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# MONKEY BIZ

A macaque at 'Monkey Hill' is fed a peanut from a tourist.  
Photo: The Phuket News

## OFFICIAL TASK FORCE TO TARGET ILLEGAL VENDORS ON 'MONKEY HILL'

The Phuket News  
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Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong led a high-profile meeting last week to address the growing illegal encroachment on Khao Toh Sae in Phuket Town, and to tackle the rising number of incidents of macaques attacking tourists and local residents.

The meeting, held on Jan 24 at the old Provincial Hall, which now serves as the offices of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO), saw the participation of key officials from government agencies, including the Phuket Damrongdhama Center (Provincial Ombudsman's Office) and Phuket forestry officials.

The issue was brought to light after several complaints were lodged

at the Phuket Damrongdhama Center, prompting the convening of the meeting to seek immediate solutions.

Among the decisions made during the meeting were directives to the Phuket Forestry Office to inform vendors that selling products in the protected forest areas is strictly prohibited.

Shops in the area are mandated to be demolished promptly, with alternative selling locations designated by the government, said an official report of the meeting.

Of note, many of the vendors on the popular tourist attraction hill – with monkeys as the main drawcard, but also offering stunning views of Phuket Town and the azure waters off the east coast – sell food for monkeys for tourists to buy, despite the many signs warning visitors to not feed

any animals on the hill, mostly for safety reasons.

To enforce the new measures announced last week, an operational team, comprising personnel from the Phuket Forestry Office; Region 8 Police; the Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc), which serves as the political arm of the Thai military; the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) and additional officers will be stationed in the Khao Toh Sae area.

The operation to clear illegal vendors was set to commence yesterday (Feb 1) with a focus on ensuring order and safety, said the report.

Last year the remaining 300 rai of protected forest land on Khao Toh Sae, locally called 'Monkey Hill', was fenced off to prevent further

encroachment.

The Phuket Damrongdhama Center has been tasked with leading the initiative. A guard post will be located at the bottom of the road up the hill to serve as a screening point for tourists and local residents. Signs advising on proper conduct, warnings, and area prohibitions will be strategically placed every 500 metres.

The guard post will be staffed by five officers for an initial period of one month. The five officers will comprise one officer from the Phuket Forestry Office and one official from the PPAO, as well as three security personnel. One of the security personnel will be provided by the Phuket branch of Isoc while the other two will be from the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor).

Vendors illegally located on protected forest land will receive notice to...

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Teen rapes spur street justice



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The 'Burgerfest' is set to return



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# News

## ‘Monkey Hill’ illegal vendors face eviction

Continued from page 1  
...vacate the site. Failure to comply will result in legal action, the official report warned.

### MONKEY TROUBLE

Meanwhile, the Khao Phra Thaeo Nature and Wildlife Study Center has been assigned the responsibility of finding a solution to relocate macaques causing disturbances in the area. Cooperation with relevant agencies will be sought to develop methods for feeding monkeys that prevent future disruptions.

The PPAO, along with Phuket City Municipality and Ratsada Municipality, will collaborate on maintaining the cleanliness in the area. A formal request for documents showcasing the extent of the forest area assigned by the Forest Department will be submitted.

As part of a comprehensive plan to enhance the Khao To Sae area, the PPAO has



Photo: The Phuket News

proposed developmental initiatives, including the creation of a tram system for tourists and local residents to use to go up and down the hill.

The PPAO has also proposed hiring additional security personnel, and implementing measures to promote cleanliness, convenience, beauty, and safety in the region.

The proposals aim to boost tourism and create a positive experience for visitors to the popular hill and its viewpoint, said the official report.

## Phuket Town seeks ‘special admin’ status

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Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas has presented to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin a formal request for ‘Nakhon Phuket’ (‘Phuket City Municipality’) to be granted special administration status so that it can better provide for its residents and adequately further develop the town.

Mr Saroj led a delegation to Government House to deliver the formal request on Jan 19, reported national state news agency NNT.

The letter urged the transformation of Phuket City Municipality into a special local government organisation. The letter, presented at the Naree Samoson Building at Government House, was received by Prime Minister Settha, who



Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Thepsuthin (centre) chairs the meeting at Government House on Jan 19 to receive the formal request. Photo: NNT

in turn promptly assigned the request to Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Thepsuthin to review.

Deputy Prime Minister Somsak is also Chairman of the Decentralisation to Local Administrative Organisations Committee (DLOC). The DLOC operates under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, at the Prime Minister's Office.

In addition to submitting the formal request, Mayor Sa-

roj presented a comprehensive research report, including a management research project and spatial development

Deputy Prime Minister Somsak expressed support for the initiative. He conveyed the policy of the DLOC, and emphasised the potential establishment of special forms of local government organisations in specific areas or cities, each tasked with a unique mission and powers tailored to their distinctive characteristics.

“This initiative not only addresses the city’s immediate problems but also positions it strategically in dimensions of care, craft and culture, and creativity. As the wheels of transformation are set in motion, Phuket City looks toward a future where it can more aptly respond to the needs and expectations of its residents,” Mayor Saroj said.

of the Prime Minister’s Office, and Anu Yaemsang, Director of the Office of the Decentralisation to Local Administrative Organisations Committee (DLOC).

the formal request, Mayor Sa-

## Governor wants AI traffic control

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON SUWANARAT has announced that the provincial government is aiming to have AI traffic control systems rolled out to help alleviate the ongoing traffic congestion in key areas on the island.

The Phuket Provincial Government has a policy to solve road accidents and traffic congestion by using AI technology to control traffic lights, Governor Sophon told a meeting of the Phuket Provincial Road Safety Administration Center committee at Phuket Provincial Hall on Jan 24.

Present for the meeting were Phuket Vice Governor Saththa Thongkham as well as the heads of a range of government offices and agencies, including Udomphon Kan, Director of the Phuket Provincial office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket).

No details of exactly what systems were to be rolled out at which key locations on the island were revealed in an official report of the meeting.

Instead, the official report noted that the meeting included a presentation of the results of the operations of the Road and Marine Accident Prevention and Reduction Operations Center during the New Year holidays – the ‘Seven Days of Danger’ for New Year 2024 – along with a summary of law enforcement during the period and an analysis of causes of road accidents.

However, none of those results were made public in the official report.

According to the official report, the meeting was briefed on the growing traffic situation on secondary roads, and the ongoing efforts in “controlling and organising rental car operators in the area”.

Also discussed at the meeting were the



Photo: PR Phuket

effectiveness of the ‘Wearing a helmet 100%’ campaign, efforts to prevent people riding motorbikes through underpasses, and managing traffic congestion and at U-turn points on Route 402, better known as Thepkrasattri Rd.

Again, no specifics of any of these issues were revealed in the official report.

Meanwhile, Patong Police are continuing their campaign to clear the streets of illegally parked vehicles, including cars, vans and motorbikes.

In Phuket Town, Phuket City Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas on Wednesday presided over a public meeting to gain feedback and suggestions from local residents about changing the parking situation at the old ‘Daeng Plaza’ on Phuket Rd, in the heart of Phuket Town’s commercial district.

The result of the meeting, which saw 124 local residents turn out, was that a preliminary design is to be drawn up to allow parking for 161 cars, four taxis, 45 motorbikes, three passenger vans and eight passenger buses. The area is also to include two disabled parking spaces.

“More information will need to be studied to solve the problem of parking spots, especially in Phuket Old Town – there aren’t enough of them, which nowadays is a big problem affecting the daily life of local residents and our tourism image, is very important,” Mayor Saroj said. *The Phuket News*

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# Two beaten over raping girls, 12 and 14 years old

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
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**W**ichit Police are investigating the beating of two young men who were attacked in revenge for the pair allegedly plying two girls, aged 12 and 14, with alcohol and raping them.

The two men presented themselves at Wichit Police Station at 9:53pm on Jan 23 to file a formal complaint of the beating, which they said was carried out by eight other young men.

Due to the nature of the incident, Wichit Police Chief Pol Col Chatru Chukaew was informed of the complaint, as were Deputy Chiefs Pol Lt Col Rachan Phanwai and Pol Lt Col Wuttichai Chanfai.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum and Deputy Commanders Pol Lt Col Akanit Danpitaksart and Pol Col Teerawat Liamsuwan also joined the investigation.

Maj Gen Sinlert said the incident involved two groups of youths, one from Phuket



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Town, the other from Chalong.

The two men – one a 20-year-old from Moo 1 Chalong; the other an 18-year-old from Moo 1, Wichit – told police the attack was carried out in an alley next to Klong Mudong Market in the hours between late on Jan 22 and early Jan 23.

The two men were familiar with their attackers, but could name only four of them by their nicknames: Mr Guy, Mr Diao, Mr Jim and Mr Jane.

The attack was recorded on video, which shows the two men being repeatedly struck

and kicked, and repeatedly stomped on the head.

One of the attackers, 'Mr Diao', later told reporters that the attack was carried out for revenge. The two men were wanted for getting two girls drunk then raping them at a house in Chalong last month.

The group of eight were trying to hunt down three men involved in the incident, but on that night found only two of them, he said.

When confronting them, the two admitted to their part in the rapes, he said.

The two girls were at first

reluctant to admit what had happened. They felt shame and feared what would happen to them if they told anyone, he said.

"This kind of thing cannot be tolerated," 'Mr Diao' said.

Regardless, Maj Gen Sinlert said police were now looking to press charges against all eight who took part in the attack for "jointly together causing bodily harm".

The two girls have been urged to file a formal complaint at Chalong Police Station.

Maj Gen Sinlert also said that police were now cracking down on delinquent youths.

"We have measures to control youths after midnight by calling the parents to pick them up in accordance with the Child Protection Act, and we have set up teams to go out and patrol areas," he said.

"In addition to using Or-Sor [personnel from the Volunteer Defense Corps], we have started using patrols to search suspected persons, which we are doing. We are now increasing the intensity of our patrols," he added.

## Brussels fugitive caught working as Patong DJ

A 36-YEAR-OLD MAN sentenced to prison for 10 years in Belgium for attempted murder has been arrested in Patong, where he worked as a DJ at a nightlife venue.

The man, identified by police only as Achmal, 36, was taken into custody by Phuket Immigration officers at an apartment in Patong, Pol Maj Gen Phanthana Nuchanart, Deputy chief of the Immigration Bureau, announced at a press conference in Bangkok on Jan 23.

The date and location of Achmal's arrest was not reported. The name of the nightlife venue where he worked as a DJ was also not reported.

Achmal was a dual national and held passports issued by Belgium and Morocco, Maj Gen Phanthana explained. He was wanted on Criminal Court Arrest Warrant No. 878/2566 dated Dec 15, 2023,

Achmal was found guilty of "attempting to murder another person with premeditation, carrying a firearm without permission, possession of ammunition spare parts or accessories which were installed on a firearm without permission", Maj Gen Phanthana noted.



Photo: Immigration Bureau

The Court of Appeal of Brussels had sentenced Achmal to imprisonment for 10 years.

Immigration officers had found that Achmal had used both passports to repeatedly re-enter Thailand, switching which passport he used many times.

Achmal was tracked down and found to be moving between residences in Bangkok, Sisaket and Phuket.

Officers tracked him down to an apartment in Patong, where he was arrested.

Achmal "went undercover" to work as a DJ in a service establishment in the Patong area, Maj Gen Phanthana said.

Achmal was handed over to the Office of the Public Prosecutor, which is to work with the Foreign Office in order to oversee his extradition, he added.

*The Phuket News*

## Russian rockers face deportation

SEVEN MEMBERS OF A Russian rock band who oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine face deportation from Thailand after their arrest in Phuket for working illegally by performing a concert in Patong.

The seven members of the rock band 'Bi-2' were arrested after completing their concert at the Illuzion nightclub in Patong last on Jan 24, reported *The Phuket News'* Russian-language newspaper *Novosti Phuket*.

Phuket Provincial Court last Saturday (Jan 27) ordered the seven arrested, comprising six Russian nationals and one Israeli national, to pay a fine of B3,000 each.

Russian state news agency TASS reported that the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Phuket "noted" that none of the detained Russians applied for consular assistance.

TASS quoted Russian Consul in Phuket Vladimir Sosnov as saying, "We know about the arrest. None of the detainees turned to us for consular assistance."

RIA Novosti quoted Mr Sosnov as saying, "We received information today from the Phuket Provincial Immigration Police Depart-



Photo courtesy of MASH on Telegram.

ment that members of the 'Bi-2' band, seven people, will be transferred in the coming days to the Temporary Detention Center of the Royal Thai Police Immigration Bureau in Bangkok for subsequent deportation."

To which countries the seven were to be deported remained unclear.

The concert in Patong was the second performance by the band in Thailand, after performing in Pattaya on Jan 22. Videos of the arrest in Patong were published by MASH and SHOT news channels on Telegram.

TASS itself reported that in May last year the Russian Ministry of Justice added musician Egor Bortnik (Yegor Bortnik, Leva 'Bi-2') to its register of "foreign agents".

"The department clarified that Mr Bortnik opposed the 'special military operation' in

Ukraine and spoke negatively about the Russian Federation, its citizens and government bodies," TASS noted.

According to a report by Bloomberg, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Saturday accused the band members of sponsoring terrorism by publicly supporting Ukraine, raising concerns they may face criminal charges in Russia.

Russian Consul in Phuket Mr Sosnov said that the band members will be sent to Bangkok for deportation based on their citizenship.

Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* confirmed that four of the band members were Israeli citizens, including one who is also an Australian citizen.

Phuket, police, immigration and provincial figures all still remain silent on the arrests.

*The Phuket News*

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## Eva Beach grasps at new trial appeal

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Nakhon Sri Thammarat Administrative Court has accepted a motion that may derail a Supreme Administrative Court ruling last year deeming the Eva Beach development in Rawai as illegal construction.

The Supreme Administrative Court ruling also deemed Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos as negligent and guilty of malfeasance in his role in allowing building permits to be issued and allowing the construction to proceed.

According to court documents obtained by *The Phuket News*, Judge Thanakorn Saringkarn formally accepted the motion on Jan 19. A trial date has yet to be set.

The motion has been filed under Section 75 of Act on Establishment of Administrative Court and Administrative Court Procedure, B.E. 2542 (1999), which stipulates that a motion for a new trial may be accepted on any of the following conditions:

(1) the Administrative Court erred in hearing facts or there appears fresh evidence which may result in material alteration of the finally heard

Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) was present when court officials inspected the Eva Beach project in 2015. Photo: The Phuket News / file

facts;

(2) the real party or the third person did not appear in the proceedings or appeared but was unreasonably refused an opportunity to participate in the proceedings;

(3) there occurred in the process of trial and judgment a material impropriety which results in an unfair result of the case;

(4) the judgment or order has been passed or issued in reliance on any facts or law and subsequent material alteration of such facts or law

results in the judgment or order being contrary to the law then in force.

The application under paragraph one (1) may be submitted only when the party or third person has, without fault, no knowledge of such circumstance in the previous hearing, Section 75 notes.

The application for a new trial or for a new order shall be submitted within 90 days as from the day such person has known or should have known of the ground for the new trial and judgment or for

the new order but not later than five years as from the Administrative Court having the judgment or disposing order, the section adds.

Of note, the Supreme Administrative Court ruling was handed down on Sept 15 last year, giving a 90-day window for applications for a new trial to be submitted. That deadline expired on Dec 14, yet the motion for a new trial was formally issued on Jan 19.

According to court documents, it appears that the motion was accepted under

paragraph two (2), "that the real party or the third person did not appear in the proceedings or appeared but was unreasonably refused an opportunity to participate in the proceedings", as a list of owners of the units at Eva Beach have been listed as parties to the motion.

At this stage it appears that if the motion is successful under this appeal, developers in at least Phuket will be able to continue with illegal construction by using the unfair impact on victims who buy the properties as a way of allowing the illegal construction to remain.

The motion makes no reference to the guilty verdicts handed down by the Supreme Administrative Court to Rawai Mayor Aroon, who so far remains unimpeached for for his "negligence" and "malfeasance" in allowing illegal construction to proceed.

While the Eva Beach case was being heard at the Supreme Court, Mayor Aroon came under fire in 2017 for allowing illegal construction to continue on the coastal road along Krathing Cape, north of Nai Harn. The incident gained national attention in the media.

## Russian poker club busted in Rawai

FIVE RUSSIANS, FOUR MEN and one woman, were arrested in a gambling raid at a luxury villa in Rawai on Jan 22.

Officers from Region 8 Police raided the villa, in Soi Salika, at about 5:30pm. The raid followed an investigation into illegal gambling and was executed with the authority of a warrant, Region 8 Police reported.

The five arrested at the site were all Russian nationals, named by police as Aleksandr Shelgunov, 36; Vasilii Piskunov, 39; Pavel Mishanov, 38; Evgenii Vylegzhanin, 23; and Ksenia Savranchuk, 36.

Officers seized as evidence a large gambling table, two decks of playing cards and betting chips amounting to the equivalent of B356,300 that were being used at the time the officers entered the property.

Also seized were two books for recording income and expenses, two stopwatches, another spare gambling table and 508 spare



Photo: Region 8 Police

betting chips representing a value of "approximately" B1,619,739

Officers also seized the hard disk for the CCTV system at the house, and an assortment of illegal shisha (or hookah, or baraku) contraband.

One of the five arrested was charged with shisha contraband, while the rest were charged with gambling illegally, Region 8 Police noted, without specifying exactly who was charged with what.

All five were taken to Chalong Police Station for "further legal action", Region 8 Police confirmed.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Tourists arrested for magic mushrooms

AN AMERICAN WOMAN IS ONE of two tourists recently arrested for possession of illegal mushrooms after she was stopped at a road checkpoint in Kamala.

Pol Lt Suriya Kiatpaisansophon of the Kamala Police explained that officers had set up a traffic checkpoint at At the 'Naka Public Service Point' police box on the Kamala-Patong Road, in Moo 6, Kamala, on Jan 23.

At about 5:30pm, the officers at the checkpoint stopped 27-year-old Egyptian national Khaled Mohamed Abobakr, who was driving a Honda Click motorbike with American citizen Karima Salah Mohamed riding pillion.

The officers asked to inspect the vehicle and a shoulder bag the couple had with them.

The officers found dried 'buffalo dung' mushrooms in a clear, press-close plastic bag. The mushrooms, listed as a Category 5 narcotic and better known as 'magic mushrooms', weighed 2.8 grammes.

For reasons unexplained, the American woman was deemed to be the person in possession of the



A British man was arrested for magic mushrooms in Patong on Jan 25. Photo: Patong Police

mushrooms. The officers informed her of her rights and placed her under arrest, Kamala Police reported.

Ms Mohamed and the mushrooms were handed over to investigating officers for her to be charged with illegal possession of a Category 5 narcotic without permission, Kamala Police confirmed.

The arrest was one of four arrests for drugs reported by Kamala Police in a report posted on Jan 24.

In addition to the arrest of Ms Mohamed, one person was arrested with illegal possession of crystal meth with intent to sell and two suspects were arrested for selling kratom juice in bottles without permission, Kamala Police confirmed.

Eakkapop Thongtub

the Phuket News



# After a decade, olive ridley returns to Karon

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Officials from the Andaman Sea and Coastal Resources Research and Development Center have expressed their delight at the news of an olive ridley sea turtle laying eggs at Karon Beach for the first time in over a decade.

The discovery of the turtle and her nest of eggs was made around 6am last Saturday (Jan 27) by lifeguard Udom Phatthakor, who was conducting his daily inspection of the local beach area and laying down safety flags in the sand in front of the Centara Hotel Grand Resort and Spa.

While going about his business, Mr Udom came across the mother turtle busy burying her eggs in the sand and swiftly alerted local village chief Arunsri Klanma.

Ms Arunsri and her colleague, assistant village headperson Kaewta Thanomsin, then alerted officials at the Research and Development Center, who duly sent an inspection team to the site.



Photo: Kaewta Thanomsin

On arriving and inspecting the nest, officials confirmed the eggs had been laid at a depth of approximately 30cm, meaning they were therefore at risk of being flooded by the tide.

The decision was therefore made to relocate the eggs to a safer spot at the Sireetarn Marine Endangered Animal Rescue Center at Ao Makham, where they will be nursed carefully.

There were a total of 126 eggs, center officials confirmed, adding that olive ridley sea turtles typically take between 45-50 days to hatch. They also confirmed there was a chance the mother turtle may return to the site to lay yet more eggs and they were consequently maintaining surveillance at the site.

Officials confirmed this was the first time in over a decade that such a discovery

had been made at the Karon location, meaning extra reason for joy and celebration.

It is also the fourth instance of a turtle laying eggs locally this year after discoveries in Khao Lampi-Hat Thai Mueang National Park in Thai Muang, Phang Nga, north of Phuket on Jan 2, a further discovery in Phang Nga on Jan 6, and a third case at the same spot in Khao Lampi-Hat Thai Mueang National Park on Jan 22.



Phuket airport on Jan 24. Screenshot: Supplied

## Airport chokes with Immigration glitch

A DISRUPTION IN THE immigration biometrics system is what caused widespread delays at immigration checkpoints last week.

At time of press local officials had yet to publicly recognise whether the same system outage also caused delays at Phuket International Airport, despite a video sent to *The Phuket News* showing similar long delays at Phuket airport at the same time, on the same day (Jan 24).

Pol Maj Gen Choengron Rimpadee, commander of immigration officers at Suvarnabhumi Airport, said the system was currently undergoing repairs, causing delays at the immigration counters, reported Thai News Agency (TNA), operated by Thai state-owned broadcaster MCOT.

This, in turn, extended the time required for the processing of passport checks from the usual 45 seconds per person

to over one minute, said the report.

The malfunction primarily impacted the automated channels for passport checks, leading to severe congestion during peak flight hours, particularly for outbound passengers. The situation escalated quickly, resulting in long queues extending to the baggage inspection points.

"The Immigration Technology Center, overseeing the affected technology system has expedited the resolution. Simultaneously, Suvarnabhumi Airport's immigration checkpoints took immediate action according to their contingency plans, resorting to manual checks conducted by immigration officers and utilizing the airport's application to identify individuals with potential issues such as warrants or overstays," state-run TNA reported.

*The Phuket News*

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# Real estate hits B100bn boon

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Russian nationals led the way as over B100 billion was invested in Phuket real estate development last year, according to a study by a leading international investment management company.

Extensive project development and investment island-wide has resulted in the province being declared as the country's leader in regards to luxury property development and investment in 2023, the Colliers International report revealed.

Phattharachai Thawee-wong, Director of Research and Communications at Colliers International Thailand stated last Friday (Jan 26) that the emergence of luxury condominiums and villas in Bang Tao on the Island's west coast in particular have seen prices sky rocket to B100 million per rai in the area.

It has resulted in Bang Tao being unofficially referred to as 'Thong Lor', literally translating as 'liquid gold'.

Mr Phattharachai was referencing a report conducted by his firm on the overview



Photo: PR Phuket

of land transactions in 2023 in Thailand, with the majority taking place in tourist specific provinces such as Chonburi, Rayong, Hua Hin and Phuket.

"Following the reopening of the country after the COVID-19 pandemic, the most bustling tourism city in Thailand is Phuket," Mr Phattharachai said. "The recovering tourism sector has seen foreigners buying condominiums and pool villas at a phenomenal rate, either as a second home or to invest and rent out to people of the same nationality."

The latter practice is something especially prevalent amongst Russian nationals, according to Mr Phattharachai. "Russian nationals are the main group involved in this," he said. "We have witnessed many times the phenomenon of Russians buying multiple units, buying the whole floor in a complex or even the whole building. It resulted in the real estate market in Phuket truly exploding in 2023."

Mr Phattharachai further explained that it has been the opposite in Bangkok with high prices in the capital result-

ing in a somewhat stagnant market there during the past 12 months.

As a result many real estate developers from the capital joined overseas investors to focus on development opportunities in Phuket last year, with over B100bn pouring into the province, the highest figure in a 12-month period in many years.

"Extensive condominium development has seen more than 8,600 new units launched, far higher than the usual 3,000 units launched on a yearly basis, while over 1,000 units

have been launched through pool villa projects, with prices ranging between B40 million to B100mn," commented Mr Phattharachai.

Bang Tao has seen massive development with entrepreneurs investing in projects including a joint venture between Assetwise Public Company Limited (ASW) and Botanica Luxury Phuket Co Ltd. Others include Origin Company Property Ltd, Central Group, Siamese Asset Public Co Ltd and Habitat Group Co Ltd.

"There has been a massive influx of new developments in Bang Tao," Mr Phattharachai said. "As a result, the current price of land adjacent to the beach or near the beach has increased to more than B100mn per rai. Meanwhile, the rental price for condominiums is B1,000 per square metre resulting in typical rentals ranging between B40,000 to B70,000 per month."

Krit Techasamma, Managing Director of Origin Nationwide Company Limited, a subsidiary of Origin Property Public Company, or ORI, said that the company has invested in developing the Jin Resort World Phuket Bangtao Beach

project, valued at B8bn on an area of 25 rai next to Bang Tao Beach. It is a beach known for beautiful sunsets and is considered a central location for visitors to travel elsewhere while in Phuket, Mr Krit said.

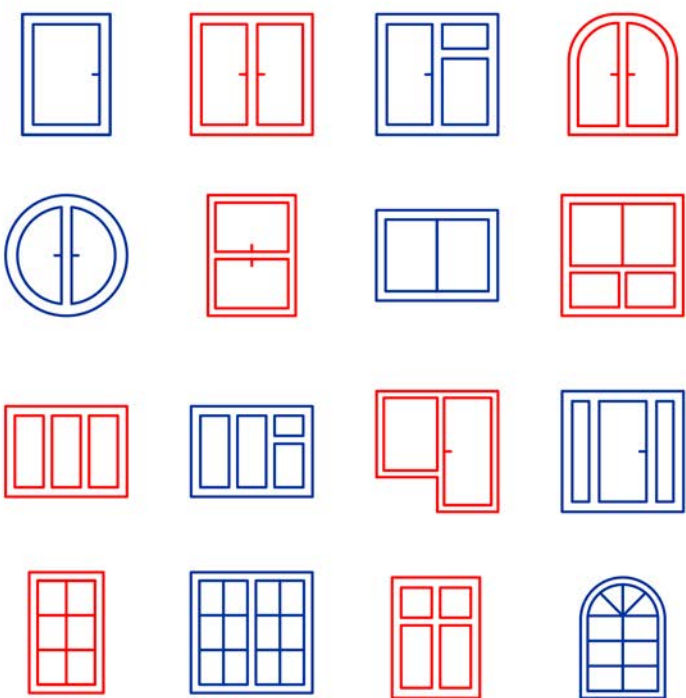
Other prominent developments include the So Origin Bangtao Beach five pronged project, consisting of an eight-floor high luxury condominium, 35 luxury pool villas, a 5-star hotel, luxury branded residences and a beach club known as Tichuka Phuket. Construction is scheduled to start in the third quarter of this year and will conclude in the first quarter of 2026.

Moving away from the Bang Tao area, Korn Narongdej, Chief Executive Officer of Raimon Land, said that his company plans to build a range of exclusive low-rise ultra-luxury villas on Kamala Beach in the fourth quarter of 2024 in a development project worth approximately B7bn.

While last year was a record, Colliers' Phattharachai predicts no repeat in 2024 as the emphasis will be on selling old projects that have been developed recently but have yet to be sold.



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## Debate over 'Go Wholesale' shopping centre heats up

A HEATED MEETING took place at the offices of Phuket City Municipality last week as relevant government agencies, stakeholders and representatives gathered to address complaints regarding the construction of the 'Go Wholesale' shopping centre in Phuket Town.

Capt Nopporn Meesawat, Deputy Director of Internal Security for Phuket Province, chaired the session Jan 25, alongside the director of the Phuket Damrongtham Center (Phuket Provincial Ombudsman's Office).

The central focus of the meeting was on resolving concerns raised by a group of vendors at Phuket City Municipality Fresh Market 2 on Ong Sim Phai Rd, who fear the impact of the Go Wholesale shopping centre on their incomes.

The group of fresh produce vendors presented a list of issues, as follows:

- Fear of heightened competition with existing small stores in the vicinity.
- Economic hardship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to reduced



Photo: PR Phuket

income and increased debts.

- Anticipation of increased traffic congestion in the area if the shopping centre is constructed.

- Apprehension that the shopping centre will lure customers away with lower prices, better services, promotions and convenience.

The vendors proposed for the developer of the Go Wholesale shopping centre to consider alternative locations outside urban communities.

In response, representatives of Go Wholesale emphasised the shopping centre's potential to boost the economy and tourism industry by creating jobs, paying taxes and stimulating the local economy.

Construction of the shopping centre is expected to create about 200 jobs and generate a total income of around B103 million a year.

The developers are committed to paying approximately B20mn a year in taxes, including sign tax, property tax and local maintenance tax.

Construction and completion of the shopping centre alone is expected to cost B400mn.

However, the shopping centre operator will buy products directly from local farmers, and target customers such as hotels and large restaurants who buy in bulk.

Officials at the meeting noted that construction of the shopping centre and the issuing of permits for construction to proceed did not require a public meeting, but suggested that the developer address the concerns raised and for its executives to understand the plight faced by the vendors.

Representatives from the Phuket Chamber of Commerce and Phuket branch of the Federation of Thai Industries highlighted the fundamental differences between modern trade and agricultural markets, advocating that modern trade should be located outside urban communities.

he Phuket News



# Court clears Pita in iTV media shareholding case

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Constitutional Court ruled on Jan 24 that Pita Limjaroenrat, the former leader of the election-winning Move Forward Party (MFP), did not hold shares in a media business when he applied to run for office last year, and his MP status therefore remains intact.

The nine-member panel ruled 8-1 that Mr Pita did not violate the regulation prohibiting MPs from owning shares in media companies.

Mr Pita held 42,000 shares in iTV Plc, or 0.0035% of the company's total, as the executor of the estate of his late father, their original owner. He transferred the shares to a relative last year after the holding was revealed.

The law that prohibits MPs from holding shares in a media business was intended to ensure that they could not unduly influence news coverage.

The judges said in their ruling that even if Mr Pita had held one share, he could have been guilty if iTV were a functioning media business. But they concluded that it was not, despite apparent attempts by opponents of Mr Pita to prove otherwise.

The court said that iTV ceased to be a media organisation in March 2007 and only remained a business entity because



Pita Limjaroenrat arrives at the Constitutional Court to hear the ruling in his media-shares case on Jan 24. Photo: Bangkok Post

it is still involved in a legal dispute with the government over unpaid concession fees, and it did not have any revenue from any media services.

The Constitutional Court suspended Mr Pita as an MP on July 19 last year when it accepted a complaint from the Election Commission that he had violated Section 151 of the Election Act, which states that a candidate who applies to run as an MP while knowing that he might be in violation of election rules - in this case, holding shares in a media company - would face disqualification.

On the same day, the joint House and Senate sitting voted to reject his renomination for prime minister. He had lost an earlier premiership vote the week before.

The Move Forward Party won the May 14, 2023, election with 151 House seats but it failed to form a government because the second runner-up Pheu Thai Party, which had 141 seats and was its former coalition ally, instead teamed up with 10 other parties and secured 320 votes in the 500-member House.

Mr Pita is now in the clear but, at time of press, the MFP was facing another major challenge as the Constitutional Court was set to rule on Wednesday (Jan 31) whether the party's policy to amend Section 112 of the Criminal Code, the lese-majeste law, represents an attempt to overthrow the constitutional monarchy. Such a finding could set in motion a move to dissolve the party.

## China wants a piece of Land Bridge: PM

### BANGKOK

CHINA'S GOVERNMENT and private sector are interested in the Thai government's Land Bridge project, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin revealed following a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at Government House on Monday (Jan 29).

Mr Srettha said that in recent years Chinese companies had invested in large factories in Thailand, to serve local demand and to export their products.

Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit would lead a road show on the Land Bridge to China in the near future, the PM said.

The proposed Land Bridge involves connecting the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand by road and rail, with transit hubs in Ranong and Chumphon. There would be two deep-sea ports, one at each end, and 90 kilometres of road and a railway to move cargo containers off-loaded at one end to ships waiting at the



Srettha and Wang on Jan 29. Photo: Bangkok Post

other end.

It is being promoted as a new logistics and transport hub and an alternative to the existing route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea through the congested Malacca Straits, cutting travel time from nine days to five days.

The initial concept involves building a transport route for goods from the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) via at Laem Chabang port to the Andaman Coast for around 8 million tonnes annually.

Economists predict China would benefit the most from the project. Critics say the unloading and loading of ships and the transport of containers by land between the two ports would add to freight costs, not reduce them. Bangkok Post

## Thailand and China agree visa waiver

### BANGKOK

THAILAND AND CHINA HAVE signed a reciprocal visa-waiver agreement intended to boost tourism between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi inked the agreement at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok on Jan 29.

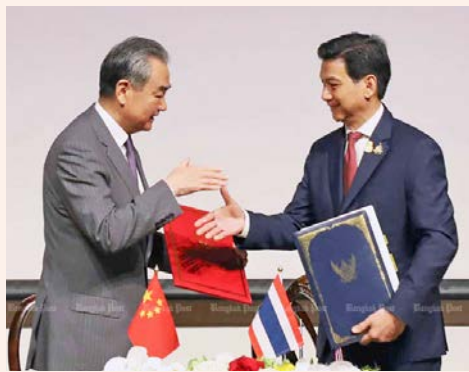
The "Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Mutual Visa Exemption for Holders of Ordinary Passports and Passports for Public Affairs" is effective from Mar 1.

Under the agreement, holders of valid, ordinary Thai passports and Chinese holders of passports for public affairs and ordinary passports will be exempted from visa requirements for entering, exiting or transiting the other country for up to 30 days.

Cumulative stays must not exceed 90 days in any 180-day period, except for the purposes of residing or engaging in employment, study, media activities or other activities that require prior official approval.

"This agreement is a symbol of our long-lasting friendship, trust and confidence, which is evidenced at every level," Mr Parnpree said. "I am certain that travel between our two peoples, whether for tourism or business, will become more convenient, and help stimulate the tourism industry in both countries."

Wang was also effusive. "From March



Wang Yi (left) and Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara ink the deal on Jan 28. Photo: Bangkok Post

1, our two countries will officially enter a visa-free era. This will surely bring our people-to-people exchanges to a new height. There will be a big increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand," he said.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports expects the reciprocal visa-free scheme will attract about 8 million Chinese visitors this year, and generate about B320 billion in revenue from their spending.

Chinese tourists were the country's largest group of visitors before COVID-19 and are seen as key to a sustained recovery of the tourism industry, a main driver of economic growth.

Travellers from mainland China made up about 27% of the 40mn foreign visitors in 2019, but only 3.5mn of the 28mn tourists last year. Malaysia was the largest visitor market, at 4.4mn.

The government is targeting 35mn foreign arrivals this year. Bangkok Post



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Spring onions bundled. Photo: Dragana Gordic / Freepik



Fresh galangal asian cooking ingredient. Photo: Rawpixel.com / Freepik



Assortment ginger wooden board. Photo: Freepik

# The root of the matter



## GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

After my previous article on spicy additions to your garden, where should I carry on? Well I'm going to start at the vegetative source – with bulbs and roots – and leave the leaves till last. The most powerfully pungent bulbs in Southeast Asia, as in most corners of the globe, belong to the lily (liliaceae) family. And of these – onions, shallots, chives and garlic – the last named (*allium sativum*) is the most widely used.

One of their daily tasks, as any Thai 'restaurateur' will confirm, is to peel all those pesky garlic cloves of 'kratiem'. Although more than one type occurs here, the small purple-skinned cloves are considered superior to the white ones on account of their greater intensity of flavour. Packed with oil, they will surely let your taste buds know if you are bold enough to chop them up raw. As many Thais do... More usually, the cloves are macerated into a spicy paste along with other seasonings, or chopped and added to stir-fry dishes, soups and stews, or sliced and fried to a brown crisp with fish.

I went through an entire childhood without ever tasting garlic. Hard to imagine, especially in this day and age

when garlic has become one of those 'magical' natural ingredients, supposedly capable of thinning the blood, of reducing 'bad' cholesterol and of lowering vascular pressure. And if you do try putting some bulbs in the garden, it does have an inhibiting effect on many insects. They won't come within a mile. That much I know from growing garlic in Andalusia.

We can pass quickly over the onion 'per se' (allium). It is one of the oldest vegetables known to man, and while I love them as much as Chaucer's Summoner – whose 14<sup>th</sup> century breath was permanently tainted by onions – they are so cheap and available here, and their appearance and flavour so well known that they don't need me to expatiate upon their merits.

Just to say that the spring onion (*allium fistulosum*, or 'ton horm') is a very important garnish in the Kingdom. It is not only found in those green platters of winged beans, Chinese kale and cashew leaves that grace the lunch tables of the cheapest Thai eateries, but is often added, along with garlic, to the clear soups that accompany the main course or to pad thai.

Although shallots (*allium ascaonicum*, or 'horm daeng') grow wild in parts of Thailand, they are a less visible presence, because they are not used for decorative effect. But they are common ingredients in hot pastes, and though more expensive than onions, are sometimes preferred on account of their sweeter and less harsh flavour, and a lower water content that allows for easier frying. If you try cultivating them, remember that they don't grow singly like onions, but in small bunches. And they are best cultivated in rich soil from 'sets' of small bulbs rather than from seed. Remember to pare away the earth from the tops of the bulbs once they are well established.

The last member of the allium clan to warrant a mention is the chive (*allium tuberosum*), normally referred to in the plural form. Bunches of the local variety, flat or Chinese chives, are always available in wet markets. They grow in long leaved clusters and, because of their strong aroma, are sometimes known as garlic chives. Often sold with the flowering tips (or culm) still attached, they are considered a delicacy in Chinese cuisine. But ask any Thai about 'dok kuichai' and s/he will soon be singing its praises.

So what about spicy roots? Two, ginger and galangal, cannot be ignored, despite official attempts to limit their use as pesticides. Ginger (*zingiber of-*

ficinale) is of course better known, since the mature, beige-coloured root travels well and is available from any European greengrocer. Known as 'khing' in Thailand, where it grows wild (what doesn't?), it is normally sold in markets as a freshly dug young root. In this form, it has thin, creamy skin and pink shoots which terminate in green stalks (which are normally kept on to help retain the juice in the rhizome).

Popular as a marinade with Chinese chefs or as an accompaniment to fried fish, the tender young roots can be grated or crushed to release the intense flavour before cooking. Ginger has a reputation in Asia as a medicinal herb, useful for counteracting indigestion and even nausea. And it makes a delectable hot drink which I often buy – in a plastic bag of course – at the local market. Good for hangovers...

Galangal (*alpinia galanga*) comes from the same family and the rhizome looks quite similar, if less knobby. But the flavour is distinctively different and, sliced into thin chunks, it graces many Thai and Malay soups and stews. The distinctive flavour of 'tom yam' soup owes everything to its infusion of galangal. Both are handsome, strong-growing plants with ramrod straight stems, large oval leaves and impressive red flowers. They are sometimes grown in pots, but make sure the containers are large, and since they are heavy feeders, they need lots of water and possess vigorous roots.

Turmeric (*curcuma*), the third member of the ginger brigade, is popular in India where its root or rhizome is heated, crushed and dried to give rice or tandoor chicken a golden appearance. Thais, on the other hand, prefer their turmeric fresh; thinly sliced in curries and soups. Long used in traditional medicine, turmeric is not only a staple of Ayurvedic practice, but is now considered one of the most important herbs in contemporary medicine.

It is easy to cultivate: Given space and water, the orange rhizomes should be ready to be exhumed within six or eight months. The flowers are an additional bonus; they rise from the centre, a massive inflorescence made up of smaller cream or pink flowers and surrounded by large bright green leaves.

Patrick Campbell's book 'The Tropic Gardener', described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, is available for B500 (half price) to personal callers from 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13 in Rawai (Tel: 076-613227 or 085-7827551).

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# Phuket's 'Burgerfest' is back!

Phuket's Best Burger 8 - Burgerfest: Asia's Biggest Burger Extravaganza Returns to Blue Tree Phuket

## SPONSORED

Get ready for a sizzling and mouthwatering experience as one of Phuket's most anticipated events, Phuket's Best Burger, is set to return to Blue Tree Phuket on Saturday, Mar 23. Organised by the esteemed Shark 13 Productions, this year's Phuket's Best Burger 'Burgerfest' promises to be an unforgettable celebration of culinary delights and community spirit.

As the eighth edition of the iconic Phuket's best Burger 'Burgerfest', this event has become synonymous with indulging in the finest burgers crafted by the most talented chefs in the region. Burger enthusiasts and foodies alike can expect a day filled with juicy burgers, live entertainment, kids activities, a host of craft beverages and a vibrant atmosphere that has made Phuket's Best Burger 'Burgerfest' one of Phuket's most loved annual events.

What makes Phuket's Best Burger 'Burgerfest' truly exceptional is its status as Thailand's Biggest Burger event. Each year, the festival attracts burger aficionados from across the country who gather to indulge in an array of unique and mouthwatering burger creations. From classic beef patties to inventive plant-based options, Burgerfest offers



something for every palate. The last event attracted over 2,500 people who had an opportunity to try over 35 different burgers, plus enjoy local craft drinks and live music and entertainment.

The event will take place at the picturesque Blue Tree Phuket, providing the perfect backdrop for a day of culinary exploration and family-friendly fun. Attendees can look forward to a diverse lineup of food stalls, live music, and engaging activities for all ages. Prize sponsors include The BBQ Store

and Class Act Media, together mounting in over B200,000 worth of prizes for the winner.

"We are thrilled to bring Phuket's Best Burger 'Burgerfest' back to the Phuket community for its eighth edition, at the stunning Blue Tree Phuket. This event has grown into one of Asia's Biggest Burger celebration, showcasing the incredible talent of local and international chefs and the diverse flavours of the region, as well as having activities for all ages and some of the best live music from Phuket and beyond,"



said Jay Leshark, owner of Shark 13 Productions.

Shark 13 Productions is a renowned content and event management company dedicated to creating memorable and engaging content and experiences. With a focus on culinary events and markatainment, Shark 13 Productions has successfully organized and executed some of the most beloved festivals in the region and produced a plethora of creative content for a variety of local and international brands.

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POP QUIZ

1. Which currency has the lowest value in the world?
2. Who in 2018 became the first rapper to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music?
3. How many kilogrammes does one cubic metre of water weigh?
4. A dolorimeter is an instrument used to measure what?
5. Leonardo Da Vinci International Airport serves which Italian city?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

	9		1				7	
	6	7	5		2			
				6	4		5	
6				7		4		
	5	9				3	8	
		4		8				9
	1		4	2				
			8		3	7	2	
	8			9		3		

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

  1. It may be red
  6. Mound
  11. Mail place: abbr.
  14. Swampy area
  15. Olive-gray songbird
  16. Ashes holder
  17. Tasty treats
  20. "Hazel" cartoonist
  21. Key
  21. Boito's Mefistofele, e.g.
  22. Spiny shrub
  23. Sleep where you can
  24. After much delay
  25. Costello's partner
  28. Lurch
  30. Gravitates (toward)
  31. Hand tool for boring holes
  32. Blast maker
  35. Tasty treats
  39. Calendar abbr.
  40. Old blades
  41. Bulgarian moolah
  42. Admission
  44. Waker
  46. Some field workers
  48. Lays down the lawn
  49. Convex molding
- Down

  1. Slightly
  2. Spike
  3. Checked out
  4. Big bird of stories
  5. Flatfish type
  6. Russian beer
  7. Pilfers
  8. Estimate follower
  9. Moldovan moolah
  10. Permanent
  11. Collateral agreements
  12. Newspapers
  13. Beginning
  18. Bridge seat
  19. Welfare, with "the"
  23. Lady of Lisbon
24. Domain
  25. Goya's "Duchess of \_\_\_"
  26. Swain
  27. Torpedo types
  28. Brings aground
  29. A long time
  31. They're not returned
  33. Actress Campbell
  34. Romanov ruler
  36. Death of living cells
  37. Big galoots
  38. And
  43. Kind of phone
  44. Campus military org.
  45. Theaters
  46. Counterfeit
  47. Dispatch boat
  48. Debaucher
  50. Inside info
  51. Mysterious character
  52. Gumbo pod
  53. Fishing locale
  54. Midterm, e.g.
  56. French vineyard
  57. Cheerios grain

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:  
1) Iranian rial (1 rial = 0.00085 bahr); 2) Kendrick Lamar (for his album 'DAMN.'; in 2018); 3) 1,000kg; 4) Pain threshold; 5) Rome

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14						15					16	
17					18					19		
20				21					22			
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46	47						48					
49					50	51				52	53	54
55					56					57		
58				59						60		
61				62						63		

Visit: [www.ilovecrosswords.com](http://www.ilovecrosswords.com)

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

P E E N G L A D S T E E P O N T O N A R Y H A L V E L E A V E U P I N T H E A I R G A R A H P L S D P H I E G E S A D T E E A I R C O N D I T I O N I N G L I E U O D D C A N T O C A B I N E L L N A P E A I R T O A I R M I S S S L E S B R A T A L L S A E R A P P F I E O L D S T H E C A S T L E S I N T H E A I R A R E N A A C A I E D D O R E S A W Y E N S L Y O N	5	4	7	8	6	1	2	3	9
	9	1	6	5	2	3	8	7	4
	2	3	8	4	9	7	6	1	5
	6	5	1	7	8	9	3	4	2
	3	8	2	1	5	4	9	6	7
	7	9	4	2	3	6	1	5	8
	1	6	5	9	4	8	7	2	3
	8	2	3	6	7	5	4	9	1
	4	7	9	3	1	2	5	8	6

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

out of 10 married adults in the US say that they typically sleep alone.

85

percent of those who have attempted to break the water speed record since 1940 have died while trying.

7,000

US dollars a day is how much an email spambot can earn.

300,000

US dollars in research and three months is what it took for scientists to create a lab-grown burger patty.

92

quadrillion

US dollars is how much PayPal once accidentally credited a man with.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Moon over Koh Kaew. Photo by Jason Beavan

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket?  
Email it to [execeditor@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:execeditor@classactmedia.co.th)

This week in history

Feb 2, 1709

Alexander Selkirk is rescued after being shipwrecked on a desert island, inspiring Daniel Defoe's adventure book *Robinson Crusoe*.

Feb 3, 1972

The first day of the seven-day 1972 Iran blizzard, which would kill at least 4,000 people, making it the deadliest snowstorm in history.



The original registration form and login page for thefacebook in 2004.

Feb 4, 2004

Facebook is founded by Mark Zuckerberg, along with fellow Harvard College students and roommates Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes.

Feb 5, 1958

A hydrogen bomb known as the Tybee Bomb is lost by the US Air Force off the coast of Savannah, Georgia, never to be recovered.

Feb 6, 60 AD

The earliest date for which the day of the week is known, from a graffito in Pompeii.

Feb 7, 1951

Korean War: The Sancheong and Hamyang massacre by a unit of the South Korean Army, which slaughters 705 unarmed citizens – 85% of them women, children and elderly people – as suspected communist sympathisers.

Feb 8, 1879

Sandford Fleming first proposes adoption of Universal Standard Time at a meeting of the Royal Canadian Institute.  
Source: Wikipedia



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MON 5 FEB

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WED 7 FEB

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### Wednesday BBQ Night

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FRI 9 FEB



### Grow Boating Evening

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening which will be held at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm on Friday the 9th of February. We are delighted to confirm that our joint drinks sponsors for the evening will be the Thailand Marine Guide and Lalizas Thailand. See [thailandmarineguide.com](http://thailandmarineguide.com) and [lalizasthailand.com](http://lalizasthailand.com) Limestone adventures will also be sponsoring a free prize draw to win a half-day longtail trip to Koh Rang Yai for four people including food and soft drinks valued at 24,000 baht. See [limestoneadventures.com](http://limestoneadventures.com) There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees and as always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. If you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket](http://www.facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket) Grow Boating is kindly supported by our media partner The Phuket News, Live 89.5 radio and Phuket News TV. See [www.thepuketnews.com](http://www.thepuketnews.com) To join our mailing list please send an email to [growboatingphuket@gmail.com](mailto:growboatingphuket@gmail.com) or use the sign up form at <http://eepurl.com/c9UJib>

THU 15 FEB

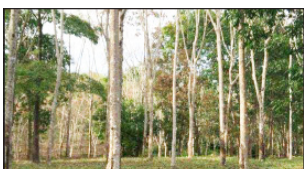


### Skål International Phuket Dinner - February

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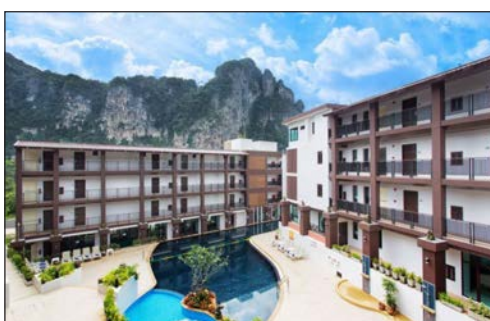
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Photos: Vertigo Video Productions

## STAND UP WITH REGINALD D HUNTER

Legendary US/UK comedian Reginald D. Hunter was in Phuket on Thursday, Jan 25 where a packed out crowd at the Junkyard Theatre got to enjoy his full comedy set LIVE. You will have seen Reginald on QI, Live at the Apollo and on his own series for the BBC: Songs of the South and Songs of the Border.



## WINDOW ON PHUKET

February/March 2024 issue

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## Thai teen makes history at Winter Youth Olympics

### WINTER OLYMPICS

AGNESE 'CHOMPHOO' Campeol has made history by clinching the first ever medal for Thailand at a Winter Youth Olympic Games.

The 18-year-old athlete won a silver medal in the women's monobob competition in bobsleigh at the Winter Youth Olympic Games 2024 in Gangwon, South Korea, on Jan 23.

In an interview with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) media, Agnese expressed her emotions, stating, "I'm so confused, and so proud. I was a little bit nervous at the start, but I said to myself, 'I can do it.'"

Agnese began her journey with the Ski and Snowboard Association of Thailand, where they actively sought athletes interested in participating in the Winter Youth Olympic Games.

Her determination to compete led her to the support of programs like the New Horizons Programme



Khunying (left) and medal winner Agnese. Photo: Bangkok Post

and the PyeongChang Legacy Foundation, both of whom she thanked and dedicated her win in Gangwon to.

Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, a member of the IOC and the Executive Board of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand, extended her congratulations to Agnese.

Khunying highlighted the historical significance of Agnese's medal for the Thai national team and emphasised that Agnese will serve as a role model for Thai teenagers, encouraging them to take an interest in the Winter Youth Olympics.

At time of press, Agnese remains Thailand's only medal success at the current Games, which concluded yesterday (Feb 1).

Bangkok Post

# Sinner wins Aussie Open

### TENNIS

AFP

Jannik Sinner stormed back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in an energy-sapping five-set Australian Open final last Sunday (Jan 28), claiming his first Grand Slam title.

The Italian fourth seed had no answer to the Russian's aggression in the first two sets but dug deep to win 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in three hours and 44 minutes.

He collapsed to the floor before returning to his feet to savour his moment on Rod Laver Arena, climbing into his box to hug coaches Simone Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill.

Sinner thundered 14 aces, hit 50 winners and broke Medvedev's serve four times to become the first Italian champion in the tournament's history.

The 22-year-old is the first Italian man to win a Slam since Adriano Panatta in 1976 and the youngest man to win the Australian Open since Novak Djokovic in 2008.

Sinner's semi-final victory over 10-time winner Djokovic had guaranteed there would be a new name on the trophy.

But the result is a bitter blow for the third-ranked Russian, who also blew a two-set lead against Rafael Nadal in the 2022 final.

"I'm feeling great, I just have to process it all," said Sinner. "It was a great match and a great opportunity and I took it in the right way."

"I'm happy. I think the best moment



Sinner celebrates with the trophy. Photo: AFP

was when I went into the locker room to hug my people. They have made me feel so, so special and they also know the process behind it all. It's a great, great moment for me.

"It's been a hell of a journey till now, even if I am still only 22."

Sinner admitted he had been forced to scramble for answers because Medvedev was "crushing" it in the first two sets.

"The match was going so fast and I had zero chances in the first two sets, but I was looking for any small chance and I managed to break him in the third set and that's it," he said.

Former US Open champion Medvedev, who has now lost five of his six finals in the majors, said Sinner deserved to win.

"You fought to the end and you managed to raise your level," said the 27-year-old. "You and your team are doing an amazing job."

"I hope I can try to get the next one if we play in a final."

In Saturday's women's final, Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus eased to a 6-3, 6-2 victory over 12<sup>th</sup> seed Zheng Qinwen of China to successfully defend her title and add a second Grand Slam trophy to her cabinet.



The Jan 24 press conference. Photo: Bangkok Post

## Amazing Muay Thai World Festival kicks off at Lumpinee

### MUAY THAI

THE 2024 AMAZING MUAY THAI World Festival begins today (Feb 2) at the iconic Lumpinee Boxing Stadium in Bangkok.

Running until Monday, the global extravaganza will witness 600 Muay Thai exponents from 58 countries vying for the prestigious WBC MuayThai world championship gold, silver and bronze medals.

The Lumpinee Boxing Stadium will transform into a battlefield where the world's best Muay Thai practitioners will showcase their skill, strength and determination.

Attendees will have the opportunity to indulge in a gastronomic journey, with an array of Thai foods representing all regions of the country.

Moreover, the event will feature ring officials seminars tailored for international Muay Thai officials, enhancing the global standards of the sport. Participants will

delve into the intricacies of officiating, contributing to the overall growth of Muay Thai on the world stage.

For those seeking relaxation amidst the excitement, traditional Thai massages will be available, allowing attendees to rejuvenate and experience the soothing benefits of this ancient practice.

Adding another layer of excitement, various Thai companies will showcase their lines of Muay Thai apparel and equipment. Enthusiasts and practitioners alike will have the opportunity to explore cutting-edge gear and apparel, staying at the forefront of Muay Thai trends.

WBC MuayThai president Col Thanapol Bhakdibhumi, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Thapanee Kiatphaibool, Gen Orachai Boonsukjitseree, WBC MuayThai secretary-general Kevin Noone and Taekwondo Association of Thailand chief Pimol Srivikorn confirmed the event at an official press conference in Bangkok on Jan 24. Bangkok Post

## Muay Thai Olympic status sought

### MUAY THAI

PAETONGTARN Shinawatra, the deputy chairperson of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, is pushing to have Muay Thai become an Olympic sport.

Ms Paetongtarn has outlined her goals in strengthening Muay Thai's position as one of Thailand's soft power tools through several strategies, including being included in the Olympic Games.

"We will get the opportunity to cheer on Muay Thai boxers representing Thailand in the Olympics one day," she said on a Facebook live forum event on Jan 23.

Ms Paetongtarn said she and her team would seek to make Muay Thai more popular among foreigners through other initiatives, such as incorporating a ranking system similar to Taekwondo's belt ranking system.

She also talked about ways to aid Muay Thai teachers in becoming more professional and approaches to fostering more Muay Thai competitions at all levels, locally, nationally and internationally.

Similarly, Ms Paetongtarn spoke of ways to boost the



The government has pledged to improve Thailand's soft power by introducing sports, with Muay Thai one of its most powerful tools. Photo: Bangkok Post

number of overseas Muay Thai camps and ways to further promote the Muay Thai equipment industry, which would all add to the mix of maximising the national sport's potential.

Meanwhile, the advisor to the prime minister and chairperson of the Sports Subcommittee in the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, Pimol Srivikorn, said the government had made significant progress in promoting Muay Thai as a 'soft power'.

As part of that, Mr Pimol met with Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt two weeks ago to discuss a plan to send Muay Thai teachers to a number of schools in Bangkok and a memorandum

of understanding (MoU) made with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has been signed, he said.

The MoU will allow the soft power committee to send Muay Thai teachers and equipment to up to 20 schools under the BMA to participate in a pilot programme starting next semester.

Mr Pimol said the committee was also looking to organise a Muay Thai masterclass in England, which would allow foreigners to learn the martial art from internationally recognised Muay Thai masters, such as Rodtang Jitmuangnon, Buakaw Banchamek and Superbon Singha Mawynn for one full day in April.

He said the masterclass would hopefully inspire the foreign students, prompting them to promote the sport to their friends, many of whom it is hoped would then wish to visit Thailand to learn more, which would, in turn, boost Thai tourism.

Mr Pimol's comments came shortly after it was confirmed that the Thai government was looking grant a 90-day special visa for foreigners who want to visit Thailand in order to practise Muay Thai.

Bangkok Post



# Klopp confirms Liverpool exit

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp shocked the football world last Friday (Jan 26) by announcing he will leave the club at the end of the season because he is “running out of energy”.

Klopp, who has restored Liverpool to one of European football’s powerhouses since taking over at Anfield in 2015, said the decision was taken after realising his “resources are not endless”.

“I can understand that it’s a shock for a lot of people in this moment, when you hear it for the first time,” Klopp said in an interview on Liverpool’s website.

“I love absolutely everything about this club, I love everything about the city, I love everything about our supporters, I love the team, I love the staff. I love everything. But that I still take this decision shows you that I am convinced it is the one I have to take.

“It is that I am, how can I say it, running out of energy. It is not what I want to do, it is just what I think is 100 percent right.”

Klopp led Liverpool to their first league title for 30 years in 2020 and to Champions League glory in 2019 among seven trophies during his time at Anfield.

He could add a few more in the coming months as he aims to go out on a high.

Liverpool are five points clear at the top of the Premier League, face Chelsea in the League Cup final next month and



Klopp has promised Liverpool fans that he will never coach another English club. Photo: AFP

are still involved in the FA Cup and Europa League.

Klopp said he had taken the decision in November when discussions with the club about potential signings for next season began.

The 56-year-old has spoken in the past of his desire to manage the German national team, but he hinted that those ambitions will be put on hold as he plans to take at least a year’s sabbatical from management come May.

“Whatever will happen in the future I don’t know now but no club, no country for the next year. No other English club ever, I can promise that,” he added.

The US-based Fenway Sports Group (FSG), who own Liverpool, paid tribute to Klopp and said work will begin immediately on looking for his successor.

Xabi Alonso, the Spanish former Liverpool player who has guided Bayer Leverkusen to the top of the Bundesliga this season as coach, is the bookmakers’ favourite although Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi is also in the running.

“It goes without saying that we will be hugely saddened to lose not just a manager of such calibre, but a person and leader for whom we have enormous respect, gratitude and affection,” said FSG president Mike Gordon.



Thailand's players after the 0-0 draw with Saudi Arabia. Photo: AFP

## War Elephants reach Asian Cup knockout round

### FOOTBALL

THAILAND COACH Masataka Ishii hailed his players as the War Elephants held Saudi Arabia to a goalless draw in their final Group F game at the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar on Jan 25 to qualify for the knockout stages.

Ishii decided to rest some key players in the game at Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, and the 101-ranked War Elephants managed a credible draw with a team who sit 49 places above them in the FIFA rankings.

At time of press, Thailand were set to face Uzbekistan, runners-up from Group B, on Tuesday (Jan 30) at the Al Janoub Stadium. Saudi Arabia were due to play South Korea, who finished second in Group E, on the same day at

the Education City Stadium.

The draw against the Saudis meant Ishii’s team at that stage were just one of two sides yet to concede in Qatar, with the hosts being the other.

“From what I’ve seen during training, I know the players’ qualities and believe they can do the job,” said Ishii.

“Also, our preparation goes beyond the Asian Cup. We also have to think about the World Cup qualifiers and that’s why we need to plan for long term,” added the Japanese coach.

Thailand won their opening Group F game 2-0 against Kyrgyzstan and followed up with a 0-0 draw against Oman before the draw with the Saudis saw them secure second place on five points. Saudi Arabia won the group with seven points.

Bangkok Post

## Stones keep rolling in FA Cup

### FOOTBALL

SIXTH-TIER SIDE Maidstone United stunned Championship high-flyers Ipswich 2-1 to reach the FA Cup fifth round last Saturday (Jan 27) in one of the biggest upsets in the competition’s 153-year history.

Ipswich are 98 places and four divisions above Maidstone in the English football pyramid and currently in second place in the Championship.

However, the visitors scored two goals worthy of winning any cup tie as Lamar Reynolds produced a cool first-half chip over Christian Walton and Sam Corne kept his composure to fire in the winner 24 minutes from time.

Maidstone, nicknamed the Stones, needed a few heroics from Brazilian goalkeeper Lucas Covolan and had to see out eight minutes of added time, but held out for a famous victory.

“Our boys have run themselves into the ground and that is what we said, ‘leave nothing in the chang-



Maidstone players and staff celebrate in front of their fans after their historic win. Photo: AFP

ing room,” said Maidstone manager, former Wolves defender George Elokobi.

“This binds us for life, what our boys are achieving right now, which has not been done over over 100 years. The magic of the FA Cup is very much alive.”

The non-league giant-killers, the lowest-ranked side left in the competition, will now face Sheffield Wednesday or Coventry in the next round after they drew 1-1 last Friday to force a replay.

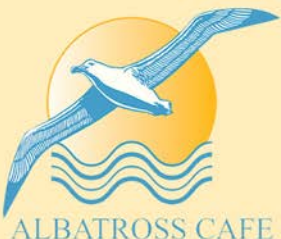

Elsewhere, holders Manchester City beat Tottenham 1-0 and will face Luton in the next round after the Hatters beat Everton 2-1.


Liverpool comfortably

beat Norwich 5-2 and will now face Watford or Southampton, who played out a 1-1 draw, while Manchester United overcame a scare at fourth-tier minnows Newport County to advance 4-2 and will play Bristol City or Nottingham Forest in the next round.

Brighton travel to Wolves and Bournemouth entertain Championship leaders Leicester in the last 16 while Aston Villa or Chelsea, who played out a 0-0 draw last Friday, will face off against Leeds or Plymouth.

Newcastle, who beat Fulham 2-0 last Saturday, set up a tie against Blackburn who beat Wrexham 4-1 on Monday. AFP



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# Sport



**Klopp stuns Kop with quit pledge > p15**

## RUNNING FOR HOPE



The Jan 24 press conference at the Limelight shopping mall in Phuket Town to announce the event. Photo: PR Phuket

### RUNNING

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A charity run has been confirmed with all proceeds going towards helping fund the construction of a cancer therapy facility at Vachira Hospital, it has been confirmed.

Incorporating a 4-kilometre fun run and a 12km mini marathon, the event will take place on Sunday, Mar 24, at Bang Wad Dam in Kathu, with a 5am start time.

The event is being organised by the Nomklow Foundation, a charity organisation under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen, who are targeting at least 2,000 participants.

It is hoped that the run can serve as a metaphorical “first candle to be lit” that can help kick-start fundraising efforts for the new radiation treatment facility, which has been targeted to be completed and open to the public by 2027.

Announcement of the plans came after Bangkok Dusit Medical Services confirmed last October it is to invest B300 million to open its Phuket Cancer Center by the third quarter of this year, marking what would be the first radiotherapy service in Phuket and the Andaman region.

The upcoming charity run was officially announced at a press conference on Jan 24 at the Limelight shopping mall in Phuket Town, overseen by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat.

Also in attendance were: Somchai Jirayus, Chairman of the Nomklow Foundation; Dr Weerasak Lorthongkam, Director of Vachira Phuket Hospital; Thaneth Tantipiriyakit, President of the Phuket Tourist Association; and Ornsiri Raktaengam, chairman of the race organising committee, in addition to associated executives and sponsors.

Mr Somchai revealed that, whereas financial grant support has been secured from the government for construction of the facility, the funds are still not enough and alternative options to raise funds were therefore required, hence the charity run being organised.

#### ‘FAR FROM IDEAL’

Dr Weerasak explained that

currently there are a large number of cancer patients in Phuket province yet those seeking treatment have to travel to Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Surat Thani, Songkhla or Bangkok.

This dynamic is far from ideal, he said, adding that it not only creates a financial burden on people but also requires them to request repeated leave from work, which often sees many people opting to decline ongoing treatment.

Governor Sophon echoed these sentiments, stating that the establishment of a cancer treatment centre in Phuket would save people time, money and much inconvenience, while also enabling people in the nearby Andaman area to avail its services.

Governor Sophon added

that on behalf of Phuket Province he fully supports the project, which is aligned to the goal of developing quality living standards for the island’s residents.

Ms Ornsiri explained that the emphasis of the event is on it being a charity initiative and not a competition, adding she hoped it could serve to encourage further fundraising activities while simultaneously raising cancer awareness.

Registration fees for each run are as follows: fun run option 1, including only a running shirt and bib, at B199; fun run option 2, including a running shirt, bib and commemorative medal, at B299; the mini marathon, including running shirt, bib and commemorative medal, at B399.

Additionally, there is a VIP option for B9,999 where participants will receive a running shirt, bib, a commemorative medal, a customised cloth bag and a commemorative shirt with customised collar design. This option is geared more so to allow people to pledge larger donations to the cause, officials said.

Registration is now open and can be done at <https://soft.events/run/first-phuket-cancer-center-2024>.

Once registered, participants can collect their running shirt and bib on Mar 22-23 between 10am and 6pm at the Limelight shopping mall in Phuket Town. For further information or to learn how to donate to the Nomklow Foundation call 076-361-234 ext 6530.

## Phuket footballing trio sign for Buriram United

### FOOTBALL

IN A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT for Phuket’s football scene, three former British International School, Phuket (BISP) students have recently signed contracts with renowned club Buriram United, who ply their trade in Thai League 1.

The trio, brothers Micah and Jonah Duchowny and teammate Siam Yip, who all honed their skills at the BISP Cruzeiro Academy, have now taken their talents to the national stage, contributing

to the growing success of Phuket’s footballers.

Jonah Duchowny, an 18-year-old attacking midfielder and forward, joins the Buriram United squad with his brother, Micah Duchowny, a 20-year-old defender.

The third player, Siam Yap, 19, known for his proficiency as a goal scorer who can also operate as a left-winger, completes the trio of Phuket talents strengthening Buriram United’s roster.

Buriram United, affectionately known as the ‘Thunder Castle’, are committed to nurturing young talent, and strategically brings in



Brothers Micah and Jonah Duchowny. Photo: Buriram United / Facebook

emerging stars to fortify its lineup not only for the present but also for the future.

The move is not just a testament to the individual talents of Micah,

Jonah and Siam but also reflects positively on the football development programmes on the island, with the BISP Cruzeiro Academy playing a pivotal role in shaping all three during their formative years.

“It is truly gratifying to witness former students from our academy achieve success at such a high level,” an extremely proud BISP Cruzeiro Football Academy Director Jonathas Candido told *The Phuket News*.

“Micah, Jonah and Siam exemplify the dedication and skill that our football program instils in our players,” he added.

The local community eagerly

anticipates the impact these three players will have on Buriram United and, by extension, on the broader Thai football scene.

Their journey from Phuket to Buriram serves as an inspiration for aspiring footballers across the island, showcasing that talent nurtured through strong football academies can compete on the national stage.

We wish Micah, Jonah and Siam all the very best of luck as they embark on this new chapter in their careers and look forward to charting their success in the years to come. *The Phuket News*