

**DEMOCRATS PUSH TO RETAKE PHUKET > PAGE 3**

# FREE OF CHARGE



Ministry of Justice Permanent Secretary Pongsawat Kaiarunsut (right) inspects a map of the 178 rai along the Layan-Leypong beachfront. Photo: DSI

## GOAL OF DSI PROBE INTO B10BN LAND GRAB IS NOT PROSECUTIONS

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Ministry of Justice Deputy Permanent Secretary Pol Lt Col Prawut Wongsinin has revealed that the aim of the years-long fight to have 178 rai of beachfront land at Layan and Leypong Beaches in Cherg Talay returned to the state is not to prosecute the encroachers.

The stunning revelation came during an inspection of the land reclaimed by Pongsawat Kaiarunsut, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, last Friday (Jan 27).

"In the prosecution of natural

resource offences, it cannot be denied that the destination is government officials. The DSI has a challenge in creating understanding among encroachers and investors so that they understand the role we have and to obey the law," Ministry of Justice Deputy Permanent Secretary Lt Col Prawut said.

"The important thing is to understand government officials whose duty is to issue land title documents. Later, when we started prosecuting and integrating with all sectors, it made the roles of various agencies start to be clear... The DSI initiated prosecution and has had success.

The situation has improved, but if we ignore it, there will be more encroachment indefinitely," he said.

"The DSI is an operational unit and must be integrated with law enforcement. It must be transparent, fast and verifiable. The responsible agency must work with us... The goal is not to arrest government officials, not to prosecute investors or people who encroach [on government land]. The main goal is to return forest areas to the state land," Lt Col Prawut continued.

"Therefore, the results are not statistics for cases filed and court verdicts. The successful result is to

follow up on the results of the verdict whether the forest land has been returned to the state. In many cases, we claim success, but the forest land has not been returned yet. Therefore, the ultimate goal must be understood in the same way," he concluded.

### B10BN FIGHT

The land reclaimed altogether has been estimated to be worth over B10 billion. It has mostly been reclaimed from private operators, profiteering from tourism and tourism-dependent businesses at the prime tourism site.

After years of legal action, the demolition to knock down the last...

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# News



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## Jet-ski operator fined B50k at Surin Beach

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A jet-ski operator and a parasail operator have each been fined B10,000 per vessel for operating at Surin Beach, in Cherg Talay, which officials have declared a “White Beach”, to be free from all private vendors offering such services.

Phuket Marine Chief Natchaphong Pranit reported that a team of officers led by Tanthai Wongsaree, a Marine Department inspector from the Ranong regional office, arrived at the beach at 3pm last Friday (Jan 27).

The officers were dispatched after the Phuket Marine Office received a complaint pointing out that jet-skis were available for rent at the beach, and a boat operator was providing parasail rides to tourists.

Surin Beach is supposed to be free from such services, as it had been declared a ‘White Beach’ years ago, the complaint said, Mr Natchapong explained.

Just as the complainant had described, the officers found at the beach an operator with



Photo: Phuket Marine Office

five jet-skis for rent.

All five jet-skis had been legally registered. However, they were being operated outside their designated area.

The operator is permitted to rent out jet-skis at nearby Bang Tao Beach only, and only within one nautical mile of the beach in calm sea conditions, Mr Natchapong said in his report.

The operator was deemed

to have violated Section 9 of the Navigation in Thai Waters Act, and fined B10,000 per jet-ski, landing the operator with a B50,000 fine, he added.

Similarly, the team of officers also found a boat operator providing parasail rides at Surin Beach, Mr Natchapong said.

The operator is permitted to provide parasail rides at only Kamala Beach, and only

within half a nautical mile from the beach and only in calm sea conditions, he added.

The operator was fined B10,000 for breach of Section 9 of the Navigation in Thai Waters Act, Mr Natchapong explained.

The fines issued were the maximum allowed under the Navigation in Thai Waters Act, Mr Natchapong confirmed.

“Such boats are not allowed



to serve in the Surin Beach area. They must be used in accordance with zones specified in the vessel license and in the areas designated by the Phuket Provincial Government,” he said.

“Regarding this issue, the Phuket Marine Office will work with the Thalang District Office, the Cherg Talay Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) and other relevant

agencies, as well as the Jet Ski Boat Club operating at Bang Tao Beach to make sure Surin Beach remains a ‘White Beach’, without jet-skis, parasail boats, banana boats and similar water activities.

“Tourists and the general public are free to use Surin Beach and its public areas safely, and the beach will continue to be kept orderly,” Mr Natchapong said.

## DSI B10bn land grab probe continues with goal of no prosecutions

Continued from page 1

...remaining illegal beach-front buildings on the state land began on Sept 30 last year.

The Department of Special Investigations (DSI) originally served eviction notices in 2017 after the Supreme Court ruled that the occupiers were illegally encroaching on state land.

Several ‘final warnings’ were issued for years after the Supreme Court decision, with the last eviction notice served on Sept 12, 2022 – meaning that the businesses on the land targeting tourists were allowed to continue to operate all throughout Phuket’s tourism industry’s record-breaking period from 2016 through 2019.

Officials have never made any announcements about recovering any of the illegally obtained income from the occupiers of the land during those years.

### ON SITE

Joining Ministry of Justice



Local residents handed over what appeared to be formal requests over the land. Photo: DSI

Permanent Secretary Ms Pongsawat last Friday was Ministry of Justice Deputy Permanent Secretary Pol Lt Col Prawut Wongsinin, as well as Piya Rakskul, who is now serving as Acting Director General of the Department of Special Investigation (DSI).

Mr Piya took up the role as DSI Chief following former DSI Chief Traiyarit Temahiwong being abruptly trans-

ferred over the alleged extortion of a bribe by DSI officials and police and the subsequent release of 11 Chinese suspects found hiding in a Bangkok house formerly occupied by the consul-general for Nauru.

Ms Pongsawat and her entourage last Friday inspected the land, met local residents and held a meeting at the park officers’ head office at Sirinat National Park to discuss details

of the reclamation.

Ms Pongsawat said the land reclaimed should be “considered a gift for the whole world to experience the new tourist areas of Phuket”.

She also praised the coordinated efforts of the many agencies and government offices involved in having the land returned to the state.

“This area is the success of many agencies who jointly

claimed back the land to be the public domain. It is an area that is valuable and valuable to the people,” Ms Pongsawat said.

“From now on, the Ministry of Justice will talk and integrate its efforts in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Interior and local tambon administration organisations [OrBorTor],” Ms Pongsawat said.

“Within the [Justice] ministry, there are agencies that specialise in this area, namely the DSI and the Legal Execution Department, who came to take care of the people in reclaiming the area,” she said.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

However, Ms Pongsawat also noted, “From now on the work of the agency will not adhere to normal procedures because some cases have ‘expired’ [sic]. Therefore, an integrated dialogue is an important policy.

“In some matters, if the regulations cannot be applied, administrative measures will

be used to jointly solve this problem, and we will be asking how to support the DSI in order to complete the mission of reclaiming the country’s resources.”

The term “expired” was not defined by any official reports of Ms Pongsawat’s visit. However, according to Isara news – but not mentioned in any Phuket reports about the 178 rai reclaimed – at last report in October, of the 64 plots reclaimed, two plots were still in the process of legal action. At that time, 172 of the 178 rai had been fully reclaimed, Isara News reported.

Official reports of Ms Pongsawat’s visit last Friday included photos of local residents handing over envelopes directly to Ms Pongsawat and other leading officials – the type of envelope usually used for handing over formal requests – but no reports gave any explanation as to why the envelopes were being handed over.



# Democrats aim to reclaim Phuket

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Democrat Party leader Jurin Laksanawisit was in Phuket last Sunday (Jan 29) for a campaign event to present the party's three Phuket candidates for the upcoming national election in May.

The event saw the 4,000-seat Indoor Sports Centre filled to capacity.

Jurin, who also serves as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce as well as leader of the Democrat Party, was joined on stage by party secretary Chalermchai Sri-on and party deputy leader Nippon Boonyamane.

Present to provide her support for the event was long-standing Phuket Democrat and former Phuket MP Anchalee Thepabutr.

The event saw three candidates presented to Democrat supporters.

Former Phuket Town Deputy Mayor Kawee Tansuktanon was presented as the candidate for Phuket District 1. Chaiyot Panyawai, who has served two terms as President of the Phuket branch of the Lawyers Council of Thailand, was presented as the candidate for Phuket District 2. Former Wichit council member Ploy Laksmi-saengchan was presented as the candidate for Phuket District 3.

Of note, Phuket has previously had only two seats available for Members of Parliament.



Photo: Democrat Party via Ploy Laksmi-saengchan / Facebook

The two current MPs representing Phuket are Sutha 'Goh Tui' Pratheep Na Thalang and Nattee Thinsakhu. Both are representatives from the ruling military-aligned Palang Pracharath Party led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. They were elected to office in 2019.

At time of press, the Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC, or ECT Phuket) had yet to confirm that Phuket will have three MP seats up for grabs at the upcoming election in May.

Of note, two key laws regulating elections were brought into effect

only last Sunday (Jan 29), and the Election Commission of Thailand had been granted extra time to bring the changes into effect.

"First of all, I would like to thank my brothers and sisters from Phuket and Southern Thailand who have come to support us a lot. The old atmosphere that the Phuket people used to support the Democrat Party is back again," Jurin said at Saphan Hin last Sunday.

"As for the three candidates from Phuket, we have a lot of confidence in them, because all three have been in the area for a long time," he said.

"Today we have officially entered into election preparation mode and we are ready to go to the polls on any day, regardless of whether the House of Representatives is dissolved on Mar 23 [which may affect when the national election may be held]," Jurin added.

"In the South, we have had a better response [recently]. This can be seen from the last two by-elections. The Democrat Party was elected in both Chumphon and Songkhla provinces.

"In many provinces, we are ready, including the 14 Southern provinces. In the upcoming election, we have 58 seats in the southern region [to be contested]. We are confident that we will gain more trust from the people, especially in Phuket where we are confident that we will have all three candidates," Jurin concluded.

Up until the surprise election result in 2019 that saw two military-aligned candidates elected as Phuket MPs, Phuket had for decades remained a Democrat stronghold. Much support remains for Democrats in Phuket, but at a local level.

Highlighting that support was the election of Rewat Areerob, another former Phuket MP Democrat, to the position of President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or OrBorJor) by a large margin in the provincial election on Dec 21, 2020.

## HARD TIMES

However, the Democrat Party has suffered repeatedly in public incidents in recent years. In April last year, former Democrat Secretary-General Suthep Thaugsuban urged the party's executive committee to show responsibility for the sexual misconduct accusations against its disgraced former deputy leader, Prinn Panitchpakdi, to restore public confidence in the party.

Prinn faces charges in three cases: one for alleged indecent exposure and two for alleged rape.

Pol Maj Gen Trairong Phiewphan, Bangkok Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner for Legal Affairs, last year confirmed that the indecent exposure case dated back to 2016.

Prinn was also accused of raping a woman in a condominium on Rat Damri 14 road in 2015 and another woman at a hotel in 2016, Maj Gen Trairong said.

Jurin himself came under fire for his public response over the Prinn rape scandal, with his public handling of the incident resulting in key Democrat members resigning from the party.

Jurin initially did not even apologise for the incident. He later gave a public apology, and resigned from several key government committees, including his position as head of two government panels on women and gender policies.

## Kathu Mayor sacked over illegal water probe

CHAI-ANAN SUTHIKUL HAS BEEN removed from office as Mayor of Kathu by order of the Phuket Governor following an investigation into allowing a private operator to pump water from a lagoon at the Tin Mine Museum in Kathu.

The news, originally reported by a local news media outlet, was shared by the Phuket Info Center on Jan 26.

The Phuket Info Center, originally launched as an official COVID-19 information service, is operated under the Phuket branch of the Ministry of Interior, namely under the Phuket Governor's Office.

However, Kathu Municipality and the Phuket Provincial Office at time of press still had yet to make any public announcements confirming the news.

According to the report shared by the Phuket Info Center, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew confirmed the order to remove Mr Chai-anan from office at a 'Governor Meets Media' event at Phuket Provincial Hall late on Jan 26.

Governor Narong explained that Mr Chai-anan had acted unlawfully in allowing a private operator to pump water from the lagoon at the Tin Mine Museum without first obtaining permission from the Royal Forest Department, said the report.

The Phuket office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC Phuket) had forwarded a complaint to the Governor's Office about the offence.

In response, Governor Narong assigned Tanida Silpa, Director of the Legal, Regulation and Complaint Group at the Phuket



Chai-anan Suthikul.  
Photo: Kathu Municipality

Provincial Office of the Department of Local Administration to investigate.

His actions were based on Ms Tanida's findings, said the report.

"There is no need to set up a new committee to investigate. The Governor of Phuket has issued a letter to withdraw Mr Chai-anan from the post of Mayor of Kathu city to take effect on January 20, 2023, with the Deputy Mayor of Kathu now as the acting mayor and the [Kathu Municipality] management team have stopped performing duties since receiving the said order," the report noted.

Mr Chai-anan has the right to appeal the order with the Administrative Court within 90 days from the date of receiving the order, the report said.

Governor Narong has also issued a written notice to the Phuket branch of the Election Commission (PEC) to organise an election to be held to elect a new Mayor of Kathu within 60 days from the date of the removal order, the report concluded.

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 4 m/s

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Wind 4 m/s

WED FEBRUARY 8

High: +30°  
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Wind 4 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 9

High: +30°  
Low: +27°  
Wind 4 m/s

## Man arrested for 2012 arson attack

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A man wanted for his role in the assault of a security guard and arson of a snake show and health nutriment business on Sai Ta-iad, Chalong, in 2012 has been arrested in Bangkok and brought to Phuket to face charges.

Surachai Thongklip, 42, was arrested in Bang Krabue Community 14 of Dusit District, Bangkok, at 8pm on Jan 24.

He was taken to Crime Suppression Division Sub-Division 1 headquarters for processing before being brought to Phuket.

Surachai was presented for questioning by Chalong Police at 5pm on Jan 25. Through his lawyer, Surachai denied any involvement in the crime.

Chalong Police Deputy Chief Lt Col Somkiat Sarasit, who heads the Chalong Police Investigation division, has been assigned Surachai's case.

Lt Col Somkiat said police were continuing their investigation and collecting evidence in order to formally charge Surachai.

Surachai was one of three men wanted for the assault and arson at the popular tourism business 'Phuket Healthy Nutriment' in Soi Ta-iad in 2012.



Surachai Thongklip, 42, and his lawyer at Chalong Police Station. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Crime Suppression Division police arrested Suwan Thongpermploy and Yuttana Karmasom in early 2016.

Both of them testified to the Crime Suppression Division police that a former female inspector under the Tourist Police and her husband both masterminded the crime.

The former Tourist Police inspector and her husband were summoned by police, but the Phuket Provincial Prosecutor's Office decided not to pursue charges.

The assault and arson occurred on April 23, 2012. The security guard,

25-year-old Anuchit Chaitongngam, was found tied up and unconscious in front of Phuket Healthy Nutriment, a tourist attraction on Soi Ta-iad that stages snake shows and sells herbal products.

Mr Anuchit was knocked unconscious in the attack, recorded by CCTV showing four masked men involved in the crime. He suffered serious injury to his head and was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for treatment.

CCTV footage showed that after disabling the guard, the four men

broke into the building and set fire to several parts of it.

The fire caused an estimated B20 million in damage to the reception area, herb shops and various pieces of furniture.

After interviewing the owner and staff of Phuket Healthy Nutriment, police said they believed a business conflict with a competitor was probably behind the arson attack.

At that time, the company had already been serving tourists for almost 20 years, attracting more than 500 tourists a day, most of them Chinese.



Photo: Patong Police

## Police nab cocaine on Bangla

PATONG POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a 61-year-old man for possession of cocaine on the popular nightlife street Bangla Rd.

The man, named by police as Samroeng Sangthong, 61, a resident of Patong, was placed under arrest on Bangla Rd at 2:30am on Jan 21, Patong Police reported.

Samroeng was found with cocaine "ready to use" in three separate plastic bags, police noted.

One bag contained 0.94 grammes of cocaine, another contained 0.9g and the third contained 0.74g of the drug, police said.

Samroeng was taken to Patong Police Station and charged with possession of a Category 2 narcotic for consumption", officers reported.

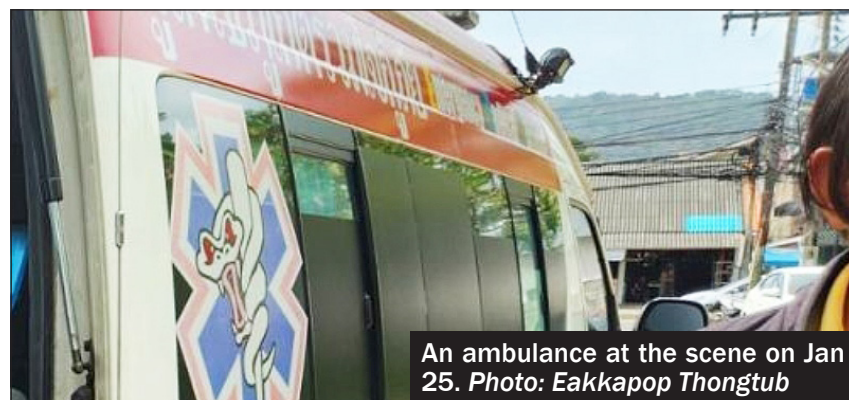
No reason was given for the delay in announcing Samroeng's arrest.

However, the arrest was credited as under the direction of Patong Police Station Chief Col Sujin Nilbadi and Deputy Chiefs Lt Col Preecha Baringpattanakul and Lt Col Wuthiwat Liangboonjinda.

The arrest was made by a team of officers led by Capt Thongplew Kruehom of the Patong Police who joined a "special patrol network" of Tourist Police led by Capt Ittikorn Phacharadet, overseen by Tourist Police regional senior officers Maj Gen Chaiyaphong Wanichacheewa, police noted.

By coincidence, Mr Samroeng's arrest followed the arrest of an Uzbek woman caught trying to smuggle 2.23 kilogrammes of cocaine into Phuket after arriving on a flight from Doha just one day earlier (Jan 20).

Eakkapop Thongtub



An ambulance at the scene on Jan 25. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

## Russian with bipolar disorder found dead

A 36-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN MAN suffering from bipolar disorder was found hanged at his rented room in Rawai last week.

Capt Charat Lempan of the Chalong Police said officers were notified of the man's death at 12:50pm on Jan 25.

The man was identified as Roman Melnik, a 36-year-old Russian national. His wife, Victoria Sokoluk, a Ukrainian national, told police that her husband had long suffered bipolar disorder, formerly more commonly known as manic depression.

Mr Melnik had been suffering from insomnia. He had not slept for about a week, Ms Sokoluk explained to police.

He had an appointment to see a psychiatrist the same day his body

was found, she added.

Mr Melnik was found hanged by a green bag strap attached to the balcony door behind the room. He is believed to have died some 12 hours before his body was discovered, police said.

Capt Charas noted that police found no signs of a struggle or theft of any property in the room.

Mr Melnik's body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital to confirm the cause of death, so it can be returned to his family, Capt Charas said.

*If you or anyone you know is in need of emotional support and counseling, please contact the Samaritans of Thailand at their 24-hour hotline 02-113-6789 (English & Thai) or the Thai Mental Health Hotline at 1323 (Thai).*

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Old Town Festival puts local culture on show

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew presided over the formal opening of the Phuket Old Town Festival last Friday evening (Jan 27), noting that the annual event highlighting Phuket's local culture and status as a UN 'City of Gastronomy' helps promote the island's 'soft power' in attracting tourists.

The event, held at the Chartered Bank Intersection In front of the Peranakannit Museum in the Phuket Old Town area, was held as part of Phuket Town's Chinese New Year festivities.

Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas noted that with the impact of COVID-19 easing after the past three years, life was returning to normal around the world and more people were starting to travel.

"As a result, the drive in tourism is helping the overall global economy to recover, and it is generally accepted that Phuket has outstanding tourism features both in terms of nature and culture. This can



Photo: PR Phuket

be seen by Phuket being the top in the country for generating income from tourism," he said.

To help the drive to boost the tourism recovery, Phuket City Municipality held its 'Old Town Festival' throughout the old town area from Jan 27-29, he noted.

The area includes the popular old streets of Thalang Rd, Phang Nga Rd, Krabi Rd, Thepkasattri Rd, Phuket Rd and Soi Rommanee, he said.

"Phuket people realise the value of cultural heritage and traditional way of life inherited from their ancestors is helping lead to economic recovery in urban areas. This aspect is considered to bring existing

'cultural capital', to add value to job creation, create careers and generate income for the local people," Mayor Saroj said.

Focusing on driving 'cultural tourism' was in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. "It promotes economic growth and decent employment, including the reduction of inequality within and outside the country," he said.

"It is also in line with the country's development guidelines under the 20-year national strategy (2018-2037) to respond to the economic development of Thailand through 'stability, prosperity, sustainability' according to the Sufficiency

Economy Philosophy without leaving anyone behind, and to promote tourism to Phuket City and the island of Phuket," Mayor Saroj concluded.

Governor Narong noted that holding festivities to mark the Chinese New Year was also helping drive Phuket's tourism industry.

"It is considered an important activity to stimulate the economy of Phuket as a whole. It affects the economy at the local, provincial and national levels. It also builds confidence in the tourism potential of Phuket, especially after the COVID-19 situation over the past three years," he said.

Among the many activities held over the three days, the festival included a Phuket Festival parade, cultural performances and lifestyles of Phuket people, musical performances from youth groups and local people.

People were invited to walk through the streets, browse and buy local products and sample the tastes of local Phuket food, which Governor Narong said builds on Phuket as a 'City of Gastronomy'.

## 99 monks ordained for Princess prayers

PHUKET GOVERNOR Narong Woonciew joined a mass ordination of 99 monks on Jan 26 held to make merit and offer blessings and best wishes for Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendiradebyavati.

The event, held at Wat Thep Wanaram (Wat Manik) in Srisoonthorn, saw 99 images of Princess Bajrakitiyabha, the eldest child of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun (Rama X), handed out to the new monks.

The event continued the daily practice of mass prayers being held in Phuket for the recovery of Princess Bajrakitiyabha. Every day, a main government office in Phuket holds an event to pray for the recovery of the Princess.

Joining the event on Jan 26 were a host of leading officials from a wide range of government offices and agencies, as well as members of the public.

Princess Bajrakitiyabha collapsed unconscious while she was training her pet dogs in Pak Chong district of Nakhon Ratchasima at 6.20pm on Dec 14.

She was taken to Pak-



Photo: PR Phuket

chongnana Hospital in the district to receive initial treatment under the advice of royal doctors. She was then transported by helicopter to King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital after her condition was stabilised.

The princess's pets were being trained as they competed in the Thailand Working Dog Championship 2022 organised by the Royal Thai Army at the Military Dog Battalion in the district from Dec 10-19, 2022.

In the most recent official statement on the condition of the princess, issued on Jan 7, the Royal Household Bureau said that she remained unconscious due to a bacterial infection.

Royal doctors concluded her unconscious state resulted from severe heart arrhythmia due to inflammation of the heart after a mycoplasma infection.

The Phuket News

## Historic house refurb nearly finished

AFTER NEARLY TWO YEARS, THE B28-million renovation of the historic Chartered Bank Manager's House on Damrong Rd in Phuket Town is nearing completion.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew inspected the work underway at the site, in the old government quarter on the north side of Phuket Town, on Jan 24.

Present during Governor Narong's visit were Suvit Phansaengiam, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Office of the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning, along with representatives from private contractors carrying out the work.

The renovations are 85% complete and the renovations are expected to be finished next month, Governor Narong said.

"There has been a lot of progress in the renovation of the house structure and the fittings. Now [they are] in the process of adjusting the surrounding landscape to make it beautiful," he said.

"This place will be one of Phuket's landmarks that can be visited and photographed by tourists," he noted.

However, he added, "In terms of whether to take advantage of the site in any respect, it must be considered again by listening to the opinions of the public before proceeding in any direction due to the need for maintenance."

Governor Narong was clear that the historic building will not be made available for rent. "But it may be used for weddings and events," he said.

Plans to renovate the century-old mansion known as the Standard Chartered



Photo: PR Phuket

Bank House were first drawn up in 2018.

Under the initial renovation plans, the building was to be used for three specific purposes: 1) To function as a place to welcome important visitors; 2) To become a historical tourism destination; and 3) To provide a place for tourists to enjoy and relax.

Standard Chartered Bank was the first foreign bank permitted to operate in Phuket. The Phuket branch opened in the now historic Sino-Portuguese building on Phuket Rd in the heart of the Phuket Old Town area in the early 1900s. Since 2012 the main building has been home to the Phuket Peranakan Museum (officially called the "Chalermraj Center").

A separate house was built on Damrong Rd for the manager, which so far has not been put to any official or community use.

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# TAT Phuket targets 12mn tourists

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A total of 12 million tourists are expected to visit Phuket this year, Nanthasiri Ronnasiri, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Phuket Office (TAT Phuket) has revealed.

The number is still a marked increase on the estimated 9.2mn people who visited the island from January through December last year, Ms Nanthasiri said, according to an official report released on Monday (Jan 30).

The TAT has set a target of 23mn tourists visiting Thailand in 2023, Ms Nanthasiri said. "The target set for Phuket has been set at 12mn, equivalent to the period before COVID-19," she added.

"From January to December 2022, Phuket had 9,260,657 tourists. Of those, 46.4% were foreign tourists and the remaining 53.6% were Thai tourists.

"Hotels across the island enjoyed an average occupancy rate of 42.58% throughout the year," Ms Nanthasiri noted.

According to the tourism data collected, the top 10 tourists who travelled to Phuket in 2022 were from, in order by volume, Russia, India, Australia, England, Singapore, Germany, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, the United States and Israel, Ms



TAT Phuket Director Nanthasiri Ronnasiri. Photo: PR Phuket

Nanthasiri explained.

"This influx resulted in a 'high revolving income' [circulating through the local economy] of up to B230.389 billion, of which 74.4% came from foreign tourists and 25.6% came from Thai tourists," she said.

More inbound tourists from Israel were expected during the northern hemisphere 'summer' months, she added.

"Phuket is ready to welcome tourists both from the same groups of tourists who are already coming as well as tourists from new markets," Ms Nanthasiri said.

The TAT will be aiming to attract more tourists by promoting year-round activities through the campaign '365 Days of Wonders of

Thailand... You can travel every day'," Ms Nanthasiri concluded.

## AUSSIE REBOUND

The number of Australians visiting Phuket has recovered to nearly 90% of the volume attained before the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian Consul-General to Phuket Matthew Barclay has confirmed.

The news followed Mr Barclay meeting Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew at Provincial Hall on Jan 23.

"It's clear 2023 will be a significant year for Phuket. The meeting was a great opportunity to discuss the Phuket administration's efforts to safely welcome Australian and international travelers and build economic

opportunities for Phuket's future," Mr Barclay told *The Phuket News*.

"We were very interested to hear the extensive efforts Phuket is making in its bid for the Specialised Expo in 2027/28 – potentially the first of its kind in Asean," he added.

According to Ministry of Tourism & Sports (MoTS) statistics, a total of 771,798 Australian nationals entered Thailand in 2019.

According to MoTS statistics, in that year Australians stayed on average 13.29 days and spent on average B5,401.34 a day – altogether spending a total of B55.4 billion throughout the year through tourism supporting the Thai economy.

## NOW PUSH

The TAT is preparing to spend an additional B1.9 billion to increase airline seat capacity, aiming to connect big cities that still have potential to spend amid the downturn, reports the *Bangkok Post*.

The Cabinet on Jan 24 allocated an additional budget of B3.9bn for tourism promotional campaigns, of which B1.93bn is for marketing to help revive the economy.

Tourism last year generated around B1 trillion, lower than the target of B1.3trn, as the economy slowly recovered from the impact of the pandemic, high inflation and household debt, while facing intense competition from other countries

to lure more tourists, according to the TAT.

TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn said with the extra budget from Cabinet and China's reopening, the tourism revenue target this year needs to be upgraded from B2.38trn.

The agency will reassess the outlook in line with economic and political factors before deciding on a new target for 2023, he said.

The long-awaited stimulus budget of B1.93bn, which the TAT submitted in June last year, is for both international and domestic programmes with a focus on solving major obstacles for tourists, particularly insufficient seat capacity.

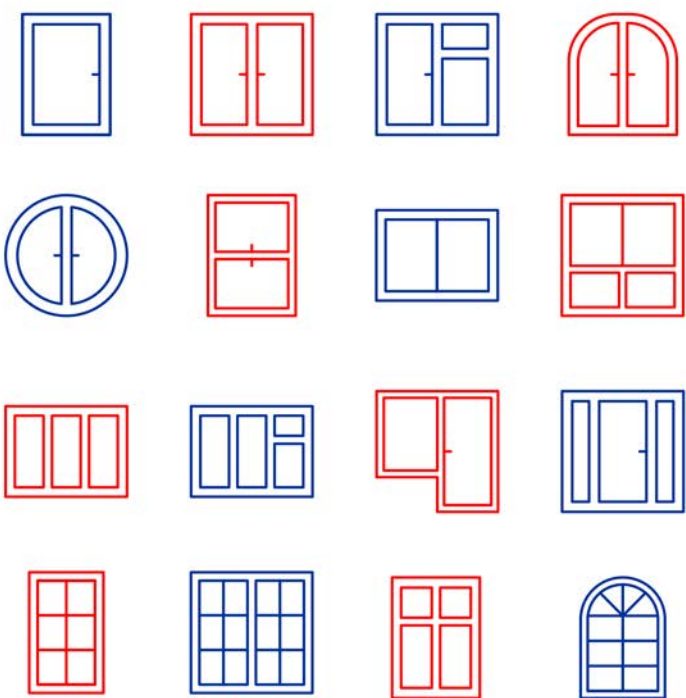
Mr Yuthasak said marketing campaigns for the long-haul market will follow the "ABC strategy" – which stands for airline focus, big cities and beyond – and collaboration with agents.

Partnerships with airlines will see more chartered flights added in markets with potential to grow and light traffic, such as Canada, Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, he said.

Mr Yuthasak said the TAT will also target countries that have potential to stimulate spending in both big cities and secondary cities by organising roadshows in France, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.



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## Drivers cry over 'unfair' prices

AN ASSOCIATION REPRESENTING drivers from 30 taxi, van, tuk-tuk and bus operators in Phuket have filed a formal complaint calling for action against operators from outside the province operating on the island – and undercutting their prices – greatly affecting their income.

The complaint was filed at the Phuket Provincial Ombudsman's Office at Phuket Provincial Hall on Jan 24. Present to receive the complaint in person was Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodrambam, along with Adcha Buachan, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Land Transport Office (PLTO).

Present to submit the complaint were Maitree Kwanyuen, President of the Vehicle Operators Association 30 Phuket Province (สมาคมผู้ประกอบการรถ 30 จังหวัดภูเก็ต), and Chanawee Ekteawsakul, President of the Bus Operators Association 30 Phuket Province.

Mr Maitree pointed out that the Vehicle Operators Association 30 Phuket Province was an officially registered association (Reg No 2/2563). The association represents drivers of more than 300 buses, vans and tuk-tuks, he said.

The association was formed "to develop, promote and assist and the exchange of knowledge among non-regular taxi operators in Phuket to meet safety standards for tourists who come to use them", Mr Maitree noted.

"After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, Phuket's tourism industry came to a halt. Since then there have been good signs that the industry is recovering, although not as much as before," Mr Maitree said.

"Business operators have suffered a lot. Many had to go out of business and many had to go bankrupt due to inability to pay debts



Photo: PR Phuket

to financial institutions," he added.

"And now that the situation is beginning to improve, 'capitalists' [sic] from outside the area are gradually bringing their own vehicles [into Phuket] to serve tourists," he said.

"The situation has aggravated local business operators who are about to work, and feed themselves, again," he said.

The key grievance is that operators from outside Phuket are providing transport for tourists at prices cheaper than those charged by operators based on Phuket.

"The association discussed this and agreed that we are to ask for kindness and mercy from the relevant government agencies in the province, to help find a way to help Phuket business operators or protect their rights as much as they can, as these are people who live in Phuket, so Phuket people can earn an income and feed their families," Mr Maitree said.

Phuket Vice Governor Anupap said that discussions will be held with the relevant agencies to find solutions to the problem so that "all parties can live together and to reduce problems that will occur in the future".

Of note, the report by PR Phuket made no mention of any legal requirements preventing operators from outside Phuket from serving passengers, tourists or otherwise, in Phuket.

The Phuket News



# Actress bribe claim true, confess officers

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

A number of officers among the seven Huai Khwang policemen accused by Taiwanese actress Charlene An of extorting B27,000 from her in the early morning of Jan 4 have now admitted she was telling the truth, according to a police source.

The source was quoting information discussed by executives of the Royal Thai Police (RTP) during Monday's (Jan 30) meeting of a committee which screens senior police officials for promotion.

The seven officers who stopped the Taiwanese actress and her companions in a Grab taxi for a security check at a checkpoint in front of the Chinese embassy on Ratchadaphisek Rd did in fact demand B27,000 not to arrest the actress who was found in possession of a vaping device, said the source.

The member of the group who actually handed the bribe money to the officers was a



Taiwanese actress Charlene An. Photo: Bangkok Post

Singaporean companion of the actress. Vaping remains illegal in Thailand.

"Some of the officers admitted to extortion after being interrogated separately," said the source.

They had kept the incident secret and even initially denied the allegation as they thought their victim was a foreigner who wouldn't dare report the details to authorities.

Attendees at the meeting also discussed whether they should be dismissed for serious disciplinary misconduct,

adding their superiors are also facing a probe to find out if they too were involved.

A Metropolitan Police Bureau (MPB) panel will examine previous cases of alleged extortion, said the source.

Following reports about the actress' social media complaint, a number of similar complaints have been made in which people say police demanded payment in exchange for officers turning a blind eye, said the source.

Earlier on Monday, Pol

Maj Gen Archayon Kraithong, spokesman for the RTP, said national police chief Pol Gen Damrongsak Kittiprapas had begun moves to transfer the Huai Khwang police station chief during the probe.

MPB commissioner Pol Lt Gen Thiti Saengsawang later signed the order to transfer Pol Col Yingyos Suwanno, the station chief, to the MPB's operations centre.

As for the seven police officers, a MPB committee had found them guilty of dereliction of duty for failing to take legal action against the Taiwanese actress or accurately recording the incident, said Pol Lt Gen Thiti.

Court action may follow over the more serious allegation of extortion.

Former politician and massage parlour tycoon Chuvit Kamolvisit on Monday issued more details of what is said to have happened that night.

Chuvit said surveillance camera footage of the security checkpoint that night had been deleted and the memory cards installed in the officers' helmet cameras wiped.



Anutin. Photo: Bangkok Post

## One pill limit or face meth dealing charge

### BANGKOK

A MINISTERIAL REGULATION is being amended so that anyone in possession of more than one methamphetamine pill, instead of 15, will be regarded as having the pills with intent to sell, not for personal use as at present.

At present, those found with 15 or fewer pills in their possession are regarded as having them for personal use only and subject to rehabilitation, said Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on Monday (Jan 30). "This has been exploited by people who actually intend to sell them," he said.

The bill has been prepared by the committee on treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts and is ready

for the minister's signature. Later it will be forwarded to Cabinet for approval and then published in the Royal Gazette.

Anutin, who is also deputy prime minister, said the amendment would be a more effective legal measure against the trade in illegal drugs and help protect young people, their families and society.

"The reason the committee reached this decision is that we want to be more decisive and see effective enforcement of the law, after it was suggested that we seem to fear there is not enough room in prison for drug convicts," the minister said.

Anutin said that with a person able to have only one meth pill for personal use, drug traders would no longer be able to exploit the regulation.

Bangkok Post

## Early House dismissal 'unlikely'

### BANGKOK

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES is unlikely to be dissolved before the Election Commission (EC) finishes redrawing electoral boundaries for the 400 constituency MPs nationwide, according to Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam.

Speculation about an early election has been reignited following the Jan 29 promulgation of two amended organic laws on elections, which provide legal grounds for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to dissolve the House and call for an early vote.

The election is tentatively scheduled to take place on May 7, as the House of Representatives will complete its term on March 23. However, if the House is dissolved before March 23, then the law requires a snap poll to be held between 45-60 days of the dissolution.

However, it appears the EC still needs time to prepare for the coming polls, as it has not finished redrawing electoral boundaries to accommodate the increase in the number of constituency MPs from 350 to 400.

Speaking at Government House on Monday (Jan 30), Mr Wissanu said the poll commission wants 45 days to prepare before a House dissolution is called, due to the regulation involving electoral boundaries.

Under the organic law on the election of MPs, the EC must send electoral boundary templates to provincial election offices, which will hold public hearings to gather



Wissanu Krea-ngam. Photo: Bangkok Post

feedback from stakeholders, including voters and political parties.

Mr Wissanu said the process is expected to take the whole month of February, but it could be shorter if the public does not have objections.

He said he felt the need to inform the public and political parties because some believe the time is ripe for a House dissolution following the enforcement of the two amended organic laws on elections.

Asked if a House dissolution can be expected after Feb 28, Mr Wissanu said: "It could happen any time."

"I told the EC secretary-general that in politics sometimes we don't have the luxury of waiting. If the House must be dissolved now, it can't wait," he said.

"[Ultimately] it will depend on the situation. But it can't happen unless electoral boundaries have been set."

Bangkok Post



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# Fighting flesh-eating bacteria

LEFT: Ed Olieslagers' foot pictured when he arrived at hospital.  
RIGHT: Ed with his lower left amputated four months later. Photos: Supplied

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Long-term expat Ed Olieslagers is on a mission to raise awareness about necrotizing fasciitis, better known as "flesh-eating bacteria", after a mosquito bite ended up costing him the lower half of his left leg.

"It can happen to anyone at any moment. The medical world has too little experience of it and the symptoms are often identified too late. Negligence of people to pay attention to a small harmless wound is the start of the problem," Ed warns.

Ed, originally from the Netherlands, is 62 years old and has been living in Thailand since 2006. During that time he lived in Phuket from 2010-2014. The former 'global/strategic purchaser' for 'Volvo Car / Volvo Bus' is now living in Pak Chong, Nakhon Ratchasima, but will be moving back to Phuket this year.

The diagnosis came on April 17 last year after a mosquito bite had become inflamed and just got worse. "The first signs were terrible pains, which were similar to gout symptoms," Ed recalled.

After becoming worried about the continuing signs of infection, he first

saw a rheumatologist, and four hours later he was at a hospital. In one way, Ed was lucky; the doctors at the hospital correctly diagnosed the infection after just two hours. That said, the disturbing rate of infection was easy to identify. Ed provided photos showing the damage done to his foot in those two hours.

"And that was only the beginning of a long period of operations, medications and terrible pains that I still cannot describe in words," said Ed.

In total Ed underwent nine operations, finally resulting in the amputation of his left leg above knee. His lower right leg was also amputated, below the knee, due to related complications with thrombosis.

"I was finally discharged from the hospital on August 15, 2022. In total, I lost 25kg of weight over the course of four months," Ed noted. During that time, there were several periods where serious concerns were raised about whether he would survive.

"I woke up the next day [Aug 16], and found myself wondering what am I going to do?" Ed recalled. The emotional impact was deep, and took quite some time for him to come to terms with his new situation. "Acceptance of the status and solve the problems as they appear," he said.

Physical and financial recovery were also key priorities. "Make a plan to survive in order to become independent and train the body back in shape as soon as possible," Ed noted.

The infection and hospitalisation had hit Ed financially. Before COVID-19, he ran a successful swimming pool design and construction business, Samui Water Solutions Co Ltd. However, like many other businesses, the impact of the pandemic saw his business collapse.

His savings depleted and with no income resulting in his social insurance falling short, Ed has launched an appeal on Go Fund Me. The appeal, 'Ed Olieslagers's Road to Mobility', has a target of €50,000 (about B1.78 million). So far he has received donations of only about €780 (about B27,802).

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/in-zamelingsactie-ed>

The goal is to pay the outstanding medical bills, which so far have been covered by Australian friend Judy, for which Ed wants to pay back a total of B650,000. A further B500,000 is sought for prosthetics and mobility

solutions. "Prosthetics are expensive. I am also planning on using an ATV to get around," said Ed.

The rest is for support and living expenses, only for the short term. "I am starting a new business, but that is taking time to get off the ground," Ed explained.

The option of returning home is "riddled with deep holes", Ed noted. "Airlines will not allow me to travel alone without prosthetics. On returning home it will take four weeks just for a formal notification of address and a request for social welfare will take at least eight weeks to process. After that health insurance for a returning expat will take a further eight weeks, and any evaluations for prosthetics will take eight to 12 weeks before they start," he said.

To support his appeal, the Immortals motorbike club held a fundraising event for Ed in Nakhon Ratchasima last Saturday (Jan 28), during which the dangers of necrotizing fasciitis were highlighted.

Through his appeal, Ed explains at length how vital awareness of necrotizing fasciitis, a form of strep bacterial infection, is. "There is no awareness of this disease and even little knowledge in the medical world in general. Treatment starts often with trial and error," Ed notes.

"In my specific case, the body started reacting positively and then a new infection developed again and again... I finally ended up twice in a sepsis situation, meaning the body started switching off non-vital parts, which results in death unless you take emergency action like amputations," he explained.

"My case came from a mosquito bite. It can start from any damage of the skin tissue," he added, noting that necrotizing fasciitis infections can come from cat scratches, an open wound on the foot from a misstep and even shaving.

"People are happy in ignorance, thinking, 'Oh, it's nothing. Why bother? It will not happen to me.' That is a big risk, not only for people with diabetes and cellulitis, but anybody like you and me," he said. And although rare, "Children not excluded!" he added.

"The emotional part of this I can handle now... but nobody is raising awareness about it. I have to do it myself, and tomorrow I have to do better than today!" said Ed.

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# Powering the cycle of change

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Joanna and Max Hellier, founders of the sustainability change organisation 'Root The Future', have begun their 10-day, 1,500km bicycle ride, starting in Chiang Mai and finishing in Phuket – all in the name of climate action.

The campaign ride, which began last Saturday (Jan 28), is to raise awareness about Thailand's burning season in Northern Thailand, ocean pollution in Southern Thailand and promoting switching to a plant-based diet while highlighting how it can help to combat these issues.

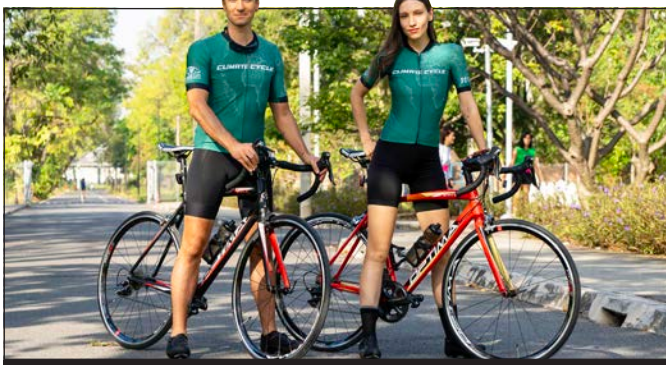
Founded in 2020, Root The Future is a community organisation on a mission to raise awareness about climate change and promote the benefits of going plant-based for the health of our planet, the couple explained in a release announcing the Chiang Mai to Phuket ride.

Led by Joanna and Max, Root The Future regularly hosts events and campaigns, alongside daily multimedia content, to engage the community in taking small steps to positively impact the environment.

Some of Root The Future's most successful projects include the Root The Future Plant-Based and Sustainability Festival, which has been held in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, and the annual Root The Future Plant-Based Awards, recognising the efforts of local businesses that are propelling sustainable food culture forward.

In 2021, Root The Future ran a full marathon (42 kilometres) to raise funds for vegan restaurants affected by the pandemic. Last year, the distance was increased to 50km, and the public was invited to participate by pledging to their own plant-based goals and/or by joining in on the run. Due to the popularity of the initiative, the Run The Future running club was formed, now meeting every Saturday to raise awareness for the environment.

This year, Root The Future is looking to go even bigger



Max and Joanna are on their way to Phuket, by a 1,500km bike ride to raise awareness about the environment and the benefits of a plant-based diet. Photo: Root The Future

ger in the name of climate action, eyeing a distance of 1,500km. The duo will be cycling from Chiang Mai in the north of Thailand to Phuket in the south, in 10 days, covering a daily average of 150km over various terrain.

They will do this entirely fueled by plant-based food, whilst highlighting actionable solutions to climate-related issues in Thailand and across the world. A camera man will be following them from start to finish in anticipation of a documentary film, which will be released after the event.

**Burning Pollution** is one key issue being highlighted by the ride. As a result of continuous burning, PM2.5 levels in Thailand have been on the rise. In 2020, it was estimated that the average Thai resident was exposed to an annual PM2.5 concentration of 21.4 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, nearly two times the World Health Organization (WHO) target of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

"But the farmers aren't to blame! Due to a lack of alternatives and funds for more sustainable and environmentally friendly options, tens of thousands of small farms spread across 17 provinces, carry out the process of burning.

"The burning is to clear fields of large quantities of biomass, such as corn husks and stalks. The burning of the fields is also an effort to make the soil fertile enough to grow on again, after being degraded by the hazardous, chemical-intensive maize farming," they add.

"By switching to a plant-based diet, we reduce the demand for meat, and therefore the demand for cheap animal feed. This, in turn, will reduce maize intensive farming and the associated burning that happens in Northern Thailand... Plant-based food might just clean the air!" the couple explained.

**Ocean Pollution** is also a key issue for Joanna and Max. "The water and coastlines are becoming overrun with plastic pollution, which is suffocating vital marine life and eventually ending up in the food that we eat... Overfishing is not only causing a breakdown in this fragile ecosystem, but is also polluting our oceans with millions of tonnes of discarded fishing gear," they say.

"Discarded fishing gear (a.k.a. Ghost gear) including nets, lines and pieces of equipment, make up the majority of the oceans' macro plastic pollution, which is damaging coral, killing sea life and eventually ending up as microplastics in our food," they explain.

"Additionally, studies estimate that up to 40% of all marine life caught by fishing vessels is bycatch (non-targeted species such as whales, dolphins, turtles, stingrays and sharks). For example, approximately 50 million sharks are killed each year as bycatch.

"By reducing or removing marine life from our diets, we can help clean the oceans, save marine animals and also reduce our microplastic and heavy metals consumption," they add.

To keep up to date with Joanna and Max's progress while en route to Phuket, follow them at:

[@rootthefuture](https://www.instagram.com/rootthefuture)  
[fb.com/rootthefuture](https://www.facebook.com/rootthefuture)  
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POP QUIZ

1. Who wrote the book The Invisible Man?

2. The world's tallest arch, the 192-metre high Gateway Arch, is in which American city?

3. What colour is the background of the Saudi Arabian flag?

4. Who is American actress Kate Capshaw married to?

5. What is a "muntin"?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Agave plant

5. Flaky mineral

9. Cleans up, in a way

14. Gulf of \_\_\_\_

15. Harsh sound

16. Mother-of-pearl

17. Relax

20. Ankles

21. Same: Fr.

22. Clear

23. Hellenic vowel

24. Good times

27. Impending

29. Relax

35. Reo contemporary

36. Caterpillar hairs

37. Mosque V.I.P.

40. Its capital is Oranjestad

43. Small price to pay

44. Paperlike cloth

46. Tough, durable wood

48. Relaxed

54. Sea bird

55. Sigma follower

56. See 46-Across

57. Harvest goddess

60. Time immemorial

Down

1. Equivocate

2. Conceive

3. Bright fish

4. French cordial

5. Wharton grad

6. Harm

7. Pacific

8. Daughter of Zeus

9. Sets of nine

10. Lock of matted wool

11. Computer image

12. Constant

13. Badger's burrow

18. Rows

19. Grace period?

25. Bear in the sky?

26. Not e'en once

28. Come back again

30. Service station?

31. Jump for joy

32. Made a fast stop?

33. Gabriel, for one

34. Even

37. "\_\_\_\_ magic!"

38. Mayan language

39. Mock, in a way

41. Thai money

42. Purlieu

45. Previously

47. Underground comic artist Robert

49. Form of ether

50. Bare

51. In a lucid way

52. What you will

53. Plumed hats

57. Sgt. Snorkel's dog

58. Large cat

59. \_\_\_\_ row

61. Tight

63. \_\_\_\_ League

65. Pickled delicacy

66. Tax pro

67. Common contraction

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) H.G. Wells; 2) St Louis; 3) Green; 4) Steven Spielberg (since 1991); 5) A strip holding and separating panes of glass in a window

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
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64			65					66	67					
68						69					70			
71						72					73			

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

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

2

out of 4 teenage girls feel depressed after looking at a fashion magazine for only 3 minutes, according to one study.

7

times how much it would cost to end extreme poverty worldwide is how much the world's billionaires made in 2017.

40

percent of the world's land is in just six countries.

750,000

US dollars is how much Brazilian football star Ronaldinho lost in a deal with Coca-Cola because he took a sip from a Pepsi at a press conference in 2012.

220 million

is how many smell receptors Basset hounds have. The portion of their brains tied to sense of smell is 40 times that of a human.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Laem Singh Beach. Photo: Paola Vignati

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This week in history

February 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.

February 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.

February 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.

February 6, 60 AD

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

February 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.

February 8, 1879

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

February 9, 1895

William G. Morgan creates a game called Mintonette, which soon comes to be referred to as volleyball.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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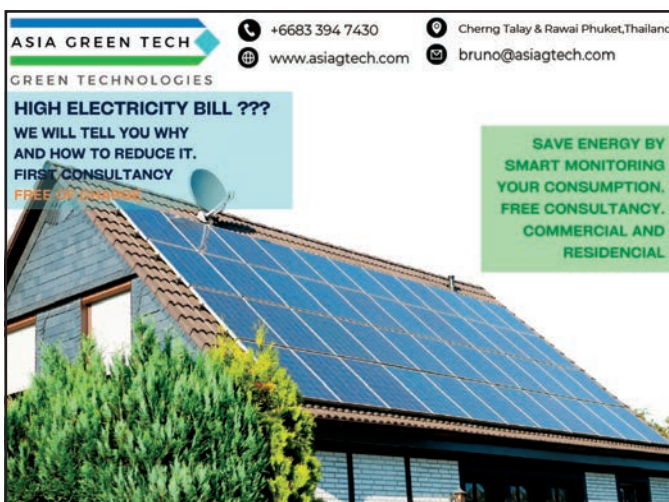
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**FRI 3 FEB**



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10 persons in each class. All participants get a free Daxio-Run shirt (Max 2,000). If you are interested in participating in the Daxio Run, all you need to do is to be there to get one of the 2,000 running shirts available from 06.00 to 08:00 on Saturday morning.

**SUN 5 FEB**



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**MON 6 FEB**



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**WED 8 FEB**



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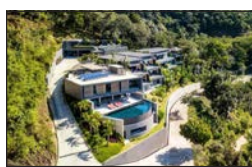
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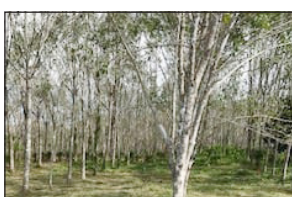
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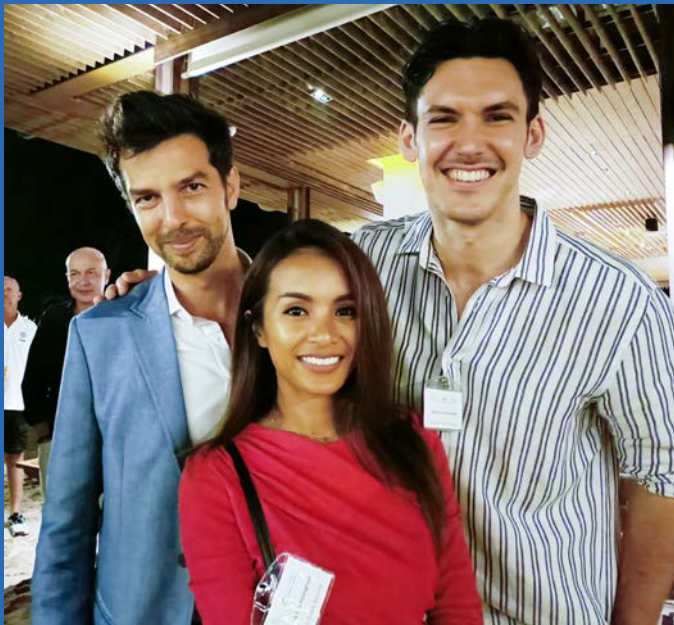
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## AUSTCHAM AUSTRALIA DAY SUNDOWNERS

Another fantastic networking event held at the Renaissance Phuket Resort & Spa on Friday, January 27. Over 120 guests tucked into some great Aussie fair from Really Good Deli, Lady Pie and the culinary team of Renaissance. A big thanks to the Austcham team for organising this great evening and a sad farewell to Brendan Cunningham, who has served as the Executive Director of Austcham for the past six years, all the best from the team at The Phuket News mate.



## AUSTRALIAN SPECIALS NIGHT AT THE PORT RESTAURANT

On Tuesday, January 24, DoubleTree by Hilton Phuket Banthai Resort hosted a small group of guests and locals to sample some great Australian fare and beverages in celebration of Australia Day. Highlights were the emu masaman puff pastry, Australian lamb kebabs and Pavlova.



## AMBASSADOR FAMILIARIZATION TO ROYAL PHUKET MARINA

Organized by TCEB – Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, seven Ambassadors from Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa and Turkey on Sunday, January 29. They were impressed by our Floating Debris Collections Boat made entirely from recycled plastic by Ocean for All – License to clean and learned about the support of Royal Phuket Marina to Disabled Sailing Thailand Foundation – with RPM Disable Sailing Boat, SV14.



# Novak strikes back at Aussie Open

## TENNIS

AFP

An emotional Novak Djokovic called it “the biggest victory in my life” after sweeping past Stefanos Tsitsipas to win a 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Open title and equal Rafael Nadal’s 22 Grand Slam crowns last Sunday (Jan 29).

The Serb returns to world number one as he overcame a hamstring injury and off-court drama to defeat the Greek third seed 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) at Rod Laver Arena.

The 35-year-old climbed to his player’s box afterwards to embrace his mother, and broke down in uncontrollable tears.

His father Srdjan was again missing after he sparked controversy by posing with a fan carrying a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin’s face on Jan 25.

The emphatic victory over Tsitsipas capped a remarkable return for Djokovic to Melbourne Park, having missed last year’s tournament when he was deported over his COVID vaccination stance.

“I have to say this has been one of the most challenging tournaments I’ve ever played considering the circumstances,



Novak Djokovic after his final victory last Sunday (Jan 29). Photo: AFP

not playing last year, coming back this year,” he said, wearing a jacket with the number 22 emblazoned on it.

Djokovic, who was more emotional than usual, added: “Only my team and family know what we have been through in the last four or five weeks and this is why I’d

probably say this is the biggest victory in my life considering the circumstances.”

He later explained that he and his father had decided it would be better if Djokovic senior was not courtside, his absence leaving an empty seat in his player’s box. It was the same in the semi-finals.

“That hurts him and me a lot because these are special, unique moments that who knows if they are repeated again,” Djokovic said.

### ‘NOT GOING ANYWHERE’

There had been an air of inevitability about Djokovic

triumphing once more.

After his three-year ban from Australia was lifted, he won the Adelaide International at the start of the year before reinforcing his status as an all-time great in Melbourne.

His dominant win drew him level with Nadal on a record 22 Slams, two clear of retired Roger Federer.

The Spanish great made a second-round exit with a hip injury, one of a series of shocks which upended the men’s and women’s draws during the first major of the year.

“I guess we always find the A-game on the Slams,” Djokovic said of equalling his old rival Nadal. “This is what I feel both Nadal and myself probably still fight for.

“It is still what motivates us the most, winning the biggest titles in our sport and trying to keep up with the young guns.

“Tennis is in good hands,” he added. “But we’re still not going anywhere.”

Nadal and Djokovic have won 16 of the last 19 Slams.

The 36-year-old Spaniard though slid down the rankings when they were released on Monday, in contrast to Djokovic.

The Serb dethroned Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz and returned to the top for the first time since June. Tsitsipas climbed one place to three.

Both men were back on a court that helped them rise to stardom.

Djokovic won his first Grand Slam in 2008 on Rod Laver Arena while Tsitsipas burst on the scene in 2019 when he stunned defending champion Federer in the last 16.

Meanwhile, an emotional Aryna Sabalenka battled back from a set down to beat Elena Rybakina and win the Australian Open last Saturday for her first Grand Slam title.

The hard-hitting Belarusian collapsed to the court in tears after winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 against the Wimbledon champion after an epic struggle that lasted 2 hours and 28 minutes.

The 24-year-old wiped away tears before getting a warm hug from Moscow-born Rybakina, who played a full part in a thrilling match between two of the most powerful hitters in the women’s game.

Sabalenka, the fifth seed, then ran to her players’ box to celebrate with her team.

## Host provinces for SEA Games, Asean Para Games decided

### SEA GAMES

BANGKOK, CHON BURI and Songkhla have officially been selected as the three provinces within Thailand to host the the 33<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in 2025.

The decision was made by a remote committee meeting of the Sports Authority of Thailand on Jan 25, which was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister Gen Prawit Wongsuwan.

In addition to confirming Bangkok, Chon Buri and Songkhla as the main host provinces for the SEA Games, which runs from Dec 9-20, 2025, the committee also confirmed that Nakhon Ratchasima will host the the 13<sup>th</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Para Games between Jan 20-26, 2026.

Furthermore, talks at the meeting focused on identifying and allocating a set budget from the National Sports Development Fund in order to stage both events



Photo: Bangkok Post

successfully.

Gen Prawit urged all the four provinces that were selected as hosts of such major international sports competitions to ensure they are fully prepared and able to create a good impression.

The committee also acknowledged its annual budgets for expenditure, investment and reserve

funds, as well as key performance indicators in the first quarter.

Phuket had considered submitting a bid to host part of the 2025 SEA Games in collaboration with other Andaman provinces although nothing official was ever entered, the committee confirmed.

Bangkok Post

## Thailand to boycott kickboxing at SEA Games over name dispute

### MUAY THAI

THAILAND WILL BOYCOTT a kickboxing event at the upcoming Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) in Cambodia, officials have confirmed, in a bitter row with the hosts over what to call the sport: Muay Thai or Kun Khmer.

Thai officials are angry at plans by Cambodia to refer to the event – which they regard as their national sport – on the official programme as Kun Khmer instead of Muay Thai.

While the name Muay Thai may be better known around the world, Cambodian officials insist the sport originated from their Khmer culture.

The event is one of a series of combat sports at the 11-country regional games, alongside regular kickboxing, karate, taekwondo, kun bokator and vovinam.

The SEA Games are due to get under way in May, with Cambodia hosting for the first time in 60 years.

Charoen Wattanasin, vice-chairman of the Na-



Fighters at Tiger Muay Thai gym in Phuket. Photo: Tiger Muay Thai

tional Olympic Committee of Thailand, said on Jan 24 the International Olympic Committee had not endorsed the term Kun Khmer.

“They are violating international regulations for sports competitions,” he said. “The Thai Boxing Association won’t be sending athletes to compete.”

Cambodian sports officials are refusing to back down.

“We are the host country so we have the right to change it to Kun Khmer as the sport has its origin in Khmer and it is our culture,” Vath Chamroeun, secretary-general of the

Cambodian Southeast Asian Games Organising Committee, told AFP.

“We have to satisfy our people.”

He said Cambodia would retaliate and not send fighters to Thailand when it hosts the 2025 games. The sport will be called Muay Thai at that event.

Muay Thai secured Olympic recognition as a sport in 2021 – but its pathway to the Olympic games is uncertain because of safety concerns.

It allows some moves that are banned in other forms of kickboxing, such as elbow- and knee-strikes. AFP



# Wrexham denied Hollywood ending, Reds picked off

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Brighton dumped FA Cup holders Liverpool out of the competition last Sunday (Jan 29) as Hollywood star and Wrexham co-owner Ryan Reynolds saw his non-league side denied a dramatic win by Sheffield United in a six-goal thriller.

Kaoru Mitoma's brilliant control and finish in stoppage time to seal a 2-1 win for the Seagulls was another enormous blow to Liverpool, whose season is unravelling just months after they came close to winning a historic quadruple.

The Reds had led at the Amex through Harvey Elliott, but have now won just once in their past six games in all competitions.

Lewis Dunk levelled before the break for the home side and they were well worth their place in the fifth round courtesy of a moment of magic from Mitoma.

The Japanese winger cushioned Pervis Estupinan's cross



Brighton's Kaoru Mitoma (right) scored the late FA Cup winner against Liverpool. Photo: AFP

into his path, flicked the ball over Joe Gomez and fired high past Alisson Becker in the 92nd minute.

An FA Cup exit at the fourth-round stage leaves the Champions League as Liverpool's only remaining shot at a trophy this season.

Meanwhile Wrexham, the last non-league club left in the competition, were left disappointed as John Egan made it

3-3 in the dying seconds for the 10-man Blades.

The hosts could not have got off to a worse start as Oli McBurnie headed Sheffield United in front after 61 seconds.

Paul Heckingbottom's side look set for a return to the Premier League next season, but they were rocked by a pulsating atmosphere inside the Racecourse Ground.

James Jones and Thomas O'Connor struck within 11 minutes early in the second half to turn the tie around.

Oliver Norwood quickly levelled, but the momentum swung Wrexham's way once more when Daniel Jebbison was sent off 20 minutes from time.

Paul Mullin looked to have pulled off the shock of the round with a calm finish four minutes from time, only for Egan to break Wrexham hearts by turning home a corner at the death.

"Impossible is @Wrexham\_AFC's favourite colour," tweeted Reynolds, who took over the club in 2020 along with fellow actor Rob McElhenney. "That was one of the most exciting things I've EVER seen."

"Thank you each and every Wrexham supporter who came out and aimed your heart at that pitch tonight."

There were no shocks in Saturday's action, with all the Premier League sides progressing to the fifth round with the exception of Fulham, who were held 1-1 by Championship side Sunderland.

## Transfer market rebounds thanks to PL record spend

### FOOTBALL

RECORD SPENDING by English Premier League clubs fuelled a recovery in the international transfer market in 2022 with a total outlay of some US\$6.5 billion (B214bn), according to a report published by FIFA on Jan 26.

The figure represents an increase on the last two years as football recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but is still below the levels of 2019 (\$7.35bn), just before the health crisis, the sport's world governing body said in its Global Transfer Report.

The report only takes into account international transfers, in which over 20,000 were recorded and fewer than 3,000 involved a fee.

English clubs' spending "reached a record high of almost \$2.2 billion", the report said, with six of the 10 biggest international transfers involving moves to Premier League sides.

Among those moves



Darwin Nunez. Photo: AFP

were Liverpool's signing of Darwin Nunez from Benfica and Luis Diaz from Porto as well as Manchester United's purchases of Casemiro and Antony from Real Madrid and Ajax respectively.

There was also Erling Haaland's switch from Borussia Dortmund to Manchester City and Newcastle United's signing of Alexander Isak from Real Sociedad.

Meanwhile, the continuing growth of women's football was reflected by a 19% increase in the number of international transfers to a total of 1,555.

Only a small number involved a fee but spending on international transfers rose to \$3.3mn, which FIFA said was 62% higher than the previous year. AFP

## Penguins walk tall in ACG romp

### CRICKET

Continued from page 16

...to have any chance of an unlikely victory and they got just that when Adeeli Ali and Abubakar combined to stump opener Rhys-Thomas (2) in the 2nd over. Despite the early wicket however runs continued to flow freely as Van Blerk (31) looked to make full use of the fielding restrictions with some cracking cover drives early on.

With the score 48-2 after 6 overs an early finish looked likely before Adele Ali cleaned up Chataway (7) for his second of the day. Shakiel Raja was rewarded for some tight bowling the following over as Van Blerk could only pick out Yasir at long on. This brought about a tricky period for the Penguins as just another 13 runs were added to the total over the next 3 overs as the Warriors bowlers battled hard to stay in the contest.

Following the midway drinks break both Morgan (35\*) and McMillan (15) started to play more freely as the pair upped the scoring



Photo: Thanawat Phumipraphat

rate before the latter could only pick out Raja at mid-wicket with the score 93-4 after 13 overs. Feline lover Hamilton made a triumphant return to the Penguins side after a long absence with a briskly made 18\* including 3 boundaries from just 12 deliveries to put his side on the brink of victory before Morgan finished the job in style with a pair of trademark sixes over the square leg boundary in the 16th over to seal a 6-wicket win.

Man of the match went to Wetherell for bowling returns of 4-13 from his four overs. Other performances of note included

Ledeboer's figures of 3-18 whilst Morgan's (35\*) and Van Blerk's (31) ensured a straightforward run chase for their side.

Shakiel Raja's 33 with the bat and bowling figures of 1-11 as well as Adeel Ali's returns of 2-9 with the ball stood out in a losing cause.

This Sunday (Feb 5) sees the league move to a double-header format as both Warriors and KCC look for their first points in the morning game (10:30am), whilst Penguins and Andaman CC face off in a top of the table clash in the afternoon (2pm).

Curt Livermore



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# Sport



**Djokovic back on top**  
Down Under > p15

## MAKING A SPLASH

### BISP Sea Eagles swim team excel in the pool



Former student Marija Rutkauskaitė in action at BISP before taking up a scholarship at California State University. Photo: Jamie Wheeler

#### SWIMMING

The Phuket News  
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The Sea Eagles from the British International School, Phuket (BISP) will go into this weekend's swim meet on home turf in supremely confident mood after a series of exceptional displays of late.

The Phuket International School Athletics Conference (PISAC) swim meet takes place from today (Feb 3) until Sunday (Feb 5) at the BISP campus in Koh Kaew as teams from across the island compete to show off their skills and expertise in the pool.

The Sea Eagles will be considered strong favourites, however, due to some outstanding performances in recent times that has seen several students excel in the water.

Most recently was the Bangkok Feeding Frenzy swim meet hosted by Bangkok Patana School in December which saw over 600 swimmers from four different countries participating.

With only 26 swimmers taking part BISP finished in third place overall and first place in the quality team point category. The 11-12 boys age group finished first in overall scores and the 15-18 boys and girls age group finished third in overall scores.

Several new school records were broken at the event, including by student Anton who set new best times in the 200 and 400-metre freestyle, 100m and 200m backstroke and 100m fly.

Similarly, Jaidee broke records in the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke and 200m individual medley (IM), while Valeriia broke the record

in the 50m backstroke and Nassir set two new Nepalese national records in the 200m and 400m IM. There were also new records set in the boys free relay team and boys medley relay team.

Prior to this BISP had dominated at the first international competition hosted by Headstart International School on Nov 19-20 last year, comfortably finishing in first place on points overall and setting several new records at the time in the process.

Several weeks previous the first-ever BISP pentathlon was staged, with over 360 swimmers from eight different teams and each swimmer having to swim five races consisting of 50m of each stroke, including front crawl, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly and a 200m IM.

The BISP team once again excelled to finish in top spot,

with 90% of the swimmers achieving personal best times during the event.

#### RECORD BREAKING

Outside of team competition, year 11 student Duana Lama set new records at the National Championships in Nepal last November, winning nine gold medals and one silver. The gold were won in the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke, the 400m and 200m freestyle and in her 200m IM team relay, with her silver medal in the 50m butterfly. She set new national records for the 200m IM and the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke.

Then there is former BISP student Marija Rutkauskaitė who has represented her country Lithuania in multiple international competitions such as the European Youth Olympic Festival, European Junior

Championships and World Junior Championships.

Her coach had come to hear of BISP from a fellow practitioner before letting Marija's family know of the school. Despite knowing it would be a tough goodbye to endure, they were sure this institution would help her achieve her full potential – BISP had the facilities, coaches, academics, and support offerings any student-athlete would need and more. True enough, once the swimmer took a dive slightly different than the ones she was used to, she was granted a scholarship.

Marija thrived under the BISP swim program while in Phuket before moving to take up a Division 1 Swimmer Scholarship at California State University in Fresno in August last year.

She credits her educators for helping her land a

scholarship to the Division 1 institution and for their overall unwavering support while based at the BISP campus.

"In Year 11, the counsellors really helped my parents and I narrow down our options and submit quality applications," she says. "Soon, I will be majoring in business entrepreneurship and interior design while still perfecting my swimming skills."

Marija thanks her friends and house parents for encouraging and supporting her throughout the transition. "As they all come from different countries, there's always someone around to remind you that you're never alone in this situation," she says.

There is no doubt the Sea Eagles will continue to produce and nurture outstanding talent such as Marija, much of which will be on show at this weekend's competition.

## Old guard come out on top in Patong derby

#### CRICKET

LAST SUNDAY (JAN 29) SAW the Patong Penguins take on newly formed Patong Warriors for the first time in game 2 of the 4-team T20 League held at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang where the experienced heads of the Penguins came out on top with a convincing 6-wicket victory to claim both the crucial points and bragging rights.

After winning the toss Warriors'

skipper Ashan Ali elected to post a big score in batting first. It would be the Penguins, however, would take the early upper hand when Morgan capitalised on a mix up in the middle by running out opener Yasir for a duck in the first over. A handy 21-run stand was formed over the next 3 overs before Adele Ali (15) picked out the safe hands of Morgan at square leg, Paddy Ledeboer claiming his first scalp of the day.

Following the power-play and

with score reading 51-2, Simon Wetherell was introduced into the attack and immediately lured the batsmen into going aerial as both Abubakar (12) and captain Ashan Ali (16) fell in the same manner with Rhys-Thomas and Stu Hamilton holding onto their catches.

Post drinks saw Wetherell continue to bamboozle the batsman and the off-spinner picked up another brace in the 12<sup>th</sup> over firstly trapping Saif (11) LBW before Rana (0) was stumped through some handy glove

work from Anthony Van blerk on the following ball.

Shakiel Raja (33) provided some much needed resistance for his side before an unfortunate inside edge onto his stumps saw him removed of the bowling of Livermore with the score now reading 105-7 with 3 overs remaining.

Unfortunately for the betting side only one other batsman Zohaib Khan (13) would reach double figures as Ledeboer and the Penguins closed out the innings' death others



Photo: Thanawat Phumipraphat

impressively to restrict the final score to a well below par 123/9 in the allotted 20 overs.

Defending a sub-par total, Warriors knew early wickets would be crucial...

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