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Subject: Myanmar foreign minister to visit Japan (Reuters)

TOKYO, Oct 14 (Reuters) - Myanmar's foreign minister will visit Japan next week in another sign that one of the world's most isolated states is beginning to open up after it freed hundreds of political prisoners this week.

Wunna Maung Lwin will visit Japan on Oct. 20-22, Kyodo news agency reported on Friday, citing Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba.

Myanmar's army, which has ruled the former British colony for half a century, formally handed over power in March to a civilian president, a retired general, who has begun reforms aimed at reviving an economy crippled by sanctions over human rights abuses.

Myanmar, also known as Burma, released about 200 political detainees on Wednesday following some loosening of media controls and more dialogue with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Japan froze new development assistance to Myanmar in 2003, while continuing humanitarian aid. It restored development help in June and the Foreign Ministry has said it may make further moves if political prisoners are released.

Japan is interested in developing Myanmar's rich natural resources, including rare earths, as well as taking part in fixing the nation's poor infrastructure, Kyodo said, quoting government sources.

Japan's biggest business lobby, the Keidanren, sent a 20-member delegation to Myanmar in September, the first such mission to the country in eight years.

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