surviving woman had a well-known history of violent drunken behaviour - including punching police officers - the foreign media stuck to its Thai-bashing reports. Even though the female victim went on to change her account of events preceding the shooting, the foreign press adhered to the original sensationalised (and perhaps fabricated) reports that she was shot for no reason whatsoever by the drunk policeman. The cop, who had a history of violence, fled the scene after the shooting.



Sure, I pity the murdered guy in Pai district (and his family) and hope that the officer spends time incarcerated for this hideous crime. But I wish that the foreign media wouldn't jump to sensational conclusions every time something like this happens. They immediately compared the crime in Pai to the awful backpacker-killing cop in Kanchanburi a few years ago. The media should be advised instead to wait for clearer and more accurate firsthand reports before setting up the gallows and taking Thailand to the cleaners.

Then there's the other Western media favourite: Thailand's spicy nightlife. Some foreigners may conclude that the true fault behind sensationalist reports on this subject is Thailand's own - due to governments and law-enforcers constantly turning a blind-eye to illegal goings-on. Yet, it could be argued that sensationalist foreign reports just make the problem worse.

Take a recent Canadian documentary by an "award-winning" journalist from Global BC. According to this enlightened reporter, after two weeks of intensive undercover research, it was found that "most of them [naughty show bars in two areas in the Silom and Sukhumvit districts in Bangkok] operate under prison-like conditions". At these venues "a 16-year-old can be had for Bt600 a time" and "underaged girls are numbered like cattle". Pattaya is no better according to the reporter: "Prepubescents can be found at every street corner", "there are many hotels that allow you to rape children", and "paedophiles who get caught can just bribe their way out".

This documentary, when posted on YouTube, received so many complaints that it was finally pulled off the site. I am certainly not saying that this kind of activity does not go on, because it does, but sensationalist reporting like this is only going to encourage more of the worst kind of tourist to visit Thailand.

I'll admit, and Thais will admit, that Thailand has a very high murder rate - which includes a fair number of Westerners. Thailand's statistics, though, don't differentiate between murder charges and murder convictions. I feel it unfair, however, that the foreign media continues, as it has been doing for decades, to report on this in a sensational and sometimes fabricated way. Unfortunately, this sensationalism is very similar to that purveyed by some of the foreign gossip-mongers here, who believe everything they read and hear.

And finally, I believe it is more than possible that there is a strong connection between those kind of people and foreign reporters looking for a sensational story.

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