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# CARRY ON



People enjoy Patong Beach. Photo: Patong Municipality

## GOVERNOR, KEY FIGURES LOOK AT SHAPING PHUKET'S FUTURE

**Natnaree Likidwatanasakun**  
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As Phuket prepares to usher in the New Year, Governor Sophon Suwannarat and other key figures have spoken with *The Phuket News*, reflecting on the significant events of 2024, a year marked by both trials and triumphs. From natural disasters to soaring tourism numbers, the island has seen its share of challenges and progress, laying the groundwork for a more sustainable future.

Phuket faced severe natural disasters this past year, including unprecedented floods and landslides. The June 29-30 floods in Kamala marked the first major flooding event of its kind in the

area, while the deadly landslide in Kata on Aug 23 claimed 13 lives, including migrant workers from Myanmar, and tourists from Russia.

These disasters have underscored the urgent need for improved disaster preparedness and resilient infrastructure to mitigate future risks, Governor Sophon noted.

"In response, local authorities quickly mobilised rescue operations and began debris removal efforts. However, recovery has been slow due to the scale of destruction," he added.

Despite these disasters, Phuket's tourism sector experienced a remarkable recovery. According to Governor Sophon, the island welcomed over 9 million

visitors between January and September, generating more than B360 billion in revenue, exceeding pre-pandemic levels from 2019.

"This surge in tourism has placed immense pressure on local infrastructure," he explained. To address these challenges, the province has prioritised infrastructure development, including road expansions and supporting public transport projects such as the Phuket Smart Bus. These initiatives aim to reduce congestion, improve accessibility and enhance the overall tourist experience, he said.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Governor Sophon said major infrastructure developments were underway to alleviate key

pressures, including traffic. The construction of a new expressway connecting Phuket Town to Kathu, is slated to begin early this year. The project aims to alleviate traffic congestion by 2029, he said.

Other projects included expansion of public transport with electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce car dependency and promote sustainability, and upgrades to air transport infrastructure, including four additional aircraft parking bays at Phuket Airport and progress on the 'Andaman Airport' in Phang Nga.

Governor Sophon also emphasised efforts to protect Phuket's natural beauty. Initiatives including conservation projects for coastal areas and mangrove forests and construction of a second...

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Equality law to be celebrated with weddings



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Skal Phuket sets its sights on the future



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Young Caiah making a mark in Muay Thai



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# More of the same, but better

Continued from page 1

...incinerator to address waste management challenges, with a third incinerator requested for long-term solutions.

Advanced warning systems for landslides, featuring rain gauges and soil monitoring technologies and a wastewater treatment system developed in collaboration with Chinese experts to reduce pollution and ensure sustainable water supply were also underway, he said.



Governor Sopon. Photo: PR Phuket

## SKILLS GAP

"The province [provincial officials] is working to address education gaps, particularly among marginalised groups like sea gypsy children, by integrating them into the education system through both in-person and online courses," Governor Sopon said.

He also highlighted a growing emphasis on improving language skills, particularly in Russian, to better communicate with the increasing number of Russian tourists visiting Phuket.

Another key focus is workforce development, with the province investing in vocational training programs for industries such as yacht care and hospitality, which are crucial to the local economy.

"Our efforts over the past year have been successful thanks to

cooperation from all sectors – government, social organisations and the media. The valuable input from the public, media and the private sector has been instrumental in addressing major issues like flooding, waste management, power outages and more," he added.

"The province cannot work alone; collaboration from all sides is essential to drive meaningful change," Governor Sopon said.

"By working with local communities and partners, we aim to develop a sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism model that benefits both residents and visitors. Through these ongoing efforts, Phuket will continue to thrive as a unique, sustainable destination. We will also remain committed to

enforcing laws to maintain a harmonious environment," he concluded.

## LOCAL VOICES

Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee highlighted the political shifts of 2024, including the dissolution of the Move Forward Party, as a significant event for Thailand. Locally, he emphasised the importance of teamwork to overcome challenges like flooding and infrastructure deficiencies.

"With cooperation, we can transform Phuket into a high-quality, sustainable tourism hub," he stated.

Patong Mayor Chalernsak Maneesri outlined efforts to address Patong's flash floods and traffic congestion. Dredging canals and implementing urban

development projects, including a three-kilometre beachfront renovation, are key priorities.

"Patong isn't that bad in terms of disasters, but we do have occasional flash floods that take time to drain," he said.

"To address this, the municipality has been dredging the canals, with assistance from Phuket Prison inmates for the cleanup. Now water flows more efficiently into the sea," he added.

Traffic, however, remains a significant issue, with persistent congestion in key areas.

"The municipality is undertaking several urban development projects, including a three-kilometre landscaping initiative to enhance the beachfront promenade and establish distinct zones: a Welcome Zone, a Family Zone and a Business Zone," he explained.

"Although the construction has added to the traffic, it's necessary for the city's growth," he said.

Future projects will enhance the city's Welcome and Business zones with budgets exceeding B100 million, Mayor Chalernsak noted.

Patong Municipality is also addressing environmental issues with plans to lay wastewater pipes in Baan Kalim to Soi Khuan Yang at a cost of B115mn.

"These initiatives aim to keep the environment clean and support sustainable development," Mayor Chalernsak noted.

As for tourism, Patong's population swells from 20,000 to over 100,000 daily during the high season, Mayor Chalernsak said.

Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, President of Phuket Tourism Association, Phuket's global reputation as a tourist destination was bolstered by the success of events like the Phuket Vegetarian Festival, which won the 2024 World Festival City title.

Mr Thaneth emphasised the need for sustainable tourism practices to combat challenges such as global warming and traffic congestion. Plans for new events, including the Thailand Biennale 2025 and Diwali celebrations, aim to solidify Phuket's status as a year-round destination, he said.

"Despite these hurdles, the tourism sector is thriving, with revenue reaching pre-pandemic levels. The association is committed to promoting Phuket globally, with numerous trade shows planned in key markets, including Saudi Arabia, India and China," Mr Thaneth said.

"Phuket is a destination for everyone, all year round," he noted.

## Phuket to celebrate same-sex marriages

PHUKET WILL MARK THE FIRST day of legal same-sex marriages in Thailand with a special event at Jungceylon on the auspicious day, Jan 22.

Phuket Provincial Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Thiraphong Chuaychu announced the event at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall just before the festive holidays began.

The event on Jan 22 will mark the launch of a nationwide campaign called 'Embracing Equality: Love Wins in 878 Districts', with Kathu District in Phuket identified as a key area to launch the project, which aims to ensure equitable public services across all districts throughout the country.

The initiative aligns with the Civil and Commercial Code Amendment Act (No. 24) B.E. 2567, announced in the Government Gazette on Sept 24, 2024, and set to take effect on January 22, 2025, Mr Thiraphong explained.

"The legislation emphasises equality in civil services, and the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) has designated Kathu District in Phuket as a pilot area to implement the project," he said.

A highlight of the project is its celebratory event, scheduled for Jan 22 at Jungceylon shopping mall in Patong. The event, titled 'DOPA Day One: Equality Rings in 878 Districts,' will feature a symbolic marriage registration ceremony.

A 'Pre-Opening Ceremony' will be held from 8am to 10am to welcome attendees.

The official 'Opening Ceremony' will be held from 10am-11am, featuring Ministry



Photo: PR Phuket

of Interior officials and same-sex couples registering their marriages on stage.

For the purposes of the event, the number of same-sex couples to register their marriage on stage will be limited to three to five couples, Mr Thiraphong said.

A media session featuring press conferences and interviews will be held from 11am to 11:30am.

To participate, interested couples can register from Jan 6-15, 2025.

Enquiries about the marriage registration process can be directed to the Phuket Provincial Registration Office or the Kathu District Office via their official Facebook pages.

"This initiative reflects Phuket's commitment to fostering equality and inclusivity in public services while celebrating love and diversity across the nation," Mr Thiraphong said. *The Phuket News*

## Wastewater at Suan Luang spurs swift official response

WASTEWATER FLOWING into the reservoir at the revered Chalermprakiat Rama 9 Public Park (Suan Luang) in Phuket Town has raised serious concerns from local residents in the area.

Phuket Town Deputy Mayor Suphot La-onghphet visited the park on Dec 19 at the construction site of the Phuket Care Center.

The inspection follows concerns raised by local residents about potential contamination and water quality issues.

Initial findings revealed that wastewater mixed with a significant amount of garbage was blocking the water path, causing overflow into the reservoir.

Officials from the Phuket City Municipality's engineering department had previously adjusted the area and dug channels to divert wastewater into a treatment pond.

However, the blockage disrupted this system,



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

allowing wastewater to spill into the reservoir.

Deputy Mayor Suphot immediately coordinated with municipal engineering officials to clear the garbage and restore proper flow to the treatment pond.

In addressing the broader water management challenges at Chalermprakiat Rama 9 Park, Mr Suphot noted that the current warm weather had triggered

reactions in the water, turning it a dark green colour.

To combat this, officials have installed an aerator to aerate and improve water quality.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure the reservoir remains clean and safe for public use while addressing underlying waste management issues in the area, Deputy Mayor Suphot said. *The Phuket News*



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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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High: +35°  
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Wind 11 m/s

MON JANUARY 6

High: +35°  
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Wind 4 m/s

TUE JANUARY 7

High: +35°  
Low: +28°  
Wind 4 m/s

WED JANUARY 8

High: +37°  
Low: +28°  
Wind 4 m/s

THU JANUARY 9

High: +36°  
Low: +27°  
Wind 4 m/s

## SOS launch 'Food Bank' initiative in Ratsada

CHATUPHON RO-janaphanich, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, was in Phuket last week to officially launch the 'Food Conservation Project: Developing Food Banks' project, organised by the Scholars of Sustenance Foundation (SOS Thailand).

The launch, held at the Laem Tukkae Community in Ratsada, was joined by Tawi Impoonthrap, Operations Manager of SOS Thailand, and other members of the foundation.

Also present were government officials, representatives from the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), Ratsada Municipality and community organisations.

The initiative aims to tackle food waste while strengthening food security for vulnerable populations, Ms Chatuphon explained.

"Studies reveal that the country generates nearly 4 million tons of surplus food annually,



Photo: PR Phuket

while approximately 3.8mn low-income individuals face challenges accessing adequate nutrition," Ms Chatuphon said.

"Managing surplus food through food banks raises awareness about food waste, reduces resource loss and enhances food security for those in need. It also fosters collaboration among stakeholders to address this issue sustainably," she added.

The SOS initiative emphasises reducing food waste at source, aligning with global sustainability goals and addressing pressing environmental concerns. Community engagement and partnerships are central to the project's success, as participants work together to transform surplus food into a resource for those in need, Ms Chatuphon noted. *The Phuket News*

## Officials promote road projects to ease traffic

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Before the festive holidays, Phuket officials held a press conference to tout the development of secondary roads as a move to help alleviate traffic congestion across the island.

Jakkrapong Thamuntree, Director of the Phuket office of the Department of Rural Roads, gave a breakdown of projects already completed, and those planned and or already underway at a press conference at Phuket Provincial Hall on Dec 20, chaired by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat

Twenty rural roads, spanning over 126 kilometres, were marked for improvement, aligning with the Phuket Provincial Development Plan, Mr Jakkrapong said.

The roads are being upgraded to facilitate better access to key tourist destinations and piers, ensuring a seamless travel experience for both residents and visitors, he added.

Mr Jakkrapong explained that the development plan includes



Mr Jakkrapong. Photo: PR Phuket

significant enhancements to roads connecting popular tourist attractions and important piers.

**HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:**  
Tourist Access Routes:

- Rural Road 4018: A 13.2km route linking Route 4031 to Baan Khoktanode, supporting access to Nai Thon Beach, Banana Beach and Layan Beach.

- Rural Road 4055: A 2.909km road connecting Route 4029 to Patong Beach, Bangla Walking Street and Tri Trang Beach.

- Rural Road 4038: A 7.816km route to Bang Wad Dam from Route 4020.

- Rural Road 3030: A 10.680km road connecting Route 402 to Baan Kathu, offering access to the

Phuket Mining Museum and facilitating travel from the airport to Patong Beach.

- Rural Road 4027: A 2.5km road connecting Route 4031 to Nai Yang National Park, serving Nai Yang Beach, Mai Khao Beach and Sirinat National Park.

- Rural Road 4009: A 2.705km route to Rawai Beach, Laem Phromthep, Windmill Viewpoint and Kata Beach.

In the fiscal year 2024, 31 projects were undertaken with a total budget of B190.7 million.

The 31 projects included seven road and bridge maintenance projects (B79mn) and 24 safety management projects (B111.7mn).

## Two Myanmar men drown in Kathu pond

TWO MYANMAR DROWNED while a third swam to safety after the rubber boat they were in capsized in a pond in Kathu while trying to enjoy a day off before Christams

Kathu Police were called to the pond in Soi Por Pla Tak Daed, in Moo 1, Kathu, at about 6pm on Dec 22. Officers soon arrived, joined by rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Foundation.

The victims, identified as Kyaw Soe Lin and Sein Mae Chit, were visiting relatives at an elephant camp in the area along with a third friend, Mu Sa Phay, Kathu Police reported.

The trio borrowed a rubber boat for a leisurely row in the pond when it overturned. Mr Mu Sa Phay swam to shore, but his two companions went missing in the water.

A coworker of the victims, Ms Na, expressed her sorrow, saying, "They were very close friends and



Photo: Kathu Police

wonderful colleagues. Today was their day off, and they were simply enjoying themselves. I beg the officers to do everything they can to help."

The search team faced challenges due to the diminishing daylight and the size of the pond. After more than two hours, the rescue workers, including divers, recovered the bodies of the two men from the middle of the pond.

The men's bodies were taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for post-mortem examination to confirm the cause of death.

At last report, police were still investigating the circumstances of the men's deaths.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Nai Harn makeover ready next month

A B66 MILLION LANDSCAPING and bike path project currently underway at Nai Harn Lake is set for completion by early next month, officials have confirmed.

Preecha Chennarong, Chief Administration Officer (Palad) of Rawai Municipality, explained that the project is being overseen by the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO).

The project, in total 1,973 meters long, will see parking spaces made available alongside the park beside the lake as well as a bike lane and the installation of solar-powered street lights.

The contract, with developer Sasivarai Construction for precisely B66,600,000, was initially agreed to on May 7 last year, with 515 days allowed to complete the works.

However, due to delays in the official bidding process, the completion date has been pushed back to Feb 10, 2025, Rewat Areerob, former PPAO President, told *The Phuket News*.



Photo: PPAO

"If the project is not completed by the new deadline, daily penalties will apply," he assured.

Mr Preecha noted, "The purpose of the renovation is to provide an improved pathway for running and jogging, as well as to create a bicycle lane and parking facilities for everyone to enjoy activities around the lake.

"Everything will be more organised once the project is completed," Mr Preecha assured

The project will also include the installation of solar street lights and new, clearer, traffic signs as well as landscaping, including the installation of flower gardens and the planting of trees in the area, Mr Preecha said.

Natnaree Likidwanasakun



# PPAO election campaigns underway

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Campaigning for the upcoming Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or OrBorJor) is underway, with the term of the most recent administration, led by Rewat Areerob, now concluded.

The elected members of all Provincial Administration Organisations (PAOs) across the country ended on Dec 19, with the election of new members, and presidents, set for Saturday, Feb 1.

Registration of candidates were open from Dec 23-2. The final list of eligible candidates is to be announced today (Jan 3), confirmed notices posted by the PPAO.

To be eligible to contest the election for PPAO seats or as President, candidates must be Thai nationals by birth. For PPAO council seats they must be at least 25 years old as of election day, and candidates for PPAO President must be at least 35 years of age as of election day.

Candidates must also be registered as continually resident in Phuket for at least a year before the application date.

There is no educational requirement for PPAO Council seats, but PPAO President candidates must have at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent.



Rewat Areerob (centre) campaigns at the Samran Market in Chalong. Photo: Rewat Areerob / Facebook

Also, according to notices issued by the PPAO, candidates with the following characteristics are prohibited to to run for any seat as a PPAO member, including president:

- Be addicted to drugs
- Be bankrupt or previously entered bankruptcy
- Own or hold shares in any newspaper or media business
- Be a monk, novice, ascetic or religious person
- Be a person who has had their voting rights previously, or currently, revoked, regardless of whether the case has reached a final decision or not.

- Be "insane" [sic] or suffer any mental disorder

- Be temporarily suspended from the right to run for election
- Be sentenced to imprisonment and detained by court order
- Has been imprisoned for less than 5 years and has not been released yet.

The fee for registering a candidate is B2,000 to contest a seat as a PPAO Councilor, and B30,000 to contest the seat as PPAO President.

PEC Director Oraphin Achiv- asuk has previously confirmed that there will be 24 PPAO electoral districts across Phuket. The

breakdown includes 14 voting districts in Mueang Phuket District, seven in Thalang District and three in Kathu District.

Rewat Areerob, representing the 'Phuket Yatdai Party', was elected PPAO President in the PPAO election held on Dec 20, 2020.

In total, the Phuket Yatdai Party secured 20 of the 24 seats available on the PPAO Council, while the Khon Baan Rao Party secured three seats, and the Gao Na Party secured just one seat.

Mr Rewat has confirmed that he is running for re-election, and joined a merit-making event on

Dec 20 to confirm his fellow Phuket Yatdai candidates.

He has been assigned 'No 1' on the ballot.

In concluding his first term as PPAO President, Mr Rewat on Dec 19 said, "Today is the end of my term as the President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation. I would like to thank the people who have trusted me and come to work to solve various problems during both crises and normal times, as I have followed up on my work all along.

"I hope that I will be given the opportunity to continue working on traffic problems, economic problems, and promoting education, solving garbage problems, droughts and floods, and other disasters that may occur. There are also many other policies that will make Phuket a livable city with a heart for working."

In accordance with election law in Thailand, there will be a 24-ban on the sale of alcohol throughout the country for the election. The ban will be in effect from 6pm the day before the election (Friday, Jan 31) through to 6pm the day of the election (Saturday, Feb 1).

The ban applies to all people in the country. Those caught violating the ban can face a fine of up to B10,000 or even up to six months in jail, or both.

## Officials warn of norovirus

PHUKET OFFICIALS ARE STEPPING up readiness to combat norovirus as the threat of an outbreak looms, particularly following reports of widespread cases in China, and an outbreak over more than 1,400 infections in Rayong late last month.

The Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), in collaboration with the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health and the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office, organised a comprehensive workshop titled 'Phuket is Ready! To Cope with Norovirus' held at the PPAO offices on Dec 18.

Rewat Areerob, PPAO President at the time, delivered the opening address, stressing the critical need for preparedness.

Highlighting the virus's rapid spread in China, he pointed out that norovirus has no specific vaccine or treatment, making prevention the cornerstone of disease control. He warned of the severe potential impact on public health and the local economy if proactive measures are not implemented.

The workshop featured several key activities, including expert Insights by Dr Wichian Boonkitikorn, Director of the Epidemiology Division, Department of Disease Control, who presented a special lecture on the characteristics of norovirus, its transmission and the current outbreak situation in China.

The workshop also focussed on local data analysis, with Kiatsak Choti Wongpipat, Deputy Director of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), providing an in-depth overview of Phuket's disease surveillance, prevention measures and



Photo: PR Phuket

strategies for controlling potential local outbreaks.

Mr Rewat emphasised a proactive surveillance policy, urging cooperation from government agencies, the business sector, hotels and local communities. He reiterated that a united effort is essential for effectively preventing and managing any potential outbreak.

The PPHO has issued several notices informing the public of norovirus.

The notices, originally issued by the Division of General Communicable Diseases under the Ministry of Public Health's Department of Disease Control, explained that norovirus is a virus that causes inflammation in the digestive system.

It spreads quickly and easily, even with minimal exposure. It is resistant to heat and many disinfectants, making it hard to eliminate. When food or water is contaminated with norovirus, it can cause diarrhea and vomiting and spreads rapidly.

The virus is more common in the cool season and spreads easily in cooler weather, affecting both children and adults.

To prevent infection, stick to the principles of eating food that is thoroughly cooked, served hot, and prepared in clean conditions, the PPHO advises. *The Phuket News*



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# UNLOCKING SUCCESS

## How Strategic Brand Partnerships Drive Growth and Innovation

### ADVERTORIAL



Is there a difference between sponsorships and brand partnerships? After all, both are effective tools that help build brand visibility and engage with target audiences, right? On the face of it, they seem to be the same. But on delving deeper into the details, it becomes clear that there is, indeed, a difference.

Sponsorships are basically transactional, exchanging cash or in-kind contributions for a defined list of benefits, which usually includes marketing rights, social and traditional media exposure, on-site branding and so on. Sponsorship tends to be short term, often to achieve specific goals such as a new product launch, driving a sales or marketing campaign or celebrating a corporate milestone.

Brand partnerships, on the other hand, tend to be longer term, more cooperative and involve greater integration between the parties. They tend to create more authentic engagement, as they focus on aligning the values and missions of both brands. Key features of brand partnerships include shared objectives and goals; they may include joint marketing initiatives, such as Häagen-Dazs's recent partnering with the hit Netflix show 'Emily in Paris' for a worldwide campaign.

Brand partnership objectives

vary from brands partnering to access each other's customer base – as seen with Carlsberg's recent partnership with Grab – to alignments aimed at mutually reinforcing key product attributes, such as legendary past alliances between Fearless Yachts / Porsche and Riva Yachts / Gucci and the more recent collaboration between luxury Italian design house Fornasetti and the Ferretti Group.

The imperative to portray corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another brand partnership driver, witness leading broker TJB Super Yachts partnering with UK-based charity, Blue Marine Foundation and Princess Yachts partnering with the Marine Conservation Society.

According to Asia Sponsorship News (ASN), brand partnerships – especially in luxury lifestyle, sports and sustainability – have been steadily rising in Asia. ASN says that brands demonstrating a commitment to shared values through partnerships are more likely to succeed

in building brand loyalty.

"Brand partnerships allow companies to go beyond traditional marketing. They're built on collaboration and trust, leading to more meaningful experiences for the audience," said Paul Poole, founder and managing director of Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd, adding, "It's not just about being seen, but about being part of something bigger, which resonates more deeply with today's consumers."



Regional events like the Thailand International Boat Show demonstrate how partnerships can create a rich, immersive brand experience. These

partnerships extend beyond logos and banners, offering customers a chance to interact with brands in ways that feel authentic and aligned with their lifestyles. This unique show boasts a comprehensive commercial sponsorship and partnership programme that enables corporate Asia to get involved with the high-end luxury and boating lifestyle.

Sponsorships and brand partnerships offer opportunities to engage with and target a company's audience but, while sponsorships offer quick visibility, brand partnerships foster deeper connections that lead to longer term success.

Paul Poole summarises, "In today's market, it's no longer enough to simply sponsor an event – you need to actively engage and build a meaningful relationship with your audience. That's where partnerships truly excel."

Paul Poole will participate in a panel discussion on *New Ways to Create Publicity and PR in the Yachting Industry* at the Thailand Yacht Conference 2025, held on 8 January 2025 in conjunction with the Thailand International Boat Show.

**Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd.** is an independent marketing consultancy based in Bangkok, Thailand. The company specialises in commer-

cial sponsorship and partnership marketing, working with both rights holders and brands. Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd. has packaged, sold, and managed sponsorship and partnership opportunities for several of Southeast Asia's leading yachting events. [www.paulpoole.co.th](http://www.paulpoole.co.th) / [info@paulpoole.co.th](mailto:info@paulpoole.co.th)

**Asia Sponsorship News (ASN)** is the leading market intelligence service for the sponsorship industry in Asia, distributing independent news, analytics and insights on a subscription basis, with a bespoke consultancy and training service. ASN has been instrumental in the continued success of the sponsorship industry in Asia through its unrivalled data set of over 270,000 commercial sponsorship and partnership marketing deals in Asia which has allowed sponsorship professionals to trade faster and more efficiently, in an environment of greater transparency. ASN is operated by Asia Sponsorship News Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd.

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## E-visas from all Thai embassies, consulates

VISITORS HEADING to Thailand are now able to apply online for an e-visa at Thai embassies and consulates worldwide.

Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa last week announced that from Jan 1, 2025, the Thai e-visa system would be operative at all 94 Thai embassies and consulates.

Worawoot Pongprapant, director-general of consular affairs, said travellers will no longer have to queue up and file many documents at embassies.

Travellers could conveniently and safely apply for visas at [www.thaievisa.go.th](http://www.thaievisa.go.th) anywhere and anytime and pay visa fees online via Kasikornbank.



Photo: Foreign Ministry

However, travellers from some countries will still have to show payment slips at embassies and consulates, Mr Worawoot said.

He said the e-visa system will cover tourists, students and workers. Copies of approved e-visas will be sent to applicants via email.

Tourists from 93 countries do not have to apply for visas in advance and can stay in Thailand for up to 60 days, he said.

Bangkok Post

## Illegal tour guide problem worsens

THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL tour guides has worsened, attributed to longer visa-free stays and weak law enforcement, enabling foreigners to illegally operate both tour company and guide services in most major tourism cities, says the Professional Tourist Guides Association of Thailand.

New concerns cropped up on social media last month as an illegal Russian tour guide was caught leading a tour group in the Similan Islands, using a Thai guide as a sitting nominee, while being unable to compel customers to follow national park rules.

Tourists were seen jumping from rocks into the shallow sea, risking injury from underwater stones.

Paisarn Suethanuwong, a committee member of the association, said some foreigners are wrongfully reaping the benefits of Thailand's booming tourism industry.

He said the government's visa-free policy of up to 60 days for tourists from 93 countries has been exploited by foreigners who work illegally in Thailand.

Foreign tourists stay roughly 15 days or less on average, according to arrival and departure data.



A snorkeller explores sea life underwater at Koh Tachai, one of the Similan Islands. Photo: Bangkok Post

Mr Paisarn said there are many recent cases of Chinese working illegally at Bangkok construction sites.

He said in the past, foreign guides might illegally take jobs from licensed operators, but now they take part in the entire business cycle by themselves in major cities such as Bangkok and Phuket, explicitly opening tour services targeting not only Chinese tourists, but also Russian, Indian and South Korean travellers.

"Thailand has lost tens to hundreds of billions of baht from these illegal operations, with tourism revenue flowing out of the country," said Mr Paisarn, adding the authorities failed to strictly enforce the law to prevent these problems.

Tour guide is a restricted occupation for Thai nationals. The number of licensed tour guides is estimated at over 50,000, including 20,000 English-speaking and 10,000 Mandarin-speaking guides, he said.

Mr Paisarn said the number of tour guides may be unable to meet demand, particularly for high-demand languages such as Russian and Polish, but this is not an excuse for operators to illegally hire foreign tour guides.

Allowing Thai tour guides to work with the support of foreign tour leaders is the solution, he said.

If foreigners solely manage a tour business, as is happening now, this is an illegal business, said Mr Paisarn.

Despite the rising number of independent tourists and decline in large tour groups after the pandemic, this trend has not significantly affected tour guides because many independent tourists still travel as small private group tours, which depend on tour escorts, said Mr Paisarn.

The main issue remains foreigners seeking opportunities to target customers on their own, he said.

Bangkok Post



# Marriage Equality Bill ready

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The state and civil sectors are gearing up to implement the Marriage Equality Bill, which is set to become law this month.

The bill was endorsed by His Majesty the King and published in the Royal Gazette on Sept 24, making Thailand the third country or territory in Asia, after Taiwan and Nepal, to recognise same-sex marriage.

The bill will become law 120 days after it was published in the Royal Gazette, which means same-sex couples will be able to start registering their marriages on Jan 22 this year.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, along with the Social Development and Human Security, Interior, Justice, and Culture ministries and Bangkok Pride organisation, held an event called "Marriage Equality Day" on Dec 3 to provide an update on Thailand's readiness to implement the Marriage Equality Bill.

Kannapong Pipatmontrikul, the director of the General Registration Office of the Interior Ministry, said that a committee had been formed to make adjustments to the marriage registration system to allow same-sex people to register their marriages at local district offices across Thailand.

### TRIAL RUN

He said that the committee has also



Thailand is the third country or territory in Asia, after Taiwan and Nepal, to recognise same-sex marriage. Photo: Bangkok Post

amended the wording of some regulations to better reflect the spirit of the Marriage Equality Bill, such as replacing references to specific genders to "individuals", and switching out references to husbands and wives in favour of "married couples".

"We are waiting for the Interior Minister to approve the amendments," Mr Kannapong explained.

Once approved, the registration system will be modified to reflect the changes, and a trial run will be organised to check the system's readiness, he said, before adding staff who are involved in marriage registrations will be retrained to improve their knowledge of the

new law and system.

Mr Kannapong said that once the bill becomes law, same-sex couples can register their marriages at any district office across the country.

Those who want to register their marriage must be at least 18 years old, but parents' and/or guardians' consent will still be required if the applicants are younger than 20.

Kerdchoke Kasemwongjit, Justice Ministry's Inspector-General, said the ministry will review other bills to guarantee that same-sex couples have the same rights as heterosexual couples to establish a family, such as the surrogacy bill, nationalities bill and gender recognition bill.

# Bangkok economy hit by PM2.5 dust air pollution

## BANGKOK

ECONOMIC LOSSES OF over B400 billion caused by air pollution, particularly fine particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns or PM2.5, have been predicted for Bangkok.

Associate Professor Witsanu Attavanich, a lecturer from the Faculty of Economics at Kasetsart University, said air pollution must be addressed, as the problem was both an environmental and economic issue.

Air pollution research found the amount of PM2.5 in Bangkok for one year lasts about 6-7 months and causes over B400 billion annually.

"The next in line suffering adverse effects from pollution are Chon Buri, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen," he said.

Assoc Prof Witsanu has recommended fostering a creative economy by adopting the Bio-Circular-Green Economy (BCG) model for sustainable development.

The BCG model covers bioeconomy, which enhances the value of biological resources; circular



Photo: Bangkok Post

economy, which maximises resource efficiency and longevity; and green economy, which promotes economic development by ensuring the sustainability of resources and the environment.

Applying the royal wisdom of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great in preserving and planting trees should also be adopted, Assoc Prof Witsanu said.

This could be done with promoting carbon credits in the public sector and promoting a circular economy by reducing the burning of waste materials and using them to create additional benefits to generate income.

Measures should be also taken to ensure farmers can access modern machinery at affordable prices to reduce farm burning and help farmers increase their yield per rai, reducing household debt, Assoc Prof Witsanu concluded. Bangkok Post

# Myanmar babies 'not entitled to free treatment'

## BANGKOK

BABIES OF MYANMAR PARENTAGE born at a border hospital in Thailand are not entitled to receive free healthcare coverage like Thai nationals even though they are automatically issued with a 13-digit identification number, the National Health Security Office (NHSO) has confirmed.

More importantly, the ID cards clearly designate them as migrants born in Thailand, not Thai nationals, Dr Jadej Thammatacharee, secretary-general of the NHSO said on Dec 18.

He was responding to media reports about a rising number of pregnant women in Myanmar intentionally crossing the border to give birth in the Thai hospital to obtain healthcare benefits.

They take advantage of a health insurance package under the universal healthcare coverage scheme, which is designed specifically for migrants who do not have any healthcare coverage, according to a healthcare worker who earlier spoke anonymously to the Drama-addict Facebook page.

Around 160 babies with Myanmar mothers were delivered last month at the border hospital, compared to 80 from Thai women, said the worker.

Meanwhile, the NHSO has insisted it accesses the central database run by the Ministry of Interior to determine a baby's nationality, he said.



Photo: Bangkok Post

Dr Jadej also clarified that the "Tho 99 Rights Fund", earlier reported as having financed the welfare benefits for newborn babies of migrants at the taxpayers' expense, was not intended to be disbursed for babies born to Myanmar parents who obtained medical services at the border hospital.

Approved under a 2010 Cabinet resolution, Tho 99 Right was intended specifically for the 400,000 to 500,000 migrant workers in Thailand who, at the time, awaited nationality verification and were left without any healthcare coverage, said the doctor.

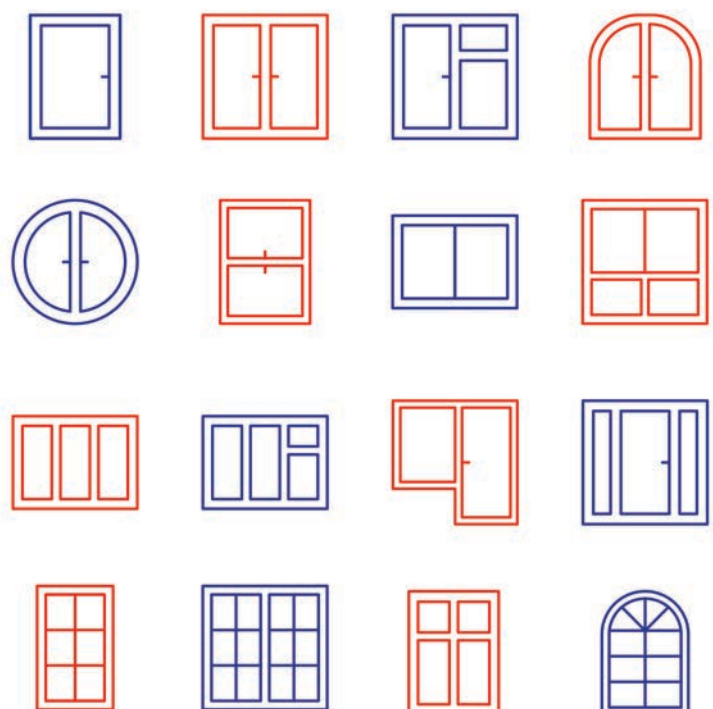
This healthcare right is only reserved for migrant workers and their children who are born here, not Myanmar nationals who exploited medical services here, he said.

"Foreign nationals not eligible for Tho 99 Right coverage will need to pay the medical expenses out of their own pockets," Dr Jadej said.

The annual budget to pay for the healthcare costs of eligible migrants is B2-3 billion a year, he added. Bangkok Post



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# Skål Phuket's vision for the future

The Phuket News

editor@classactmedia.co.th

As Skål International Phuket transitions from Eddy Brosse's impactful presidency to Bas van Straten's promising leadership, the club reflects on its achievements and anticipates an exciting future.

Eddy Brosse leaves a lasting legacy as Skål International Phuket President, having overseen remarkable growth and transformation together thanks to a remarkable team at the helm of the Phuket club. When he took the reins in late 2022, the club had just 34 members. Today, it boasts over 60 and is on track to becoming the largest Skål International club in Thailand.

"We re-established Skål International Phuket on the local networking calendar as the island's only mixed professional club," Eddy shared. Their efforts prioritised diversity in genders, age and nationalities while striving to increase Thai representation up to 40% and maintain quality. Under his leadership, the club's committee introduced a vibrant annual calendar of monthly events, doubling the attendance in just two years.

Despite the challenges faced due to a restricted committee, the results speak for themselves, with all nationalities mixing happily at each event and attendance having doubled, while members keep sharing quality stories of new partnerships and collaborations. "We made a great, diverse team that delivered real results," Eddy reflected.

As the incoming National President of Skål International Thailand, Eddy's vision expands to uniting clubs across the country and borders, building brand awareness and closer ties to government officials and similar associations. Next year will also see the implementation of clear, ethical standards for all clubs in the country. He aims to reconnect Skål with the tour-



ism industry's up-and-coming generations, positioning it as a true "trusted voice".

Eddy is very enthusiastic about the future: "We had an amazing Skål International Thailand Forum this year with the Chiang Mai, Krabi, Samui and Phuket clubs, taking the time to reflect on who we are, where we are coming from and where we should be heading toward."

"It was necessary, and we achieved beyond my expectations on mapping out our way forward together. We have a brilliant team of new young Presidents coming on and I am already very excited to take Skål International Thailand up to the next level with this great team!"

## Bas van Straten: Building on Success

With 19 years of membership and three years as Treasurer and acting Vice President, Bas van Straten steps into the presidency with a deep understanding of Skål International Phuket and a strong experience

within the past effective committee. His tenure as Treasurer brought structure to the club, including improved accounting systems and formalised association status (the first club in Thailand).

Bas is committed to strengthening member connections and delivering value. Recognising a desire among members for more industry insights, he plans to introduce expert speakers and partner with associations and Chambers of Commerce to raise Skål International's profile. "While friendship is vital, many members want more industry updates," Bas explained.

To attract new members, particularly young professionals, Bas will engage universities and HR departments, encouraging younger members to lead these efforts. "This approach will make it easier to connect with potential recruits," he said.

Collaboration with Eddy Brosse will be essential. By sharing best practices and aligning with Skål International Thailand's national strategy, Bas aims to play his part into unity across Thailand's clubs and boost corporate involvement.

## Looking Ahead

Eddy Brosse's achievements have set a strong foundation for growth, while Bas van Straten's vision brings fresh energy to the club. Together, their leadership embodies Skål International's core values of friendship and professional excellence.

As Skål International Phuket moves forward, it continues to exemplify the power of collaboration, diversity, and sustainability in the tourism industry, within a professional yet casual atmosphere of camaraderie.

Do connect with any of them for details on how to join great monthly events and superb local connections: Phuket club: [info@skalphuket.org](mailto:info@skalphuket.org)  
Bas van Straten: [president@skalphuket.org](mailto:president@skalphuket.org)  
Eddy Brosse: [president@skalthailand.com](mailto:president@skalthailand.com)



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# The Caucasus, where history is not past but present

Georgian Military Highway to Kazbegi. Photo: Todd Miller



## GLOBETROTTER

Todd Miller

Nestled between the Black and Caspian Seas, the Caucasus region stands as one of Earth's most fascinating crossroads. This mountainous territory, where Europe dissolves into Asia, has long been a collision of cultures, languages and empires. I recently explored Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia over a three-week period this Fall. Here are my top impressions:

### Baku: Oil Money and New Flames

Baku hits you like a Mercedes-Benz wrapped in a Persian carpet. Fueled by an ambition to put the city on the global map and funded by oil wealth, Baku has emerged as an architectural powerhouse. The capital city is what would happen, I suspect, if Dubai and Istanbul had a baby.

Baku's signature statement piece isn't subtle – three flame-shaped skyscrapers that dominate the skyline. At night, thousands of LED screens transform the buildings into actual flickering flames, a hypnotic display visible from almost anywhere in the city. Architects drew inspiration from Azerbaijan's history as a land of fire worshippers, creating what amounts to a 21st-century temple to flame.

The Flame Towers are seductive, but the Heydar Aliyev Center is pure architectural poetry. The late Zaha Hadid's masterpiece seems to defy physics – a vast white structure that appears to have been shaped by wind, all curves and flowing lines without a single straight edge in sight. I visited the Center twice, because when a building is this graceful, once is not enough.

Then there's the Carpet Museum, which takes the imaginative form of a rolled-up carpet. The building's facade mimics the texture and patterns of traditional Azerbaijani carpets, complete with elaborate fringe details at the base. This is architectural wit executed at grand scale.

### Kazbegi: A touch of heaven?

If Baku dazzles with architectural flash, next door in the Republic of Georgia the defining impression is subdued spirituality. Georgia has one of the world's richest concentration of churches dotting its mountainous landscape. In my 10-day visit to the country, I meaningfully visited about two dozen of these inspiring sanctuaries. My favourite is at Kazbegi, a small mountain town in the highlands of northern Georgia, where getting there is as memorable as the destination. It's a full day's drive into the mountains on the scenic but slow Georgian Military Highway.

I didn't expect the majesty of Gergeti Trinity Church. Perched beneath the towering snow-frosted Mount Kazbek, this iconic 14th-century monument seems to defy both gravity and logic. Taking in the magnitude of this valley, I began to understand why Georgian Orthodox Christians consider this a sacred place. The hike up took about an hour and rates as one of my top experiences in the country, in part because I encountered few others along the way. But the serenity didn't last long. Although my October visit is considered end-of-season, this does not imply quiet.

### Armenia: A Collective Memory

What strikes me most about Armenia is its deep history. This is a place that puts a new perspective on "old". Yerevan, the capital, predates Rome and celebrated its 2,806<sup>th</sup> birthday during my visit. The country is the cradle

of Christianity with the world's oldest cathedral, the world's oldest known leather shoe and the oldest winery. The distinct Armenian alphabet is a youthful 1,700 years young. Armenia has a collective memory to match this pedigree, which makes the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex strike a deep chord.

Situated on a hill in Yerevan, this memorial complex pierces the sky with its soaring spire. At its heart, an eternal flame flickers amidst 12 inward-leaning slabs, symbolising the unity of the Armenian people in ensuring the memory of the 1915 genocide endures. There are no graphic displays, no attempts to shock. Instead, the architecture itself speaks of loss. Everything here serves to remind and remember.

The Armenian Genocide claimed 1.5 million lives and is the first documented ethnic cleansing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This year I have visited three

countries – Rwanda, Cambodia and Armenia – scarred by devastating mass atrocities of the past century. What's striking is each has distinct characteristics but all share tragic parallels. It's heartbreaking that "never again" has become a phrase we repeat all too frequently.

The Caucasus are a region of contrast and complexity, old and new. Baku's flashy modernity, Kazbegi's timeless spirituality and Armenia's collective memory tell the story of a fascinating region where history is not past but present.

*Adventurer and author Todd Miller has explored more than 100 countries on all continents. His Amazon bestseller 'ENRICH: Create Wealth in Time, Money, and Meaning'. His writing has featured in CNBC, Fast Company and Newsweek. He resides at Natai Beach. [www.enrich101.com](http://www.enrich101.com)*



Gergeti Trinity Church at Kazbegi. Photo: Todd Miller



History Museum of Armenia in Yerevan. Photo: Todd Miller



Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan. Photo: Todd Miller



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POP QUIZ

1. How many movies was Elvis Presley in?

2. Who composed 'Peter and the Wolf'?

3. Who sang the 1990 club classic 'Groove is in the Heart'?

4. What was the Latin name of Paris in Roman times?

5. In which two countries is Coca-Cola not sold?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Early pulpit

5. Group of eight

10. Eye section

14. Wassailer's song

15. Humpback, e.g.

16. Big name in mapmaking

17. Home of Monument Circle

20. High ball?

21. Indian princess

22. Compact submachine gun

24. Trophy

26. Sailor's assent

27. Ring bearer, maybe

28. Small amount

30. Saws with the grain

32. Jocks' antitheses

34. Entreaty

35. Gaudy scarf

36. Fire preceder?

37. Home of Coit Tower

43. Devotee

44. Starfleet Academy grad.

45. Real

46. Put in

49. Black-and-white predator

50. International money

51. Author Harper

52. Nile reptile

Down

1. Ruined "City of 1001 Churches"

2. Sun follower?

3. Sheets and pillowcases

4. Assortment

5. Have

6. Winner

7. Spanish snack

8. Greetings

9. Filibuster

10. \_\_\_ Minor

11. More futile

12. Group of nine people

13. Calculators

18. Epitome of simplicity

19. Conciliatory

22. Ben Franklin's baby

23. "J'accuse" author

25. Concentrated, in a way

29. Blooper

31. Indiana basketballer

33. Gush

36. State in NE India

38. Police devices

39. Sharp

40. Cross

41. Glow

42. Nicaragua's second-largest city

46. Biblical miracle worker

47. Threaten

48. "You \_\_\_!"

49. First act

53. Zzzz

55. Neighbor of Ger.

58. Barely managed, with "out"

59. Incessantly

61. \_\_\_ carotene

63. Had an edge

64. Wreath

65. Infomercials, e.g.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17				18						19				
			20			21								
22	23			24	25			26				27		
28			29		30		31			32	33			
34					35				36					
37				38				39				40	41	42
				43				44				45		
46	47	48				49						50		
51					52	53			54		55		56	
57			58					59			60	61		
62									63				64	65
66					67						68			
69					70						71			

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

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

A	L	E	E		B	O	O	D	L	E		R	A	W
G	A	L	E		U	N	R	E	A	L		A	L	I
E	V	E	R		G	R	E	E	N	P	L	A	N	T
S	A	G		O	R	S	O		R	E	A	P		
A	M	B	O		G	E	T	T	E	R	S			
H	A	N	O	I	T	O	R	A	H	S				
I	N	T	O		A	U	R	I	G	A		O	B	I
G	O	L	D	E	N	R	E	T	R	I	E	V	E	R
H	A	Y		R	E	B	A	T	E		W	E	A	K
M	O	N	O	D	Y		H	E	R	D	S			
A	R	T	I	S	T	S		B	I	R	D			
C	E	I	L		S	P	A	R		R	E	P		
H	A	N	D		B	R	A	K	E	L	E	V	E	R
E	V	E		R	E	T	I	R	E		I	S	I	S
S	E	A			A	D	E	P	T	S		I	S	N

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

2.5

days are spent every year by the average American looking for misplaced items.

85

percent of people in the US believe they are less biased than the average American.

1911

is the year when a baseball team of death-row prisoners in Wyoming had their executions delayed if they kept winning.

156,721


people have signed a petition for the next heavy metal in the periodic table to be named 'Lemmium', after Motörhead's Lemmy.

36 trillion

US dollars is the current national debt of the United States, the largest external debt in the world.

Source: [Uberfacts](http://uberfacts.com)

ISLAND VIEW



Day's end at Nai Yang. Photo by Gus Chesterton

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

Jan 3, 2009

The first block of the blockchain of the decentralised payment system Bitcoin, called the Genesis block, is established by the creator of the system, Satoshi Nakamoto.

Jan 4, 1948

Burma gains independence from the UK, becoming an independent republic named the Union of Burma, with Sao Shwe Thaik as its first President and U Nu

Jan 5, 1066

Edward the Confessor, one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England, dies childless, sparking a succession crisis that eventually leads to the Norman conquest of England.

Jan 6, 1929

Mother Teresa arrives in Calcutta, India, to begin her work among India's poorest and sick people.

Jan 7, 2015

Two gunmen commit mass murder at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris, shooting 12 people execution

Jan 8, 1297

François Grimaldi, disguised as a monk, leads his men to capture the fortress protecting the Rock of Monaco, establishing his family as the rulers of Monaco.

Jan 9, 2007

Apple CEO Steve Jobs introduces the original iPhone at a Macworld keynote speech in San Francisco.

Photo: AFP

style, and wounding 11 others.

Source: [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia)

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## PHUKET TOWN JOINS CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Phuket City Municipality is spreading holiday cheer with its festive decorations featuring 'Uncle Santa', and this year with 'Nong Santi', placed atop the Peranakan Museum in the heart of Phuket Old Town. The initiative aims to attract tourists and boost the local economy during the festive season. Uncle Santa and Nong Santi scaling the Peranakan Museum have created a buzz among Thai and foreign tourists, who are flocking to the area to snap photos and selfies as keepsakes. The festive makeover is part of a city-wide effort to celebrate Christmas, bid farewell to 2567, and welcome the New Year. At the iconic Charter Intersection, a popular check-in spot for visitors, the Sino-Portuguese-style clocktower has been transformed into a vibrant holiday attraction. Decorations have also extended to other landmarks in the city. At Surin Circle, also known as the Clocktower Circle, Santa-themed 'Ping' cookies add a whimsical touch to the surroundings. Meanwhile, Suriyadet Circle, near the Phuket City Municipality 'Fresh Market', features 'Santa Yaya', dressed in a traditional Yaya outfit paired with a festive Christmas hat, warmly welcoming visitors to stop, take photos and check in. The decorations aim to draw more tourists to Phuket Old Town, a hub of culture and history, during the holiday season. By creating an atmosphere of joy and wonder, Phuket City Municipality hopes to stimulate local businesses and ensure the town's economy thrives as 2025 approaches.





## Second Sri Soonthorn Half Marathon confirmed

### MARATHON

THE DATE FOR THE second annual Sri Soonthorn Half Marathon has been confirmed as Sunday, Feb 9, organisers revealed at a press conference on Dec 16.

Sri Soonthorn Mayor Chimbol Gidsup explained that it is hoped the number of participants this year can exceed the total of 1,400 who took part in last year's inaugural event, which attracted local, regional and international athletes.

This year's event will follow the same structure of the successful launch, whereby it will once again be held at Ban Bang Neow Dam in Thalang and will be split into four separate race categories: a 3.5 kilometre 'walk for health'; a 5km fun run; a 10km mini marathon; and the 21km half marathon.

Trophies and cash prizes will be distributed for the top three finishers in each distance and competitors will not be



Ban Bang Neow Dam.  
Photo: PR Phuket

split by gender, with age divisions in each race category instead made up of under-19 years old, 20-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-49 years old, 50-59 years old, and 60 years and above.

Mayor Gidsup explained that the event is important in encouraging local residents to be mindful of their health by taking up regular exercise.

"The area is typically southern Thai and ideal for cross country disciplines, taking in a beautiful nature trail with abundant fresh air," Mayor Gidsup said.

"It is a great way to promote the area and boost tourism which can have a positive impact on local businesses and the economy," he concluded.

*The Phuket News*

# ONE Championship going big in Japan

### MMA

Bangkok Post

ONE Championship boss Chatri Sityodtong has promised to deliver "the biggest martial arts event in Japan's history" with Thailand's Rodtang Jitmuangnon set to face Takeru Segawa at Saitama Super Arena on Mar 23.

The five-round flyweight kickboxing super fight will headline ONE 172 at the 37,000 capacity arena.

Adriano Moraes and Yuya Wakamatsu will also rematch for the flyweight MMA world title, which has been vacant since the legendary Demetrious Johnson announced his retirement last September.

ONE chairman and CEO Chatri promised "more title fights" and "a few big surprises" would be revealed for the card in January.

"We're also going to feature some of the greatest



Segawa (left) and Rodtang. Photo: Bangkok Post

combat sports athletes from Japan like Masaaki Noiri, KANA [Morimoto], and Hiroki Akimoto," he said.

"Of course we will have the legend Shinya Aoki on the card as well. This card is Japan versus the world. We will see if Japan can restore its past glory," he added.

Speaking through a translator at a press conference on Dec 18, which was streamed live by ONE's Japanese broadcast partner U-Next, Chatri insisted the card would be "the biggest in the last 30 years".

"Mark my words. This will be the biggest martial arts event in the history of Japan. My goal as a half Japanese is to bring martial arts back to the mainstream in Japan and have 120 million people watching this fight in Japan," Chatri added.

"This is Japan's chance to bring back honour and glory in martial arts, back in the same ways it was in the PRIDE days 30 years ago."

Rodtang and Takeru were all set to fight at last January's ONE 165 card in

Tokyo – the promotion's most recent appearance in Japan – before the Thai withdrew injured.

Former three-division K-1 champion Takeru went on to challenge for Superlek Kiatmookao's ONE flyweight kickboxing title at Ariake Arena but lost a unanimous decision that left him in tears – and heavily limping out of the ring.

"In Takeru, you have arguably the single biggest combat superstar in Japan alongside [Naoya] Inoue and Tenshin [Nasukawa]," Chatri said.

"Takeru and I were talking backstage – if he's OK with his body, his big dream is to win a world title in ONE.

"I predict somebody is going to get knocked out. This is by far the most important super fight in Japanese history. They are the two biggest superstars that Japan and Thailand have ever produced in the world of striking, pound for pound."

## Dutch test awaits Thai spikers

### VOLLEYBALL

HOSTS THAILAND WERE DRAWN to face the Netherlands in the pool phase of the FIVB Women's Volleyball World Championship 2025 at the official ceremony on Dec 17.

Thailand, who are seeded No.1 as the host country, are also joined by Sweden and Egypt in Pool A.

It will be the first time the World Championship is held in Thailand and Southeast Asia.

Defending champions Serbia, who will try to win their third straight world title, have been drawn in Pool H with Japan, Ukraine and Cameroon.

Olympic champions Italy are in Pool B with Belgium, Cuba and Slovakia.

The United States, who lost to Italy in the gold medal match at the Paris Olympics, are in Pool D with the Czech Republic, Argentina and Slovenia.

Another Southeast Asian side Vietnam are in Pool G with Poland, Germany and Kenya.

The 32 qualified teams that will compete in the Aug 22-Sept 7 championship were split into eight pools of four for the start of the tournament.

The pool play will determine the 16 teams that will advance to the knockout rounds, with the top two sides in each pool moving forward.

Four cities - Bangkok, Phuket, Nakhon Ratchasima and Chiang Mai - will host matches in the pool phase.



The Dec 17 draw. Photo: Bangkok Post

From the round of 16 onwards, the single-elimination phase matches will all be held at Bangkok's Indoor Stadium.

The Pool A and H matches will take place in Bangkok's Indoor Stadium, Pool B and G games will be held at Phuket's Municipal Stadium, Pool C and F battles will take place at Chiang Mai's International Exhibition and Convention Centre while Nakhon Ratchasima's Chatchai Hall will host Pool C and D fixtures.

The 2025 championship will be the first in the 'new era' of the tournament. Starting with this edition, the tournament will be held biannually and will have an expanded field, featuring 32 national teams per gender. *Bangkok Post*

## KLPGA Tour back at Blue Canyon

### GOLF

THE KLPGA GOLF Tournament will return to Blue Canyon Country Club in Phuket this year for the second time with a prize money of B27.65 million up for grabs.

The Blue Canyon Ladies Championship 2025, to be held between Mar 13-16, is the second consecutive year that the tournament has been held in Thailand and marks the opening course of the 2025 season of the KLPGA Tour.

In addition to leading female golfers from the KLPGA Tour joining the competition, there will be a further 40 golfers invited to join the competition.

These will be the top eight players from the Thai LPGA Tour Order of Merit, the top four from the Japan LPGA Tour Order of Merit and two leading golfers from each of the following countries: India, Indonesia, Philippines, China, Taiwan, Australia, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Furthermore, two Thai and one international golfers from national



Photo: Supplied

qualifiers and seven players from sponsors will make up the contingent.

This is an extension of the success of last year's competition by Blue Canyon and the KLPGA Tour in organising the competition in Thailand for the first time. That tournament winner was South Korea's Lee Ye-won, who scored a total of 9 under par 207, one of three tournaments she won in 2024.

"This year, we are trying to bring our experience in organising the tournament to be more fun and exciting than last year," commented Prapan Asava-aree, Chairman of the Board of

Directors of Blue Canyon Country Club.

"We have also invited leading golfers from both the Thai LPGA Tour and leading female golfers from across Asia to add colour to the competition, while opening the National Qualifiers round to give Thai female golfers and foreign golfers a chance to join and gain experience in the competition."

The KLPGA is a professional women's golf league in South Korea, one of the world's largest women's golf tours based on the Rolex Women's World Golf Ranking.

*The Phuket News*



# Young Caiah a big hit

## MUAY THAI

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

She may be young but BCIS School Phuket student Caiah Yammine is already making a name for herself in the world of Muay Thai.

Since arriving in Thailand, Caiah has been pursuing her dreams with dedication and focus, becoming the youngest Muay Thai fighter at Tiger Muay Thai gym in Chalong and capturing the hearts of many with her passion and resilience.

Six-year-old Caiah's Muay Thai journey began in 2023 when she and her family came to Thailand from Australia for a holiday and some casual training in the national sport known as the "Art of Eight Limbs".

Caiah spent a month training at Tiger Muay Thai before being offered her first fight by her coach Saifon Chumphon. Despite facing off against an older opponent at Rawai Boxing Stadium, young Caiah surprised everyone by winning her first championship title and, in the process, charting the course for her so far impressive career in the sport.

Her success did not go unnoticed. Viwat Sakulrat, the owner of Tiger Muay Thai, offered Caiah a sponsorship as the youngest fighter at the renowned gym. Inspired by the



Coach Saifon and Caiah in the ring at Patong Boxing Stadium following her win on Dec 10. Photo: Supplied

opportunity, her family made a life-changing decision to move to Thailand and support Caiah's dream of one day becoming a Muay Thai world champion.

On Dec 10, Caiah won her biggest challenge yet at Patong Boxing Stadium, taking her overall win run to four consecutive fights.

Despite her rigorous training schedule, which includes two training sessions a day, Caiah also remains a dedicated student at BCIS School Phuket where she excels academically.

But Muay Thai is not the only sport Caiah is passionate about. In addition to her training in the sport six days a week, she also practices Brazilian jiu-jitsu twice a week, participates in gymnastics, swimming and plays football.

While her athleticism and dedication

are a true reflection of her strong work ethic, she also displays a humility in her recognition and thanks to her support team at the gym.

Following her Dec 10 win in Patong she took to her Instagram account to comment: "What a nice way to finish the year off. Kru @saifon\_chumphon I can never thank you enough for the love and support I get from you."

"Also I would like to thank all the coaches who have helped and pushed me through all my classes I know at times it's not easy but we get there in the end. Big Thankyou to my boss @viwat\_tigermuaythai for believing in my dream."

Watch this space as this is clearly just the beginning and *The Phuket News* looks forward to following young Caiah's career as it unfolds.

# Phuket kart star wins big in Macau

## KARTING

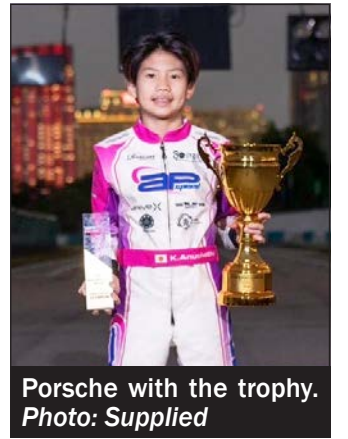
YOUNG PHUKET GO-karting sensation Kamolphu "Porsche" Anutchakun signed off for 2024 by winning the junior category at the Macau International Kart Grand Prix IAME Asia Final 2024 on the weekend of Dec 6-8.

The event was organised by the Sports Bureau, the Automobile General Association of Macao-China, OTK Kart Asia and IAME Asia and took place at the Coloane Karting Track in the town of Cotai.

The weekend's races featured different categories of the IAME Asia Final 2024 and the AAMC Karting Championship Round 8, as well as the KZ Class and the Sands Cup.

Porsche, a student at Kajonkietsuksa School in Kathu, triumphed in the junior class ahead of fellow racers Andre Galimberti of Italy and Sekiguchi Shun of Japan to secure first place on the podium and the winner's trophy.

Earlier in the weekend,



Porsche with the trophy. Photo: Supplied

Porsche had finished in fourth place in his first round of qualifying after crashing in his second round. He therefore demonstrated great skill to navigate the field and advance up the track to finish in top spot.

Prizes were awarded to the winners of the different categories after the races finished by distinguished guests, including: Luis Gomes, President of the Macau Sports Bureau; Roberto Carlos Osório, President of Automobile General Association of Macao-China; and Filippo Fagnani, Chief Executive Officer of IAME.

Ben Tirebuck

# Dojo team finish off year in style despite ongoing concerns

## JUDO

THE STUDENTS FROM The Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket rounded off 2024 in style by claiming an impressive nine-medal haul at the Johor Judo Championships in Malaysia last month.

The event saw over 500 athletes descend on the southern Malaysian state on Dec 21 to battle it out with the boys and girls from the Blue Tree based gym showing the best version of themselves to win four gold medals, one silver and four bronze against tough competition.

As captain for the Dojo David led the way by example, fearlessly winning his final contest with very good strategy and smart, powerful technique. It is little wonder Dojo lead instructor Alexis Plantard says the sky is the limit for his young student.

Similarly Sagit, who won all his four contests



The Dojo team at the Johor Judo Championships in Malaysia on Dec 21. Photo: Alexis Plantard

by ippon (the highest score a fighter can achieve in judo) and who has developed tremendously well over the past 12 months.

Considering it was his first competition event, Leo did not display any nerves as he won all four of his matches in hugely impressive style, securing his yellow belt accreditation in the process. A beaming Alexis stated how Leo had "fought like a tiger".

Also competing in her first competition was young Lea, who won her three-contest division to claim gold, while Max won silver in his first bow for a

long time, having been overseas for an extended period. Max also secured his yellow belt with his victory.

Rounding off the competition debutant contingent was Daniil who claimed a bronze medal by winning two of his three contests with a very powerful style.

Dima also won bronze by winning two of his four bouts. Proving that he is getting stronger every month, he secured his orange belt status in Johor.

Fellow bronze medalists were Mayel, who won two of his three fights and is

also showing great progress, and Yana, who showed great courage and never gave up in any of her bouts.

## TOUGH CONTEST

Prior to this the team had competed at the Indonesian International Judo Open in Jakarta on the weekend of Nov 23-24.

With over 800 athletes involved it was always going to be a tough contest and that is exactly how it transpired.

However, demonstrating tough resolve, the team still managed to return home with two gold medals and a bronze.

Student David won his gold after defeating tough opposition as four opponents from Indonesia and one from Uzbekistan were overcome in style.

Captain Gabin secured a bronze medal in a very tough division. His final medal of the year meant he was the Dojo's top performing student in 2024 in terms of medals, making the podium at competitions in 10 different countries throughout the year.

Completing the medal haul for the Dojo was lead instructor Alexis who won gold after seeing off strong opposition from Indonesia, Singapore and Japan.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

This victory put Alexis in good stead for his next competition, the world championships of kurash wrestling kurash in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on Dec 6.

Despite what Alexis claimed was a contentious refereeing performance in the semi-final, he still managed to win bronze against a field of top athletes.

"I was leading the semi-final match and so close to the final before the referee penalised me for a foul I simply did not commit," Alexis explained.

"However, during my last five world championships in kurash wrestling I never managed to get higher than fifth place so this demonstrates progress and for that I am happy," he added.

The Ulaanbaatar was

Alexis' final competition of 2024 which saw him fight 82 matches in 27 tournaments all around the world. "I will take a rest now and get back to training shortly," Alexis told *The Phuket News*.

Despite their sterling performances throughout 2024, the Dojo team are still facing an uncertain future, having been told by their current landlord at Blue Tree they had to vacate the premises by Jan 1.

Alexis said he has managed to locate a new venue but construction at a cost of B2 million has yet to begin and it will be several months before it is ready to welcome the students.

"Until then I will simply open my house and roll the practice mats out in my garden to ensure that we continue to train and develop the best generation of students. We will never give up and the sky is the limit," he said.

Ben Tirebuck





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