

- **Illegal Myanmar found in vans** *Bangkok Post, 8 January 2007*

Chiang Rai \_ Police intercepted a caravan of 10 vans taking almost 100 illegal Myanmar immigrants to Chiang Mai on Saturday. They claimed they were visiting the Royal Flora Expo.

Mae Sai district traffic policeman Pichai Muangma, whom a van driver accused of having arranged the trip, was transferred to a provincial police office yesterday for an internal inquiry.

Police said the illegal aliens were probably heading to the Central Plains to work on construction sites and in factories.

Wiang Pa Pao district police stopped a van and arrested the driver, Chokechai Charoensukmongkol, and 10 Myanmar passengers at a road block on the Chiang Rai-Chiang Mai highway on Saturday.

Nine other vans sped away, and later nearly 90 Myanmar passengers were found abandoned at Wat Pa Gor Tai in the province's Muang district.

The driver, charged with being an accessory to human smuggling, said Pol Sgt Pichai paid him 4,000 baht to pick up the aliens at Mae Sai district and take them to the expo.

Pol Sgt Pichai had told him that all passengers had been issued with border passes for the journey.

Some of the arrested Myanmar claimed to have paid 4,000 baht each for the week-long tour to Chiang Mai.

The illegal immigrants are being detained in Mae Sai district and awaiting deportation.