

**OMBUDSMAN HEARS SLEW OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST OFFICIALS > PAGE 2**



Photo: Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

## OFFICIALS ORDER ALL CONSTRUCTION OF NEBU HOTEL HALTED

**Natnaree Likidwatanasakun**  
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Local residents in the Pasak Soi 6 area of Cherng Talay have successfully pressured officials to review the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process of a proposed Nebu hotel project, citing concerns over transparency, environmental effects and community well-being.

Any construction at the site has been suspended pending the EIA review.

During a visit to the site on Feb 24, Phuket MP Thitikan Thiti-pruethikul, who also serves as the Committee Spokesperson for the House of Representatives Committee on Land, Natural Resources and Environment,

expressed dire concerns over how local officials approved the EIA despite the project being located in a 'Yellow Zone'.

"Yellow Zones are meant for low-density residential use," Mr Thitikan told *The Phuket News*.

"Allowing a high-rise hotel in this area is illegal. This decision not only violates zoning laws but also sets a dangerous precedent for future developments in Phuket," he said.

"If this case were Bangkok, a project on less than a rai of land wouldn't even qualify for approval. It wouldn't meet the government's own regulations," said Poonsak Chanchampi, Chairman of the House Committee.

"But in Phuket, the rules vary by local government. Some areas

allow it, some don't. Some developments move forward without public hearings or proper urban planning.

"There's no structured approach to managing rapid development, and that's why we keep seeing these problems," he added.

"The root of this issue lies in how permissions are granted. If we truly want to prevent cases like this from happening again, we need to shift the approval process to the central government for proper assessment," Mr Poonsak said.

"This would help eliminate 'conflicts of interest' [sic]," he noted.

"But when permission is given at the provincial level, we see the same problems repeatedly, decisions made without community

input, without a systematic process, and often influenced by vested interests," Mr Poonsak explained.

Mr Thitikan, who has already presented the Nebu hotel problem to Parliament, explained, "In Phuket, 'Yellow Zone' regulations typically restrict buildings to two to three stories [8-12 metres], with strict limitations on density and commercial activity.

"The approval of a seven-story hotel raises serious legal questions about the enforcement of zoning laws and the accountability of local authorities," he said, without specifically accusing any particular persons of wrongdoing.

### LOCAL FIGHT

Local residents argue that the hotel project violates multiple...

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## News



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# Nebu hotel under fire for EIA

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...zoning and environmental regulations.

Among the key concerns presented to the House of Representatives Committee on Land, Natural Resources and Environment during the site visit on Feb 24 were:

1. Height and density issues, as the proposed 23-metre, seven-story hotel sits on a small 1,200-square-metre plot in a Yellow Zone, designated for low-density residential use.

2. The hotel plans include only 20 parking spaces for 89 rooms, creating potential traffic congestion in an area already struggling with narrow roads and inadequate drainage.

3. Environmental and public health risks.

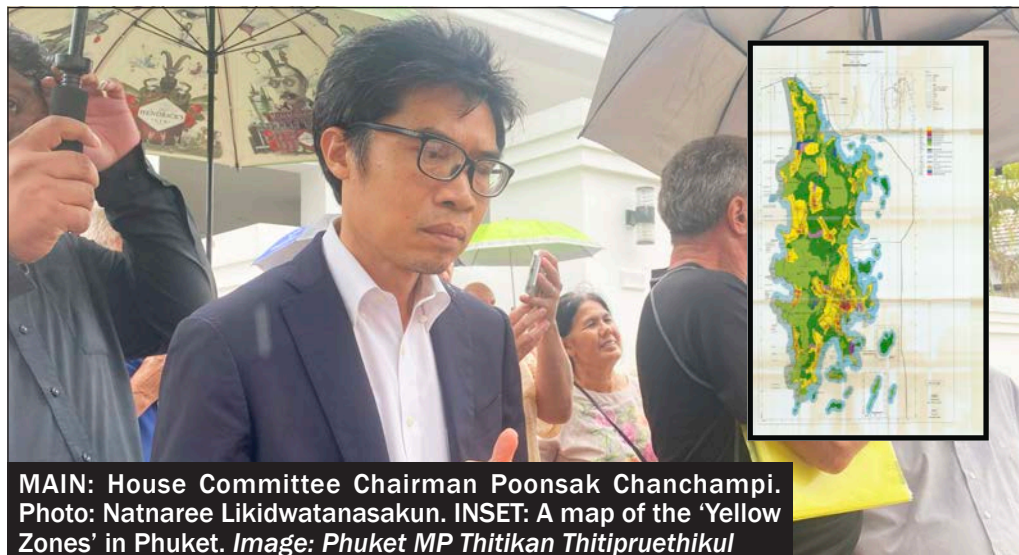
"The community fears flooding due to poor water management, noise pollution from a rooftop bar and discomfort from air compressors expelling hot air into residential areas," one resident said.

"The EIA report claims 70% public approval but has failed to produce names or addresses. Residents conducted their own survey, where 100% of respondents opposed the project," said one local resident.

"We just want a proper impact assessment," the resident added.

## MOUNTING PRESSURE

Manoch Panchalad, Chief of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor), arrived



MAIN: House Committee Chairman Poonsak Chanchampi. Photo: Natnaree Likidwatanasakun. INSET: A map of the 'Yellow Zones' in Phuket. Image: Phuket MP Thitikan Thitipruethikul

at the site to greet the house committee members, but left after about 10 minutes to attend to other matters.

He left Aphichat Deekongsiang, Director of Cherng Talay OrBorTor's Engineering Division, to answer questions about the project.

Mr Aphichat initially defended the EIA process, but later conceded to reviewing its legitimacy.

"The OrBorTor insists it is legal to build a hotel in the yellow zone, as they are already conducting on-site assessments alongside local authorities, including Phuket MNRE and the Phuket Provincial Office of Public Works and Town & Country Planning," Mr Aphichat said.

However, after a few minutes answering questions from the high-level officials, he said, "We [Cherng Talay OrBorTor] have taken the community's concerns seriously. We have held three meetings between local residents and the busi-

ness operator, leading to significant adjustments in the hotel's design, such as reducing the height, decreasing room count, and underground construction while ensuring privacy by removing balconies.

"On public infrastructure, we are actively working to improve roads and utilities, but road widening requires community cooperation through land donations," he said, marking that local residents literally had to donate land in order to make the project pass its own EIA.

"Drainage issues are also being addressed in coordination with the Highways Department," Mr Aphichat added, without commenting how the end of the street already floods each year with heavy rains.

"The local residents have pointed out the increased construction will worsen the long-term issue. However, the OrBorTor has confirmed that they will request the transfer of the

land to their authority so they can address the flooding problem by building a drainage ditch before the low season," he said.

"Moreover, the road construction currently being carried out by OrBorTor has been confirmed to be completed soon," Mr Aphichat said.

Local residents at the site on Feb 21 pointed out that gave little reprieve to them while cement trucks from OrBorTor are already blocking cars from passing.

"Imagine building a hotel and having even more trucks entering such a narrow road," one local resident said.

"Environmental and regulatory compliance remains a priority," Mr Aphichat assured.

"The EIA report has been reviewed, and I confirm that legal standards are met. Concerns about noise and air conditioning will be relayed to the developers, and regulatory mechanisms are in place to

address disturbances," he added.

"No construction permit has been issued yet. A fourth meeting on Mar 13 will give residents another chance to voice their concerns before any final decision is made.

"Cherng Talay OrBorTor confirms that no building permit will be granted until the case is fully resolved," he concluded.

## ACTION

Following the site visit on Feb 21, the House of Representatives Committee on Land, Natural Resources and Environment ordered urgent action be taken.

Officials have issued a temporary halt on construction pending EIA review, and an urgent review of the EIA process has been ordered.

The house committee along with local authorities will investigate claims that the EIA was conducted improperly and did not follow due diligence.

The committee has asked Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat to follow up on the case as the matter has been escalated to the Phuket Governor's Office, with demands for expedited inspection and a transparent resolution.

The EIA report was sent to Governor Sophon after the Nebu hotel case was presented in Parliament late last year. However, Governor Sophon has yet to recognise the case or make any public comment about it.

## BACKPEDDLE

After hearing the house committee's actions ordered, Mr Aphichat began to cover for Cherng Talay OrBorTor's role in the hotel project continuing, with even a sales office erected on site late last year.

"The OrBorTor still confirms that all procedures were followed, but if there were errors in the process, we are willing to investigate," Mr Aphichat said.

Committee Chairman Mr Poonsak made the decision simple for Mr Aphichat.

"Since they cannot redo the EIA without identifying the problem first, a new EIA will be conducted if any mistakes are found," Mr Poonsak assured.

The Nebu hotel case underscores growing public skepticism toward the EIA process and raises questions about previous questionable approvals.

The local residents affected argued that unchecked development risks long-term harm to Phuket's urban landscape, environment and tourism reputation.

"Previous incorrect EIA approvals need to be checked and canceled if it's obvious they should never have been approved in the first place," one local resident said.

"It's encouraging to see the Phuket Governor and officials taking this seriously. We just hope this isn't another empty promise," another local resident said.

# Ombudsman's office reviews slew of complaints against Phuket officials

KHANITNAN APHICHARN, Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the Ombudsman, has visited Phuket to be briefed on a slew of complaints filed against Phuket officials for their action, or lack of action, in allowing illegal acts to continue.

Ms Khanitnan was the "guest" at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Feb 24, with the meeting chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai.

Representatives from some relevant government agencies were present for the meeting.

The discussions focused on several key issues raised by the



Photo: PR Phuket

public, including:

- Allegations of an influential figure illegally occupying land and collecting tolls at Laem

- Hin-Koh Maphrao Pier, causing public hardship.

- Complaints about Phuket Provincial Police officers failing

to arrest a suspect despite an outstanding warrant from the Phuket Provincial Court.

- Concerns that Chalong Police officers did not properly mediate a dispute as requested by a complainant.

- Claims that Phuket City Municipality failed to enforce regulations on residential construction, leading to legal violations on land adjacent to villagers' homes.

- Allegations that Phuket City Municipality did not take action against a shopping mall in Muang District that had illegally built a structure.

The meeting provided a platform for affected residents to voice their concerns, with officials pledging to take appropriate action in response to the issues raised, said an official report of the meeting.

The official report gave no details of any of the cases reviewed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the national Office of the Ombudsman.

An official with whom *The Phuket News* spoke declined to provide any details of any of the cases reviewed, saying that the cases were still under investigation. *The Phuket News*



# B1bn in illegal businesses

The Phuket News

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Two Chinese nationals have been arrested in Phuket for using nominees to conceal ownership of multiple businesses, including restaurants, international schools, hotels, car rentals, condominiums and luxury villas.

The suspects' investments were valued at approximately B1 billion and officers seized B4.1 million in cash for further investigation, Pol Maj Gen Pornchai Khajornklin, Deputy Commander of Region 8 Police announced last week.

Police are also investigating an accounting firm suspected of aiding in document falsification to hide foreign ownership, Pol Maj Gen Pornchai said.

The Investigation Division of Region 8 Police was ordered to collaborate with Phuket Provincial Police in a large-scale operation to identify and apprehend foreigners violating Thai business laws, Pol Maj Gen Pornchai explained.

Officers searched target businesses such as food and beverage shops, international schools, hotels, car rentals, condominiums, housing estates and accounting offices suspected of assisting in concealing foreign business operations.

The operation resulted in multiple arrests, including two individuals with outstanding arrest warrants under the Alien Business Act B.E. 2542.

Additionally, two Chinese nationals were arrested for being in the Kingdom with an expired permit or illegal entry, while two Myanmar nationals were detained for working in violation of Thai labour laws.

In carrying out the operation, officers seized B4,108,000 in cash during the arrests and discovered two undeclared lion cubs that were found in possession without permits.

Police will further investigate the individuals involved and expand the inquiry into the illegal business network, Pol Maj Gen Pornchai assured.

Pol Maj Gen Pornchai did not identify specifically



Photo: Phuket Immigration

which businesses were involved, and did not confirm whether the two Chinese nationals arrested were involved in the operation of The Glass House Cafe and Space on Ratsada-Anusorn Rd, in Moo 2, Ratsada.

The owners/operators of The Glass House Cafe have already been caught as repeat offenders in the illegal possession of lion cubs, so far without any consequences that have been made publicly known.

Regardless, police were thanked for their action against the illegal operations, notably with Sarayuth Mallam, Vice President of Government Relations at the Phuket Tourist Associ-

ation, presenting a bouquet to Pol Maj Gen Pornchai.

## WARRANTED

Phuket Immigration led the arrest of a Chinese couple wanted on an outstanding warrant for illegally operating a business in Thailand during a raid at a luxury condominium in Kathu last Friday (Feb 27).

Immigration officers, working with the Investigation Unit of the Crime Suppression Division 3, Region 8 Crime Suppression Division, arrived at the condo at 11:30am.

Authorities located the suspects on the ground floor of the condominium. Officers identified themselves as immigration police, present-

ing their credentials and read the charges through an interpreter.

Phuket Immigration reported that an investigation revealed that Mr Bin, 43, and Ms Chen, 39, both Chinese nationals, were subject to arrest warrants (warrant numbers Chor. 175/68 and Chor. 176/68) issued by Phuket Provincial Court on Feb 23.

The couple was taken into custody and taken to Phuket City Police Station and charged with "being foreigners jointly engaged in a business that Thais are not yet ready to compete with foreigners", Phuket Immigration reported.

## CRACKDOWN CONTINUES

Phuket Immigration, in coordination with multiple other law enforcement agencies, has since carried out a large-scale inspection of 15 suspected nominee businesses, leading to the arrest of 11 people and the seizure of substantial evidence.

Phuket Immigration, led by Pol Col Kriangkrai Ariyaying, along with

officers from Phuket Provincial Police Crime Suppression Division and Phuket Tourist Police, carried out coordinated raids across the province last week.

The operation resulted in the arrest of four Chinese nationals and seven Myanmar nationals on various charges.

The four Chinese nationals were detained for offenses including overstaying visas (one by 1,317 days), entering Thailand without permission and operating businesses in sectors restricted to Thai nationals.

The seven Myanmar nationals were arrested for working without valid permits or exceeding their employment rights.

In its report of the crackdown, *Bangkok Post* cited Phuket Provincial Police Chief Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum as saying that Immigration Police, Tourist Police and local officials were pursuing five more nominee cases in Phuket involving Russian, Iranian, Australian and Chinese nationals.

## Slow progress in landslide death probe

THE INVESTIGATION into the landslide that killed 13 people and injured many in Kata August last year has stalled, as Karon Police still need to question more victims and witnesses due to the extensive damage.

At the time of press, officers had scheduled additional questioning of victims on Wednesday (Mar 5), with witnesses also set to provide further testimonies.

Pol Lt Col Ekkasak Kwanwan, Senior Inspector (Investigation) at Karon Police, who is handling the case, told *The Phuket News* that the process is ongoing, and before suspects can be called in for questioning, it is crucial to gather thorough statements from accusing witnesses.

"This case is highly sensitive, and we need to ensure that every individual's testimony aligns with the allegations," he said.

"On the day of the flood [and landslide], there were confirmed injuries, deaths and property damage. However, whether legal actions will be taken depends on the evidence



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee

and witness statements we collect," he added.

The Phuket Provincial Lawyers Council has been actively involved in the process.

Due to scheduling constraints with legal representatives, progress has been slow, but Pol Lt Col Ekkasak emphasises that questioning appointments are ongoing and coordination remains consistent.

Wednesday was set as the next key date for additional witness testimonies, investigators are working to gather all necessary information and piece together a complete picture of the case.

Once they have sufficient details from

witnesses, they will proceed with summoning the accused for questioning to ensure a thorough and fair investigation, Lt Col Ekkasak said.

Lt Col Ekkasak said officials remain committed to conducting a detailed and transparent inquiry into the landslide's impact and legal implications.

In January, a report by the Department of Mineral Resources investigation into the landslide in Kata on Aug 23 last year listed the new parking lot and nearby restroom constructed at the Big Buddha Viewpoint as factors that contributed to the cause of the deadly landslide.

Natnaree

Likidwatanasakun

## Luxury villa site caught with illegal Chinese workers

A JOINT TASK FORCE OF officials led by Thalang Police have arrested eight Chinese nationals found working illegally at a luxury villa construction site in central Phuket.

The eight workers were arrested at the site of the Ashera Villa Phase 3 project, located in Moo 9, Thepkrasattri, on Feb 24.

Starting prices for villas at the project are listed as from B32.9 million.

Joining Thalang Police for the raid were officers from Phuket Immigration, Phuket Tourist Police, Phuket Provincial Employment Office and the Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc), which serves as the political arm of the Thai military.

Officers moved in at the site after receiving a tip-off. When the officers arrived, they found more than 10 men who appeared to be Chinese, Thalang Police reported.

The workers fled when they saw the officers approach. The officers were able to arrest eight of them, with two of the workers getting away.

The eight Chinese nationals, all men, were later identified as Cao Hengfeng, 40; Zhao Jishi, 42; Gu Xingheng, 38; Xiang Longji, 38; Wang Peng, 25; Li Shichen, 39; Zhou Hong, 45; and Wang Wenan, 35.



Photo: Thalang Police

None of the eight suspects were unable to present their work permits to officers, police reported.

During questioning, the suspects admitted that they had been hired as construction workers by an employer who provided them with accommodations at i-Life Prime Thalang Village in Tambon Thepkrasattri.

They received a monthly salary ranging from B20,000 to B25,000.

Further checks revealed that the men had entered Thailand on tourist visas from Feb 5-15.

While their visas had not yet expired, they were found in violation of Thai labour laws, which prohibit foreign nationals from working without a work permit.

The eight were informed of their legal rights and taken to Thalang Police Station, where they were charged with working illegally in the country, police confirmed. *Eakkapop Thongtub*



The Phuket News

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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High: +36°  
Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT MARCH 8

High: +36°  
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN MARCH 9

High: +35°  
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

MON MARCH 10

High: +35°  
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE MARCH 11

High: +35°  
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED MARCH 12

High: +37°  
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 13

High: +36°  
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Delivery driver sees red over small accident

PATONG POLICE are investigating an assault following a road accident where a pickup truck driver physically attacked another motorist after a collision.

A viral video shared on Facebook by user Pooja Pooja shows a white covered pickup truck crashing into a grey pickup. The driver of the grey pickup then exited his vehicle, scolded the other driver and proceeded to punch him.

When the driver being attacked covered his head and bent low to avoid the punches, his assailant then lifted a knee into the man's head.

The post, which included images of the incident, criticised the violent reaction, stating, 'Accidents can happen at any time, and no one wants them to. But how can you gang up and attack someone after they already apologised?'

The poster also confirmed that the driver of the covered pickup was their younger sibling and vowed to pursue legal action.

According to reports, the driver of the covered pickup was accompanied by his girlfriend when the accident occurred.

As evidenced in the video, he immediately admitted fault and apologised, but the other driver refused to listen and allegedly launched a physical attack, striking him multiple times and causing visible injuries, including bruises.

Fearing for their safety, the girlfriend recorded the assault on video, which was later used as evidence when they filed a complaint at Patong Police Station.

The pickup truck owner condemned the violent response, stating that while accidents are unfortunate, resorting to physical aggression was unacceptable. He affirmed his intention to pursue the case legally.

Police are reviewing the footage as part of their investigation. *Eakkapop Thongtub*



Screenshot: Pooja Pooja / Facebook

## Teacher cleared in kindergarten beating

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The investigation into the case of a 5-year-old student injured at a Patong kindergarten has cleared the accused teacher of any wrongdoing.

The investigation concluded that the injuries the child suffered resulted from rough play among children.

Following the child's injury, the parents filed a police complaint, prompting an official investigation, led by Phuket Vice Governor Ronnarong Thipsiri. Provincial authorities and Patong Municipality then established a committee to ensure a "fair and thorough" examination of the case.

Vice Governor Mr Ronnarong announced the result of the investigation at Phuket City Hall on Monday (Mar 3).

Present for the announcement were Patong Police Chief Pol Col Chalermchai Hirasawat, Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee, Patong Deputy Mayors Lalita Maneesri and Sanakorn Keesin, along with teachers, the parents involved and officials from relevant agencies.

Pol Col Chalermchai said that the injuries were not inflicted by the teacher but resulted from rough play among children.

The investigation determined that a group of children hit the student multiple times with a feather duster, causing the wounds.

"Experiments conducted by child psychologists confirmed



Photo: PR Phuket

that children of that age could exert enough force to cause bruising. No evidence implicated the homeroom teacher in the incident," Pol Col Chalermchai said.

Pol Col Chalermchai assured that all enquiries were conducted following proper legal and psychological procedures, ensuring the credibility of the testimonies.

After reviewing the findings, the child's parents accepted the investigation's findings and withdrew their complaint without pursuing legal action.

Mr Ronnarong stressed the importance of clearing the teacher's name, noting that the public accusations had unfairly harmed her reputation.

He also stated that authorities would continue investigating whether negligence played a role in allowing the incident to occur.

"The committee will further discuss whether she negligently allowed the children to play unsupervised, leading to the incident, or if this constitutes neglect of duty, and determine what kind of punishment she may face," he said.

"The child involved in the incident has since returned to a normal and cheerful state," Mr Ronnarong said.

Phisuda Wirakij, the teacher at Patong Municipality Kindergarten at the centre of the accusations, said that she would use the case as a lesson to enhance safety measures moving forward.

"I felt regret for leaving the children unattended during lunch break and apologise for the incident," she said.

Similarly, Patong Deputy Mayor Ms Lalita apologised for what occurred at the school, which is operated by Patong Municipality.

"Stricter supervision measures will be implemented to prevent such occurrences," she stated.

She further explained that prioritising safety, additional CCTV cameras would be installed in the school to monitor incidents and ensure swift action when necessary.

"If something goes wrong, we can address it properly and hold those responsible accountable. I don't want parents to feel that school is not a safe place," she added.

## Monkey snatches tourist's phone, takes selfie

A MISCHIEVOUS monkey on Khao Toh Sae, also known as 'Monkey Hill', surprised a group of female tourists by snatching a phone and appearing to take a selfie, sparking amusement and debate online.

The moment was captured in a 43-second TikTok video posted by

user 'ju' with the caption 'Monkey hill attack'. The clip shows the monkey grabbing the phone from one of the tourists before holding it up as if taking a picture. A Thai man later intervened and managed to retrieve the phone, returning it to the startled tourist.

The video quickly went viral, with netizens flood-

ing the comments section with humorous reactions. Some joked that the monkey had set the image as its profile picture, while others wondered how the phone was recovered. One user quipped, "No need for a photographer – the monkey took the picture himself!"

While the incident

amused many, it also serves as a reminder for visitors to exercise caution around the playful but unpredictable monkeys that roam the popular tourist spot.

Local authorities continue to advise tourists to keep a safe distance and secure their belongings when visiting Monkey Hill.

*Eakkapop Thongtub*



Photo: Supplied



# First artists chosen for Biennale 2025

The Phuket News

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The Ministry of Culture has officially launched the first group of artists participating in the Thailand Biennale, Phuket 2025, an international contemporary art festival set to take place from November 2025 to April 2026.

The announcement was made during a press conference at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center last Friday (Feb 27), led by Prasop Riangngan, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture.

Phuket was selected as the host city for the fourth edition of the Thailand Biennale due to its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty and well-established infrastructure for international events, said an official report of the press event in Bangkok.

The festival will be held under the theme 'Eternity', exploring the sustainable relationship between humans and nature through various



Some of the first 15 artists chosen to take part in the Biennale 2025. Photos: PR Phuket

forms of contemporary art. The event aims to establish Phuket as a creative art city while boosting tourism and the local economy.

A total of 60 artists will participate in the festival, with 49 selected so far, including 15 Thai and 34 international artists.

The first group of 30 artists was introduced at the press conference. Leading the artistic direction are Arin Rungjang, the 2020 Silpakorn Artist in Visual Arts, and David Teh, alongside curators Marisa Pantharakrachadet and Hera Chan.

The exhibition will span three main zones across Phuket's districts, featuring

venues such as the Suang Luang (King's Park), the Old Tantalum Factory, Bang Wad Reservoir and Sirinat National Park. These locations will serve as platforms for artistic expression, highlighting themes of environmental consciousness and cultural heritage, said the report.

At the event in Bangkok, Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat emphasised the province's readiness to host the event, with support from government and private sectors, local businesses and artist networks.

He highlighted Phuket's reputation as a world-class tourist destination and a

UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, positioning it as an ideal host for the Biennale.

National artist Mr Arin elaborated on the concept of 'Eternal Kalpa', which seeks to create a dialogue on sustainability and the balance between human existence and the environment. The festival will include art installations, performances and exhibitions that intertwine contemporary artistic perspectives with Phuket's natural and cultural landscapes.

The Thailand Biennale, Phuket 2025, is expected to attract art enthusiasts, tourists and cultural figures from around the world. Organisers invite the public to engage with the event, fostering an exchange of artistic ideas and strengthening Thailand's position on the global cultural stage, said the report.

For more information, visit [www.thailandbiennale.org](http://www.thailandbiennale.org) or follow updates on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/thailandbiennale/](https://www.facebook.com/thailandbiennale/)

## Patong to host 'Air Sea Land 2025 Sports and Music Festival'

PHUKET IS SET TO welcome thousands of tourists as it hosts the international sports and music festival, 'Air Sea Land Phuket 2025 Sports and Music Fest'.

Organised in collaboration with the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), the event aims to boost the local economy and promote sports tourism, with an expected turnout of 15,000-20,000 visitors.

A press conference was held at Simon Cabaret Phuket last Friday (Feb 27) to announce the festival.

Key figures in attendance included Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai; Surasak Kerdjanthuek, Deputy Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand for Sports Promotion; Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, Commander of the Phuket Provincial Police; Awut Nuchet, Deputy Mayor of Patong Municipality; and Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, President of the Phuket Provincial Sports Association.

The event kicked off with an exciting performance by Simon Cabaret.

Mr Surasak explained



Photo: PR Phuket

that 'Air Sea Land Phuket 2025' will feature competitions in four major sports: Muay Thai, basketball, beach taekwondo and taekwondo. Alongside the sports action, the event will showcase 'Sports Entertainment' activities.

Music lovers can look forward to performances by renowned artists including The Toys, UrboyTJ and DJs such as 62 Bullets, Roxy June and Tong Apollo. Visitors can also enjoy a street food zone, special promotions and a vibrant festival atmosphere.

The officials present assured that Phuket is fully prepared for the festival, with security and traffic measures in place, as well as medical support for athletes and attendees.

The festival will be held at Loma Park and Jungceylon shopping mall from Mar 10-16. Entry is free.

The Phuket News

## Phuket cafe singer homeless in Nakhon Sri Thammarat

MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT and Human Security (MSDHS), Warawut Silpa-archa, has directed a team to provide assistance to a former Phuket café singer who has become homeless and is suffering from mental illness.

The Ministry's Center for Accelerated Public Welfare (CWHs) received a report from the Nakhon Sri Thammarat Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office regarding the case, reported state news agency NBT.

Of all things, the woman's mother believed her daughter had become bewitched, contributing to her current condition, the report said.

In response, a team from the MSDHS, along with local community leaders, attempted to locate the woman in Nakhon Sri Thammarat's Muang District but were unsuccessful.

The woman's mother provided key information, making it clear that her 30-year-old daughter suffers from mental illness and behavioural disabilities.

She had not received consistent medical treatment, leading to a deterioration of her condition. Additionally, she had a history of drug abuse and wandering the streets while speaking to herself.

According to the mother, the woman previously lived in Phuket with her husband and their two children.



Photo: NBT

However, her mental health issues led to the breakdown of her marriage, with her husband assuming custody of their daughter.

The mother also revealed that her daughter had undergone psychiatric treatment multiple times but refused to take medication upon returning home. This, coupled with continued drug use, caused repeated relapses.

Mr Warawut stated that the MSDHS has coordinated with local networks to facilitate the woman's psychiatric treatment.

Once she completes the necessary care, if her mother is unable to look after her, she will be provided with welfare protection at a homeless shelter – subject to her consent.

The report urged residents who spot the woman wandering to report her whereabouts to the MSDHS through the Accelerated Welfare Management Center hotline at 1300, which operates 24/7.

The Phuket News



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# Goodbye 90-year leases

## Supreme Court decision kills 'automatic' 30-year lease renewals

Jerrold Kippen

The Thai Supreme Court's recent decision over the 'automatic' renewal of a 30-year lease of a property in Phuket is poised to significantly impact the real estate market in Thailand.

The recent decision in Case No. 4655/2566 overturns decades of previous legal holdings by the Supreme Court and lower courts and would invalidate the common practice of pre-agreed long term lease renewals – effectively rendering them null and void.

The decision has important implications for developers, investors and buyers who have organised their property holdings around leasehold renewals.

The court's firm stance asserts that contractual promises for lease renewal, when made at the beginning of a lease, are: 1) unenforceable; 2) violate the Civil and Commercial Code; and 3) are void as a matter of law.

### Case Background and Legal Reasoning

The case arose in Phuket, where the Civil Court of Phuket initially ruled in favour of the lessee, upholding the lease renewal clause as an enforceable promise from the original lessor to the lessee.

The decision was consistent with past rulings by the Thai Supreme Court and the prevailing consensus in legal opinion that acknowledged renewal clauses in long-term lease agreements as enforceable personal obligations.

However, a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeal Region 8, which includes Phuket, overruled the Trial Court by declaring the renewal clause void.

Subsequently, the Thai Supreme Court upheld the appellate ruling, marking a significant departure from previous interpretations. This ruling



Photo: Gerd Altmann / Pixabay

fundamentally alters the legal landscape for long-term lease renewals in Thailand.

### Key Legal Findings of the Supreme Court Decision

1) The two primary legal conclusions from the Supreme Court's ruling are:

Pre-agreed Lease Renewals are Void: The Supreme Court found that any agreement at the inception of a lease providing for renewals beyond 30 years is void under Thai law. Specifically, it held that such arrangements circumvent Section 540 of the Thai Civil and Commercial Code, which states: "Immovable property may not be leased for more than thirty years. If a lease is made for a longer period, such period shall be reduced to thirty years. After the expiration of the lease, it may be renewed, but such renewal shall not exceed thirty years from the date of renewal."

The court ruled that attempting to contract for renewals at the start of the lease amounts to an effort to evade this legal restriction, rendering such terms legally ineffective from the outset.

2) Lease Renewal Promises are Not Enforceable Personal Obligations: In addition to striking down pre-agreed renewals, the court rejected the argument that a lessor's promise

to renew a lease could be enforced as a personal obligation. It held that the promise to extend a lease beyond 30 years does not create an enforceable right for the lessee at the time of renewal.

Instead, the court deemed such agreements void from the outset, meaning that even if the parties agreed to a renewal in their initial lease contract, the lessee has no legal recourse to enforce it when the initial lease term expires.

### What does 'Void from the Outset' mean?

The ruling that pre-agreed renewal clauses are "void from the outset" has substantial practical implications. Because the renewal provisions, whether registered at the Land Department or not, are considered invalid from the start, any prepaid lease renewal term rental amounts pose a legal dilemma:

**For the lessee:** Since the renewal is void, the lessee no longer has the enforceable right to the extended lease for the period they thought they had secured, even if they have already paid for it.

**For the lessor:** The court ruling invalidates the renewal clause, raising questions about the lessor's rights regarding any rental payments for the renewal term. This creates potential dis-

putes over whether and how such funds should be returned, along with more significant issues, such as tax and accounting complications and penalties.

**For both:** Any side agreement to renew the lease, regardless of whether they specify the rental amount for the renewal term, does not resolve this issue and is likely void as well.

### Implications for Real Estate Developers and Investors

This ruling represents a seismic shift in Thailand's real estate market, particularly for developers who have traditionally marketed leasehold structures based on 30-year leases with multiple pre-agreed renewal options. The decision raises urgent concerns for several key stakeholders:

**Developers:** Numerous large-scale real estate projects, especially in resort areas such as Phuket and Pattaya, have been sold to foreign buyers through long-term lease agreements that included promises of renewals. These developers now need to reassess their sales models and legal frameworks to ensure they comply with Thai law.

**Existing Leaseholders:** Those who have already purchased properties under leasehold arrangements with pre-agreed renewals may discover that their renewal rights are unenforceable. This situation could lead to legal disputes and substantial financial losses for foreign investors who thought they had secured multi-decade leaseholds.

**Prospective Buyers:** Anyone thinking about investing in a long-term leasehold in Thailand should now be aware that any previously agreed renewal terms are likely to be void. Due diligence is more important than ever before.

### Conclusion: A Watershed Moment for Thai Real Estate

The Supreme Court's decision in Case No. 4655/2566 is a game-changer for the Thai property market, significantly altering the legal landscape for leasehold properties. It is important to remember that Thailand is a civil law country, and Supreme Court rulings do not become law themselves, as they do in common law countries like the United States. However, Thai Supreme Court rulings have a significant persuasive effect on lower courts, and we expect lower courts throughout Thailand to now follow this ruling.

Thus, developers, investors and buyers must now adapt to a new reality in which pre-agreed lease renewals may be unenforceable and the only legally valid lease renewal must be negotiated at the end of the initial lease term. This new reality does not mean that it is not possible to structure long-term leases that are secure and comply with this recent Supreme Court ruling and applicable Thai laws and regulations. However, all stakeholders must be open to revising such leasehold structures and past practices.

In any event, this recent ruling serves as a stark warning to those relying on long-term leasehold contractual arrangements that do not reflect the legal reality they purport to embody. In the future, all market participants must adjust their strategies to align with this definitive interpretation of Thai property law, ensuring compliance and mitigating risks in an even more complex legal environment for leasehold investments.

*DUENSING KIPPEN is an international law firm specializing in business transactions and dispute resolution with offices in Bangkok and Phuket, Thailand, as well as affiliated offices worldwide. Visit them at: [duensingkippen.com](http://duensingkippen.com)*

## Cabinet approves easing of work permit collection rules

THE CABINET HAS approved, in principle, a draft ministerial regulation aimed at streamlining the process for foreign workers to obtain work permits in Thailand.

The proposed amendment seeks to revise the existing 2020 regulation, which currently requires foreign workers to collect their work permits in person from the Department of Employment.

Under the new regulation, foreign workers will have the option to authorise a representative to collect their permit on their behalf, receive it by mail, or access it online, explained an official report of the impending change.

The change is expected to reduce travel costs and administrative burdens for both foreign employees and their employers.

Currently, foreign workers



Photo: PRD

must obtain a work permit before beginning employment in Thailand.

While applications can be submitted by the worker or their employer, collection of the permit itself has been restricted to the foreigner collecting the work permit in person, creating logistical challenges and additional expenses for businesses and workers alike, explained the report.

Employers have raised concerns about lost productivity when employees must travel to government

offices to retrieve their documents. The Ministry of Labour proposed the amendment to address the issue and provide greater flexibility, the report added.

The new process – when draft ministerial regulation is ratified – will apply to all foreign workers, including those employed in industries such as film production and music festivals.

By allowing alternative collection methods, the

government aims to simplify administrative procedures, enhance efficiency, and support businesses by reducing operational disruptions, the report said.

The Department of Employment will establish clear guidelines for implementing these changes once the regulation is finalised, the report concluded.

*The Phuket News*



# Uyghurs deported to China

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Thailand has deported 40 Uyghur detainees who had been in the country for nearly 11 years after receiving assurances from China that they would be looked after.

A Thai delegation, including Chatchai Bangchud, secretary-general of the National Security Council (NSC), and Pol Gen Kraiboon Suadsong, a deputy national police chief, travelled with the Uyghurs to Xinjiang in China on Feb 27.

Mr Chatchai reported that, after being reunited with their families, some of the Uyghurs who spoke Thai expressed gratitude for the Thai government's efforts on their behalf over the past 10 years.

The agreement to repatriate the group was reached during the prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra's recent visit to China on the occasion of the Thailand-China 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

Before Thailand decided to send the Uyghurs back to



The Chinese Embassy in Thailand released an image that it said showed a Uyghur man being reunited with his family on his arrival in Xinjiang on Feb 27. Photo: Chinese Embassy Bangkok

China, the Chinese government had submitted a formal letter guaranteeing their safety, which is a legally binding agreement.

China's recognition of the Uyghur ethnic minority was also demonstrated in celebrations of Chinese New Year at Yaowarat when a performance which featured Uyghur's identity and culture was conducted by the Chinese government, he said.

Before their release, video clips filmed by their families in their hometowns were shown to them to give them an idea of how vastly improved their hometowns have become since they left, he said.

However, the move has touched off a storm of criticism from human rights activists, with Phil Robertson, the Bangkok-based director of Asia Human Rights and Labour Advocates, claiming the Thai government "has finally done the unthinkable."

He said Thailand should resign its seat on the UN Human Rights Council "to show responsibility for its outrageous and unacceptable action".

Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said: "This is a clear violation of the principle of non-refoulement and the Royal Thai

Government's obligations under international law."

Human Rights Watch criticised Thai authorities for having deported the men despite making public assurances earlier that they would not do so.

"Thailand's transfer of Uyghur detainees to China constitutes a blatant violation of Thailand's obligations under domestic and international laws," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "The men now face a high risk of torture, enforced disappearance, and long-term imprisonment in China."

On Monday (Mar 3) the Department of Corrections (DoC) dismissed claims by an opposition MP that Uyghurs detained in Klongprem Prison had sent letters opposing deportation to China.

The DoC said information about three letters – allegedly written by the detained Uyghurs and a relative that was unveiled on Feb 28 by Fair Party MP Kannavee Suebsang – was fabricated and the prison stamps on the letters were also found to be fake.

## B50mn casino entry requirement scrapped

## BANGKOK

THE ENTERTAINMENT Complex Bill has been amended, removing the requirement that Thais must show they have at least B50 million in a fixed deposit before being allowed into the planned casino-entertainment complex.

It has been replaced by the need to have filed three-years of income tax returns, while the casino entrance fee remains at B5,000.

The requirement is in Section 65 of the draft Entertainment Complex Bill, which has been under scrutiny by the Council of State, the government's legal advisory body.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Pichai Chunhavajira said the draft had now been reviewed by the council and revisions proposed to meet its objectives, including listening to feedback from the public.

The revised draft legislation was signed by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anutin



Deputy Finance Minister Julapun Amornvivat. Photo: Bangkok Post

Charnvirakul on Feb 28 and will now be submitted to the Cabinet for review.

"The Ministry has checked the data and found there are only 10,000 Thai accounts with at least B50mn. So, the former requirement would push people to gamble elsewhere, which could be illegal," Deputy Finance Minister Julapun Amornvivat said on Monday (Mar 3). "This amendment has been agreed on by the ministry and the Council of State."

He said the draft bill would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval as soon as possible, adding he expected this would be during the current parliamentary session.

Bangkok Post

## Gulf of Thailand canal project push gains new momentum

## BANGKOK

THE THAI CANAL ASSOCIATION for Study and Development wants a national committee to study the feasibility of connecting the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea via the proposed 9A Canal Route.

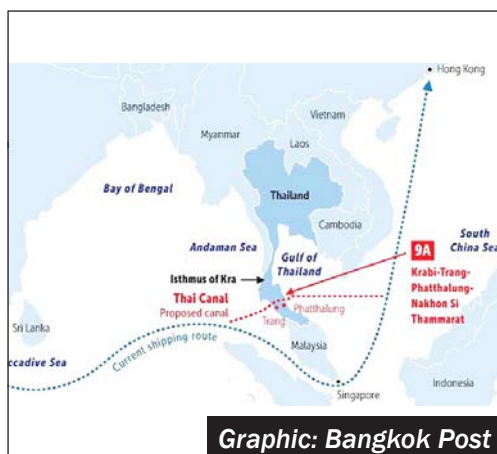
The project, if approved, could create up to a million new jobs, its advocates say.

Led by its president, Gen Pongthep Thetprateep, the association submitted a petition to Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra during the government's mobile meeting at the Thale Noi Non-Hunting Area in Khuan Khanun district, Phatthalung, on Feb 17.

Narong Soomthong, chairman of the 9A Canal Route Feasibility Study Committee, said the national study committee was proposed to the House after the canal's feasibility study passed the Senate. However, due to an insufficient House quorum, discussions on forming the 49-member committee were postponed.

"The Thai Canal Association decided to submit the petition because of its confidence in the government's ability to manage the project," Mr Narong said. The petition calls for the creation of a national committee to further study the feasibility of the 9A Canal Route.

Experts from various fields, including environmental and biodiversity specialists, as well as cultural impact analysts, will be included. The 9A Canal Route, also known



Graphic: Bangkok Post

as the Thai Canal project, would be 300-400 metres wide and 15-18 metres deep.

The 135-kilometre canal would extend from Ao Luek Port in Krabi on the Andaman coast, passing through Trang, Phatthalung, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and ending in Songkhla's Ranot district at Baan Tha Bon on the Gulf of Thailand.

Mr Narong said the canal would help Thailand navigate economic challenges, particularly for the financially vulnerable, by ensuring the broad distribution of its benefits.

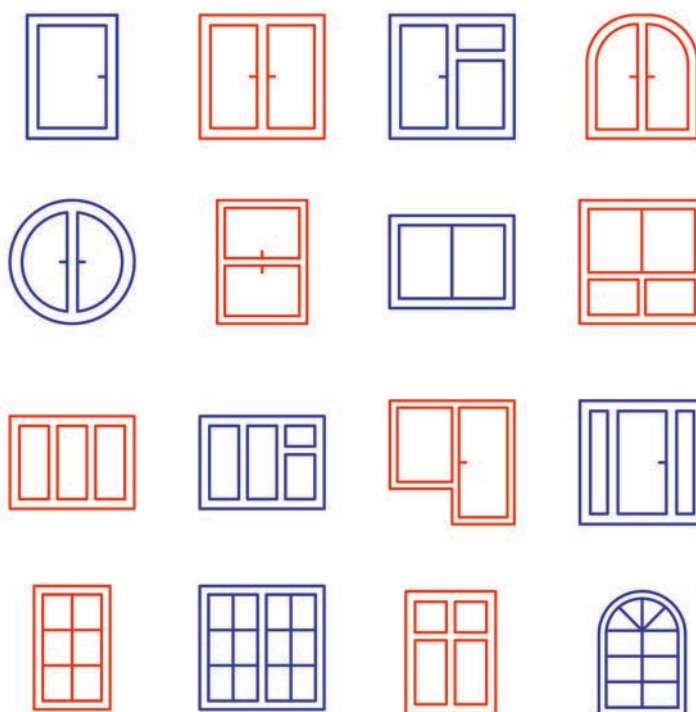
If completed, the canal could handle at least 300 billion tonnes of logistics vessels annually and create between 500,000 and 1 million new jobs, he said.

"It will also provide lifelong compensation to locals in the five provinces affected by its construction," Mr Narong added.

Bangkok Post



## Safe, Secure, Soundproof Windows and Doors



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The Monkey fails to find the right balance between comedy and horror. *Photo: IMDb*

Mixing comedy and horror together is always a risky venture for a filmmaker. Get it right and you end up with a classic movie like *Scary Movie* or *Werewolves Within*. Get it wrong and you get a film that is dangerously likely to pick up a Razzie or two.

Directed and written by Osgood Perkins (*Longlegs*), while based on a short story by the legendary Stephen King, *The Monkey* tells the story of what happens when twins Hal and Bill (both played by Christian Convery (*Cocaine*

Since his disappearance, playing with his belongings are the only connection that the twins have to their father and while most of the games they play are innocent the wind-up monkey seems to come with some danger. Whenever he is wound up and plays his drums someone dies – including the twins' babysitter Annie (*Danica Dreyer – Silk Road 2*).

Move forward 25 years and Hal (Theo James – *Divergent*) is still haunted by the monkey. He has spoken to Bill (also played by Theo James) for years but when unexpected deaths begin again Hal realises that perhaps it is time to say goodbye to his son, Petey (Colin O'Brien – *Wonka*), and disappear in a bid to protect him from the curse. When his Aunt Ida (Sarah Levy – *Schitt's Creek*) is killed, though, he decides to take Petey for one last road trip... a foolish decision that soon puts their lives on the line.

With the horror side of the film not really working you would hope that perhaps the comedy element of *The Monkey* would work a little better, but

*David Griffiths has been working as a film journalist for over 25 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. He currently hosts a film podcast called The Popcorn Conspiracy. He is also a Rotten Tomatoes accredited reviewer and is an alternate judge for the Golden Globes Awards. You can follow him at Facebook: SubcultureEntertainmentAus*



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Your body will thank you for making sleep a priority. Photo: Supplied

## WELLTHWISE

Libby Heath

**A**ah, sleep. It is one of my favourite things to do. If sleep were an Olympic sport, I would have medals. I have been training for decades. It is the most vital of all the pillars of health. When restful sleep eludes you, every system suffers. Sleep is when your body restores itself, processes emotions, and strengthens memory.

I muse over the phrase, “slept like a baby.” Does that mean that you woke up crying multiple times? Like many other wellness behaviours, good sleep comes from knowledge and the consistent practice of small actions. Productive sleep comes from knowing your chronotype, employing simple, but not always easy habits, and lastly, prioritising sleep.

A chronotype is your body’s natural inclination to sleep, wake and be active at certain times. It is influenced by genetics, age and hormones. The concept of sleep chronotypes was first introduced by Dr Michael Breus in his book ‘The Power of When’. Knowing your chronotype can help you optimise productivity, improve sleep quality and maintain overall well-being.

There are four main chronotypes, each represented by the animal that mirrors its sleep patterns:

**Bear** (The Most Common): Bears follow the sun, with energy peaking in the morning and dipping after lunch. Their best work time is from late morning to early afternoon. To maximise productivity, prioritise important tasks before 2pm.

**Lion** (Early Riser): Lions are early risers with high energy in the morning but tend to slow down in the evening. Their optimal work time is in the early morning, between 5 and 10am. Utilise these early hours for deep work and take it easy in the evening.

**Wolf** (Night Owl): Wolves struggle with mornings but excel in the evening. Their most productive period is from late afternoon to night. If possible, adjust your schedule to match these energy peaks for better efficiency.

**Dolphin** (Light Sleeper): Dolphins have irregular sleep patterns and often experience insomnia. Their best work time falls between mid-morning and early afternoon. Developing a consistent sleep routine can help improve overall productivity.

Which one are you? If you don’t recognise yourself, there are free quizzes available online, many offering detailed insights into your chronotype. Work with your chronotype when possible. But if life demands a shift, gradual, consistent changes can help you adapt.

## TIPS

Whether you want to shift your chronotype or simply want to improve the quality of your sleep, the following tips may help:

- Wake up at the same time every day, including weekends, to regulate sleep pressure. Sleep pressure is the body’s natural urge to sleep and is primarily caused by the accumulation of a brain chemical called adenosine. The more active you are – mentally or physically – the more adenosine builds up in your brain throughout the day. During sleep, adenosine gets cleared away, alleviating sleep pressure and allowing you to wake up feeling refreshed. For some people, naps interfere with sleep pressure build up and cause a premature reset, thus delaying the natural bedtime.

- Everyone’s sleep needs are different. In a perfect world, sleep pressure matches sleep opportunity, the time available to sleep. Work backwards from a fixed wakeup time and experiment with different bedtimes until you determine the best match. Not everyone requires the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep, some need more, some need less. Honour your inner voice that signals your “enough” rather than suffer from sleep-need anxiety because your tracker keeps sending you nasty messages.

- Limit caffeine. Caffeine reduces sleep pressure by blocking adenosine and delays the feeling of sleepiness, making it harder to fall asleep, even if you feel tired. It disrupts deep sleep and shortens total sleep time. Even after a full night’s sleep, you may wake up feeling poorly rested, if caffeine is still in your system; the adenosine didn’t get cleared out. The half-life of caffeine is about 5 to 7 hours for most people. This means: After 5 hours, 50% of the caffeine is still in your system. After 10 hours, about 25% remains. It can take 12-14 hours for caffeine to fully clear from your body. That means no caffeine for most people after 2pm; for those sensitive to it, stop at noon.

- Expose yourself to morning sunlight soon after waking up. Go outside and look safely at the sky for 15-30 minutes to raise energy boosting cortisol levels and to reset your circadian rhythm. Repeat the same behaviour in the evening as the sun sets. The changing light triggers the production of the sleep invoking hormone melatonin. Keep the interior lights dim, 1-2 hours before bed. Avoid bright lights and blue screens close to bedtime.

• Create a supportive sleep environment. A relaxing pre-sleep routine, a cool, dark and quiet bedroom and comfortable bedding set the stage for quality sleep.

If you wake up during the night, do not look at the clock, especially if you use your phone as your clock. The light alone is a stimulus, and the mind automatically starts calculating how much or how little time you have until wakeup, both of which can be stress provoking. If possible, put your phone out of reach.

Set two alarms, if that gives you confidence that you will not accidentally oversleep. If falling back to sleep seems impossible, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you are sleepy again. Otherwise, the bed becomes a battlefield rather than a place of repose.

- Lastly, make sleep a priority. Once you understand your sleep needs and have found your optimal schedule, stick with it, without apology. Your body will thank you.

Libby Heath shares her insights and advice through her column ‘Wellthwise’ here in The Phuket News. Please note that if you have a condition that requires medical treatment, consult your doctor. Contact Libby at: BeWellthwise@gmail.com

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POP QUIZ

1. The Singapore national anthem is on which banknote?

2. Can hippos swim?

3. The four 'Little Women' of the classic novel of the same name are Beth, Jo, Amy and who?

4. In which year was the machine gun invented?

5. How many 'Ivy League' colleges are there?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Driven transport

5. Jewish teacher

10. Kind of instrument

14. "By yesterday!"

15. Betelgeuse's constellation

16. "Cogito, \_\_\_ sum"

17. Rarely

20. Back

21. Outdo

22. Annexes

25. Dates

26. Chop (off)

29. Piques

31. Can't stand

35. "The \_\_\_ Daba Honeymoon"

36. Andrea Doria's domain

38. Arabic for "commander"

39. Fab Four film

43. Otherwise

44. Character

45. Poetic meadow

46. Mideast capital

49. Goose speech

50. Time zone

51. Froth

53. Big laugh

55. Astronomer

58. Choker

62. Destination of the disgruntled?

65. Dirty coat

66. Sea gear

67. Ball field covering

68. Barley beards

69. 1980's-90's ring champ

70. Cut down

Down

1. Golden Triangle country

2. "\_\_\_ She Lovely?"

3. Disabling spray

4. "La Bohème," e.g.

5. Howard of "Happy Days"

6. Victorian, for one

7. Food collectors?

8. Dense mass

9. Accustomed

10. Learn again

11. "Aeneid" figure

12. These may be inflated

13. Family head

18. Deep blue

19. Old weapon

23. Attracted

24. Taste, e.g.

26. Cake part

27. Ancient editorial marks

28. Buddy-buddy

30. Pole position?

32. "South Pacific" hero

33. Trig functions

34. Foot the bill

37. Dislike intensely

40. Flyers

41. Like old recordings

42. Obliquely

47. Slay

48. Most healthy

52. Compassion

54. Licks

55. Cultivate

56. Long, long time (var.)

57. Sonata, e.g.

59. Daunting exam

60. "Buona \_\_\_" (Italian greeting)

61. Glimpse

62. Fed. construction overseer

63. Blood group system

64. Gabriel, for one

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) \$61,000; 2) No; 3) Meg; 4) 1884; 5) Eight

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

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

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

CLUB	STEWY	KITE
AERY	MACAE	IRON
GONE	WITH	THE
WIND		
ENS	ELATE	DISKS
TIER	RUGS	
MISERY	ELSE	LAP
OCTAD	ANO	LIRA
THE	SOUND	MUSIC
TORE	GNUS	ECLAT
ORE	FLOE	STRESS
DOIT	CERE	
MEDIC	AIOLI	BRA
ACHRIST	MASCAROL	
SHAG	PEATY	NASA
SOLE	ADMIN	YEAR

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

tonne of recycled paper saves about 17 trees.

92

days is how long the average person will spend on the toilet in their lifetime.

2,617

times a day is how often the average smartphone user touches their phone.

30,000

degrees Celcius is the temperature of the air immediately surrounding a bolt of lightning – that's 5 times hotter than the surface of the Sun.

305 trillion

US dollars is the equivalent of how much people all around the world owe. There is only the equivalent of US\$2.37trn in circulation.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Teeing off as the sun starts to set. Photo by Gus Chesterton

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

This week in history

Mar 7, 1814  
Emperor Napoleon I of France wins the Battle of Craonne.

Mar 8, 1910  
French aviator Raymonde de Laroche becomes the first woman to receive a pilot's license.

Mar 9, 1933  
Great Depression: President Franklin D. Roosevelt submits

the Emergency Banking Act to Congress, the first of his New Deal policies.

Mar 10, 1629  
Charles I dissolves the Parliament of England, beginning the 11-year period known as the Personal Rule.

March 11, 2011  
A 9.0 magnitude earthquake strikes 130km east of Sendai, Japan, triggering a tsunami killing thousands of people,

and triggering the second largest nuclear accident in history.

Mar 12, 1913  
The future capital of Australia is officially named Canberra.

Mar 13, 1639  
Harvard College is named after clergyman John Harvard.

Source: Wikipedia

Sendai Tsunami.

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**FRI**
**7**
**MAR**



## The Society Blood Drive

On 7 March 2025, from 10.00 to 15.00  
@ The Society, Phuket

### Blood Drive at The Society / Sansiri Phuket

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### Grow Boating Evening - March 2025

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Isola restaurant at the Royal Phuket Marina from 5pm. There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by Isola Restaurant for all attendees and as always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome. Find us at facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket

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### International Women's Day Lunch

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**SAT**
**8**
**MAR**



### Special Cheese Night

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**SUN**
**9**
**MAR**



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**MON**
**10**
**MAR**



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**WED**
**12**
**MAR**



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**FRI**
**14**
**MAR**



### Phuket Business Networking - March 2025

Make sure to bring lots of business cards, as getting to know each other is what PBN is all about. A small entry fee, THB 500 per person, that includes the first 3 drinks and a light buffet. Location - Oasis Bar, Koh Kaew, starting 5pm. Register your attendance here - facebook.com/phuketbusinessnetworking or call Jason - 086 479 7471.

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## PFAM - FEBRUARY COMMUNITY CONNECT

This month's PFAM Community Connect held at Gill 'n Brew on Thursday, February 26, brought together a small but enthusiastic group in a warm and inclusive space. Guests shared ideas on how the event could evolve, reinforcing its role as a safe place for authentic connections. Many expressed how valuable it was, especially for those who feel lonely, marginalized or come from countries where LGBTQIA+ connection is difficult. While the gathering was intimate, its impact was undeniable. Community Connect is more than just a social event – it's a growing movement providing a lifeline for those seeking belonging. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined and contributed. We look forward to seeing this space continue to grow at the next PFAM Community Connect! For more details on PFAM – [pfaminternational.com](http://pfaminternational.com) or connect with K. Oh or Josh on 099-9989274.



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# Oliviera relishes visit Marquez wins Thai MotoGP

## MMA

Continued from page 16

...excitement to delve into Muay Thai, the striking art that has long been a pillar of combat sports in Thailand. The chance to work with Muay Thai legends, such as the renowned Lerdsila Chumpairtour, was an opportunity Oliveira relished.

He said he is already looking forward to returning to Thailand, whether for his fight camp at Bangtao Muay Thai and MMA gym or for further training after his next fight. His aim is to enhance his striking game and further refine his champion mentality.

Oliveira's determination to evolve and grow as a fighter is evident in his approach to training. He remains laser-focused on improving, with a mindset rooted in self-discipline and relentless pursuit of progress which is "to be better than the Charles that was yesterday," he says, emphasising that growth is a daily effort.

His approach and champion mentality is rooted in constant learning,



Photo: Catherine Ly

"his mentality is always the same... everything you can learn, during training, he is definitely learning something..." or rewatching his fights to identify areas for improvement. He understands that success isn't just about winning fights but also about embracing the journey and learning from every experience.

For Oliveira, the belt signifies more than just recognition; it is a testament to the years of hard work, perseverance, and the refusal to give up. His mindset is simple yet powerful: there is no going backward. There is only one direction: forward.

Whether he is inside the gym or preparing for the biggest fight of his career, Charles Oliveira remains committed to the path of continuous self-improvement, focused on the one goal that matters most: reclaiming his championship status.

## MOTO GP

AFP

Six-time world champion Marc Marquez won the season-opening Thai MotoGP last Sunday (Mar 2) to complete a dominant debut weekend at his new factory Ducati team, having also romped to Saturday's sprint.

The Spanish great took the 26-lap grand prix by 1.732 seconds for his 63<sup>rd</sup> MotoGP victory from younger brother Alex Marquez, who is still seeking a first chequered flag, with Francesco Bagnaia third.

It completed a perfect weekend for Marc Marquez, who took pole position, the sprint victory and the grand prix win for a maximum 37 points to open the 22-leg 2025 campaign.

He led from pole in stifling heat at Buriram and opened a comfortable 1.5 second lead over his younger brother by lap seven, when he suddenly slowed on turn three to lose the lead.

Whatever the problem was, it was short-lived, as Marc tucked into second spot and put relentless pressure on Alex as the brothers tussled for the lead, with Bagnaia lurking less than a second adrift in third.

Alex Marquez was made to work hard to hold the lead on his Gresini Ducati, and with four laps to go, Marc made his move, diving underneath at turn 12 and then disappearing off into the distance.



Marc Marquez (left) leads the field as the 2025 MotoGP season gets underway at the Buriram International Circuit on Mar 2. Photo: AFP

Franco Morbidelli was fourth and Japanese rookie Ai Ogura fifth on his MotoGP debut, while Thai rider Somkiat Chantra, also making his debut in the sport's highest class, finished in 19<sup>th</sup> place after starting in 21<sup>st</sup> on the grid.

Marquez senior had been fast all week, going quickest in opening practice on Friday before being pipped by brother Alex in the afternoon session.

Marc Marquez enjoyed a strong pre-season with the factory Ducati, having joined from Honda, and is strongly fancied to win a first world crown since 2019.

Marquez and Bagnaia have been hailed as a factory Ducati dream team but some observers have cautioned that the high-octane mix of two fast

high-profile racers could prove too combustible.

"I gave my all," said Bagnaia. "But Marc, he was playing with us all day. So maximum ambition was to finish in P2 but it we finished in P3."

The start of the new MotoGP season has been overshadowed by the absence of world champion Jorge Martin.

The Spaniard suffered fractures to his right hand and left foot in a horror crash during pre-season testing in Malaysia.

Then his Aprilia team said this week that Martin suffered another mishap in training and had to have more surgery.

Aprilia said Martin will also miss the next race, in Argentina in mid-March, with no time frame put on his return.

## Samui Open Beach Volleyball competition dates confirmed

### BEACH VOLLEYBALL

ORGANISERS HAVE confirmed the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Samui Open Beach Volleyball Tournament will be held on Koh Samui at the Samui Resotel Beach Resort on Chaweng Beach between Mar 21-23.

Supported by the Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) in conjunction with their 'Amazing Thailand' campaign, the international tournament promises to once again be a thrilling sporting occasion and a big boost for sports tourism in southern Thailand.

The now fully registered tournament will see 88 teams with 130 athletes and 25 countries represented from Europe, North America, South America, Oceania, Australia and Asia. 80% of the athletes



Photo: Supplied

are from overseas and 20% are Thai and Foreign National. Attendance is free.

B100,000 in prize money will be awarded to tournament winners along with trophies, medals, sponsor vouchers, volleyball gear and apparel. The beach volleyball event is partnering with 'HUB Beach Volleyball' camp from Australia, offering a three-day training camp prior to the event.

The international event, the biggest event of its type

to date, is presented by TAT, organised by Biggs Island Productions (BIP), hosted by Samui Resotel Beach Resort and supported by Koh Samui Municipality (Tessaban).

"We are proud to promote beach volleyball in South East Asia and on Koh Samui and to hold this annual event on our beautiful island," TAT Director Nittharat Vanitcharoen said on Feb 28.

The Phuket News

## Lydia Ko adds 'Asia's Major' to trophy haul with Singapore stroll

### GOLF

WORLD NUMBER THREE LYDIA KO strode to a commanding four-shot victory over Thailand's Jeeno Thitikul and Japan's Ayaka Furue to lift the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore last Sunday (Mar 2).

The Olympic champion's victory was her first in 11 appearances at the championship on the Tanjong Course at Sentosa Golf Club, where her previous best was second in 2015.

Ko, a three-time major winner, started the final round with a one-shot lead over a tightly packed field.

She extended her advantage quickly with three successive birdies from the sixth hole and hardly looked back.

The New Zealander did drop a shot on the 11<sup>th</sup> but recovered quickly with two birdies on 13 and 15.

Another bogey on 17 did little to damage her title bid and a par on the 18th was more than enough for the Hall of Famer to clinch her 23<sup>rd</sup> LPGA win with a winning total of 13-under-par 275.

### 'NOT REAL'

"I dreamt last night that I won but then I woke up, and I was like, it's not real yet," said Ko.

"So, I just wanted to focus on my game as it was a pretty tight leaderboard.

"I felt a lot better coming into this event than a few weeks ago.



Lydia Ko poses with the winner's trophy after winning the HSBC Women's Championship golf tournament at Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore on Mar 2. Photo: AFP

"I didn't know if I would win. But to win here in Singapore and get all the love, not only this year but for the years that I've come, it means a lot.

"It's also exciting to add 'Asia's Major' to my major collection," added Ko.

The consistent Jeeno enjoyed a second successive top-three finish to open her 2025 campaign, and her 10<sup>th</sup> top-10 in a row on the LPGA Tour, after coming third in Thailand last week.

"I really want to keep it (going) because the more really consistent that you are, it's giving you a good chance every week," said the 22-year-old Thai.

Furue signed off with a 68 for her best result in her last four LPGA starts.

"I'm very happy with this outcome because this year, I'm not playing well until this tournament. So I'm very happy with that," said the 24-year-old Japanese. AFP



# United dumped out of FA Cup

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester United's dismal season hit a new low as the FA Cup holders crashed out after a 4-3 penalty shoot-out defeat against Fulham in the fifth round last Sunday (Mar 2).

Ruben Amorim's side trailed to Calvin Bassey's first-half opener at Old Trafford before Bruno Fernandes equalised to force a 1-1 draw after extra time.

Fulham keeper Bernd Leno was the hero in the shoot-out as he saved from Victor Lindelof and Joshua Zirkzee, with the visitors converting all four of their kicks.

Booted off at half-time, it was another wretched result for United in a season that sees them languishing in 14<sup>th</sup> place in the Premier League.

United's neighbours City survived a scare on Saturday (Mar 1) as they overcame giant killers Plymouth 3-1, despite falling behind to Maksym Talovierov's goal in the 38<sup>th</sup> minute.

Plymouth had shocked Premier League leaders Liverpool in the previous round but a Nico O'Reilly brace and a Kevin De Bruyne strike settled the game in City's favour.

"Big compliments to Plymouth for making our job so difficult. They were incredibly organised, but we played a good game," City manager Pep Guardiola said afterwards.



Manchester United's Joshua Zirkzee reacts after missing his penalty against Fulham. Photo: AFP

Elsewhere, Crystal Palace striker Jean Philippe-Mateta was hospitalised in the Eagles' 3-1 win over Millwall.

Millwall goalkeeper Liam Roberts was sent off just eight minutes in after catching Mateta's head with his boot as he raced out of the penalty area to clear the ball.

"Thank you for all your kind messages. I'm doing well. I hope to be back very soon. And stronger than ever. Well done guys for a great job today," Mateta posted on Instagram.

Palace chairman Steve Parish described as the "most reckless challenge" he had ever seen.

The home side made use of the man advantage to book their place in the quarter-finals with a Japhet Tanganga own goal and further strikes from Daniel Munoz and Eddie Nke-

tiah securing the win.

Bournemouth advanced to the last eight for only the third time in their history with a 5-4 penalty shoot-out win over Wolves after their 1-1 draw at the Vitality Stadium, while Nottingham Forest also triumphed 5-4 on penalties against Ipswich after their game similarly finished 1-1.

Brighton managed to defeat Newcastle United at St James' Park in extra-time thanks to Danny Welbeck's goal after both teams had a player dismissed in normal time.

The only non-Premier League side left in the competition is Preston North End who beat Burnley 3-0 at Deepdale to make the quarter-finals for the first time since 1966, ending their opponent's 23-game unbeaten run in the process.

# New rule aims to combat goalkeeper time-wasting

## FOOTBALL

GOALKEEPERS WHO hold on to the ball beyond eight seconds will be punished by conceding a corner from next season after a rule change by football's lawmakers the International Football Association Board (IFAB).

The current rule states that goalkeepers are supposed to be sanctioned with an indirect free-kick if they hold on to the ball with their hands for more than six seconds. However, the offence, introduced back in 1997 to minimise time-wasting, is rarely penalised.

A trial allowing keepers to hold on for eight seconds has been active in a number of competitions this season, with the final five seconds counted down by the referee's hand.

"The amendment means that if a goalkeeper holds the ball for longer than eight seconds (with the referee using a visual five-second countdown), the referee will award a corner kick to the opposing team (rather than the current indirect free kick



Limited time imposed for 'keepers. Photo: AFP

for more than six seconds)," IFAB said in a statement after its 139<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, hosted by the Irish FA in Belfast last Saturday (Mar 1).

"After trials have shown a major positive impact where goalkeepers have been holding onto the ball for too long, IFAB has unanimously decided to amend Law 12.2," it added.

IFAB also supported FIFA's plan for referees to wear cameras during next year's World Cup as part of the live match transmission.

AFP

# Lobsters battle hard but fail to defeat

## FOOTBALL

PHUKET ANDAMAN FC (PAFC) fell to a 2-0 defeat against league leaders Songkhla FC last Sunday (Mar 2), a result that brings a sobering end to Coach M's brief honeymoon period.

Despite a spirited performance and a much-changed lineup, the Lobsters were ultimately undone by the clinical finishing of the visitors, who extended their unbeaten run in the league stage of Thai League 3 to over two years.

PAFC came into the game without captain, Kla, who was suspended following a red card in the previous match. His twin brother, Keng, took the armband and played in a back three in a 3-4-2-1 formation, with all of the foreign players either benched or injured.

Despite the reshuffle, PAFC started brightly and went toe-to-toe with the league leaders in an end-to-end opening period



PAFC's Puttipong heads for goal. Photo: Supplied

before falling behind in the 6<sup>th</sup> minute when the referee penalised the home side for a clumsy challenge inside the box and Lizaso converted the penalty.

PAFC continued to battle gamely, but they struggled to create clear-cut chances against a well-organised Songkhla defense. The visitors doubled their lead in the 67<sup>th</sup> minute through Phan-itan and, despite PAFC's valiant efforts, were able to hold on for comfortable victory.

The defeat leaves PAFC in a precarious position in the league table – with only four games remaining, they are just two points above the relegation zone. The next

three games, against Krabi, Rayong and PSU Surat Thani City, are now absolutely crucial. Three points are a minimum target from these three games, but even that may not be enough to guarantee safety.

After a promising start with a draw in his first game in charge, the reality of the challenge facing Coach M has now hit home. He must quickly find a way to galvanise his squad and inspire them to produce the results needed to avoid relegation.

The coming weeks will be crucial in determining whether the Lobsters can escape the clutches of relegation and secure their place in T3 for next season. *Simon Causton*

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# Sport

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**Marquez wins opener at Thai MotoGP > p15**



## WINDSURFER'S PARADISE

### Phuket praise after hosting national comp

Romeo Romei in action at the Phuket Open 2025 Windsurfing regatta at Nai Yang Beach on Feb 23. Photo: Brian Stamm

#### WINDSURFING

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Organisers were quick to lavish praise on Phuket after it successfully played host to a leg of the national windsurfing tour recently, labelling the island a 'windsurfer's paradise'.

The Phuket Open 2025 Windsurfer regatta, held at Nai Yang Beach across the weekend of Feb 22-23, delivered an exciting showcase of talent, skill and strategy among a competitive field of participants.

With eight races sailed and two discards applied, the competition saw a mix of dominance, tight battles for the podium and some surprises along the way at the picturesque venue in the northwest of the island.

From the very first race, 10-time World Windsurfing Champion and three-time

Olympic athlete Riccardo Giordano established himself as the clear favourite, winning every counted race with a net score of just 6 points.

The Italian's unmatched consistency and tactical brilliance left his competitors no chance to challenge him and saw him secure an emphatic overall victory.

While Giordano sailed in a league of his own, the real battle unfolded for the remaining podium spots. Dean Callister of Great Britain showed impressive consistency to claim second place with 15 net points, demonstrating resilience even when facing tougher races.

Close behind, Finland's Juha Blinnikka secured third place with 17 points, showcasing strong racecraft but falling just short of overtaking Callister. Christian Schaake of the Netherlands finished fourth with 19 points, proving to be a formidable competitor with steady performances throughout the regatta.

A special mention goes to Spain's Teresa Del Moral, the only female competitor in the fleet, who delivered a stellar performance to finish fifth overall with 27 points. Her ability to challenge and outperform many experienced racers was a highlight of the event, reinforcing the growing competitiveness of female sailors in the Windsurfer Class. Del Moral preceded an excellent Romeo Romei of Italy in 6<sup>th</sup> position.

Further down the leaderboard, the competition remained fierce, with Osamu Hachiya of Japan and Franck Constant of France battling for top-10 positions.

Some competitors, including Germany's Mario Lehmann and Marco Masei of Italy, faced difficulties and registered multiple DNCs (Did Not Compete), which heavily impacted their overall standings.

#### PREMIER DESTINATION

The competition was the latest in an ever-expanding calendar as the

sport of windsurfing continues to grow in popularity and participation.

The previous event took place in Jomtien, Pattaya, on the weekend of Jan 25-26, and further competitions this year in Thailand will see the Asian International Event in Hua Hin (Mar 29-30), the Songkran Windsurfer Open, in Jomtien (Apr 26-27), the Summer Trophy in Koh Samui (June 7-8), the Winter Trophy in Bangkok (Nov 22-23) and the Bangsaray Invitational (Dec 5-6).

The breathtaking backdrop Nai Yang Beach was specifically chosen to host this year's event in Phuket due to it being widely regarded as a premier destination for windsurfing. With its warm waters, steady winds and stunning coastal scenery, the location provided the perfect conditions for high-level racing, cementing its position as a windsurfer's paradise.

The consistent breeze ensured fair competition, while the

turquoise waters and tropical surroundings added to the spectacle. Wind conditions throughout the event were light to moderate, adding an extra layer of tactical challenges for the sailors.

Beyond the racecourse, competitors and spectators enjoyed Phuket's renowned hospitality, vibrant culture and world-class Thai cuisine. The regatta highlighted why Phuket continues to be one of the most desirable locations for windsurfing events in Asia and beyond.

With an unmatched performance by Giordano, a thrilling battle for the podium and an unforgettable venue, the Phuket Open 2025 Windsurfer regatta was a resounding success. The event showcased the best of competitive windsurfing, confirming Phuket as a world-class host for future regattas.

All the action from the event can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/ZegG3k4cU8o?feature=shared>.

## UFC legend Oliveira lights up Phuket with local gym visit

#### MMA

Catherine Ly

FORMER UFC LIGHT-weight champion Charles "Do Bronx" Oliveira brought his relentless mindset and hunger for success to Thailand last month, where he attended a two-day event at the Bangtao Muay Thai and MMA gym.

This marked his first trip to the country, and he could not

have been more eager to embrace the opportunity. Oliveira, who had his last fight in November 2024, is already gearing up for his next challenge, aiming to reclaim the UFC lightweight title and become a champion once again.

With his sights firmly set on the future, Oliveira expressed his interest during the Q&A session about the potential for a long-awaited rematch with Max Holloway for the BMF title this

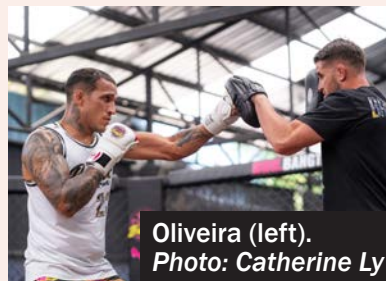
summer – a fight that has been in the making for over 10 years.

Throughout his career, Oliveira has demonstrated a singular focus: to be the best. His resolve has only grown stronger since losing the lightweight belt, and he has made it clear that, "his goal is to become the next champion" and to reclaim the title.

Whether he has to face top contenders like Arman Tsarukyan or others, Oliveira is

more than ready for the challenge. Tsarukyan, another familiar face in Phuket, recently stated he would be open to fighting Oliveira for the number one contendership spot. Oliveira, always open to opportunities, confirmed that he is willing to face anyone in his quest for the belt – even if it means considering a move to welterweight for the right title shot.

Oliveira's trip to Thailand wasn't just about focusing on the



Oliveira (left). Photo: Catherine Ly

future of his UFC career; it was also a chance for him to immerse himself in the local martial arts culture and learn new skills. Coming from a strong jiu-jitsu background, he expressed his...

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