

# Recent Transport Disasters Blamed On Spirits : Khaosod Online

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By Khaosod Online  
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## Recent Transport Disasters Blamed On Spirits

by Warawita Yaemsuda, Teeranai Charuvastra

(14 September) Supernatural powers are cited as the factors behind recent high-profile accidents in Thailand, namely the botched landing of a Thai Airways plane at Bangkok's main airport earlier this week.

14 people were injured during the evacuation from the Airbus A330-300 which skid off the runway of Suvarnabhumi Airport on 9 September.

While initial investigation pointed to a malfunctioned landing gear (the officials have not yet finished their inquiry), the Managing Director of Thai Airways, Mr. Sorajak Kasemsuvan, is not taking chances. He said his company will conduct a major ceremony to appease the malevolent spirits said to be haunting the airport.

He is quoted as saying that the ceremony will also thank the said spirits for assisting with the successful operation to salvage the plane from the runway.

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Mr. Sorajak's comment followed a series of coverage by *Thai Rath*, the best-selling newspaper in Thailand, which gave extensive attention to the supposed involvement of ghosts and spirits in the accident.

Previously, Thai Rath has reported that a ghost in "traditional costume" (which strangely resembles the outfit Thai Airways flight attendants wear) has helped evacuate the passengers from the aircraft shortly after it slid off the runway.

The newspaper has also quoted Mr. Chotisak Asapaviriya, a former director of Airports Authority of Thailand (AOT), as saying that he had organised a regular prayer session to placate the vengeful spirits which reside in the airport vicinity.

At the ceremony to unveil the airport in 2006, Mr. Chotisak told Thai Rath, an official in charge of searching for explosive materials had broken down into a trance, claiming that he was being possessed by a "grandfather ghost" who demanded a shrine to be built on the airport compound. The shrine was quickly built afterwards.

Thai Rath helpfully points out that 8 *major* shrines have been built around Suvarnabhumi Airport by the staff in order to ward off evil spirits, such as a shrine dedicated to the Naga (holy big snake in Buddhist myths) which is presumably angered by construction of the airport on what was once a swamp inhabited by snakes.

Other smaller shrines include a strangely named "Italian Shrine".

The newspaper cited the curses of the residing ghosts as the main reason the construction of the airport had been delayed for decades. The more rational Thais, however, would point to mire of corruption that has plagued the project before the government of Thaksin Shinawatra finalised the project in late 2005.

Dr. Smith Thammasaroj, former director of Suvarnabhumi Airport, told Thai Rath he was convinced of the existence of supernatural entities around the airport even though, he admitted, he had never



encountered any particular case personally.

The scientist who once headed Thailand's Meteorological Department said he had invited so many psychics to conduct ceremonies and constructed so many shrines "that I can't keep count".

"We even had to build a condominium for the ghosts to reside," Dr. Smith said, "Because the spirits are so many individual spirit houses won't be enough".

However, there has been few secular responses to the accident at Suvarnabhumi Airport on 9 September, too.

Sqn.Ldr. Sitha Tiwaree, Managing Director AOT, said the authority has conducted an Emergency Plan Rehearsal, in which the airport's fire and rescue departments took part.

The accident involving the Airbus was the most severe case at the airport since its opening 7 years ago, he said.

Sqn.Ldr. Sitha stressed that the incident will be analysed for future adjustment of the Emergency Plan, particularly how to transport passengers to the airport building - the procedure that received several complaints on 9 September. The rehearsal also pointed out that the airline crew was not familiar with the runway, causing complications during the latest accident, the director noted.

In long term, he said, the airport plans to build another substitute runway, in order to sustain further service. The AOT board will meet on Tuesday, 17 September to discuss about the construction budget, according to Sqn.Ldr. Sitha.

But it seems the spirits do not only roam the sky.

After a train headed from Malaysia to Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Station derailed in the capital city yesterday, *Daily News*, the second best selling newspaper of the kingdom, reported that a certain curse might be involved.

According to Daily News, a painting at Hua Lamphong depicted a small obstacle in the rail track, which perfectly explains the frequent derailments - more than 15 incidents this year alone.

Even Transport Minister Chatchart Sitthipan, best known for his hands-on approach in inspecting problems of public transports, is mulling a paranormal hands-on solution. He has reportedly ordered the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry to consider a plan to organise a merit-making ceremony for the sake of his Ministry.

During the past few months, Mr. Chatchart noted, the country has suffered from many transport accidents such as minivan crashes, train derailments, boat crashes, and the Thai Airways incident.

"There have been more deaths than usual. Many have suggested that the Ministry of Transport needs a large-scale merit-making ceremony" Mr. Chatchart said.

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