

Police arrest 80 Mon clergy for illegal entry

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MORE than 80 Burmese minority monks, novices and nuns were charged with illegal entry yesterday in a police raid on a Thon Buri religious centre.

The 84 Burmese were arrested in Bang Khun Thien District by police led by Thon Buri Metropolitan chief investigator chief Pol Col Urai Sri-urai and Tha Kham chief inspector Pol Col Manas Natnitithada.

Police sealed off Soi Wat Bang Kradi, in Samae Dam, and searched the centre, which occupies 100 square wah, where they found 28 monks, 54 novices and two nuns.

Bang Khun Thien chief

abbot Phra Khru Adul Thanakorn and his secretary, Phra Chamnan Satthathiko, were asked by police if the centre was set up with permission from the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council.

The police recovered 26 monkhood certificates which will be checked for authenticity. Three were found to be authentic and believed to have been issued by Luangpor Uttama, in Sangkhla Buri District, Kanchanaburi, while the rest were fake.

Pol Col Urai said the raid came amid reports Burmese illegal immigrants had gathered at the centre under the guise of being monks, novices and nuns.

Phra Varee Inthasaro, 42, leader of the group, said most of the monks and novices were ordained by Luangpor Uttama.

Pleading with the police not to defrock them, he said that if it was inevitable, it should be carried out by Luangpor Uttama.

Phra Varee said he had been a monk for 22 years, the last seven of which were in Wat Bang Kradi.

Phra Rattanakavee, who is in charge of monks in Bang Khun Thien District and who interviewed the Mons, said he would like to see the group deported as monks if there was no other course of action.

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Ethnic Mon clergy arrested during a raid in Thon Buri are provided with lunch yesterday. Some of them refused to eat. BP 880916

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