



3RD INTERNATIONAL LAO NEW YEAR FESTIVAL (ILNYF)

ເທສກາຣມະຫາສິງກາຣປີໃໝ່ລາວນາງຊາດ ★ *Celebrate, Collaborate, Educate & Advocate*

Day Festival: San Francisco's UN Plaza ★ Evening Gala: St. Mary's Cathedral ★ Saturday, April 30, 2011

ປີໃໝ່ລາວ | *Pii May Lao* or Lao New Year

The Lao people celebrate their New Year, *Pii May* (pronounced Pii-My) (ປີໃໝ່) or *Kut Songkaan* (ກຸດສິງການ) according to the ancient Hindu calendar, which falls around April 13, 14, or 15 in the Gregorian calendar. The celebration is considered to be the most important and biggest traditional festival in the country. The festival coincides with the end of the dry season and the start of the monsoon season. It is seen as a day of rebirth and purification.

Pii May Lao is a three-day event. The first day is called *Sangkhan Luang* (ສັງຂານລ່ວງ) or the last day of the old year. This is the time when people clean their houses in preparation for the New Year. On this day, people earn merit and blessings by building mounds of sand, usually on the river banks and temple grounds, which are then decorated with small triangular flags, flowers, money and candles. This day falls on Thursday, April 14th in 2011.

The second day is called *Sangkhan Nao* (ສັງຂານເນົາ), which is the day between the old and the New Year (This day is considered neither to be part of the old year or the New Year). *Sangkhan Nao* is also known as the day of rest, which means all work is forbidden. Only fun activities should take place such as visiting relatives and friends, taking a day trip or the customary throwing of water on friends and passers-by. At night time, there is usually a *Lamvong* (ລຳວົງ) or circle dancing party and everyone dresses their best to partake in the celebration. Plenty of food and drinks are available well into the night. This year, *Sangkhan Nao* is only one day long and falls on Friday, April 15th.

The third day of the Lao New Year is called *Sangkhan Kheun Pii May* (ສັງຂານຂຶ້ນປີໃໝ່). It is the start of the New Year and is the most joyous day of the festival. People go to the temple and make offerings to gain merit. Young people prepare scented water with flowers and visit their grandparents, parents, and elders. They rinse the elders' hands with the water and ask for their blessings and forgiveness for any wrong-doings in the past year. At home they engage in a special family ceremony called the *Suukhwan* (ສູ່ຂວັນ) or *Baci* (ບາສີ) to welcome the New Year in which participants then take turns tying the blessed white strings around each other's wrists to wish them good luck and prosperity for the New Year.

For 2011 the Lao New Year day falls on **Saturday, April 16th**.

Article provided by Vinya Sysamouth, Ph.D, Center for Lao Studies



IN THE NEWS

- San Francisco Chronicle, SFgate.com | The New York Times | AsianWeek | Only In San Francisco
- San Francisco Public Library | Lao Overseas TV | Radio Free Asia | Lao Champa TV | Lao Star TV | LaoBuddy.com
- Lokdamneun Magazine | LaoKingdom.com | Hyphen Magazine | SFArts.org | APEX Express, KPFA 94.1FM
- Lao Roots Magazine | Voice of America (VOA) | Lao American Magazine

OFFICIAL RECOGNITIONS

- San Francisco Board of Supervisors Proclamation | California State Senate Resolution | Certificate of Honor
- Greetings and Congratulations | Marin County Resolution | Congressman Mike Honda Greetings