



Title :	Universities to tackle student gambling issue
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## Universities to tackle student gambling issue

THE NATION

MORE than 500,000 university students are addicted to gambling, and peer pressure, as well as media influence are major factors behind this, a study by Ramkhamhaeng University has revealed.

The most popular forms of gambling were found to be wagers on football, cards and the underground lottery.

In response to this finding, eight top universities have decided to launch a pilot project to curb gambling in campuses, particularly among first-year students.

Pongsathorn Chantarasamee, manager of the Information Centre for Gambling Control Public Policy (ICGP), cited the 2012-13 study on undergraduates done by Ramkhamhaeng University's Faculty of Mass Communication. It showed that more than 500,000 students either bet on football, play cards or buy underground lottery tickets.

The main factors were found to be peer pressure, media reports both online and in print, plus the lack of

strict measures to control the habit. It was also found that this spawned other problems such as rising debt and prostitution.

Natthakorn Withitanon, a law lecturer at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, said a related study in the province showed that female students were more into gambling than their young men. He said most people don't think gambling is a major issue because their parents also buy the lottery, citing a survey in the South that found that people bet on boxing every Sunday, while also gambling on the lottery and stocks on a daily basis.

"Some people claim that their children's tuition fee is earned this way," Natthakorn said.

Chatchai Ngernphoklang, a political science lecturer at Maha Sarakham University, said moves to prevent students from gambling should start from the first year in university, and it could take the form of senior students guiding their juniors.

He said universities could opt for short films or holding anti-gambling activities on different days of the

month, as well as include education against gambling in the student-orientation programme so it is imprinted in freshmen's minds.

Asst Prof Nivech Arunberkfah, from the humanities and social science faculty at Prince of Songkhla's Pattani campus, said the anti-gambling campaign could be linked to religion like in the South. For instance, gambling is considered evil under Sharia law, so any money earned from betting would be considered sinful.

Burapha University's political science and law lecturer Vichien Tansirikongkhon said eight universities decided to conduct studies in their respective campuses, and then create and propose guidelines to the ICGP. They could also organise a mutual "campus visit" programme to learn and network, before it is turned into an anti-gambling campaign in other universities, he added.

The eight universities are Chandra-kasem Rajabhat, Ramkhamhaeng, Burapha, Kasetsart, Chiang Rai Rajabhat, Maha Sarakham, Walailak and Payap.