

- [Politics](#)
- [Regional](#)
- [Security](#)
- [Crimes](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Asia](#)
- [World](#)
- [Investigative report](#)

[News](#) > Local News

Call for alcohol ban on trains

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Anti-alcohol activists on Monday called for a ban on alcohol sales on trains arguing that passengers who drink irritate and sexually harass other travellers.

The Stop Drink Network, part of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, took the issue to the Transport Ministry with research to back up its claim.

The non-governmental organisation surveyed 1,160 passengers aged 15 and above from Dec 3-10 at railway stations including Hua Lamphong, Samsen and Thon Buri. The survey found that 93.5% of the respondents supported a ban on alcohol sales and drinking on trains.

Almost 45% claimed that drinkers annoy other passengers on trains, while 8% said that drinking on trains led to to sexual

harassment.

In total, 86% of respondents also supported a ban on the sale of beer and other alcohol beverages at stations.

The State Railway of Thailand only asks vendors not to sell alcoholic drinks on trains.

But Stop Drink Network leader Songkran Pakchokdee said that merely asking for cooperation from vendors was not enough. He urged the Transport Ministry to work with the Public Health Ministry to issue an order banning alcohol sales and punishing violators with fines.

"While we are waiting for the regulation, the Transport Ministry should order the SRT to announce a temporary ban," he said. "The ban should cover all trains except in dining cars," he added.

Somchai Siriwattanachok, permanent secretary for transport, said the Transport Ministry plans to work with the Public Health Ministry to toughen up regulations on drinking on trains.

The SRT will meanwhile increase the number of officials and police charged with deterring the consumption of alcohol on trains until the regulation is ready and will discourage vendors from selling beer and other alcohol drinks on trains especially during the festive season, he added.

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