

## **Alcohol Control Legislation in Thailand**

Considering the draft legislation to control alcoholic beverages and approving the draft in principle upon its first reading in March 2007, the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) eventually approved the draft legislation in the final round on 21 December 2007. The draft, at the moment, is in the process of being published in the Royal Gazette and will be enforced by February 2008.

Initially, those who proposed and supported the legislation against alcohol wanted a total ban on alcohol advertisements on television, radio, billboards and in published media. In addition to the popular support from 13 million Thai people who signed a petition in favor of the legislation, the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) formally advocated the legislation by submitting a supporting letter to the NLA. However, the StopDrink Network encountered obstacles from the alcohol industry who lobbied hard to water down the bill, particularly the provisions banning alcohol advertisement.

The alcohol control measures, including the minimum age for alcohol purchasers, alcohol free areas, warning labels, and the advertising ban, appeared in Chapter 4 of the legislation. During its consideration in the second round in November 2007, the total ban of advertisements on television and radio, under measure 31, became controversial and was finally left out from the final bill. Measure 31 was amended by a group of NLA members led by Dr. Somkriat Onwimol, allowing only alcohol advertisements promoting the image of alcohol companies to be broadcast all day excluding the showing of the logo, container or product including sales promotions, except those advertisements broadcast from overseas. As a result, the draft legislation was not fully considered in the second round, and was pulled by the NLA on that day.

On 21 December 2007, the last NLA meeting of the interim government, the draft legislation was resubmitted to the NLA in order to be reviewed in the second and third rounds, and it eventually received approval from the NLA. However, sections 31/1-34 covering various advertisement issues were removed. The items omitted included the advertising ban on radio and television, in theaters, advertisements in print media and on billboards, sponsorships, use of alcohol logos on non-alcoholic beverages and the use of the name of companies on advertisements. Dr. Amphol Jindawattana, the NLA member who withdrew these measures, pointed out that he was concerned that passage of the larger legislation would be delayed if the measures were not omitted. He also added that the focus of measure 31 was controls on advertisements, an area where he felt the Ministry of Public Health would later be able to draft a ministerial regulation for such controls.

In summary, after the legislation is enforced as a law, it will

- raise the minimum purchase age to 20 years of age
- not allow vendors to sell alcohol to drinkers who are intoxicated
- require warning labels on containers of all alcoholic drinks
- only permit advertisements promoting company reputation without allowing any alcoholic beverage names or logos to be broadcast on radio or television
- not allow the sale of alcohol in temples and religious places, public health service places and drug stores, official government places, dormitories, educational institutions, fuel stations, public parks and other places in accordance with the ministerial announcement, except shops and clubs.
- not allow the sale of alcohol by vending machine, peddler, or using marketing activities and other promotional activities in accordance with the ministerial announcement
- not allow the consumption of alcohol in temples and religious places, public health service places and drug stores, official government places, educational institutions, fuel stations, public parks and other places in accordance with the ministerial announcement, except shops and clubs.