

India's drumming tax collectors (Mon 14 Mar, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about taxes / India / local government / drummers / drums / tax avoidance / ear plugs / terrible noises / penalties for tax evasion ... Change topic / partner frequently to increase conversation.

TAX BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'tax'. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

TAXES: Talk in groups about taxes. What do you think of the taxation system in your country / other countries? Which taxes are unfair? Which taxes are too low? Which taxes should be scrapped? Do the rich pay enough tax? Is tax revenue well spent by the government?

BUDGET: In pairs/groups, create an imaginary taxation system for country X. There should only be five different taxes. Agree on what should be taxed and the rates. Decide also on how tax revenue should be spent. What percentage should be spent on the following areas – Health, Defence, Education, Welfare, Crime, Transport, Agriculture, Environment etc. Share your budgets with other groups and tell each other the good and bad points you find. Vote on the best plans.

RAT-A-TAT-TAX: Discuss with your partner which of the following you would / would not do if the tax drummers came to your house. On a scale of 1 (impossible) to 10 (definitely) give a score for each point and explain why you have given that score.

- a. Pay up immediately.
- b. Buy lots of earplugs.
- c. Turn your TV / stereo up really loud.
- d. Take the drums away from the drummers and smash them.
- e. Take the drums away from the drummers and keep them in your house.
- f. Lie - promise the drummer you will go to the bank and pay.
- g. Take your guitar outside and jam with the drummers.
- h. Take your garden chair outside, sit down, and enjoy the free music.
- i. Telephone the city government to complain.
- j. Ask the drummers for drumming lessons.

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'property' and 'tax'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. Tax collectors in India are learning the drum to relieve stress. T / F
- b. Drummers are being sent to play outside the homes of tax evaders. T / F
- c. A city has hired 20 groups of drummers as a tax collection technique. T / F
- d. The drummers will play outside the homes of defaulters until they pay up. T / F
- e. The city's tax revenues have increased by 68 per cent in just one week. T / F
- f. Many local residents enjoyed facing the music. T / F
- g. One local resident bought a week's supply of earplugs. T / F
- h. This method of tax collection is quickly spreading around the world. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| (a) avoid | tolerated |
| (b) reminder | bite the bullet |
| (c) default | brouhaha |
| (d) solution | lapse |
| (e) din | outstanding |
| (f) face the music | evade |
| (g) overdue | quick fix |
| (h) commotion | warning |
| (i) endured | spreads |
| (j) catches on | hullabaloo |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| (a) avoid | government |
| (b) given a very | overdue taxes |
| (c) local | evasion |
| (d) 20 groups | stand the racket |
| (e) tax | noisy reminder |
| (f) the embarrassment | and see |
| (g) pay their | caused by the din |
| (h) quite a | paying their taxes |
| (i) could no longer | commotion |
| (j) We shall have to wait | of drummers |

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GAP FILL

India's drumming tax collectors

BNE: People who avoid _____ their taxes in the Indian town of Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, are being given a very noisy _____ by their local government. City authorities have hired 20 groups of drummers to play their drums non-stop outside the homes of citizens who default on paying their property taxes. The drummers will keep playing until the defaulters _____. The novel, but noisy solution to tax evasion is music to the ears of the tax collectors, as tax revenues have increased by a _____ 18 per cent in just one week. It seems the embarrassment caused by the din outside their homes has forced many people to _____ face the music and pay their overdue taxes immediately. The drummers have been told to continue banging until the tax has been paid. One resident, Sanjay Rao, said, "It was quite a commotion, and most unbearable. My family and I decided it would be cheaper to _____ our taxes than to buy a week's supply of earplugs." His neighbour, Leisha Patel, also paid quickly, "I endured the terrible noise for twenty minutes, but then could no longer stand the _____ and the shame." We shall have to wait and see whether the penalty of drummers on one's doorstep _____ in the rest of the world as a way of drumming up revenue.

pay up paying literally reminder racket catches on cough up welcome

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. What do you think of the idea of drumming tax collectors?
- c. Would this work in your neighborhood?
- d. Would you cough up if the tax drummers arrived on your doorstep?
- e. Do you always pay your tax?
- f. Have you ever tried to evade paying tax?
- g. What do you think of the taxation system in your country and other countries?
- h. What's the most important area the government should spend taxes on?
- i. Should rich people pay high taxes?
- j. What happens if you don't pay taxes in your country?
- k. Which is worse, a group of drummers or a group of bad violinists on your doorstep?
- l. What was the last thing you heard that was music to your ears?
- m. When was the last time you did something wrong and had to face the music?
- n. Do you ever use earplugs?
- o. Do you think tax drummers will catch on in other parts of the world?
- p. Would you like to be able to play the drums?

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q. Did you like this discussion?

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 information on tax evasion. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. TAX DRUMMER:** Imagine you are a tax drummer. Write your diary/journal entry for your first day at work.
- 4. LETTER TO MAYOR:** Write an imaginary letter to your local mayor about his/her decision to hire tax drummers in your city. Half of your neighbors evade paying their taxes.

TEXT

India's drumming tax collectors

BNE: People who avoid **paying** their taxes in the Indian town of Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, are being given a very noisy **reminder** by their local government. City authorities have hired 20 groups of drummers to play their drums non-stop outside the homes of citizens who default on paying their property taxes. The drummers will keep playing until the defaulters **pay up**. The novel, but noisy solution to tax evasion is music to the ears of the tax collectors, as tax revenues have increased by a **welcome** 18 per cent in just one week. It seems the embarrassment caused by the din outside their homes has forced many people to **literally** face the music and pay their overdue taxes immediately. The drummers have been told to continue banging until the tax has been paid. One resident, Sanjay Rao, said, "It was quite a commotion, and most unbearable. My family and I decided it would be cheaper to **cough up** our taxes than to buy a week's supply of earplugs." His neighbour, Leisha Patel, also paid quickly, "I endured the terrible noise for twenty minutes, but then could no longer stand the **racket** and the shame." We shall have to wait and see whether the penalty of drummers on one's doorstep **catches on** in the rest of the world as a way of drumming up revenue.