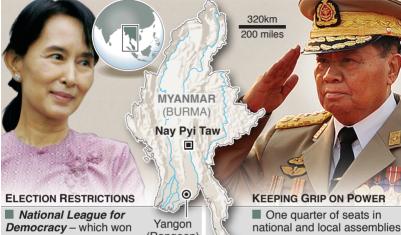
Burma holds first elections in 20 years

Myanmar's military rulers say the elections will mark a democratic transition from military to civilian rule. However, critics warn they are a sham aimed at further entrenching military rule, albeit in civilian quise



- (Rangoon) 1990 polls but was never allowed to take power forced to disband after refusing to run due to laws banning detained leader. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, from taking part
- 80% of candidates up for election belong to parties broadly aligned with government. Pro-democracy parties allowed to run complain of harassment and intimidation
- Polls scrapped in restive ethnic areas pursuing long-held dream of semiautonomy, disenfranchising around 1.5 million people
- Foreign observers not allowed into country over election period. Internet service severely limited ahead of polls

- reserved for military officers
 - Armv-dominated parliament expected to nominate member of junta. possibly leader General Than Shwe, as president
- Parliament cannot veto President's appointment of ministers, which must include three serving generals
- Army can assume full control in state of emergency and retains veto on constitutional changes

Two weeks before polls. iunta changed country's flag. national anthem and official



name - from Union of Myanmar to Republic of the Union of Myanmar