

### SOUTH

# Woman tied to tracks, run over by train

SUPAPONG CHAOLAN

**SURAT THANI:** A woman was tied to a railway track and then run over by a train in Ban Na Doem district yesterday.

The body was identified as 27-year-old Niparat Tawonporn. She had been cut in two.

She was wearing only a bra and jeans and her hands and ankles had been bound together and tied to the track, said local police.

Relatives told police Niparat left home about 7pm on Saturday. She said she was going to a market in Ban Na Doem, but then went missing.

Police believe the woman was badly injured or even killed before being tied to the railway track, as they found bruises on her body. She had been run over by the Bangkok-Yala train and her body was found yesterday morning.

Police also found her motorbike nearby, which she rode on Saturday night. Her body was found about three kilometres from Ban Na Doem train station.

Ban Na Doem police chief Pol Col Narongyos Unhabandit believed at least two people were involved in the murder. He said she may have been killed because of conflicts between men she had started relationships with since her divorce.

Police however, have not ruled out the possibility of her being murdered for her assets or because of a business disagreement.

## Village head shot dead by militants

**PATTANI:** A village headman from Ban Klong Chang was shot dead from behind by suspected militants in Mayo district yesterday.

Mayuso Samaeasas was walking home when gunmen shot him in the chest, stomach, hip, knee and legs.

The attack took place after midnight when Mayuso returned from a talk with a peace-keeping unit at the 44th Ranger Forces Regiment.

He was only 400m from home. His son heard the shootings and took him to hospital. He succumbed to his wounds there.

# No fairy tale for the real-life Snow White

Meet the woman translating Thailand's darkest crimes, by Lamphai Intatthep and Wassayos Ngamkham

In the fairy tale, Snow White is bullied by a witch and seeks help from the seven dwarfs. But a real-life Snow White is the person police turn to when they need help with certain delicate cases.

Snow White Orawin Smelser — or Snowy to her friends — is a Thai-Texan woman who works as a translator at the Children, Juveniles and Women Division (CWD).

Her work includes translating documents on transnational cases and for embassy officials and foreign crime investigation teams, and interpreting dialogues between the police and English-speaking suspects.

Ms Snow White — and yes, it is her real name — is the daughter of a Thai mother and a Texan father. She was raised in the United States and moved to Thailand five years ago.

The 32-year-old also works part-time as an English teacher at the AUA private language institute and as a freelance translator for a law firm.

She said a fellow teacher at AUA recommended she work as a translator for the CWD, which needed help with cases involving English-speaking foreigners.

At first, she was reluctant to do it, because she had a bad impression of the Thai police.

"People talk about bad police behaviour," she said. "I've heard that if a policeman charges you with a traffic offence, you can hand him some money and he will let you go."

The English teacher, however, decided to give it a try.

Now, after a year of working with officers at the CWD, Ms Snow White said her opinion of the Thai police had totally changed.

"They work all day and night to find the truth and track the criminals," she said.

Ms Snow White, who graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, where she studied advertising and web design, had worked on many cases, including that of a Canadian teacher who sexually abused underage boys around Southeast Asia, and a former British police officer implicated in a sex trafficking ring in London.

Christopher Paul Neil was arrested last October in Bangkok following a campaign by Interpol, which had reconstructed a series of digitally "swirled" internet images of a man abusing boys.



**Snow White Orawin Smelser, a Thai-Texan English teacher, uses her bilingualism to help police officers at the Children, Juveniles and Women Division deal with cases involving foreign suspects.** PATTANAPONG HIRUNARD

And former British police officer Ian Shuttleworth was arrested in Bangkok in March. He was accused of acting as a job broker, luring and smuggling Thai women into Britain for a London gang.

Ms Snow White remembers sitting between the suspect and the police one day and interpreting their conversations for nine hours.

After finishing the investigation process, she was asked to translate all information and dialogue between the Thai and British police which came in several forms — email, telephone conversations and video conferences.

She admitted that it is sometimes difficult to control her emotions while working on such sensitive cases. She said she often feels pity for the victims, but knows she has to keep her personal

feelings to one side.

"I tell myself to remain unbiased and to bear in mind that everyone is innocent until proven guilty," she said.

She said working with the CWD can be stressful as she has to listen to details of inhumane acts, including human trafficking, sexual harassment, and child sex abuse.

But despite this, she said she would continue working with the CWD as it furnishes her with valuable experience difficult to find in other jobs.

With a degree in web design, she also helped develop an English-language website for the CWD, english.cwd.go.th, which contains useful information about the agency and emergency contacts for foreigners in trouble.

"I am proud to help the police," she said, adding that an English translator and interpreter is a must-have at police stations here because there are many foreigners in Thailand, and many criminal cases involved foreigners.

Ms Snow White, who was given her unique name by her Texan father because she was "white as snow" when she was born, said she loves working with languages and dreams of one day having her own language institute in Thailand.



## Raising the bar

The Go Teng pole, which the gods are invited to descend, is lifted at the Jui Tui Chinese temple yesterday, signalling the start of the annual Phuket Vegetarian Festival, which will run until Oct 7.

SAKHORN SAENGTONG-SAMARNSIN

### TAD TON WATERFALL TRAGEDY

# Two more lightning strike victims die, toll now five

BANGKOK POST AND AGENCIES

Two more victims of the lightning strike at Tad Ton waterfall in Nong Sung district in Mukdahan died yesterday, taking the death toll to five.

Thomas McGuinness, 16, and Nongnut Tongmaha, 17, died in Ubon Ratchathani after sustaining serious injuries when they were struck by lightning while on a visit to the waterfall, the hospital said.

McGuinness died at 10am and Nongnut died at 2.30am. Shannon Seigan, a 16-year-old Australian student, is being treated at the same hospital.

The three were moved from Mukdahan hospital to a bigger hospital in Ubon Ratchathani on Saturday night waiting for an airlift to Bangkok.

Two female students, Supaporn Petcharat, 14, and Atchariya Wongwai, 17, and a teacher from Perth, Gregory Ian Crombie, 40, were killed instantly in the incident when a storm hit the area.

Crombie led the group including 11 Australian students from Winthrop Baptist College, a secondary school in Western Australia, on a cultural exchange programme.

Australian foreign ministry spokesman Angus Mackenzie said the group was expected to return to Bangkok on Wednesday and fly back to Australia shortly afterward.

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