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**Managing Editor :** Kyaw Zwa Moe  
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**General Manager :** Mya Aye  
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(Administration/Finance)

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Must include the writer's name,  
postal address, phone, e-mail address

#### CONTACT US:

The Irrawaddy  
P.O.Box 242, CMU Post Office  
Chiang Mai 50202, Thailand

#### E-mail to:

editors@irrawaddy.org  
research@irrawaddy.org  
reporters@irrawaddy.org  
subscriptions@irrawaddy.org  
information@irrawaddy.org  
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## EDITORIAL

# Nature's Message to the Generals

1. **B**urma suffered heavily in this year's monsoon, which brought severe flooding and left tens of thousands homeless. Dozens died in floods that ravaged towns in Rangoon and Irrawaddy divisions, upper Mandalay and Sagaing divisions, southern Mon State, western Arakan State and northern Kachin State.
2. Local people say stoically that the flooding is common in the monsoon season, while the ruling generals shrug off the problem and concentrate on the important business of staying in power. Few recognize that Burma's worsening monsoons are a symptom of global warming, for environmental issues are given little attention by an unconcerned government and an uninformed public.
3. Temperatures in Burma have been rising steadily in past decades—about 0.6 degrees Celsius since the late 1970s, according to the experts. Meanwhile, the monsoon season is getting shorter but more intense.
4. While global warming is having an impact on Burma, it must also be recognized that Burmese environmental problems are international in scale. Everything is interdependent.
5. Nature is blamed for the flooding and rising temperatures, but Burma's military regime and the business people who help prop it up have contributed massively to the contamination of the country's air, soil and water.
6. Burma has around 34 million hectares of natural forest, the second-largest area in Southeast Asia after Indonesia. Over the past decades, the military government has indiscriminately cut down Burma's forests, including vast areas of teak, at the same time handing out licenses enabling its business cronies to cash in on this valuable resource.
7. Well-known environmentalist U Ohn says that although about half of Burma is covered with forest, the quality of the remaining timber is questionable. Only the best timber is taken, legally or illegally, leaving inferior trees and no mechanism in place for reforestation.
8. Although the military government declares that "systematic measures are being taken for preservation of natural resources," and despite its signature on the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gases, it has clearly never taken environmental protection seriously. Public awareness of the issue is also lacking.
9. Yet, the preservation of Burma's forests is vital in the international efforts to curb so-called "greenhouse gases," which are considered to be a major contributor to climate change.
10. Attention should be paid to the preservation of Burma's mangroves, since they absorb more carbon dioxide than any other forest types.
11. Environmentalist U Ohn once suggested in an interview with The Irrawaddy that instead of felling Burma's forests, the government should promote eco-tourism by nurturing them. He recommended several areas that he considered well suited to such a program: the Popa area in Burma's central dry zone, the forests around Inle Lake in southern Shan State, areas of northern Kachin State and western Arakan State, the mangrove forests in the Irrawaddy Delta and coral reefs in Tenasserim Division.
12. The ruling junta should listen to experts like U Ohn, not only in the interests of Burma but for the sake of the world at large. If it doesn't, we shall be witnessing even greater monsoon disasters in the future.

# Learning with The Irrawaddy 22

To accompany the September 2007 issue of The Irrawaddy magazine

Selected article: *Editorial: Nature's Message to the Generals*

## Activities to do before reading

### Activity 1 Editorials

- a) Discuss editorials.
- What is an editorial?
  - Who writes an editorial?
  - What are that person's duties?
- b) What are the similarities and differences between editorials and news articles?  
Put the words in the box into the table. (Some words can go in both columns.)

fact	persuade	inform	subjective	opinion	objective
	bias	argument	interview	research	

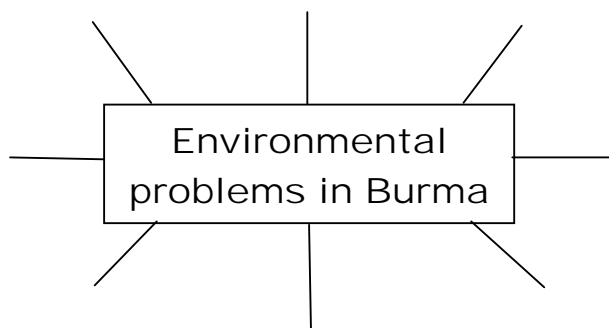
Editorials	News articles

Can you think of any other words to go in either column?

- c) What are the qualities of a good editorial?

### Activity 2 What do you know?

- a) What environmental problems does Burma have? Make a mind map.



b) What do you know about global warming? Fill in the table.

Causes	Effects	Solutions

**Activity 3** Jigsaw gap-fill

Follow the instructions given to you by your teacher.

**Activity 4** Prediction

Look at the title: 'Nature's Message to the Generals'.

- a) What do you think the article says? Be as specific as you can.
- b) Do you think the following statements are true (T) or false (F)?
1. More than 20,000 people became homeless during this year's monsoon.
  2. Half of Burma is covered in forest.
  3. 30 years ago, Burma was 6 degrees cooler than it is now.
  4. Burma has signed the Kyoto Protocol.

### Activities to do during reading

**Activity 5** Reading for gist

Skim the text, and answer the following questions.

- a) How accurate was your prediction in Activity 4 a)?
- b) What is the main argument of the article? Choose one of the summaries below.
1. The recent flooding in Burma was caused by global warming. Developed countries should change their environmental policies.
  2. The environmental situation in Burma is getting worse, and the current regime is largely responsible. They should improve their policies.
  3. The Burmese generals are damaging the world's environment. They owe it to other countries to improve their policies.
  4. Reducing deforestation is the best way of fighting global warming. The Burmese government should encourage eco-tourism.

c) Match the summaries below with paragraphs in the article.

1. In order to prevent even worse flooding, the Burmese government should take the advice of environmentalists.
2. Burmese businesses and the government, not just nature, caused the recent floods and warming.
3. Burma has a lot of forest, but the government and businesses are destroying it very quickly.

### **Activity 6** Dictionary work

What do these words mean?

monsoon

timber

ravage

inferior

intense

mangrove

contamination

coral reefs

hectare

nurture

vast

disaster

### **Activity 7** Root words

a) What are the roots of the following words?

reforestation

southern

international

illegally

b) What do the following words mean? What part of speech are they?

concern

inform

depend

able

question

system

preserve

c) Find words in the text that derive from the root words in b).

Can you figure out their meaning? What part of speech are they?

d) Mark the stress on the words in b), both the roots and the derived words.

What do you notice?

## Activity 8 Vocabulary in context

Find the words and phrases on the left in the article and try to figure out their meaning. Match them with the definitions on the right.

The number of the paragraph in which the word appears is in square brackets: [...].

1. tens of thousands (n) [1]	(a) hugely; a very big amount
2. steadily (adv) [3]	(b) a system or way of doing something
3. prop it up (v) [5]	(c) not being there; not being enough
4. massively (adv) [5]	(d) to take advantage of; to make money from
5. licenses (n) [6]	(e) to support it
6. cash in on (v) [6]	(f) holidays where tourists learn about and enjoy nature, and do no harm to the environment
7. mechanism (n) [7]	(g) in order to help; for the benefit of
8. measures (n) [8]	(h) between 20,000 and 90,000
9. lacking (v) [8]	(i) to reduce
10. curb (v) [9]	(j) official papers showing you have permission to do something
11. felling (v) [11]	(k) gradually; at a slow, unchanging speed
12. eco-tourism (n) [11]	(l) cutting down
13. for the sake of [12]	(m) official actions done for a special reason

### GLOBAL WARMING (Student A)

Global warming is (1)\_\_\_\_\_. Over the last century, the average temperature of the earth has increased by 0.6 degrees Celsius. This is caused by (3)\_\_\_\_\_, especially carbon dioxide. These gases keep heat from the sun next to the earth so it cannot escape back into space. The main cause of the increase is our burning of carbon-based fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and natural gas. (5)\_\_\_\_\_ causes about one third (33%) of the warming. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, so the fewer trees there are, the more carbon dioxide stays in the air.

Scientists believe the average temperature of the earth will rise by (7)\_\_\_\_\_ by 2100. This could have a severe impact on life on earth. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves and hurricanes will become more frequent. Many species of plants and animals will become extinct. Diseases such as malaria and dengue will become more common.

To prevent this happening, it is vital to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the air. To do this, we must (9)\_\_\_\_\_, such as nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, solar and wave power, and reduce deforestation. Most countries in the world have signed the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement made in 1997 to reduce production of greenhouse gases. However, many countries are not following it.

### Activity 9 Fill the gaps

Fill the gaps with words and phrases from Activities 3, 6, 7 and 8.

1. Russia is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_. It's the biggest country in the world.
2. I want to cut down some trees so I can use the \_\_\_\_\_ to build a new house.
3. Your boyfriend is \_\_\_\_\_ to mine. Mine is much better-looking and has a bigger car.
4. My cousins were fined by the police because they didn't have driving \_\_\_\_\_.
5. It is \_\_\_\_\_ to study hard if you want to pass your exams.
6. Some people were really worried about Katie's illness, but I was \_\_\_\_\_ because I don't care if she dies.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ of our drinking water by chemicals from the factory really concerns me.
8. We should try to prevent global warming \_\_\_\_\_ our children.
9. We need to take some \_\_\_\_\_ to stop cheating in exams.
10. He won the debate because I was completely \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't know anything about the situation.

### Activity 10 Reading for detail

- a) Check your predictions in Activity 4 b). How many did you get right?
- b) Are these statements true or false, according to the article?  
If false, write a correct sentence. If the article doesn't say, write *Don't know*.

e.g. Thousands of people died in Burma during this year's monsoon.

*False. Dozens of people died in the monsoon.*

1. Flooding often happens in Burma during the monsoon season.
2. This year's floods were the worst ever in Burma.
3. Burma's monsoons are becoming shorter and weaker.
4. Burma's environment is connected to the rest of the world's.
5. There are about 340,000 square kilometres of natural forest in Burma.
6. Preserving Burma's forests is necessary to fight global warming.
7. America is the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases.
8. The government said we should take care of Burma's forests so they can be used for tourism.

c) Answer the following questions.

1. Who has cut down the forests?
2. Why is it especially important to protect mangroves?
3. What causes of global warming are mentioned in the article?
4. What effects are mentioned?
5. What solutions are mentioned?

### Activities to do after reading

#### **Activity 11** Think for yourself

- a) Why do you think the Burmese government isn't doing enough to protect the environment?
- b) Why do you think the Burmese public doesn't know much about the environmental problems?
- c) Do you think the problems will get better or worse in the future?

#### **Activity 12** Quiz

How much can you remember without looking back at the article or the Global Warming text?

#### **Activity 13** Vocabulary

- a) Can you remember exactly how these words were used in the article?

e.g. steadily     *Temperatures in Burma have been rising steadily in past decades...*

1. uninformed
2. severe
3. scale
4. interdependent
5. questionable

- b) Write your own sentences using these words and phrases.

1. lacking
2. preservation
3. vital
4. for the sake of
5. disasters

### **Activity 14**   **Evaluation**

Evaluate the article. How good is it?

You should think about these questions:

- Does the article have all the qualities of a good editorial from Activity 1 c)?
- Does it give interesting, useful and relevant information?
- Does it leave out any important information?
- Does it use facts to support its argument?
- Does it make any questionable claims or suggestions?
- Is it well-structured? (E.g. Are any paragraphs out of place?)
- How could it be improved?

### **Activity 15**   **Letter**

Write a letter to Than Shwe. Try to persuade him to do more to protect the environment and combat global warming. Use evidence to support your argument, and use some of the new vocabulary from these worksheets.

### **Activity 16**   **Poster presentation**

Make a poster about one aspect of global warming, and present it to the class.

### **Activity 17**   **Speech**

Imagine you are U Ohn. Make a speech to the Burmese generals trying to persuade them to protect the environment and combat global warming.

### **Activity 18**   **Project**

Follow instructions from your teacher.

#### **GLOBAL WARMING (Student B)**

Global warming is the increase in the temperature of the earth. Over the last century, the average temperature of the earth has increased by (2)\_\_\_\_\_. This is caused by the increase in 'greenhouse gases' in the air, especially carbon dioxide. These gases keep heat from the sun next to the earth so it cannot escape back into space. The main cause of the increase is (4)\_\_\_\_\_, such as coal, oil and natural gas. Deforestation causes about one third (33%) of the warming. Trees absorb (6)\_\_\_\_\_, so the fewer trees there are, the more carbon dioxide stays in the air.

Scientists believe the average temperature of the earth will rise by 1.4 to 5.8 degrees between now and 2100. This could have a severe impact on life on earth. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves and hurricanes will become more frequent. Many species of plants and animals will (8)\_\_\_\_\_. Diseases such as malaria and dengue will become more common.

To prevent this happening, it is vital to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the air. To do this, we must reduce our energy use, use alternative energy such as nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, solar and wave power, and reduce deforestation. Most countries in the world have signed the (10)\_\_\_\_\_, an agreement made in 1997 to reduce production of greenhouse gases. However, many countries are not following it.