

Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 23

To accompany the **October 2007** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *Letting Go of the Tiger's Tail*, pages 2-3

TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the twenty-third issue of 'Learning with the Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to the Irrawaddy Magazine. It is designed for reading/writing, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. You can teach this to learners with good pre-intermediate or intermediate English.

In this issue we have included:

- ★ this teacher's guide
- ★ some copies of the Irrawaddy magazine
- ★ a class set of photocopies of the article
- ★ a class set of worksheets.

A. Activities before reading

Activity 1 Brainstorm

Before you give out copies of the article, write the title of the article, "*Letting Go of the Tiger's Tail*" on the board. Tell the students that the article has something to do with Burma. The tiger and someone holding the tiger's tail are symbols for something.

Elicit suggestions from the class about the possible topic and content of the article and what the symbols might be. Write everyone's ideas on the board. *The tiger symbolizes Burma and the person holding the tiger's tail is the junta leader Than Shwe.*

Ask learners about some other symbols they may know (animals that symbolize countries, colours that can symbolize love, peace, etc).

Activity 2 Metaphors

a.) Read the definition of metaphor together and see if the students know of any other metaphors in English.

b.) Have students complete the matching exercise.

Answers: 1. *d.* 2. *e.* 3. *a.* 4. *b.* 5. *c.*

Activity 3 Create your own metaphors

Have students work in pairs to create their own metaphors with the examples given.

B. Activities during reading

Activity 4 Match the vocabulary

a) Learners go through the article and underline words they don't understand. Allow them to use dictionaries if they like, but don't let them spend too much time on this.

b) Learners match the words and definitions.

Answers: 1. *f.* 2. *h.* 3. *g.* 4. *b.* 5. *j.* 6. *c.* 7. *d.* 8. *i.* 9. *a.* 10. *e.*

Activity 5 Gap fill

Learners fill the gaps with the words from **b**.

Answers:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. reluctant | 6. hijacked |
| 2. brutality | 7. infuriated |
| 3. tangible | 8. blunder |
| 4. cronies | 9. unleashed |
| 5. manhandled | 10. legitimacy |

Activity 6 Phrases in context

Learners find the example in the article, and identify the best definition or synonym of the underlined phrases.

Answers: 1. *d.* 2. *b.* 3. *c.* 4. *b.* 5. *a.*

Activity 7 Comprehension

a) These questions all have one clear answer, easily identifiable from the article.

Answers:

1. The 88 Generation Students group staged a march in Rangoon on August 19th.
2. Four hundred activists were arrested in Rangoon on August 19th.
3. On September 5th in Pakokku the monks were manhandled and brutally beaten by the authorities.
4. The "Metta Sutta" are the Buddha's words on loving kindness.
5. The tiger's tail is currently being held by junta leader Snr Gen Than Shwe and his cronies.

b) These questions require longer answers, explained in learners' own words. Check that they understand the main points in these questions and answers.

Possible answers:

1. The three signals the monks sent to the outside world were: 1. They marched to religious pagodas not to public buildings. 2. They marched to the Chinese Embassy and chanted the "Metta Sutta" and 3. They marched to the home of Aung San Suu Kyi.

2. The monks marched to the religious pagodas to claim the highest moral ground and make it harder for the military to intervene. They marched to the Chinese Embassy to send a signal to those who support the junta and when Aung San Suu Kyi appeared with them it was a symbol of her unification with the monks.
3. Burma's neighbours are reluctant to support moves towards political change and democracy.
4. The UN and the West have adopted a policy of "closely watching" events in Burma.
5. Some effects of the monks leading the protests are: the confidence of the regime has been shaken, there is new energy injected into the opposition movement, the outside world has become more aware of the brutality of the regime in Burma, the regime has lost respect on both a national and international level due to the harsh treatment of the monks.

Activity 8 **Timeline**

See attached timeline from Wikipedia for a more detailed account of the events from August 15 to October 15. Have students draw a timeline and leave big spaces on the line. They can fill in some information from the article-and then the teacher can do a listening activity by adding some of the events that are listed on the attached timeline.

Possible answers from only reading the article:

1. 1962-Gen Ne Win stages a military coup.
2. 1988- student uprising in Burma.
3. August 19th 2007- Students stage a march in Rangoon.
4. August 2007-400 activists arrested
5. September 5th 2007- Monks in Pakokku protest and then are beaten by the authorities.
6. September 2007- Monks march to religious pagodas.
7. September 2007-Monks march to the Chinese Embassy to chant the "Metta Sutta".
8. September 2007-Monks march to Aung San Suu Kyi's home-she appears before them.
9. October 2007-military crackdown on protesters.

C. Activities after reading

Activity 9 **Diary**

This might be a good homework exercise or you could ask students to do it in the class. Make sure they understand that the diary is only for ONE day. Prompt ideas by asking them a few questions like:

What do you think the feeling on the streets of Rangoon was like during the days of the protests?

What kinds of things would you have seen if you were there?

What would you have heard?

Brainstorm vocabulary together on the board before the students write their diary entry. Perhaps have headings such as Sights-Sounds-Smells-Feelings and try to generate as many words as possible for each column.

Activity 10 **Solutions from inside Burma. Suggestions to the International Community.**

Part 1-Solutions from Inside Burma

Put students in groups of 4 or 5. Tell them they are to imagine that they are a group of community leaders who have been involved in the recent protests. In their groups they should make a list of ideas on how to continue the protest movement in spite of the current military crackdown. Tell them to be as creative as possible-even if some solutions seem to be unrealistic-they should still try and generate as many solutions as possible. Groups present their solutions-discussion can follow as to which solutions are particularly practical.

Part 2-Suggestions to the International Community

The article mentions some of the current policies of the international community towards Burma. Have the students look through the last few paragraphs of the article to find what the UN, the West and Burma's neighbors are doing about the current situation. Write the things they are doing on the board ("wait and see", closely watching, reluctant to support moves towards political change and democracy because of Burma's resources, etc). Now have students get in groups and think about what they would suggest to the international community about how to help with the current situation in Burma.

Activity 11 **Letter to the media**

Put students into pairs. Have them write their own letters to a world newspaper about the protests and the current situation in Burma. What do the students want the world to know about what is happening in Burma?

Activity 12 **Poster**

Put students in pairs. Give them a large piece of paper (if you don't have this, ask them to stick small pieces of paper together). Give them one lesson to design their poster. Ask each pair in turn to come to the front, show their poster and explain it. After each presentation ask the class if they have any questions about the poster. Hang the posters around the classroom.

2007 Burmese anti-government protests

Timeline

August 15 – Fuel price increased

The Burmese government removed subsidies on fuel causing a rapid increase in prices. The government raised prices of fuel from about \$1.40 to \$2.80 a gallon, and boosted the price of natural gas by about 500 percent. This increase in fuel prices led to an increase in food prices.

August 19

In response to the increase in fuel prices, citizens protested in demonstrations beginning. In response to the protests, the government began arresting and beating demonstrators. The government arrested 13 prominent Burmese dissidents .

September 5

Burmese troops broke up a peaceful demonstration in Pakokku and injured three monks. The next day, other monks later took government officials as hostages in retaliation. They demanded an apology by the deadline of September 17, but the military refused to apologize. This sparked protests involving increasing numbers of monks. After these events, protests began spreading across Burma, including Yangon, Sittwe, Pakokku and Mandalay.

September 22

Around two thousand monks marched through Yangon and ten thousand through Mandalay, with other demonstrations in five townships across Burma. Those marching through the capital were allowed to pass the house of Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Although still under house arrest, Suu Kyi made a brief public appearance at the gate of her residence to accept the blessings of the Buddhist monks.

September 23,

150 nuns joined the protests in Yangon. On that day, some 15,000 Buddhist monks and laymen marched through the streets of Yangon in the sixth day of peaceful protests against the Burmese military regime.

September 24

Between 30,000 and 100,000 people demonstrated in Yangon, making the event the largest Burmese anti-government protest in twenty years. The BBC reported that two locally well-known actors, comedian Zargana and film star Kyaw Thu, went to Yangon's golden Shwedagon Pagoda early on Monday to offer food and water to the monks before they started their march. The marches occurred at the same time in at least 25 cities across Burma, with columns of monks stretching up to 1 km. At the end of the march, approximately 1,000 monks arrived to greet Aung San Suu Kyi's home but were denied access by police. They chanted prayers before peacefully moving off. Later that day, the military junta's Minister for Religion, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, warned the Buddhist monks leading the protests not to go beyond their "rules and regulations".

September 25

The junta threatened demonstrators with military force and placed army trucks at Shwedagon Pagoda, the assembly point for monks leading the protests. Witnesses said 5,000 monks and laypeople still marched into the Shwedagon. Civilians were forming a human shield around the monks; Vehicles mounted with loudspeakers toured central Yangon, blaring warnings of military action. Reuters reported that the detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi had been moved

to the Insein prison on Sunday, a day after she appeared in front of her house to greet marching monks.

September 26

Burma's junta imposed dusk-till-dawn curfews on the country's two largest cities of Yangon and Mandalay. Additionally, gatherings of more than five people were prohibited. Meanwhile, truckloads of armed soldiers and riot police were sent into Yangon.

September 26

Pro-democracy figure Win Naing was arrested at his home in Yangon after being seen providing food and water to the protesting monks but was released from jail after one night. Troops barricaded Shwedagon Pagoda and attacked a group of 700 protesters with batons and tear gas.

September 27

The junta security forces began raiding monasteries across the country to quell the protests, arresting at least 200 monks in Yangon and 500 more in the northeast. As the day moved on, by some accounts there were 50,000 protesters in Yangon. In the evening, the Burmese state television reported that nine people had been killed in a crackdown on pro-democracy protestors in Yangon. It added that eleven demonstrators and 31 soldiers had been injured. The United Nations' special envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, was allowed into the country after the Burmese authorities bowed to international pressure.

September 28

Yangon was unusually empty as people were afraid of violent reprisals from the army. The Burmese government cut off Internet access. Troops beat people caught carrying cameras.

September 29

The BBC reported that several hundred people gathered in Yangon and that eyewitness reports said demonstrators were surrounded by security forces. United Nations Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari arrived in Yangon and was due to fly immediately to Naypyidaw to talk with the junta generals. Approximately 5,000 people gathered to demonstrate in Mandalay. The military forced monks from outside Mandalay to return to their native towns, the military kept the homes of NLD Party leaders under guard.

The largest demonstration in the country at Kyaukpadaung, Mandalay Division, numbered about 30,000 and was led by around 1,000 monks. The demonstrators marched peacefully despite heavy presence by security forces and military troops. Some 10,000 farmers in Wra Ma, 30 miles north of Taungup, southern Rakhine State, were reported to have joined hands to protest against the government. The demonstrators are said to have been angry at the government's action against monks in Yangon.

September 30

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari was at last allowed to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. The two spoke for 90 minutes at the State guest house in Yangon after Gambari returned from talks with the junta in the more remote capital of Naypyidaw. Gambari met with acting Prime Minister Thein Sein, Culture Minister Khin Aung Myint and Information Minister Kyaw Hsan, but was not given audience with senior general Than Shwe.

October 1

The barricades around the Shwedagon Pagoda were removed, but soldiers were still stationed at the four entrances.

5,000 protesters are reported to have gathered in the town of Man Aung, Rakhine State, in the morning. At 9 a.m. they marched while holding two banners displaying their demands; for the release of all political prisoners, a reduction in commodity prices, and national reconciliation.

October 2

Ibrahim Gambari met with Aung San Suu Kyi for a second time, just hours after returning from talks with Than Shwe in Naypyidaw, where he conveyed concerns over the violent crackdown.

October 3

Riot police and soldiers scoured Yangon with photographs to identify and arrest participants in last week's protests. Yangon was still patrolled day and night, and troops were still stationed at major road junctions and places like the Sule pagoda, the report states.

October 4

Another report from the BBC stated that up to 10,000 people, many of them monks who led the protests, had been "rounded up for interrogation in recent days". United States diplomats who visited 15 monasteries found them empty, while others were being barricaded and guarded by soldiers, the report said.

October 5

The opposition rejected the junta's conditional offer of talks with Aung San Suu Kyi. Shari Villarosa, the United States top diplomat in Burma, has been invited to talk with the military leaders. After meeting with many of the parties involved Ibrahim Gambari returned to New York and briefed the Security Council about his visit.

October 8

Yangon residents were reported to be "keeping up a low-key resistance", harassing troops by tossing rocks at them. In response, security forces detained some of the rock throwers.

October 9

Ye Min Tun, a foreign ministry official for ten years, told the BBC how "appalling" treatment of Buddhist monks during last month's protests forced him to resign from the military regime. Asked whether he thought the pro-democracy movement was now finished, the diplomat said: "I think it's not the end. I think it's just the beginning of the revolution."

October 10

There were reports that a member of the National League for Democracy, named Win Shwe, 42, died during interrogation in the central Burma region of Sagaing. Sources are claiming that five military generals and more than 400 soldiers of Sikai Division near Mandalay have been jailed for refusing to shoot and beat monks and civilians during the protests. Many civil servants are also staying away from work to show their disapproval of the junta's action.

October 12

Military rulers arrested what is thought to be the last four known leaders, part of the "88 Students Generation" activists of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising. concern for their safety and for others still being held.

October 15

Gambari arrived in Thailand and issued a statement describing the latest arrests in Yangon as "counter to the spirit of mutual engagement" between the UN and Burma. The EU announced an agreement for further sanctions against the military junta.