

Southeast Asian snapshots



New Mandala Associate Editor Mish Khan wades through the fortnight that was in this crazy, chaotic corner of the globe.

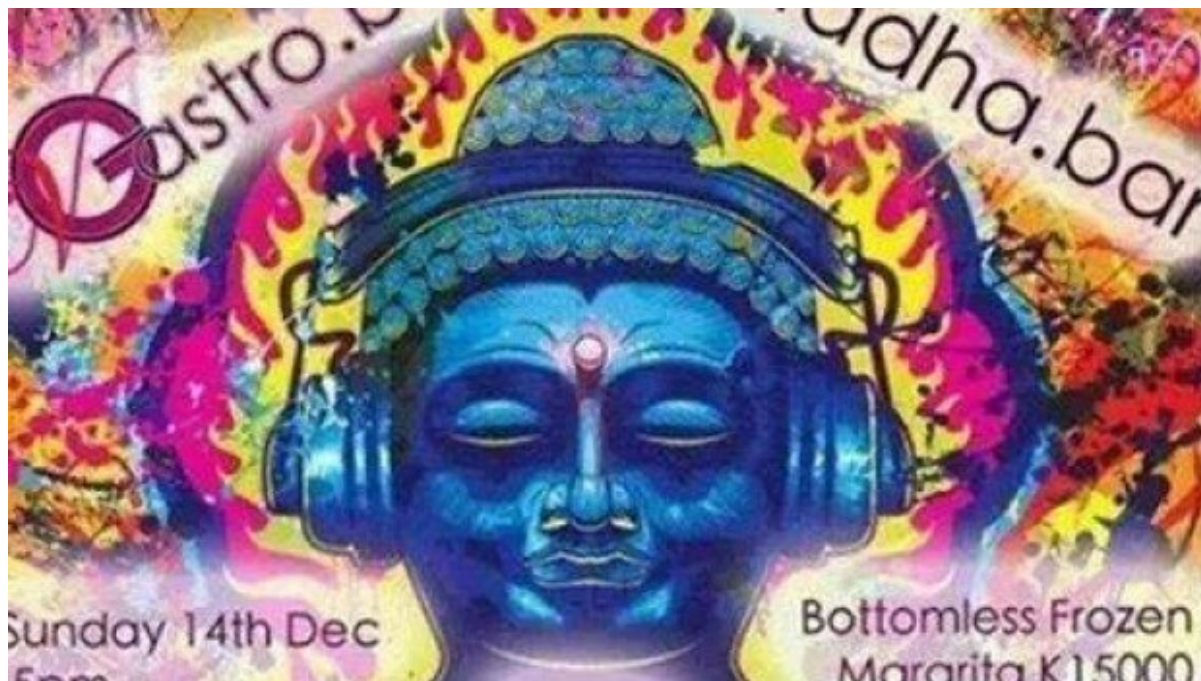
This week she casts the net a little wider to bring you nonsense from North Korea, epic tantrums from Thailand and debauchery Down Under.

“Buddha bar” prisoner released - but no all is zen

34 year-old-New Zealand man Phil Blackwood, who was imprisoned nearly one year ago, along with co-accused local colleagues Ko Tun Thurein and Ko Htut Ko Ko Lwin, [is set to walk free.](#)

Released on presidential amnesty along with 100 other political prisoners, the Yangon-based bar owner was convicted last December to two-and-a-half years of hard labor at the infamous Insein

prison, [after using imagery of the Buddha to promote an event on the bar's Facebook page](#). Psychedelic images featuring the Buddha are [a common visual in](#) the West.



After realising the mistake was offensive, Blackwood and his colleagues quickly removed the post and publicly apologised. However, the trio were convicted after [fierce lobbying by hardline Buddhist nationalist groups](#). The original image has since been dubbed [one of most dangerous images to be shared in 2015](#).

Blackwood's high-profile arrest and pressure from abroad did not, however, pan out for his local colleagues, [who have not been pardoned](#). This has raised eyebrows, clearly suggesting that Blackwood was favourably pardoned as a Westerner.

Human Rights Watch [said](#) “[It would be] yet another indication of the transparently politicised nature of the Burmese legal system if one of three people convicted for the same offence is released but not the other two.”

KIM1001 – dictator asks for own university course

The prestigious University of Indonesia has [been instructed to consider running a special course on North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un](#), at the request of the North Korean government.

The request came as part of a recent partnership between the institution and the shadowy, authoritarian state. The University's International Office stated, “The demand for a special Kim Jong-un class is part of the agreement between the country's university and UI to carry out exchanges of students, staff and lecturers.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzt0IACxIFA>

The suggestion is being poorly received, with one comment reading “what would they teach, 'how to destroy a country and 'how to be a total psycho?’”. Others have questioned the institution’s priorities, [given its recent ban of LGBT groups](#). Whether the course would conform to North Korea’s absurd propaganda about the 33-year-old figure, such as being a child prodigy [who could drive at three](#) and a [world class music composer](#), remains unclear.

Thai judge’s tantrums go viral

Recent video footage of a Thai judge going berserk after receiving a parking ticket has gone viral in Thailand (although in the true Thailand spirit, users have been [warned](#) it is now illegal to share the video).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4qtdAwmcvw>

The video shows the woman storming around the Department of Land Transport in anger, knocking a bottle over, and brandishing her ID while yelling "F*&king remember that I am your boss!"

Users quickly spouted jokes about the epic rage tantrum, with the top comment reading: "Is a person like this our judge? My old neighbour could be one too, then". One store parodied the event on a t-shirt.



Authorities in Thailand [explained](#) that the judge, Chidchanok Paensuwan, may be mentally ill and has “only been tasked with secretarial work” since an incident in 2012 where she parked in the middle of Paholyothin Road, blocking two lanes of traffic.

Bogan behaviour not a bonanza down under

Lee Kuan Yew once warned that Australia was in danger of becoming the “white trash of Asia”. His fears were realised on Tuesday as Australian rugby player Mitchell Pearce, the captain of the rich and powerful Sydney Roosters club, made news around the world for his [drunken behaviour on Australia Day](#).

A video has circulated showing a heavily intoxicated Pearce attending a party. He is asked to leave after making unwanted advances towards a woman, urinating himself, and simulating sexual intercourse with a dog.



The incident has sparked backlash, with many calling for Pearce to be punished while others are defending his behaviour. The scandal, however, is nothing new to Australian “footy” culture, which has [long been marred by similar antics](#).

If Australia plans to be a winner in the Asian century, our culture of tolerating aggressive machismo is certainly winning over no-one.

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