



KWANYUEN Sitthikim, a 21-year-old fisherman, in an emotional reunion with his mother, Mrs Thongchub, at Don Muang Airport last night.

NATIONPHOTO

Freed Thai fishermen arrive from Burma

TN 880930

A group of 120 Thai fishermen returned last night from Burma where they were imprisoned for almost a year and some said they recently saw a friend die of fever in the prison in Tharawaddy, some 400 kilometres from Rangoon.

Watthana Youcharoen said upon his arrival that he saw Sanan, family name not known, die after taking a bath while suffering from high fever. Sanan was an employee of the Chaimongkol 2 fishing boat of a company in Samut Sakhon, the fisherman said.

Watthana said he had been jailed for 10 months for violating the Burmese waters. "Now I feel as if I were reborn," he said.

Most of the 120 Thai fishermen imprisoned at Tharawaddy were suffering from skin disease, and many looked pale and skinny.

Another fisherman, Lab Mingmuang, a 30-year-old native of Pathum Thani province, said he was told last month that the Thai fishermen would be released. He said he kept waiting for the day of freedom.

Lab, who said his vision has become blurred after the six months in prison, said he was overjoyed to be freed but that he would not give up his fishing job.

Lab was arrested with another 26 crewmen from Samut Sakhon last April.

The fishermen said they were not maltreated by the Burmese guards though the prison condition was very bad.

In a related development, another three Thai fishing boats were confiscated and about 100 Thais were arrested by Burmese authorities last night, a fishing boat operator of Samut Sakhon said.

But he said he has no details about the incident.

• Meanwhile, three senior members of the long-ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party were yesterday named to lead the party under its new name, Radio Rangoon reported.

The Kyaw, former minister of Transportation and Communications, was named chairman of the National Unity Party set up after the military seized power on September 18.

Brigadier Tun Yi, a member of the BSP's central committee, and Than Tin, a deputy prime minister and minister of Mines, were named joint general secretaries of the National Unity Party.

UNICEF to fly medical supplies

THE United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) will fly 103 tons of emergency medical supplies and equipment to hospitals in Burma to help hundreds of people wounded in anti-government demonstrations there, an agency official said yesterday.

A privately-chartered Hercules C-130 transport plane arrived here yesterday from Jakarta and is to begin flights into Rangoon tomorrow. The UNICEF official, who asked not to be identified, said he will make six trips on consecutive days to the Burmese capital.

Diplomats say hundreds of people have been killed and many wounded since a military coup in Rangoon Sept 18. The government says about 350 people have died.

The official said 83 tons of medical supplies worth US\$454,361 arrived here Tuesday from

the organization's warehouse in Denmark's capital, Copenhagen. The other 20 tons were drawn from the Bangkok warehouse of the International Committee of the Red Cross and through local procurement, he said.

Under diplomatic and UN supervision, six convoys will distribute the supplies to 50 hospitals and 20 medical dispensaries nationwide. In Rangoon, the supplies will be sent to 16 large hospitals and 18 smaller ones, the official said.

UNICEF, which has an office in Rangoon, has also given 350,000 Burmese kyats (US\$58,333) to a recently-formed ad hoc "Interphase Committee for Relief Operations," which is trying to raise 5.28 million kyats (US\$880,000) in emergency funds to help the Burmese, the official said — AP

09/1988/116/0006