

MILITARY AGENCY 'ISOC' STEPS IN AT NUI BEACH > PAGE 5



'Rainbow Bear' looms large at the Chartered Bank Intersection in Phuket Town. Photo: Discover Phuket Pride

The Phuket News
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Phuket Pride activities began in Patong last Saturday (June 1), marking the start of a month of celebrating the LGBTQI+ community in Phuket and all over the world.

Phuket's Pride activities got underway as Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin officially opened the 'Bangkok Pride Festival 2024' last Friday (May 31), then joined the parade through the streets of the capital last Saturday, joined by some 170,000 supporters of Pride Month under the banner 'Celebration of Love, celebrating equal marriage'.

To highlight the government's efforts to recognise the LGBTQI+

community, official reports noted that the government is pushing for the Equal Marriage Act.

The goal is to "celebrate the basic rights of all Pride people" whereby "everyone is entitled", said one report.

The government is also to have appropriate changes made to allow the job title 'Sex Worker'.

"The government is ready to push for worldwide recognition [as LGBTQI+ friendly] by 2030," said another report.

Joining PM Srettha for the Pride Parade in Bangkok last Saturday were Minister of Tourism and Sports Sermak Phongpanich and Paethongthan Shinawatra, Chairperson of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee.

In its "drive to make Thailand a destination for diverse groups of people from all over the world", the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has organised events across the country throughout the month of June. The TAT expects more than 860,000 people to attend the events, and generate some B10 billion for the national economy through tourism, with Phuket playing its part.

PATONG

Patong Municipality is holding the Phuket Pride 2024 events under the slogan "Equality For All – Be Yourself, Be Respect, Be Proud."

To get the ball rolling in Phuket, teams took to the sands on Patong Beach near the western end of Bangla

Rd for the Beach Volleyball Phuket Pride Open 2024 last Saturday (June 1). Played over two days, the tournament saw 12 teams of LGBTQI+ players vie for their share of the prize purse of more than B28,000.

Before Patong Mayor Chalerm Sak Maneesri declared the tournament underway, Supakorn Suwan, Chairman of the tournament organiser Andaman Power Phuket Group, explained that the first-place prize was B12,000 cash along with a trophy and medal.

First runner-up received B7,000 with a trophy and medal, second runner-up received B4,000 plus a trophy and medal, while third runner-up received B2,000.

In addition, there was an MVP award along with a trophy and prizes...

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'Phuket Pride' gets underway

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...for the most popular team and another prize for the best uniforms

From Monday (June 3), the centre of attention moved to Soi Paradise, the heartland of the LGBTQI+ community in Phuket, where a 'Night Party LGBTQI+ Community' is being held each night through to Sunday (June 9).

A 'Sunset Pride Cruise Party' was to be held on Wednesday (June 5), with the ninth edition of the 'Miss Queen Andaman Power 2024' pageant "that searches for rainbow pearls of the Andaman", to be held at the Jungceylon shopping mall from 5pm to night (June 7).

Organisers describe the pageant as "the ultimate TG (Transgender) girl contest, a platform for creative expression under the concept of "smart, beautiful, healthy and volunteer". Under the banner 'Equality For All - Be Yourself, Be Respect, Be Proud', contestants are competing for total prize money of more than B70,000.

Jungceylon will also host the 'Drag Queen of Pride 2024' show tomorrow (June 8).



Contestants promote the 'Miss Queen Andaman Power 2024' pageant. Photo: Patong Municipality

The Phuket Pride events in Patong will culminate with a 'Pride Parade' along the beachfront on Sunday (June 9).

"March in the Phuket Pride Parade, celebrating Thailand's move towards marriage equality. The fabulous march will start at Duangjitt Resort, strut down Thaweewong Road (Patong Beach Road), turn onto Bangla Road, and culminate at Jungceylon. It's going to be a spectacle, darling!" said the notice announcing the parade.

"Mark your calendars, pull out your fiercest outfits, and join us for Phuket Pride Week. You are the glitter that makes our parade shine!"

Motorists were advised to avoid Prachanukroh Rd and Thaweewong Rd and use an alternate route while the parade is underway from 5pm to 7pm.

TOWN PRIDE

To mark its Phuket Pride celebrations, Phuket City

Municipality has adorned its major attractions in rainbow colours, including the popular-and-now-renamed 'Rainbow Bear' – a large 'teddy bear' inflatable standing several storeys high near the Chartered Bank Intersection in the Phuket Old Town area.

The Chartered Bank Intersection itself now has 'rainbow pedestrian crossings', and several other major features throughout the town, including 'Nong Ya Ya' at the Suriyadej

Circle, are now also in rainbow colours.

Six 'Pride' checkpoints have been set up throughout the town where people can take photos. Those who collect photos at all six checkpoints and post the photos online with the hashtag #IDiscoverPhuketPRIDE stand to win prizes. Winners will be announced on July 5.

Also, a 'Pride Wall' has been set up at the dragon statue in Queen Sirikit Park where people can freely leave their messages in support of Pride Month.

To bring the month of celebrations to a close, Phuket Town will host a parade on June 29 to be led by a star cast of Thai celebrities, including actress Grace Patsita, singer Mum Laconics, actors Tae Nanthasai, Biw Nattapon, Big Nathaschai and actress Tai Chatchadaporn.

Also joining the parade will be beauty pageant celebrities Mainta Farmer (Miss Thailand 2022), Tharina Botes (Miss Thailand World 2024) and Phuket's own Lin Malin (Miss Grand Thailand 2024).

In announcing the 'Discover Phuket Price' events,

Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas last month emphasised the collaborative effort between the municipality, government agencies, civil society groups and the private sector to make the month-long festival a reality.

The goal is to showcase Phuket as a welcoming destination for all and to foster understanding and acceptance of diverse sexualities in society, Mayor Saroj said.

"Phuket, known internationally as a tourist hotspot, embraces its status as a city open to various rights and diversities. Among these is the LGBTQ+ community, which advocates for the rights of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities," Mayor Saroj noted.

"Discover Phuket Pride 2024 @ Old Town" promises to be a celebration of diversity, equality, and unity, reinforcing Phuket's reputation as an inclusive and welcoming destination for all travellers. With its blend of cultural heritage, entertainment, and advocacy, the event is set to become a highlight on Phuket's annual calendar, attracting visitors from around the world," he added.

Marine Police chief touts 'Andaman Dawn' success

JUST ONE DAY AFTER announcing the Operation 'Andaman Dawn' last week, Marine Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong Nuchanart announced that the campaign had netted nearly 20,000 meth pills, confiscated 23 firearms and 314 rounds of ammunition and landed 112 arrests.

Speaking at a press conference at Ratsada Pier on May 30, Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong gave a breakdown of the arrests and raids conducted stretching as far back as February.

On Feb 14, Marine Police seized the fishing boat 'Chok Amiron' for using unauthorised fishing gear and fishing without proper permissions near Phuket. Further investigation revealed discrepancies in the boat's registration, leading to charges of using a stateless boat and document forgery, Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong said.

Regarding unregistered jet-skis, earlier this month officials



Photo: PR Phuket

seized 27 unregistered jet-skis in the Ao Por area. The operators were charged with using boats without proper licenses, he said.

A concerted effort to inspect tour speedboats and fishing vessels resulted in the arrest of 39 individuals and the seizure of nearly 20,000 methamphetamine (ya bah) pills. The charges included possession

and consumption of illegal drugs, he added.

In total, the 'Andaman Dawn' campaign, which actually ran from May 20-30, Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong said, yielded substantial results, as follows:

- Narcotics: Seized 19,996 methamphetamine (ya bah) tablets.
- Firearms: Confiscated 23 fire-

arms and 314 rounds of ammunition.

- Arrest Warrants: Executed 25 warrants, leading to 25 arrests.
- Navigation Violations: Charged 32 individuals with various navigation offenses.
- Other Offenses: Addressed 13 additional cases, resulting in 7 arrests.

In total, the campaign resulted in 139 cases and 112 arrests.

Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong proudly announced the results of the campaign just one day after he publicly announced the campaign at an assembly held at the Marine Police Region 8 headquarters on Phuket Rd in Phuket Town.

At the same time, officers from the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) joined by Marine Police arrested three Phuket tour speedboat crewmen on drug charges and a further five for violating the breaches of the Navigation Act in Thai Waters Act, namely by operating boats without the correct certification.

The arrests were made at Ratsada Pier as well as at 'piers/marinas' in

the Koh Kaew area.

The press were later told, on May 30, that in addition to Pol Maj Gen Prutthiphong Nuchanart, Operation Andaman Dawn was led by senior officials including Pol Col Tharakorn Lertphoncharoen, Pol Col Ajarn Wanlap Puangphaka, Pol Col Ram Roshom and Pol Col Thanawat Hanyok-in.

Their coordinated efforts spanned six provinces: Ranong, Phang Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang and Satun, covering an area of 691 square nautical miles.

The Central Investigation Bureau and Marine Police Division vowed to continue their campaign of vigilance and enforcement to combat illegal activities on the Andaman Sea, ensuring the region's safety and economic stability, said an official report of the May 30 press conference.

'The success of the 'Andaman Dawn' operation marked a significant step in maintaining law and order in this vital maritime zone,' the report added. *The Phuket News*

200 arrested in nominee blitz

Bangkok Post

Ninety-eight foreign nationals, mostly Russians, were among 231 suspects arrested during a crackdown on nominee businesses in Phuket, with assets worth over B1.5 billion seized.

Police from the Economic Crime Suppression Division (ECSD) searched accounting and real estate firms in the island province as part of the operation, Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) commissioner Pol Gen Jirabhob Bhuridej said last Friday (May 31).

Charges are pending against 96 juristic persons and 135 individuals.

Of the individuals, there were 98 foreign nationals, mostly Russians, and 37 Thais who acted as nominees for foreign companies, said Pol Gen Jirabhob.

The individuals were later granted bail.

The foreign suspects were charged with running businesses by avoiding or violating provisions of the law, and having Thais or those who were not foreign nationals support or jointly run businesses that foreigners did not have permission to run.

The Thai suspects were charged with aiding or supporting businesses of foreign nationals who had not received permission to operate the businesses as stated in the law, said



Police question a Thai woman during a search at a company suspected of using Thais as nominees for its business in Phuket. Photo: CIB

Pol Gen Jirabhob.

Seized during the crackdown were 225 bank accounts with B319 million in circulation; 245 land documents, including those for 96 condominium units worth about B1 billion and 43 title deeds covering 24 rai of land worth about B200mn; 196 passports; 108 work permits; documents related to the setting up of 800 companies; 1,601 stamps of companies, four electronic devices and other items.

The seized assets were worth

over B1.5 billion, police said.

The police operation was launched after local residents complained to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin that foreign nationals, mostly Russians, had been running businesses and buying many residential units and land plots with unusually high prices.

Foreign-run tour-related businesses were among the activities that took away jobs from Thais and caused damage to the economic system, said Pol Gen Jirabhob.

The prime minister then ordered acting national police chief Pol Gen Kitrat Panphet to assign the relevant agencies to investigate.

The ECSD, a unit of the CIB, subsequently launched an investigation and found that 59,717 Russian nationals had entered Phuket since the Russia-Ukraine war began in early 2022. They noted an unusually high number of 1,603 new businesses registered in the province.

ECSD commander Pol Maj Gen Phutthidet Boonkrathue gave the

example of businesses involving one foreign woman, identified only as Lana, 45.

She was found to be an executive and shareholder in nine companies – seven real estate firms, one service firm and one tour company – with total registered capital of B38mn.

The companies occupied three luxury condominium and apartment projects worth over B900mn, said the ECSD chief.

The investigators found that a Thai woman, identified only as Trithip, acted as a nominee for Lana.

Trithip and other Thai nationals were also found to be nominees for 272 firms – 142 had only Thai shareholders and the rest had both foreign and Thai shareholders.

The investigators subsequently gathered evidence to seek court approval to arrest those involved in nominee businesses, said Pol Maj Gen Phutthidet.

During questioning, Trithip admitted she had been hired to serve as a nominee for B30,000 to B50,000 per firm.

Pol Maj Gen Phutthidet said the investigators had already issued summonses to 85 of the foreign nationals to hear charges of using Thai nominees. The investigation is being extended, he added.

Of note, the announcement of the arrests was made in Bangkok. No local authorities reported the arrests.

Riding the 'Dragon Line'

DEPUTY PERMANENT Secretary of the Ministry of Transport Sorapong Paitoonphong last Friday (May 31) enjoyed a free ride on Phuket Town's newly launched public bus as part of a symbolic launch of the service.

Phuket's first urban bus route was launched on May 17 by the local consortium of Phuket companies PKCD, together with the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation.

The 'Dragon Line' around Phuket Old Town is operated by a 22-seat 'Smart Bus EV', an air-conditioned electric bus. The rides are free for both local residents and tourists.

Joining Mr Sorapong to inaugurate the 'Dragon Line' was Phuket Vice Governor Satta Thongkham.

Several other VIPs from the public and private sectors joined the event, including Waitha Upatisarang as the Chairman of the Executive Board of PKCD and Bhumikitti Ruktaengam as the Chairman of the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation.



Photo: PR Phuket

Reporting Mr Sorapong's visit, the Phuket office of the Department of Public Relations (PR Phuket) reiterated that the launch of the Dragon Line was aimed at tackling both environmental and traffic issues in Phuket.

"Providing such services is a part of the policies aimed at making Thailand reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions, known as the Net Zero policies," PR Phuket said.

Despite the 'Dragon Line' being a local private corporate effort, the official report of the event also confirmed the government's intention to further develop the use of electric vehicles

for public transportation in Phuket.

"This is in line with the guidelines for developing the quality of life of the people [in Phuket]; guidelines for promoting tourism; guidelines for stimulating the economy, and guidelines for protecting the environment in the province," PR Phuket said.

"The public electric bus service under this project will comply with standards and laws related to public transport. This will create confidence among people and promote safety in traveling," PR Phuket concluded.

The Phuket News



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Photo: Patong Police

Patong throat-slasher caught

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED the man wanted for slashing the throat of a fellow hotel employee in Patong last week.

Officers arrested Chaiyot Weerachue, 37, at a house in Ratsada at about 8:10pm after tracking his movement from the scene, in front of a hotel on Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd in Patong, police reported on May 30.

Chaiyot first fled to Chalong, where he disposed of the knife used in the attack. Police then tracked Chaiyot's movements to Phuket Town, then to Ratsada, where he was arrested.

CCTV confirmed the incident happened at 1:23pm on May 29, police said.

Chaiyot chased fellow hotel staffer Anuwat Meetham, 33, to an area

in front of the hotel, where Chaiyot pulled out a knife and slashed Anuwat's throat before fleeing on his motorbike, police reported.

When police searched the house in Ratsada, no knife was found. Chaiyot later confessed that he had disposed of the knife in Chalong, and showed officers where he threw it, police reported.

Police noted that during questioning Chaiyot said that he and Mr Anuwat had a long, ongoing conflict. However, no reason was given for the final altercation that led to him slashing Mr Anuwat's throat.

At last report Mr Anuwat remained in care at Patong Hospital, and police had yet to confirm which charge Chaiyot is to face.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Drunk man arrested for shooting up garage

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A man from Wichit was arrested by police before dawn last Saturday (June 1) after getting drunk and losing control of himself while being in his father's car shop with several firearms within his reach.

The siege continued for seven hours before the suspect was safely apprehended.

A woman alerted Wichit Police about a situation at S.Charoenyont garage, located across the road from Phuket Villa 3 housing estate on Chao Fa East Rd, at 10:16pm last Friday (May 31).

According to the woman's report, her son was at the garage, drunk to the extent of being unable to control himself, having access to firearms, and shooting them.

Officers rushed to the scene and established a cordon around the garage while requesting reinforcement including a SWAT team. Leading the officers were Wichit Police Chief Col Chattri Chukaew and Deputy Chief Lt Col Atthawat Suwannarat.



Worawut Upama (right, wearing S.Charoenyont T-shirt) faces multiple charges for his drunk antics. Photo: Wichit Police

Police maintained the blockade until 5:30am when the suspect left the garage and tried to escape in a black Mercedes-Benz luxury sedan. The car failed to start, and the man was apprehended. The suspect did not have any firearms "in his hands" at that moment, but had a shoulder bag, police noted.

The suspect was identified as Worawut Upama, 39, a resident of Wichit. The subsequent search resulted in the seizure of weapons, described as two shotguns, two rifles, a knife and a samurai sword.

Despite the report, Wichit

Police photos did not show any rifles, with all the firearms being shotguns. The ammunition in the pictures is also limited to shotgun cartridges.

Col Chattri confirmed later that Worawut was charged with illegal possession of firearms; carrying firearms in a public area without a reasonable cause; shooting firearms in a public area without a reasonable cause; and consuming an illegal Category 1 drug (methamphetamine).

It was not disclosed whether the guns were registered in the name of a person other than Worawut.

Fruit shop owner shoots wife

A FRUIT SHOP OWNER IN Patong has told police that he shot his wife 'by accident'. He had fired at the ceiling in anger over his wife having an affair with hired help. The bullet ricocheted and injured her, he claimed.

Police were alerted to the shooting at 8:23am on Monday (June 3).

Officers arrived at Patong Hospital, where the wife was taken for treatment of her injuries.

At the hospital, officers found the fruit shop owner, Niwat Kongsom, waiting for them.

Niwat told police that he had fired his Browning 9mm handgun during an argument with his wife, Kulap Naowko-aksorn (described by police as Niwat's 'mea').

She had an affair with a man named Kai, from Myanmar. Kai, an ethnic Mon, had been hired to help out at the fruit shop.

Kai had been working at the shop for just two to three days, Niwat told police.

The affair was consummated in the worker's room of their fruit



Photo: Patong Police

shop on Sirirat Rd, he said.

It was not explained how Niwat learned of his wife's indiscretion, but Niwat said that while confronting her about it, in a fit of anger he fired two shots into the ceiling.

Unfortunately, one of the bullets ricocheted, striking Ms Kulap in the left arm, he explained.

Following the incident, Kai fled the scene, while he rushed his wife to hospital, Niwat continued.

Police placed Niwat under arrest and seized the handgun used in the incident.

He was taken to Patong Police Station for further questioning and to face potential charges related to the shooting.

The police are continuing their investigation.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Police nab illegal cable guys

TOURIST POLICE HAVE ARRESTED two Chinese nationals and one Myanmar national for working illegally while installing cables to provide Chinese TV channels in Phuket Town.

Acting on a tip-off, officers arrived at the scene, on the roof of an apartment building on Yaowarat Rd in Phuket Town, to find five foreigners working at the site.

Present at the scene, Thai national Sittichai Klapdee admitted to officers that he was responsible for overseeing the work done. He picked up and brought the workers each day, and dropped them off at night.

The officers also found that foreign workers were installing cable systems to provide Chinese TV channels. Tourist Police reported.

Three of the foreigners were found to be working without a work permit: Chinese nationals Wang Hao, 29, and Zhang Shaowen, 49; and Myanmar national Chit Ko Oo, 22.

The three were taken to Phuket Tourist Police headquarters for questioning and verification of their visa status.

Wang Hao had entered Thailand



Photo: Tourist Police

on a tourist visa on May 18. The visa permitted him to stay until June 16. Zhang Shaowen entered Thailand on a tourist visa on May 4. His visa permitted him to stay until June 2, Tourist Police reported.

Speaking through a Chinese interpreter, both Zhang Shaowen and Wang Hao told officers they had worked for about two days. They were hired to work for B40,000 a month. The salary was to be transferred via the WeChat system from Yong Thong Company based in Bangkok.

Myanmar national Chit Ko Oo had legally entered Thailand on May 2, Tourist Police also confirmed.

Giving his statement through an interpreter, Chit Ko Oo said that he had been working on the current job for about nine days. His monthly salary was B15,000 and he was paid by Wang Hao. The Phuket News

ISOC steps in at Nui Beach

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Rear-Admiral Tinnakorn Kanjantamee, Deputy Director of the Phuket branch of Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), which serves as the political arm of the Thai military, led an inspection visit to Nui Beach on May 28 to address a land dispute after the vicious assault at the beach late last month.

The incident, on May 23, drew widespread media attention and tarnished Phuket's image, said an official report of the inspection.

The assault at Nui Beach broke out after a heated dispute over two claimed plots of land at the tourist-popular beach.

Police have charged one of the main assailants, Chalothorn 'Boy' Chotipanang, with assault and at last report were to charge at least three others for their role in the attack.

During his visit to the beach, R/Adm Tinnakorn was joined by Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee, Karon Police Chief Police Col Khunadet Na Nongkhai, Phuket Forestry Center Director Sorasak Ranantan, representatives from the Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO) and Phuket Land Office along with the Mueang Phuket District Chief; local village headmen; and other relevant agencies.



Photo: PR Phuket

The conflict on May 23 centred around an 18-rai plot at Nui Beach and an adjacent 68-rai plot designated as ALRO land, explained R/Adm Tinnakorn.

The altercation between claimants drew significant public attention, prompting local authorities to take swift action to prevent further incidents and clarify land boundaries, he added.

Present at the site for the inspection yesterday were Singha Pengkaew, also known as 'Sgt Laem', who claims ownership of the 18-rai plot, and Chalothorn 'Boy' Chotipanang, who acts as land caretaker for Thana Chotipanang, who claims ownership of the 68-rai plot of ALRO land.

"The Governor of Phuket is con-

cerned about this issue and has assigned a team to inspect the area. He has issued a policy to strictly enforce the law," R/Adm Tinnakorn said.

During the visit, officials from the forestry department, provincial land office, and provincial land reform office provided clear information and a roadmap for resolving the problems with both plots of land, as there was still uncertainty.

After discussions, a preliminary agreement was reached for each party to remain in their respective locations until the boundaries were clarified, R/Adm Tinnakorn explained.

The Phuket ALRO office and related agencies were to conduct a survey on Wednesday this week (June 5), he added.

Phuket MP Chalermpong stated that the inspection of the disputed area at Nui Beach was crucial.

"The boundary of the 18-rai area in the forest, currently claimed by some individuals, needs to be clarified," he said.

"Any lawsuits arising from this dispute will proceed through the legal process. The aim is to avoid damaging the image of Phuket as a world-famous tourist destination, and all parties are urged to exercise their rights legally," he added.

"Claimants of ownership ALRO land in the area will need to identify their claimed sections, as the existing map from the ALRO is already clear. This will help prepare an accurate map of the disputed area," he said.

"This site visit aims to resolve the long-standing land dispute, which has frequently led to conflicts, including recent physical altercations reported in the media, negatively affecting Phuket's image as a tourist destination," Mr Chalermpong said.

HISTORY OF ALRO ABUSE

The land in dispute at Nui Beach is administered by the government agency ALRO, better known by its Thai initials 'SorPorKor'.

The ALRO programme was enacted in 1975 with the aim of distributing degraded forest tracts to poor and landless farmers to harvest crops. The land that ALRO administers is referred to as SorPorKor land.

Under the ALRO programme, each qualified farmer was entitled to a maximum of 50 rai of land. The land cannot be sold but it can be handed down to their children.

Over the years many people abused the programme by developing their allocated land to house commercial buildings, leading to officials in 2020 to expand the allowed use of ALRO land beyond farming.

The new rule now allows 12 uses: farming, petrol station, drinking water plant, market place, vehicle dealership, retail shop, post office, healthcare facility, restaurant, school, apartment complex and food processing plant.

Hungarian consulate opens

HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR TO Thailand Sandor Sipos and Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat co-chaired the grand opening of the new Hungarian Honorary Consulate together in Phuket last Friday (May 31).

The event, at the new consulate, located at the J.D. Pools branch in Moo 9, Thepkra-sattri, was well attended by distinguished guests.

The Hungarian Consulate in Phuket is responsible for a consular district that includes the six provinces of Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Ranong, Nakhon Sri Tham-marat and Surat Thani.

Thanusak Phungdej, appointed by the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and approved by Thailand's Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, serves as the Honorary Consul of Hungary at the Phuket consulate.

His mission is to assist Hungarian citizens traveling in the area, facilitate business cooperation for Hungarian companies in Thailand and promote economic, trade, cultural, scientific and tourism relations between Thailand and Hungary.

In his remarks, Mr Thanusak highlighted the longstanding diplomatic relations between Thailand and Hungary, which will mark their 51st anniversary on Oct 25, 2024.

He noted the increasing number of Hungarian tourists and business people visiting Thailand, with nearly 28,000 Hungarians visiting in 2023. Conversely, approximately 9,400 Thais travel to Hungary annually.

Thailand and Hungary have a strong



Photo: PR Phuket

trading partnership, with Hungary being Thailand's 11th trading partner in the EU and 51st globally. In 2023, the total trade value between the two nations was approximately B27.72 billion.

During the event, Ambassador Sipos and Honorary Consul Mr Thanusak presented 15 Teqball tables to the Phuket Sports Association, received by its President, Thammawat Wongcharoen.

Teqball, a sport invented by Hungary in 2014, has been promoted as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Thai-Hungarian diplomatic relations.

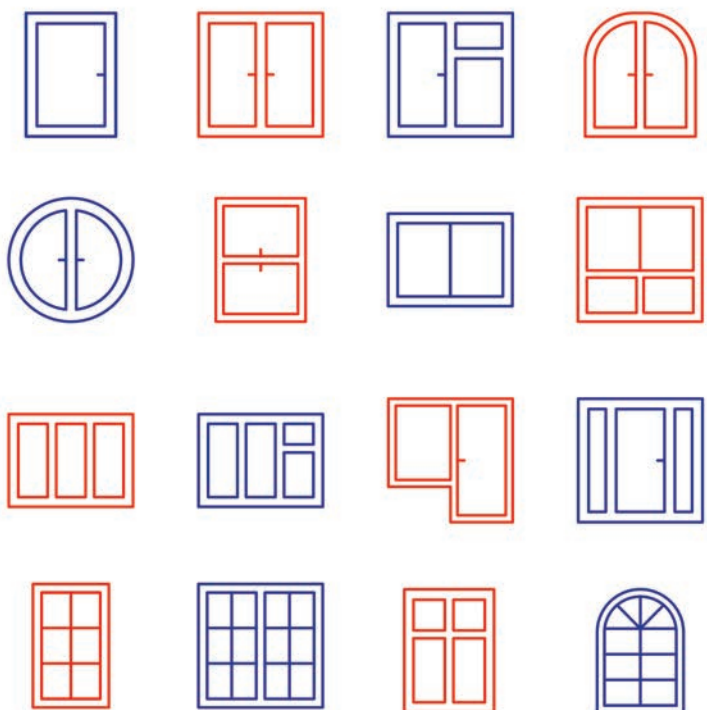
The Hungarian Embassy in Thailand previously supported the sport by donating 12 Teqball tables to the Department of Physical Education on Aug 8, 2023, which contributed to Thai athletes becoming World Teqball Champions in late 2023.

The initiative is expected to further popularise Teqball in Phuket and throughout the Andaman provinces. Added to the programmes for the 2021 Asian Beach Games and the 2023 European Games, the sport is now aiming for Olympic inclusion.

The Phuket News



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Roadshow targets Vietnam

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Tourist Association, in collaboration with the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), has held its 'Phuket Roadshow to Vietnam 2024' aiming to boost tourism from Vietnam to Phuket.

The initiative seeks to increase the proportion of Vietnamese tourists visiting Phuket from 8% to 12%, recognising the Vietnamese market's potential due to its large, travel-ready working-age population exceeding 100 million people.

Held from May 20-24, the event was spearheaded by key figures including Thaneth Tantipiriyakit, President of the Phuket Tourist Association, and Saolak Chankaew, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation.

The delegation, consisting of 20 tour operators from Phuket, focused on promoting Phuket's attractions and new tourism products in the two major Vietnamese cities Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

In Ho Chi Minh City, the event took place on May 21 at the Hilton Saigon Hotel. Veeraka Muthitaporn, Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, presided over the opening ceremony, with Kanya Manosengiam, Deputy Director of the TAT Ho Chi Minh



Photo: Phuket Tourist Association

Office, in attendance. The event featured business matchmaking sessions between Phuket tourism operators and 16 travel agency representatives from Ho Chi Minh City.

On May 23, the roadshow moved to Hanoi, where it was hosted at the Melia Hanoi Hotel. Urawadee Sriphirom, Thai Ambassador in Hanoi, presided over the opening, and Sukakarn Yodchun, Director of the TAT Ho Chi Minh Office, delivered the welcome speech. Business negotiations in Hanoi involved more than 30 companies, further solidifying Phuket's presence in the Vietnamese market.

Mr Thaneth emphasised the strategic importance of Vietnam as a growing market for Phuket, noting the convenience of direct flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Phuket.

"Vietnam is a key market with over 1 million tourists visiting Thailand annually. The direct flights make travel more convenient, and Vietnamese tourists have shown a preference for the luxury and extended stays that Phuket offers," he said.

Mr Thaneth expressed confidence in the roadshow's potential to increase the number of Vietnamese tourists to Phuket by at least 12%, translating to approximately 150,000 additional visitors. He highlighted the high spending power and preference for luxury experiences among Vietnamese tourists, making them a valuable segment for Phuket's tourism industry.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy by the PPAO, led by President Rewat Areerob, to diversify and expand Phuket's tourism markets.

The roadshow in Vietnam marks the culmination of a series of successful promotional events in various cities and countries, each receiving positive responses from tourists.

Sukakarn Yodchun, Director of the TAT Ho Chi Minh Office, highlighted the potential of the southern Vietnamese market.

"Southern Vietnamese people are mostly in the working age group, living in an economic hub with high purchasing power. They are ready to travel, especially during school holidays," she said. The TAT's focus is on promoting tourism among working professionals, families, and seminar attendees – all markets well-supported by Phuket's diverse offerings, she added.

Phuket already boasts products and activities tailored to these groups, and the convenience of direct flights from Vietnam enhances its appeal. The island's attractions cater to tourists of all ages, making it a prime destination for family vacations. In recent campaigns, the TAT has been showcasing Phuket's unique offerings to Vietnamese tourists, encouraging them to visit, Ms Sukakarn said.

Ms Yodchun noted that the TAT frequently brings Vietnamese entrepreneurs and bloggers to Phuket for firsthand experiences, which they then share with their audience back home. "The Vietnamese market is

very interesting as their habits are quite similar to Thai people. Effective communication in Vietnamese, especially by guides and hotel staff, would significantly improve their travel experience," she said.

Echoing this sentiment, Veeraka Muthitaporn, Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, emphasised the close cultural ties between Thailand and Vietnam.

"Vietnamese people are very familiar with Thai culture, products, and attractions, and they love to travel to Thailand, especially Bangkok and Phuket," she said. With Vietnam's population exceeding 100 million, predominantly of working age, the potential for increased travel to Thailand is substantial.

"Vietnamese tourists are particularly drawn to Thailand's traditions, cultural events, and beautiful beaches. Phuket, with its stunning seaside landscapes and rich cultural heritage, stands out as a preferred destination. This roadshow aims to solidify Phuket's position as a top travel choice for Vietnamese tourists, promoting its diverse attractions and facilitating a deeper cultural exchange.

"Through these concerted efforts, Phuket hopes to see a significant increase in Vietnamese tourists, enhancing its tourism sector with a market known for high spending and extended stays," he said.

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Govt touts visa promotions, reducing retiree insurance

THE CABINET LAST WEEK APPROVED a raft of new visa promotions to attract more tourists, including visa-free and visa-on-arrival schemes and longer stays for students, and a reduced level of compulsory health insurance for retirees.

The new visa measures were touted to come into effect last Saturday (June 1), but at time of press still had yet to be ratified by publication in the Royal Gazette.

The Foreign Ministry proposed the measures to attract as many visitors as possible because the national economy depended heavily on tourism, government spokesman Chai Wacharonke said.

He said the number of countries eligible for visa-free entry would increase from 57 to 93. The 36 new countries included Albania, Cambodia, China, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Laos, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Romania, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan.

Visitors' stays under this scheme were also extended to 60 days, the government spokesman said.

The Cabinet also approved visa-on-arrival for 31 countries, up from 19 countries previously.

Visitors who want to work and also visit tourist destinations will be able to get five-year visas valid for stays up to 180 days, extendable for another 180 days. They were previously entitled to only two stays of 30 days each, the government spokesman said.

"This measure targets digital nomads, remote workers and freelancers... as well as those who want to learn Muay Thai and



Photo: Bangkok Post

Thai cuisine. They can both learn and tour places," Mr Chai said. He called it Destination Thailand Visa.

Foreign students of higher education could stay for one year after graduation, instead of being required to leave the country immediately finishing their course.

"They can find work during the extended period, especially in the fields that we need," the spokesman said. There were about 40,000 such foreign students in the country, he said.

RETIREMENT

Visitors aged 50 years or more who want long-stay visas are currently required to have health insurance coverage worth B3 million.

Under the Cabinet's resolution on May 28, each long-stay visa applicant in this age group is required to have health cover of only B440,000 – B400,000 for inpatient treatment and B40,000 for outpatient cover.

This is effective for long-stay applicants from September to December, Mr Chai said.

The Cabinet also approved the expansion of e-visa application services at Thai consulates and embassies from 47 to 94 locations, commencing in September, the spokesman said. *Bangkok Post*

Thaksin faces questions over lese-majeste charge

BANGKOK

AFP

Former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be prosecuted for insulting the monarchy over comments he made almost a decade ago, the Office of the Attorney-General said on May 29.

Prayuth Pecharakun, spokesman for the Attorney-General, said Thaksin would be summoned to court on June 18 to answer charges under lese-majeste laws.

Two-time premier Thaksin, 74, was ousted in a 2006 coup and then lived in self exile for 15 years, returning to Thailand last year as his Pheu Thai party took power at the head of a coalition government.

Thaksin also faces prosecution under the Computer Crimes Act, the spokesman said.

Thaksin's lawyer, Winyat Chatmontree, said he would fight the charges. "He is ready to prove his innocence in the justice system," Winyat told reporters.



Thaksin is set to be prosecuted for insulting the monarchy. Photo: AFP

Critics say the lese-majeste laws are abused to stifle legitimate political debate, and there has been a spike in their use since youth-led anti-government street protests in 2020 and 2021.

More than 270 people have been charged with lese-majeste since the protests, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights.

The prosecutor's office said the case against Thaksin relates to comments he made in 2015 to South Korean media. It is the latest in a series of legal battles he has fought.

When he returned to Thailand in August last year, the billionaire former Manchester City owner was jailed on graft and abuse-of-power charges dating back to his time in office.

But his return to the kingdom, on the very day Pheu Thai's Srettha Thavisin came to power as PM in alliance with pro-military parties, led many to conclude a deal had been done to cut his jail time.

The rumours grew when the King soon cut Thaksin's sentence from eight years to one, and he was freed on parole earlier this year.

Thaksin insists he has retired, but he has made numerous public appearances since his release and still casts a long shadow over the country's politics.

For the past two decades, Thai politics has been largely defined by a tussle for dominance between the pro-royalist, pro-military establishment and Thaksin and his allies.

His critics suspected him of pulling strings in the kingdom during his exile, which he spent mostly in Dubai.

His daughter, Paetongtarn, is now head of the Pheu Thai party and has been tipped as a possible future PM.

Last year's general election was the first time in more than 20 years that a Thaksin-linked party failed to win most seats, beaten into second place by the progressive Move Forward Party.

But pro-establishment forces in the senate blocked MFP's leader Pita Limjaroenrat from becoming prime minister, paving the way for Pheu Thai to take power and shut the newcomers out of government.

Koh Samui hit by second earthquake in a week

SURAT THANI

AN EARTHQUAKE MEASURING 2.2 on the Richter scale was reported on Koh Samui in Surat Thani province last Saturday (June 1).

This followed a 2.4-magnitude quake two days earlier on May 30, officials confirmed.

The Earthquake Observation Division of the Meteorological Department recorded the Saturday tremor at 8:31am, with its epicentre pinpointed in Tambon Bo Put, at a depth of two kilometres.

Surveillance footage captured extensive vibrations in residential areas, although there were no reports of damage or injury, officials reported.

One online comment described the latest quake as feeling "like a heavy truck driving by."

A previous earthquake struck Koh Samui on the morning of May 30, with the Department of Mineral Resources saying the quake was caused by the geothermal energy.

Officials have urged people on the southern resort island of Koh Samui not to panic over the situation and to follow



The epicentre of the May 30 quake. Image: Department of Mineral Resources

reports from state agencies. People should move to wide-open spaces or shelter under sturdy structures if another tremor occurs, officials added.

On Monday Natural Resources and Environment Minister Patcharawat Wongsuwan said he was aware of residents' concerns in the wake of the shakes, and had ordered the rapid installation of a seismic monitoring station on the tourist island.

Since 2008, there have been 16 earthquakes in Surat Thani. Most occurred on and near the Khlong Marui Fault Zone (KMFZ), a major active strike-slip fault system in southern Thailand.

Bangkok Post

New campaign aims to catch kids before they drop out

BANGKOK

THE EQUITABLE EDUCATION FUND (EEF) is working with 11 government agencies to reduce the number of children left out of the education system to as low as 200,000 in five years.

EEF managing director Kraiyos Patrawart said the "Thailand Zero Dropout" policy aims to bring down the number of students who leave formal education to zero. Last year that number was over 1 million, Mr Kraiyos said.

The EEF is cooperating with agencies including the ministries of Education, Interior, Digital Economy and Society, and Social Development and Human Security, to achieve the goal with the first meeting set for June 14.

Mr Kraiyos said the number of children excluded from the education system and those with risk of dropping out of school has been rising nationwide over the past few years since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hundreds of thousands of households are very likely to be stuck in the poverty trap, he said, and there is a risk that the children of these households will fail to receive higher education than their parents did for another generation.

In addition, Thailand may be stuck in the middle-income trap for several more years since the country has become an



Students at Ban Bang Kapi School in Bangkok. Photo: Bangkok Post

aged society with fewer than 500,000 births per year.

According to the Education Data Center (EDC), there are about 11mn students in all levels of education from nursery school to high school.

Meanwhile, data from the Bureau of Registration Administration at the Ministry of Interior shows there were 1.02mn children who were not in the education system last year.

The number included young children who did not go to nursery school or primary school, children who started attending school at later ages than usual, students who dropped out mid-semester and children who lacked access to education.

"The Zero Dropout project will not instantly bring all children back to school, but it will provide them with alternative ways to get an education and develop flexibly in a way that fulfils their life goals," said Mr Kraiyos. Bangkok Post

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'Furiosa' a driving force for action

David Griffiths

When making a franchise of films how do you top what has come previously when the last film was universally loved by critics and fans alike while also lazily picking up six Oscars along the way?

That was the big question facing legendary director George Miller as he sat down to work on *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, his very eagerly anticipated followup to the last *Max Max* film – *Fury Road*.

Of course not everyone was a fan of *Fury Road* with some franchise stalwarts still arguing that the best films were the originals that Miller had made back in the 1970s and '80s. And that it seems what Miller decided to do with *Furiosa* – make a film that had the characterisation of the original films and the full action of *Fury Road* and the result is another film that is going to have a massive impact on those watching it.

Furiosa takes the audience right back to when the title character was a small girl (Ayla Browne – *True Spirit*) living in a luscious paradise. That all stopped when she was kidnapped by men working for Dr Dementus (Chris Hemsworth – *The Avengers*), who then murders Furiosa's mother in front of her.

Years later Furiosa finds herself working for Immortan Joe (Lacy Hulme – *Killer Elite*) where she is trained as a mechanic. The older Furiosa (Anya Taylor-Joy – *The Witch*) then begins to work on the War Rigs with Praetorian Jack (Tom Burke – *Only God Forgives*) and as she watches the tribes heading towards war she starts to devise a plan that will see her get revenge on Dementus and hopefully return to the paradise that she once called home.

While *Fury Road*'s biggest weakness was the fact that it felt like George Miller threw characterisation to the curb when he wrote it, he makes up for it in



spades with *Furiosa*, a film with so much characterisation that it almost presents another issue – a villain so likable that you don't really want to see his downfall.

The action in this film is amazing (more on that later) but so is the way that these characters have come to life. While expertly written on the page by Miller and Nick Lathouris (*Mad Max: Fury Road*), these characters are brought to life beautifully well by a cast who are at the top of their game.

This is Anya Taylor-Joy's film and she gives Furiosa life with a performance where she doesn't need dialogue-driven scenes to deliver emotion. Many of her scenes here see Furiosa not speak at all yet nobody in the cinema is left wondering how she is feeling. Whether it be action or drama, Taylor-Joy sensationally delivers it all here.

Then there is the performance of Chris Hemsworth, who is arguably playing a role that feels like it was written for Jason Momoa. Hemsworth brings

something almost Shakespearean to a character that the screenplay has interestingly written as a guy that is totally out of depth. There are no Marvel 'I can never be defeated' super-villain vibes here – and it is the fact that Miller has given Dementus vulnerabilities that makes him as likable as he does.

Even minor characters here, such as the lovable Organic Mechanic (Angus Sampson – *Insidious*), are given a tonne of characterisation, which Sampson takes and runs with brilliantly as he steals every scene that he is in, while the only character that it felt like needed more work, and screen time was Praetorian Jack – a strange choice for someone who is so important to the story.

The other thing that makes *Furiosa* a must-see are the action sequences. Once again Miller and his team have created a film that contains edge of your seat type stunts while never failing to be creative throughout. The interweaving of a decent plot in between action sequences is one of the most important things to separate *Furiosa* from *Fury Road* and the result is something amazing.

While *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* may not be a masterpiece it is a worthy addition to the *Mad Max* franchise. It gives more life to one of the most interesting characters to come out of *Fury Road* and once again proves why George Miller is one of the most creative filmmakers of this generation.

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga is rated '15' and is currently screening in Phuket.

3/5 Stars

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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Horses for courses



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

Horses for courses? As true of flowers as of fillies. When enthusiastic gardeners who have lived in Europe or North America set up home in Phuket, they must take on board the very different requirements that plants need in this tropical environment.

Because it is much hotter and, during the monsoon, both wetter and more consistently humid, many of our favourite temperate plants will not readily cope with these conditions. They may be built to endure several degrees of frost, but, on the other hand, will be unable to handle the full power of the tropic sun, or, in some cases, the saturated ground and moisture-laden air that is the norm during the rainy season. A plant such as lavender (*lavandula angustifolia*), which flourishes in the south of France and is grown commercially in huge beds, needs dry, well-drained soil and abhors clay. In Thailand, it is liable to contract root rot because the ground underfoot in the monsoon season is consistently damp.

By way of contrast, tropical plants, and especially those native to extreme climate zones (9, 10 or 11 on the horticultural scale), will not only survive here, but will grow at a rate of knots

not seen in temperate climates. Indeed, some plants, introduced from less congenial climates, have become invasive in Southeast Asia, Northern Australia and the South Pacific archipelago. *Lantana camara*, for example, having 'escaped' from South America, has become a weed in many tropical countries; the decorative Indian rubber vine has colonised large tracts of land in Queensland; the water lettuce has clogged up waterways in the Floridian Everglades.

Take the bougainvillea (*fuang faa*). Although it is synonymous with Southern Europe and is a feature of gardens in many Mediterranean coastal regions, it is not always easy to grow in Spain or France. Many attempts were made in my Andalucian garden before two *fuang faa* became really established. Here in Phuket, the experience has been quite different. Not only are Thai bougainvilleas available in a glorious range of colours – often grafted onto the same shrub – but they grow with a vigour, nay a rapacity, that is extraordinary. They are impervious both to dry conditions and temperatures in the mid-30s.

I once had to cut down a specimen that had grown 30 feet high in a little over three years. It possessed a trunk the thickness of a man's thigh and an armoury of long spines that rendered the whole process of removal quite painful – to me anyway... But it was painful in another way, since the shrub had been a beauty to behold, in con-

stant flower with both white and pink bracts. A real feature of the garden. But it had to go: it was impeding the growth of other plants, was threatening to fracture the garden wall, and was beginning to spread across the narrow soi.

The pivotal point is this: Plants here not only grow far more rapidly than in Europe, they also grow much bigger. A massive generalisation, but one that is more or less true. And since most tropical plants are unfamiliar to the newly arrived expat, he does not know what to expect when he pops them into his pristine flower beds. What he might recall as a small pot plant struggling to survive in an English drawing room, can rapidly assume the proportions of a tree in this fecund climate.

Consider the so-called 'rubber plant', or *ficus elastica*. A member of the fig family and originally cultivated as the primary source of rubber, it was soon superseded by *hevea brasiliensis*, smuggled in from Brazil and now a feature of Southeast Asian plantations everywhere. Just look around Phuket.

On the other hand, *ficus elastica* never became a commercial proposition. But because it possessed such glossy, attractive foliage, and because it was tolerant of a wide range of conditions, it became a popular indoor pot plant. When I was a boy it was the first houseplant to grace our living room. And this popularity has spawned a number of attractive new varieties: nowadays,



Lantana. Photo: Patrick Campbell

there are a number of ornamental cultivars with purple leaves or variegated or grey-green foliage. House plants all... But outdoors in the ultra-conducive conditions of Southern Thailand, it may grow to a 100 feet or more!

To a less spectacular extent, the same is true of *codiaeum* and the many varieties of *cordyline* and *dracaena*. Again, many of these have been lovingly grown as delicate houseplants in chilly Western drawing rooms since the early 20th century: here, *dracaena fragrans* is an everyday yard plant that effortlessly reaches 20 feet in height.

And, what's more, it thrives on neglect.

Unlike most of us...

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





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POP QUIZ

1. What is the name of the magnificent hall in Asgard ruled over by the god Odin?
2. What word do the Scottish people give for the last day of the year and its celebration?
3. Which Art Deco-style skyscraper was the world's tallest building for 11 months before it was surpassed by the Empire State Building in 1931?
4. Which Nobel Laureate wrote the four-volume history of Britain and its former colonies entitled 'A History of the English-Speaking Peoples'?
5. Legendary singer, songwriter and actress Anna Mae Bullock is better known by which name?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

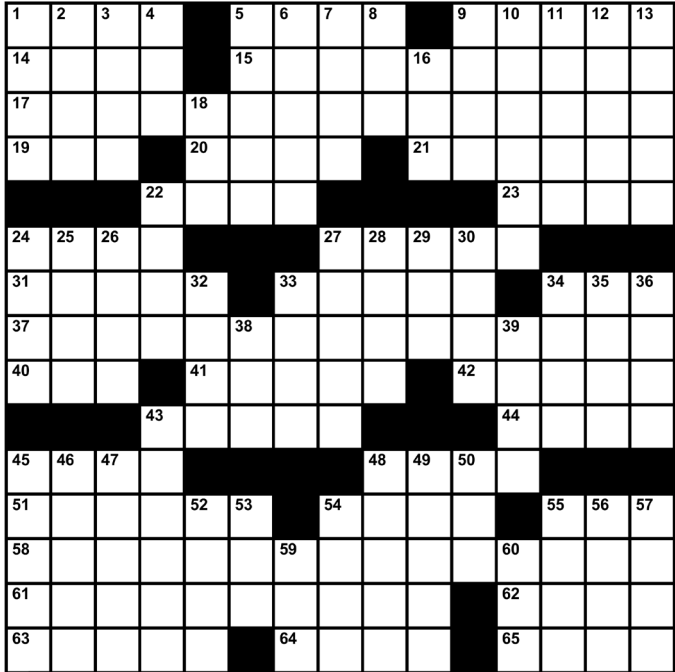
- Across

 1. Daddy-o
 5. Off-color
 9. Critical
 14. Wagon part
 15. A bucket of ice for a merlot
 17. Turn 21, e.g.
 19. At all
 20. Tending to business
 21. Speech-related
 22. Essential part
 23. Not own
 24. Bottom
 27. Agreements
 31. Open, in a way
 33. Disney flier
 34. Verbal jewel
 37. Result of gaffe
 40. Like Falstaff
 41. Violin string rub
 42. Be theatrical
 43. Trig. function
 44. ___ a good thing
 45. Printer's unit
 48. I.R.A. part: abbr.
 51. Gets the lead out?
 54. Slender instrument
 55. Convened
 58. Refuses to move
 61. Shy ones
- Down

 1. Plane-jumping G.I.
 2. Plow pullers
 3. Latitude
 4. Dry
 5. Old boss address in South Africa
 6. Confine
 7. The "U" in I.C.U.
 8. Sushi bar order
 9. Mild oath
 10. Chopper parts
 11. Dateless
 12. Toxic substance
 13. Set up
 16. Fungus
 18. Weed killer
 22. Heated competition?
 24. Polish
 25. Asian buffalo
 26. Difficult position
 27. ___ Wars
 28. "Absolutely!"
 29. Good buddies use them
30. Heavy reading?
 32. Copter's forerunner
 33. Teaspoonful, maybe
 34. Elementary particle
 35. "Beetle Bailey" dog
 36. Next
 38. Figs.
 39. Forget about
 43. Overthrew Batista
 45. European gull
 46. Humor with a twist
 47. Slopes
 48. Looks out for, maybe
 49. Take it easy
 50. 100 yrs.
 52. Black, to poets
 53. X5, e.g.
 54. Fiend
 55. Winter blanket
 56. Be in pain
 57. Red-bearded god
 59. Study
 60. Curling surface

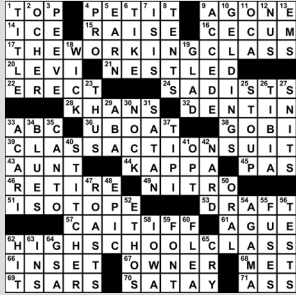
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Valhalla; 2) Hogmanay; 3) The Chrysler Building; 4) Sir Winston Churchill; 5) Tina Turner



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

day on Mars is 39 minutes and 35 seconds longer than one day on Earth.

39

years old is all it takes to be officially older than half the people in the US.

95,000

flights were cancelled across Europe in just five days in April 2010 due to the ash cloud from the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull volcano.

525,000

children under five die of diarrhea every day, according to the World Health Organization.

1.115 trillion

US dollars is how much in credit card debt US consumers owe as of this year.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Rubber ducky tours at Panwa. Photo by Sutharat Khaodee

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

This week in history

June 7, 1982

Graceland opens to the public; the bathroom where Elvis Presley died is kept off-limits. The building was designated a US National Historic Landmark in 2006.

June 8, 1949

George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' is published.

June 9, 1885

Treaty of Tientsin is signed to end the Sino-French War, with China eventually giving up

Tonkin and Annam – most of present-day Vietnam – to France.

June 10, 1997

Before fleeing his northern stronghold, Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who also called himself 'Brother Number 1', orders the killing of his defence chief Son Sen and 11 of Sen's family members.

June 11, 1184 BC

Trojan War: Troy is sacked and burned, according to calculations by Eratosthenes.



Saloth Sar, aka Pol Pot.

June 12, 1665

England installs a municipal government in the newly renamed New York City (the former Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam).

June 13, 1994

A jury in Anchorage, Alaska, blames recklessness by Exxon and Capt Joseph Hazelwood for the Exxon Valdez disaster, allowing victims of the oil spill to seek US\$15 billion in damages.

June 14, 1789

Mutiny on the Bounty: HMS Bounty mutiny survivors including Capt William Bligh and 18 others reach Timor after a nearly 7,400km journey in an open boat. Source: Wikipedia

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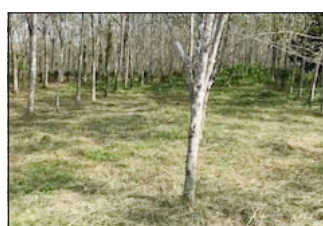
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Photo: PR Phuket



PHUKET HONOURS HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat led a merit-making ceremony at the Phuket Auditorium on Monday morning (June 3) to honour the 46th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Suthida. Joining the Governor for the auspicious occasion was his wife, Mrs Busadee, and a host of the island's leading officials, including Vice Governors Sattha Thongkham, Adul Chuthong and Norasak Suksomboon. Also present were heads of local government agencies, judicial authorities, military personnel, police, prosecutors and representatives from local government administration organisations (municipalities and OrBorTor), along with members from the private sector. Phra Udom Wachiramongkol, the Phuket Provincial Abbot and the abbot of Wat Mongkol Nimit, a royal monastery, led the group of monks receiving alms. The alms-giving ceremony was conducted in honour of Her Majesty the Queen's 46th Birthday Anniversary. The auspicious occasion served to honour and bestow royal merit upon the Queen, reflecting the reverence and good wishes of the Thai people.

On Monday evening, from 5:30pm, a series of additional ceremonies were held at the Phuket Auditorium, located on the grounds of the Phuket Provincial Administration Centre, home to Phuket Provincial Hall. The ceremonies included the presentation of royal offerings, the laying of wreaths and a candle-lighting ceremony to further express good wishes for Her Majesty The Queen. People invited to join the ceremonies included government officials and staff, police officers, state enterprise employees, municipality and OrBorTor officials and staff, private organisations, students, royal volunteers and residents of Phuket. Attendees were encouraged to wear a variety of their formal uniforms, or Thai Amarin outfits in purple tones, traditional Thai cloth dresses or polite dress in purple tones.





Photo: volleyballworld.com

Thai spikers in good shape

VOLLEYBALL

THAILAND ENDED the second week of the FIVB Volleyball Women's Nations League 2024 in Macau with an impressive 2-2 record.

Thailand suffered their second successive defeat, going down to Brazil 3-0 (25-22, 25-14, 25-17) in the final match in Macau last Sunday (June 2), having also lost to China 3-0 (25-23, 25-17, 25-18).

Thailand began the Macau leg with two impressive wins over Dominican Republic and France earlier in the week but were no match to their Asian rivals and the South American powerhouses.

Outside hitter Chatchu-On Moksri topped the scoring chart for Thailand with 14 points (13 kills, one ace) while opposite hitter

Pimpichaya Kokram added six (all kills).

Brazil captain Gabi led the South American attack with 13 points (11 kills, one block and one ace) and opposite hitter Tainara had 12 points (nine kills, one block and two aces).

Thailand, the hosts of this year's VNL Finals in Bangkok, had a disastrous opening week, losing all four matches in Rio de Janeiro last month.

The preliminary phase will come to an end for Thailand in Hong Kong, where they are scheduled to play against defending champions Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland and Germany next week.

They will play Turkey on June 12, Bulgaria on June 13, Poland on June 15 and Germany on June 16 and all matches will be televised live on Channel 7HD. *Bangkok Post*

ALL SPORTS

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Students at a local Phuket school have reason to celebrate after they were presented with a new sports field and a range of sporting equipment recently.

The kind-hearted gesture to Wat Muang Mai School in Thalang was made by the Sports Photographers and Journalists Association of Thailand, whose senior members attended a special ceremony at the school on May 25.

The ceremony was overseen by Thammawat Wongcharoenyot, President of the Phuket Sports Association, who was joined by Damrong Chaisena, Director of the Phuket office of the Sports Authority of Thailand, and the President of the Sports Photographers and Journalists Association of Thailand Paitoon Chutimakornkul, who also serves in an official role as an advisor to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin.

Representatives from the Y. Yong Foundation and the



The ceremony at Wat Muang Mai School on May 25. Photo: Phuket Sports Association

Chong Ko Fah Sai Group were also in attendance, as were selected students and members of the general public.

Mr Paitoon delivered a speech before officially opening then presenting the multi-purpose sports field to the Head of Wat Muang School, Mrs Kingkamon Ellul.

A range of sporting equipment and goods sponsored by Grand Sport Group Company Limited were then handed over to representatives of the school which will be used to help develop students' sporting abilities.

Following the ceremony there was a futsal competition between four teams from local

schools including Wat Muang Mai School, Ban Laem Sai School, Ban Pa Khong Chip School and Ban Para School, while a live cultural and musical performance was delivered by students from Wat Muang Mai School and the 5 Network Women's Group.

HONOURING HIS MAJESTY THE KING

Meanwhile, a series of fitness-themed events in Phuket have been confirmed as part of nationwide celebrations to mark His Majesty the King's upcoming birthday.

A number of specially organised events incorporating walking, running and cycling

challenges will take place on Sunday (June 9) in the lead up to the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's birthday, which takes place on Sunday, July 28.

The events are part of a nationwide initiative organised by the Ministry of the Interior which will see identical ceremonies taking place throughout the country to show respect and honour the occasion.

The physical activities coincide with a nationwide procession of the royal flag which will travel throughout the country, exchanging hands in each province.

The flag is set to arrive in Phuket from Krabi tomorrow (June 8) before moving onto Phang Nga, Ranong, Chumphon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Phetchaburi, Samut Songkhram and Samut Sakhon provinces.

While demonstrating loyalty and respect to His Majesty the King on his birthday, the flag procession and associated physical events also serve to unite the people of Thailand by emphasising the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Tai first Singaporean golfer to qualify for US Masters

GOLF

YOUNG AMATEUR golfer Hiroshi Tai will be the first Singaporean to play in the US Masters after he won the the NCAA Individual Men's Championship in the United States on May 27.

The 22-year-old, who studies at Georgia Tech, won the prestigious national college championship by one stroke to earn a place at Augusta in April 2025 and a major debut at the US Open at Pinehurst later this month.

The NCAA Championship has been a launchpad for many glittering careers.

The list of past winners reads like a who's who of professional golf and includes Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Luke Donald and Bryson DeChambeau.

"It means a lot," the amateur world number 70 Tai told the Golf Channel after withstanding a late triple-bogey on his way



Hiroshi Tai. Photo: AFP

to a one-under 71 in the final round.

"All the guys in the team have really helped me a lot," Tai added after what was only his third collegiate tournament win.

After graduating from high school in Florida in 2019, Tai delayed college for two years to complete compulsory military service back home in Singapore.

He credited the experience for helping him to keep a cool head under pressure.

"I think it just let me mature and kind of figure out what I really wanted to do," said Tai of his 22 months in the Singapore Navy.

"It made me appreciate everything that I do have playing golf almost every day." *AFP*

Party time as T20 World Cup begins

CRICKET

THE T20 CRICKET WORLD CUP GOT underway at the Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium in Texas last Saturday (Jun 1) as the US won a pulsating seven-wicket victory over Canada.

It was the US's first ever T20 World Cup game, played out in front of a passionate crowd inside the purpose built, 7,000 capacity home of Major League Cricket.

Aaron Jones' unbeaten 94 off 40 balls, featuring 14 boundaries, 10 of them sixes, with the stadium PA blasting out Miley Cyrus's "Party in the USA" after the biggest hits, transformed what could have been a very low key American debut in elite cricket into a spectacular celebration.

"Especially because America is not really a 'cricketing country'. I wanted to win the first game of the tournament for our fans and we did that," a smiling Jones said after the game.

But there is a bigger context to this tournament for the co-hosts because as much as organiser's play down the attempt to convert American sports fans to the pleasures of the old game, part of the whole idea of holding the biennial tournament in the US is to establish some firmer roots for the sport here.

There were two things to note about the crowd at Grand Prairie – as expected the majority of spectators were drawn from the Indian community in Texas but as they showed throughout, they are fervent backers of the national team of their adopted country.

Every one of New York-born-but-Barbados-raised Jones' sixes was greeted with a massive roar and the final one, to seal victory, set off wild celebrations in the stands.



USA fans celebrate their opening game win against Canada on Jun 1. Photo: AFP

The second element was that, scattered among those Indian-heritage fans were local Americans who have, to a greater or lesser degree, been won over by the game.

Jones, still buzzing from his spectacular innings was understandably in no mood for measured considerations even with Pakistan and top-ranked India to come.

His accent may be Bajan but the attitude and rhetoric was all-American.

"We want to play fearless cricket. We want to play hard cricket. We want to play smart cricket and I think we're going to go into the Pakistan game with the same mindset. We want to play fearless cricket regardless of who we play against," he said.

The US were set to play Pakistan at the same venue yesterday (June 6).

In other games last weekend, the West Indies defeated Papua New Guinea by 5 wickets, South Africa overcame Sri Lanka by 6 wickets and Namibia beat Oman by 12 runs in the deciding super over after both teams finished on 109 runs from their allotted 20 overs to tie the game. *AFP*

Maresca the man for Chelsea

FOOTBALL

AFP

Chelsea have appointed Leicester boss Enzo Maresca as their new manager on a five-year deal to replace the departed Mauricio Pochettino.

The Italian, 44, caught the eye of Chelsea chiefs after leading Leicester City to the Championship title last season in his first campaign at the King Power Stadium.

Several candidates were linked with the Chelsea job following Pochettino's exit on May 21 after just one season in charge.

Former Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi, Ipswich manager Kieran McKenna and Brentford's Thomas Frank were reportedly in contention before the west London club decided on Maresca.

"We are delighted to welcome Enzo to Chelsea," the club said in a statement on Monday (Jun 3).

"He has proven himself to be an excellent coach capable of delivering impressive results with an exciting and identifiable style.

"Enzo has deeply impressed us in our discussions leading up to his appointment. His ambitions and work ethic align with those of the club."

Maresca, formerly on Pep Guardiola's staff at Manchester City, will begin his new role on July 1 on a five-year contract, with a club option of a further year.

"To join Chelsea, one of the biggest clubs in the world, is a dream for any coach," he said. "It is why I am so excited



Enzo Maresca has been named as the new manager of Chelsea. Photo: AFP

by this opportunity.

"I look forward to working with a very talented group of players and staff to develop a team that continues the club's tradition of success and makes our fans proud."

Pochettino left Chelsea by mutual consent last month despite a strong end to a turbulent season, in which they spent much of the campaign languishing in mid-table in the Premier League.

The Blues recovered to win their final five games of the season and earn a place in the Europa Conference League, while also reaching the final of the League Cup and the FA Cup semi-finals.

Maresca, who had a brief spell in charge of Italian side Parma in 2021, will

be the sixth coach to have managed the first team since Todd Boehly's Clearlake Capital consortium bought the club two years ago.

Chelsea have spent more than £1 billion (B47.6bn) on signings since Clearlake took over ownership from Roman Abramovich in May 2022.

Leicester, who are back in the Premier League after one season in the second tier, said they were "disappointed that Enzo has decided at this stage that he no longer wants to be part of our vision."

"He leaves with the appreciation of everyone at the club for his work in helping us to achieve an immediate return to the Premier League during the 2023/24 season."



Bellingham celebrates. Photo: AFP

Jude savours Madrid's Champions League win

FOOTBALL

JUDE BELLINGHAM said his first taste of Champions League glory with Real Madrid was the "best night of my life" after the Spanish giants beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 at Wembley last Saturday (Jun 1).

The England international had been frustrated by his former club for much of the showpiece occasion in his homeland, but Madrid once more found a way to win in the Champions League.

Dani Carvajal headed in from a corner before Bellingham teed up Vinicius Junior to fire into the far corner to deliver Madrid's 15th European Cup.

"I have always dreamed of playing in these games," an emotional Bellingham told TNT Sports after the game.

"You go through life and there are so many people who say you cannot do things. I was alright until I saw my mum and dad's face."

"My little brother is there and I'm trying to be a role model for him. I cannot put it into words. The best night of my life."

The England international and his team-mates struggled to create anything against a dominant Dortmund for much of the game and Bellingham paid credit to his former side for playing their part in his journey to the game's summit.

"Huge respect for both clubs – the club I'm at now is so special to me and so is my old club," continued the 20-year-old.

"It wouldn't be possible without them. I'll always be grateful and always have respect for what that club did for me." AFP

Thais target two victories in World Cup qualifiers

FOOTBALL

THAILAND NATIONAL football team head coach Masatada Ishii has promised an all-out effort to win their remaining two Group C games of the Asian zone qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

Thailand are gunning for a place in the final phase of the continental qualifiers, but need good results in their last two group games against China and Singapore.

At time of press the War Elephants were set to take on the Chinese in a crucial clash in Shenyang on June 6 before hosting Singapore on June 11 at Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium, with the top two teams in each of the nine groups advancing to the next stage.

As of Monday, South Korea led the group table with 10 points, followed by China on seven points and Thailand on four points. Singapore were at the bottom of the table with only



The team at Suvarnabhumi airport. Photo: Supplied

one point.

Ishii said that the team had trained hard for the match against China.

"Some key players are missing from the squad, but we have prepared the team as best as we could," added the Japanese tactician.

"I have seen the tapes of the Thai loss to China in their first game before I took over as their coach, but the Chinese have changed their coach and their style of play. We will do what needs to be done and be ready for the match."

"Our target is to claim six points from our remaining two games because

we need them to keep our chances of progressing to the final stage alive.

"The good thing is that [experienced] playmaker Chanathip Songkrasin was able to train with the team."

Meanwhile, veteran striker Teerasil Dangda said he is keen to help the War Elephants win the games against China and Singapore because "this could be my last two World Cup qualifying matches for the Thai team."

"I am not saying I will quit football altogether, but I am 35 already and World Cup is played every four years." Bangkok Post

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Sport



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BANGLA BRAWL

Boxing Stadium melee sours sport's image

Post-fight carnage in the ring at Bangla Boxing Stadium. Photo: Supplied



MUAY THAI

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

While Muay Thai is widely regarded as a rough and tumble sport, things got a little out of hand recently at Bangla Boxing Stadium as a mass brawl played out in the ring following a heated contest between two boxers.

The bout, between Russian fighter Jambulat Bijamov, who trains at Tiger Muay Thai gym, and Irishman Cathal Murphy, who trains at Chanrit Muay Thai, was the final and main fight at the stadium on Sunday, May 26.

After the final bell ended five rounds of close competition, Bijamov held his gloves aloft and paraded around the

ring in presumed victory. So confident that he had won, the Russian fighter even did a backflip off the ropes.

However, the judges awarded the fight to Murphy by a score of 49-48, who then proceeded towards Bijamov's corner to taunt both him and his trainer, resulting in both Russian men chasing the Irishman across the ring in an attempt to punch him.

Their actions evoked a reprisal, and a mass brawl between approximately 20 people ensued, with members from both camps trading blows. Even spectators from the stands entered the ring to take part, with one man seemingly spitting at Murphy twice from the edge of the ring, before security personnel were able to establish calm.

'DISRESPECTFUL'

"He was being disrespectful the entire night so I just wanted to rub it in at the end," Murphy explained afterwards.

"I regret taunting him and putting my team at risk as I didn't expect him or his teammate to react that way after screaming at me in-between rounds. He had no respect for me so I didn't have any for him. The video doesn't show the full context of the night."

Bangla Boxing Stadium issued a public statement the following day (May 27).

"Bangla Boxing Stadium would like to extend our sincere apologies to all affected parties for the incident that occurred at Sport Stadium on May 26, 2024," the statement noted.

"We had initiated a thorough investigation into the two

fighters and the dispute that the fighter The Red Corner exhibited signs of excessive jubilation towards The Blue Corner opposing team leading to misunderstanding. We had summoned both sides to mediate and admit their mistakes. Both deeply regret that this happened.

"Once again, Bangla Boxing Stadium apologizes for any inconvenience or discomfort caused by this incident. We are taking steps to address this issue internally and to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future," the statement added.

LEGAL ACTION

Sulaimarn Kaewngamdee, spokesman for Bangla Boxing Stadium, repeatedly assured that the incident was quickly controlled and staff at the

stadium were able to quell the brawl in less than two minutes.

"All events were resolved and were peaceful. No one was injured," he said.

Regarding the sharing of video clips of the incident, Mr Sulaimarn said, "I would like to appeal to those who published the clip. The various clips should be uploaded in their entirety because in the real event there were no bad or violent incidents and no one was injured."

"The clips that have been posted are incomplete. I would like to ask people to be fair to Bangla Boxing Stadium as well," he added.

Mr Sulaimarn confirmed that Bangla Boxing Stadium would be taking legal action against people who entered the ring without permission.

"The boxing stadium will report legal action against everyone [who entered the ring without permission] because it is considered that they came to cheer on boxing but did not respect the rules of the boxing stadium. The boxing stadium therefore needs to prosecute," he said.

"The boxing stadium management accepts the incident that occurred and will keep it as a lesson in order to improve. This is a lesson that requires more attention," he added.

Murphy, Bijamov and their respective teams were summoned to the Sports Authority of Thailand Phuket office on May 28 to explain the incident where both boxers shook hands to express their apologies and regrets about the incident.

Former UFC champion Alexander Volkanovski back in Phuket

MMA

IT WAS VERY MUCH A Phuket homecoming for former longtime undisputed UFC World Featherweight Champion Alexander 'The Great' Volkanovski as he came back to visit Bang Tao recently.

The number 7 ranked pound-for-pound MMA fighter in the world was back on the island to visit Bang Tao Muay Thai & MMA on Friday, May 24

and Saturday, May 25 as part of a special two-day event.

Volkanovski, who has a professional record of 26 wins with only 4 losses, had trained for several years in Phuket, out of Chalong, before his time in the UFC. He has also held parts of his training camps for previous title fights on the island throughout his storied career.

The 35-year-old Australian is currently the No. 1 ranked featherweight in the UFC, after having held the UFC world featherweight title for five years, and successfully



Volkanovski was back in Phuket as part of a special two-day event recently. Photo: Supplied

defended the belt five times.

Volkanovski was part of a two-day immersive experience last

weekend. On Friday (May 24) he was the lead in an interactive Q&A session, where fans were able to ask questions to the celebrated former UFC Featherweight champion. Additionally, there were a series of unique interactions that enabled fans to get up close and personal with the star, including photo and autograph opportunities.

The following day (Saturday, May 25) fight fans and athletes got the chance to learn unique techniques from one of the top fighters in the world with a special

hands-on MMA seminar held at the venerated Bang Tao Muay Thai and MMA gym on the island's popular west coast.

The visit marked the second time Volkanovski has made his way back to Bang Tao Muay Thai & MMA, after holding an interactive MMA seminar two years ago.

The training camp has also recently hosted undisputed UFC world heavyweight champion Jon Jones as well as MMA legend Georges St. Pierre over the last few months.

JP Mestanza