

# Burmese granted temporary shelter

RANONG — The Interior Ministry this morning granted temporary shelter to the 107 Burmese who fled to this southern province Sunday night, provincial authorities said.

Ranong police said the ministry has ordered them to move ashore the Burmese, many of them students, stranded on Koh Sane island, about 10 minutes boatride from Ranong.

All Burmese will be detained at Tambon Haad Sompan, where they will be questioned by immigration officials, police said.

The ministry, however, has so far made no statement on the status of another 150 Burmese who fled into the Thai border district of Mae Sot in the northern province of Tak. The Burmese, many of them students also, said Burmese troops have taken over control of the town of Myawaddy. A "refugee centre" has been set up in Mae Sot for the Burmese who crossed the narrow

Moei River into Thailand, sources said.

Maung Maung Thein, 25, a Rangoon University student who arrived in Ranong, told *The Nation* they were forced at gunpoint by Burmese soldiers to leave the Burmese town of Kawthaung on Sunday.

The Burmese, all males aged between 20 and 25, said they were students from Rangoon University who left Rangoon on Sept 7 and reached Kawthaung last Friday to "fraternize" with their counterparts in this southern Burmese town, also known as Victoria Point.

On Sunday, after the military successfully staged a coup, area Burmese troops searched and singled out the students to leave Kawthaung in four long-tailed boats, according to the students.

About 40 of them are said to be suffering from conjunctivitis.

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# Siddhi: Give Burmese temporary refuge

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THAILAND will allow more than 100 Burmese who fled to the southern province of Ranong to stay in temporary shelters for humanitarian reasons, Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila said this morning.

Siddhi said the Burmese will be questioned by local authorities and those who fled for political reasons would be granted asylum.

The Burmese will be detained at a specially set-up detention centre for questioning, the minister said.

Thailand, he said, will not push the Burmese back to their country at this point, but they will have to return when the situation there improves. He added there has been no contact from the Burmese authorities since the military takeover on Sunday.

More than 100 Burmese have slipped across the border in Ranong since Sunday. They were later moved to a temporary shelter at Haad Sompan, about seven kilometres from the provincial seat.

Provincial authorities said most of the Burmese arrived in small groups and

they were given shelters by Thai fishermen.

Meanwhile, the Burmese students have pledged to live peacefully and abide by the laws of the land during their brief stay in Thailand.

One of the student leaders told *The Nation* yesterday that they thank the Thai people and the Kingdom of Thailand for their kindness, understanding and generosity in providing them with food, shelter and sanctuary during time of distress, and would be forever grateful for this act of mercy.

They vowed to maintain strict discipline as house guests. And as civilized citizens of Burma, will in no way behave or act in a manner that would tarnish the image of their countrymen and offend their hosts.

The students, the majority of them from Rangoon, fled Kawthaung or Victoria after 300 crack Kachin troops were dispatched to the port city to put down the popular uprising against the military regime in Burma. These troops do not speak the Burmese language.