

**THAILAND'S 'CANNABIS PARTY' COMING TO AN END > PAGE 6**

## NOT 'FEHR'



A man holds up a sign at the Yamu Beach protest last Sunday (Mar 3).  
Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

## PROTEST OVER SWISS EXPAT TARGETS 'BAD RICH FOREIGNERS', PRIVATE BEACHES

**The Phuket News**  
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Sentiment against 'rich foreigners' being influential people ran high last week after 45-year-old Swiss expat Urs Fehr, founder of the Green Elephant Sanctuary Park in Cherno Talay, was charged with assault for allegedly kicking a woman doctor.

The incident spurred more than 500 local residents to gather at Yamu Beach in Pa Khlok last Sunday (Mar 3) to protest 'private beaches' on the island, and in support of Thandao Chandam, the 26-year-old doctor who has accused Fehr of kicking her.

Many of the people at the beach carried signs calling for an end to claims of 'private beaches' in Phuket, as all beaches in Thailand were by law public land, for the use and enjoyment of all people.

'Local people don't want animals,' one sign said. 'Beaches are for the public,' said another.

Police officers were present to ensure no further unwelcomed incidents occurred.

### CATALYST

Ms Thandao, a doctor at Dibuk Hospital, was moon watching with a friend at Yamu Beach in Pa Khlok on Feb 24, Makha Bucha Day. The

pair were sitting on concrete steps in front of Fehr's rented luxury villa when Fehr approached from behind. Fehr kicked her in the back and yelled obscenities at them, Ms Thandao said.

Ms Thandao filed a formal complaint at Thalang Police Station on Feb 25, the day after the incident. She returned to the police station with her father, Mr Kasem, to follow up progress in the case – and to speak to the press – on Feb 29.

From then on, news of the incident spread nationwide, spurring intense reactions online and accusations that Fehr and his wife, Khanuengnit, were 'influential people' with contacts in the Royal Thai Police and that the

couple were among foreigners who had laid private claim to the beach, which is public land.

However, the reactions online spread beyond Fehr and the incident, and accused officials of allowing 'rich foreigners' to break the law.

While posts online by people supporting Ms Thandao showed no visible bruises to her back, Ms Thandao said she had to return to the hospital several times for pain medication injections.

"No one should have to suffer this kind of thing. No Thai person should have to go through something like this," Ms Thandao said, adding that she would see the matter "through to the end".

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#### Chinese tourist injured in parasail ride



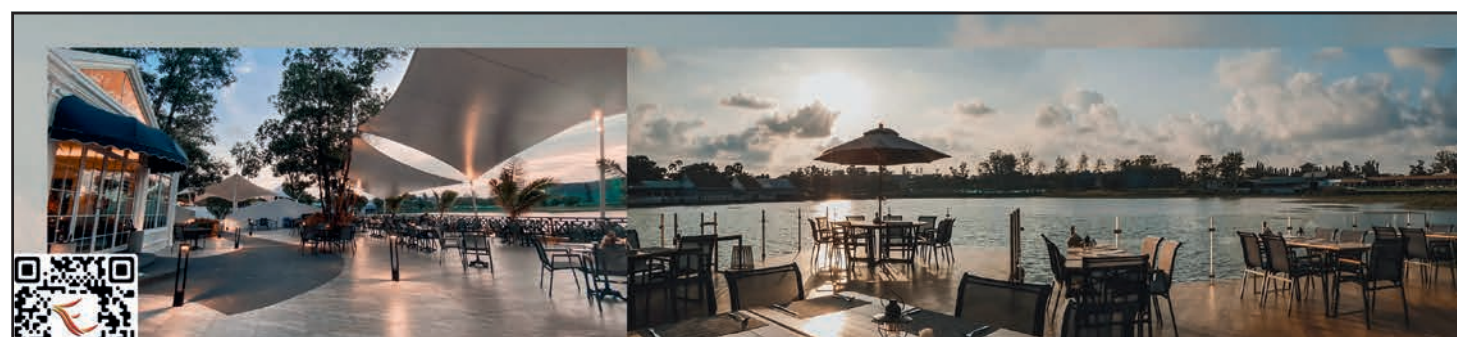
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## News



**Tourist leaves jeep stuck on beach > p4**

# Anger rises over 'bad farang'

*Continued from page 1*

"He looks like a rich man. We are just one small doctor. I want law, justice and the police to help to deliver justice that any Thai person should receive," Ms Thandao said.

"As for the insulting words, no one should be discriminated against like that. He is a foreigner living in Thailand. He came to earn a living with Thai people, working in Thailand, living on Thai soil.

"You shouldn't discriminate against anyone who is a local. You should respect them more. We should live with respect, not discrimination. Even if you are rich, you will fall from the sky. No matter how much power you have, you shouldn't discriminate against anyone," she added.

## DENIAL

Fehr was called to Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday (Mar 1) to answer the formal complaint of assault. At the conference, Phuket Vice Governor Abdul Chuthong assured that the issue did not involve any 'foreign mafia' or 'influential people'.

"Regarding the issue that has been released in the media that there is a mafia in Phuket and there are foreigners coming to stay and owning public land, the Governor is strict in this matter. Let the administration and police carry out their duties according to their authority. This includes investigating restaurants operated by foreigners," he said.

"As for the issue of Thai dignity, Thai people living in Phuket or elsewhere in Thailand must have the same honour and dignity as fellow humans," he added.

Ms Khanuengnit explained that before the incident on Feb 24, a



Urs Fehr with his wife, Sai, last Friday (Mar 1). Photo: PR Phuket

Chinese tourist had entered the grounds and broke into their rented villa, causing a fright. At that time, her husband Fehr, who goes by the nickname 'David', was not home, so he informed the owner of the villa project.

On Feb 24, Fehr thought that it might be the same group that had broken into the villa, so he grabbed his phone and ran out to take pictures. He stumbled and slipped, and injured his toe, he said. The slip resulted in his foot coming into contact with Ms Thandao, Fehr said. He held up a photo of his injured toe as evidence.

Both Fehr and his wife apologised for the incident, saying there was no intention to harm the doctor.

However, on the night before Fehr and his wife appeared at Provincial Hall to offer their defence, and apology, a video clip showing the incident was leaked and widely shared across social media.

The video clip, just 17 seconds long, appeared to have been filmed by Fehr himself. The video showed him

walking briskly up to Ms Thandao and her friend. Ms Thandao turned around to see Fehr approaching when he was just a few metres away.

Without warning or provocation, Fehr appeared to kick Ms Thandao. Although the video did not show his foot connecting with her body, the thump of his foot landing on Ms Thandao could be plainly heard.

While landing the kick on Ms Thandao, Fehr shouts twice at the women, "Get the f\*ck off!", followed by "Get the f\*ck off here!"

Ms Thandao and her friend quickly left.

## CHARGED

Thalang Police Deputy Chief Pol Lt Col Anukul Nooket later confirmed that Fehr had been charged with "assaulting another person causing injury". Fehr had denied the charge.

The confirmation came last Saturday (Mar 2) while Lt Col Anukul joined top-ranking officers in investigating the concrete steps where the incident took place.

Region 8 Police Deputy Commander Pol Maj Gen Saranyu Chamnanrat said the incident and the widespread reports on national news and social media had spurred concern. "The police have acted correctly and fairly on both sides," he said.

Pa Khlok Municipality had filed a complaint against the developer of the villa estate, Phuket Peninsula Estate Co Ltd, in order to pursue legal action over the steps being built on public land, he said.

Notices were posted at the site confirming that the steps were on public land and were to be demolished within 30 days of the announcement, marked as Feb 29.

A statement by police reporting the incident noted that the police's position was that the incident was relevant to a task force formed by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat.

The task force is to review any incidents of bad behaviour by foreigners and to take corrective action, and is empowered to request that visas of specific 'bad foreigners' be cancelled, which would result in such foreigners being deported.

## RECLAIM THE SAND

At the protest at Yamu Beach last Sunday (Mar 3), activists from the People Movement for a Just Society (P-Move) raised banners with messages demanding authorities return public access to beaches.

Suchart Jorasakul, 56, from Koh Kaew, said he and his friends arrived to demand that authorities clearly demarcate private properties from public areas. "We want to join calls for restoration of public access to Yamu Beach, which is a public beach. It turns out that foreigners are

occupying too many areas," he said.

Somboon Sampaorat, 58, of Pa Khlok, said local people gathered to demand the return of Yamu beach to the general public. "In the past people could walk along the beach. After foreign developers arrived and housing estates went up, access was restricted," he said.

Prasit Wongkajorn, one of the local residents who joined the activity, said, "After seeing this in the news, I felt that this event should not have happened.

"Whether or not it was intentional physical harm is not clear, that is for the legal process to decide. As for myself, I came here today to see the place with my own eyes, and from what I see the doctor was the victim. I came to support the doctor," he said.

"We, as people in the area, cannot accept this behaviour. We came together to show our strength against such inappropriate behaviour, so that society can live together peacefully.

"With what happened, no matter who it is, everyone has equal rights to human dignity. It's even worse that it was an act towards women. I can't forgive it," Mr Prasit said.

"Today's gathering is a great opportunity. When I was a child, you could walk around Phuket, but now business people often buy land and claim ownership right up to the beach, and then claim the area to be a private beach.

"When something like this happens, I want the relevant officials to take correct action. Make the beaches a public area that everyone can use together, and help support tourism by allowing tourists to truly see nature," Mr Prasit concluded.

# PM, police chief call for action, probes

THE INCIDENT INVOLVING Swiss expat Urs Fehr sparked orders from the country's leading figures to take corrective action.

National police chief Pol Gen Torsak Sukvimol said last Sunday (Mar 3) he had ordered Region 8 Police and the Phuket Tourist Police to investigate. He said the units were told to gather facts surrounding the alleged assault and ensure the investigation against Fehr was swift.

Pol Gen Torsak said he also instructed Phuket Provincial police Commander Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum to launch a probe into alleged misconduct by local police in Phuket, who some say accept bribes from foreigners on the island to let

them pursue illegal activities.

He said he would also direct the Royal Thai Police (RTP) Inspector-General to conduct its own investigation to ensure transparency and prevent criticism that police were protecting each other.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul last Sunday warned foreigners living in Thailand to abide by the law or their visas would be revoked.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said he had instructed the RTP and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to step up measures to ensure foreigners comply with the laws.

Meanwhile, officials from the Phuket office of the Department of Livestock Develop-

ment (DLD Phuket) confirmed on Monday (Mar 4) that all the elephants in care at the Green Elephant Sanctuary Park in Cherng Talay, founded by Fehr, were legal.

Present for the inspection were officers from DLD Phuket; the Phuket branch of the Royal Forest Department; Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife and Forest Reserve, operated by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNP); the National Health Security Office; the Phuket Labour Office; Cherng Talay Police and the Central Investigation Bureau.

Also joining the inspection was Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee. "We joined the inspection today as many

doubts have been expressed about the operation of the elephant park," Mr Chalermpong explained.

The park charges an entrance fee of B1,000 per person for children, and B2,500 per person for adults, he noted.

DLD Phuket Senior Veterinarian Suthat Niyomthai explained, "In total there are 14 elephants at the camp, all of which have been inspected and are correct. They are registered and are fitted with valid microchips. The elephants are healthy; they are strong and in perfect condition."

The park operations complied with the relevant animal preservation and anti-cruelty laws, he added.

Mr Chalermpong later re-



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee / Facebook

ported that one more elephant was not at the camp as it had been taken for treatment.

"The camp is properly registered in company form, with 73 employees. It has been registered since Mar 7, 2017. The camp rents the 21 rai 2 ngan 23 square wah on which it is located," he said.

However, the checks on the elephant park will continue, especially on the business operating as a foundation.

"We must check every step," Mr Chalermpong said.

"There must be an examination of the company's finances, and tax payments. The registration of the foundation with the Ministry of Interior must also be checked... After this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be requested to verify the visa of the business owner to make sure that it is the correct form of visa," he added. *The Phuket News*



# Parasail palaver spurs action

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A parasail operator at Karon Beach has agreed to pay B400,000 in damages to a Chinese tourist who suffered a broken shin bone after a fall while landing on the beach late last month.

Karon Police confirmed the settlement on Feb 28, after catching up with the tourist, Han Bitong, 26, and her partner Gou Xinrui at Phuket International Airport as the couple prepared to leave the country.

At the airport, Kronchit gave B140,000 to Ms Han. The remaining B260,000 will be paid later in three installments, Karon Police reported.

The agreement came on the condition that Ms Han “will not be tempted to take legal action, both civil and criminal, against Mr Kronchit Thamsuea [the parasail operator] again”, Karon Police noted.

Further confirmation of the agreement came via a report by Phuket Marine Chief Natchapong Pranit, who investigated the incident that same day (Feb 28) – a special day for Phuket officials as



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

they scrambled to contain a tourism PR nightmare. Ms Han had posted a video online describing her experience parasailing at Karon Beach: her shin bone was broken, left protruding from her leg; she waited hours to receive hospital treatment; and the parasailing operator refused to cover her medical expenses.

The video was shared on the Douyin app, the original version of TikTok available inside China.

Within hours the video was viewed millions of times and shared by more than 500,000 people, all inside

Mainland China.

Before intervention by officials, and as described in Ms Han’s video, the parasail operator, Kronchit, had refused to pay any damages, and even challenged Ms Han to report the incident to authorities.

Karon Police reported that that accident occurred at Karon Beach at about 6pm on Feb 24. Mr Guo and Ms Han paid B3,500 for both of them to enjoy a tandem parasail ride together. The pair were joined on the ride by an employee to help guide the chute.

A strong gust of wind blew in as they were returning to

the beach, affecting the chute, and dumping the pair onto the beach from a height of about two metres.

Mr Gou was at the front and hit the sand first. Ms Han was behind, and suffered a broken shin bone when Mr Gou fell hard on his backside with her leg underneath.

The parasail operator rushed to provide assistance, and both were taken to Chalong Hospital, said the report, not noting the two-hour delay for an ambulance to arrive due to traffic described by Ms Han in her video. The two-hour wait was uncon-

tested, and even confirmed by the parasail staff.

Chalong Hospital then sent Ms Han to continue her treatment at Mission Hospital. The next day (Feb 25), Mr Guo arrived at Karon Police Station to seek assistance in holding the parasail operator take responsibility for medical expenses, Karon Police explained.

Karon Police tracked down the operator, Kronchit, and had him visit Ms Han in hospital, the report noted.

The report marked no further action until Karon Police investigators went to question Mr Guo and Ms Han at Phuket airport on Feb 28.

## MONEYMAKER

Parasail safety measures were very poor, Ms Han said in her video. When she finished paying, it was as if she was being dragged into a life jacket and a service person immediately appeared in front of her without any explanation as to how it worked, she said.

She tried to say, ‘Wait. Wait’, but the Thai person just said, ‘Hurry Hurry, Safe Safe’ and dragged her into position to start her ride.

After the accident, the

‘other party’ (the parasail operator) clearly showed an angry grunt towards her, Ms Han said. She was verbally abused and accused of only wanting money, and “trying to make a small thing into a big thing”.

At Mission Hospital, surgeons successfully reset her shine bone and inserted a steel rod in her left leg. The surgery left a 15cm scar,

After the surgery, the parasail operator refused to believe the hospital report and explanations by nurses of the surgery performed on Ms Tamhan, and even refused to believe the CT scan presented.

The surgery cost B150,000, and Ms Tamhan demanded only B200,000 in damages, wanting to quickly put her experience behind her. The parasail operator refused, saying only B50,000 was available.

Ms Han warned in her video that many services in Thailand involved extreme sports. “Please do not participate. There is a risk to life,” she said.

“These people don’t see the importance of our lives. They see foreigners like us as just a source of money,” she added.

## Police target parasail safety

POL LT GEN SURAPHONG Thanomchit, Commander of Region 8 Police, led checks of parasail operators at Karon Beach last Friday (Mar 1), in leading an effort to make parasail rides for tourists safer.

The checks came in response to the incident involving a 26-year-old Chinese woman suffering a broken shin bone in a hard landing on the beach on Feb 24, attributed to a wind shift just as the woman and her male partner were coming in to land during a tandem ride (see above).

The checks immediately followed a meeting at Karon Municipality last Friday to draft standard operating procedures for parasail operators to follow.

Pol Lt Gen Suraphong chaired the meeting. Also present at the meeting, and agreeing to the new safety procedures to be followed, were Phuket Police Commander Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum and Karon Mayor Jadet Wicharasorn, as well as representatives from the Phuket Tourist Association,



Photo: Region 8 Police

the Phuket Marine Office, the Phuket office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM Phuket) and the head of the local lifeguards.

The result of the meeting saw several measures to improve parasail safety established, chief among them is for a ‘standard operating procedure (SOP) for operators to follow, and for random inspections of operators by officials from the Marine Office, DDPM-Phuket and police to ensure operators are complying with the measures.

Signs publicising how

to safely use equipment are to be posted for tourists to understand, and operators are to comply with the conditions that ensure tourists are covered by insurance in case of injury.

Officials are also to hold ‘incident response rehearsals’ to improve the response to a tourist being injured at the beach. The ‘rehearsal’ is expected to improve on the two-hour wait for an ambulance suffered by the Chinese tourist injured in the fall at Karon Beach. The delay was blamed on traffic.

The Phuket News

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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TUE MARCH 12



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Wind 4 m/s

WED MARCH 13



High: +36°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 14



High: +36°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s



Photo: Karon Police

## Driver killed as truck plunges into ravine, daughter survives

A SIX-WHEELED CRANE truck carrying a load of cement pillars plunged off the side of a narrow road in the steep hills of Karon on the night of Feb 29, killing the driver.

Pol Capt Surasak Sudmuang of the Karon Police Station was informed of the accident at 7:15pm.

Police along with a rescue unit from Karon Municipality and officers from the Karon Municipality branch of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM Karon) soon arrived at the scene, on Patak Soi 14.

The Hino six-wheel truck, registered in Kanchanaburi, was found in a ravine beside the narrow concrete road.

Beside the truck was the body of the driver, Akadach Phosa, 43.

His 12-year-old daughter had survived the accident with only minor injuries. She was taken to Chalong Hospital.

Police asked doctors at Vachira Phuket Hospital to perform a post-mortem examination on the body of Mr Akradet to determine the cause of death.

*Eakkapop Thongtub*

Thalang Police Station, where the formal complaint was filed. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

## 'Molested' prosecutor merits OAG action

Bangkok Post

A fact-finding probe will be launched in response to a media report involving the alleged sexual molestation of a female prosecutor by a senior prosecutor and an unfair transfer, reports the Office of the Attorney-General (OAG).

Watcharin Phanurat, a spokesman of the OAG, revealed at a press conference held in Bangkok on Feb 27 that the OAG had not received a complaint from the female prosecutor but rather had learned about the scandal from media reports.

The accused was identified in the news report as a deputy attorney-general, so the OAG would have to conduct

the fact-finding investigation before it could address questions surrounding the sexual scandal and the allegedly unfair transfer.

The scandal broke out on Feb 23 when a 37-year-old prosecutor filed a complaint at Thalang Police Station in Phuket claiming she had been sexually molested by a senior prosecutor when they met in Bangkok on Feb 19.

According to the complaint, the pair went to have dinner at a seafood restaurant in Wang Thong Lang district in Bangkok. At some point, the senior prosecutor hugged her without her consent, encouraged her to drink wine and invited her to his newly-built home in Ramkhamhaeng.

After they finished dinner

at 8:40pm the senior prosecutor insisted on visiting his house and asked her to accompany him in his car. She felt unable to refuse due to his seniority.

While inside the car, the senior prosecutor put his arm around her and asked to kiss her cheek. She told him to back off, upon which he told her to exit the vehicle before driving off.

The woman claimed the incident upset the senior prosecutor, and later told a meeting that the prosecutor had a history of demanding kickbacks.

The woman said she had subsequently been transferred to a position that she did not request, which she considered a form of harassment.



Photo: Amit Amor Islam

## Tourist leaves rental jeep stuck on sand at Kamala Beach

POLICE LAST SUNDAY (MAR 3) were left trying to track down who left a jeep stuck in the sand on Kamala Beach

Kamala Police were notified of the jeep abandoned on the beach at 9:32am.

Officers arrived to find the light green jeep stuck in the wet sand. One of the wheels was sunk about halfway into the sand.

Local resident Amit Amor Is-

lam posted a live broadcast online, explaining that local residents had tried to stop the person from driving onto the beach. The tourist is believed to be Chinese.

The jeep was recovered before the high tide rose.

At last report, officers were tracking down the owner of the vehicle in the hope of further tracking down who was driving the jeep at the time.

*Eakkapop Thongtub*

## Tourist lost in Layan jungle found safe

A BELARUSIAN MAN LOST in the jungle while trekking in the Layan area was found safe early Tuesday (Mar 5).

Phuket Tourist Police confirmed that the man, unnamed in their report, had been discovered unharmed just after 6am.

The Belarusian arrived in Thailand on Feb 18 and initially stayed in Bangkok, before coming to Phuket last Sunday (Mar 3), Tourist Police explained

He stayed at a hotel in the Nai Yang area for one night, then moved to stay at a hotel in Layan, Cherno Talay.

The man explained he went for a walk along the beach, then decided to go trekking in the jungle near the beachfront.

By looking at a map, he thought his journey would not be far, but he soon ended up lost.

The man managed to contact the Tourist Police at 11:18pm.



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Officers assembled a search party, which included local police and rescue workers from the Kusuldham Foundation, and began scouring the area.

The man was found safe at 5:30am.

A medical team was on hand to provide assistance as soon as the man was brought out of the jungle. The man had suffered no injuries during his night in the wild.

Although the emergency hotline in Thailand is 191, non-Thai speakers are strongly urged to instead use the Tourist Police 'I Lert U' app (available on Google Play and the App Store), which has repeatedly helped officers safely recover foreign tourists lost in the jungle in Phuket. *The Phuket News*



# Locals eye 'hands-on' community tourism

The Phuket News  
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The Phuket Provincial office of the Community Development Department (CDD) has supported the launch of 'hands-on' tourism promotion projects in Kamala and Wichit.

The projects aim to increase local people's incomes and showcase the cultural richness of the area.

The CDD branch at Kathu District Office launched its new community-based tourism project in Kamala on Feb 29.

Kathu District Chief Teeraphong Chuaychu officiated the launch of the project, titled "Activities to Promote Learning for Tourists", at Kamala Beach.

The project is to highlight community tourism at the OTOP Nawatwithi Ban Nok Lay in Moo 3, Kamala, and Ban Hua Kuan in Moo 5, Kamala.

The event was attended by prominent figures including Mukda Limnukul of the Phuket CDD office, Pan-



Photo: PR Phuket

siri Phaewpairi of the Kathu District CDD office, as well as heads of provincial and district government agencies, officials from the Kamala Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor) and local residents.

"The goal is to develop the capacity of entrepreneurs, organisation groups and households to hold activities that consumers and tourists can participate in, thereby which will generate additional income opportunities," Mr Teeraphong said.

Termed as "Decentralised

Hands-On Program Exhibition" (D-HOPE), the initiative aim to support local tourist services, enhance public relations for community entrepreneurs, and familiarise tourists and the general public with target tourism communities, he explained.

"The Community Development Department has allocated resources to support these activities, assigning the Provincial Development Office and District Community Development Office as the implementing agencies. These efforts are focused on

identifying and nurturing creative tourism programs and encouraging active participation from all sectors.

"The launch of such community-driven initiatives underscores the commitment of local authorities to sustainable development and economic resilience, promising a brighter future for Kathu District's tourism landscape and its vibrant communities," Mr Teeraphong noted.

The launch in Kamala on Feb 29 was followed by a similar launch at Ao Yon in Wichit last Saturday (Mar 2).

Muang Phuket District Chief Worasit Putjeeb presided over the official launch, joined by Ms Mukda and other officials and local residents.

The project in Wichit is to specifically support the OTOP Nawatwithi Baan Laem Panwa tourism community, in Moo 8, Wichit, Mr Worasit explained.

The aim of the project is to develop tourism initiatives through which tourists can join hands-on activities that form part of local people's daily lives, Mr Worasit said.



Chalong Mayor Ms Thanaporn. Photo: Chalong Municipality

## Chalong Municipality eyes Soi Palai upgrade

CHALONG MUNICIPALITY at its first ordinary council meeting for the year saw proposals put forward for projects requiring more than B132 million in funds, including B28mn to be spent on improving Soi Palai.

Council Chairman Khomsan Srisakulworathai presided over the meeting, held at the Chalong Municipality offices Feb 27.

Also present were Chalong Mayor Thanaporn Ongsanthipa, Deputy Mayors Sana-korn Lokaew and Thanong Ongsanthipa, Council Vice President Supawatkan Khunlak and a host of other Chalong Municipality officials, as well as local Kamnan (subdistrict chiefs) and community leaders.

The aim of the meeting

was to review projects under the five-year local development plan, for 2023-2027.

Among the motions put forward yesterday was a proposal to secure funds from the budget for Fiscal Year 2024 to spend B28mn on improving the road surface along Soi Palai in Moo 2 and Moo 3, Chalong.

Another key proposal was to secure funding from the current budget to the amount of B96.85mn to build a new Chalong Municipality office building in Moo 4, Chalong.

A third project proposed yesterday was for a reinforced concrete retaining wall to be constructed in Soi Songkhun 1, in Moo 1, Chalong, with a budget of B7.205mn.

The Phuket News

## Wichit Songkhram hounoured for founding Phuket Town

PHUKET VICE GOVERNOR Adul Chuthong last week led a ceremony to pay tribute to Phraya Wichit Songkhram, credited as the 'founding father' of Phuket Town.

The ceremony was held at the revered Phraya Wichit Songkhram Monument (Tat Rattanadilok Na Phuket) at Wat Wichit Sangkharam (Wat Kuan) in Phuket Town Feb 28.

Present were dignitaries, government officials and descendants of the respected Rattanadilok Na Phuket lineage.

"We gather here today to remember and praise the virtues of Phraya Wichit Songkhram, whose contributions laid the foundation for progress in various fields. His dedication to the betterment of our community serves as a beacon for all civil servants," said Vice Governor Adul.

Phraya Wichit Songkhram served as Governor of Phuket from 1849-1869, and died in 1890 at the age of 54. His terms as Governor spanned three reigns, from the end of King Rama III to King Rama V.

Phraya Wichit Songkhram is mostly honoured for



Photo: PR Phuket

his pioneering efforts in tin mining, particularly in the Thung Kha Bay area, which at the time was nothing more than wild undergrowth and mangrove forest.

His initiatives transformed the once-desolate area into a bustling city teeming with commerce and cultural exchange, Vice Governor Adul said.

"He developed the area into a thriving city with shops, and bringing a lot of people. There was trading of tin ore with foreigners, and a large amount of money was sent to the central government in taxes," he said.

"He was granted a fief of 10,000 rai starting at the foot of Khao Toh Sae, which he designated as the location of the Provincial Hall, Provincial

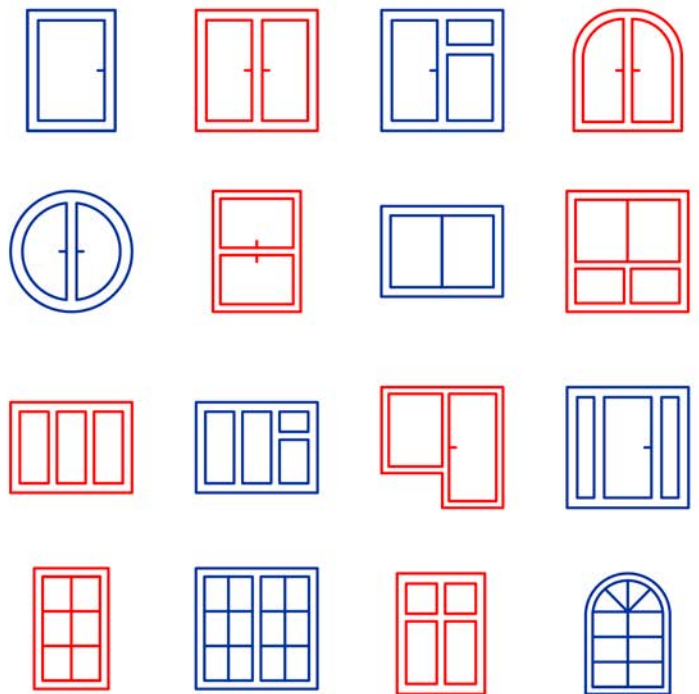
Court and various government agencies, including Wat Wichit Sangkharam (Wat Kuan)," he added.

The commemorative ceremony, held as part of an annual tradition to honour the forefathers of Phuket Town, saw the laying of wreaths by a selection of governmental bodies, private organisations and community leaders. Joining the occasion were Phuket Town Mayor Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas and Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) President Rewat Areerob.

The ceremony coincided with the anniversary of the enshrinement of the Phraya Wichit Songkhram statue at Wat Wichit Sangkharam, and included a service led by Buddhist monks. The Phuket News



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# 'Cannabis Party' is coming to an end

Dr Paul Crosio

It appears that recreational cannabis in Thailand will be coming down from its high as a new proposed law aims to steer the sector towards medical applications. If the law passes, the industry could face significant legal and regulatory changes that will cause recreational sales to go up in smoke.

The proposed framework entails a licensing regimen for cultivation, strengthened enforcement powers for law enforcement, and a limitation on the sale of smokable cannabis exclusively for medical purposes. Failure to comply with the upcoming regulations may spell potential issues for thousands of cannabis enterprises, with individuals, companies, and their leadership subject to hefty fines and even lengthy imprisonment terms.

While the draft law currently bans all non-medicinal cannabis use, its final form is subject to further legislative processes that may adjust this stance before enactment. Nevertheless, political sentiment strongly supports this tough direction, with the window for public input now closed.



Drawing parallels with Canada's policies on medical imports, the legislation could influence foreign investment in Thailand's cannabis sector. Prospective entrants into the medical cannabis sphere will be required to invest in local cultivation facilities alongside Thai partners and meet the Thai Ministry of Public Health's stringent Thai Good Agricultural and

Collection Practices (Thai GACP) and the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards. For many smaller growers, the compliance requirements pose a daunting challenge, potentially prompting a shift to the informal market or abandonment of operations in Thailand.

While some foresee the

pivot towards medicinal cannabis as a magnet for international investors, others have pointed out the formidable obstacles ahead as the government endeavors to regulate an industry that burgeoned following cannabis deregulation in 2022. Unfortunately, it appears the burgeoning recreational market will be sacrificed in favor of large-scale commercial medical cannabis

enterprises and distributors.

Navigating the transition from a recreational to a regulated medicinal market poses a significant trial for Thai authorities, who must grapple with the intricacies of cannabis legislation and enforcement. Historically, Thailand has adopted a robust approach to narcotics legislation, suggesting a similar trajectory post-legislation passage.

Particularly vulnerable are the 6,500 registered dispensaries, which will be compelled to change their businesses to clinics or alternatively streamline their offerings to focus on CBD products.

The future of the emerging edibles sector also faces scrutiny due to concerns regarding GMP compliance and recent university findings indicating THC content exceeding permissible levels.

## HOW CANNABIS BUSINESSES CAN PREPARE

Existing cannabis shops with licenses can continue to operate, but they must ensure that their operations align with the upcoming regulations. This includes prohibiting on-site cannabis smoking and refraining from selling

dried cannabis buds, reporting all sources of products, and recording information about purchasers. Any smoking areas inside shops will also be restricted.

It is also likely that there will be strict regulations on the control of raw materials used in consumer and medical use to ensure product safety and consistency. Adherence to Good Agricultural and Collection Practice (GACP) for cultivators seeking to export or focus on medical and wellness may become the norm, with an emphasis on consumer safety and consistency.

Disclaimer: Please note that the information we're sharing in this article is for general knowledge and learning purposes only. We're doing our best to keep it accurate and current, but there's a chance some details might be outdated or not entirely on the mark. What you find here shouldn't be treated as legal advice or the go-to for making major decisions, be it in business or law. Consulting a qualified legal professional is always recommended.

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# Surrogacy to become legal for foreigners

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Authorities are preparing to change the surrogacy law to welcome foreign couples to have surrogate babies in Thailand, according to the Department of Health Service Support.

Under the current law, formally known as the Protection for Children Born through Assisted Reproductive Technologies Act, surrogacy service users must be Thai, Arkhom Praditsuwon, the deputy director-general of the department said last Friday (Mar 1).

The amendment would allow foreign couples to seek surrogacy services in the country. They could bring in prospective surrogate mothers or choose Thai women for the role.

A department committee is currently drafting the relevant regulations.

"If the bill passes, it will be the first of its kind in the world," said Mr Arkhom. "Foreigners are paying special attention to this issue. When this is liberalised, the health economy should be quite active."

The bill would also spell out detailed methods to prevent human trafficking, he said.

Illegal surrogacy arrangements made by foreigners have long been a challenge for authorities in Thailand. As well, investigations are continuing into smuggling



A health professional trains expectant mothers in Khon Kaen in 2019. Photo: Bangkok Post

of frozen semen, eggs and embryos into and out of the country.

The current Act took effect in 2015, with tough regulations to control surrogacy and a ban on its use by foreign couples after several high-profile scandals that led to a crackdown on an unregulated "wombs for hire" industry. The law has since been helping many couples who have fertility problems, said Dr Sura Wisedsak, director-general of the department.

Fertility treatment is now offered at 115 facilities nationwide, consisting of 67 clinics, 31 private hospitals and 17 public hospitals.

Last year the number of newborn babies fell below 500,000 and the number is

likely to decline further this year, he said.

Each year about 800,000 people die in the country and thus the Thai population is shrinking. Citizens over age 60 now account for 20% of the total population and the proportion is projected to reach one-third by 2030.

The success rate of fertility treatment in the country has been growing and the technology used is internationally recognised, Dr Sura said.

This year, he said, the department will also push for amendments to the act to, for example, allow women's biological relatives aged 20-40 to donate eggs, and to permit women older than 55 to arrange for surrogacy mothers for their children.



Bangkok's 2023 Pride parade. Photo: Bangkok Post

## Bangkok, Phuket offered as venues

## PHUKET

THAILAND WILL OFFER Phuket and Bangkok as venues for an international LGBTQ+ summit and other activities in 2028, to show the world the country's support for gender inclusivity.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said the Cabinet had endorsed financing from the central budget for the move to bring what he called the "world cup" of LGBTQ+ and related activities to Thailand in the next four years.

"Thailand stands ready to compete for hosting the event to demonstrate the stance of the government on gender inclusivity. We are also ready to upgrade Thailand to be a destination for Pride people," he said on X last Sunday (Mar 3).

The Cabinet's synopsis released last Sunday (Mar 3) did not give any information

on the size of the budget for the campaign to hold the summit.

WorldPride is one of the most important events for LTBGQ+. It is hosted by InterPride, which is a global network of Pride movements of more than 70 countries.

The Move Forward Party and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration have jointly mobilised a push for the capital to host the global conference in 2028. Gender equality is one of the flagship policies of Move Forward.

If successful, Thailand would be the first country in Asia to host the summit. Taiwan cancelled the event scheduled there on 2025 after the organisers insisted the word "Taiwan" be removed.

Washington will replace Taiwan as the venue for WorldPride 2025. InterPride does not say on its website who will host the event this year.

Bangkok Post

## Ex-top cop indicted in 'Boss' saga

## BANGKOK

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL HAS indicted former national police chief Somyot Poompanmoung and seven others for helping Vorayuth 'Boss' Yoovidhya, the scion of the family behind the Red Bull empire, escape prosecution in connection with a 2012 hit-and-run case.

A spokesman for the Office of the Attorney-General (OAG), said on Feb 27 that the indictment was based on the recommendation of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

In September last year, the NACC accused the men of being involved in a 2020 decision by the prosecutors to drop charges against Vorayuth, which included speeding and hit-and-run.

That decision sparked a public uproar, prompting the prime minister at the time to order fresh probes into how it had happened.

The attorney-general has now instructed prosecutors at the OAG's crime suppression bureau to proceed with the indictment against the accused.

Pol Gen Somyot was indicted for malfeasance or dereliction of duty while serving as a member of the House committee on law, justice and police affairs, as well as for supporting officers to commit unlawful actions to help Vorayuth evade or receive less punishment, among other charges.

The others who face similar charges include Nate Naksuk, a former deputy attorney-general, Pol Maj Gen Thawatchai



Somyot. Photo: Bangkok Post

Mekprasertsuk, a former commander of the Royal Thai Police's Central Police Forensic Science Division, and Pol Col Viradol Tabtimdee, a former investigator at Thong Lor police station.

Education Minister Pol Gen Permpoon Chidchob, who served as an assistant national police chief at the time, was also found guilty but on a less serious disciplinary charge, according to the NACC.

Vorayuth is accused of crashing his Ferrari into a motorcycle driven by Pol Snr Sgt Maj Wichian Klanprasert in September 2012. Vorayuth allegedly refused to stop and instead sped off, dragging the victim's body around 200 metres.

Vorayuth was hit with three charges, but he has not been brought to justice. After repeatedly failing to appear in court, he fled the country in 2017.

The statute of limitations on some charges has already expired. The last charge against him, of reckless driving causing death, will expire in 2027. Bangkok Post

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# What bottled water really does to you

Water in plastic bottles is literally sold by the gallon at convenience stores across the island. Photo: The Phuket News



## SUSTAINABLY YOURS

Palmer Owyong

**D**rive by any SuperCheap, 7-Eleven, Lotus's or Big C and you will see hundreds of plastic water bottles in front of the store baking in the hot tropical sun. You will also see both Thais and expats eagerly carrying palettes of them back to their cars. The question that has always puzzled me is, why?

We all know that the world has a plastic problem and that it is bad in Phuket, where bottles, bags and packaging clog our klongs, clutter our

beaches and pollute our oceans. Nevertheless, on any given day, you will see locals and tourists alike guzzling litres of bottled water on every street corner and in every restaurant around the island.

In my previous article '7 Reasons to Stop Drinking Bottled Water', I wrote about how bottled water is depleting water supplies, creating pollution, destroying the environment, contributing to climate change, costing us money and hurting our health.

### Why plastic pollution is worse than you think

A January 2024 study by scientists at Columbia University vs. Rutgers University shows that bottled water may be

10-100 times worse for our health than originally suspected. This is because microscopic plastic pollutants that are smaller than 1 micrometre (1µm – 1 millionth of a metre, or 1/25,000th of an inch), also known as nanoplastics, can pass into the bloodstream, the intestines and the lungs. From there, they can enter the heart and other organs and can even get through the blood-brain barrier.

Scientists have been warning us about the threat from microplastics for years and estimate that each of us consumes about 1 credit card (5 grammes) of plastic each week, breathing it into our lungs from shedding fibres of clothes and fabric and eating and drinking it through contaminated food and water.

Previous studies measured only particles that ranged from 5mm to 1µm and found that a one-litre water bottle could contain tens of thousands of microplastics.

This recent study, published Jan 8, 2024 in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, measured particles smaller than 1µm using new laser technology and found that there were between 10-100 times more fragments than originally thought. In fact, about 90% of the particles inside of a water bottle are nanoplastics smaller than 1µm.

Scientists suspect that micro and nanoplastics are created from small abrasions that occur when the bottle cap is unscrewed or when a bottle is squeezed. Exposure to heat can also cause plastic to break down.

### Do nanoplastics harm our health?

Although there are not many studies on how microplastics or nanoplastic affect human health, there is evidence that the chemicals used in plastic production are toxic to humans and other mammals, especially to our reproductive health.

For example, a study published in the medical journal *Annals of Global Health* found that workers involved in plastic production, plastic recycling workers and those living near plastic manufacturing plants have an increased risk of cancers, including leukaemia, lung, lymphoma, brain, breast and mesothelioma. They also have higher levels of cardiovascular disease, asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). Children or infants in the womb are at particularly high risk.

Another recent study published in

the journal *Toxicological Sciences* studied tissue samples of 62 placentas and found microplastics in every single one of them. Most of the particles were from polyethylene, or PET, the most common type of plastic used to make bottles and bags. Researchers believe that these particles can cause inflammation in our cells, resulting in diseases including colon cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and even a decline in sperm count.

The effects on placentas are still unknown, but according to Prof Campen from the University of New Mexico, who led the research, the concentration of microplastics in placentas was especially troubling because the tissue grows for only eight months, but "other organs of your body are accumulating over much longer periods of time."

### How to reduce your exposure to plastic

The problem is that plastic has become ubiquitous and scientists have found pieces of it in remote locations far away from humans, such as the Marianna Trench and the Arctic. So, although you will not be able to eliminate your exposure to plastic particles, here are some ways you can reduce it:

1. Buy a water filter for your tap. These cost less than B3,000 on Lazada. You can also buy more complex, expensive filtration systems at HomePro.
2. Get water from a machine. There are reverse-osmosis water machines that cost B1 per litre of filtered water located all over the island. They are usually near a 7-Eleven or Lotus's. To reduce your exposure to plastic, buy a metal, glass or ceramic container to store your water in.

3. Do not microwave food in plastic containers, even if it says they are microwave safe, because it can leach dangerous chemicals into your food.

4. Stop using plastic wrap to cover your food. These contain phthalates, a chemical used to make it more flexible and are detrimental to human health.

The plastic problem is not going away anytime soon. Even though you will not be able to stop using it entirely, until food manufacturers change their packaging, you can at least minimise your exposure to microplastics and nanoplastics by not continuing to drink bottled water.

Palmer Owyong is the author of 'Solving the Climate Crisis: A Community Guide to Solving the Biggest Problem On the Planet.' You can download the first three chapters from his blog [PalmerOwyong.me](https://palmerowyoung.me)

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Timothée Chalamet in *Dune: Part Two* (2024). Image: IMDbSandworms brought to war in '*Dune: Part Two*' (2024). Image: IMDb

# 'Dune: Part Two' delivers mightily

David Griffiths

When it was announced back in 2020 that director Denis Villeneuve (*Blade Runner 2049*) was tackling the project of bringing the novels of Frank Herbert's '*Dune*' odyssey to the big screen, science fiction fans right across the world waited with bated breath.

Herbert's work is considered a masterpiece within the sci-fi realm and previous attempts to adapt it for the screen had, in the eyes of hardcore fans, failed. But then, after some mild COVID interruptions, in 2021 Villeneuve's first *Dune* film landed in cinemas and the verdict was that not only had Villeneuve done the unthinkable and made a watchable *Dune* movie, he too had now delivered something that also deserved the masterpiece tag.

Not surprisingly, the studio behind the film quickly signed contracts to see Villeneuve and his cast continue the odyssey with *Dune: Part Two*, but then came another nagging feeling for fans – what if Villeneuve could not capture the brilliance of the first film? Well if that has been your worry, then you can be reassured, because *Dune: Part Two* is sensational and lifts this sci-fi franchise into the rare air normally reserved for the original *Star Wars* trilogy.

*Dune: Part Two* begins with Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet – *Wonka*) trying to fit into life with the Fremen people with mixed results. On one hand, the warrior Stilgar (Javier Bardem – *Skyfall*) believes that Paul is the foretold Messiah, although Chani (Zendaya – *Spider-Man: Far From Home*) and her friends believe that is just an old wife's tale. Her friends don't even believe that Paul should be allowed to stay with them.

However, the spiritually gifted Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson – *The Greatest Showman*) continues pushing the idea with the religiously minded Fremen that Paul is the Messiah, while Chani is battling her romantic feelings for Paul.

Meanwhile, the Emperor (Christopher Walken – *Catch Me If You Can*), is trying to hide the fact from the rest of the universe that he is responsible for the genocide of the Atreides family, while Baron Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgård – *Good Will Hunting*) is frustrated that Beast Rabban (Dave Bautista – *Guardians of the Galaxy*) is

making no headway in getting rid of the Fremen people, so has turned to Feyd-Rautha (Austin Butler – *Elvis*) to take on the deadly mission.

As you can probably tell from that plot description, the story here is pretty in-depth, but somehow Villeneuve and fellow screenwriter Jon Spaihts (*Prometheus*) manage to bring it to the screen so that it is completely understandable and surprisingly easy to follow. The way the story plays out on the script makes it feel like a cross between *Game of Thrones* and *Star Wars* and that mix seems to work amazingly well.

What sets the *Dune* franchise aside from other films in its genre though is that Villeneuve and his cinematographer, Greig Fraser (*The Batman*), are willing to take some pretty big risks with the way the film is presented. In the first film we saw their decision to portray the Fremen's planet in a near washed-out yellow haze for most shots and this time around they take that even further making the scenes set on Feyd-Rautha's planet almost black and white. While it may not seem like much it is one of the reasons why when you watch the film the audience feels like they have transported to these planets and they're part of the action. There are very few films that are such an immersive experience for their audience as these two *Dune* films are.

When you add that to the fact that Villeneuve is a talented enough filmmaker to be able to get every ounce of suspense out of a scene, whether it features an epic battle or just two characters having an important emotionally filled discussion, and you start to realise what a talented storyteller he really is.

More of that genius is also on show when it is revealed that he is not frightened to time jump with the script – characters will be talking about doing an event and then the film will jump to after the event and somehow he manages to do it in such a way that the audience does not feel like they have been ripped off by not seeing it play out on the screen.

The other key to *Dune: Part Two* working so well is the perfect casting that this franchise has. Timothée Chalamet was born to play Paul Atreides and his range of acting easily allows him to pull off the films more dramatic dialogue scenes just as well as his action sequences. At one point he yells at Jessica to make a point and such is the power of his performance

and voice it made every person in the cinema jump.

He is also surrounded by actors and actresses who pull off brilliant portrayals of Herbert's characters. Javier Bardem and Zendaya are brilliant this time around while Austin Butler takes his acting to a whole new level in his unrecognisable performance as this film's major villain.

Then there are the likes of Florence Pugh (*Lady Macbeth*) and Charlotte Rampling (*Melancholia*), who may have smaller roles this time around but still bring their A-Game to the screen every time they appear.

*Dune: Part Two* not only continues the brilliance of the first film but is a film that certainly sets a new bar for

just how good sci-fi films should be. With stunning visuals, an engaging story and a cast at their very best this is a film that even the most critical film goers will want to watch over and over. *Dune: Part Two* is truly a masterful piece of work.

*Dune: Part Two* is currently screening in Phuket and is rated 'G'.  
5/5 Stars

David Griffiths has been working as a film and music reviewer for over 20 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. He is also an accredited reviewer for Rotten Tomatoes. You can follow him at [www.facebook.com/subcultureentertainmentaus](http://www.facebook.com/subcultureentertainmentaus)



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POP QUIZ

- 1. Triton is a moon of which planet?
- 2. The Australian film 'Crocodile Dundee' was released in which year?
- 3. Which name did Karl Marx give to all four of his daughters?
- 4. In the northern hemisphere, moss mostly grows on which side of trees – north, south, east or west?
- 5. Which cathedral contains the world's oldest working clock and the best surviving copy of the four original Magna Cartas?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

  - 1. Boutique
  - 5. Con game
  - 9. Orthodox Jew
  - 14. Deli order
  - 15. Priest
  - 16. Ancient market
  - 17. Controversial orchard spray
  - 18. Type of acid
  - 19. Beauty \_\_\_\_
  - 20. Get the top prize
  - 23. Sayings attributed to Jesus
  - 24. Music genre
  - 25. Bard of \_\_\_\_ (Shakespeare)
  - 28. Unit of resistance
  - 33. In place of
  - 36. In abeyance
  - 39. Mix
  - 40. Triumph despite obstacles
  - 44. Appraise
  - 45. 1982 World Cup site
  - 46. Fixed
  - 47. One after another?
  - 50. Table extender
  - 52. Orpheus' instrument
  - 55. Crown
  - 59. Earn a second term in office,
- Down

  - 1. Wrap
  - 2. Prefix with centric
  - 3. Big ape
  - 4. Merchant of Venice heroine
  - 5. Turn on a pivot
  - 6. Atkins diet no-no
  - 7. Independent chieftains
  - 8. Former Portuguese province
  - 9. Bother
  - 10. Biology lab supply
  - 11. They are sung singly
  - 12. Inflexible
  - 13. "Shoot!"
  - 21. Devastation
  - 22. Bottom line
  - 26. Plastic \_\_\_\_ Band
- 27. Pilfers
  - 29. Sticky stuff
  - 30. Auto pioneer
  - 31. Harbor
  - 32. The bulk
  - 33. Driver's warning
  - 34. Horse course
  - 35. Anatomical network
  - 37. Porcino
  - 38. Common Latin abbr.
  - 41. Race
  - 42. Hasten
  - 43. Related on one's mother's side
  - 48. Jubilant
  - 49. Wall Street locale
  - 51. Discoverer
  - 53. River of Lyon
  - 54. Rabbit description
  - 56. Like a gymnast
  - 57. Played over
  - 58. Don't exist
  - 59. Fiasco
  - 60. Carbon compound
  - 61. China setting
  - 62. Relative of a gull
  - 63. Guide
  - 64. Parrot type

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Neptune; 2) 1986; 3) Jenny (after his wife); 4) North; 5) Salisbury Cathedral

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
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59	60	61	62						63	64				
65								66				67		
68								69				70		
71								72				73		

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

14	V	O	W	S	B	E	A	S	T	15	A	G	A	R		
15	A	R	I	A	A	S	C	I	T	16	G	I	B	E		
17	C	A	L	L	O	N	T	H	E	18	C	A	R	P	E	T
19	U	N	D	E	R	R	E	V	E	20	T	A	S	T	E	
21	A	G	E	A	H	A	E	S	T							
22	A	L	O	N	G	A	L	A	S	23	K	A				
24	I	N	S	T	A	G	A	L	E	25	C	T	O	R		
26	C	E	N	S	U	R	E	S	E	27	V	E	R	E	L	Y
28	O	R	I	E	L	S	P	Y	A	29	E	T	A	L		
30	N	O	T	A	T	E	S	E	G	31	O	S				
32	I	R	E	B	E	T	U	P	S							
33	A	L	A	R	M	M	B	A	E	34	I	S	S	U	E	
35	G	I	V	E	O	N	E	A	L	36	E	C	T	U	R	E
37	U	S	E	D	B	E	L	L	A	38	A	R	I	D		
39	E	A	R	S	C	R	E	S	T	40	G	Y	M	S		

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

in 3 children in the UK, even before COVID-19, spent less time outside than maximum-security inmates did.

40

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

750,000

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

1.5 million

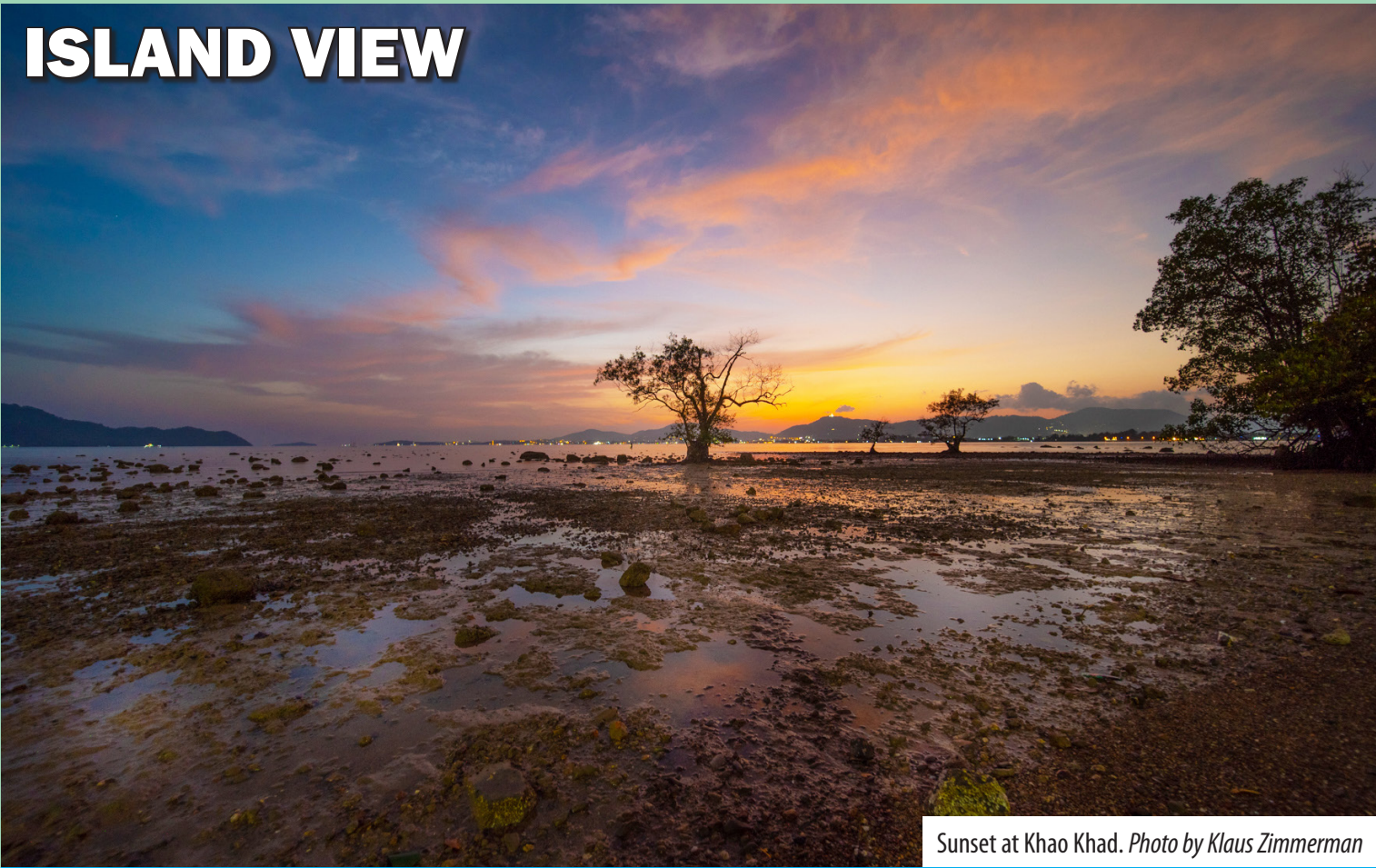
US dollars is how much one bottle of 'Shumukh by Nabeel' perfume costs, the most expensive perfume in the world.

1.5 trillion

US dollars is how much the world's 500 richest people made in 2023.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Sunset at Khao Khad. Photo by Klaus Zimmerman

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

This week in history

**Mar 8, 2014**  
Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, carrying a total of 239 people, disappears en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

**Mar 9, 141 BC**  
Liu Che, posthumously known as Emperor Wu of Han, assumes the throne over the Han dynasty of China.

**Mar 10, 1909**  
Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909: Thailand relinquishes its sovereignty over the Ma-

lay states of Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu, which become British protectorates.

**Mar 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, 1881**  
Andrew Watson makes his



Police guard a piece of plane wreckage, later confirmed to be from MH370, that washed up on remote Reunion Island. Photo: AFP / Yannick Piton

Scotland debut as the world's first black international football player and captain.

**Mar 13, 1921**  
Mongolia is proclaimed an independent monarchy, ruled by Russian military officer Roman von Ungern-Sternberg (a staunch anti-communist) as a dictator.

**Mar 14, 44 BC**  
Casca and Cassius decide, on the night before the Assassination of Julius Caesar, that Mark Antony should live.

Source: Wikipedia



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The **map** of PHUKET English 中文 Русский

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**FRI** 8 MAR

**MON** 11 MAR

**THU** 14 MAR

**FRI** 5 APR

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**SUN** 10 MAR

**WED** 13 MAR

**SAT** 23 MAR

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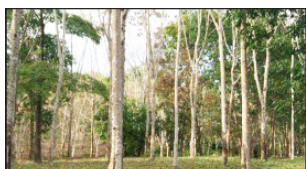
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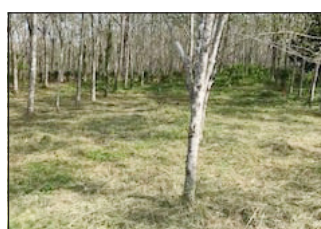
Mercedes Benz GLE350d 4MATIC Coupe. Price 3,250,000 THB Year: 2017. Mileage: 133,00 km. Excellent condition. Second owner. Color: Grey (Silver). Engine: 3,987cc. Type: Diesel. Horsepower: 258hp. Transmission: A/T. Drivetrain: AWD. Sunroof including, Sun Blind, Tinted Glass. Side Steps. Special Features Lights: Main Beam Assist, Dynamic Cornering Lights, Headlight Range Adjustment. Parking Sensors. Park Assist Rear Camera. Contact Phone: +66986709078. WhatsApp+79857673913

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## ETHERHOME AGENT DAY EVENT

A number of local real estate agents and supporters attended the opening of the show unit of Etherhome at their Chalong office on Feb 22. Etherhome would like to extend their thanks to all by offering a special commission for those who attended the event. For those of you who missed the event, worry not, they will be hosting another shortly. So stay tuned. For information on Etherhome visit [eden-development.co.th](http://eden-development.co.th)



## AUSTRALIAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - SOUTHERN CHAPTER EVENT

A very informative evening with presentations from Dr Chayanon Phucharoen - Associate Professor of Economics at PSU, Jayne MacDougall - Executive Director of Phuket Hotel Association and Khun Bhumikitti - President of Phuket Sustainable Tourism Foundation on where Phuket is headed in terms of sustainability, environmental and economic growth. Held at nH Boat Lagoon on Feb 28, the evening concluded with networking overlooking the marina of Phuket Boat Lagoon.



# Max and Red Bull off to a flier

## FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato  
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen waltzed to an easy victory at the Bahrain Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 3) ahead of teammate Sergio Pérez in an ominous start to the season for Red Bull Racing.

Verstappen was untroubled launching from pole, where he needed only fend off an ambitious attempt at the lead from Charles Leclerc starting on the front row.

The Ferrari driver dispatched, Verstappen was allowed to serenely stretch his advantage, which ballooned to an eventual 22.457 seconds over Pérez in the sister car at the chequered flag.

As well as starting from pole, the reigning champion led every lap and collected the bonus point for fastest lap of the race, completing a rare fifth career grand slam, drawing him level with Alberto Ascari and Michael Schumacher. Only Jim Clark and Lewis Hamilton have more.

Emerging from his car looking like he had enough energy to run the race several more times without breaking a sweat, Verstappen praised his team for delivering him a rare perfect weekend.

"I think today went even better than expected. It couldn't have been



Max Verstappen crosses the finish line to win the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 3). Photo: AFP

better," said the Dutchman.

Pérez started fifth, picking up a place off the line and then making easy work of George Russell and Leclerc to rise to second, though he was no match for his leading teammate.

Carlos Sainz completed the podium after a strong race from fourth on the grid, making two bold passes on teammate Leclerc on either side of the pit stop window and breezing past Russell to claim a spot inside the top three.

The Spaniard was optimistic that he could challenge Pérez, but the Mexican had the benefit of the faster

soft tyre at his second pit stop, while the Ferrari driver was left with only the slower hard compound, leaving him almost three seconds adrift at the finish line.

Leclerc and Russell finished fourth and fifth after having looked like the likely podium contenders early in the race before both were hamstrung by technical problems that left them limping home.

Leclerc's car developed a severe brake temperature imbalance on the front axle, causing him to lock up frequently and run off track.

Russell's Mercedes had been configured without enough cooling,

and he was required to lift and coast from early in the race to prevent his car from overheating.

### COOLING ISSUES

McLaren teammates Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri finished sixth and eighth and sandwiched Lewis Hamilton in seventh, the second Mercedes driver likewise afflicted with cooling issues. The closely matched trio finished approximately 50 seconds behind Verstappen.

Aston Martin teammates Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll quietly completed the top 10 as the last cars on the lead lap, though

neither was in contention for more. Stroll's race was particularly strong after he was tipped into a spin by Nico Hülkenberg at the first turn, leaving him at the back of the pack on the first lap.

Zhou Guanyu unexpectedly led home the midfield for Sauber ahead of Haas driver Kevin Magnussen.

Both were being pursued in the final laps by RB teammates Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda, who had their order controversially swapped in the final laps to give the Australian an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to make up ground.

Tsunoda responded angrily to the team order and delayed the switch, potentially costing Ricciardo a better shot at a higher finish.

The Japanese driver bizarrely took out his frustration on his teammate on the cool-down lap, dive-bombing him into a corner and almost causing a collision.

Thai driver Alex Albon was a quiet 15<sup>th</sup> ahead of Hülkenberg – who needed a new front wing after his first-lap incident with Stroll – and Alpine teammates Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly on a dire uncompetitive weekend for the French marque.

Valtteri Bottas finished 19<sup>th</sup> following a super long 50-second pit stop for a stuck wheel nut, and Logan Sargeant finished last after needing to change his steering wheel after 10 laps due to an electronics issue.

## French beat Great Britain in LA to capture Sevens rugby title

### RUGBY SEVENS

FRANCE BEAT GREAT BRITAIN 21-0 in the championship match in Los Angeles last Sunday (Mar 3) to capture the World Rugby SVNS Series title, completing a stellar debut for Antoine Dupont.

Antoine Zeghdar's try and a conversion by Stephen Perez-Edo Martin in the seventh minute lifted France ahead 7-0 at half-time.

Martin converted his own try in the ninth minute for a 14-0 French lead and Theo Fornier added a try in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute and converted to seal France's championship.

The crown marked a triumphant debut in the format for former World Rugby Player of the Year Dupont, France's 15-a-side captain and scrum-half.

Dupont switched to sevens in a bid to compete for Paris Olympic gold later this year. He debuted two weeks ago when France finished third in Vancouver and helped deliver the squad's first title of the season.

In the earlier semi-finals, France held off Ireland 26-24 while Great Britain edged Spain 10-7.

France advanced when Ireland's Billy Dardis missed a conversion kick after Terry Kennedy scored his second try in the 15<sup>th</sup> minute.

Rayan Rebbadj delivered a try and three conversions for France, which also had tries from Zeghdar, Dupont and Paulin Riva.



The French players celebrate their title success in Los Angeles. Photo: AFP

The French had seized a 26-12 lead before Zac Ward and Kennedy struck in the final minutes to lift the Irish within reach.

In the other semi-final, Robbie Ferguson's try in the fifth minute gave Great Britain a 5-0 half-time lead and Alex Davis added another in the ninth minute that made the difference.

Tobias Sainz-Trapaga scored a try for the Spaniards in the 12<sup>th</sup> minute and Juan Ramos added a conversion but it was too little and too late.

In the women's final, Michaela Blyde scored three tries to power second-place New Zealand over series leader Australia 29-14.

In the semi-finals, the Aussies ousted the United States 26-19 and the Kiwis eliminated Canada 31-12. AFP

## Prajanchai chases double-champ status

### MMA

A CHAMPION VERSUS champion showdown has been announced for ONE Lumpinee 58 in Bangkok.

ONE strawweight kickboxing world champion Jonathan Di Bella will put his title on the line against divisional Muay Thai king Prajanchai PK Saenchai at Lumpinee Boxing Stadium on Apr 5.

The blockbuster event will mark the second defence of Di Bella's crown that he won in an instant classic with Zhang Peimian in 2022.

The Italian-Canadian superstar turned back a determined Danial Williams in his first defence of the inaugural strawweight kickboxing strap. In fact, his speed and incredible fighting scored him a dominant unanimous decision at ONE Fight Night 15 last October.

The hard-fought victory brought his unblemished professional kickboxing record to 12-0.

Prajanchai, on the other hand, reclaimed his place at the top of the strawweight Muay Thai division with a crushing first-round knockout win over Joseph Lasiri last December.



Di Bella (left) and Prajanchai will face off on Apr 5. Photo: Bangkok Post

The 29-year-old completed his redemption story after suffering an upset loss to Lasiri in 2022.

He won the interim strawweight Muay Thai strap with a second-round TKO win over Sam-A Gaiyanghadao last June, his second victory over the Thai legend.

In between those wins, Prajanchai reminded the world that his skills translate perfectly to the kickboxing rule set with a decision win over tough Algerian Akram Hamidi to set the scene for his date with Di Bella.

Now, he'll be shooting for double-champ status when he meets Di Bella in a battle between two of the best in the strawweight striking ranks.

Prajanchai is a former WBA Asia South boxing champion, and his pugilistic prowess has regularly been on display across his five victories under the ONE banner.

Di Bella, for his part, has also regularly practised "the sweet science," and the Team Di Bella Kickboxing representative has a pair of professional wins to his name as a boxer.

Di Bella v Prajanchai adds to the previously announced ONE Lumpinee 58 main event between old foes Superbon Singha Mawynn and Marat Grigorian.

The pair will clash for the ONE interim featherweight kickboxing world title.

Bangkok Post



# City still Manchester top dogs

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Phil Foden scored twice as Manchester City came from behind to beat Manchester United 3-1 last Sunday (Mar 3) and close to within one point of Premier League leaders Liverpool.

Erling Haaland also struck in stoppage time to leave the title race perfectly poised ahead of City's trip to Liverpool this Sunday (Mar 10).

Marcus Rashford's wonder strike had fired United into a shock lead at the Etihad before Haaland was then guilty of a miss that will go down in Premier League folklore when he fired over with an open goal just before half-time.

Foden ensured City did not slip up in the title race as he blasted into the top corner to level and produced a composed finish 10 minutes from time before Haaland and atoned for his earlier miss.

An 11<sup>th</sup> league defeat of the season for United leaves Erik ten Hag's men 11 points adrift of the top four with 11 games remaining.

It came after Darwin Nunez headed in a 99<sup>th</sup> minute winner as injury-hit Liverpool beat Nottingham Forest last Saturday.

The Reds were again without a host of star names including Mohamed Salah, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Alisson Becker and Diogo Jota.

But there was some light at the end of the tunnel with Nunez and Dominik Szoboszlai making their returns as



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (left) and Bernardo Silva celebrate the second goal by Phil Foden (right) in the derby last Sunday (Mar 3). Photo: AFP

second-half substitutes.

The Uruguayan made the telling impact with virtually the last touch of the game, rising to flick home Alexis Mac Allister's cross and secure Liverpool's first win at the City Ground since 1984.

Arsenal remain on the tails of both City and Liverpool as they entered the record books with a 6-0 demolition of Sheffield United on Monday.

Mikel Arteta's men became the first side to ever win three consecutive away games in the English top-flight by five or more goals while the Blades also set a new record by becoming the first English top-flight side to concede five or more goals in three straight home matches.

Elsewhere Aston Villa needed Lucas Digne's late winner to beat relegation-

threatened Luton 3-2 after Ollie Watkins struck twice for Villa in the first 38 minutes to take his tally for the season to 21. Villa are fourth in the table on 55 points.

Tottenham are in fifth on 50 points after they left it late to inflict Oliver Glasner's first defeat as Palace boss with a 3-1 win thanks to goals from Timo Werner, Cristian Romero and captain Son Heung-min.

Newcastle beat Wolves 3-0, Brighton were comfortably beaten 3-0 at Fulham while Chelsea fans chanted for the sacking of Mauricio Pochettino after a 2-2 draw at Brentford.

Everton's relegation concerns still linger after a 3-1 home defeat to West Ham while Bournemouth beat Burnley 2-0.



Gianni Infantino. Photo: AFP

## FIFA gives red card to blue card proposal

### FOOTBALL

FIFA IS OPPOSED TO A proposal by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) for a "blue card", president Gianni Infantino says, adding he was unaware of the idea before it caught the public eye.

Football's rule-making body has floated the idea of a "blue card", which would give referees the power to send players off for 10 minutes for dissent or for committing fouls deemed to be cynical. It was discussed with FIFA at the IFAB annual general meeting in Scotland on Mar 1.

"There will not be any blue cards used at elite level. This is a topic that is non-existent for us," Infantino said.

"FIFA is completely opposed to blue cards. I was not

aware of this topic. I think FIFA has a say in IFAB. If you want a headline, it is 'red card to the blue card'.

"We are always open to look at ideas and proposals. But once you look at it, you also have to protect the essence and tradition of the game. There is no blue card."

IFAB proposed that players shown blue cards would be sent to a "sin-bin" for 10 minutes, as part of a trial aimed at improving on-pitch behaviour.

At present, players shown a red card or two yellow cards are expelled for the rest of the game.

Sin bins have been used at grassroots level in England for dissent, but the trial could also include cynical fouls, which are rampant at the higher levels of the sport.

AFP

## FAT extends Ishii's contract

### FOOTBALL

JAPANESE COACH Masatada Ishii has signed a contract that will keep him at the helm of the Thailand national men's team until the conclusion of the 2026 FIFA World Cup finals in July 2026.

The development was confirmed by newly elected Football Association of Thailand (FAT) president Nualphan Lamsam on Feb 28.

Additionally, it was announced that Ishii would also serve as an advisor to the national men's U23 team.

After a string of disappointing results under former War Elephants coach Mano Polking, Nualphan had invited Ishii to take over the reins of the national squad in November last year.

The Thais had an impressive run under Ishii at the 2024 AFC Asian Cup in Qatar, which concluded on Feb 10. The War Elephants finished second in their group to advance to the last 16 stage of the tournament before they lost 2-1 to



FAT president Nualphan Lamsam (left) with Masatada Ishii. Photo: Bangkok Post

Uzbekistan.

Ishii's next assignment will be the two crucial home-and-away qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. Thailand are scheduled to play Group C favourites South Korea in Seoul in the second phase of the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup finals on Mar 21.

The two sides will face off again on Mar 26 at Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium.

The South Koreans made it to the semi-finals of the Asian Cup but were far from impressive.

The Korea Football Association recently sacked national team coach Juergen Klinsmann after their semi-final exit to Jordan amid criticism of his leadership.

In his home land Ishii helped Kashima Antlers win the Luvan Cup in 2015, the J-League title and the Emperor Cup in 2016 and the Japanese Super Cup in 2017.

Under his supervision, Kashima Antlers also finished runners-up in the FIFA Club World Cup in 2016.

In 2019, he became the head coach of Samut Prakan City before moving to Buriram United with whom he recorded sweeps of all three domestic titles (the Thai League 1, FA Cup and League Cup) twice in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 seasons.

Ishii took over from Brazilian-German Polking, who left the position on Nov 22.

Bangkok Post

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# Sport



**Red Bull lay down intent in Bahrain > p14**

## BIG HIT!

### Celebrations as Dojo turns four



Dojo students and lead instructor Alexis (right) with World and European judo champion Namanja Majdov (centre). Photo: Alexis Plantard

#### MMA

**Ben Tirebuck**  
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The Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket celebrated its fourth anniversary last month and it is fair to say the establishment has come a very long way in a very short time.

Opening its doors at the outset of COVID-19 in early 2020 was always going to throw down a myriad of challenges for the Dojo, but they are ones that founder Alexis Plantard navigated well.

Once restrictions were relaxed, the Dojo reopened to the public and in no time was making its mark. Participating at the National Jiu-Jitsu championships in Bangkok in November 2020, Alexis' team

of young students emerged with an incredible 18 medals, including eight golds, nine silver and one bronze – not bad given they had only been in training for a couple of months.

It set the tone for what was to come under the watchful eye of a man who is no slouch himself on the mat. Consistently among the medal places at a variety of international competitions, Alexis most recently won a silver medal in the men's 90-kilogramme weight class at the Hong Kong International Judo Open on Feb 25. Two weeks prior, he won silver at the national French Sambo wrestling tournament to qualify for the world championships in Tajikistan in October. (Sambo sees traditional wrestling techniques

fused with jiu-jitsu and judo moves).

#### HONOUR AND RESPECT

French national Alexis teaches judo, jiu-jitsu and wrestling at the Dojo, situated at the entertainment and lifestyle complex in Cherng Talay. The number of students has blossomed since those early days and now boasts a colourful collection of characters who all are showing excellent signs of progress, ranging in age from seven to 14.

"All the students have flourished in their own ways and are collectively making great strides," Alexis told us. "The likes of David, Tomo, Gabin, Danil, Oscar, Oliver, Sota, Kichii, Leo, Mayel, Timur, Naithon, Damir, Rayan and Meera have not only been

regularly securing medals at international level competitions but developing the martial arts code of conduct to become better versions of themselves."

Alexis explained to *The Phuket News* not long after opening in 2020 that the true objective of the Dojo is to develop martial arts values. "It's not about actually getting a black belt but more so about how to conduct oneself with honour and respect under the code of a black belt. The moral code of martial arts is to teach kids how to become a good person."

Developing such values of respect, discipline and honour is to be applauded, particularly in a world that fast seems to be losing a grasp on such notions. Alexis leads by

example and respects his art and his students, something that is clearly reciprocated.

#### COMMENDABLE

Among last year's highlights was the team securing number one national ranking within Thailand in the under-12 age classification at the National Championships of Judo in Nakhon Sri Thammarat in April.

To close out the year, 19 members of the Dojo team joined 550 other athletes from more than 40 clubs to participate at the Malaysian Judo Open in December where an incredible 17 medals were amassed.

Most recently eight of the team were in action at the Sydney Open Judo Championships last weekend (Mar 2-3) where

a further nine medals were secured, including a bronze for newcomer Miguel. Prior to that it was the Philippines Open Judo Championships (Jan 13-14) where the team shone to win six golds as part of a seven-medal haul.

It is clear Alexis is creating magic within the four walls of the Dojo by not only developing his students physically but mentally, installing commendable values and setting them on the right path in life. The Dojo has come a long way since those challenging early days of 2020 and the only issue nowadays is whether the shelving at the Blue Tree venue is big enough to hold the masses of medals and trophies that have amassed and will no doubt continue to do so moving forward.

## Blue Canyon Phuket Ladies Championship attracts top talent

#### GOLF

ELEVEN THAI GOLFERS will be up against some of the top KLPGA players at the inaugural Blue Canyon Ladies Championship 2024 in Phuket next weekend (Mar 15-17).

The tournament is jointly organised by Blue Canyon Country Club, renowned as one of Thailand's most picturesque golf courses, and the Korean Ladies Professional Golf Tour (KLPGA).

Set against the stunning backdrop of Blue Canyon Country Club, the premier 54-hole no-cut

tournament boasts a prize purse of US\$650,000 (approximately B22,750,000).

Among the entrants are 11 local players – the largest Thai contingent ever witnessed in a KLPGA Tour event – and four of the top 10 players on the KLPGA Tour including Lee Ye-Won (KLPGA Tour No.1), Kim Su-Ji (No.3), Park Ji-Young (No.4) and Park Hyun-Kyung (No. 6).

"I'm thrilled and grateful for the chance to participate in this event. I've previously competed in the KLPGA Tour, once in South Korea on an invitation. Now, having the opportunity to play in Thailand fills me with joy," said former Thailand's



**Pornanong Phatlum (right), Kornkamol Sukaree (centre) and amateur Navaporn Soontreeyapas at the Mar 1 press conference. Photo: Bangkok Post**

No.1 golfer Pornanong Phatlum, winner of 21 professional titles and runner-up in the 2018 Women's British Open, during a press conference last Friday (Mar 1).

"The prospect of playing at the

esteemed Blue Canyon Golf Course, renowned as one of Thailand's premier courses, adds a special significance to this occasion," she added.

"Thailand's golf industry has seen remarkable growth and development, with our golfers increasingly making their mark internationally. This has piqued the interest of parents, who now see golf as a sport they want to introduce to their children. I see this as a positive sign for the future of golf in Thailand," Pornanong explained.

Tickets for the tournament are available for purchase at Blue Canyon Country Club (tel 062-245-7999). Full access passes for all three days of

the tournament are priced at B1,000, while admission for Saturday and Sunday is priced at B800. Daily tickets are available at prices ranging from B400-500.

Alternatively, fans can indulge in the luxurious BBC Lodge package, which offers exclusive amenities at the BBC Terrace, including complimentary food service, exciting lucky draw prizes and access to exclusive competitions.

The BBC Lodge package for all three days is priced at B7,500, with Saturday and Sunday admission available at B5,000. Single-day tickets range from B2,500-3,000.

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