

ALOHA from Burma (Myanmar)

October 29, 2004

Most of October was spent at the passport office hunting for my passport and learning the red tape of Burmese government system. I applied for my passport on October 5, 2004. Before actual application, I had to do all the necessary preparations such as checking my ID cards and family registration. I had to go back to my home town, about 200 miles away from the city of Rangoon to get my tax clearance.



Passport application is a complicated process and the system is so corrupted. The rules are also ridiculous. To apply for a passport, you need some kinds of invitation or job offer letters from abroad. It has to be endorsed by the embassy in the invitees' country. The rules make the life of an applicant so miserable that a broker becomes necessary for some people. The joke is you can get a passport easier and without hassles if you just pay a broker and let them handle the negotiations.

One of the funny line I have to fill in is "I am not involved in any political activities." Every applicant has to write in the line in their application forms. ☺

My case is that I used the invitation letter from First Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The rules, when I put in my application, did not require an embassy endorsement. However, the sudden political change in Burma caused the change in the rules of passport application procedures. The officer told me that I needed an endorsement letter from a Burmese embassy in Washington D.C to get my passport. I had to ask my friends in the States to get the endorsement, costing us a lot of money to send it back to Burma with an express courier service.

If only I had known somebody who could negotiate with that officer, I wouldn't need that endorsement. It's just a matter of who you know.

I wish passport application procedures would not be so complicated, long and expensive; the officers were not so corrupted and the brokers not wandering around in the office pushing their cases ahead of others in line. Honestly, I spent almost everyday at the passport office downtown Rangoon, wasting my productivity. As of today, I have not got my passport yet. ☺

May God bless you all!

Love in Christ,

Lwin Moe

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