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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 camp at Haad Sompan, 100 km from the border.

Authorities said most of the Burmese are 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.