Burma or Myanmar, as it's also known, appears to be undergoing change. In recent weeks news stories coming out of the country report there has been considerable change by the newly elected government since it took office. The most significant change was the release of Aung Sang Su Kyi from house arrest. This in itself speaks volumes. Her release to the world watching was as significant as when Nelson Mandela was released in South Africa. After decades of repression, political prisoners, people being killed by the regime etc, there appears to be change by its leaders, most of whom have crossed from old military leaders to supposedly elected leaders. Many people are still scared to talk about all this, especially those in the country. You can't blame them and for that reason it is a hot topic to discuss now.

So what else has recently been happening? India and Burma has recently announced they will expand trade ties. The two countries hope to boost trade and co-operation. India has promised Burma credit for much needed infrastructure projects and they will co-operate in oil and gas exploration and border trade. This is a stark reversal of previous Burmese policy. In another development Burma recently suspended the controversially Chinese backed Myitsone hydro-electric dam project that Burmese people strongly opposed. Meanwhile, the new military backed civilian-led government has just announced it is to allow trade unions and going on strike. Unions have not been allowed since 1962.

Western nations criticized the polls as neither free nor fair. Since then though changes have begun to happen. This includes media restrictions being relaxed and the release recently of 200 political prisoners as part of a wider amnesty. The country needs to release ALL political prisoners – there are more than 1800 locked up. Burma needs to hold proper democratic elections before the world will change its view on the country. This includes the reversal on the ban on Aung Sang Su Kyi's political party the National League for Democracy (NLD). Nobody knows whether recent events are all a trick or how long it will all last. Undeniably there is still a massive distance to go. Judging by what is now unfolding the country is slowly beginning to change. Perhaps its leaders should retire to allow much younger leaders to govern?

Category: Burma / Myanmar / Change
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Burma/Myanmar: Briefly, what three things do you know about Burma/Myanmar? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. Geography: Where is Burma/Myanmar? What is its capital? What countries surround it? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you. (Also, see page 8)

7. Burma/Myanmar: Think of five things you know about Burma/Myanmar. Then add five recent changes that have taken place. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Burma/Myanmar	Recent changes
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's think! In pairs, think of three advantages and disadvantages of the new Burmese government. Write them below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1	1
2	2
3	3

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9. **Famous people:** Look at the two famous people below. What do you know about them? Discuss in pairs/small groups.

1	Aung Sang Su Kyi	2	Nelson Mandela
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The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

10. **Let's roleplay: CNN:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *CNN TV* studio in London. Today's interview is about: *Change in Burma/Myanmar – is it fast enough.* 5-10 minutes.

1	The President of Burma	3	An opposition member in Burma
2	An ordinary person in Burma	4	Yourself

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

11. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Burma/Myanmar**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

12. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: **Burma/Myanmar**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation.

13 **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Briefly, explain the meaning of the word 'change'?
- 2) Name the countries.
- 3) What have Western countries said?
- 4) What has India promised?
- 5) What was recently suspended?

Student B

- 1) Which political party is still banned? Why?
- 2) What hasn't been allowed since 1962? Why?
- 3) Who have been released?
- 4) Name the famous people.
- 5) Name the dam.

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: '**Change in Burma/Myanmar**'

15. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The new government _____
- b) Burma/Myanmar _____
- c) Tourists _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Should the banned political party the National League for Democracy be allowed to run in the next Burmese election?
- 3) Should the ban on the political party the National League for Democracy now be instantly reversed? Explain.
- 4) Why is the President of Burma/Myanmar so frightened of Aung Sang Su Kyi?
- 5) Why did Western governments criticize the Burmese election?
- 6) Should tourists visit Burma/Myanmar?
- 7) How much influence does China have in Burma/Myanmar?
- 8) Why does the West including the USA not do more business with Burma/Myanmar?
- 9) Is there change in Burma/Myanmar?
- 10) What do you think of Aung Sang Su Kyi?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Have you learned anything from today's English lesson?
- 3) Is this a hot topic to discuss? Explain.
- 4) Would you like to visit Burma/Myanmar? Explain.
- 5) Should the Burmese government now release all its political prisoners? Explain.
- 6) What changes would you like to see in Burma?
- 7) How do you think the people of Burma/Myanmar feel right now?
- 8) Is Burma/Myanmar going forward? Explain.
- 9) Why don't all the old leaders in Burma/Myanmar all resign and let much younger people be democratically elected?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Burma/Myanmar

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Discuss the following:

20 things about Burma/Myanmar

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

What is happening in Burma?

What is happening in Burma? That's the question. Burma or Myanmar, as it's also known, appears to be undergoing (1)____. In recent weeks news stories coming out of the country report there has been considerable change by the newly elected government since it took office. The most (2)____ change was the release of Aung Sang Su Kyi from house (3)____. This in itself speaks volumes. Her release to the world watching was as significant as when Nelson Mandela was released in South Africa. After decades of repression, political (4)____, people being killed by the (5)____ etc, there appears to be change by its leaders, most of whom have crossed from old military (6)____ to supposedly elected leaders. Many people are still scared to talk about all this, especially those in the country. You can't blame them and for that reason it is a hot (7)____ to discuss now.

prisoners

arrest

leaders

topic

change

regime

significant

So what else has recently been happening? India and Burma has recently announced they will expand trade (1)____. The two countries hope to boost trade and co-operation. India has promised Burma credit for much needed infrastructure projects and they will co-operate in oil and gas exploration and border trade. This is a stark reversal of (2)____ Burmese policy. In another development Burma recently suspended the controversially Chinese backed Myitsone hydro-electric (3)____ project that Burmese people strongly opposed. Meanwhile, the new military backed (4)____-led government has just announced it is to allow trade unions and going on strike. (5)____ have not been allowed since 1962. Western nations criticized the (6)____ as neither free nor fair. Since then though changes have begun to happen. This includes media restrictions being relaxed and the release recently of 200 political prisoners as part of a wider (7)____. The country needs to release ALL political prisoners – there are more than 1800 locked up. Burma needs to hold proper democratic (8)____ before the world will change its view on the country.

unions

dam

civilian

amnesty

elections

previous

ties

polls

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

What is happening in Burma?

What is happening in Burma? _____. Burma or Myanmar, as it's also known, appears to be undergoing change. In recent weeks _____ out of the country report there has been considerable change by the newly elected government since it took office. The most significant change was the release of Aung Sang Su Kyi from house arrest. This in itself speaks volumes. Her release to the world watching _____ as when Nelson Mandela was released in South Africa. After decades of repression, political prisoners, people being killed by the regime etc, there appears to be change by its leaders, most of whom have crossed from _____ to supposedly elected leaders. Many people are still scared to talk about all this, especially those in the country. You can't blame them and for that reason it is a hot topic to discuss now.

So _____ been happening? India and Burma has recently announced they will expand trade ties. The two countries hope to boost trade and co-operation. _____ Burma credit for much needed infrastructure projects and they will co-operate in _____ and border trade. This is a stark reversal of previous Burmese policy. In another development Burma recently suspended the controversially Chinese backed Myitsone hydro-electric dam project that Burmese people strongly opposed. Meanwhile, the new military backed civilian-led government has _____ to allow trade unions and going on strike. Unions have not been allowed since 1962.

_____ criticized the polls as neither free nor fair. Since then though changes have begun to happen. This includes media restrictions being relaxed and the release recently of 200 political prisoners as part of a wider amnesty. The country needs to release ALL political prisoners – there are more than 1800 locked up. Burma needs to hold proper _____ before the world will change its view on the country. This includes the reversal on the ban on Aung Sang Su Kyi's political party the National League for Democracy (NLD). Nobody knows whether recent events are all a trick or how long it will all last. Undeniably there is still a massive distance to go. Judging by what _____ country is slowly beginning to *change*. Perhaps its leaders should retire to allow _____?

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

What is happening in Burma?

What is happening in Burma? That's the question. Burma or Myanmar, as (1)___ also known, appears to be undergoing change. In recent weeks news stories coming out of the country report there has been considerable change by the newly elected government since it took office. (2)___ most significant change was the release of Aung Sang Su Kyi from house arrest. This in itself speaks volumes. (3)___ release to the world watching was as significant as when Nelson Mandela was released in South Africa. After decades of repression, political prisoners, people being killed by the regime etc, there appears to be change by (4)___ leaders, most of whom have crossed from old military leaders to supposedly elected leaders. Many people are still scared to talk about all this, especially those in the country. (5)___ can't blame them (6)___ (7)___ that reason it is a hot topic to discuss now.

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So (1)___ else has recently been happening? India and Burma has recently announced (2)___ will expand trade ties. The two countries hope to boost trade and co-operation. India has promised Burma credit for (3)___ needed infrastructure projects and they will co-operate in oil and gas exploration and border trade. This is a stark reversal of previous Burmese policy. In another development Burma recently suspended the controversially Chinese backed Myitsone hydro-electric dam project (4)___ Burmese people strongly opposed. Meanwhile, the new military backed civilian-led government has (5)___ announced it is to allow trade unions and going on strike. Unions have not been allowed since 1962. Western nations criticized the polls as neither free nor fair. Since then (6)___ changes have begun to happen. (7)___ includes media restrictions being relaxed and the release recently of 200 political prisoners as part of a wider amnesty. The country needs to release ALL political prisoners – there are (8)___ than 1800 locked up. Burma needs to hold proper democratic elections before the world will change its view on the country.

much

they

this

though

that

more

what

just

SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	repression	11	controversially
2	meanwhile	12	announced
3	criticized	13	whom
4	development	14	government
5	though	15	undergoing
6	amnesty	16	significant
7	countries	17	regime
8	undeniably	18	exploration
9	co-operation	19	stark
10	infrastructure	20	previous

LINKS

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15289506>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15303968>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15304791>

<http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/12/change-in-myanmar-prisoner-amnesty-begins/?iref=allsearch>

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10759235

GEOGRAPHY

From page 2 – Seas=The Bay of Bengal, The Andaman Sea, Capital= Naypyidaw (formerly it was Rangoon=largest city)

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: What is happening in Burma? What is happening in Burma? That's the question. Burma or Myanmar, as it's also known, appears to be undergoing **change**. In recent weeks news stories coming out of the country report there has been considerable change by the newly elected government since it took office. The most **significant** change was the release of Aung Sang Su Kyi from house **arrest**. This in itself speaks volumes. Her release to the world watching was as significant as when Nelson Mandela was released in South Africa. After decades of repression, political **prisoners**, people being killed by the **regime** etc, there appears to be change by its leaders, most of whom have crossed from old military **leaders** to supposedly elected leaders. Many people are still scared to talk about all this, especially those in the country. You can't blame them and for that reason it is a hot **topic** to discuss now.

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