

## **Thailand Sees Slower Spending Growth During Songkran Amid Political Concerns**

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**By Piyarat Nisangkard**

BANGKOK, April 8 (Bernama) -- Thailand's consumers will continue to spend more for the upcoming Songkran festivities which will start this weekend but spending growth will be marginal as political crisis in the country affects confidence.

Spending will grow by 2.36 per cent to 116.81 billion baht, the lowest expansion in four years, according to the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC) survey.

Normally, spending growth during the festival should be in the double-digit but consumers were now concerned with the political turmoil, which translated into 'not much increase' in spending and travelling, said Thanavath Phonvichai, director at UTCC's Economic and Business Forecasting Centre.

The survey involved 1,233 respondents.

Last year, consumer spending during Songkran rose 10.42 per cent to 114.11 billion baht.

People are worried about their future incomes, said Thanavath.

The centre said more people would borrow this year to celebrate the Songkran festival.

For this year, 20.1 per cent of the respondents stated that they intended to borrow for the festive season compared with just 9.7 per cent three years ago.

Thanavath said the trend that more people would borrow for the occasion was a dangerous sign to the economy as it clearly showed that the people do not have enough income to cover their spending.

The household debt was expected to increase to worrying levels and it is now at 80 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, he added.

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