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# WHITE WHALE

## EXPERTS SEARCH FOR ALBINO OMURA'S WHALE IN POSSIBLE WORLD FIRST SIGHTING

Photo: Happy Ours Charter Phuket

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
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Marine experts from the Department of Coastal Marine Resources (DMCR) this week launched a three-day search for an albino Omura's whale in the waters south of Phuket following what may have been the first such sighting on record.

Officers led by DMCR REGION 5 Chief Wissanu Chaengjai used a catamaran marine survey vessel and a drone to scour the waters between the southern reaches of Phang Nga Bay Marine National Park to south of Phuket, starting their search last Sunday (Jan 5).

As of Monday, the search had found one normal-coloured Omura's whale north of Koh Racha Noi, the

DMCR confirmed. The whale was about nine metres long and was swimming quite quickly, as if it were 'lunge feeding', the DMCR officers noted.

Joining the search team was Dr Kongkiat Kittiwattanawong, DMCR Specialist in Research on Resources and Environment in Marine and Coastal Ecosystems and former director of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC).

Dr Kongkiat explained that the search for Omura's whales, initially reported as seen off Phi Phi Island on Jan 1, was especially important as very little is known about Omura's whales and that one being albino would be an exceptional rarity.

The search began after Christine Rehm and Frank Klose, owners of S/Y Micromégas II, reported sighting two Omura's whales near Hin Bida,

near the Phi Phi Islands about 3pm last Friday (Jan 5).

Both whales appeared to be white in the water, reported Christine and Frank.

The search also follows two confirmed sightings of Omura's whales on Jan 1. The first sighting on Jan 1 was by officers from the Mu Ko Surin National Park, who photographed the rare marine animal near the archipelago.

The second confirmed sighting of Omura's whales on Jan 1 was near Koh Hei, just a few kilometres southeast of Phuket. That sighting was by local boat tour operation Happy Ours Phuket, with two whales spotted: one appearing to be all white, the other the more normal grey colour.

The Jan 1 sighting near Phuket was confirmed through video footage

of the whale swimming and surfacing. The confirmation came by clear identification of the ridges on its head, Assoc Prof Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a renowned marine biologist and lecturer at Kasetsart University, reported last Saturday (Jan 6).

Omura's whales had previously been mistaken for Bryde's whales as both species look similar. Scientists now know that Omura's whales are not related to Bryde's whales at all.

The dorsal fin of the Omura's whale is similar to that of a Bryde's whale, but is more curved and located more towards the tail. Also the head of an Omura's whale has one convex ridge. Bryde's whales, also called Bruda whales, have three.

Khun Koi, of the Happy Ours Charter Team, explained that the pair of whales were spotted about nine...

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Speedboat  
crash kills  
Russian girl, 5



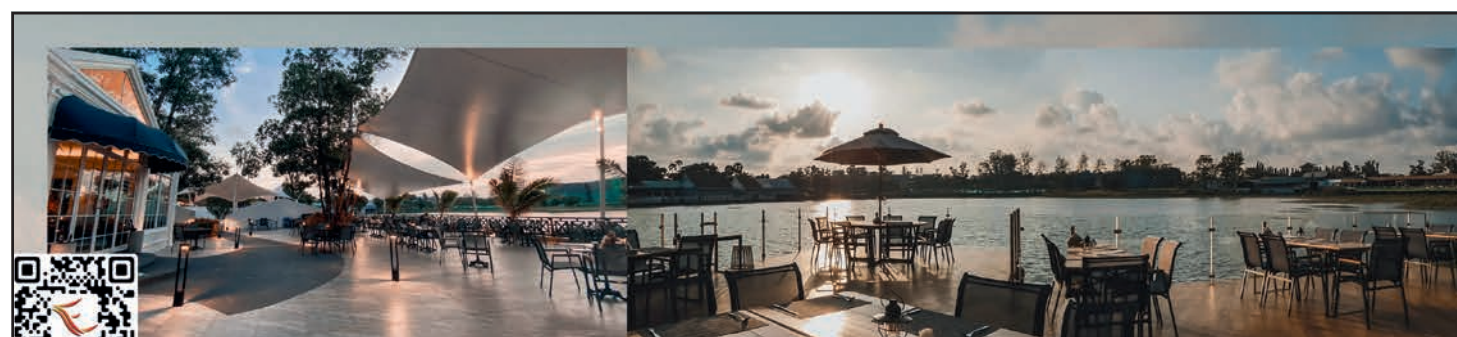
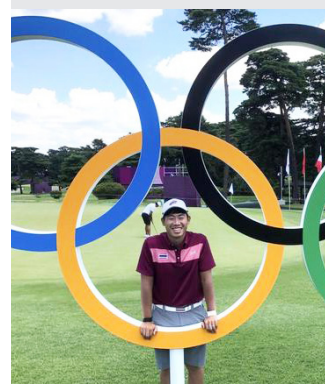
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# News



**Driver on drugs steals bus, crashes > p5**

## Omura whale sighting 'doubly rare'

*Continued from page 1*

...kilometres south of Coral Island (Koh Hei) at about 4pm on Jan 1. The DMCR was informed of the coordinates of the sighting.

"We found two whales that are thought to be the same type of whale swimming together. One was beautiful white. The other one is a normal colour. Our family... named the white whale 'Thalang' and the normal-coloured whale 'Bukit'," Khun Koi reported.

Khun Koi speculated that eco-marine tourism sector would "explode" if the whales remained in the area, especially the albino.

Dr Thon noted that finding an albino Omura's whale as "double rare". The probability of sighting an albino Omura was about "one in 10 million", he said.

Dr Thon joined the team searching the waters south of Phuket. "The discovery of an albino whale has led to a major survey of rare marine animals

since the beginning of the year. The minister ordered both the Marine Department and the National Parks Department to survey continuously for three days, using drones and modern technology together with field survey teams led by experts from the DMCR," he explained.

"Whether we find an albino whale or not, this information is very useful because it is a survey of whales, dolphins and other rare animals in distant areas that we rarely [survey] and there is a huge demand [for the information]," he added.

"I would like to propose to the Ministry of Natural Resources [MNRE] to organise a survey like this at least two times a year in four areas of the North Andaman (Surin-Similan), around Phuket (Phuket-Phi Phi) and the South Andaman (Lanta-Rok and Adang-Ravi)," Dr Thon said.

"If you can do this, we guarantee that the Thai rare marine animal industry will



Photo: DMCR

take off. We will preserve and manage tourism. We can do anything if you have the information," Dr Thon concluded.

### MYSTERIOUS GIANTS

Tourists on a sightseeing boat spotted an Omura's whale in the Surin islands, north of Phuket, last October. The sighting spurred immediate attention, as Omura's whales

were first recognised in the wild only eight years earlier.

National park officers at the Mu Ko Surin National Park confirmed the sighting on Oct 26. Park officers confirmed it was the first time that an Omura's whale had been sighted in the park's waters.

The Omura's whale (*Balaenoptera omurai*) is similar to the Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni brydei*), and is

protected in Thailand.

They grow to 20 metres long, weighing up to 20 tonnes. Omura's whales are found alone or in pairs, but may group together for feeding. The whales have been seen 'lunge feeding' on krill and small fish.

Omura's whales are found in tropical to warm regions, in both offshore and coastal zones. Most are found in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean.

Omura's whales have been confirmed as seen in Thai waters, from Prachuap Khiri Khan to Songkhla in the Gulf of Thailand, and they have been seen along the Andaman coast. A group of four have been previously photographed near the Racha islands, south of Phuket.

The Omura's whale was first described by three Japanese scientists, Shiro Wada, Masayuki Oishi and Tadasu K. Yamada, in 2003, and

named in honour of Japanese cetologist Hideo Omura, who passed away in 1993.

However, Shiro et al had first recognised Omura's whales only from dead specimens in 2003. It was not until 2015 that the first specimens were recognised alive in the wild.

At this stage, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) does not even have enough data to determine whether Omura's whales are endangered.

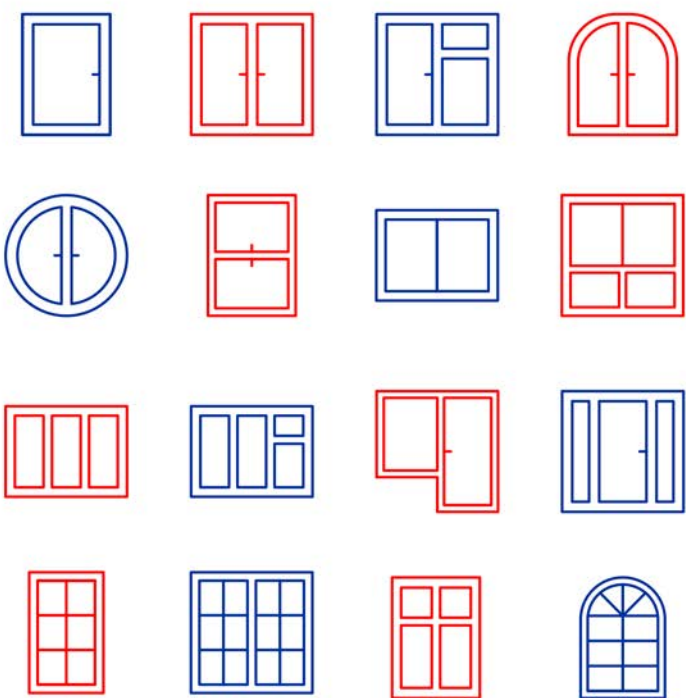
The body of an Omura's whale is a light-coloured grey-black, and they may have a whitish to pink belly. They also have 80-90 light-coloured grooves under the chin, extending past the navel.

The left side of the jaw is black, but the right side is faded or white. The jaw is filled with 180-210 pairs of short and wide teeth that are white, yellow or black.

*Additional reporting by Eakkapop Thongtub*



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## Two dead, 40 injured in 'Seven Days', say officials

PHUKET GOVERNOR Sophon Suwannarat last week confirmed that the official tally for the 'Seven Days' safety campaign for the New Year, from Dec 29 to Jan 4, was only two people killed and 40 admitted to hospital for injuries sustained in only 40 accidents recognised by officials.

The last day of the campaign, Jan 4, saw officials recognise just seven road accidents on the island, from which five people were admitted to hospital for injuries.

National road safety agency ThaiRSC, however, recorded five people killed in road accidents in Phuket during the seven days, Phuket's worst tally since 2019, when the island suffered seven deaths on the roads over the New Year holidays.

Of note, the Phuket office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket) usually publishes ThaiRSC road accident statistics in its daily notice. During the 'Seven Days' campaign, however, it published the notice only once, on Jan 2, when it marked two deaths in road accidents on the one



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

day. After that, DDPM-Phuket stopped publishing ThaiRSC reports.

At a press conference held at the DDPM-Phuket office on Jan 5, Governor Sophon was told that motorbikes were the vehicles most frequently involved in accidents, with the leading cause attributed to risky behaviors such as driving above the speed limit.

DDPM-Phuket Chief Udomphon Kan shared key road accident prevention directives for the campaign, saying the guidelines aimed to heighten awareness regarding high-risk behaviors contributing to accidents, particularly among children and youth.

The measures included enforcing speed limit regulations, preventing drunk driving, promoting safe following distances, and advocating

helmet use. Strict initiatives had been proposed, including 100% helmet usage compliance at the local level within educational institutions, communities and villages.

The provincial administration collaborated with relevant agencies to monitor and verify accident information during the control period, ensuring accurate reporting to the Road Safety Administration Center, the meeting was told.

Meanwhile, Thai RSC reported that 135 people were killed and 22,178 people were injured in road accidents in Phuket last year, marking a 23% increase in road accident fatalities on the island compared with 2022, and a 29% increase in the number of people injured in accidents on Phuket's roads.

As of Tuesday (Jan 9), ThaiRSC marked that six people had already died on Phuket's roads since Jan 1 with a further 628 people injured in road accidents in Phuket since the New Year.

On Monday alone (Jan 8), 110 were injured in road accidents in Phuket.

*The Phuket News*



# Deadly boat crash spurs action

The Phuket News  
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A deadly tour speedboat crash at Koh Maiton that killed a 5-year-old Russian girl has spurred action by the leading figures in Phuket's tour boat industry to help prevent any similar accidents from happening in the future.

Spearheading the effort is Shaun Stenning, CEO and Founder of 5 Star Marine, who is organising a marine safety event at Phuket Boat Lagoon on Monday (Jan 15).

The event, to be held from 5pm to 7pm, will include leading figures from Phuket's leading Thai and foreign speedboat, yachting and diving operators as well as marine industry suppliers and companies and the Phuket Hotels Association and the Marriott Small Business Council.

"As you would know, recent accidents on the water have cast a shadow over our industry and operators within the industry need to step forward and make a commitment to increased safety in the industry," Mr Stenning wrote in a notice calling people to attend the event.

"I have been coordinating with foreign operators across the island and the Thailand Tourism Council and the Phuket Provincial Government has been coordinating with Thai Operators."

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwan-



Tourist Police and the Phuket Marine Office inspect the 'Apirak 89' speedboat, which slammed into rocks at Koh Maithon on Dec 31. Photo: Tourist Police

narat will be attending the event, along with vice governors. Among the government agencies to be present at the event are: Marine Department, Marine Police, Phuket Immigration, Phuket's three District Chiefs, Phuket Provincial Police, Tourist Police and the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports office

"The purpose of the event is to have operators in the room commit to a new safety standard in Phuket as a voluntary commitment, endorsed by the Provincial Government," Mr Stenning explained.

Attendance at the marine safety event is free. The event will be followed by a networking session from 7pm to 8pm.

## DEADLY CRASH

The speedboat 'Apirak 89' was returning from Phi Phi Island to Chalong Pier with seven Russian nationals on board when it slammed into rocks at Koh Maithon, south-east of Phuket, at about 3:30pm on Dec 31.

Two speedboats were dispatched to render assistance and bring all nine on the 'Apirak 89' back to Chalong Pier, where emergency responders were waiting for them.

The injured were rushed to Dibuk Hospital, Vachira Phuket Hospital and Chalong Hospital. However, a 5-year-old Russian girl named by officials as Liza Pak was later pronounced dead at Chalong Hospital.

One of the Russians, named by officials as 'Mr Pak Petr', suffered serious injuries and at last report remained classified as a 'red' patient in care at Dibuk Hospital.

Capt Natthaphong, 41, also remained unconscious and intubated at Vachira Phuket Hospital. He suffered a large laceration on the left side of his face.

## DRUGS

Phuket officials took four days to admit that the captain of the Apirak 89 had tested positive for methamphetamine use, despite Thai national news agencies reporting the fact the day after the accident.

Further, instead of naming the captain as Natthaphong Kongwilai as they had done in their own previous official reports, when it came to naming the drug-test-positive captain officials cited the name "Mr Natharuj, age 41" – a name never before listed as even on the boat at the time of the accident.

Adding insult to injury, despite not admitting that the captain had tested positive for drug use, officials launched a facile spate of snap drugs tests at key piers on Phuket the day after the accident.

Of the scores of boats that operate from Chalong Pier, only 23 boat operators and crew were tested. None of the 23 samples tested positive for drugs, said an official report of

the testing.

The next day (Jan 2), only 18 boat captains and crew were tested at Ratsada Pier, which only a week earlier, on Dec 29, Prawet Suphachai, Director of Regional Harbor Office 5, joined by Phuket Marine Office Chief Natchapong Pranit, pointed out that more than 5,000 people a day were travelling on the boats to and from Ratsada Pier.

Of the 18 tested, one person – captain or crew member not confirmed by officials – tested positive for drug use. The person was referred to a local neighbourhood hospital for treatment.

More comprehensive snap drug tests at Ao Por Pier on Jan 3 saw 64 boat operators tested, with five testing positive for drug use. The five boat operators were immediately suspended from work, Phuket Tourist Police confirmed. The five were to report to the PPHO main office at a later date.

Meanwhile, Marine Police, Wichit Police, Tourist Police and the Phuket Marine Office at last report were all continuing their investigation into the accident.

At time of press no charges had been pressed, despite officials confirming that the boat was not officially registered at the time of the accident. Registration renewal had been submitted, but was not yet completed, officials confirmed.

## Russian 18-year-old slashes mother's throat, surrenders

AN 18-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN MAN arrested for slashing his mother's throat with a knife at a house in Tambon Thepkasattri before New Year has been moved to Phuket Provincial Court for detention.

Aleksandr Nikolaev was transferred from Thalang Police Station to Phuket Provincial Court on Dec 31. After holding Nikolaev for 48 hours, police were required to hand him over to the court for further detention.

While bringing him from his police cell to the transport vehicle, Nikolaev appeared to be weary.

Nikolaev has been charged with attempted murder after confessing to slashing his mother's throat with a knife.

Police were initially alerted to the incident when Pol Lt Col Phongpipat Khamchomphu of the Thalang Police received a report from the village headman of Moo 2, Thepkasattri, at about 5:15pm on Dec 29.

Police and rescue workers arrived at the home to find Nikolaev's mother, Elena Nikolaeva, 46, on the floor with a severe cut across her throat. Unable to stem the flow of blood, rescue workers rushed her to Thalang Hospital, then on to Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town.

Forensic police began investigating the house while all police stations on the island were notified to be on the lookout for Nikolaev, last seen fleeing the home in a grey Nissan Almera.

At about 9pm that night, officers found



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Nikolaev sitting in the grey Nissan parked in front of Phuket City Police Station.

Officers took Nikolaev inside, where through a written note he confessed to cutting his mother's throat with a knife.

His mother survived the attack, but she was last reported to be in serious condition. No further details of her condition have been released.

Nikolaev is believed to be mentally ill and is receiving psychiatric help. A Russian translator has been provided, but he has so far refused to speak with officers further about the incident.

If you or anyone you know is in need of emotional support and counselling, please contact the Samaritans of Thailand at their 24-hour hotline 02-113-6789 (English & Thai) or the Thai Mental Health Hotline at 1323 (Thai). The Phuket News

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SUN JANUARY 14



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Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

MON JANUARY 15



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Wind 4 m/s

TUE JANUARY 16



High: +32°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

WED JANUARY 17



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

THU JANUARY 18



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Two injured in teen shootout

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Two teenagers have been charged with attempted murder after a street shootout near Saphan Hin left one teen in hospital with a gunshot wound to the head and an innocent bystander shot in the shoulder.

Phuket City Police were alerted to the shootout at 3:10am on Jan 3 when they received a report that a bullet had struck the official residence of the Phuket Marine Police chief on Phuket Rd.

Officers responding to the call arrived at the home to find a glass louvre in one of the windows shattered and a bullet hole through the curtain. The bullet was later recovered from on the floor inside the home. The Phuket Marine Police chief was not at the residence at the time of the shooting.

While officers were investigating the shooting, the Phuket City Police Investigation Unit was notified by emergency room staff at Vachira Phuket



Photo: Phuket City Police

Hospital that a 'Mr Kai' (not his real name), 17 years old, had arrived with a head wound inflicted by a gunshot.

Kai had come to the emergency room for treatment, and another local resident had arrived after he had been shot in the shoulder. The shoulder injury was described as minor.

Investigating officers soon learned that there had been a shootout between two gangs

of youths that had started near Bang Yai Canal at Saphan Hin nearby.

One group of teens was sitting beside the canal when another group of teens from Koh Siray arrived on motorbikes. The two gangs had already encountered each other. The problem between the two gangs was described as "how they look at each other".

Police were told that one of

the gang members from Koh Siray shot at the teens sitting beside the canal, prompting the Bang Yai group to speed off on their motorbikes.

A chase ensued, and the firing continued, with one of the bullets hitting the Phuket Marine Police Chief's residence.

Kai was injured in the shootout, and one local resident was caught in the cross-

fire, police explained.

The gang from Koh Siray then sped off on their motorbikes.

Using CCTV footage from across Phuket Town, and beyond, Phuket City Police tracked down and arrested two members of the Koh Siray gang at a rented room in Wichit at 7pm on Jan 3.

The two perpetrators identified as directly involved in the shooting were 'Mr Phu', 18, who drove the motorbike, and 'Mr King', 18, who fired the gun.

In making the arrests, police seized a homemade firearm and one shotgun shell casing that had already been fired.

Phu and King were taken to Phuket City Police Station, where they told police that the other group of teenagers had opened fire at them first. They claimed they shot back at the other teens only once while making their escape.

Both Phu and King have been charged with attempted murder, police confirmed.

At last report police were continuing their investigation.

## Russian arrested for child sex trafficking

A 63-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN man was arrested at Phuket airport on Jan 5 for his alleged involvement in child sex trafficking in Thailand. The man was apprehended on an outstanding warrant issued in Phuket and handed over to Patong Police.

The arrest was announced on Jan 6 in a publication posted just before noon on the Phuket Immigration Checkpoint page on Facebook. The page covers the actions of Immigration officers stationed at Phuket International Airport.

The arrest was conducted at around 10pm on Jan 5 at the International Arrivals Hall, an off-limits area for all people except authorised personnel and passengers arriving on international flights.

The suspect's identity and the number of the arrest



Photo: Phuket Immigration Checkpoint

warrant were not revealed.

The Phuket office of the Immigration Bureau provided the following description of the charges against the suspect: "taking away a minor over 15 years but not yet over 18 years of age from the parent, guardian, or caretaker for obscene actions, even with the consent of the minor".

The charge falls under Section 319 of the Criminal Code, commonly known as "child sex trafficking". The man was reported as taken to Patong Police Station for further legal processing.

The Phuket News

## Brit arrested for pistol-whipping friend

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A BRITISH man for attacking another man by pistol-whipping him on New Year's Day.

Kamala Police working together with Phuket Immigration officers arrested 38-year-old British national Jamie Ian Bryant at a hotel in Wichit on Jan 2.

Pol Lt Atcha Yatiwat, Deputy Inspector of Kamala Police Station, received a report of the incident on the evening of New Year's Day.

Bryant and his friend were traveling in a tuk-tuk past the Oasis Spa in Kamala when an argument broke out.

According to the tuk-tuk driver, Chanchai Phet-in, who witnessed the incident, an argument erupted between his two foreign male passengers, culminating in one man assaulting the other with a firearm inside the tuk-tuk.

The injured victim's friend promptly notified the Kamala Police Station, leading to a coordinated response from the patrol and investigation teams. Bryant fled the scene, and a subsequent search of a nearby house, believed to be the assailant's residence, yielded blood-stained shoes and the suspect's passport.

Further investigations revealed the suspect's association with Chanidapa Wanitchayaphatphon, residing at Central Gear Hotel & Apartment. The police, along with immigration officers, tracked down Ms Chanidapa, who confirmed her boyfriend's involvement in the incident.

Officers arrived at her apartment to be told that Bryant was in the bathroom. Police



Photo: Kamala Police

asked her to call him to come out, which he did without resistance.

Bryant confessed to the violent argument and subsequent use of the concealed firearm. Bryant revealed he disposed of the weapon along 'Chaofa Mine Road' in Wichit, linking Prince of Songkla University Phuket campus to Chao Fa West Rd.

Bryant led the police to the discarded weapon's location, wrapped in a white T-shirt. Nearby was a bullet box branded 'SHELL SHOCK NAS' still containing 36 9mm bullets.

The injured victim received medical attention, and Bryant faces charges related to the assault, possession of a firearm, and causing bodily harm.

The investigation is ongoing, and authorities said they were working to ensure justice is served. However, what inspired the argument between the two men was not explained.

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Kathu elections invoke bans on alcohol sales

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Residents in Tambon Kathu will go to the polls to elect a new Kathu Mayor this Sunday (Jan 14), and go to the polls again next Sunday (Jan 21) to elect a new representative to serve them on the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) council. Both elections will invoke a 24-hour ban on the sale of alcohol for each of the elections.

Candidates for the Kathu Mayor election registered in December after the election was announced in late November.

There are three candidates vying for the position of Kathu Mayor: Mr Nippon Bamrunghthin, Mr Wannayut Suthikul and Mrs Phansupa Chotirasamechai.

There will be 25 polling stations set up throughout Tambon Kathu, which will be open for residents to cast votes from 8am to 5pm, explained Rattana Laptanapong, Election Director of Kathu Municipality.

Meanwhile, there are two candidates vying for the PPAO Kathu Area 1 seat on the PPAO council in the election to be held in Tambon Kathu on Jan 21.

They are Wichai Kiattansakul and Peera Sukyiran, both residents of Moo 2, Kathu.

There will be 16 polling stations set up throughout the subdistrict on Jan 21.



Image: Kathu Municipality

Those, too, will be open from 8am to 5pm for residents to cast votes, explained PPAO Election Director Akarawat Sirithanthanakorn.

The election for Kathu Mayor was invoked after the position became “vacant” after years-long incumbent Chai-anan Suthikul was summarily dismissed from office by previous Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew in January last year.

Mr Chai-anan’s dismissal from office followed an investigation into allowing a private operator to pump water from a lagoon at the Tin Mine Museum in Kathu.

Election Director of Kathu Municipality Ms Rattana posted a notice explaining how the dismissal was appealed, and how and when that appeal was dismissed by the court.

Of note, former Phuket Governor Mr

Narong when speaking to the media on Jan 26 last year confirmed that he had issued an order to dismiss Mr Chai-anan from office. However, Mr Chai-anan was to vacate the position of Kathu Mayor and call an election just days later, on Feb 1.

Under election law, the two coming elections in Tambon Kathu will each invoke a 24-hour ban on the sale of alcohol in the tambon (which does not include Patong or Kamala).

For the Kathu Mayor election, there will be a ban on the sale of alcohol in Tambon Kathu from 6pm Saturday (Jan 13) through to 6pm Sunday night (Jan 14).

For the PPAO Kathu Area 1 election, there will be a ban on the sale of alcohol in Tambon Kathu from 6pm, Saturday, Jan 20, through to 6pm, Sunday, Jan 21.



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

## Tourists in hospital after Bangla brawl

UK AND SOUTH AFRICAN tourists found themselves admitted to Patong Hospital following a brawl on Bangla Rd in Patong, prompting police intervention to quell the disturbance.

The incident on Bangla Rd was reported by Phuket Tourist Police last Friday (Jan 5). In a brief post on Facebook, officials revealed that a “quarrel” had erupted “between British tourists and South African tourists” in Phuket’s main entertainment zone.

The altercation resulted in minor injuries, leading authorities to call in Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation

to transport the injured parties to Patong Hospital.

While the exact time and location of the conflict were not disclosed by Phuket Tourist Police, photos from the scene depicted officers, local security guards and foreign volunteers calming down several able-bodied foreign men near the eastern entrance to Bangla Rd.

Officials withheld the identities of the tourists involved and made no mention of police charges. According to Phuket Tourist Police, the parties reached a resolution amongst themselves following law enforcement intervention.

The Phuket News

## Driver on drugs steals bus, slams into power pole

POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED drug-related charges against a Phuket bus driver who crashed a tour bus into a power pole in Phang Nga, resulting in the vehicle being destroyed by ensuing fire.

Phuket native and resident Thanawut Chankaew was arrested near the Thai Mueang Municipal Market in Phang Nga just before noon on Jan 6 after crashing a tour bus into a power pole.

The collision resulted in a fire that took firefighters an hour to extinguish. The fire destroyed the vehicle.

According to a preliminary investigation, Mr Thanawut took the bus from a Phuket-based company he worked for. He then drove from the island to Phang Nga province.

On his way to the mainland, Mr Thanawut ran through the Phuket Check Point at Tha Chachai in a manner described in media reports as reminiscent of being “drunk, high on drugs, or having stolen the vehicle.”

The police gave chase but



A Phuket tour bus was destroyed by fire after hitting a power pole in Thai Mueang. Photo: Screenshot

arrested Mr Thanawut only after he crashed the bus in Thai Mueang, some 26km from the Phuket Check Point.

Mr Thanawut was tested for drugs, and the results came back positive. He now faces multiple charges, including driving under the

influence.

The manager of the company that owns the bus and employed Thanawut told police that Thanawut took the bus without permission, effectively stealing the vehicle.

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# Phuket's luxury lifestyle events

## ADVERTORIAL

Phuket is no stranger to luxury lifestyle events, but perceptions have moved a long way since the annual Phuket King's Cup Regatta (inaugurated in 1987) was considered 'luxury', with its nightly beach parties offering a simple buffet and free-flow beverages.

Whether it's a luxury developer celebrating a milestone achievement, an exclusive celebrity wedding, a charity gala or an annual luxury lifestyle event, Phuket has firmly established itself as the definitive island resort destination for luxury happenings in Thailand.

But what do we mean when we talk about luxury? Is it a static concept, symbolized by instantly recognised, world-famous brands? Or is there more to it?

According to a recent world-wide survey, most respondents claimed that the meaning of luxury had evolved for today's younger generations. Sure, the age-old 'musts' defining luxury still hold true in most cases – quality, elegance, exclusivity and so on – but personal fulfillment and experiential one-upmanship amongst peers now enter the equation as being central to the concept of luxury. Price alone, while still in the mix, is less significant than it was for older generations as 'expensive' gives way, to some extent, to 'different'.

This shift in focus within the market for luxury represents an opportunity for Phuket to lead the way in hosting, developing and sustaining big, luxury lifestyle events.



When luxury lifestyle was all about shopping for the latest Louis Vuitton accessory or that must-have Lamborghini, Bangkok was the only destination in Thailand that made sense for luxury events. But, as the meaning of luxury increasingly embraces the value of experiences, Phuket – with its exotic islands and high-end beach culture – is perfectly positioned to capture a much greater share of events in this sector.

Phuket hosts two annual events that fall comfortably within the definition of 'luxury lifestyle'. One is Infinite Luxury's Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous (KRSR), now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, which sees a collection of invited superyachts

and regional glitterati gathering in the waters off Kata Beach for a few days comparing yachts and yachting experiences – and attending lavish waterfront parties.

The second annual event is the Thailand International Boat Show (TIBS), which blends all the elements of luxury lifestyle that Phuket can offer – including high-end property and bespoke travel – against a backdrop of magnificent yachts, assorted water toys and yachting adventures. At TIBS, visitors can do more than just buy a boat – they can explore and learn about the boating lifestyle, getting help from experts in tailoring their purchases to launch them on new and challenging experiences.

September 2024 will see the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Gumball 3000 rally stop in Phuket on its way from Egypt to Singapore in time for the Singapore F1. Gumball 3000 is a celebrity car rally, combining luxury and adventure, which has taken thousands of supercars and entrants on epic journeys across the globe – experiential one-upmanship at its finest. The rally's Middle Eastern leg will finish in Amman. There 100 cars will be loaded onto cargo planes headed for Bangkok, where the Asian leg begins.

All three of these events have several things in common. Their appeal is clearly to UHNWI / HNWI's. Their concepts are about more than

simply lavishing money on top-end brand purchases; they embody the excitement of new and 'different' experiences – albeit available only to those who can afford them. And they all rely on commercial sponsorship to make them work.

Sponsorship is the lifeblood of this kind of large scale, high end, professionally-managed event. As such, both TIBS and Gumball 3000 are represented by Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd. – The Sponsorship Experts in respect of their commercial sponsorship and brand partnership marketing, ensuring that their sponsorship offers are properly packaged and targeted – and their sponsors professionally managed in the build up to, during and after the event.

Building on the opportunity presented by the changing demands of those who live a luxury lifestyle, Phuket is in a strong position to pitch itself as a global destination for luxury events – attracting top rights holders, sponsors, partners, participants and visitors from across the world.

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## New Year brings Phuket B8bn boost

PHUKET ENJOYED an influx of more than 265,000 visitors over the New Year holidays, generating more than B8 billion in tourism revenue, the head of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket office has announced.

Lertchai Wangtrakuldee, Director of the TAT Phuket office, said that more than 600 flights landed at Phuket International Airport over the four days from Dec 29-Jan 1.

Over the four days there were 333 inbound international flights, about 83 flights a day, bringing a total of 63,836 inbound passengers, or 15,959 people a day, Mr Lertchai said.

In addition, there were 271 domestic flights, or 68 flights a day, bringing 36,026 inbound passengers, or 9,006 people a day, he said.

A sample survey was conducted of tourist accommodation operators covering 30% of each major tourist area on the island, account-



Photo: PR Phuket

ing for a total of 101,556 rooms at 1,890 hotels, Mr Lertchai noted.

The survey found that hotels and other guest accommodations enjoyed an average occupancy of 81.69%, with guests staying

on average 3.62 days.

In total, Phuket welcomed a total of 265,835 visitors over the four days, altogether generating B8.348bn in tourism revenue, Mr Lertchai said.

*The Phuket News*

## New minimum wages come into effect

PHUKET NOW HAS THE SOLELY highest minimum wage in the country, with the new minimum wage rates coming into effect on Jan 1.

The new minimum wages throughout the country came into effect following approval by the Cabinet, reported state news agency NNT.

The decision follows extensive deliberations and calculations carried out by the Wage Board and Committee to ensure a fair and sustainable adjustment, the report said.

The new minimum wage rates, categorised into 17 groups, reflect variations in living costs and economic conditions across different provinces.

Group 1 features Phuket alone, with a new minimum daily wage rate of B370 (previously B354)

Group 2 includes Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan and Samut Sakhon, with a new minimum wage rate of B363 (previously B353)

Group 3 features Chonburi and Rayong, with a new minimum wage rate of B361 (previously B354)

All the way down in Group 17 are Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala provinces with a new minimum daily wage rate of B330 (previously B328)

The adjustment is seen as a carefully calculated measure to improve the living conditions of workers without causing adverse effects on the economy. The government believes that the increased minimum wage will allow



Photo: NNT

employees to earn a fair income while not exacerbating inflation or impacting product prices, said the NNT report.

In a press statement, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Settha Thavisin acknowledged the importance of regular wage reviews. He announced plans for a meeting on Jan 17 to establish a subcommittee tasked with refining the minimum wage calculation formula further.

The objective is to present a comprehensive plan to the Cabinet by March, ensuring that the wage rates are tailored to the specific needs of each district and occupation.

PM Thavisin emphasised that the government's focus is on enhancing the quality of life for workers nationwide. The upcoming adjustments, he stated, will contribute to a more equitable and prosperous society, marking a significant step toward fostering economic stability in the country. *The Phuket News*



# Weed advocates slam government control bill

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Advocates of cannabis legalisation have blasted Public Health Minister Cholnan Srikaew's decision to endorse a new draft of the cannabis and hemp control bill without consulting the civil sector as he had promised.

Dr Cholnan said last Saturday (Jan 6) that under the bill, cannabis cannot be used for recreational purposes and the use of cannabis at home for medical purposes must be done in accordance with the right procedures.

Prasitchai Nunual, secretary-general of Thailand's Cannabis Future Network, said on Facebook that the minister failed to keep his promise that the draft would be put up for public discussion before it was passed on to the Cabinet.

He said involving members of the public in the policy drafting process will ensure the outcome is based on scientific facts and evidence instead of being driven by



Public Health Minister Cholnan Srikaew. Photo: Bangkok Post

political interests.

"We have yet to see the contents of the bill, but according to the minister's media interview, we believe several articles aren't grounded in facts," he wrote.

He also pointed out inconsistencies in the government's efforts to control cannabis, methamphetamine pills and alcoholic beverages.

For instance, while cannabis is legally considered a herb, its use will require a doctor's recommendation under the new draft. Meanwhile, the possession of up to five methamphetamine pills isn't

considered a criminal offence despite it being classified as a narcotic.

Mr Prasitchai called on the Public Health Ministry to improve its officials' understanding of cannabis, methamphetamine and alcohol so they can draw up a more effective control framework.

"Methamphetamine has ruined people's lives, but people can possess it. Drinking is [indirectly] promoted by extending the operating hours of entertainment venues. If the ministry's policy is dictated by political interests instead of facts, we will take further

steps," he said.

Daycha Siripatra, president of the Khaokwan Foundation, echoed Mr Prasitchai's opinions.

The Public Health Ministry seeks to regulate the use of cannabis in a similar manner to tobacco and alcohol, which last year killed more than 100,000 people and 40,000 people, respectively, he said.

Despite the harm and risks tobacco and alcohol pose to individual and public health, both substances are allowed for recreational use. In contrast, cannabis, which has not been linked to any deaths, will be prohibited for recreational use, he added.

"Most people believe that the new bill isn't for the public interest, but for the interests of some groups whose sales drop significantly after people switch to cannabis to alleviate symptoms like pain or sleeplessness," he said.

In regards to the impact on cannabis stores Dr Cholnan said once the law is in place that they must sell only the parts of the cannabis plant that are deemed legal in Thailand.

## New Year road accidents, deaths down on last year

### BANGKOK

A TOTAL OF 284 PEOPLE were killed and 2,307 injured in 2,288 traffic accidents across the country during the so-called "seven dangerous days" of the New Year holiday, a decrease from the same period last year.

Chotenarin Kerdson, deputy permanent secretary for interior, last Friday (Jan 5) released the figures of road accidents, deaths and injuries between Dec 29 and Jan 4.

During this period, 2,288 road accidents occurred nationwide, resulting in 284 fatalities and 2,307 injuries.

Total deaths, injuries and accidents were down on the same period last year which saw 317 deaths and 2,437 injuries in 2,440 road accidents.

These figures reflect a decline compared to the previous year, which saw 317 deaths and 2,437 injuries in 2,440 road accidents.

On Jan 4 alone, 17 fatalities and 205 injuries were reported in 200 road accidents, said Mr Chotenarin.

Kanchanaburi province had the most cumulative road accidents at 82 and also re-



A road accident in Kanchanaburi on Jan 4. Photo: Bangkok Post

ported the highest number of injured people at 89. Bangkok saw the most fatalities, totalling 19.

Eleven provinces – Krabi, Kalasin, Chai Nat, Tak, Nakhon Nayok, Pattani, Phichit, Mae Hong Son, Satun, Samut Songkhram and Amnat Charoen – reported zero road fatalities.

Speeding remained the major cause of road accidents, accounting for 48.5%, followed by drivers cutting in front of other motorists at 22% and poor visibility at 14%.

In addition, 88.72% of all accidents involved motorcycles, with 85% occurring on straight roads, 42.5% on highways and 30.5% on village roads.

Bangkok Post

## Lower age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 12, says police chief

### BANGKOK

NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF POL GEN Torsak Sukvimol has proposed the minimum age of criminal responsibility be lowered, because young people are committing more serious crimes.

Pol Gen Torsak made his comments on Jan 2 amid concerns about legal action against the 14-year-old boy arrested for the fatal shooting rampage at Siam Paragon shopping centre in October last year.

The national police chief said he wanted the minimum age of criminal responsibility lowered from 15 to 12 years, and he would discuss the idea seriously with relevant parties.

"Crime by children has become more severe. They are copying it from social media, and criminals are getting younger and younger," Pol Gen Torsak said.

He also based his proposal on trends in criminal cases in other countries.

The national police chief was responding to questions from reporters about people's concerns that young criminals are being spared from punishment. Under present law, criminals under the age of 15 years can only be reprimanded, and then freed.

Their concerns followed the end to the detention of the 14-year-old boy who shot people indiscriminately at Siam Paragon shopping centre on Oct 3 last year.

The boy carried out the shooting rampage inside the popular shopping complex, killing one Thai and two foreign nationals, one from China and the other from Myanmar. Four others, including a Chinese tourist and a Lao



The 14-year-old boy is arrested after the shooting at Siam Paragon mall on Oct 3, 2023. Photo: Bangkok Post

worker, were wounded.

Pol Gen Torsak said the boy was still not ready to defend himself, so interrogation had to be suspended.

A professional psychological assessment suggested the suspect was unable to understand the charges, communicate effectively or control his emotions.

Doctors concluded that the boy was mentally ill and needed continued treatment so that he would recover and not be harmful to society, Prayut Pecharakhun, spokesman for the Office of the Attorney-General said on Dec 31.

Officials and his parents agreed that the boy should continuously receive mental treatment at the Galya Rajanagarindra Institute.

If doctors conclude the boy is ready to defend himself, interrogation could resume in the presence of appropriate professionals, lawyers and his parents, Pol Gen Torsak said.

Bangkok Post

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# The Spice of Life



## GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

I recently went searching for spice seeds. I needed them for pictures that could accompany my updated scribbles about herbs and spices, and also for some experimental cultivation in containers.

I found more than I had bargained for, including such exotic stuff as dried butterfly pea flowers (*clitoria ternatea*), liquorice root, star anise and fenugreek. Not the everyday flavourings I am writing about today. But the foray reinforced my oft-stated belief that there is no end to the cornucopia of flavours we are lucky enough to savour in Thailand. Now acknowledged as one of the great cuisines of the world, it owes much of its status to the amazingly varied produce of the Kingdom.

That is where herbs and spices fulfil a key role. All this delectable produce needs seasoning to bring out and enhance those natural flavours. These aromatics have, moreover, the added benefit of acting as natural preservatives. In a world without fridges, they were indispensable.

Most of these plants did not originate in Thailand: pepper, cardamom and cinnamon come from India, cloves and nutmeg (incidentally from the same tree) from what is now Indonesia, star anise and cassia from China, chillies from Mexico. In fact, these highly prized and costly spices were introduced to this country first by traders and subsequently during the mass immigration of both Chinese and Indians to South-east Asia in the 19th century. But as those of us who daily enjoy Thai cooking can testify, no nation has embraced this spicy culture more enthusiastically.

So where to begin? Most spices come from herbs and from different bits of these herbs – leaves, roots, fruits and seeds. But that many derive from the seeds is logical enough; they were, in earlier times, that part of the plant that could be most readily preserved and used for future cultivation.

And where better than to start with the ubiquitous chilli. Thais consider a dish without chillies to be an insipid concoction. The seed pods are sold in many styles: green (unripe), red (ripe) and red-brown red (sun-dried), the latter often coarsely ground in a pestle and mortar to provide a condiment that can be sprinkled on food. Pungencies, measured on the Scoville scale, vary greatly. The main species are *C. annuum*, which includes the mild-flavoured capsicum or bell pepper, and *C. chinense*, which features the impossibly hot naga and Scotch bonnet. Most local varieties are based on *C. frutescens*, the principal ingredient in Tabasco sauce.

Though chillies are native to Mexico, the aromatic plants grow here everywhere. As with chives and garlic, most pests will not touch them. And all these small plants require are reasonable conditions for growth. Give them plenty of sun and adequate moisture and they will reward you with an eye-catching display of glossy red and green seed pods that you can pick and pick again. And if you want to cultivate less familiar varieties, they will grow readily from packeted seed. Water the growing medium well before sowing; then desist until germination. Unlike the pepper which takes an age to fruit, chillies need a mere 60 days to reach maturity.

Originally, the pepper was the main source of 'hotness' – as it still is in many Western dishes. Chillies from the New World came into the culinary picture later. Once so valuable it was sold by the gramme, pepper comes originally from the Malabar Coast,



Photo: Phillip Larking / Unsplash

but it thrives readily enough in a Thai garden if it is given plenty of water. Since it is a woody vine, it appreciates support; thus encouraged it may climb to a height of three or four metres. At length – and you may have to wait two years – bunches of berries like tiny green grapes appear amid the lush, deeply ribbed foliage. Personally I prefer them fresh – crunchy and not numbingly hot, but they are normally picked and then sun-dried to produce the familiar whole black peppers. Propagate from cuttings, preferably taken from a cultivar, to ensure consistent quality.

Cumin is another herbaceous annual that is cultivated in Asia for its fragrant seeds. Yet another example of plant migration, it was grown originally in the Levant. The plant has the merit of looking pretty in your herb garden with feathery leaves that resemble those of fennel, and attractive umbels of seeds. These have none of the ferocious kick of pepper or chilli; instead they possess a mild aniseed flavour. Used to the hot dry conditions of the Mediterranean, young plants may suffer in Thailand's high humidity, but they are worth a gamble in a container.

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







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# Healthy serves at the Courtside

**Ben Tirebuck**

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Those familiar with the Pasak 8 area of Cherno Talay will be fully aware there is a lot going on right now, with numerous new residential developments underway and in planning. With a distinct lack of dining options in the immediate vicinity, the recent opening of the Courtside Café and Bistro therefore makes much sense and comes as welcome news.

The Courtside Café is part of a much broader development that is currently centred around the SiamSportsPro Tennis Academy Phuket, but will ultimately incorporate additional dining facilities, a rooftop bar, a wellness centre, including Japanese onsen, and a range of luxury villas. It is an impressive project that will no doubt serve as a valuable component of the local community once completed.

The doors of the Courtside Café are, however, already open and the venue has been serving a comprehensive range of healthy food options to customers for some time, generating much

buzz locally. It is with much interest then that my dining partner and I make our lunchtime visit to experience the menu for ourselves.

The roomy, split-level venue offers a view onto one part of the tennis centre and creates a relaxed vibe – we never realised how strangely soothing the sound of tennis balls being hit in the background can be! It is the perfect spot for an early breakfast, social lunch or even just a coffee and pastry. Browsing the menu, you are immediately struck by the variety of healthy options on offer and all at very reasonable prices. A range of tasty sounding juices and smoothies are complemented by an extensive breakfast menu and variety of snacks, salads, wraps, pastas, sandwiches and burgers, all of which look and sound very appetising.

We opt for the gyoza and chicken satay for starters and both are simply delicious! The gyoza is served on a bed of beautifully cooked mixed vegetables that could easily be a dish in its own right. What we especially liked was the fact the gyoza was fresh and crisp and not dripping in oil, as is often the case. Likewise, the satay; succulent chicken with fresh vegetables and a sauce that had just the right amount of kick!

The smoked chicken Caesar salad for main was genuinely delicious. One could argue such a dish is easy to make and difficult to mess up, but those who know their salads know a seriously good one when they get it, and this is exactly that. Once again, it is fresh and crisp as opposed to being soggy from an overload of dressing and the chicken is both plentiful and extremely tasty. A definite winner!

Similarly, the Beyond Burger, an option which can often be very divisive, but which is a definite hit on this occasion. Fantastically flavoured and expertly cooked, it offers a great option for those who are looking to lessen their meat consumption and is one I would personally recommend highly.

The Courtside Café and Bistro offers an excellent alternative option for those looking for healthy and nutritious food that is destined to earn itself a strong and respected reputation among locals. Definitely worth checking out – and a place we will no doubt return to many times in future.



*Courtside Café and Bistro. 109 Soi Pasak 8, Cherno Talay, Thalung 83110. Open daily 7am - 10pm. Price range:*




*Less than B400. Booking not necessary. Major credit cards accepted. Car park on site. No area for smoking. No entertainment. Free WiFi. Reservations:*

*095-7161604. Visit the Courtside Café website at: <https://siamsports.pro/academy/cafe/>, on Facebook or Instagram.*





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POP QUIZ

- 1. Where was Elvis Presley born?
- 2. What was the first civilian supersonic plane in the world called?
- 3. Which is the smallest planet in the Solar System?
- 4. What is generally considered to be the average human body temperature?
- 5. How many countries share a border with Ukraine?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

  - 1. Pitches a tent
  - 6. When repeated, a cry of approval
  - 10. Agreement
  - 14. Swell
  - 15. Director Preminger
  - 16. Couple's pronoun
  - 17. Accidental statement
  - 20. Tasty
  - 21. Most wise
  - 22. Cave dweller
  - 24. Baby bird?
  - 27. "Endymion" poet
  - 28. John Irving's "A Prayer for \_\_\_ Meany"
  - 30. "How about that!"
  - 31. Perfect, e.g.
  - 32. Secret society members
  - 35. Clothing
  - 37. One way a conclusion is reached
  - 43. Straight, at the bar
  - 44. In Asia, house section reserved for women
  - 45. Some porcelain
  - 49. Common contraction
  - 51. Ripens
  - 52. Lowest deck on a ship
- Down

  - 1. "60 Minutes" network
  - 2. "That's \_\_\_!"
  - 3. Most wet
  - 4. One of the Three Bears
  - 5. Breaks off
  - 6. Stadium nosh
  - 7. Biblical suffix
  - 8. Dug in
  - 9. Deteriorates
  - 10. Cloth woven from raw silk
  - 11. Filthy from long neglect
  - 12. Pie parts
  - 13. African fly
  - 18. In shape
  - 19. Mighty one?
- 22. Fail miserably
  - 23. On the road
  - 25. Boat race
  - 26. Astute
  - 29. \_\_\_'wester
  - 33. Part of some splits
  - 34. Ed.'s request
  - 36. Wood-dressing tool
  - 38. Animal shelter
  - 39. Genetic initials
  - 40. Fashion industry, slangily
  - 41. Change for a five
  - 42. Coarse file
  - 45. Beethoven's "Moonlight \_\_\_"
  - 46. Editor, at times
  - 47. Dated
  - 48. Giving ones
  - 50. Cheerless
  - 54. Clavell's "\_\_\_-Pan"
  - 55. Church recesses
  - 58. Visored cap
  - 60. Ear-related
  - 62. Dejected
  - 63. Attempt
  - 64. Knowledge
  - 65. Palindromic preposition

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Tupelo, Mississippi; 2) The Tupolev Tu-144; 3) Mercury; 4) 37°C; 5) Seven (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Russia and Belarus)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15				16			
17					18				19			
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22	23			24			25	26		27		
28			29			30				31		
32				33	34		35		36			
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45	46	47	48			49		50		51		
52						53			54	55		56
57					58			59			60	
61						62	63					64
65												65
66					67					68		
69					70					71		

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

tonne of recycled paper saves about 17 trees.

15

percent of all internet traffic is due to Netflix.

2,617

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

30,000

degrees Celsius is the temperature of the air immediately surrounding a bolt of lightning – about five times hotter than the surface of the Sun.

307 trillion

US dollars is the equivalent of how much people all around the world owe. There is only the equivalent of US\$90.4trn in circulation.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Kamala Beach. Photo by Alena Plotnikova

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

Jan 12, 1554

Bayinnaung, who would go on to assemble the largest empire in the history of Southeast Asia, is crowned King of Burma.

Jan 13, 2012

Passenger cruise ship Costa Concordia sinks off the coast of Italy. More than 4,200 people are rescued, but 32 die in the disaster. The captain

is later jailed for 16 years for negligence.

Jan 14, 1742

English astronomer Edmond Halley observes the comet named after him.

Jan 15, 2001

Wikipedia goes online.

Jan 16, 27 BC

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavia-



The Costa Concordia.

nus is granted the title Augustus by the Roman Senate, marking the beginning of the Roman Empire.

Jan 17, 1991

Gulf War: Operation Desert Storm begins early in the morning. Iraq fires eight Scud missiles into Israel in an unsuccessful bid to provoke Israeli retaliation.

Jan 18, 1778

James Cook is the first known European to discover the Hawaiian Islands, which he names the 'Sandwich Islands'. Source: Wikipedia



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THU25JAN



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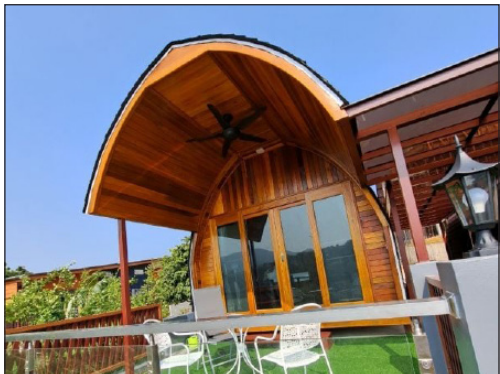
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## GROW BOATING PHUKET - JANUARY NETWORKING

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## Showjumper Janakabhorn qualifies for Paris Olympics

### OLYMPICS

JANAKABHORN KARUNAYADHAI has made history by becoming the first Thai to earn a slot in the Olympic Games individual show jumping competition in Paris later this year.

Janakabhorn finished on top of Group G (Asia/Oceania) in the Olympic rankings released by the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) on Jan 2.

At the end of the individual qualification period on Dec 31, the Thai showjumper had a total of 334 points.

New Zealand's Uma O'Neill, who finished second in Group G with 225 points, also qualified for Paris 2024.

Prior to the World Cup in Saudi Arabia in December, Janakabhorn trailed O'Neill by 13 points but a fine performance in the tournament saw the Thai score over 100 points and helped her surpass the New Zealander.

Janakabhorn missed



Janakabhorn at the World Cup in Saudi Arabia. Photo: Bangkok Post

out on a podium finish at the 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Games, settling for fourth place in Hangzhou, China, last year.

"I was under a lot of pressure last year trying to perform well to get that Olympic ticket. It was hard and I wasn't very happy with the results and for a while I told myself to just focus on the Asian Games," she said.

"After not focusing too much on qualifying for the Olympics, I performed better. I was more relaxed and after Saudi Arabia I was confident that I could get that Olympic spot and now I did." Bangkok Post

## Thai Masters set to dazzle

### BADMINTON

Bangkok Post

The star-studded Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters 2024 will take place between Jan 30-Feb 4 at Nimibutr Stadium in Bangkok, it was confirmed on Jan 5.

Reigning world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn, the world No.7, will lead the Thai challenge along with Kantaphon Wangcharoen in the men's singles competition of the BWF World Tour Super 300 event.

They will face the likes of Denmark's Anders Antonsen, Singapore's Loh Kean Yew, Li Zii Jia and Ng Tze Yong, both from Malaysia, Kenta Nishimoto and Kanta Tsuneyama and former world champion Kento Momota, all from Japan, and Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen.

Thailand's top women's singles players such as Ratchanok Intanon, Pornpawee Chochuwong, Supanida Katethong, Busanan Ongbamrunphan will all feature in the tournament.

They will face overseas players include Kim Ga-Eun of South Korea, Japan's Aya Ohori and Nozomi Okuhara, the 2017 world champion, Canada's Michelle Li and



Players and officials attend a press conference to announce confirmation of the Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters 2024 tournament on Jan 5. Photo: Bangkok Post

Singapore's Yeo Jia Min.

Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard will return to defend their women's doubles title while Jongkolphan Kittitharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai will also join the battle.

Mixed doubles stars Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai, who were runners-up last year, will hope to do one better this time around but the world No.6 pair will face challenges from Hong Kong's world No.8 Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet and

Malaysia's world No.9 Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei and fellow Thais Supak Jomkoh and Supissara Paewsampran.

"The tournament is one of the Olympic qualifying events so the competition will be intense. There are many of the world's top players and several former world champions taking part this year as they fight to qualify for the Paris Games," said Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, president of the Badminton Association of Thailand, at the Jan 5 press conference.

"The fans will also have a chance to see all the top Thai players and cheer them on. It will be a great tournament," she added.

The tournament will offer a total prize money of US\$210,000 (approximately B7.2 million).

The qualifying competition will take place on Jan 30 and the main draw will start on Jan 31.

Tickets, ranged from B800, B400, B200 and B100, can be purchased at Thai ticket major outlets.

## Warner goes out swinging as Aussies sweep series

### CRICKET

DAVID WARNER WENT OUT THE way he began with a rumbustious innings to guide Australia to an eight-wicket victory and 3-0 Test series sweep over Pakistan in Sydney last Saturday (Jan 6).

Playing in his 112<sup>th</sup> and final Test, Warner was dismissed for 57 – just 11 runs from finishing off the job – and left the Sydney Cricket Ground arena before an adoring home crowd.

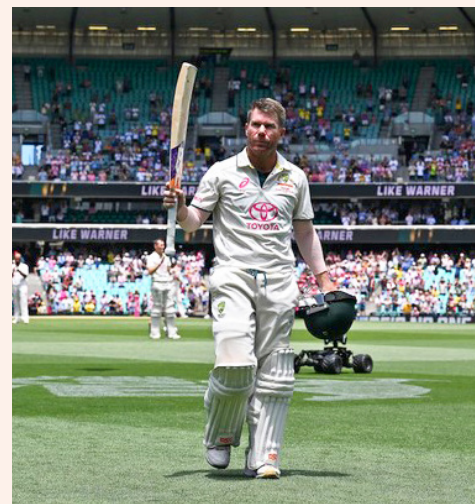
Marnus Labuschagne with his 19<sup>th</sup> Test half-century on 62 and Steve Smith on four were there at the end as the Australians eased to the 130-run target for the loss of just two wickets.

"We are in the entertainment business, happy to come out here and showcase what I try to do all the time," said the 37-year-old Warner, who made his Test debut in 2011 and will go down as one of the finest openers in cricket.

"I started with Twenty20, tried to come here and emulate that, tried to play my shots and managed to get a win on the board."

Asked how he wished to be remembered, Warner added: "Exciting, entertaining and, I hope, I put a smile on everyone's face the way I played."

It was something of an anti-climax when Warner, known as "The Bull", was out – losing a review for lbw to spinner Sajid Khan.



Warner leaves the pitch on what was his final Test on Jan 6. Photo: AFP

Warner was congratulated by the Pakistan players, who had given him a guard of honour as he came out for his final innings, before he waved his bat acknowledging the cheering crowd as he left the SCG for the last time.

It was a typically aggressive innings from Warner coming off 75 balls with seven fours, replete with crashing drives and audacious reverse sweeps.

Warner scored 8,786 Test runs at an average of 44.59, with 26 centuries.

But he will also be remembered for his central role in the "Sandpapergate" ball-tampering scandal of 2018 and was a polarising figure. AFP

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# Gunners stall against 'Pool

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool survived an Arsenal barrage to claim a place in the FA Cup fourth round in dramatic fashion as a pair of late goals sealed a 2-0 win last Sunday (Jan 7).

Jurgen Klopp's side rode their luck for long spells as Arsenal wasted a series of chances before Polish defender Jakub Kiwior headed Trent Alexander-Arnold's free-kick into his own net with 10 minutes left then Luis Diaz wrapped up the smash and grab raid in stoppage-time.

Liverpool's first FA Cup win over Arsenal since the 2001 final was a significant moment as the Premier League leaders inflicted a psychological blow on one of their main title rivals.

Arsenal have now won only once in their last six games in all competitions, an unexpected stumble that leaves them out of the FA Cup and League Cup and five points behind Liverpool in the title race.

The Reds were set to face Fulham in the League Cup semi-final first leg on Wednesday (Jan 10) and are also through to the Europa League last 16.

Meanwhile Manchester City welcomed back talismanic midfielder Kevin De Bruyne as the FA Cup holders overcame Championship side Huddersfield 5-0.

De Bruyne had been sidelined since tearing his hamstring during the Premier League opener against Burnley in August but entered the action as a substitute in the 57th minute to help his side stroll to



Liverpool's Conor Bradley (left) clashes with Arsenal's Emile Smith Rowe. Photo: AFP

a comfortable win.

"We are incredibly delighted to have him back because Kevin helps to win games. Kevin is exceptional. He is unique," City manager Pep Guardiola said afterwards.

Premier League strugglers Luton were held 0-0 by third tier Bolton at Kenilworth Road while Nottingham Forest were also given a scare by League One opponents as Nuno Espirito Santo's men recovered from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Blackpool. Sheffield United, bottom of the Premier League, cruised to a 4-0 victory at fourth tier Gillingham while Manchester United won 2-0 at Wigan Athletic.

West Ham were held to a 1-1 draw against second tier Bristol City, Bourne-

mouth came from two goals down at half-time to win 3-2 at second tier QPR while Brighton won 4-2 at Championship outfit Stoke.

Newcastle ended their 13-year wait to beat bitter rivals Sunderland as Alexander Isak's double inspired a 3-0 win, Chelsea eased past second tier Preston 4-0 while Aston Villa snatched a late 1-0 win at Middlesbrough.

The magic of the cup was alive and well as Maidstone United, the lowest-ranked team remaining in this season's competition, advanced to the fourth round for the first time in their 127-year history after beating League One Stevenage, a side currently ranked 69 league places above them in the football league pyramid.

# War Elephants get trounced in Tokyo

## FOOTBALL

MASATADA ISHII'S reign as Thailand manager got off to a bad start after his team were thumped 5-0 by his compatriots in Tokyo, Japan on New Year's Day (Jan 1).

Ao Tanaka opened the floodgates early in the second half as Japan overwhelmed the War Elephants in the international football friendly at Tokyo's National Stadium.

Keito Nakamura, Taku-mu Kawamura and Takumi Minamino also found the net for Japan, which served as a warm-up for the Asian Cup kicking off later this month in Qatar.

Thailand's Japanese manager Ishii included Consadole Sapporo midfielder Supachok Sarachat and Urawa Reds midfielder Ekanit Panya in his squad.

The home team spent most of the first half in attacking territory but could not convert a handful of opportunities against a defensively minded Thai



The Thailand team ahead of the Tokyo friendly. Photo: AFP

side before the break.

Japan's 51st minute opener resulted from an attack triggered by second-half substitute Ritsu Doan, who made a run down the left before swinging a pass to Junya Ito. The captain's shot was blocked by a defender, but Tanaka was on hand to fire home.

Nakamura made it 2-0 in the 72nd minute when he tapped in after Minamino's shot was stopped by Thailand keeper Patiwat Khammai.

Thailand defender Elias Dolah scored an own goal from a corner kick before Kawamura headed Japan's fourth in the 82nd minute.

Minamino sent one late attempt wide and had another stopped one-on-one by Patiwat before slotting the final goal in the first minute of injury time. *Bangkok Post*

# German football legend Beckenbauer dies aged 78

## FOOTBALL

FRANZ BECKENBAUER, who left a unique imprint on German football as player, captain and coach, has died at the age of 78, the German football association DFB confirmed on Monday (Jan 8).

Former captain of the German team in the 1970s, Beckenbauer had health problems in his later years and passed away last Sunday (Jan 7).

Known in football-mad Germany as "Der Kaiser" meaning "the Emperor", he captained West Germany to the 1974 World Cup title on home soil when they beat the Netherlands 2-1 in the Munich final, then managed the team that beat Argentina 1-0 in Rome to lift the trophy at Italia 90.

Beckenbauer was named European footballer of the year in both 1972 and 1976. He made 424 appearances in the Bundesliga for Bayern Munich and Hamburg



Franz Beckenbauer at the 1974 World Cup in Germany. Photo: AFP

before joining the New York Cosmos, where he finished his playing career in 1983.

He then had stints as manager in club football at both Bayern and Marseille, winning the French league title in 1991 and the Bundesliga in 1994.

In 1996, he stopped coaching and his role as president of Bayern led to a place on the Executive Committee with football's governing body FIFA.

"Franz Beckenbauer was definitely the biggest German footballer of all time, and above all one of the greatest men who I have known," said DFB vice president Hans-

Joachim Watzke.

Tributes poured in for the football icon, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz and former German captain Lothar Matthaeus alike saying "we will miss him".

UEFA hailed Beckenbauer as "one of European football's greatest sons" who "shaped German football like no other", while the English Premier League described him as the "most beautiful of footballers who won it all with grace and charm".

FIFA President Gianni Infantino on Instagram called Beckenbauer "a true legend", saying "we'll never forget you dear Franz, thanks for everything."

Beckenbauer had heart surgery in 2016 and again in 2017, when worrying news about his ill health began to emerge.

The last time he appeared at Bayern Munich's Allianz Arena was in August 2022, when he attended a match against Borussia Moenchengladbach. *AFP*



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# Sport



Tributes pour in for 'Der Kaiser' > p15

# BIG YEAR AHEAD



Clockwise from left: Louise Landgraf; Dojo Phuket students; Panipak Wongpattanakit; Kunlavut Vitidsarn; Kamolphu 'Porsche' Anutchakun. Photos: Supplied / Bangkok Post

## Much to savour in the local, national and global sporting world in 2024

### ALL SPORTS

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The year ahead promises to be a spectacular one for sports enthusiasts with an action-packed schedule of numerous high profile events set to take place.

Headline acts include the Olympic Games in Paris, the European Football Championships in Germany and the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar.

Closer to home it is a big year ahead for several Phuket-based athletes too. Louise Landgraf will be looking to continue her remarkable rise in the golf world after a hugely impressive past 12 months that saw her make history by becoming the youngest ever female winner on the professional tour.

Last April Louise triumphed at the Terre Blanche Ladies Open, part of the Ladies European Tour Access Series, at the age of 14 years, 2 months and 18 days and future success seems all but inevitable. She was also named amateur French player of 2023 in the under-16 girls age group by the French Golf Federation.

Young go-karting sensation Kamolphu 'Porsche' Anutchakun is another who will be looking to continue his progression after a fine year saw him dominate on the

track to win the the 2023 IAME Asia Series in September.

The 10-year-old, an avid Formula One fan who has aspirations of one day competing in the elite level sport, will move up an age group to the junior category this year and is also set to travel to Bangkok later this month to receive an award from the Royal Automobile Association of Thailand for his achievements.

The students at the Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket will be keen to sustain their fine form in national and international tournaments having experienced a stellar 2023 which saw them secure a wealth of medals as well as top-ranked judo team in Thailand in the under-12 age category.

Under the expert tutelage of lead instructor Alexis Plantard, the team will no doubt continue to shine and impress in the year ahead.

### OLYMPIC HOPEFULS

Further afield, all eyes will turn to the French capital as Paris hosts the summer Olympic Games between July 26 and Aug 11.

Taekwondo star Panipak Wongpattanakit was Thailand's only champion at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and she will again be the country's best bet at Paris 2024.

It will be the Surat Thani native's last Olympics and she is aiming to end her career on a high note,

having won bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics and been the top-ranked fighter in the 49kg division for many years. The 26-year-old also won her second Asian Games gold medal in Hangzhou last year.

In badminton, world No.7 Kunlavut Vitidsarn could become Thailand's first ever Olympic medallist in the sport.

Kunlavut, 22, became the country's first ever men's singles world champion after beating Japan's Kodai Naraoka in the title match at the BWF World Championship in Denmark last August.

Weightlifting is Thailand's most successful ever event at the Olympics with five gold medals and the team will return to the Olympics after they were banned from competing at the 2020 Tokyo Games due to doping cases.

Weeraphon Wichuma could be a contender for a medal after winning silver in the men's 73kg class at the 2023 Asian Games and also winning two gold and one silver at the 2022 world championships.

### UNDISPUTED CHAMPION

Boxing fans have much to look forward to with the highly anticipated heavyweight showdown between Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk in Saudi Arabia set for Feb 17 where British star Fury will put his WBC

belt on the line, with the WBA, IBF and WBO titles held by Ukraine's Usyk also up for grabs in Riyadh. The winner will be crowned the heavyweight division's first undisputed champion since Lennox Lewis from 1999 to 2000.

Formula One celebrates its 75th anniversary this year and will resume with a packed schedule of 24 races between March and December. Red Bull Racing dominated both the constructors and drivers championships last year and current champion Max Verstappen will be looking for his fourth consecutive title this season as the action kicks off in Bahrain on Mar 2.

In tennis the usual big four Grand Slam tournaments will be entertaining fans at Wimbledon, the French, United States and Australian Opens, with the latter starting on Sunday (Jan 14). Novak Djokovic goes into the Melbourne-based tournament looking to win a 25th grand slam title to take him past Australia's Margaret Court as the single most successful player tennis has seen.

### WAR ELEPHANTS CHARGE

Meanwhile, the Thai national football team are in action at the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar, which starts today (Jan 12) and runs to Feb 10.

It will be Matasada Ishii's first tournament after being appointed

coach of Thailand last month with the War Elephants in Group F with Saudi Arabia, Kyrgyzstan and Oman.

With the six group winners plus four best runners-up reaching the next round, Thailand have a considerable chance of getting past the group stage.

Thailand's results could determine the Japanese coach's future as coach. His tenure did not get off to a good start, however, as the team were defeated 5-0 by his countrymen Japan in a friendly in Tokyo on New Year's Day (see p15).

There will also be a new President of the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) announced on Feb 8 as incumbent Pol Gen Somyot Poompunmuang steps down.

Nualphan Lamsam, who is currently manager of the national team, is considered favourite to win the post with the backing of a large number of clubs and big names in Thai football.

Other sporting tournaments of note this year include the Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters, a BWF World Tour Super 300 event, in Bangkok later this month (see p14) and the sixth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, scheduled to be held in Bangkok and Chon Buri in November.

Additional reporting by the Bangkok Post