

**BANYAN LAUNCHES US\$2BN, 6,000-UNIT PROJECT AT LAGUNA > PAGE 6**

# NET ZERO



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

## CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030: OFFICIALS TARGET 30% EMISSIONS IN ONE YEAR

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

Phuket officials have set their sights on achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, with the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 30% within just one year.

The ambitious plan was unveiled during a press conference held on Feb 1, where the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation, in collaboration with the local community, presented their strategy.

Joining the project are the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), Phuket City Municipality's Environment and Pollution Control Office, and the Pollution Control Department.

### STEPPING UP

Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, Chairman of the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation, outlined the comprehensive strategy. As a response to Thailand's commitment at COP 26 to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The initiative kicks off with operations in the Thalang Rd area, serving as a model before extending across the entire province. The collaboration involves a meticulous study of carbon dioxide emissions from key sources, such as vehicles, wastewater, electricity consumption and waste. The goal is to reduce carbon emissions from these sources by 30% within the next 12 months, with regular assessments every quarter.

To promote waste separation,

the foundation plans to distribute colour-coded garbage bags in the Old Town area, encouraging residents and businesses to cooperate in the recycling effort. This includes separating organic waste, which will be collected and converted into soil improver, contributing to a more sustainable waste management system.

PPAO President Rewat Areerob emphasised the significance of environmental strategies in the tourism industry. The PPAO has allocated budgets for machines to convert organic waste into soil improvers, supporting five tons per day, with plans to expand this initiative across different areas in Phuket.

Phuket City Municipality has also taken steps to improve areas along

Phuket Rd, transforming them into parking lots to reduce traffic congestion in the Old Town area. This move aims to organise parking efficiently for both citizens and tourists.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**  
Parimet Charoennoppakun, an environmental studies expert from the Phuket-based Pollution Control Department Region 15 Office, stressed the importance of monitoring pollution.

"Our office is monitoring various forms of pollution, although Phuket is not as affected by dust and smog as many provinces in the northern and central regions, but pollution released from exhaust pipes from vehicles with engines left on is just as dangerous as dust and smoke," she said.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### NEWS PAGE 3

**Russians nabbed for B30mn crypto kidnap, extortion**



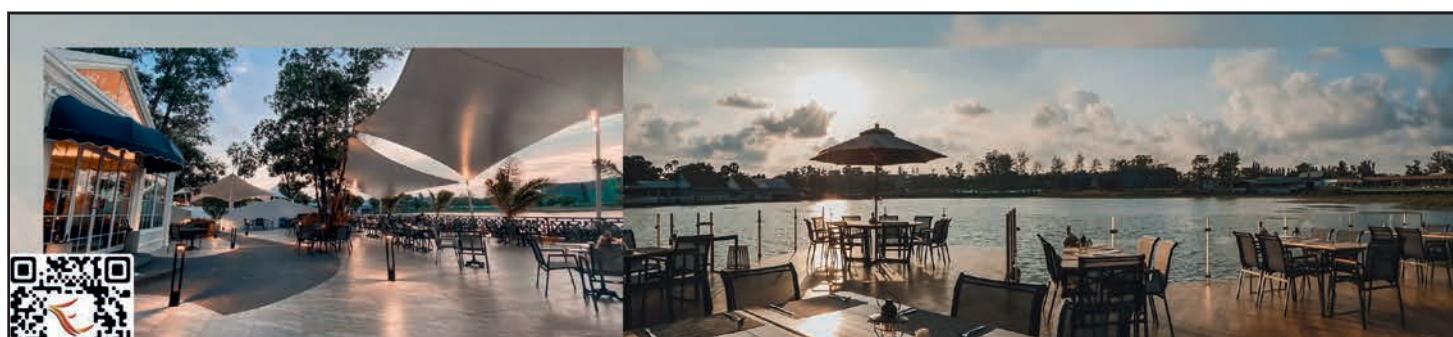
### LIFE PAGE 9

**Tamarind offers succulent tastes of the South**



### SPORT PAGE 14

**Thai sisters win back-to-back badminton titles**



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# News



Chinese New Year festivities underway > p5

## Targetting 'net zero'

Continued from page 1

"The Environment and Pollution Control Office No. 15 has carried out monitoring of the water quality of Bang Yai Canal and found that the water quality is continuously deteriorating," Ms Parimet said.

"The main cause is the actions of humans. If the community in the Old Town area can work together to reduce the amount of waste drained into Bang Yai Canal, it will have a positive impact on the environment, our way of life, and our tourism image," she said.

Of note, Ms Parimet made no mention of wastewater flowing across tourist-popular beaches and into the water where tourists swim.

Assoc. Prof Dr Theeranee Ajalakul, Director of the Big Data Institute, discussed the institute's role in integrating information from various sectors to estimate the carbon footprint. This involves creating a dashboard for measuring, tracking, and inspecting environmental factors, using data and artificial intelligence technologies.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Don Limnaphisit, President of the Phuket Old Town Community Association, highlighted concerns



Photo: PR Phuket

about vehicle exhaust affecting residents and tourists. He urged transportation operators to drop off tourists at designated points and park in allocated areas.

The Phuket Old Town Carbon Neutrality Project has garnered support from various agencies, including the Faculty of Environmental Technology at Prince of Songkla University and the Phuket Young Ambassador group. Future projects involve collaboration with tourism agencies to host the GSTC 2025 Global Conference in Phuket, marking a significant milestone for sustainable tourism in Thailand, officials noted.

The success of this initiative could serve as a prototype for other provinces across the country, marking a paradigm shift towards sustainable practices in tourism, officials said.

For more information about the project, interested parties can contact the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation at 076-610365-6.

## Ban on feeding Toh Sae monkeys now enforced

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

In response to the escalating issues of macaque-related incidents at Khao Toh Sae in Phuket Town, officials on Feb 1 began their measures to clear the area of illegal vendors selling food for tourists to give macaques on the hill, and preventing tourists themselves from feeding the monkeys.

Locally called 'Monkey Hill', Khao Toh Sae is famous for tourists and local residents to visit the large troupe of macaques living on the hill.

However, despite repeated campaigns by local officials for years urging people to not feed the monkeys for their own safety, and numerous signs posted along the road up the hill for people to not feed the monkeys, the practice continues.

Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong launched the latest campaign at 10am, with the installation of a checkpoint on the road leading up the hill.

Present were Wathanaphong Suksai, Director of the Phuket office of Natural Resources and Environment; Thiwat Sidokbuab, Vice President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization (PPAO); and Monchai Saelao, head of the working group assigned by the Provin-



Photo: The Phuket News

cial Damrongdharma Center (Provincial Ombudsman's Office) to attend to the issue.

The mobilisation comes as a result of a meeting of provincial officials to address concerns related to product sales and the increasing incidents of macaques biting and attacking both tourists and locals in the Khao Toh Sae area, explained an official report of the campaign launch.

The resolution of the meeting outlined specific guidelines, including the organisation of product sales and feeding schedules for monkeys, aimed at preventing harm to tourists and local residents.

An operational team including personnel from the Phuket Forestry Office, Region 8 Police and the Phuket branch of the Internal Security

Operations Command (Isoc), which serves as the political arm of the Thai military, has been formed to enforce the measures.

The checkpoint on the road up the hill is to be staffed by five officers for an initial period of one month. The five officers will comprise one officer from the Phuket Forestry Office and one official from the PPAO, as well as three security personnel. One of the security personnel will be provided by the Phuket branch of Isoc while the other two will be from the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor).

Bags will be checked, and the bringing of food, including bananas and various fruits, is now prohibited. The precautionary step aims to mitigate the risk of monkeys stealing food from visitors

and potentially leading to macaque bites.

Despite the restrictions, efforts to care for the over 800 monkeys on Khao Toh Sae are a priority, officials noted.

Designated feeding points and times will be arranged, with volunteers allowed to provide nourishment under controlled conditions. More signs in both Thai and foreign languages will be displayed, urging tourists to adhere strictly to the guidelines.

People wanting to contribute food for the monkeys are encouraged to contact officials at the checkpoint, who will collect and distribute the donations through volunteers, ensuring an organised and safe approach to managing the macaque population in the area, the official report noted.

## Bi-2 band members deported to Israel

THE SEVEN BAND members of exiled Russian-Belarusian rock band Bi-2 who were arrested in Phuket for working illegally late last month have been deported to Israel.

The news was confirmed by a post on the band's Telegram channel at 00:07am Feb 1.

"All the musicians of the Bi-2 group have safely left Thailand and are heading to Tel Aviv. Details tomorrow," said the message.

None of the seven arrested were deported to Russia, where government officials openly call the musical group "anti-culture figures"

and "sponsors of terrorism", and the group's frontman Egor Bortnik has been declared a "foreign agent".

International human rights agency Human Rights Watch had already urged the Thai government to not deport any of the band members to Russia.

"Under no circumstances should they be deported to Russia, where they could face arrest or worse for their outspoken criticisms of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's war in Ukraine," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikh-

anovskaya launched a petition on change.org, also urging the Thai government not to deport the band to Russia.

"I'm worried about the situation involving the Belarus-born rock band Bi-2," she wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "It's now absolutely clear that Russia is behind the operation to deport the band."

Confirmation of the group's safe passage to Israel came one week after their arrest immediately after they performed a concert at the Illuzion nightclub on Bangla Rd, Patong.

Pol Maj Gen Pantama Nutnarot, Deputy Chief of Immigration Bureau, offered some calm before the band's

departure. "Those wanted for political or other reasons won't be sent back to Russia," he assured.

The band indicated in their posts online that their arrest was the result of the activities of the Russian Consulate General in Phuket, reported *The Phuket News*' Russian-language sister newspaper *Novosti Phuket*.

However, the organisers of the band's concerts in Thailand, VPI Event, claimed they had secured all necessary permits, but the band was issued tourist visas erroneously, resulting in their detention.

VPI asserted that immigration officers focused solely on



Photo: Change.org

penalising the artists, ignoring the usual protocol of contacting event organisers in such situations, AFP reported.

Of note, before coming to Phuket, Bi-2 performed in concert in Pattaya, where they were not arrested for working illegally.

The Russian Embassy in Thailand stated on Jan 30 that the initiative to check Bi-2's

papers after the Phuket concert came from the Tourist Police themselves. "Local authorities act in their own interests and do not need anyone's advice or recommendations, [they] independently carry out supervisory activities and make decisions in relevant areas," the embassy said.

*The Phuket News*



# Russians charged for abduction, extortion

Eakkapop Thongtub  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Five Russian nationals have been arrested and charged with conspiracy to abduct a Belarusian national and his wife, and extorting B30 million in cryptocurrency from them. Police last Friday (Feb 2) confirmed that no harm had been done to the victims, but the culprits succeeded in making them transfer the funds. The name of the cryptocurrency was not reported, though police revealed the exact sum as US\$801,200.

Belarusian national Albert Viviankou, 23, and his wife, not named by the police, were abducted in Phuket Town on the evening of Jan 31. A group of men forced them into a black Hyundai minivan near Sugar Palm Condo and O-OH Farm Restaurant north of Suan Luang Park.

“Just now, between O-OH and our condo, some Russian man was abducted [by culprits] in a black minivan with tinted windows. He was screaming loudly, including ‘Help me!’ We only saw him being forced into the minivan, and then the vehicle’s door was shut. Personnel and patrons of the O-OH Farm ran out; one of them tried to stop the minivan but could only hit the window. This is all the information as of now,”



Five Russians have been arrested in connection with the Jan 31 kidnapping in Phuket Town. Photo: Phuket City Police

read an eyewitness report posted on the ‘Real Phuket’ Telegram channel.

The next day (Feb 1), police confirmed the abduction and revealed that four suspects had been arrested in connection with the case. Last Friday (Feb 2), police clarified that five Russian men had been apprehended and charged with conspiring to abduct a person/people and extortion. The five Russian nationals were identified by police as Zalm Nalchikov, 37; Oleg Bogdanov, 30; Azamat Nagoev, 36; Islam Abdokov, 29; and Aslan Abazov, 36.

According to the most recent report by Phuket City Police, some eyewitnesses followed the Hyundai minivan, but lost it at the Naka Market. The eyewitnesses

then called the 191 emergency hotline.

The kidnappers forced Mr Viviankou to transfer to them an equivalent of US\$801,200 in an unspecified cryptocurrency. Mr Viviankou and his wife were then released unharmed not far from the abduction scene.

Police officers promptly identified the rental house where the kidnappers took the victim. The house, less than two kilometres from the abduction scene, had a white Toyota Fortuner parked nearby, believed to belong to one of the criminals.

In the car, police officers found a rope, three rolls of duct tape and box cutters. Fingerprints were taken from these items, which were classified as pieces of evidence.



Photo: Phuket City Police

## Tourist affronted at bus terminal toilet

A FEMALE TOURIST INVOLVED in a claim of sexual assault at a restroom at Phuket Bus Terminal 2 has declined to press charges, Phuket City Police have confirmed.

Police managed to track down the woman to question her over the incident, first reported early on Jan 31.

The woman had entered the restroom at about 3:10am, police noted in their report.

As previously reported, after the woman had entered the women’s restroom, a Thai man – a bus company employee – entered the men’s restroom.

The man heard sounds coming from the women’s restroom, police said.

After walking into the women’s restroom, he encountered the foreign female tourist, the police report continued.

On seeing the man, the woman screamed for help. A

monk walking past outside heard her scream and came running to help, police said in their report.

At that point the woman promptly left the scene, while the monk admonished the man, who in turn repeatedly offered the monk a wai of apology.

Of note, the report gave no explanation as to the man being in the women’s restroom for nearly a full minute before the monk came running to help, as evidenced by CCTV footage outside the restrooms at the time.

The report gave no other details or any other explanation of police action to follow.

The woman tourist said she did not want to pursue legal action. Instead, she wanted to continue her trip to Koh Phangan “in peace”, the police report concluded.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Governor highlights safety at meeting with island consuls

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON SUWANARAT highlighted tourists’ safety as a key issue at a meeting with the island’s honorary consuls and diplomatic corps on Jan 31.

The meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall, was attended by key figures including Vice Governors Sattha Thongkham and Norasak Suksomboon, and Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum.

The meeting was aimed at addressing critical security measures for foreigners in Phuket and fostering confidence among tourists and expatriates, said an official report of the meeting.

Officials stressed the significance of maintaining order and adhering to established rules within the community. Phuket Immigration Office took the opportunity to announce the formation of a sub-committee on the revocation of temporary permission to stay in the Kingdom, the report said.

The meeting also featured discussions on broader issues concerning Phuket, the report continued.

Not missing an opportunity for promotion, the report marked that the Governor raised “critical” issues such as Phuket being selected to host the 4<sup>th</sup> International Contemporary Art Festival ‘Thailand Biennale 2025’. The festival will continue for five months. Phuket aims to showcase its local arts, culture and identity development from forest to city, “positioning itself as a world-class tourist destination with robust international relationships”, the report noted.

The meeting concluded with an invitation extended to all countries to participate in the



Photo: PR Phuket

Thailand Biennale 2025.

As already explained repeatedly by local government news channels, artists from abroad who are interested in having their works displayed during the festival can apply to do so through their representative consulate or embassy. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Also at the meeting, the head of the Phuket Provincial Consular Office and Deputy Consul General of the People’s Republic of China in Songkhla outlined new visa conditions for Chinese nationals starting Mar 1.

Under the new visa-free scheme, from Mar 1, holders of valid, ordinary Thai passports and Chinese holders of passports for public affairs and ordinary passports will be exempted from visa requirements for entering, exiting or transiting the other country for up to 30 days.

Cumulative stays must not exceed 90 days in any 180-day period, except for the purposes of residing or engaging in employment, study, media activities or other activities that require prior official approval.

The official report of the meeting did not report any other “critical” issues discussed at the meeting. *The Phuket News*

## British teacher arrested for molesting female student

THAI IMMIGRATION officials have arrested a 38-year-old British man in Chiang Mai who was wanted for indecent acts with students in Phuket, where he worked at an international school.

The arrest was announced at the Immigration Bureau weekly press conference held in Bangkok on Feb 1.

The man, named by Immigration officials only as “Mr Tyler”, was wanted on Phuket Provincial Court arrest warrant No. 21/2024 issued on Jan 12.

The man was brought to Chalong Police Station and charged with taking away a minor who is over 15 years of age but not more than 18 years of age from father, mother, guardian or caretaker without justification for indecency.

Tyler worked as a teacher at an international school in Phuket in 2014-2015, Immigration officials explained.

While being a teacher, Tyler twice committed in-



Photo: Immigration Bureau

decent acts on a 16-year-old foreign female student from the school at a house in Chalong. The first time was on Dec 9, 2014, the second time was at night on April 2, 2015.

When the girl’s parents and the school learned about the incident, the school investigated and terminated Tyler’s teaching contract.

At the press conference it was explained that as for the report of the legal action, the girl’s parents requested that their daughter finish her studies in Thailand first. Af-

ter their daughter graduated, the parents then reported the matter to the Chalong Police so that he could be prosecuted.

Investigators collected various evidence and requested the Phuket Provincial Court to issue an arrest warrant for Tyler.

Tyler was found living with his wife, a Thai woman, at a house in Nong Hoi Sub-district, in Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai Province, where he had been living since 2016.

*The Phuket News*



The Phuket News

## CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

**PURIYA BEAVAN**  
Editor**CHRIS HUSTED**  
Executive Editor  
084 307 7408  
execeditor@classactmedia.co.th**BEN TIREBUCK**  
News / Sport Editor  
061 806 8132  
editor3@classactmedia.co.th**CHUTHARAT 'UM' PLERIN**  
Thai Editor  
088 766 1615  
thai@classactmedia.co.th**JASON BEAVAN**  
General Manager  
086 479 7471  
gm@classactmedia.co.th**SIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS**  
Sales Support  
086 479 7470  
sales@classactmedia.co.th**NIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA  
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THU FEBRUARY 15

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## Drunk Aussie hit by overstay

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A 44-year-old Australian tourist found himself caught short while trying to leave the country without enough cash to pay his overstay fine.

Phuket Tourist Police posted a brief report of the incident on Jan 30, while the Tourist Assistance Center at Phuket airport (TAC Phuket) posted a photo of the man being escorted through the terminal by Tourist Police on Jan 29.

According to the report posted on the official Phuket Tourist Police Facebook page, the man had completed check-in with Cathay Pacific Airways to board his flight home and presented himself at the immigration counter to exit the country.

The immigration officer at the counter pointed out to the man that he had overstayed in the country for 22 days, meaning he had to pay a fine



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

of B11,000, determined by the standard overstay fine of B500 a day.

The man said he had lost his wallet and had no money to pay the fine, said the report. The man showed that he had only B8,000 baht with him, as his credit cards were gone.

He had money in a foreign account but was unable to access it.

It was explained to the man that he would not be allowed to leave the country without paying his overstay fine first, which sparked an angry outburst from the man,

who Tourist Police said was drunk at the time.

The man continued his tirade, but eventually calmed down. He was told to "take it easy and get some rest", and was directed to a nearby hotel to recover, Phuket Tourist Police explained.

Phuket Tourist Police said they contacted Australian consular officials in the hope they were able to provide assistance.

Phuket Tourist Police on Jan 30 reported that the man had already resolved the situation and boarded a flight home.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

## Construction worker dies after crushed by wall panels

POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING the death of a worker who was crushed by cement wall panels at a construction site in Cherng Talay.

Cherng Talay Police were informed of the incident at about 11:30am last Saturday (Feb 3).

Officers were told by staff at Thalang Hospital that a Myanmar man, later identified as Aye Myat Thu, 25, had been rushed to the hospital, but had died from his injuries.

Officers arrived at the construction site to be told by site coordinator Pimpisa Phinijmontri, an employee of Khayankarnkianti Co Ltd, that the incident occurred at about 9am.

Aye Myat Thu had asked to

go home because he felt sick and dizzy, Ms Pimpisa said, adding that she had given permission.

Aye Myat Thu then went to wash his hands before leaving. It is believed he placed his hand on a stack of prefabricated wall panels, which fell on top of him. There were three to four wall panels, weighing 100kg each.

Aye Myat Thu was rushed to hospital, but was later pronounced dead.

Police questioned Aye Myat Thu's brother, Yan Naing Soe, 31, and his partner Than Htay, 25, who both said they had no idea why Aye Myat Thu had died.

Police said they were continuing their investigation.

Eakkapop Thongtub



Photo: via Phuket Info Center

## Police crack down on tourists hanging out of car windows

KARON POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED that tourists caught on video hanging out of the windows of a car while travelling along the road have been fined for their unsafe behaviour.

The incident was recorded on video by a car travelling behind and shared on social media.

Karon Police reported that the tourists were seen hanging out of the car windows at about 3pm on Jan 30.

By 5:45pm that day, traffic police had tracked the tourists down and had them brought to Karon Police Station and "fined according to the law", Karon Police noted in their report.

Which law the tourists were fined under was not reported, or much in fines they were required to pay. The report also did not identify the tour-

ists by name or nationality.

According to the report, the tourists apologised for their behaviour and "felt guilty about the incident. They said they would not do it again and "asked for the opportunity to be a good tourist", said the report.

The tourists also said they would be a voice in inviting tourists to visit Phuket, and said they would recommend to their friends and other foreign tourists that they must strictly follow traffic rules to ensure their safety and the safety of others, the report concluded.

Police across Phuket over the past week have taken to issuing public warnings while reporting aberrant behaviour by tourists, including warning against unsafe driving and parking illegally.

The Phuket News



# NACC asked to probe Bang Khanun corruption

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Chamroon Kerddam, Chairman of the Gulf of Thailand Coastal Area Conservation Network - Andaman (branch), and concerned members have filed a complaint urging the Director of Phuket off of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) to investigate and prosecute civil servants accused of facilitating encroachment in the Bang Khanun protected forest reserve.

In the formal complaint, submitted at the Phuket NACC office on Jan 29, Mr Chamroon expressed concern on behalf of the Thai people about the misuse of forest resources and public land in Bang Khanun National Forest Reserve, which he said as state land was collectively owned by the Thai people.

The complaint alleges that government officials in the area have engaged in behaviour encouraging intruders to occupy and destroy the national reserved forest, despite its designation as protected forest area.



The Royal Forestry Department has allocated funds from the national budget for reforestation efforts in the area, emphasising its significance, he added.

However, the complainants argue that neglectful behaviour by provincial officials and forest officials, along with other related government agencies, had led to encroachment, deforestation, and the cultivation of commercial crops.

The encroachment, primarily monoculture, is causing irreversible damage to the island's rainforest ecosystem, Mr Chamroon said.

The complainant emphasised that the responsible officials, who are duty-bound to manage and preserve forest resources, had neglected their responsibilities, leading to unlawful possession of forest areas in the Bang Khanun forest by groups and individuals.

The complaint cites a special case investigated by the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) under the Ministry of Justice, case number 49/2021, where charges have been filed against nine intruders for encroachment on the Bang Khanun forest.

It is known that the Royal Forestry Department granted

permission to government agencies, including the Royal Thai Navy, Thalang Technical College and Vachira Phuket Hospital, for public use.

The complainants argue that the behaviour documented in official documents points towards favouritism and neglect of duties, potentially constituting offences under Sections 157 and 151 of the Criminal Code.

The complaint submitted was addressed to NACC Director, urging an immediate and thorough investigation into the alleged offences committed by the implicated government officials.



## Lantern festival underway

THE PHUKET LANTERN Festival is underway with the streets of Phuket Town adorned with lanterns as a way of welcoming the Chinese New Year, this year to be celebrated as a Year of the Dragon'.

Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas led the official opening at Chartered Bank intersection in the Phuket Old Town last Saturday night (Feb 3).

Mr Saroj noted that the Lantern Festival, or 'Yuan Xiao Jie', is a time when Chinese people reunite with family and make blessings to bring joy and happiness to the family.

"It is also a time for families to meet and participate in various activities such as releasing lanterns, enjoying light decorations and setting off firecrackers. The Lantern Festival has been passed down into local culture to continue and preserve the good culture of the local area, as well as creating a good atmosphere and image for tourism. It

stimulates the economy and generates incomes for people in the local area," he said.

Phuket City Municipality has organised activities "Sweep the house to welcome Chinese New Year" throughout Phuket Town, he said.

"And during this time, Thai-Chinese people in Phuket buy things to decorate homes, such as blessings decorations, including red lanterns, to bring good luck, long life, prosperity and happiness," he added.

The event on Saturday night highlighted large illuminated characters placed at the Chartered Bank Intersection and including a range of festivities, including cultural dance performances.

Earlier in the day, Mayor Saroj joined a Chinese New Year celebration event at the Limelight shopping centre in Phuket Town, complete with dancing dragons.

The Phuket Lantern Festival will continue through to Feb 24.

The Phuket News

## Patong to honour LGBTQ+ marriage on Valentine's Day

PATONG MUNICIPALITY is leading the way with the official events for Valentine's Day (Feb 14) this year, honouring 14 LGBTQ+ couples registering their marriage on the 'Day of Love'.

Under the campaign 'Love is Love', Patong Municipality will honour 14 male-female couples and 14 LGBTQ+ couples as special guests, complete with giving them a gift voucher.

Registration of all 28 couples to be given special treatment on the day have been received, Kathu District Chief Theeraphong Chuaychu explained at a press conference at Phuket Provincial Hall chaired by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat on Jan 31.

Meanwhile, Thalang District Chief Pairoj Srilamul explained that the Thalang District Registrar's Office invites couples to register their marriage on Valentine's Day under the campaign 'Destiny bound at Layan Beach, eternal love'.

Registration for cou-



ples to enter the special guest initiative, an annual exercise for local officials on Valentine's Day, closes Feb 10. People can register by contacting the Thalang District Office Registration Office at Tel: 076-313992 during government hours.

Wichet Suyanan, Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) at Mueang Phuket District Office, said that the Mueang Phuket District Registration Office Scheduled is holding its activity "Marriage, love, care for each other at Paradise Island @ Muang Phuket", targeting

50 couples.

Couples have until Feb 10 to register with the Muang Phuket District Registration Office. The office can be contacted at Tel: 076-224911 or 081 8933290 for more details.

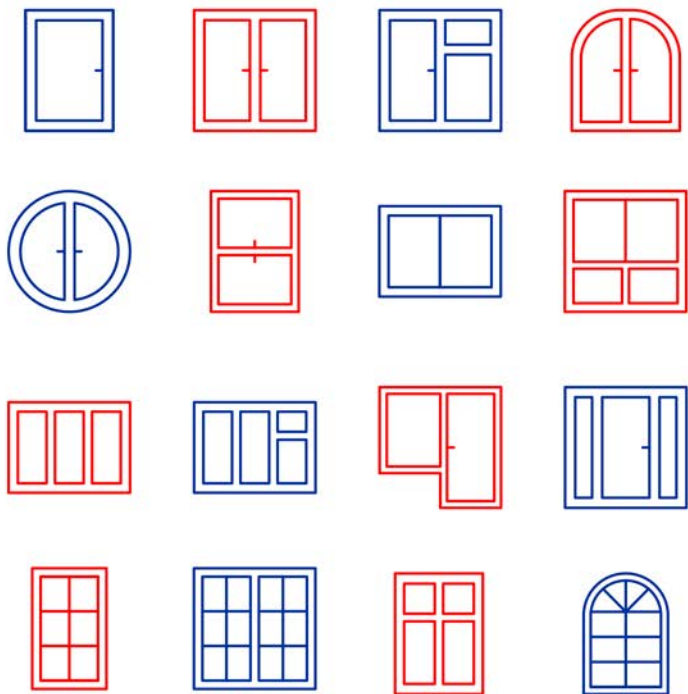
Currently, 34 couples have registered with the office to register their marriage on Feb 14, Mr Wichet said.

All couples who register their marriage at the Muang Phuket District Office on Valentine's Day will receive souvenirs, he said.

The Phuket News



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# Banyan launches Laguna Lakelands

Bangkok Post  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Hospitality firm Banyan Group has launched the first phase of Laguna Lakelands, a 700-rai project worth US\$2 billion (about B71.431 billion).

The project is the largest residential development in Phuket and the group's largest venture since the US\$3-billion integrated resort Laguna Phuket.

Group founder and executive chairman Ho Kwon Ping, better known locally as KP Ho, said the Phuket property market has experienced unprecedented growth over the past few years, fuelled by post-pandemic tourism.

"This current boom is the highest since I started doing business in Phuket over 30 years ago," he said. "It surpasses the robust recoveries following the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis."

Mr Ho said there are five factors driving the surge in Phuket's property and tourism markets. The island's climate is unrivalled compared with islands in the South China Sea, which are rainy most



An artist's rendition of Laguna Lakelands. The project is projected to have a minimum of 6,000 residential units.

days, he said.

With its diverse markets, Phuket's hotel business last year experienced only high and peak seasons, with no low season, as foreign tourists arrived during the rainy season from India and the Middle East, said Mr Ho.

The occupancy rate in Phuket was 70-80% last year. A healthy tourism sector will drive property demand in Phuket because potential

buyers, particularly those from overseas, are familiar with the area having visited as tourists.

Compared with Bali, which has a larger population, Phuket has a greater number of direct flights from 70 cities.

It is also a foreigner-friendly destination and obtaining a leasehold for property ownership is convenient, he said.

The Thai government

launched a long-term resident visa last year covering a 10-year period, which benefits foreign buyers.

Stuart Reading, managing director of the group's property development, said sales of resort condos and villas in Phuket rose from 1,300 units in 2019 to 1,500 units in 2022, then skyrocketed to more than 3,000 units last year.

"Since we launched residential properties for sale in

Laguna Phuket 25 years ago, we have recorded total sales of US\$1 billion," said Mr Reading. "It took only four months last year to get half of that amount from our new launches."

Among the new launches was the first phase of Laguna Lakelands, comprising one-to three-bedroom Lakeview Residences condos in four- and seven-storey towers. Unit sizes range from 52 square

metres to 119sqm, priced from B6.8 million.

Of the 300 units, 20% have been sold. Some 70-80% of buyers were Russian nationals, with the remainder coming from Europe and the US. To attract more foreign buyers, the project has designated some units to be offered under a leasehold contract.

There are 14 units of four-bedroom Waterfront Villas with private pools and gardens. Unit prices start from B60mn, with two units already sold to buyers from Saudi Arabia and China.

Located on an inland plot on the northeastern part of Laguna Phuket, Laguna Lakelands will have at least 6,000 residential units in five different themed zones launched on a phase-by-phase basis, he said.

Through 10 years of development, the combined sales value is projected at US\$2bn, Mr Reading said.

Other components include a country club, a town centre with retail, eateries and entertainment, an adventure park and a resident beach club. Around 30% of the area will be forest, parks and lakes, he said.

## TAT proposes extended visa-free stays to boost tourism

THE TOURISM AUTHORITY of Thailand (TAT) is urging the government to extend the visa-free stay period for long-haul tourists from the United States and Europe to 90 days to boost the country's tourism revenue from these regions to 40% in 2024.

The initiative, aimed at increasing the average duration of stay and spending per trip, comes as part of TAT's strategy to enhance the tourism sector's contribution to the economy, reports state news agency NNT.

Thailand currently facilitates tourist visas on arrival for nationals from over 60 countries, allowing them a 30-day stay. The proposal to extend this period follows the success of a temporary 90-day visa granted to Russian tourists last November, which significantly benefited the tourism sector.

In the past year, over 100,000 foreign tourists, predominantly from the US, the UK, Sweden and Germany, applied for a 60-day visa. The proposed extension



Photo: AoT Phuket

to 90 days is expected to generate at least a million additional room nights across the country.

The tourism body has also requested the National Tourism Policy Committee to extend other tourist-friendly measures, such as visa-free stays for Kazakh tourists and continued suspension of TM6 forms at Thai-Malaysia border crossings, alongside the 90-day visa-free stay for Russians. These measures are pending

Cabinet approval.

Despite global challenges like geopolitical tensions and Europe's sluggish economy, the TAT remains confident in the appeal of Thailand to European travelers, citing the country's cost of living and the propensity of these tourists to stay longer. The TAT anticipates record-breaking arrivals from major markets, including up to 2 million Russian tourists and over 1mn each from the US, the UK and Germany. NNT

## Airport expects 49k passengers a day during Chinese New Year

PHUKET INTERNATIONAL Airport is expected to handle an average of 49,000 passengers per day during the Chinese New Year holidays, from Feb 4-16, airport director Monchai Tanode has announced.

More than 640,000 people, comprising 430,393 international passengers and 210,592 domestic passengers, are predicted to traverse Phuket Airport during the 13-day Chinese New Year Festival, Mr Monchai said in a release issued on Saturday (Feb 3).

To accommodate the influx, 3,915 flights are expected, averaging 301 flights daily, comprising 2,298 international flights and 1,617 domestic flights, he noted.

Phuket Airport has invested in technology and infrastructure to address passenger congestion and enhance safety, Mr Monchai explained.

The REAL-TIME Passenger Tracking System (RTPTS) will monitor passenger density around the clock, while self-service channels, such as automatic self-check-in machines (CUSS), aim to expedite the check-in process, reducing



Photo: AOTGA / file

wait times and improving service efficiency.

In terms of safety, the airport has deployed additional personnel in accordance with security measures. An increased cycle of mixed test kits for surveillance and enhanced safety inspections in critical areas like runways and taxiways have been implemented, aligning with government security agencies in Phuket.

To enhance the festive atmosphere, Phuket Airport is set to hold several activities, including a dragon dance on Thursday (Feb 8), and a decorated arch for the Chinese New Year festival, creating a photo backdrop for passengers pass-

ing through the international passenger terminal.

Passengers are urged to cooperate by arriving at the airport two to three hours before their scheduled departure to prevent any delays.

Route and flight schedules can be conveniently checked through the 'SAWASDEE by AOT' application or by calling the Contact Center at 076-351111 or 076-351801.

In case of emergencies or unusual incidents, passengers can report to the security center at Phuket Airport by calling 076-351191, which operates 24 hours a day, the release added.

The Phuket News



# MFP faces dissolution bid

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Move Forward Party (MFP) may be facing the prospect of disbandment as prominent activists have petitioned the Election Commission (EC) to initiate dissolution proceedings against it due to the party's stance on royal insult laws.

Political activist Ruangkrai Leekitwattana filed a petition with the EC on Feb 1, asking it to pursue a dissolution case against the main opposition party.

The petition came after the Constitutional Court ruled on Jan 31 that the MFP's continuous efforts to amend Section 112 of the Criminal Code, also known as the lese-majeste law, indicated an intention to undermine the constitutional monarchy.

The court said Mr Pita and the party tried to either change or revoke Section 112 when its 44 MPs submitted a bill to amend it on Mar 25, 2021.

Mr Ruangkrai said he based his petition on Section 92 of the organic law on political parties.

This states that if the EC has evidence pointing to a political party's attempt to overthrow the constitutional monarchy, it must petition the Constitutional Court to consider dissolving that party and banning its executives from applying to run in elections for 10 years.

"The court's ruling is legally binding on all agencies. The EC must carry out its duty," Mr Ruangkrai said.



MFP advisory chairman Pita Limjaroenrat (left) looks on as MFP party leader Chaithawat Tulathon addresses reporters following the Constitutional Court's lese majeste ruling on Jan 31. Photo: Bangkok Post

The court's ruling supported the allegation MFP was attempting to end the constitutional monarchy through its proposal to amend the lese-majeste law.

Mr Ruangkrai said he also asked the EC to seek the court's ruling on whether MFP executives should be banned from running in elections due to the same alleged wrongdoing. He said he would file a related petition with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

The former senator said he was gathering evidence and would decide whether to file a similar petition against the ruling Pheu Thai Party.

Pheu Thai leader Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin referred to amending Section 112 during their election campaigns last year, Mr Ruangkrai said.

The EC also received a similar petition

from lawyer Theerayut Suwankesorn who asked the Constitutional Court last year to halt the MFP's attempts to amend Section 112.

The Jan 31 ruling obliged the EC to take action against the MFP, he said.

The lawyer also said he would ask the NACC to investigate claims of a serious ethical violation by former MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat and 43 other MFP MPs who submitted the bill to amend Section 112.

MPs are required by law to meet certain ethical standards, including the safeguarding of the royal institution.

Failure to do so is considered a serious ethical violation, resulting in the restriction of the wrongdoers' rights to participate in any election and the suspension of their electoral rights for a period of 10 years.

# Smoking cessation drug more accessible

## BANGKOK

THE SMOKING CESSATION drug Cytisine has been included in Thailand's list of essential medicines as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) aims to make the drug accessible to all who need help quitting smoking in an attempt to cut the risk of lung cancer.

Dr Withit Saritdechakul, secretary-general of the FDA, said on Feb 4 lung cancer is one of the five most common types of cancer in Thailand and the risk of developing it is heightened 20 to 30 times by cigarette smoking.

Prevention is the best course of action when it comes to dealing with cancer and its consequences, he said, considering the high costs of treatment and care of cancer patients.

"Because the prices of most smoking cessation medicines are high, access to these drugs in Thailand isn't easy. That probably deters many from trying to quit," he said.



Thai Health Promotion Foundation members campaigning to help smokers quit. Photo: Bangkok Post

The FDA's sub-committee responsible for recommending changes to the country's lists of essential medicines found Cytisine to be highly effective, safe and inexpensive.

Being classified as essential medicine and removed from the list of controlled substances, Cytisine now can be purchased over the counter and provided to patients under the government's universal health care scheme for free.

Dr Withit said those who aren't covered under the health scheme can find a low-cost version of the drug, which is produced by the Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO), at any pharmacy. Bangkok Post

# Government may lift ban on afternoon alcohol sales

## BANGKOK

PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER CHOLNAN Srikaew has requested the government's alcoholic beverage control committee review a proposal by the Thai Alcohol Beverage Business Association (TABBA) to lift the rule prohibiting alcohol sales between 2pm and 5pm.

Under current laws, the permitted hours for selling alcohol in Thailand are restricted to 11am to 2pm and 5pm to 12am. Violating the three-hour ban on alcohol sales in the afternoon may result in penalties for shop and bar owners, including a maximum sentence of six months in jail and/or a fine of B10,000.

In the most recent effort to change the rules, TABBA submitted a petition asking for the repeal of the 2pm-5pm alcohol sale ban to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Thepsutin, and Dr Cholan, the Public Health Minister.

"The committee will need to decide what steps to take if it agrees that the 2pm-5pm alcohol sale ban should be removed in support of the government's tourism promotion policy," Mr Cholan said on Feb 1.

A committee source indicated that a decision is anticipated at the next meeting on Feb 15.

Should the government's alcohol beverage control panel endorse TABBA's request, the committee will refer the decision to the



Photo: Bangkok Post



National Alcoholic Beverage Policy Committee for final approval. This committee is typically chaired by the prime minister or a deputy.


If the national committee confirms the cancellation, a new announcement by the Ministry of Public Health will be issued, allowing the sale of alcoholic beverages between 2pm and 5pm.

The source mentioned that while TABBA's proposal aligns with the government's tourism promotion policy, more stringent measures would be required to safeguard the public, particularly minors, from potential risks associated with lifting the ban. TABBA members acknowledge this concern.

The revocation might be expedited to enact the new rule by early April, in time for the annual Songkran festival.

"Regulations that hinder tourism or are unnecessary should be adjusted to align with the government's tourism promotion. This alcohol sale ban is one of those regulations," TABBA adviser Thanakorn Kuptajit said on Feb 1. Bangkok Post



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# ÀNI Art Academies - Thailand

## ADVERTORIAL

The world's first private resort collection, ÀNI not only offers exclusive retreats in the most beautiful and far-flung corners of the earth. The company, founded by philanthropist and arts patron Tim Reynolds, is also behind the non-profit ÀNI Art Academies, which provides an intensive, multi-year art skills education to aspiring artists at absolutely no personal cost. Designed to promote creative freedom through logic and discipline, programs utilize the successful curriculum developed by artist, Anthony J. Waichulis, and graduates around the world have gone on to lead highly successful careers as sought-after artists and art educators, benefiting their families and communities alike.

Established in 2010, ÀNI Art Academies currently has six schools worldwide, two in the United States in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and four that are situated just minutes from ÀNI's private resorts in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Anguilla, and the Dominican Republic. While many luxury hospitality brands establish outreach programs to support the communities in which they operate, ÀNI Private Resorts was in fact founded at the same time as ÀNI Art Academies to support and grow the art organization and help uplift the local communities of some of the world's most beautiful natural destinations.

Co-founder of a thriving Wall Street trading firm and founder of the Tim Reynolds Foundation, Tim's interest in art as a means of social upliftment began with his own artistic training. His fascination with Irving Stone's argument that both Michelangelo and Van Gogh were more hard-working achievers than born geniuses sparked the idea that individuals could become artists through education, thereby offering opportunities to those who otherwise had none. Through his teacher Timothy Jahn, Tim met Anthony Waichulis, and in 2010, The Waichulis Studio in Bear Creek Village Pennsylvania became the flagship of the newly-established ÀNI Art Academies project, aptly named after the Swahili word andjani, meaning the 'journey ahead'.



Thailand has a vibrant history deeply rooted in art and cultural expressions. From ancient temples to intricate sculptures and murals, the country's artistic heritage continues to captivate the global art community. ÀNI Art Academies Thailand, nestled in the scenic beauty of Koh Yao Noi, seeks to embrace this rich artistic legacy and encourage aspiring artists from across the nation to join their prestigious institution. With its strategic location, the academy attracts students not only from Koh Yao Noi but also from the provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi and all over Thailand, eager to explore their artistic talents and learn from the local instructor Dan Christian.

ÀNI Art Academies Thailand is also a platform designed to empower individuals and uplift local communities through artistic expression. By attracting students from all over Thailand, ÀNI Art Academies Thailand is helping to revitalize and celebrate the country's rich artistic heritage and is a testament to the power of art education and how it can pave the way for personal and societal transformation. ÀNI Art Academies Thailand also gives a limited number of full merit scholarships and offers apprentices national exhibition opportunities.

Says Tim: "The crossover between the resorts and our academies offers guests

a truly enriching experience. The campuses are beautifully landscaped, with pavilions in which guests can enjoy the scenery and perhaps the sunset while watching the apprentices at work. This is often when art gets purchased, with all proceeds going to the artists themselves, as guests meet the apprentices and learn their stories while witnessing their incredible talent honed through years of hard work."

Before an ÀNI apprentice even picks up a pencil, they are taught the discipline of how to set up and care for their tools, their easels, and their space. Apprentices start learning fundamentals

like how to properly hold a pencil and competently draw a straight line. They progress to perfecting the execution of spheres, cones, cubes, and other shapes, and understanding the principles of light, draftsmanship, and visual perception. The level of competency in these fundamentals can take years to achieve, and this is the key to creating fine art to the level of excellence for which ÀNI Academies are known.

Over an approximate four-year period, apprentices are encouraged to develop their own creative voice and go beyond the rudiments of just being able to draw a good picture. They take the subject or the visual format and push it to a different level by evolving it, perhaps narratively or historically. Each

artist decides what kind of story they want to tell, and each is mentored individually by the Academy's Dean. "When apprentices of ÀNI Art Academies graduate, the goal is for them to have a full toolbox of skills. From photorealism to abstract painting, they can paint anything, as their artistic development has been supported through learning," says Tim.

When Tim started this initiative, he felt that placing some of the strongest artistic training into the hands of emerging artists around the world would give rise to a generation of creatives capable of contributing exciting new ideas, sharing robust cultures, and pioneering new means of connection and communication through expression on a scale previously unseen. Over the past decade, this vision has come to impressive fruition. Yet as Tim makes clear: "The success of ÀNI Art Academies is not measured by revenues, rather, it is and will continue to be measured by how many people this program has touched."

If you are interested in joining our program or know someone who would be, you can apply online at [aniartacademies.org](http://aniartacademies.org) or send us an email.

### Registration open:

Contact Ms. Kedsnee Worayot, Administrative Assistant: [aaatadmin@aniartacademies.org](mailto:aaatadmin@aniartacademies.org)

Contact Mr. Jonathan Reutenauer, President: [jonathan@aniartacademies.org](mailto:jonathan@aniartacademies.org)



### ÀNI Art Academies Thailand

5/1-2 Moo.2 Koh Yao Noi sub-District Koh Yao District, Phangnga Province, 82160 Thailand

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# Tamarind taste of the South

Amy Bensema

Beachside with breathtaking views overlooking the Andaman Sea, Tamarind Restaurant offers up a family-style dining experience of authentic Thai dishes made from premium ingredients. Located in the Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort, the restaurant is a hidden gem with a charming atmosphere.

I'm a huge fan of the bold and intense flavours of authentic Southern Thai cuisine, and upon perusing the restaurant's menu, I knew that my dining partner and I were in for a treat. Wanting to try a little bit of everything, we decided on the Andaman Sea Set Menu, Kai Yang Nam Chim Chaeo, and Kung Pad Sa Tor.

First up is the Kung Sarong from the Andaman Sea Set Menu and the Kai Yang Nam Chim Chaeo. The presentation of both dishes is beautiful, and after approximately a million photographs, we dig in. Kung Sarong is a dish of crispy Tiger prawns, wrapped in a nest of Vermicelli noodles and served with sweet chilli sauce, while Kai Yang Nam Chim Chaeo is an organic chicken thigh marinated in oyster sauce & black pepper before being grilled and served with spicy Nam Chim Chaeo dipping sauce. Both of these iconic Thai dishes were sensational.

The rest of the Andaman Sea Set



Menu arrives and the dishes include Yum Sam Krob Talay, Tom Yum Kung, Choo Chee Kung, Pla Kao Sam Rot, and Pad Pak Ruam. These dishes are a testament to the diverse flavours of Southern Thai cuisine, well plated and presented, and so fresh and flavour-some. The Tom Yum Kung with king prawn, galangal and kaffir lime is so silky, and the Choo Chee Kung, wok-sautéed Tiger prawns in thick coconut milk with red curry and kaffir lime leaves, is rich and tangy. All of the dishes in this set menu are very good, but another standout is the Yum Sam Krob Talay featuring the seafood catch of the day, shallots, cashew nuts, crispy Thai anchovies and green mango. The

salad dish is truly top-notch.

Our a la carte order, Kung Pad Sa Tor, is made of fresh wok-sautéed king prawns, stinky 'Sa Tor' local broad beans, jungle curry and kaffir lime. The prawns are juicy, the jungle curry spicy and the 'Sa Tor' bitter and pungent... the flavour combination of this is off the charts, and in all honesty, it's one of my favourite dishes.

We wait for our dessert to be served, which is included in the Andaman Sea Set Menu, and we are not disappointed when it arrives. A platter of Phon La Mai Ruam with seasonal Thai fruits is accompanied by Ice Cream Ma Phrao. The latter is a handcrafted artisanal coconut sorbet with a coconut crepe

and bananas in syrup. It's a fantastic dessert and a wonderful sweet treat to end our delicious dining experience.

Without a doubt, Tamarind is one of the best restaurants I have ever dined at in Phuket. Everything is exceptional – the setting, the food, the hospitality of the staff – and I look forward to recommending this hidden gem to other friends in Phuket.

*From the restaurant:* We now use sustainable fish. Sustainable seafood has become a global priority as we strive to protect the world's oceans and marine ecosystems. Pullman Phuket Panwa is no exception to this growing movement, as it continually seeks to make responsible choices in its culinary offerings.

The resort recognises the importance of sourcing seafood in a manner that doesn't harm the environment or deplete fish populations. When you dine at Pullman Phuket Panwa, you not only savour the flavours of the sea, but also contribute to the preservation of marine ecosystems. It's a culinary experience that aligns with the global movement towards responsible dining.

*Tamarind Restaurant. Open daily 6pm- 10pm. Price range: B800-B1,200. Reservations highly recommended (Tel: 076-602500). Major credit cards accepted. Parking on-site, has smoking area and free WiFi hotspot. Website: PullmanPhuketPanwa.com. Facebook/Instagram: PullmanPhuketPanwa*

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## POP QUIZ

- Who wrote the book *The Invisible Man*?
- The world's tallest arch, the 192-metre high Gateway Arch, is in which American city?
- What colour is the background of the Saudi Arabian flag?
- Who is American actress Kate Capshaw married to?
- What is a "muntin"?

Answers below, centre

## SUDOKU

Medium

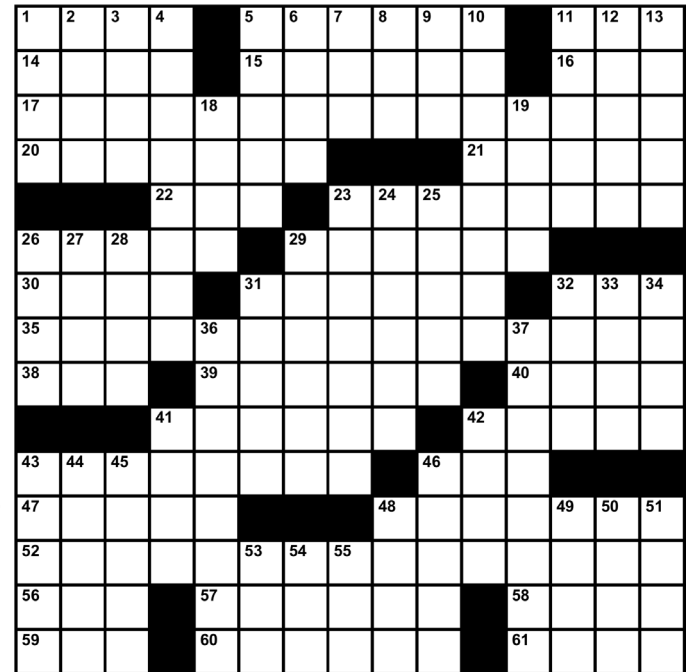
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|   | 7 |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |   |
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| 5 |   |   | 9 | 4 |   |   |   | 3 |
| 8 |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | 7 |   |
|   |   | 2 |   |   | 8 |   |   | 1 |

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
- Freeway exit
  - Wheel protector
  - Brit. fliers
  - Conniver
  - City in northern Syria
  - Building addition
  - Time piece?
  - Flipper?
  - Nay sayers
  - Election winners
  - Loch nationality
  - Baghdad resident
  - Blubber
  - Attractive woman
  - Organism that needs oxygen to live
  - Car-fixers united
  - Online comment
  - Gone by
  - Being
  - Pro \_\_\_\_
  - Small eggs
  - Distended
  - Bowed deeply
  - Resinous deposit
  - Eye opener
  - Belt parts
  - Regular piece
  - Gloomy
  - Deceitful one
  - Case
  - Wreckage in a
- Down**
- Jamaican exports
  - Rush order?
  - Prefix with phone
  - Old time port clearance
  - Salutes
  - Armbone
  - Busy one
  - Tax preparer, for short
  - Lending letters
  - Shepherd's pie ingredients
  - Prefix with linear
  - "\_\_\_\_ well"
  - Soft tissue
  - New Mexico Native American
  - Engrossed by
  - Attacked with arms
  - Appropriates
  - "Goody!"
  - "Star Trek" character
  - Hierarchy level
  - Like some winds
  - Retro car
  - Per \_\_\_\_ (yearly)
  - Thailand, once
  - No pro
  - Melodramatic outburst
  - Renovated
  - Someone who humbles himself as a sign of respect
  - Crew equipment
  - Goes with Bell
  - \_\_\_\_ of time
  - Sealskin wearer, maybe
  - Having grass
  - Riches
  - Brought up
  - Guitar forerunner
  - Flightless flock
  - Fit of pique
  - Caesar's hello
  - One of the Ewings on "Dallas"
  - Old name for Tokyo

### Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

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



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

### Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

in 5 women buy Valentine's gifts for themselves.

20

baby girls in the US were named 'Kindle' in 2013.

6,000

cell phones, 3,500 digital cameras and 18,000 hats are handed in to 'Lost and Found' at Walt Disney World each year.

107 million

Americans have tattoos, and 24% of those people regret getting them, according to Pew Research Center.

10 billion

doughnuts are consumed by Americans every year.

Source: Uberfacts

## ISLAND VIEW



Early start. Photo by Sutharat Khaodee

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

## This week in history

Feb 9, 1895

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

Feb 10, 1258

Baghdad falls to the Mongols, and the Abbasid Caliphate is destroyed.

Feb 11, 1990

Nelson Mandela is released

from Victor Verster Prison outside Cape Town, South Africa after 27 years as a political prisoner.

Feb 12, 1954

British tea maker Lyons's "LEO" (Lyons Electronic Office I) produces a payroll report. It is the first time in history an electronic computer is used in business.

Feb 13, 1981



Nelson Mandela in 2000.

A series of sewer explosions destroys more than two miles of streets in Louisville, Kentucky.

Feb 14, 1779

Capt James Cook is killed by Native Hawaiians near Kealahou on the Island of Hawaii.

Feb 15, 2013

A meteor explodes over Chelyabinsk, Russia, injuring 1,500 people as a shock wave blows out windows and rocks buildings.

Source: Wikipedia



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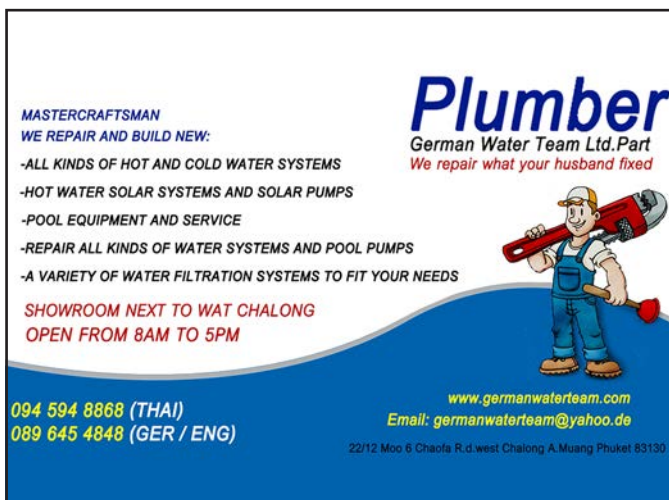
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**THU 15 FEB**



## Skål International Phuket Dinner - February

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**FRI 8 MAR**

## International Women's Day Lunch

### International Women's Day Lunch

Join us for lunch at the Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town to celebrate International Women's Day - Everyone Everywhere can Inspire Inclusion. Engage with a community of individuals who share your commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. Draw inspiration from our speakers, share your own experiences, and exchange ideas that highlight the importance of women's inclusion. Together, we can forge a movement that emphasizes understanding, values diversity, and promotes the empowerment of women. The IWD 2024 #InspireInclusion campaign is dedicated to creating a world where women feel a profound sense of belonging and empowerment, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society for all. Let's unite to inspire change and make inclusion a reality for women everywhere.



## Grow Boating Evening

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening which will be held at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm on Friday the 9th of February. We are delighted to confirm that our joint drinks sponsors for the evening will be the Thailand Marine Guide and Lalizas Thailand. See [thailandmarineguide.com](http://thailandmarineguide.com) and [lalizasthailand.com](http://lalizasthailand.com) Limestone adventures will also be sponsoring a free prize draw to win a half-day longtail trip to Koh Rang Yai for four people including food and soft drinks valued at 24,000 baht. See [limestoneadventures.com](http://limestoneadventures.com) There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees and as

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## PHUKET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NETWORKING EVENT

'Connect Phuket, Connect the World' was the theme of the event on Feb 2, held at the mini convention hall at Central Floresta. Wonderful treats and drinks supplied by EDEN by The Lake, and a tantalising bikini and beach wear fashion show presented by INFINITY & Co luxury beach concept.





## Thai Muay Thai experts to train Saudi army

### MUAY THAI

THE GOVERNMENT will send eight Muay Thai experts to Saudi Arabia in April to train the country's military and national boxers as part of an initiative to promote the sport as an example of Thailand's soft power.

Pimol Srivikorn, an adviser to the prime minister and chairman of the sports sub-committee in the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, said on Feb 2 the initiative has already raised the standards of many Muay Thai trainers to a world-class level and provided them with more opportunities to spread Muay Thai culture abroad.

He said the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) will open higher-standard testing centres in Chiang Mai, Songkhla, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chon Buri and Bangkok to develop Muay Thai instructors and issue national certificates for qualified candidates.

A coordination centre

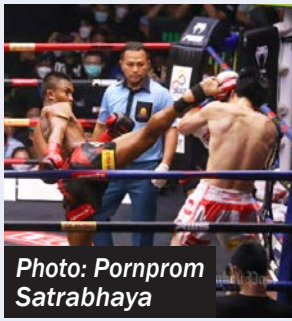


Photo: Pornprom Satrabhaya

to help connect instructors in Thailand with overseas clients who are interested in hiring them will also be established.

According to Mr Pimol, a plan for overseas roadshows is also in place. The roadshows, featuring well-known Muay Thai fighters as well as short classes and workshops, will kick off in Europe and the Middle East.

Mr Pimol said eight government-certified Muay Thai trainers, both male and female, will travel to Saudi Arabia in April to train the army and the country's boxers at the request of the Thai embassy in Riyadh.

The instructors will each be paid B80,000 to B120,000 per month.

Bangkok Post

# Six Nations underway with Ireland on song

### RUGBY

AFP

Ireland got the defence of their Six Nations title underway in style last Friday (Feb 2) when they dismantled France 38-17.

The Irish outscored France – reduced to 14 after Paul Willemse was red carded in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute – five tries to two in Marseille to consign the home side to their heaviest defeat since Fabien Galthie took over as head coach in 2019.

“We’d take any type of win, on a Friday night in Marseille to kick off the Six Nations,” said Ireland coach Andy Farrell, praising his team’s composure.

“The more the game went on the more you saw the performance building.

“It wasn’t all singing, all dancing. But we were pretty ruthless when we needed to be.”

Lock Tadhg Beirne was outstanding, as was his rookie partner Joe McCarthy, named man of the match.

On Saturday Scotland overcame a stunning fightback by Wales to end their 22-year wait for a win in Cardiff with a 27-26 victory.

The visitors were 27-0 up early in the second half only for the home side to score 26 unanswered points of their own.

Their nail-biting win meant Scotland ended a run of 11 straight defeats in the



Tadhg Beirne (centre) scores for Ireland. Photo: AFP

Welsh capital, a sequence including nine Six Nations losses.

“I’ve been in games like that with Scotland that we’ve lost,” said captain Finn Russell who was delighted with his side’s resilience.

“That was the most pleasing thing, that we found a way to win with the crowd on our backs. It shows how far we’ve come, to be able to fight and win those games.”

Also on Saturday, England managed a hard-fought 27-24 win over Italy in Rome, ending a long-standing opening day hoodoo while failing to convince against their spirited hosts.

Elliot Daly and Alex Mitchell scored England’s two tries with George Ford kicking the rest of the points for Steve Borthwick’s men, who claimed their first round one win since 2019.

England were trailing Italy by nine points mid-way through the first half after superb scores by Alessandro Garbisi and Tommaso Allan.

But Gonzalo Quesada’s Italy couldn’t pull off their first ever win over England on the head coach’s debut in the Azzurri dugout.

“Mixed bag performance, really pleased with some of the endeavour. There were a few growing pains out there but delighted with the character shown,” said England captain Jamie George, whose team started two debutants and brought three more off the bench for their first caps.

It was a promising display from the Italians although the result means they have won just one Six Nations match of their last 43 and have not enjoyed victory at home since 2013.

## Doubles delight for Thai shuttlers

### BADMINTON

THERE WAS DOUBLE CAUSE FOR celebration last Sunday (Feb 4) after Thailand won both the women’s and mixed doubles titles at the BWF Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters 2024 in Bangkok.

Sisters Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard claimed back-to-back titles at the Nimibutr Stadium after defeating Li Yijing and Luo Xumin of China in a three-game thriller in the women’s doubles title showdown of the World Tour 300 event.

The second-seeded Thai pair fended off seven championship points and converted theirs on the first attempt as they secured a 21-13, 17-21, 27-25 victory in an hour and 22 minutes.

The victory was their fifth career World Tour title and their first since winning the tournament last year.

Benyapa and Nuntakarn received the winners’ cheque of US\$16,590 (approximately B580,000) while Li and Luo picked up \$7,980 (B279,000).

Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai then made it a day of double joy for Thailand as they captured the mixed doubles title.

They defeated Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei of Malaysia 21-12, 21-18 in a battle between top two seeded pairs in the final.

It was their second title in three weeks after their triumph at the India Open last month.

Earlier, Peeratchai Sukphun and Pakka-



Benyapa (left) and Nuntakarn enjoy their victory. Photo: Bangkok Post

pon Teeraratsakul fell just short in their attempt to win their first World Tour crown.

The world No.76 pair, who came through the qualifying round, lost to world No.16 and fifth seeds He Jiting and Ren Xiangyu of China 21-16, 14-21, 13-21 in the men’s doubles decider.

Peeratchai and Pakkapon, both 19, took home the \$7,980 (B279,000) runners-up cheque while the winners received \$16,590 (B580,000).

In the women’s singles final, Thai fourth seed Supanida Katethong lost to Japan’s third seed Aya Ohori 21-18, 17-21, 13-21.

World No.17 Supanida made her first final since the US Open in July 2023.

Fifth seed Chou Tien-chen was crowned the men’s singles champion after the Taiwanese defeated Singapore’s second seed Loh Kean Yew 21-16, 6-21, 21-16.

The singles winners and runner-ups received \$15,750 (B551,000) and \$7,980 (B279,000) each respectively. Bangkok Post

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# Gunners reignite title charge

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal rekindled their bid for a first Premier League title in 20 years by beating leaders Liverpool 3-1 at the Emirates Stadium last Sunday (Feb 4).

Liverpool's hopes of sending off manager Jurgen Klopp as a champion of England were dented as Arsenal closed to within two points at the top of the table thanks to goals from Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Martinelli and Leandro Trossard.

Liverpool missed the presence of Mohamed Salah throughout and were left a man short when Ibrahima Konate was sent off for a second yellow card.

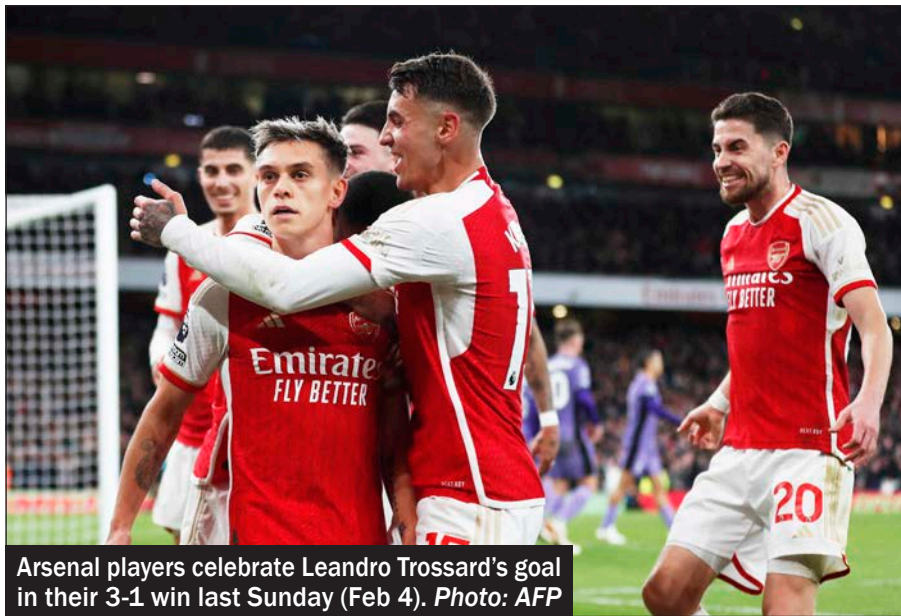
"We were ruthless when we had a chance and it feels like a big win," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta.

"It gives us momentum and the way we have done it we are back in the title race. I am excited," he added.

Manchester City moved into second place, level on 49 points with Arsenal, after Phil Foden's hat-trick powered them to a 3-1 win at Brentford on Monday evening.

Ominously for Liverpool, however, is the fact that Pep Guardiola's men have a game in hand and the experience of going the distance, having won the title in five of the last six seasons.

Meanwhile, Mauricio Pochettino apologised to the Chelsea fans after their 4-2 home loss to Wolves, Matheus Cunha's hat-trick handing the visitors their first victory at Stamford Bridge



Arsenal players celebrate Leandro Trossard's goal in their 3-1 win last Sunday (Feb 4). Photo: AFP

since 1979.

The Blues were booed off by furious fans after dropping into the bottom half of the table and, with trips to Aston Villa in the FA Cup and Manchester City among their next three games, could be in complete disarray by the time they face Liverpool in the League Cup final at Wembley on Feb 25.

Manchester United climbed into sixth with a 3-0 win over West Ham as goals from Rasmus Hojlund on his 21st birthday and a brace from 19-year-old Alejandro Garnacho gave the Red Devils a glimpse of a bright future.

On Saturday Aston Villa moved into fourth place with a 5-0 demolition of Sheffield United, while strugglers Everton salvaged a 2-2 draw with Tottenham thanks to an injury time equaliser from

young defender Jarrad Branthwaite.

Brighton crushed Crystal Palace 4-1, Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth drew 1-1, while David Datro Fofana's double inspired second bottom Burnley's fightback from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Fulham at Turf Moor.

However, the game of the weekend was the remarkable 4-4 draw at St James' Park between Newcastle United and Luton Town.

Luton raced into a 4-2 lead before Kieran Trippier scored in the 67th minute and Harvey Barnes, playing for the first time since September after injury, completed Newcastle's escape act six minutes later.

The result left the Magpies in ninth place and the Hatters one point clear of the relegation zone.



Fury suffered an injury in training. Photo: AFP

## Fury's postponed bout with Usyk rearranged for May 18

### BOXING

TYSON FURY'S POSTPONED world heavyweight title bout with Oleksandr Usyk has been rearranged for May 18 in Saudi Arabia, according to fight promoters last Saturday (Feb 3).

Fury had been due to face Usyk for the undisputed world heavyweight crown on Feb 17 in Riyadh.

But the eagerly-anticipated bout was postponed last week after the British fighter suffered a deep cut above his eye in training.

Revealing the new date last Saturday, a statement from Queensbury Promotions on X, formerly known as Twitter, read: "The undisputed heavyweight championship fight between @Tyson\_Fury and @usykaa has been rescheduled to May 18th in Riyadh."

The 35-year-old Fury re-

quired 11 stitches to the gash, apparently throwing into doubt the chances of the fight taking place in the short-term.

Usyk's team had reportedly considered a bout with Croatian Filip Hrgovic as a late replacement.

But Saturday's announcement puts Fury and the 37-year-old Ukrainian back on a collision course.

Usyk currently holds the WBO, WBA and IBF titles, with Fury the WBC champion at present.

The last undisputed heavyweight champion was Lennox Lewis when he beat Evander Holyfield in 1999.

Fury has won 34 fights with one draw since turning professional in 2008.

His most recent fight was a controversial victory over former UFC world champion Francis Ngannou in October.

AFP

## War Elephants target World Cup after Asian Cup exit

### FOOTBALL

DESPITE AN IMPRESSIVE run in the tournament, the War Elephants exited the Asian Cup in Qatar following a 2-1 loss to Uzbekistan in the last 16 round on Jan 30.

Returning from Qatar on Feb 1, Thailand head coach Masatada Ishii told media upon arrival at Suvarnabhumi International Airport that he was proud of the team performances.

"I have to give the credit to every player. We did not have much time to prepare the team, but the players showed a lot of determination and it made the results come out good," said the Japanese coach.

"While preparing for the tournament, I asked the player I need their commitment to training as my birthday gift. They all showed so much determination and that was a great birthday gift for me."

Ishii also thanked the Thai fans for supporting the War Elephants.



Thailand coach Masatada Ishii. Photo: Bangkok Post

"A big thank you to the fans for cheering the team and I would also like to thank the clubs who allowed their players to join the squad," he said.

The focus now turns to the upcoming qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup with the Thais scheduled to play their third match of the Asia Zone qualifiers against South Korea in Seoul on Mar 21, something Ishii indicated that he has already shifted his focus to.

"We have been analysing the South Korean team but since they are still in the Asian Cup, we will keep watching them," he said. "I think South Korea and

Japan will be finalists in this tournament."

Thailand are in Group C with China, Singapore and South Korea for the second phase of Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup finals.

They were beaten 2-1 at home in the opening game by China, the defeat leaving them in a precarious position, although they managed to beat Singapore 3-1 in their next group game.

The top two teams in each of nine groups will advance to the next stage and Jurgen Klinsmann's South Korea are hot favourites to be Group C champions.

Bangkok Post

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# Sport



**Six Nations returns in style > p14**

## MMA FEAST

### Phuket to host major international MMA festival

The press conference on Jan 18. Photo: Sports Association of Phuket

#### MMA

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A major international mixed martial arts (MMA) event has been confirmed to take place in Phuket next month, organisers have revealed.

The sixth edition of the International and Thai Martial Arts (ITMA) Games will be held between Mar 10-17 at the indoor stadium in Saphan Hin, with over 1,200 athletes from 50 countries expected to participate in a variety of martial arts disciplines including Muay Thai, Kickboxing, Karate and Jiu Jitsu.

Competition groupings will be determined by age and weight, from the cadet division, incorporating 8-10 years old, through adult (19-39) to masters (40-45), typically with three rounds of com-

petition of varying duration, depending on the class.

The ITMA Games and Festival were founded in 2016 by the World Muay Thai Organisation (WMO), the World Muay Boran Federation (WMBF) and the Kru Muay Thai Association (KMA) with a shared vision to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Thailand through the power of martial arts.

The multi-discipline competition in Phuket next month will see rules and regulations run in accordance with a number of major international organisations, including: WMBF; WMO; Union Boxing Federation; Dap Thai Society, covering Thai sword fighting; International Sport Karate/Kickboxing Association (IKSA); Carlson Gracie Federation, covering Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (Gi and No Gi); and International Fighting Sport Association (IFSA), cover-

ing amateur MMA and Jeet Kune Do.

On the fringes of the actual competition will be a series of interactive workshops and seminars where attendees can learn more about the intricacies of a variety of mixed martial arts, including: a WMO ring officials refreshers course; a WMO ring officials course for Muay Thai; a Muay Boran and Dap Thai seminar; a ISKA ring officials course for Kickboxing; a MMA ring officials course; and a Sagat Muay Thai Seminar.

Furthermore, on Mar 17 there will be the annual Wai Kru Ceremony held by the Kru Muay Thai Association (KMA). "Wai Kru" is to show respect and thanks to one's teacher and their lineage of teachers, for passing down their skills and knowledge and this auspicious occasion sees a grand display of tradition,

respect, history and culture of Thailand's most precious martial arts.

Everyone is welcome to celebrate National Nai Kanomtorn day (Thailand's Muay Thai war hero) on Mar 17 and to participate in the Wai Kru ceremony attendees will experience an exchange in blessings from highly respected Grand Masters.

The event was officially announced by Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), at a press conference held at the Twin Tower Hotel in Bangkok on Jan 18.

Also present were Charatdej Ulit, President of the Phra Chao Suea Muay Thai Sports Association, Chinawut Sirisamphan, President of the Muay Thai Teachers Association, in addition to numerous Muay Thai teachers and students.

#### SOFT POWER DRIVE

Mr Rewat explained that the tournament is being organised by the PPAO, the Phra Chao Suea Muay Thai Sports Association and the Muay Thai Teachers Association and will be held at gymnasium 1 at Saphan Hin Stadium which has a total of 600 seats for spectators to enjoy the action.

Mr Rewat added that the event is a key part of the government's drive to promote the national sport of Muay Thai as a soft power to help enhance the country's image internationally while attracting tourists to its shores.

As part of this initiative, it was announced on Feb 2 that Thailand is sending eight Muay Thai experts to Saudi Arabia in April to train the country's military and national boxers (see p14).

In related news, the head of the Phuket Sports Association, Thammawat Wongcharoenyot,

said on Jan 31 that the province is equipped and ready to respond to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin's call to issue 90-day visas for people wishing to come to Thailand to study Muay Thai.

With a tourist visa, a foreigner can stay in Thailand for up to 60 days but with a special visa for learning Muay Thai, they could stay for 90 days.

Phuket is internationally renowned for Muay Thai with 43 boxing camps currently registered with the Sports Authority of Thailand and two standard boxing stadiums, Patong Beach Boxing Stadium and Bangla Boxing Stadium, said Mr Thammawat.

The province is therefore perfectly placed to take advantage of the proposed move to allow students to enter on a special visa which would help boost the local economy immeasurably, Mr Thammawat added.

## Thailand to host women's Volleyball Nations League Finals

#### VOLLEYBALL

THAILAND WILL HOST THE women's Volleyball Nations League 2024 Finals for the first time in June, it has been confirmed.

The Finals will be held at Indoor Stadium Hua Mark, confirmed Fabio Azevedo, general director of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) during a press conference last Friday (Feb 2).

Thailand and the seven best teams of the preliminary round will be in action between June 20-23.

Tourism and Sports Minister Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol said the government is aiming to promote Thailand as a premier destination for world-class sport tournaments and the sport of volleyball can be Thailand's soft power.

"Our national women's volleyball team are unique and are well loved by not just Thais but volleyball fans from all over the world," said Sudawan. "Hosting the VNL Finals



The Feb 2 press conference. Photo: Supplied

will be a great opportunity for not only sport fans who will get to watch top athletes perform but Thai tourism will also receive a boost."

Somporn Chaibangyang, presi-

dent of Thailand Volleyball Association, believed the volleyball body will successfully host the June tournament.

"We hosted many international tournaments with great success in the past and I believe we will be able to host another successful event this June," said Somporn.

"We will prepare the team well for the Finals. It will be a great opportunity for Thailand to be one of the eight teams to play in the Finals.

"I would also like to thank Tourism and Sports Minister Sudawan

Wangsuphakijkosol and Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) governor Gongsak Yodmani for advocating for our country to be chosen as host."

Other than hosts Thailand, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Turkey and United States are the 15 teams that will vie for the seven vacancies.

The first three competition weeks of the 2024 season will take place in May and June. *Bangkok Post*