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Myanmar moves its capital city

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8 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Myanmar moves its capital city

The military leaders of Myanmar, formerly Burma, are moving the country's capital city 320 kilometers north, to the town of Pyinmana. The government has already transferred nine different departments to the new location and others will soon follow. The new administration center covers a ten-square-kilometer area and will house all government ministries. Spokesman Kyaw Hsan explained the old capital Yangon, formerly Rangoon, was just a "headquarters" after British colonial rule ended in 1948. He said Pyinmana was "the most appropriate place for the seat of a new city".

International rumors are spreading over reasons for the move. Mr. Hsan explained: "The authorities have chosen Pyinmana because it is centrally located and has quick access to all parts of the country." However, some people believe that Myanmar's military dictators fear an American Iraq-style invasion. Pyinmana is more difficult to attack than coastal Yangon. The US has called Myanmar an "outpost of tyranny". Another theory is that the military dictators are afraid of democracy. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic elections but the ruling generals have refused to accept the result.

WARM-UPS

1. MY CAPITAL: In pairs / groups, talk about the capital city of your country. Is it the best choice to be capital? What is the history of that city being capital? Are the people from the capital different from those outside the capital? Would you prefer a different city to be capital?

2. WORLD CAPITALS: Look at the capital cities below. Talk about them with your partner(s). Rank them in order of those you would most like to visit. Explain your ranking to your partner(s).

_____	Washington DC	_____	London
_____	Tokyo	_____	Jerusalem
_____	Paris	_____	Beijing
_____	Brasilia	_____	Riyadh
_____	Nairobi	_____	Papeete (Tahiti)

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Military leaders / Myanmar / Burma / government ministries / colonialism / seats / rumors / invasions / tyranny / Aung San Suu Kyi / elections / democracy

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. MYANMAR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Myanmar. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. MOVING: Do you like moving? In pairs/groups, talk about where you would move to (and why) in the situations below:

- A different room in your house
- A different part of your town/city
- A different town/city of your country
- A different country
- A different school
- A different job
- A different company
- Other

6. MYANMAR OPINIONS: Do you agree or disagree with these opinions? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. The terrible situation in Myanmar is ignored by the world.
- b. The US should invade Myanmar and arrest its military leaders.
- c. Burma is a better name than Myanmar.
- d. The world should rescue Aung San Suu Kyi. She is a true hero of democracy.
- e. Myanmar is not important enough to bother with.
- f. The UN should act on the many human rights abuses in Myanmar.
- g. Democracy will come to Myanmar. We just have to wait.
- h. The real war on terror should be focused on regimes like that in Myanmar.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Myanmar's rulers have touched the hearts of residents in the capital. T / F
- b. The former name of Myanmar is Burma. T / F
- c. A new administration center will house the new government. T / F
- d. British colonial rule ended in Myanmar in 1988. T / F
- e. Myanmar's capital has relocated to be more centrally positioned. T / F
- f. Analysts think Myanmar fears an Iraq-style invasion by the U.S. T / F
- g. The US called Myanmar a "model of good leadership". T / F
- h. Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi is Myanmar's president. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. moving | cruelty |
| b. soon | H.Q. |
| c. house | reports |
| d. headquarters | shortly |
| e. appropriate | worry |
| f. rumors | governing |
| g. located | suitable |
| h. fear | positioned |
| i. tyranny | shifting |
| j. ruling | accommodate |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. moving the country's capital city | of democracy |
| b. others will soon | ministries |
| c. house all government | ended in 1948 |
| d. British colonial rule | an "outpost of tyranny" |
| e. the most appropriate place for the | located |
| f. rumors | seat of a new city |
| g. it is centrally | elections |
| h. The US has called Myanmar | 320 kilometers north |
| i. military dictators are afraid | follow |
| j. Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic | are spreading |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Myanmar moves its capital city

The military leaders of Myanmar, _____ Burma, are moving the country's capital city 320 kilometers _____, to the town of Pyinmana. The government has already _____ nine different departments to the new location and others will soon _____. The new administration center _____ a ten-square-kilometer area and will _____ all government ministries. Spokesman Kyaw Hsan explained the old capital Yangon, formerly Rangoon, was just a "headquarters" after British colonial _____ ended in 1948. He said Pyinmana was "the most appropriate _____ for the seat of a new city".

rule
transferred
place
formerly
house
follow
north
covers

International rumors are _____ over reasons for the move. Mr. Hsan explained: "The authorities have chosen Pyinmana because it is _____ located and has quick _____ to all parts of the country." However, some people believe that Myanmar's military dictators _____ an American Iraq-style invasion. Pyinmana is more difficult to attack than _____ Yangon. The US has called Myanmar an "outpost of tyranny". Another _____ is that the military dictators are afraid of _____. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic elections but the ruling generals have refused to _____ the result.

democracy
coastal
centrally
fear
theory
spreading
accept
access

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Myanmar moves its capital city

The _____ leaders of Myanmar, formerly Burma, are moving the country's capital city 320 kilometers north, to the town of Pyinmana. The government has already _____ nine different departments to the new location and others will soon follow. The new administration center _____ a ten-square-kilometer area and will _____ all government ministries. Spokesman Kyaw Hsan explained the old capital Yangon, formerly Rangoon, was just a "headquarters" after British colonial _____ ended in 1948. He said Pyinmana was "the most appropriate place for the _____ of a new city".

International _____ are spreading over reasons for the move. Mr. Hsan explained: "The authorities have _____ Pyinmana because it is centrally located and has quick _____ to all parts of the country." However, some people believe that Myanmar's military dictators _____ an American Iraq-style invasion. Pyinmana is more difficult to attack than _____ Yangon. The US has called Myanmar an "outpost of tyranny". Another theory is that the military dictators are _____ democracy. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic elections but the ruling generals have refused to _____ the result.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'new' and 'city'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "MYANMAR" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Myanmar, democracy and human rights.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- formerly
- transferred
- follow
- house
- headquarters
- seat
- rumors
- centrally
- invasion
- coastal
- afraid
- elections

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Myanmar?
- c. What do you think of the idea of a country moving its capital city?
- d. Are you happy with your capital city or would you like a new one?
- e. What problems do you think there are when a capital city moves?
- f. Which name do you prefer, Myanmar or Burma?
- g. Do you think the capital should move back to Yangon (Rangoon) after democracy arrives in Myanmar?
- h. Why do you think George W. Bush talks about the importance of freedom but does so little to help the people of Myanmar?
- i. Do you think the United Nations should use force to bring democracy to countries like Myanmar?
- j. Do you think it's right for the US to call other countries "outposts of tyranny"?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you like moving?
- d. Do you think the capital of your country is a great city?
- e. What do you know about Myanmar?
- f. What do you know about Aung San Suu Kyi?
- g. Do you think the US or UN should invade Myanmar and remove the military leaders?
- h. What do you know about the ethnic minorities in Myanmar?
- i. What difference would democracy make to the people in Myanmar?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

NEW WORLD CAPITAL: You are members of the new “World Capital City Council”. In pairs / groups, make decisions about the new capital city. Choose from the lists below

1. TYPE OF CITY

- a. New site
- b. A city that already exists

2. CONTINENT

- a. Africa
- b. Antarctica
- c. Asia
- d. Australia (and Australasia)
- e. Europe
- f. North America
- g. South America

3. NAME

- a. Worldia
- b. Worldtown
- c. Globevski
- d. Earthton
- e. Planetville
- f. Other

4. LANGUAGE OF STREET NAMES

- a. English
- b. Latin
- c. Esperanto
- d. No language – just symbols
- e. No names – just numbers
- f. Other

5. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

- a. One representative from each world country
- b. One representative per continent
- c. Just representatives from the G8 country members
- d. Every country is leader of the council for 6 months - in order from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe
- e. Other

Change partners and compare your “World Capital City”. Give each other feedback on the choices made. Combine the best of your different proposals to form one “perfect” plan. Show your changes to your original partner / group.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Myanmar's Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since 1990. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. MY CAPITAL: Make a poster describing your choice of capital city for your country. It could be the existing capital or a different city. Make sure you explain the reasons for your choice. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: Imagine you are a citizen of Myanmar. Write a letter to the military leaders and tell them what you think of their decision to move your capital city. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. moving | shifting |
| b. soon | shortly |
| c. house | accommodate |
| d. headquarters | H.Q. |
| e. appropriate | suitable |
| f. rumors | reports |
| g. located | positioned |
| h. fear | worry |
| i. tyranny | cruelty |
| j. ruling | governing |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. moving the country's capital city | 320 kilometers north |
| b. others will soon | follow |
| c. house all government | ministries |
| d. British colonial rule | ended in 1948 |
| e. the most appropriate place for the | seat of a new city |
| f. rumors | are spreading |
| g. it is centrally | located |
| h. The US has called Myanmar | an "outpost of tyranny" |
| i. military dictators are afraid | of democracy |
| j. Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic | elections |

GAP FILL:

Myanmar moves its capital city

The military leaders of Myanmar, **formerly** Burma, are moving the country's capital city 320 kilometers **north**, to the town of Pyinmana. The government has already **transferred** nine different departments to the new location and others will soon **follow**. The new administration center **covers** a ten-square-kilometer area and will **house** all government ministries. Spokesman Kyaw Hsan explained the old capital Yangon, formerly Rangoon, was just a "headquarters" after British colonial **rule** ended in 1948. He said Pyinmana was "the most appropriate **place** for the seat of a new city".

International rumors are **spreading** over reasons for the move. Mr. Hsan explained: "The authorities have chosen Pyinmana because it is **centrally** located and has quick **access** to all parts of the country." However, some people believe that Myanmar's military dictators **fear** an American Iraq-style invasion. Pyinmana is more difficult to attack than **coastal** Yangon. The US has called Myanmar an "outpost of tyranny". Another **theory** is that the military dictators are afraid of **democracy**. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi won democratic elections but the ruling generals have refused to **accept** the result.