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## Interesting Facts about Myanmar - Geography, Polity, National Flag

Hey aspirant, welcome back to our captivating “**Know your Country**” series. This time, we invite you to join on an exploration of the remarkable country Myanmar. **Myanmar** is the largest country by area in Mainland Southeast Asia and has a population of about 55 million.

**Myanmar** is known as **Burma**, is a country in Southeast Asia. In the 9th century, the Bamar people entered the upper Irrawaddy valley, and following the establishment of the Pagan kingdom in the 1050s, the Burmese language, culture, and Theravada Buddhism slowly became dominant in the country.

Early civilizations in the area included the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Pyu city-states in Upper Myanmar and the Mon kingdoms in Lower Myanmar. Myanmar and briefly controlled Manipur and Assam as well. Myanmar was reconquered by the Allies.

Now steeped in the history of the Myanmar. The region that is now Myanmar has been inhabited since the United Nations and several other organizations have reported consistent and systemic human rights violations in the country. In 2011, the military junta was officially dissolved following a 2010 general election, and a nominally civilian government was installed. Before looking at different aspects, one must know the country symbols of the particular country. The country symbols of Myanmar are:

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Myanmar	
<b>Official Name</b>	Republic of the union of Myanmar
<b>Capital</b>	Nay pyi Taw
<b>Continent</b>	Asia
<b>President</b>	Myint Swe
<b>Prime Minister</b>	Min Aung Hlaing
<b>Currency</b>	Kyat
<b>Language</b>	Burmese
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity.
<b>National Flag</b>	
<b>National Anthem</b>	Saung Gauk
<b>National Game</b>	Chinlone
<b>National Bird</b>	The Green Peafowl (Daung)
<b>National Tree</b>	Padauk Tree

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[Source: Britannica]

So now, let's move on the first aspect of the blog i.e. **History of Myanmar**.

## History of Myanmar

Before, further knowing the History of Myanmar you have to know that the Myanmar has pre history and indigenous history. The history of Myanmar covers the period from the time of first-known human settlements 13,000 years ago to the present day.

### Ancient and Early Medieval Period:

However, the earliest inhabitants of recorded history were a Tibeto-Burman-speaking people who established the Pyu city-states ranged as far south as Pyay and adopted Theravada Buddhism. Another group, the Bamar people, entered the upper Irrawaddy valley in the early 9th century. They went on to establish the Pagan Kingdom (1044–1297), the first-ever unification of the Irrawaddy valley and its periphery.

### Medieval period:

Eighth-century Chinese records identify 18 Pyu states throughout the Irrawaddy valley, and describe the Pyu as a humane and peaceful people to whom war was virtually unknown and who wore silk cotton instead of actually silk so that they would not have to kill silkworms. While Pyu settlements remained in Upper Burma until the advent of the Pagan Empire in the mid 11th century, the Pyu gradually were absorbed into the expanding Burman kingdom of Pagan in the next four centuries. The Pyu language still existed until the late 12th century. By the 13th century, the Pyu had assumed Bamar ethnicity. The histories/legends of the Pyu were also incorporated to those of the Bamars.



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### Colonial period:

According to the colonial era scholarship, as early as the 6th century, another people called the Mon began to enter the present-day Lower Burma from the Mon kingdoms of Haribhunjaya and Dvaravati in modern-day Thailand. By the mid 9th century, the Mon had founded at least two small kingdoms (or large city-states) centered around Bago and Thaton. The earliest external reference to a Mon kingdom in Lower Burma was in 844–848 by Arab geographers.



[Source: Wikipedia]

However, the overextended empire unraveled soon after Bayinnaung's death in 1581. Siam broke away in 1584 and went to war with Burma until 1605. By 1597, the kingdom had lost all its possessions, including Taungoo, the ancestral home of the dynasty. In 1599, the Arakanese forces aided by Portuguese mercenaries, and in alliance with the rebellious Taungoo forces, sacked Pegu.

### Independence and Beyond:

Despite being a tumultuous time for Myanmar, the Taungoo expansions increased the international reach of the nation. Newly rich merchants from Myanmar traded as far as the Rajahnate of Cebu in the Philippines where they sold Burmese Sugar (sarkara) for Cebuano gold. Filipinos also had merchant communities in Myanmar, historian William Henry Scott, quoting the Portuguese manuscript Summa Orientalis, noted that Mottama in Burma (Myanmar) had a large presence of merchants from Mindanao, Philippines.

Before going further we will get discuss about the events of the country.

### Here is the timeline of some key events in China history:



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- **1287:** Mongols under Kublai Khan conquer Pagan.
- **1531:** Toungoo dynasty, with Portuguese help, reunites country as Burma.
- **1755:** Alaungpaya founds the Konbaung dynasty.
- **1937:** Britain separates Burma from India and makes it a crown colony.
- **1948:** Burma becomes independent with U Nu as prime minister.
- **1962:** U Nu's faction ousted in military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who abolishes the federal system and inaugurates "the Burmese Way to Socialism".
- **1982:** Law designating people of non-indigenous background as "associate citizens" in effect bars such people from public office.
- **1987:** Currency devaluation wipes out many people's savings and triggers anti-government riots.
- **1990:** Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) wins landslide victory.
- **1991:** Aung San Suu Kyi awarded Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to peaceful change.
- **1997:** Burma admitted to Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean); Slorc renamed State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)
- **2003:** Khin Nyunt becomes prime minister. He proposes to hold convention in 2004 on drafting new constitution as part of "road map" to democracy.
- **2010:** Government changes country's flag, national anthem and official name.
- **2014:** At least 22 people are killed in fighting between government troops and ethnic Kachin rebels.
- **2017:** The United Nations human rights council decides to set up an investigation into alleged human rights abuses by the army against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

The timeline showcases Myanmar as a rich and diverse history in a simple way. Let's move on to the next aspect of this blog i.e. **Geographical Aspects**.

## Geographical Aspects of Myanmar

It is located between Bangladesh and Thailand with India and China to the north. Myanmar is a land of hills and valleys. It is also a land of mountains with ranges in the north, east and west parts of the country. The three main mountain ranges are the Arakan Yoma Range, the Bago Yoma Range and the Shan Plateau. Myanmar is the north western most country of mainland Southeast Asia located on the Indochinese peninsula. With an area of 261,228 sq mi (676,578 sq km), it is the second largest country in Southeast Asia and the largest on mainland Southeast Asia.

### Physiographic Aspects:

Myanmar's mountains create five distinct physiographic regions. The Northern Mountains are characterized by complex ranges centered on the eastern ends of coastal plane. Myanmar has a land border totaling 4,053 miles (6,523 km) bordering five countries and encompassing a total land area of 261,228 square miles (676,580 km<sup>2</sup>).

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### Demographical Aspects:

People who were out of the country at the time of the census are not included in these figures. The provisional census results indicated that there were 10,889,348 households in Myanmar. On average, 4.4 people lived in each household in the country. The most prominent group, the Bamars, make up 68 percent of the population. Other ethnic groups include the Shan, Karen, Mon, Chinese, Indian, and Rohingya. About 89 percent of the population is Buddhist, with small proportions of Christians and Muslim both 4 percent of the population.



[Source: Britannica]

The Provisional results of the 2014 census show that the total population of Myanmar is 51,419,42 a population well below the official estimates of more than 60 million. This total population includes 50,213,067 persons counted during the census and an estimated 1,206,353 persons in parts of northern Rakhine State, Kachin State and Kayin State who were not counted. More females (51.8%) were counted than males (48.2%). The second is the social acceptability of celibacy among the Burmese, who are predominantly Buddhist and value celibacy as a means of spiritual development

### Climate and Weather:

Myanmar's climate is characterized as a tropical monsoon climate, influenced by its proximity to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. The country experiences three distinct seasons:

- 1. Cool Season (November to February):** This period brings relatively dry and mild weather, with average temperatures ranging from 20°C to 25°C. It's a pleasant time to visit Myanmar, with clear skies and comfortable temperatures.
- 2. Hot Season (March to May):** Temperatures rise significantly during this season, reaching up to 35°C in some areas. The weather is generally dry, but occasional thunderstorms can occur.
- 3. Rainy Season (June to October):** The southwest monsoon brings heavy rainfall to most parts of Myanmar during this period. The average rainfall can exceed 5,000 mm in coastal regions and mountainous areas.



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Due to variations in altitude and topography, Myanmar's climate varies across different regions. The coastal areas and lowlands experience a more pronounced tropical climate, while the mountainous regions in the north and east have cooler temperatures and higher rainfall.

Here's a breakdown of the climate in different regions:

- **Central Myanmar:** This region experiences a typical tropical monsoon climate, with distinct wet and dry seasons. Temperatures range from 20°C to 35°C throughout the year.
- **Coastal Areas:** The coastal regions, including Yangon and the delta areas, experience high humidity and abundant rainfall during the monsoon season. Temperatures remain warm throughout the year, averaging between 25°C and 33°C.
- **Mountainous Regions:** The mountainous areas in the north and east, such as Shan State and Kachin State, have a more temperate climate due to higher altitudes. Temperatures are generally cooler, ranging from 15°C to 25°C, and rainfall is more abundant.

Myanmar's diverse climate offers a range of experiences for travelers, from exploring ancient temples under clear skies during the cool season to witnessing the lush greenery of the rainy season. Understanding the seasonal variations can help plan your trip accordingly.

## Soil and Vegetation:

The vegetation of Myanmar can be broadly categorized into six major types: tropical evergreen forest, mainly distributed in the southeast and southwest; subtropical evergreen forest, mainly distributed in the north and west; semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forests, mainly distributed in the east and north. Vegetation is an assemblage of plant species and the ground cover they provide. It is a general term, without specific reference to particular taxa, life forms, structure, spatial extent, or any other specific botanical or geographic characteristics.

There are about 24 soil types in Myanmar which are dictated by soil-forming factors such as rainfall, parent rocks, and topography and land forms. However, only three main soil groups are recognized as agriculturally important: alluvial, black and red laterite soils. It is located between Bangladesh and Thailand with India and China to the north. Myanmar is a land of hills and valleys. It is also a land of mountains with ranges in the north, east and west parts of the country.



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[Source: Wikipedia]

Now, let us look upon the **political aspects of Myanmar**.

## Political Aspects of Myanmar

Democracy was suspended in the country following a coup in 1962. The uncertainty and chaos paved the way for a Burmese nationalist government to take over. From 1962 to 1988, the country was ruled by the Burma Socialist Programmed Party as a one-party state guided by the Burmese Way to Socialism.

The movement of people across the border caused by the colonization added a large group of Hindu followers to the mix. The strenuous conversion campaigns by the Catholic Christians and their competition with the Methodist colonialists additionally divided minority groups such as the Karen and Kachin within themselves. The colonial departure unleashed the animosity that has been building towards one other.

### Parliamentary house:

On 15 March 2016, the Assembly of the Union elected Htin Kyaw as the 9th president of Myanmar. He resigned on 21 March 2018 and Myint Swe became acting. Rohingya insurgents have been fighting against local government forces and other insurgent groups in northern Rakhine State since 1948, with ongoing religious violence between the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas and the Buddhist Rakhines fuelling the conflict.

- **Legislature:** The Pyithu Hluttaw is the lower house of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, with seats accorded to each of the 330 townships in the country. Of the 440 seats in this body, 330 are directly elected and 110 are military appointees nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services.
- **Executive:** The president appoints the cabinet, nominates judges, is the commander-in-chief of armed forces. Myanmar's current President, Win Myint, was not elected by the general populace but was chosen by the members of the Parliament. This unique political structure is due to Myanmar's constitution, which prevents anyone with a foreign spouse or children from holding an executive position. This rule was the reason why Aung San Suu Kyi, despite her popularity, could not become the president as her late husband and her two sons are British citizens.
- **Judiciary:** The Supreme Court of Myanmar is the highest judicial forum and final court of appeal under the Constitution of Myanmar, existing as an independent judicial entity alongside the legislative and executive

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[Source: Business Standards]

Almost 3 years ago, on February 1st, 2021, the military in Myanmar deposed the elected government, stalling a gradual process of democratization that had begun a decade earlier. The coup d'état sparked protests around the country, as people took to the streets to voice their support for democracy. Myanmar has been pursuing democratization in its own unique way since the country gained independence in 1947. Unfortunately, the militarization of governance and administrative systems has been the status quo, and a lot of life has been sacrificed in this decades-long struggle for democracy.

So now, let's look at the **Culture of Myanmar**.

## Culture of Myanmar

Myanmar's traditional culture is an amalgam of folk and royal culture. Buddhism has been a part of Myanmar's culture since the 1st century AD and has blended with non-Buddhist beliefs. The cultural mainstream of Myanmar has become deeply associated with the traditions of the Bamar ethnic majority and influenced by teachings of the Buddhist religion. This standard of behavior and national identity is commonly referred to as 'bama hsan-jin' – translating as 'Burmese-ness'.



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- **Language:** The official language is Burmese, spoken by the people of the plains and, as a second language, by most people of the hills. During the colonial period, English became the official language, but Burmese continued as the primary language in all other settings.
- **Cuisine:** Burmese cuisine is typified by a wide-ranging array of dishes, including traditional Burmese curries, Burmese salads, and soups that are traditionally eaten with white rice. Burmese cuisine also features Indian breads as well as noodles in many forms, as fried or dry noodles, noodle soups, or as noodle salads.
- **Art and Crafts:** Art of Myanmar refers to visual art created in Myanmar. Ancient Burmese art was influenced by India and China, and was often religious in nature. From stone-carving, lacquer ware, umbrella-making to marionettes, each craft has a long history of glory, with some dating back to the early 1800s. As one of Myanmar's hidden treasures, these crafts make up the country's cultural identity as well as heritage.
- **Festivals:** Thingyan, or Burmese New Year, is the biggest festival of the year and is celebrated in every town, village and hamlet throughout the country. The Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival is one of the largest Buddhist festivals in Burma. The celebrations take place over more than 20 days. Four out of the five revered Buddha images are paraded around the lake in an elaborate, gilded barge pulled by traditional long boats manned by hundreds of rowers.
- **Multiculturalism:** Myanmar is a country of cultural diversity in Southeast Asia. It is geographically composed of seven states and seven regions. There are eight major tribes in Myanmar: Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Burma, Rakhine, and Shan with 135 ethnic groups and over 100 languages.
- **Indigenous Heritage:** Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion among the majority Bamar ethnic group and among the Shan, Rakhine, Mon, and numerous other ethnic groups. Various forms of Christianity are dominant among the Kachin, Chin, and Naga ethnic groups.



[Source: Trip Advisor]

Myanmar, which undergone different stages of political transition since its independence from British . Through out its decades of independence, Myanmar has struggled with military rule, civil war, poor governance, and widespread poverty.

## Education in Myanmar



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The educational system of Myanmar is operated by the government Ministry of Education. Universities and professional institutes from upper Burma and lower Burma are run by two separate entities, the Departments of Higher Education, whose office headquarters are in Yangon and Mandalay respectively. The Basic Education system is 5-4-2-system consisting of five-year schooling for primary level, four-year schooling for lower secondary level and two-year schooling for upper secondary level.

Myanmar's education sector has been consistently starved of investments and resources for many decades. Episodes of political turbulence have brought frequent crackdowns on students, with resultant damage to the education system. In Myanmar, schooling is compulsory until the end of elementary school, probably about 9 years old.

However the international standard for schooling is 15 to 16, Primary school education is compulsory for all children in Myanmar. Grades 6 to 9 fall under middle school and last four years. Education System in Myanmar; Primary, Elementary; Middle, Intermediate School; Secondary, Secondary; Tertiary, Bachelor; Tertiary, Master.

## Economy of Myanmar

The economy of Myanmar is the seventh largest in Southeast Asia, with an estimated nominal GDP of US\$63.99 billion in 2023 and an estimated purchasing power. The Union of Myanmar's economy depends heavily on sales of precious stones such as sapphires, pearls and jade. Rubies are the biggest earner; 90% of the world's rubies come from the country, whose red stones are prized for their purity and hue. Thailand buys the majority of the country's gems.

So, now look about some interesting facts of Myanmar.

## Some Interesting Facts about Myanmar

Myanmar is the largest country in Southeast Asia. The country is called the "Golden Land," as it has many beautiful golden temples. The major religion followed in Myanmar is Theravada Buddhism. The main religions of this country are Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity.

- **Shwedagon Pagoda:** The Shwedagon is the most sacred Buddhist pagoda in Myanmar, as it is believed to contain relics of the four previous Buddhas of the present kalpa. According to legend, it was constructed over 2600 years ago and is the world's oldest Buddhist monument.
- **Iconic Structure:** The extraordinary Shwedagon Pagoda towers over Yangon's skyline at 110 metres high. Built 2,500 years ago to enshrine Buddha's hair and other holy relics, the complex now consists of hundreds of temples, stupas and statues. The main pagoda is covered with hundreds of gold leaves and the top of the stupa is encrusted with 4531 diamonds; the largest of which is a 72 carat diamond.



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[Source: Rainforest Cruises]

Myanmar is the largest country in Southeast Asia. The country is called the “**Golden Land**,” as it has many beautiful golden temples, such as Shwedagon Pagoda and other calming spots to experience peace of mind. There are many beaches and Buddhist temples, which make Myanmar an incredibly beautiful country. Check out the interesting facts of other countries on [KD Live](#) and update yourself with the time. So, we will meet in some other blog. till then, stay tuned!

