

Thailand wants foreigners social media, bank account details

April 20 2016, by By Jocelyn Gecker

Want to live in Thailand? No problem, say Thai authorities. Just be prepared to reveal your social media habits, bank account information and the restaurants and night clubs where you hang out.

Thai authorities are now asking expatriates to fill out an elaborate form that asks a variety of personal information in the name of [national security](#) and crime prevention.

Providing the information is not mandatory, said police Maj. Gen. Chatchawan Wachirapaneekhun, the deputy commissioner of the Immigration Bureau's crime suppression unit. However, there is nothing on the form to indicate that answering the questions is optional.

"If you're not intending to commit crimes, these questions should not be a problem," said Chatchawan, who drew up the form. "And they are not mandatory anyway. If you don't want to answer these questions, then you can simply just cross them out."

The form titled "Record of Foreigner Information" entered circulation earlier this month. It asks for standard personal information like name, age and passport details. But it adds new sections to pre-existing forms, such as "All Social Media Used by Foreigner," and the names of places the applicant frequents, specifying clubs, restaurants, shops, hospitals and elsewhere.

It also asks for bank account numbers, and information on any vehicle

and license plates of cars or motorcycles the applicant uses.

Chatchawan said that an increase in the country's foreign population has led to more crimes by foreigners, and the new information will help authorities if they need to track down criminals.

"We want to collect [information](#) to keep track of foreigners and be able to contact them directly in the case of emergencies and national security," he said. "It will support our future work in the case of terrorism and crime that affects Thai society."

Thailand's appeal has led to record tourist numbers every year, peaking in 2015 at nearly 30 million arrivals. Authorities have also promoted the country as an ideal retirement destination.

Beaches, red-light districts, laid-back lifestyle combined with lax law enforcement and corruption in the justice system have also made Thailand a magnet for pedophiles, mafia gangs and other criminals.

The military junta that took power in a May 2014 coup has said one of its missions is to clean up Thailand's image and corrupt law enforcement agencies.

Rights groups say the new questionnaire is the latest violation of basic rights under the military-ruled government, which has cracked down on civil liberties in Thailand.

"This is a highly intrusive requirement that tramples on people's privacy and will enable the Thai government to build files on foreigners for further action at a time of their choosing," said Brad Adams, the Asia director of Human Rights Watch.

He said it risks alienating foreign investors and tourists who play a major

role in the Thai economy.

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