



## New Year road toll appears to be good news

THE NATION

THE OVERALL PICTURE of road accidents seems to be encouraging during the New Year period, while drink-driving and speeding remain the key contributing factors in crashes and account for most of the arrests made, Interior Minister Anupong Paojinda said yesterday.

Anupong's remark was made before the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department's Road Safety Centre (Thai RSC) announced a tally of 410 deaths and 3,516 injuries in 3,425 road accidents in the first six days of the New Year holiday period's "seven dangerous days".

The agency claimed that represented an across-the-board decrease compared to the same period a year ago. However, the Thai RSC's own information for the same in New Year 2018 cited a lower number of deaths at that time (375) with more injuries (3,612) and road accidents (3,456).

General Anupong said further measures would be discussed to reduce the loss of life stemming from these factors, and more analysis would be done on the most accident-prone highways and secondary roads and time periods.

"Agencies will then have to assess whether the new measures are sufficient to lower the death toll or whether even more measures are needed, such as promoting driver discipline or introducing harsher punishments," he said.

"We have to assess the effectiveness of the measures one by one. I will try to do this as fast as possible so that we will be better prepared to handle the type of accidents that cause the most deaths year-round, not just in festive times."

National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) secretary representative Lt-General Somsak Somrak later elaborated on the holiday road toll during a media conference at the Thai RSC.

He said Nakhon Ratchasima reported the highest number of fatalities (24) of any province, while Nakhon Si Thammarat reported the highest number of road accidents (109) and the highest number of injured (127).

On January 1 alone, there were 664 road accidents – these claimed 89 lives and a further 675 people were injured, he said. Drunk driving remained



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the main cause at 43.22 per cent, followed by speeding at 31.48 per cent.

In a separate press conference, NCPO deputy spokeswoman Colonel Sirichan Nga-thong said 4,545 vehicles (3,338 motorcycles and 1,207 automobiles) had been seized from drunk drivers in the six days from December 27 to January 1.

Meanwhile, Probation Department chief Prasarn Mahaleetrakul reported that Thai courts had during the same period ordered probation for offenders



in 6,390 cases – 5,903 of these cases involved drunk drivers, 446 drivers were under the influence of drugs, 39 were guilty of reckless driving and two of speeding. On January 1 alone, 119 drunk-drivers were put on probation, he added.

The three provinces with the most drunk-driving cases in the first six days of the holiday period were Bangkok (413 cases), Maha Sarakham (411) and Sakhon Nakhon (382), Prasarn said.

A total of 67 drunk drivers – 35 in Bangkok, 14 in Khon Kaen, 12 in Buri Ram, five in Ratchaburi and one in Rayong – have been ordered to wear Electronic Monitoring (EM) devices since January 1.

Apart from being fitted with the devices and being banned from driving for six months, the 67 have also been handed night-time curfews and are banned from going out from 10pm to 4am for 15 days, must report to probation officials periodically, undergo four sessions of traffic regulation training, and do 24 hours of community service.

Repeat offenders – those committing drink-driving offences three times or more – have also been referred to a programme to screen for alcoholism and admitted to hospital for alcoholism treatment, Prasarn added.