Briton charged with lese majeste

POLICE have arrested a Briton with lese majeste for his remarks about Princesses Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Soamsawali, police officials and sources said yesterday.

The sources said Mark Davis was arrested on March 4 at Kan eng restaurant in Hua Hin resort, Prachuap Khiri Khan, but was later released on bail.

The Briton, who reportedly owns a restaurant in Hua Hin, denied the lese majeste charge, the sources said.

Senior police officials in Prachuap Khiri Khan confirmed yesterday that a Briton has been charged with lese majeste, but refused to give details.

Prachuap Khiri Khan Governor Boonchuay Srisarakham, however, said he did not know about the case.

Pol Col Santi Siriphan, Prachuap Khiri Khan police chief, said police were questioning witnesses and would formally file a charge against Davis soon.

Pol Lt Col Nirand Permpanich, chief of Hua Hin police, said senior provincial officials did not want to publicize the case because of its sensitivity.

According to the sources, the Briton allegedly commented negatively with a Swedish friend on HRH Princess Soamsawali who was presiding over the opening of the Sofitel Hotel on March 4.

Two Thais overheard Davis' remarks, which also offended HRH Princess Sirindhorn, and asked police to arrest him, the sources said.

A source said the Briton was drunk when he made the comments.

On being arrested, Davis asked his accusers whether they really understood what he had said, the source added.

Pol Col Santi said if Davis was found guilty, he would ask the Police Department to declare the man persona non grata.

Davis is one of a few foreigners known to have been arrested for allegations of majeste in Thailand.

Health delegation to visit Laos

PUBLIC Health Minister Suthas Ngern-muen will lead a team to Laos at the end of this month for talks on medical cooperation between the two countries.

He said yesterday Thailand has agreed to provide medical assistance to Laos in terms of personnel training.

Suthas will accompany a team of doctors who will demonstrate diagnosis and treatment methods.

He said there are many health institutions in Thailand which are capable of training Laotian personnel.