

MEDIA INFO

CELEBRATING SONGKRAN IN KELANTAN



With a large Siamese population concentrated in the Tumpat area, it's no wonder that the Siamese festival of Songkran is celebrated with much zest in Kelantan state.

The Songkran festival, held on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar during the full moon period, is a new year celebration among the Siamese. This year, the Siamese community in Kelantan celebrates the occasion on 14 April at the Sukhontharam temple in Tumpat. Among the events lined up are traditional dances and cultural performances, a Miss Songkran parade, and friendly water fights!

During the Songkran festival, many people usually splash water at others in good fun but there is more to it than that. In Kelantan, it is a day for Buddhists to do good deeds and receive blessings. Kelantan Buddhists visit temples with offerings of alms such as clothes, food and money to the monks and the poor.

They also participate in bathing ceremonies to clean Buddha images and the temple compounds. It is believed that the cleansing ceremony is a chance for Buddhists

to start life on the new year with a clean slate as well as to purge the bad deeds and sins of the previous year.

A special ceremony to bathe the Buddha images and Buddhist monks is also held on this day. To start the occasion, the chief monk will first bathe the Buddha images. He will then sit below a canopy of white cloth surrounded by urns of perfumed water. The junior monks and those attending the ceremony will take turns to bathe him by pouring a bowl of scented water over the cloth onto his head. Each will then take his or her place next to the chief monk below the canopy. Other Buddhists will then participate in the bathing ceremony by first bathing the Buddha images followed by the chief monk, the junior monks, the parents, the elders, family members and friends. At the end of the ceremony, the monk is then given a new set of saffron robes and accompanied in a procession to the temple hall for special prayers. The congregation receives a blessing in return.

The Songkran festival promotes good values such as unity, respect and peace among the people in a fun way. The custom of throwing water at friends and family is taken in good humour. Incidentally, this water-throwing festival coincides with the hottest season of the year, thus, getting drenched is a welcome relief!

At home, as a symbol of their respect to the elders and to receive their blessings and forgiveness, children pour water into the palms of their parents with scented water.

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