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SHORT STOP

PM MEETING CUT SHORT TO ADDRESS BANGKOK QUAKE



Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra reacts on receiving the news about the earthquake in Bangkok. Photo: PR Phuket

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was forced to cut short a high-level meeting with Phuket officials last Friday (Mar 28) after receiving an urgent call regarding the earthquake situation in Bangkok.

The Prime Minister immediately convened an emergency meeting via a conference system to monitor developments and coordinate the response.

The earthquake, which originated in Myanmar, impacted several northern regions of Thailand, including Bangkok (see page 7).

PM Paetongtarn also issued warnings for all provinces to

remain on high alert to ensure timely assistance to affected residents.

As part of immediate response measures, Prime Minister Paetongtarn directed the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society to send SMS alerts with safety guidelines to the public.

Additionally, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior were mobilised to safeguard public safety, particularly by monitoring and forecasting potential aftershocks, which were expected within the first two hours following the main quake.

The Ministry of Transport temporarily delayed flights at Suvarnabhumi Airport for 20

minutes to conduct safety assessments. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health has deployed emergency medical teams to high-risk areas, and schools nationwide have been ordered to close as a precautionary measure.

The Prime Minister also urged residents of high-rise buildings to avoid using elevators and instead use stairs for safety.

Reassuring the public, the Prime Minister emphasised that the government and relevant agencies are taking swift action to mitigate risks and ensure public safety.

She urged people to remain vigilant but not to panic, and to follow official instructions.

The public can stay informed through continuous updates on

NBT TV, which provided real-time coverage of the situation, PM Paetongtarn said.

BEFORE ALERT

Before the emergency call interrupted her schedule, Prime Minister Paetongtarn was chairing a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall alongside Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anutin Charnvirakul. The session was dedicated to reviewing Phuket's development policies and budgeting for sustainable tourism initiatives.

During the meeting, provincial officials and private sector representatives presented their proposals for funding.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat outlined 14 key...

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PATRICK CHANTHAM HAIR LAB, BOAT AVENUE LAGUNA PHUKET
49/35 BOAT AVENUE, LAGUNA, CHERNGTALAY AMPHOE THALANG, PHUKET, THAILAND 83110

execeditor@classactmedia.co.th

News



Interpol fugitive nabbed on Red Notice > page 4



Photo: PR Phuket

Isoc in Phuket holds anti-terrorism training

THE REGION 3 BRANCH of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc) held a specialised training program in Phuket aimed at strengthening community surveillance against modern threats.

The initiative, dubbed the 'community pineapple eyes', aimed to empower local residents, airport security personnel and civilian officers to detect and respond to potential security risks.

Of note, Isoc serves as the political arm of the Thai military and has branches in every province in the country.

The training course, held on Mar 25, titled 'Development of a Network to Monitor and Warn of Terrorism', was inaugurated by Lt Gen Chanin Singhanatnirak, Director of ISOC Region 3.

The event was also attended by Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong, who urged participants to contribute to maintaining peace and security in the province.

Lt Gen Chanin emphas-

ised that contemporary threats such as terrorism, transnational crime and cybercrime are increasingly interconnected, involving advanced technologies, document forgery and cross-border movements.

"This training is not just about monitoring potential bomb threats but about fostering a 'community pineapple eyes' – an alert and informed network capable of identifying and reporting suspicious activities before they escalate," he said.

The Phuket branch of Isoc played a key role in organising the event, inviting airport security specialists to provide critical insights.

The training included expert-led sessions on internal security, patriotism, facial recognition techniques and survival strategies in case of terrorist incidents.

Participants were also encouraged to share their insights to help develop a comprehensive local security action plan.

The Phuket News

Phuket expats called to join national census

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun
reporter1@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket branch of the National Statistical Office (NSO) is calling on all long-term expats and other foreigners on the island to take part in the 'Population and Housing Census 2025'.

The NSO Phuket branch has confirmed that all residents, including foreigners who have lived in Thailand for over three months, will be counted.

The previous national Population and Housing Census was conducted in 2010, NSO Phuket branch Director Hasanah Lekhim told *The Phuket News*.

"We typically conduct data collection every 10 years. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 survey was postponed to 2025," she explained.

The United Nations (UN) recommends conducting a national census at least once every 10 years to ensure accurate and up-to-date statistical information, she noted.

Ms Hasanah said the census conducted in Phuket 15 years ago covered 982 areas, and accounted for 184,795 buildings and 209,235 households.

"These are estimates from 2010, and we know the real numbers are now higher," she said.



Photo: PR Phuket

Since then, NSO Phuket has provided updated statistics from annual and 'snapshot' surveys.

NSO currently lists Phuket's population as 429,583. The estimated average household income per month is B41,865 and the estimated average household expenditure per month is B38,941.

NSO Phuket is looking to bring those figures up to date, and to better reflect the reality in Phuket.

ONLINE

This year, the census will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 started on Tuesday (Apr 1). During Phase 1, Apr 1-20, participants will be able to submit data online:

- via the NSO website (www.nso.go.th)
- or via the 'Tang Rat' application, which will be Thai language only (available on Google Play and the App Store).

"Foreign residents who

have lived in Phuket for three months or more, as of Apr 1 [or since Jan 1, 2025 or earlier], are also required to fill in the information," Ms Hasanah confirmed.

"For the online survey, the form can be filled out on the main NSO website. There will be seven languages: Thai, English, Vietnamese, Myanmar, Laotian, Cambodian and Chinese.

"You can change the language by clicking the right corner of the website," she explained.

"The information collected will not include ID numbers [passport or Thai ID], bank account details, or income," Ms Hasanah said.

"The only questions asked will be about the household's location, type of household and residence, and the number of members in each household," she added.

"A family representative can submit the information, so other members do not

need to submit it multiple times," she noted.

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE

Phase 2 will be conducted from Apr 21 to June 19, Ms Hasanah continued.

During this phase census officials and volunteers will conduct household visits to collect data from those who did not complete the survey online, she said.

"The data collection on-site will involve volunteers, some of whom can speak English, depending on the area. Areas like Cherng Talay, Patong and Chalong may require English-speaking volunteers," she said.

The census will categorise data into population count, household numbers, and types of buildings, including homes, shophouses, condominiums, and vacant rental properties, she noted.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Phuket Provincial Statistics Office is seeking volunteers to assist with data collection.

"We need a lot of people to help with this," Ms Hasanah stated.

Anyone interested in joining as a volunteer can contact the Phuket Provincial Statistics Office at 076-211594.

Focus on Phuket's sustainable future interrupted by earthquake

Continued from page 1

...projects across three major areas, requesting a total budget of B1,197.87 billion.

The projects included improvements to traffic and electricity infrastructure, measures to address water management and flood prevention, and additional funding for the construction of a radiotherapy building at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The Minister of Tourism and Sports also proposed positioning Phuket as a premier global tourist destination. Plans were discussed to expand Phuket International Airport 2, to be built in Phang Nga, to accommodate growing tourist numbers, as well as to

enlarge the cruise port area to attract high-end travelers.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn acknowledged the proposals and instructed relevant agencies to advance Phuket's development while ensuring that tourism growth aligns with environmental conservation and sustainable living standards, said an official report of the meeting.

However, as the earthquake crisis unfolded, she had to leave the meeting abruptly to oversee the emergency response efforts.

THAILAND FIRST

In the morning before her high-level meeting with Phuket officials last Friday, PM Paetongtarn inaugurated the Thailand Sustain-



PM Paetongtarn at Thailand's first 'Sustainable Tourism Conference' in Phuket last Friday (Mar 28). Photo: Ing Shinawatra / Facebook

able Tourism Conference 2025 (TSTC 2025) at the Phuket Rajabhat University Conference Centre, marking the first international seminar of its kind in Thailand aimed at advancing sustainable tourism.

During the opening ceremony,

the Prime Minister delivered a keynote address on 'Soft Power, a Mechanism for Creating Sustainability in Thai Tourism', emphasising the role of cultural and creative industries in driving long-term tourism development.

The two-day conference, which concluded last Saturday (Mar 29), served as a crucial platform for elevating Thai tourism to international standards, said an official report of the event.

The conference featured three key components: lectures and seminars by over 20 experts in sustainable tourism, an exhibition area with more than 30 entrepreneurs showcasing innovative tourism solutions, and interactive workshops aimed at fostering best

practices in the industry.

Participants who completed the workshops received certificates recognising their contributions to sustainable tourism.

The event is part of a broader initiative to position Phuket as a leading sustainable tourism destination and aligns with Thailand's long-term strategy to integrate environmentally and socially responsible practices in its tourism sector, said the official report.

The conference also served as a preparatory step for Thailand's hosting of the Global Sustainable Tourism Conference (GSTC) in 2026. Phuket will take over as the host city from Fiji, with the event scheduled for Apr 22-23, 2026.

Pollution chief defends air quality

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun
reporter1@classactmedia.co.th

As Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinwatra visited the island last Friday (Mar 28) for Thailand's first 'Sustainable Tourism Conference', Chanthira Duangsai, Director of the Environmental Department and Pollution Control Region 15 office in Phuket, assured that the air quality in Phuket was "still healthy".

Ms Chanthira's assurance came as Swiss-based IQAir reported over '100' levels of PM2.5 pollution across much of central Phuket, and a reading of 117 at Kata, on Mar 27.

IQAir reported a reading of 122, in the 'orange' zone, in Kathu, and over 100 across much of central Phuket. One local resident remarked, "There is still haze today, but it is not as bad as yesterday."

Of note, readings over 100 are designated 'Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups'. While the haze has been plainly visible, it has not reached reportedly 'dangerous' levels.

Similarly, AQI.cn reported the Thalung Town area reaching 'red' levels of over 150 at four different reporting times throughout Wednesday.

IQAir on Mar 28 again reported 'orange' readings of well over



Hills in Kathu obscured by haze last week. Photo: Supplied

100 across much of central Phuket, with a reading of 143 in Srisoonthorn.

AQI.cn last Friday showed that many of the air-quality reporting stations that as of one day earlier were still reporting unhealthy air-quality readings were "nearly" offline. The offending stations no longer send PM2.5 readings. Other data appeared to be getting through.

Regardless, Ms Chanthira said, "From what I checked, the air quality measurement station in Talad Yai, near the Phuket Public Health Office, has not sent any warning signals, which I believe means it is still healthy."

She said that air pollution levels are monitored in real-time, with a warning issued if pollution reaches 37.5 milligrammes per cubic metre. "That's the threshold where we consider it necessary to alert the public," she said.

Ms Chanthira pointed out that neighbouring provinces Phang Nga and Ranong (sic) recorded higher readings, reaching 38.9 on Mar 26.

"I always monitor the air quality situation closely," she assured.

"On Wednesday [Mar 26], Phuket's reading was only 29," she said.

Ms Chanthira assured that the Thai government's Air4Thai app and website "provides the most accurate air quality updates for Thailand, as they are operated by the Thailand Pollution Control Department".

"The only accurate app or website for Thailand is Air4Thai, not air quality data from foreign websites," she said.

Ms Chanthira made no comment on why Air4Thai remained a constant 'Green' air quality reading for Phuket despite the contradicting reports.

She also made no comment on the source of the readings for air quality reporting platforms such as IQAir and AQI.cn.

The AQI.cn reading for Thalung on Mar 26 was reported as 141. AQI.cn openly reported that the reading came from Air Quality monitoring station 86833303210 8462 with data provided by CUSense by Chulalongkorn University.

The air quality monitoring station was even defined as located at "Shell, 402, Tawan Place, Thalung, Phuket Province, 83110, Thailand".

For no reasons given, the reporting station was no longer sending data.

As this issue of *The Phuket News* went to print, the air quality had eased, but the haze still had yet to dissipate.

AIR QUALITY INDEX SCALE:

0 - 50 - Good - Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk

51 - 100 - Moderate - Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

101-150 - Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups - Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.

151-200 - Unhealthy - Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

201-300 - Very Unhealthy - Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

300+ - Hazardous - Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects. Everyone should avoid all outdoor exertion.

- US-EPA 2016 standard

Governor quells quake, tsunami fears

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON Suwannarat last Sunday (Mar 30) met with the press to make a public statement that the 7.7 Magnitude earthquake in Myanmar that devastated Mandalay and rocked Bangkok has had no effect at all in Phuket.

The earthquake in Mandalay last Friday (Mar 28) caused tremors in many areas of Thailand, especially in the north, Governor Sophon explained (see page 7).

However, Phuket, nearly 2,000km from Mandalay, has not been affected in terms of building structures in any way, Governor Sophon said.

Gov Sophon recognised reports that people at the Phuket Provincial Hospital in Ratsada were able to feel the tremors.

However, high-rise building structures in Phuket, especially buildings that are 23 metres or higher, are continuously inspected every year, he noted.

From the initial assessments, no damage has been found, he said.

There are some 300 such structures on the island, Governor Sophon added.

Governor Sophon also confirmed that there has been no risk of a tsunami affecting Phuket following the earthquake.

The National Disaster Warning Center and the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation have been monitoring the situation since Friday, he said.

Although the emergency agencies had increased their vigilance to "on watch", which is standard procedure following any major earthquakes in the region, Governor Sophon confirmed that there had been no tsunami alerts.

Regarding the impact on tourism, the



Photo: PR Phuket

Governor stated that although there may be short-term concerns, the number of tourists on Mar 27-28 was still increasing, with about 15,000-17,000 tourists visiting per day.

"Provincial officials have been communicating this through the Phuket Tourist Association and related agencies, to inform tour operators and foreign tourists that Phuket is not affected by the incident," he said.

Regarding tsunami warning concerns, Governor Sophon said that Phuket has a total of 19 tsunami-warning towers on the island.

"The two in the Mai Khao area are currently under repair, and the repairs are expected to be completed soon," he said.

"The warning system is controlled by officers who initiate the warning sirens when a disaster occurs, in accordance with the province's disaster prevention plan," he added.

"In addition, the Phuket Provincial Office has discussed with the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation [PPAO] to develop a mobile phone warning project for local residents, which is currently in the study and development phase to accommodate future situations," Governor Sophon said. *The Phuket News*



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CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

PURIYA BEAVAN
EditorCHRIS HUSTED
Executive Editor
084 307 7408
executive@classactmedia.co.thBEN TIREBUCK
News / Sport Editor
061 806 8132
editor3@classactmedia.co.thCHUTHARAT 'UM'
PLERIN
Thai Editor
088 766 1615
thai@classactmedia.co.thNATNAREE 'MILD'
LIKIDWANASAKUN
Reporter / Translator
082 295 3244
reporter1@classactmedia.co.thJASON BEAVAN
General Manager
086 479 7471
gm@classactmedia.co.thSIRIPORN (NOK)
SEANGMAS
Sales Support
086 479 7470
sales@classactmedia.co.thNIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA
Graphic designerThe Phuket News
@thephuketnews

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99/7 Moo 1 (Billion Plaza),
T. Kathu, A. Kathu, Phuket 83120

PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

www.foreca.com

FRI APRIL 4

High: +36°
Low: +29°
Wind 11 m/s

SAT APRIL 5

High: +36°
Low: +28°
Wind 11 m/s

SUN APRIL 6

High: +35°
Low: +28°
Wind 11 m/s

MON APRIL 7

High: +35°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

TUE APRIL 8

High: +35°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

WED APRIL 9

High: +37°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

THU APRIL 10

High: +36°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

Two arrested for armed robbery of Myanmar shop

THALANG POLICE HAVE arrested two suspects for the robbery of a Myanmar woman and resulted in the theft of nearly half a million baht from a grocery shop at a migrant worker's camp

The robbery occurred at about 11:30am on Mar 25, police confirmed.

Four unidentified individuals, all wearing full-face helmets and armed with knives, arrived on two motorbikes and carried out the heist. They stole a total of B470,000 in cash and valuables before fleeing the scene.

A joint investigation by Thalang Police Station and the Crime Suppression Division of Phuket Provincial Police led to the identification of the four suspects. They were named as Zaw Min Oo, Hein Min Htike, Thar Nge Soe and Zin Ko, all Myanmar nationals.

Following the investigation, Thalang Police gathered sufficient evidence to request arrest warrants from the Phuket Provincial Court. The court issued warrants for three of the suspects: Zaw Min Oo (Warrant No. 243/2568); Hein Min Htike (Warrant No. 244/2568); and Thar

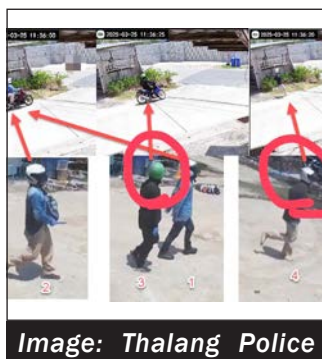


Image: Thalang Police

Nge Soe (Warrant No. 245/2568).

At about 9:15pm on Mar 26 officers from the Thalang Police and the Crime Suppression Division successfully arrested one of the suspects, Hein Min Htike, who holds a non-Thai nationality ID card.

Officers also arrested Zin Ko, despite not having a warrant specifically for his arrest.

Both men were taken into custody and transferred to Thalang Police Station for further legal proceedings.

At last report police were continuing their search for the remaining suspects and pledged to seek additional arrest warrants to ensure all involved are brought to justice.

Eakkapop Thongtub

French fugitive wanted over drug baron jailbreak

AFP

A French fugitive arrested in Phuket last week was wanted over a deadly prison breakout that freed a notorious drug baron nicknamed 'The Fly', authorities have confirmed.

Adonis Correa, 24, was the latest of two dozen suspects to be detained in a sprawling international manhunt after the shocking escape of suspected gangland kingpin Mohamed Amra from a prison van in northern France in May 2024, reported AFP.

Correa is considered by investigators to be a "close friend" of Amra, who was arrested in Romania last month after nine months on the run as France's "public enemy number one".

Correa was arrested in Phuket on Mar 26, French sources and Thai police confirmed.

"Thai immigration police have arrested a French national linked to a transnational criminal organisation involved in a violent prison break that resulted in the deaths of prison officers," Thai police said in a statement.



Adonis in custody. Photo: PR Phuket

The shocking, violent nature of Amra's escape last year stunned France and made headlines around the world.

Masked gunmen armed with military-grade automatic weapons attacked a prison van transporting him at a motorway toll plaza, killing two guards and wounding three others.

Amra, who is suspected of pursuing his drug-related activities and even ordering murders from his prison cell, went on the run and was eventually tracked down in Bucharest and sent back to France.

Correa is the latest of two dozen suspects detained as part of the French probe into the breakout.

He entered Thailand on a tourist visa through Phuket International Airport Feb 8 – before an arrest warrant and Interpol red notice were issued against him, according to Thai police.

Thai authorities said they tracked Correa to the Kamala and Patong areas of Phuket and arrested him.

His lawyer in France, Joseph Hazan, told AFP on Mar 27 that his client had turned himself in.

"He presented himself to Thai authorities, with whom we have been in contact for several days," Hazan said, adding that his client had not yet made a statement and would "explain himself to the French judges".

Russian cannabis dealer nabbed

WICHIT POLICE HAVE arrested a Russian man accused of illegally selling cannabis products and e-cigarettes worth nearly B1 million.

The Russian man, identified by police as 24-year-old Artem Lotts, was arrested during a raid on a house off Chao Fa Rd in Moo 1, Wichit, on Mar 26.

Joining the raid were officers from the Phuket Public Health Office (PPHO).

Lotts was found in possession of over 1 kilogramme of dried cannabis buds, various cannabis extracts, e-cigarettes and more than 200 smoking devices, said an official report of the arrest.

Officials estimated the total value of the seized items to be close to B1mn, the report added.

Lotts was taken into custody to face multiple charges, including selling or processing con-



Photo: Wichit Police

trolled herbs for trade without permission under the Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicine Wisdom Act B.E. 2542, possessing Category 5 narcotics without authorisation, and selling e-cigarettes that were illegally imported.

He was also charged with working in Thailand without a valid work permit.

Wichit Police Chief Somsak Thongkliang stated that the crackdown was part of an ongoing effort to combat illegal sales of cannabis and e-cigarettes in accordance with national policies.

The Phuket News

Body found weighted in park pond

POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING the death of a man whose body was found floating in a pond at Suan Luang (Rama IX) Park, with two five-kilogramme dumbbells fastened to his waist.

The body was discovered by a passer-by early last Saturday morning (Mar 29).

Phuket City Police were called to the park at about 3:30am.

Joining police at the scene were forensic specialists from Vachira Phuket Hospital rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation.

Rescue workers retrieved the body, which was floating face down. The deceased was identified as a male, estimated to be between 40 and 50 years old, but his identity and nationality remain unknown.

He was wearing a black short-sleeved shirt with orange and yellow patterns, black shorts and a black leather belt.



Photo: Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation

Notably, two iron dumbbells, each weighing approximately five kilogrammes, were tucked under his belt at the front of his waist.

A pair of black flip-flops was discovered on the riverbank nearby.

A preliminary medical examination indicated that the man had been dead for about three days, police said. No identification documents, wounds or signs of physical assault were found on the body, and the initial cause of death could not be determined.

Police are reviewing CCTV footage from the area in an effort to establish the man's identity and determine the circumstances leading to his death. Eakkapop Thongtub

Phuket gifted B4mn for road safety

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket officials have received more than B4 million from the Road Safety Fund to support accident prevention initiatives, with a strong focus on motorbike safety.

Confirmation of the budget received came at a meeting at the Phuket Land Transport Office on Mar 25 to discuss strategies for enhancing road safety in the province for the 2025 fiscal year.

The meeting, chaired by PLTO Chief Adcha Buachan, was also attended by Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Pol Col Phasakon Santhikun and other officials, including Chief of the Phuket Provincial Education Area Office, Panna Phromwichian.

The Phuket Provincial Road Safety Fund Allocation Subcommittee had invited applications for funding from projects aimed at preventing accidents and reducing road fatalities, explained an official report of the meeting.

The province of Phuket had been allocated B4.29mn, with a primary focus on public awareness campaigns, particularly targeting motorbike safety, in an effort to deliver measurable improvements in road safety, confirmed the report.



Rescue workers attend to a traffic accident in Patong. Photo: Kuusoldharm Phuket Foundation

Motorbike accidents remain a major concern in Phuket, a popular tourist destination where road fatalities are a recurring issue.

Officials said they hoped that increased funding for public education and prevention initiatives will lead to a significant reduction in accidents, the official report said.

On the day of the meeting, the Phuket office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM Phuket) reported one death and 76 people injured in accidents on Phuket's roads.

Those additions brought the tally for the year so far to 23 people killed and 7,825 people injured in road accidents in

Phuket since Jan 1.

Motorbike accidents accounted for 83% of all road accidents on the island, DDPM Phuket noted in its report.

HIGHWAY NETWORK

Provincial officials also held a meeting last week to review the results of a study on the selection of routes and formats for a new highway network development project aimed at easing traffic congestion and supporting urban expansion.

The meeting took place at Phuket Rajabhat University on Mar 26. Chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong, the event featured a report from Sanakorn Thapthimthongsuk, Deputy Director (Operations) of

the Phuket Highways Office

Organised by the Department of Highways under the Ministry of Transport, the meeting aimed to disseminate project details to stakeholders while gathering public and agency feedback. The initiative seeks to develop a new highway network to mitigate Phuket's severe traffic congestion, accommodate urban growth, and enhance the province's role as a key economic and tourism hub, explained an official report of the meeting.

Currently, Route 402 (Thepkasattri Rd) serves as the main route to Phuket Town. There are plans to develop Route 4027 (Tha Ruea – Mueang Mai, via Pa Khlok) as an additional alternative. However, persistent heavy traffic at the Tha Ruea Intersection (Heroines Monument) remains a significant bottleneck, impacting both residents and tourists, the report said.

To address the issue, the Department of Highways has undertaken a feasibility study on potential new routes, enlisting consultants to analyse and select an optimal option while conducting an initial environmental impact assessment (IEE) and ensuring continuous public engagement, the report continued.

During the meeting, Vice

Governor Adul emphasised the importance of public participation in shaping the project.

"Today's meeting is a valuable opportunity for all sectors to exchange ideas on the new highway network development project, which will help alleviate traffic problems and support Phuket's future growth. I encourage everyone to share constructive opinions so that the project can be designed in the most beneficial way for the people," he said.

At the conclusion of the session, representatives from government agencies, private enterprises, local administrative bodies and community groups provided suggestions to align the project with public needs and regional conditions.

The Department of Highways assured attendees that the development plan would prioritise public benefit, economic value, and environmental sustainability to support the long-term expansion of Phuket's transportation network and tourism sector.

However, neither the report by local Public Relations Department officials or even the Phuket Highways Office disclosed exactly what changes to any of the previously repeatedly announced plans might be.

Mayoral, council candidates register for May 11 elections

THE FIRST DAY OF registration for mayoral and municipal council candidates in Phuket on Monday (Mar 31) saw an energetic and competitive atmosphere, with multiple teams vying for key leadership positions.

The registration period, open until close of government office hours today (Apr 4), attracted early applicants eager to secure their candidacy.

At Phuket City Municipality, two major teams arrived at the registration venue before the official opening at 8:30am.

Suphot La-ongphet, leader of Rak Phuket Party and better known for his very active role as a Phuket Town Deputy Mayor, secured the number 1 spot on the ballot, while Phisit Sutthichindaowong, leader of the Phuket chapter of the 'Young Turks' party (Khon Noom), drew number 2.

Their respective municipal council candidates were also assigned numbers based on the draw, with Rak Phuket receiving numbers



Photo: PR Phuket

1-6 and Young Turks receiving numbers 7-12.

Enthusiastic supporters gathered at the venue, presenting flowers and marigold garlands to encourage the candidates.

Similarly, the Patong Municipality race saw fierce competition with three teams submitting applications.

Pakrit Keesin, leader of the Rak Patong Team, was among the first to arrive, followed by Chalermluck Kepsup of the Patong Fah Mai Team and Lalita Maneesri of the Patong Creative Team.

A draw determined the ballot order, with Ms Kepsup receiving number 1, Ms Maneesri number 2 and Mr Keesin number 3.

In Chalong, Thanaporn Triwong, leader of the Ji Nui Party and who has just completed a term as Chalong Mayor, secured the

number 1 position, while previously long-standing Chalong Mayor Samran Jindapol of the Chalong Kao Mai Party took number 2.

Supporters of both teams turned out in large numbers to show their encouragement.

The upcoming municipal elections, scheduled for May 11, will take place across 10 locations in Phuket, including Phuket Town, Patong Municipality and multiple subdistrict municipalities including Ratsada, Wichit and Rawai.

Additionally, municipal council elections will be held in Kathu and Thepkasattri Municipality.

High voter turnout is expected, as the elections are shaping up to be a significant event in shaping Phuket's local governance, said an official report of today's registrations.

Under election law, the elections will invoke a 24-hour ban on the sale of alcohol throughout the country from 6pm May 10 through to 6pm May 11.

The Phuket News



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Cabinet approves casino bill

Bangkok Post

Thailand's Cabinet approved a draft law for casinos and entertainment complexes last week as the government looks to attract more tourists and build a major gaming industry.

But the latest draft approved by the Cabinet will significantly limit how many Thai punters can go to casinos, with an entry fee of B5,000 and proof of at least B50 million in bank deposits, effectively blocking large swathes of the population.

Deputy Finance Minister Julapun Amornvivat said last month that the assets requirement for Thai nationals would probably be scrapped because it would exclude too many people. He said officials had decided to submit the draft in its current form and deal with possible amendments later.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra told reporters last week that the details of the law were not final as parliament would have the final say.

The bill will be sent to the House of Representatives, and if passed, will also need approval from the Senate and His Majesty the King.

Another restriction in the draft is that the casino area may only occupy up to 10% of the entire



Anti-gambling protesters gather at Government House on Mar 27 as the Cabinet approved a bill on entertainment complexes that will include casinos. Photo: Apichart Jinakul / Bangkok Post

space of an entertainment complex, according to a government statement.

Gambling is mostly banned in Thailand apart from state-controlled horse racing, the lottery and some sports, but successive governments have pressed the case for allowing casinos to draw in more foreign visitors and create more jobs and state revenue.

Government spokesman Jirayu Houngsub said the bill would require public hearings to be held in locations proposed for entertainment complexes, and compensation to be paid for any negative impacts.

Operators of the complexes would be prohibited from linking gambling at casinos to any computer system, broadcasting

gambling at casinos or trying to increase the number of players and bets. Casino operations would also be subject to the anti-money laundering law, he said.

"The government supports entertainment complexes mainly to stimulate the economy, investment and tourism," said Mr Jirayu.

A Citi report late last year estimated that about half of people aged 20 and more in Thailand could be casino players, providing a base for the country to potentially become the world's third-largest gambling destination.

B100BN INVESTMENT TARGETED

The government hopes to attract at least B100 billion in new

investment in casinos and entertainment complexes and see an annual boost to foreign arrivals of 5% to 10%, while generating revenue of more than B12bn a year.

Several countries in Southeast Asia have legalised casinos, but only a few like wealthy Singapore have been successful in drawing global giants such as Las Vegas Sands, thanks to robust regulations.

Mr Jirayu said that 80% of the 71,300 respondents to an online public hearing conducted from Feb 28 to Mar 14 expressed support for the bill.

OPPOSITION

However, a recent public opinion poll showed that a majority of people are worried about the negative effects of legalised gambling.

The entertainment complex bill on the Cabinet's agenda drew about 80 protesters to Government House on Mar 27.

The opposition People's Party also pointed out that legalising gambling could backfire on tourism if China discourages its citizens from visiting Thailand as a result.

MP Parit Wacharasindhu said the government continues to eagerly push this project, though

it acknowledged Beijing has consistently curbed the number of outbound Chinese tourists seeking gambling overseas. This move already affected destinations that have legal casinos, such as Singapore, the Philippines and Macau.

"We learned during the prime minister's official visit to China [in February] President Xi asked her three times about the casino policy. This should raise questions about whether this policy creates risks, as it might prompt the Chinese government to adjust policy, making travel to Thailand more difficult," he said.

In December 2024, President Xi instructed Macau during his three-day visit to continue its economic diversification, improving policy support and investment to cultivate new industries.

Macau's economy is largely reliant on revenue from legal casinos, and it was affected in recent years after the Chinese government cracked down on money laundering, implementing policies to curb the number of Chinese visiting Macau for gambling.

The proportion of Chinese visitors in Macau dropped from 91.4% in 2021 to 89.6% in 2022 and 67.5% in 2023, before rising to 70% last year.

Higher incomes record more debt

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, farmers and private sector employees are the most indebted, primarily because of home and car purchases, according to a 2024 survey conducted by the Trade Policy and Strategy Office (TPSO).

The survey of 6,291 respondents regarding their debt burden last year indicated a slight improvement from 2023, with a reduction in informal debt.

The survey found 51% of respondents reported having outstanding debt, a decrease from 62.5% in 2023.

In terms of occupations, 68.2% of government employees are carrying debt, followed by 57.2% of farmers and 53.2% of private-sector employees, similar to the survey in 2023.

Students and retirees had the lowest debt burdens at 20.5% and 26.7%, respectively.

The majority of respondents expressed a desire for government intervention to reduce interest rates, said Poonpong Naiyanapakorn, Director-General of TPSO.

Regarding income and debt, the survey found 81.3% of those earning more than B100,000 per month hold debt, followed by 76.2% of those earning B50,001 to B100,000, and 63% of those earning B40,001 to B50,000.

The survey suggested a direct correlation between income and debt burden, as higher-income groups tended to have more debt.

Mr Poonpong said the main reasons



People browse deals at a real estate expo in Bangkok. Photo: Somchai Poomlard / Bangkok Post

for debt include real estate and vehicle purchases (27.5%), followed by increasing daily living expenses (25.6%) and investment-related debt (11.9%).

Retirees and unemployed respondents identified rising living costs as their main source of debt.

The majority of debt was formal (79.9%), followed by a combination of formal and informal debt (13.5%), with purely informal debt at 6.58%, a slight decline from 7.19% in 2023.

For government employees, 90.4% of their debt is formal debt, while farmers had the highest proportion of mixed formal and informal debt at 22.2%.

Freelancers recorded the highest level of informal debt at 15.6%, likely due to difficulties accessing formal loans, noted TPSO.

Lower-income groups or those earning up to B20,000 monthly also reported a significant portion of informal debt, highlighting their financial difficulties, the TPSO also noted.

Bangkok Post

Atta chief seeks marketing boost

NEW ASSOCIATION OF THAI TRAVEL Agents (Atta) President Thanapol Cheewarattanaporn is requesting more state support for marketing campaigns and tourism development to draw foreign tourists, particularly the sluggish Chinese market.

Atta welcomed Cabinet approval of the draft entertainment complex bill, eager for tourism stimulus, but wants stringent regulation of casinos and proper employment for Thais so that the development does not solely benefit foreigners, said Mr Thanapol, who on Mar 27 was elected Atta president for a two-year term.

"The government hasn't done enough in collaboration with the private sector on marketing campaigns to promote tourism," he said.

Mr Thanapol said the Chinese market is growing slowly in the first quarter.

According to Atta, between Jan 1 and March 25, the association served only 214,213 Chinese tourists, a 47% year-on-year decrease.

Although last month Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra met President Xi Jinping, vowing to crack down on cyber-scams, the government has not talked directly to Chinese tour operators about ensuring safe travel, he said.

Mr Thanapol is managing director of tour company Quality Express and a previous Atta vice-president.

He served as president of the Association of Domestic Travel from 2020 to 2022, and president of the Thai Travel Agents Association from 2018 to 2020.

To restore Chinese tourism confidence,



A tour boat passes the iconic Wat Arun. Photo: Apichart Jinakul / Bangkok Post

the association plans to hold a roadshow to second-tier cities in China in May, inviting over 100 Thai operators and 400-500 Chinese operators.

He said under his term, he will include more committees from regional areas in the northern and southern provinces in the association, in order to boost tourism more effectively, including to second-tier cities.

As the tourism trend is shifting away from large tour groups, Atta will also prioritise attracting smaller leisure groups, while boosting the Mice (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) segment, he said.

As the government pledged to develop new man-made attractions via the entertainment complex bill, including legalised casinos, Mr Thanapol said he welcomed this scheme to stimulate tourism.

However, he said he is still worried about how the government can properly regulate its operation to prevent illegal actions. It should also assure benefits for locals, by offering an appropriate employment quota, not only benefiting foreign workers. Bangkok Post

Earthquake probe underway

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The government has launched an investigation to determine the cause of the collapse of the 30-storey Bangkok building at the centre of city rescue efforts following last Friday's (Mar 28) devastating earthquake.

A 7.4 magnitude earthquake, with a depth of 10 kilometres, struck in Mandalay, Myanmar at 1:20pm on Friday, with the Thai Meteorological Department confirming tremors were felt in many parts of Thailand, including Bangkok.

The quake caused damage to many high-rise buildings in the capital, including the complete collapse of the under-construction 30-storey State Audit Office (SAO) building in Chatuchak district.

The confirmed death toll for Bangkok stood at 19 on Monday (Mar 31), with fears that the number could rise significantly as dozens remain missing under the building's rubble.

Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt confirmed that the search for survivors was continuing after infrared sensors had detected the vital signs of at least three people in the rubble on Monday, although rescuers faced obstacles getting to them because the site was still unsafe.



Rescue workers are deployed to the under-construction State Audit Office building that collapsed in Chatuchak district of Bangkok last Friday (Mar 28). Photo: Pattarapong Chatpattarasil

SUBSTANDARD

Tasked with investigating the disaster, Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul formed a committee on Monday to carry out a detailed probe, which is expected to conclude within seven days.

The committee comprises experienced engineers and reliable experts from the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning, with the investigation engaging architects, construction supervisors and builders, Anutin explained.

"Thailand will quickly find out why the building collapsed. It was just built and should have been designed to withstand earthquakes," he said.

Critics have questioned the

standards of a Chinese contractor involved, and raised concerns over the quality of steel and building materials used. An investigation team from the Ministry of Industry collected samples of construction materials from the collapsed SAO site on Monday.

The team is focusing on the quality of steel bars used in fortifying concrete polls, beams and foundation structures in particular, as substandard steel bars normally break rather than bending to absorb powerful forces released by an earthquake, which could have led to the collapse.

Industry Minister Akanat Promphan said on Monday that six types of steel had been found, all from a single producer.

"The collapse of a building can

come from several factors, from design, construction (and) material specification but most important is the standard of the materials," he said.

The ministry has recently taken legal action against up to seven companies producing and selling steel, all joint ventures of Thai and foreign companies. The factories were closed after they were found to have produced and distributed substandard steel bars, which could have posed a threat to public safety.

Anutin insisted both the Thai and Chinese companies in the joint venture comprising Italian-Thai Development Plc and a subsidiary of China Railway No.10 Engineering Group, which was erecting the building, will be fully held accountable for the collapse and its consequences.

SLOW RESPONSE

Concerns have also been raised about Thailand's emergency response system, with the government criticised for their slow response to the disaster.

Hectic evacuations from several buildings, traffic chaos which hindered rescue workers' access to areas affected by the tremors and text messages warning people about events that took too long to reach people reflected poorly on the government's ability

to manage emergency situations, Senator Romsit Wiriyan said on Monday.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra chaired a meeting later that day with state agencies to address the delay in the text message alerts, with representatives of mobile phone operators such as Advanced Info Service and True Corporation also in attendance.

Meanwhile, Bang Sue police on Sunday detained for questioning five Chinese nationals and one Thai interpreter who had taken 37 files from containers behind the collapsed building before fleeing the site.

Tipped off by someone who witnessed the suspicious presence of these people at a temporary office on the SAO building premises, police rushed to the scene but the group had already left. The only person they met was a Chinese national who identified himself as Liu Yang, director of the project.

He provided police information about the six people, who were then summoned to meet investigators. They reported themselves to authorities and came with the document files in question, which were handed over to the police.

The files contained various documents including information about contractors and sub-contractors, police confirmed.

Government frets over Uyghur fallout with European Union

BANGKOK

THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC Development is working with the foreign and commerce ministries to deal with the ramifications of the government's deportation of Uyghurs on free trade negotiations with the European Union (EU).

The committee held a meeting on Mar 27 about the matter with representatives from both ministries, related private companies, the Thai Chamber of Commerce (TCC) and the Federation of Thai SMEs.

Sittiphol Viboonthanakul, a People's Party (PP) list-MP and chairman of the committee, said before the meeting that the deportations would affect Thailand's international trade dynamics because the EU has condemned the government's actions. However, the degree of the impact is uncertain.

He further highlighted the need to assess whether this situation could delay the signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, which is expected within this year, and impact Thailand's ongoing efforts to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

He also suggested that the discussion would cover concerns over US trade policies, including possible higher tariffs on Thai exports.

When asked whether the government's invitation to European ambassadors to join a discussion on the deportation issue will



Thai government officials visit Xinjiang, China on Mar 20. Photo: Bangkok Post

help mitigate impacts, Mr Sittiphol affirmed that the government will try its best to minimise them.

He also highlighted the need for the government to develop a strategy to deal with a trade war and consequences that could arise if the Thailand-EU FTA is not signed this year as expected.

It was reported that TCC representatives asserted during the meeting that Thailand has consistently adhered to international human rights standards.

They pointed out that over the past decade, Thailand has worked to address international concerns, such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing issues.

Furthermore, in recent discussions with international economic organisations, the Uyghur deportation case was not a significant topic of concern, said the representatives.

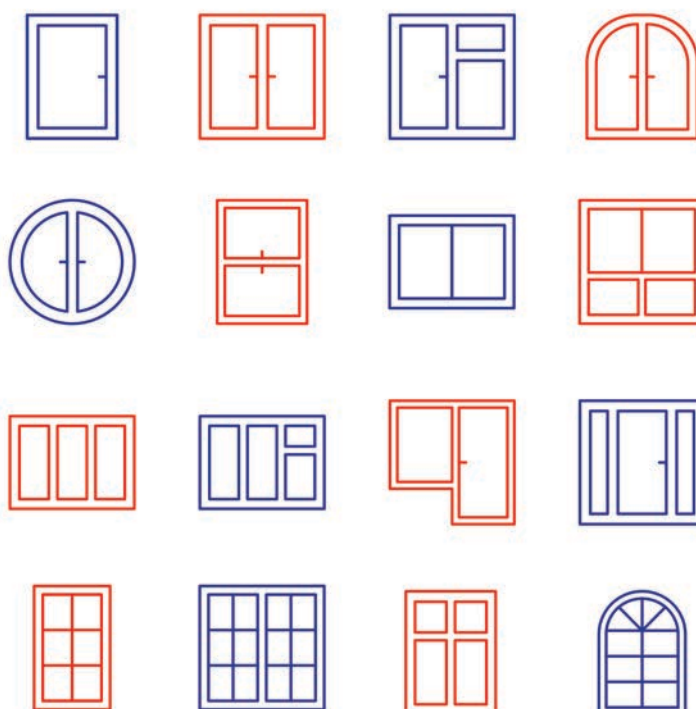
They also stressed that deportations are a common practice globally, citing similar cases in the US and Europe.

They argued that this matter should not be included in the FTA negotiations.

Bangkok Post



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Baz Daniel still cycling Phuket at age 76. Photo: Supplied



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

Turning 76 while riding a bicycle, as I recently did, is not for the faint-hearted, well not in Phuket's torrid maelstrom it's not!

Admittedly, and with due deference to both sanity and self-preservation, I did choose a sunrise start and a relatively quiet island backwater to take my birthday ride.

I hopped – oh, alright then, 'creaked

and groaned' – onto my saddle one dewy morning at the southern end of Kata Noi Beach, in one of our island's most beautiful bays and at that early hour the road was quiet, bathed in early-morning sun dapples and very inviting even to an aged cyclist.

Off I set heading north with the beguiling Andaman Sea dancing softly on my left and the sweep of forested hills punctuated by building developments in varying states of legality, completion, or indeed deconstruction, to my right.

ICONS

The island's once verdant spine unfortunately represents an irresistible temptation to Phuket's ever-more rapacious property developers to build more of those multi-million-dollar luxury sea-view mansions, whether all the requisite acres of paperwork have been legally obtained or not.

Only a few months back, torrential rains brought down cascades of illegal structures sitting right below the implacable, and one can only assume, completely astounded, gaze of the Big Buddha atop the Nakkerd Hills. Tragically, 13 people were killed in the huge mudslide and fingers were pointed at the potential illegality of the construction around the Big Buddha itself.

Mysteriously, all seems to have gone eerily quiet on the 'rigorous and unwavering' investigations which were promised into this catastrophe.

Such were my early morning musings as I plied this lovely beachside corridor adjacent to Phuket's beautiful spine. It represented a trip through the past for me passing various glorious Phuket icons where I'd spent many happy times in the early days of my island explorations from 2005 onward.

Up the steep headland and past the lovely Mom Tri's Villa Royale, once the home of Mom Tri Devakul, Harvard-educated member of Thailand's royal family, not to mention one of the island's most extensive and prestigious wine cellars!

CHARISMATIC

Then down the steep hill I plunged, brake-blocks screaming, past Mom Tri's Boathouse where I'd spent many fabulous wine-drenched evenings at sundry gourmet dinners, writers'

nights, music concerts and common-or-garden suppers with friends and island luminaries, though there was never anything common-or-garden about the cuisine, the service or the stunning views from the Boathouse.

Nor, indeed, about its charismatic General Manager Max Chin, with whom I had the pleasure of working over several years. Max was the quintessential, larger-than-life GM, brimming with charm, fun and ebullience. He was the perfect leader for the Boathouse where such global superstars as Peter Ustinov, Rudolph Nureyev and countless royalty and nobility had held court down through the years.

I then cycled the road along Kata Beach itself and over the next headland between Kata and Karon past the hilarious Mini-Golf and Dinosaur Park... surely one of the only places in Phuket where you can be, "Two under par going into the final hole, thereby achieving a Tyrannosaurus as opposed to an Eagle!"

Onward I pedalled north along Karon Beach past the dilapidated sports ground on my right, where in 1997, when a little blue pill had just been legalised in Thailand, I saw the venerable Phuket Vagabonds rugby club become unofficially re-branded as the Phuket VIAGRABONDS! Happy days!

Onward I rode adjacent to Karon Beach to the roundabout at the far end, then straight ahead to cycle a loop around the little lake there, then finally on to the beach for an exhilarating dip to cool down after my monumental aged exertions.

Unlike the journey of reaching the age of 76 itself, I'd planned this as an out and back ride, so I retraced my cycle tracks back to have a coffee with my old friend Richard Pope, the genial developer of the wonderful Kata Rocks Resort, with whom I'd worked on branding and communications in its early days.

Sitting on Kata Rocks' glorious poolside terrace on the rocky headland overlooking the Andaman Sea and Pu Island, reminiscing with Richard about the 'good old days' on Phuket made me realise that no matter how much the island changes superficially, I was indeed most fortunate to be living out my cycling dotage in such a delightful location.

HeadStart Sporting Academies Making a Difference



For 24 hours, from 8pm on Friday, 28th February to 8pm on Saturday, 1st March, 2025, HeadStart's three sporting academies – Aqua Panthers Swim Academy, and Panthers Football and Basketball Academies – came together as one to compete in their respective sports all in the name of charity. This spectacular community event witnessed almost 300 Academy athletes in the pool, on the pitch and on the court, swimming lengths, scoring goals and sinking 3-pointers all while raising money for our nominated foundations: Youth Football Home, Phuket and North Andaman Network Foundation.

Aqua Panthers' Relay Challenge

The event began with over 100 Aqua Panthers swimmers in a 12-hour overnight relay. They didn't just show up for a casual swim. They pushed. They raced against the clock. They racked up as many laps as possible in 30-minute relay bursts, pushing each other further with every exchange. The result? Over 120,000 metres covered!

Panthers Football in Action

Next came the Panthers Football Academy players, stepping in for the swim team in the much-anticipated second leg of this 24 hour event! What a thrilling day it was, as players, parents, teachers, and coaches rallied together, creating an electrifying atmosphere both on and off the field. The air was charged with energy, with cheers ringing out from an enthusiastic crowd of supporters, all eager to see the teams giving it their all.

Basketball Showdown for Charity

Not ones to miss out, our Panthers Basketball Academy joined the exciting action in the afternoon as players, parents, and staff hit the court for some unforgettable matchups! Showing off impressive shooting and defensive skills, the HeadStart Arena witnessed dominant performances and comeback wins, with steals a plenty and 3-pointers drained.

The True Spirit of Sport

Beyond the games, the event was about raising funds for worthy causes. It was heartwarming to see Academy athletes welcome Youth Football Home players with warmth and friendship demonstrating the true spirit of this event. The final three hours were a celebration as our HeadStart community created a carnival atmosphere, with games, and a community BBQ. Thanks to our community's generosity, an incredible 373,732 Thai baht was raised. We look forward to next year's event!

For more Information about HeadStart visit our website:

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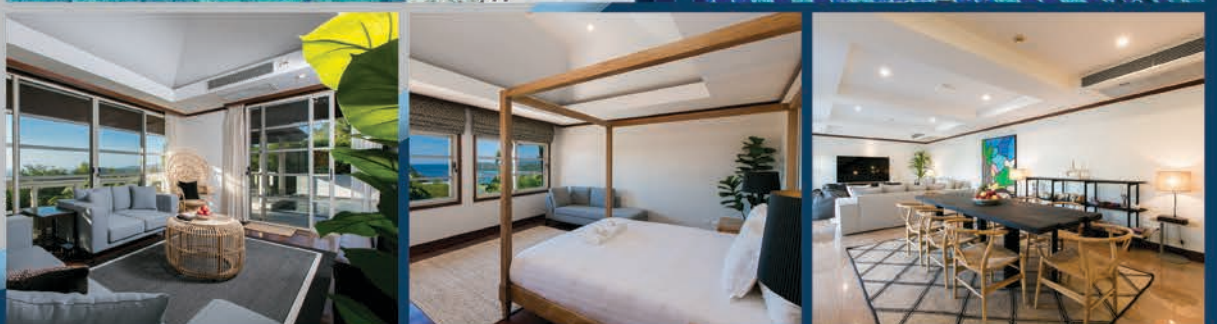


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POP QUIZ

1. During the time of the Roman Empire what African country was known as the 'breadbasket for Rome'?

2. As of 2024 which country has the highest life expectancy globally?

3. Aureolin is a shade of what colour?

4. How many dots appear on a pair of dice?

5. What company was initially known as 'Blue Ribbon Sports'?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Under

6. Priestly garb

10. Adroit

14. Caribbean cruise stop

15. ___ tide

16. Dwarf buffalo

17. As fast as possible

20. Small amount

21. Crew members

22. Lassie, for one

23. Area

24. Fast feline

25. Temporary

28. Guiding light

32. Oil source

33. Coffee break snack

34. Genetic material

35. Turning right continually

39. Upholstery problem

40. Carries on

41. Believed

42. Ethanoates

44. Spooks

46. Hawaiian strings

47. Draped dress

48. Food tray

51. High school breakout

Down

1. Bleats

2. Hence

3. Hilo feast

4. Oriental tie

5. Malicious

6. Cavern, in poetry

7. Leases

8. Dickensian cry

9. Medical tool

10. Second-largest city in Texas

11. Organic compound

12. Central points

13. Profits

18. Told all

19. Total

23. Brass component

52. Dance step

55. Defeats soundly

58. First family member

59. Hate group

60. Ado

61. Capital on the Caspian

62. Like some threats

63. "Snowy" bird

24. Johnnycakes

25. African capital

26. Infant's illness

27. Figure of speech

28. Presents

29. Judge

30. New World lizard

31. South African dollars

33. Plunges

36. Legendary sea monster

37. Engage in a summer sport

38. Bangkok native

43. Island nation north of Fiji

44. ___ souci

45. Foundling hospital

47. Display

48. Union foe

49. Jessica of "Dark Angel"

50. Soup ingredient

51. ___ retentive

52. "D"

53. Flu symptom

54. 32-card game

56. Antiquated

57. Account

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			

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

13

is the correct number of a baker's dozen, not 12 as often thought.

80

per cent of information stored on all computers in the world is in English.

741

consecutive weeks is how long Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side of the Moon' album was on the Billboard 200 charts from 1973 to 1988.

22,000

children die globally each day due to poverty, says UNICEF.

238,140

passenger cars are produced daily around the world.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Kamala sunset. Photo by Roy Falconer

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket? Email it to editor3@classactmedia.co.th

This week in history

Apr 4, 1968

Martin Luther King Jr is assassinated by James Earl Ray at a motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

Apr 5, 1614

In Virginia, Native American Pocahontas marries English colonist John Rolfe.

Apr 6, 1992

The Bosnian War begins, lasting until Dec 14, 1995.

Apr 7, 1906

Mount Vesuvius erupts and devastates Naples, causing widespread destruction and claiming the lives of over 100 people.

Apr 8, 2020

Bernie Sanders ends his presidential campaign, leaving Joe Biden as the Democratic Party's nominee. Biden is duely elected President of the United States.

Apr 9, 1959

Project Mercury: NASA

announces the selection of the United States' first seven astronauts, whom the news media quickly dub the 'Mercury Seven'.

Apr 10, 837

Halley's Comet makes its closest approach to Earth at a distance equal to 0.0342 astronomical units (5.1 million kilometres/3.2mn miles)

Source: Wikipedia

Naples and Mount Vesuvius.

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Monday BBQ Night

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Wednesday BBQ Night

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ANZAC Day Memorial Service – Phuket

Phuket Veterans invite you to join us in honouring the sacrifices of Australian and New Zealand service members at our ANZAC Day Memorial Service. Time: 5:30 AM. Location: Kamala Beach (Meeting point: Kamala Police Station). Following the service, all attendees are invited to a Gunfire Breakfast at Devils Bar, Kamala. Dress Code: Smart Casual / Uniform. We look forward to commemorating this important day with you. For more info - facebook. com/phuketveterans

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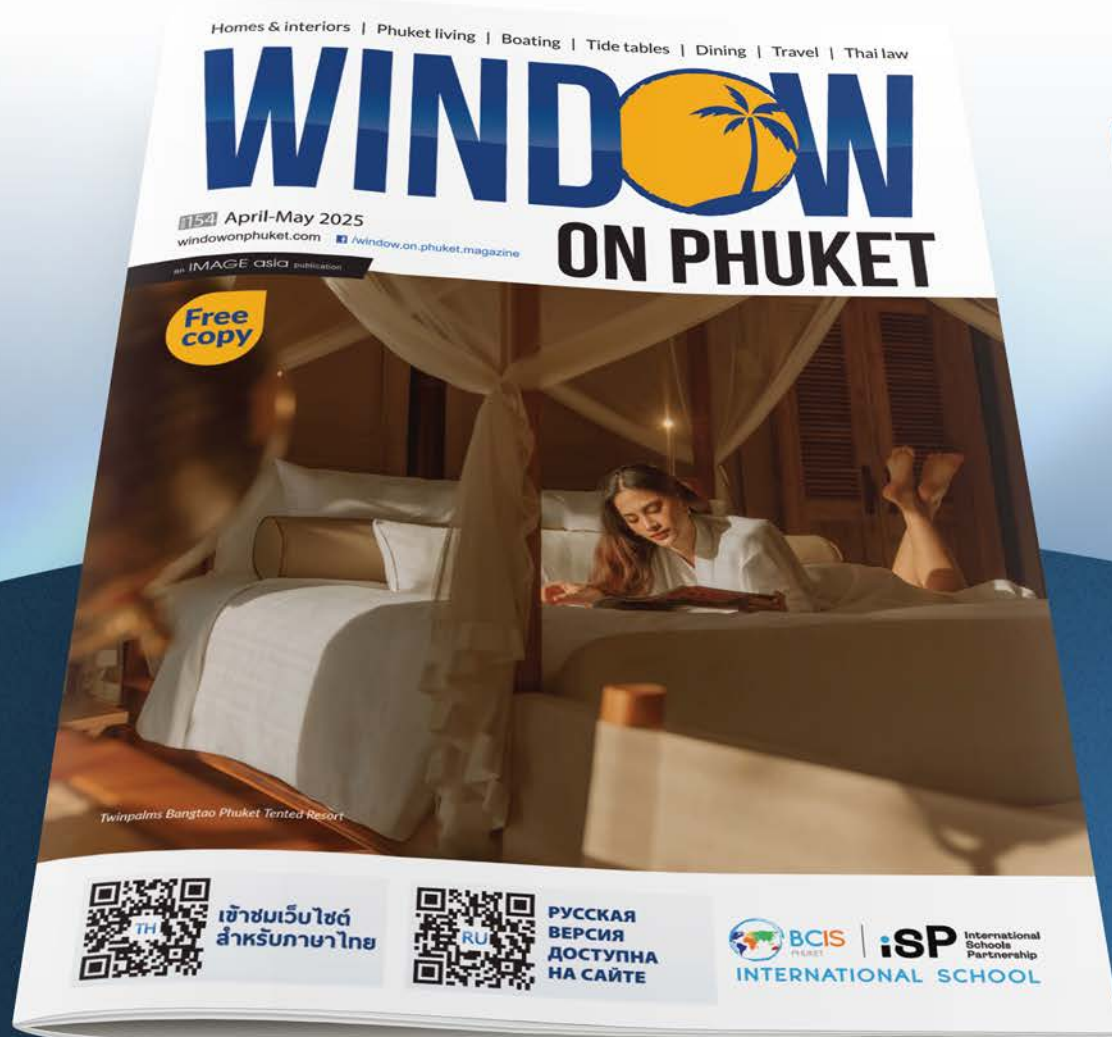
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SKAL PHUKET MARCH DINNER - A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Held on Thursday, Mar 20 at the wonderful Kee Sky Lounge at The Kee Resort and Spa, Patong, over 30 Skål members and guests enjoyed a great evening of food, drinks and networking. A little drop of rain did not dampen the mood of the evening with general manager Doeke Bonga and his team ensuring a stress-free and very enjoyable evening. To find out more about Skål International Phuket visit facebook.com/skalphuket



WINDOW ON PHUKET

April/May 2025 issue

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Tsunoda to replace Lawson at Red Bull

FORMULA ONE

YUKI TSUNODA WILL partner world champion Max Verstappen at the Japanese Grand Prix following Red Bull's decision to sack struggling Liam Lawson after just two races.

The 24-year-old Tsunoda will be promoted from Red Bull's sister team RB for his home race at Suzuka this weekend (Apr 4-6).

New Zealander Lawson, 23, who was drafted in from RB in the winter to replace Sergio Perez, has endured a miserable start to the 2025 season.

He has been knocked out at the first stage of all three qualifying sessions and has yet to score a point while Verstappen in the other Red Bull is second in the title race with 36 points, eight behind early season leader Lando Norris of McLaren.

Tsunoda has shown pace on both race weekends.

He was 12th in Australia and only finished out of the points in Shanghai because of RB's flawed two-stop pit strategy.

Tsunoda made his F1



Yuki Tsunoda. Photo: AFP

debut with AlphaTauri in 2021, becoming the first Japanese driver on the grid since Kamui Kobayashi in 2014.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner did not exactly give Lawson a vote of confidence after the Chinese Grand Prix on Mar 23.

"I think Liam's had a tough couple of races, a tough weekend here," said Horner who was more upbeat when asked about Tsunoda.

"Yuki is an experienced driver now doing a great job." AFP

Thai Olympic election fiasco

OLYMPICS

Bangkok Post

Pimol Srivikorn has been named the new president of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand (NOCT) after winning an election marred by a walkout by rival candidate Suchai Pornchaisakudom.

The 61-year-old president of the Taekwondo Association of Thailand emerged victorious in the Mar 25 contest to replace Gen Prawit Wongsuwon, securing the top job in Thai sports and ushering in a new era for the organisation.

He succeeded the former deputy prime minister, whose reign ended after his election defeat and subsequent loss of the presidency of the Thailand Aquatics Association last November.

Mr Pimol is the organisation's eighth president and the first civilian in 60 years to be elected to the top office.

Before the voting began, Mr Suchai and his supporters expressed dissatisfaction with the transparency of the selection process for athletes eligible to cast ballots.

Prof Charoen Wattanasin, the election chair, dismissed the objections, prompting Mr Suchai and his team to walk out.

Immediately following his walkout, Mr Suchai left the committee headquarters and was expected to



Pimol (centre left). Photo: Bangkok Post

regroup with his supporters at the Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand in Muang Thong Thani.

Gen Wit Thephasadin na Ayutthaya, the NOCT secretary-general, warned that if concerns over the election's legitimacy were not addressed, the matter could end up being reviewed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or the Administrative Court in Thailand.

The debate prior to the election centred on the eligibility of two new athlete voters – Tawin Hanprab (2016 Olympic silver medalist in taekwondo) and Tanyaporn Prucksakorn (Olympic shooter) – who were granted voting rights over Kaew Pongprayoon, the 2012 Olympic boxing silver medalist, who was excluded from voting.

Meanwhile, Yaowapha Burapolchai, president of the Thai Olympic Athletes Association, insisted both Tawin and Tanyaporn were selected in accordance with the Thai Olympic charter.

Following his victory, Mr Pimol expressed gratitude to the sports federations for their trust in his leadership.

"The NOCT will now operate more proactively, moving away from the bureaucratic approach of the past. Our priority will be to support national sports associations in every way possible," he said.

He further emphasised that policies regarding athlete allowances and SEA Games prize money would need approval from the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), requiring discussions with Tourism and Sports Minister Sorawong Thienthong.

He also denied there was a rift within the organisation after the election incident.

"We are all sports professionals. We must accept both victory and defeat with grace. Ultimately, our shared success – whether at the SEA Games, Asian Games, or the Olympics – reflects Thailand's global standing in sports."

Salby wins Tour of Thailand

CYCLING

DENMARK'S ALEXANDER SALBY of Li Ning Star team was crowned overall champion of the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Cup Tour of Thailand 2025 last Saturday (Mar 29).

The Danish rider finished the 144.40-kilometre sixth-and-final stage, from Watthana Nakhon to Aranyaprathet, in fifth place but it was enough for him to claim the overall title with a time of 17:19.52 hours.

Salby's teammate Simon Pellaud from Switzerland finished second overall in 17h 19m 57s and Italian rider Lorenzo Quartucci took the third place with a time of 17h 20m 04s.

Salby also took the overall points title (green jersey) with 76 points. Yevgeniy Gidich from China Glory-Mentech Continental Cycling team took the second place with 67 points and Thomas Sexton from St George Continental Cycling Team was third with 58 points.

Thai national team cyclist Sarawut Sirironnachai claimed the Best ASEAN Rider award (purple jersey) with a total time of 17h 20m 23s, finishing in 11th place overall.

Thai riders Sakchai Phodingam from Grant Thornton Cycling team and Navuti Liphongyu from Thailand Continental Cycling team were second and third in the Best ASEAN Rider category.

New Zealand's Nicholas Kergozou de



Salby on the podium. Photo: Bangkok Post

la Boessiere of the St George Continental Cycling team won Saturday's stage in 3h 11m 41s. Roojai Insurance rider Pathompob Phonarjthan was second and the third place went to Dutchman Roy Eefting-Bloem.

Solution Tech Vini Fantini from Italy won the best team category with a total time of 52h 58s and the Best ASEAN team was Thailand Continental Cycling team in 52h 1m 27s.

"Overall it was a great competition. The live broadcast had the biggest ever audience and there were teams from more than 20 nations worldwide taking part in this year's tournament," Gen Decha Hemkrasri, president of the Thai Cycling Association (TCA), commented afterwards.

"Thai cyclists did well, with Sarawut claiming the purple jersey as the best ASEAN rider.

"Next year the Tour of Thailand 2026 will go to Nong Khai," he added.

Bangkok Post

Argentina win Hong Kong Sevens

RUGBY SEVENS

ARGENTINA WON THEIR first ever Hong Kong Sevens last Sunday (Mar 30) when they outmuscled France 12-7 in the final to kick off a fresh era for the famous tournament at the city's new US\$3.85 billion Kai Tak stadium.

The World Sevens Series leaders' defeat of the Olympic champions meant a new name was engraved on the venerable old trophy first contested in 1976.

Los Pumas extended their lead at the top of the men's World Rugby Sevens standings to 12 points over Fiji with a third consecutive tournament win, adding Hong Kong to their Vancouver and Perth crowns.

It was a magical moment for Argentina's coach Santiago Gomez Cora, who came to Hong Kong as a player in 2004 and suffered the agony of losing in the final to England.

"It was one of my dreams to win this one," said Gomez Cora.

"When you talk about sevens it's all about Hong



Argentina life the cup. Photo: AFP

Kong. When you win here as a coach or a player it is like nothing else."

After a scoreless first half Argentina took the lead in the second half when Santiago Alvarez bullocked over from a crash ball for the opening try.

Less than a minute later, Marcos Moneta galloped through a tiring and depleted French defence. Joaquin Pellandini converted for a 12-0 lead.

Australia took the bronze after beating Fiji 22-21 in a third-place playoff thriller decided by Sidney Harvey's try after full-time.

Hong Kong is bidding to re-establish the city as a hub for international sports, culture and entertainment with the sports park on the site of the old Kai Tak airport at the heart of the plans.

The 50,000-seat stadium, which boasts a futuristic purplish facade and a retractable roof, is purpose built for rugby sevens, with 24 separate changing rooms.

"I think it's just amazing for rugby. It's just such an incredible facility," World Rugby chairman Brett Robinson told reporters.

AFP

Forest blaze into FA Cup semis

FOOTBALL

AFP

Nottingham Forest reached the FA Cup semi-finals for the first time in 34 years as Belgian goalkeeper Matz Sels starred in a 4-3 penalty shoot-out win over Brighton last Saturday (Mar 29).

After the quarter-final clash at the Amex Stadium finished 0-0 following extra-time, Sels took centre-stage to send Forest to Wembley.

Sels saved spot-kicks from Jack Hinshelwood and Diego Gomez and, although Forest's Neco Williams blazed over, Ryan Yates held his nerve to stroke home the winner.

Forest also needed shoot-outs to get past third-tier Exeter and top-flight strugglers Ipswich in the fourth and fifth rounds respectively this season.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side are enjoying a remarkable season that could culminate in Champions League qualification and a first FA Cup final appearance since 1991.

"We are so happy. It's a huge moment for all of us to share with our fans," Nuno said.

"We have to focus on the Premier League but it's going to be a beautiful moment for all of us on our journey."

Forest, who last won the FA Cup in 1959, have climbed to third in the Premier League, leaving them within touching distance of appearing in the Champions League for the first time since 1980-81.



Nottingham Forest's Ryan Yates scores the winning penalty to guide his side into the FA Cup semi-final. Photo: AFP

They are five points clear of fourth-placed Chelsea and six ahead of fifth-placed Manchester City with nine games to go.

Brian Clough's men were the last Forest team to make the FA Cup semi-finals, beating West Ham before losing the final to Tottenham.

Forest will face Manchester City after Pep Guardiola's team came from behind to reach the FA Cup semi-finals for a record seventh consecutive season with a 2-1 win over Bournemouth on Sunday, but victory came at a cost as Erling Haaland hobbled off injured.

Haaland had seen a first-half penalty saved before Evanilson put the Cherries in front.

The Norwegian made amends by equalising four minutes into the second period before being forced off

with an ankle injury. His replacement, Omar Marmoush, took just two minutes to score the winner.

Aston Villa cruised to a 3-0 win at Championship Preston North End, thanks to a Marcus Rashford brace and a Jacob Ramsey strike.

They will face Crystal Palace in the semi-final after The Eagles beat Fulham 3-0 on Saturday.

Revitalised since joining Villa on loan from Manchester United during the January transfer window, Rashford is beginning to show the form that made him one of England's brightest stars prior to his steep decline over the last two years.

Unai Emery's side are enjoying a fine season in the Premier League and will face Paris Saint-Germain later this month in the Champions League quarter-finals.



Bagnaia. Photo: AFP

Bagnaia wins USA MotoGP after Marc Marquez crash

MOTO GP

FRANCESCO BAGNAIA won an eventful Grand Prix of the Americas last Sunday (Mar 30) to end crash-victim Marc Marquez's perfect start to the MotoGP season.

Six-time elite class champion Marquez was set fair to make it six wins out of six in Texas after romping to victories in the sprints and main races in Thailand, Argentina and Saturday's sprint in Austin.

But a crash on lap nine did it for the Spanish superstar, gifting victory to his Ducati factory teammate, their 20th consecutive grand prix success, just two shy of Honda's historic benchmark of 22.

Alex Marquez, on a Ducati satellite bike, took second for the sixth time to

move one point clear of his older brother in the riders' standings.

Fabio Di Giannantonio, on another Ducati satellite machine, came in third at the Circuit of the Americas.

There was chaos before lights out with riders on the grid, their bikes equipped with wet tyres, all set for the start.

But then, with the changeable overcast conditions drying, pole-sitter Marc Marquez dramatically ran back to the pits to swop to a bike with slicks, triggering a domino effect as his grid rivals copied his example.

As he had not sat on his bike Marquez did not break any rules, only causing mayhem, and a delayed start with a race reduced by one lap to 19 laps.

AFP

Blatter and Platini cleared on appeal in FIFA corruption case

FOOTBALL

FORMER FIFA PRESIDENT Sepp Blatter and ex-UEFA chief Michel Platini were acquitted on appeal by a Swiss court on Mar 25 in a long-running corruption case that shattered their careers as the most powerful figures in world football.

Blatter, 89, and Platini, 69, listened in silence as the Extraordinary Court of Appeal clerk in the town of Muttens, near Basel, read out a decision identical to the one handed down in 2022, which had initially cleared them.

Prosecutors had requested suspended sentences of 20 months for the pair, but charges of fraud, for which they risked five years' imprisonment, as well as disloyal management, breach of trust and forgery of documents were all dismissed.

After almost 10 years of legal proceedings, a final appeal is still possible before the Swiss Supreme Court, but only on limited



Platini (left) and Blatter. Photo: AFP

legal grounds. The prosecutors' office said in a statement it "will decide about how to further proceed".

Platini, a former France captain and manager, said he felt "from the start" that the purpose of the affair was to prevent him "from being president of FIFA".

"I know that for my enemies, it was time that was important... They kept me out for 10 years," said Platini, whose downfall cleared the way for the election in early 2016 of Gianni Infantino as FIFA boss.

The case stemmed from a delayed payment of two million Swiss francs (B66mn) FIFA made to Platini in 2011 for con-

sultancy services, based on what Blatter claimed was a "gentlemen's agreement".

However, to agree such a sum without a written record, without witnesses and without ever making provision for it in the accounts was "contrary to commercial practice" as well as to FIFA's norms, said Prosecutor Thomas Hildbrand.

At the time, Blatter was running for re-election as FIFA president and Platini had become head of European football. Platini backed Blatter in his successful bid for a fourth term in charge of FIFA.

Both men were eventually banned from football by FIFA's ethics committee.

AFP

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Sport



Man City get FA Cup semi boost > p15



The Phuket Andaman FC players and staff celebrate their dramatic escape from relegation from Thai League 3 after their late 1-0 win at FC Yala last Saturday (Mar 29). Photo: Supplied

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Late final day drama sees PAFC survive relegation

FOOTBALL

Simon Causton

Phuket Andaman FC have pulled off a remarkable, almost improbable, escape from relegation in the Thai League 3 South, clinging to their league status with a dramatic, last-gasp 1-0 victory against FC Yala last Saturday (Mar 29).

The victory punctuates a season of near-constant turmoil and raises questions about the club's long-term future: a club reborn or a stay of execution?

The club's journey to this pivotal moment has been fraught with challenges. Phuket Andaman FC travelled south for this decisive encounter against Yala under the guidance of interim coach Henry Leask, a figure who has become a recurring presence amidst the club's instability.

Leask's return to the dugout was forced by the abrupt resignation of the most recent manager, Coach M, just days before the game, further illustrating the chaotic backdrop to Phuket's season. In a statement released last Friday (Mar 28), Coach M expressed his regret at leaving the club in such a precarious situation but ultimately decided to step down.

This campaign has been defined by an unprecedented level of managerial upheaval that, incredibly, has seen four different individuals in the managerial hot seat. Earlier in the season, Leask had stepped in as an interim coach, holding the reigns for a period of five games, including three league matches and two cup ties, while the club desperately sought a replacement for the dismissed Coach Go.

Even during that initial caretaker spell, Leask faced the significant challenge of managing a fractured dressing room, contending with a rebellious faction of players who maintained a loyalty to the departed Go. This deep-seated dissent has been a persistent and corrosive force throughout the season, undermining the authority of subsequent coaches and contributing to the team's inconsistent performances.

JUBILATION

Phuket Andaman FC's management made a bold, some might say desperate, decision for this crucial final game against FC Yala. In a move that demonstrated both courage and a degree of calculated risk, they excluded several key players from the squad. This was a high-stakes gamble, given that the excluded

players included top scorer Bank, club captain Kla, his brother Keng, central defender Bass, influential midfielder Wa and fellow midfielder Not.

Despite fielding a severely depleted team, with reports indicating they travelled south with a mere 14 players, Phuket Andaman FC displayed a remarkable level of discipline and resilience. Under Leask's pragmatic guidance, they executed a game plan built on defensive solidity and tactical organisation, effectively frustrating their promotion-chasing opponents.

As the tension mounted in the final stages of the game, news filtered through from other matches, confirming that Yala City, Phuket's relegation rivals, were being held to a draw by Phatthalung.

Sensing a golden opportunity to seize their own survival, Phuket Andaman FC pushed forward with renewed purpose and their persistence and determination were rewarded in dramatic fashion.

In the dying moments of the game, they were awarded a crucial penalty. Puttipong Chanchaemsri kept his composure and coolly converted the spot-kick, sparking scenes of jubilation and relief amongst the Phuket

Andaman FC players, staff and travelling supporters.

The final whistle confirmed a 1-0 victory for Phuket Andaman FC, securing their survival in Thai League 3. This result represents a remarkable turnaround given the club's chaotic season and the tumultuous week leading up to the match.

TURNING POINT

The survival of Phuket Andaman FC is of paramount importance for the island, ensuring that it will continue to have a professional football team. The club's turbulent period under Higher Sports ownership, marked by financial instability, managerial chaos and internal strife, has hopefully reached a turning point. Club president Russ Horsley has stated that the club now has solid financial backing and is poised to move forward with ambitious plans for the future.

With the current squad's contracts now expired, the club faces a significant rebuilding process during the off-season. It is hoped that they will prioritise retaining the services of key players who have demonstrated both quality and commitment, such as Dutch-Indonesian centre-back Kai Boham and American wide player Luke Pavone. The

club also needs to secure the best of the available local talent, building a strong foundation for future success.

Crucially, Phuket Andaman FC would be wise to build any future plans around the calm and assured coaching Leask. The young Scottish coach has demonstrated a practical and pragmatic approach to the game, a style that is often essential for success at this level. Providing him with the resources and support to build a squad in his image could yield significant dividends for the club in the years to come.

The island of Phuket can now look forward to another season of professional football, a welcome prospect after a season marked by uncertainty and despair. Furthermore, there is the exciting prospect of a return to the newly redeveloped Surakul Stadium next season, which promises to enhance the matchday experience for both players and fans.

After a season of turmoil, this offers a renewed sense of optimism and the hope that Phuket Andaman FC can finally realise its potential.

Simon Causton is the host of 'A Thai Football Podcast' and writer of the 'Football Siam' blog which covers all things Thai football.