



Ao Mystery - Solution

A: Reasons why there are many Burmese workers on Phuket:

- Before the tsunami four million visitors flew into Phuket's international airport every year.
- Phuket suffered a 90% drop in visitor numbers after the tsunami in December 2004.
- Phuket has loads of jobs available to re-build the island's tourist facilities.
- Phuket lies close to the Burmese border.
- Burmese migrants are cheaper to employ than Thai workers.
- There are about 73,000 legal migrant workers from Burma working on Phuket, and maybe the same number working illegally.
- Migrants in Thailand often do the '3D' jobs – dirty, difficult and dangerous.
- Ao has found work on a building site for a new hotel.
- Amnesty International called Burma, "a prison without bars". The country has been ruled by a military dictatorship since 1962.

B: How workers like Ao get money (remittances) back to their families in Burma:

- For Ao, working illegally in a bar in Thailand is worth the risk. He can make more money and send it home to his family in Burma.
- Worldwide, the amount of money sent home by migrants working abroad is greater than all the overseas aid given to poor countries.
- Ao's family lives in Burma near the Thai border.
- No member of Ao's family has a bank account - they don't trust the Burmese banking system.
- In Burma, Ao's family uses cash – not cards - to buy things. If they have enough money to save they buy gold and wear it.
- Burmese people living near the Thai border can illegally tap into Thai phone networks.
- Dealers in Burma can exchange the numbers on Thai top-up phone cards for cash.
- Ao phones home regularly.

Red herring:

- Ao hopes to work in a tourist bar so that he will learn enough English to chat up his dream partner!