

AIRPORT CORRUPTION PROBE STALLS > PAGE 2

HALF FULL



Bang Neow Dum reservoir in Srisoonthorn (pictured) is 67% full, but Bang Wad reservoir in Kathu is already only 59% full. Photo: Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

OFFICIALS ASSURE NO WATER SHORTAGES DURING DRY SEASON

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The island's three main reservoirs have sufficient water to last until the end of the dry season, assures Krirksak Leenanon, Director of the Phuket branch of the Royal Irrigation Department – even though Phuket is experiencing a huge resurgence in the number of tourist arrivals who are adding extra pressure on the water supply needed to serve them.

"I acknowledge the increasing number of tourists. Currently, only Bang Wad Reservoir [in Kathu] is a slight concern, while Bang Neow Dum [in Srisoonthorn] and Klong Kata reservoir [in Chalong] have

sufficient water," Mr Krirksak told *The Phuket News* this week.

Mr Krirksak remains adamant that there is adequate water for the coming dry spell despite water levels at the three main reservoirs already falling.

Bang Wad Reservoir, the island's main reservoir, is 59% full, with 6 million cubic metres of water, he said. The reservoir has a capacity of 10.2mn cubic metres.

Bang Neow Dum Reservoir, which serves Cherng Talay and the surrounding area, is 68% full, with 5.3mn cubic metres of water (capacity 7.8mn cubic metres), and Klong Kata is 70% full, with 2.91mn cubic metres of water (capacity 4.14mn cubic metres), Mr Krirksak added.

At the same stage last year, Bang Neow was 71% full and Klong Kata was 58% full, but Bang Wad was 64% full.

RISE IN TIDE

Phuket recorded 8.65 million passenger arrivals in 2024, marking a 23% increase from 2023 and just 5% below the 2019 peak, Bill Barnett noted in C9 Hotelworks' latest release, 'Phuket Hotel and Tourism Market Review 2025'.

Passenger arrivals for last year reached 8.65mn, reflecting a 23% increase compared to 2023 and just 5% below the 2019 benchmark of 9.07mn arrivals.

China, historically Phuket's largest international source market,

recorded 998,228 visitors in 2024, up from 566,961 (+76%) in 2023, but still trailing the pre-pandemic peak of 3.12mn.

The Thai government's introduction of visa-free entry in late 2023 has been instrumental in driving the recovery, Mr Barnett added. The policy also extended to travelers from Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia, further diversifying source markets.

Russia led international arrivals with 1,069,597 visitors in 2024, representing a 26% year-on-year increase, while India recorded a 58% rise, contributing 481,478 visitors. Collectively, Russia, India and China accounted for 45% of Phuket's total international arrivals, Mr Barnett said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NEWS PAGE 3

Wastewater returns to Kamala Beach



LIFE PAGE 9

Cleaning up Phuket's ugly tide of trash



SPORT PAGE 16

Windsurfing comp set for Nai Yang Beach



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News

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The Phuket office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC Phuket) has confirmed that no formal investigation has started into four Airports of Thailand (AoT) management staff at Phuket International Airport over a corruption scandal in which AoT has already publicly admitted that the four were found guilty of corrupt behaviour.

The NACC is still collecting evidence, and the four suspects remain employed by AoT, NACC Phuket Chief Suwat Saowarat told *The Phuket News*.

At the end of November, the officials from the central NACC in Bangkok visited Phuket International Airport to gather evidence regarding corruption allegations related to an B11.8 million contract for stickers commemorating His Majesty The King, Mr Suwat said.

The four suspected of corruption have been identified as. Jirattikul Eiamhiran –Deputy Director of Phuket Airport (Operations and Maintenance); Peera Akkhachai –



Passengers queue at Phuket International Airport. Photo: AoT Phuket

Director of the Business Support Division at Phuket Airport; Pakin Sirichan – Airport Department (Operations and Maintenance Division); and Wiwatana Aimchoi – Director of the Supplies Division at Phuket Airport.

“However, they currently remain under AoT supervision,” Mr Suwat said.

Mr Suwat did not confirm whether the four remained in employment with AoT, a multi-billion-baht state enterprise operated with the Ministry of Finance as the main investor.

AoT stopped answering questions from *The Phuket*

News last year.

Mr Suwat has not provided a timeline for resolving the case, noting that the evidence collection phase has “only recently concluded”.

“I can only say that the evidence collection phase needs to include gathering additional documents and conducting on-site inspections,” he said.

Mr Suwat stated that he cannot confirm when the Central NACC will officially launch an investigation.

He explained that the suspension from work can only happen once the court accepts the case and orders a suspension. Until then,

they remain under AoT’s authority.

While claiming that NACC officials needed to gather more documentary evidence in order to proceed with their investigation, Mr Suwat made no mention that the preliminary investigation ground to a halt by AoT deliberately stalling presenting documents to officials, as confirmed last October.

The NACC Phuket office was seeking detailed information on budget allocation, median price determination, procurement methods and authorisation processes, as well as relevant documents for further investigation into the

allegations of corruption and inflated pricing involving Phu Khao Advertisers Co Ltd.

The average price for the contract was determined to be B11.8mn. It was found that procurement regulations were violated. The auction was scheduled for July 19, 2024 with the winner announced the same day. However, records show that the sticker sheets were installed earlier, on July 17-18, before the auction bids were opened.

“The NACC was not [formally] informed about the case, and no one from AoT has reported the corruption case directly to us, which raises doubts,” Mr Suwat told *The Phuket News* at the time.

Phasaramon Kanchanawant, AoT’s Director of Corporate Communications, last year confirmed to *The Phuket News* that disciplinary action had been ordered against the Deputy Director of Phuket International Airport and three senior staff over the “alleged corruption”.

However, she, and any other representatives of AoT questioned by *The Phuket News*, declined to disclose the specific punishments, citing internal

Ransomware
Russians face
extradition > p4

policies and an ongoing review by the AoT committee.

None of the officials at AoT at Phuket airport or at the main office in Bangkok were willing to give any further information to *The Phuket News* other than what AoT has already announced in a notice posted online last August.

The notice, citing AoT President Kerati Kijmanawat, said that an internal investigation into the corruption scandal had already been completed, and that disciplinary action would be taken against the senior management at Phuket airport deemed by the AoT investigation as guilty of corrupt practices.

However, there has been no confirmation of any punishment to any of the individuals involved.

“AoT has its own policies in place to investigate and discipline employees directly,” she added, without any recognition of the legal requirement of state officials reporting any incidents of corruption to the PACC or the NACC.

“However, I insisted that AoT has investigated and made a proper punishment,” Ms Phasaramon assured.

Water supply confidence flows as tourist numbers hit new records

Continued from page 1

The trend is continuing, with officials hoping for Phuket to attract even more visitors in 2025. As of Monday (Feb 10) Phuket had already welcomed 128,353 international arrivals, up from 112,818 in 2024 (+13.77%), since the start of 2025.

BOOM TOWN DRAIN

“As Bang Wad Reservoir is slightly lower [compared with last year], we are coordinating with the Provincial Waterworks Authority Phuket to bring water from the mines supply to Bang Wad, but overall, it is sufficient. There is no problem,” Mr Krirksak said.

However, the increasing population in the Cherng Talay area is calling for extra attention, Mr Krirksak noted.

Manoch Panchalad, Chief of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organisation (Or-BorTor), this week confirmed to



Mr Krirksak explains Phuket’s water supply plans to Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra during her visit to the island last month. Photo: PR Phuket

The Phuket News that the resident population in Cherng Talay, not including tourists, had jumped from 11,919 in 2023 to 19,062 in 2024, a rise of 60% in 12 months.

Similarly, the number of households grew from 12,671 to 18,612, an increase of 5,941 households, or about 47%, Mr Manoch said.

“This rapid growth puts increased pressure on local residents, not only with traffic issues, but also water supply,” Mr Manoch said.

Regardless, Mr Krirksak of the RID Phuket branch remained confident that there will be no water-supply shortages, although there is already less water in Bang

Neow Dum than at the same time last year.

“Phuket has enough water to serve the people,” Mr Krirksak said.

LONG TERM

Mr Krirksak highlighted that he was called on to explain to Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra what projects were underway to help avoid dire water shortages like those that plagued Phuket in 2018 and 2019, when the Army was called in to supply entire neighbourhoods, some of which had residents carrying water back to their homes from communal tanks for months.

“We are in the process of drafting a budget proposal to dredge Bang Wad Reservoir and increase its capacity by approximately 100,000 cubic metres. We are currently at the stage of requesting the budget,” Mr Krirksak said.

“Another proposed project is ‘Kaem Ling Khok Tanode,’ which may be a medium-term one, which is currently in the design stage. The work should start around 2027,” he added.

“It will help arrange for water storage facilities at various points to act as reservoirs during the rainy season. They will temporarily store rainwater so that it can be sent to Bang Neow Dum,” Mr Krirksak said.

However, the decades-incoming water-supply pipeline from the Ratchaphra Dam in Surat Thani for the time being still remains a pipe dream.

“Our long-term plan is to bring water from the Ratchaphra Dam to the Lum Ru Yai Reservoir in Phang Nga and then send water from there to Phuket,” Mr Krirksak said.

“This is still in the planning stage, but it is a long-term plan that we have proposed to do,” he added.

Kamala wastewater returns

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Preeyaporn Suwannaket, Director-General of the Pollution Control Department (PCD), has ordered an 'urgent investigation' into black wastewater yet again flowing across Kamala Beach and emptying into water where tourists and other beachgoers swim.

The investigation was ordered last Friday (Feb 7) in response to health concerns raised by local residents after the black wastewater was found again flowing into the sea at Kamala Beach.

Ms Preeyaporn said her focus was on environmental pollution, according to an official report posted by the PCD.

Ms Preeyaporn confirmed that the investigation was ordered by Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment after he was made aware of the beach wastewater at Kamala.

Officials from the Phuket Environmental and Pollution Control Region 15 Office (PEO 15), and from other relevant agencies, inspected the blight the next morning (last Saturday, Feb 8).

Officials discovered that wastewater had been flowing



Photo: PCD

from a public canal receiving runoff from the local community. The canal water was found to be white and cloudy on the surface, with blackened water and sediment continuing some 250 metres before entering the sea.

A foul odor was also noticed, and the bottom of the canal appeared heavily polluted.

Kamala Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) operates a community wastewater treatment system managed by the Wastewater Management Organisation (WMO), designed to process 1,000 cubic metres of wastewater a day, noted the official PCD report.

However, only 300 cubic metres – just 30% of capacity – is

currently being processed due to the wastewater pumping station being located at a higher elevation than the wastewater level, pollution officials noted.

To address the issue, the PCD has recommended both immediate and long-term solutions, the official report continued.

In the short term, Kamala authorities are advised to spray microorganisms in the canal and on the beach to reduce odours.

Additionally, microorganism tanks will be placed along the canal at intervals to further mitigate the smell.

The installation of a temporary water pump is expected to help accelerate wastewater processing by an additional 60 cubic metres per day.

Local officials have also been instructed to inspect wastewater discharge from coin-operated laundry services and hotels and report their findings by Feb 14.

For a long-term solution, plans are in place to construct two additional wastewater pumping stations to ensure that all wastewater is properly processed, said the PCD.

Efforts will also focus on enhancing the wastewater collection system and conducting annual sediment dredging to maintain water quality.

"Businesses and residents are urged to comply with wastewater disposal regulations to prevent further contamination," the PCD report continued.

The PCD encouraged the public to report any illegal discharge of wastewater or waste into public water sources via the hotline 1650.

THE FLOW

The PCD assured residents and visitors that the Phuket PCD office – which did not raise the alarm of black wastewater again flowing across Kamala Beach – will continue monitoring environmental conditions and implementing sustainable solutions to prevent future pollution incidents.

The return of black wastewater flowing across Phuket beaches has become an annual event, plainly observed by tourists and residents alike. So, too, has promises by officials to take 'urgent action' become an annual affair.

Deputy Minister of Interior Sabida Thaiseth during her visit in Phuket in November led a delegation to see first-hand dark wastewater flowing out into sea at Surin Beach.

That visit followed Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat announcing that a Chinese state-owned enterprise – CWEG Design & Consulting Co – has been brought in to resolve critical wastewater problems at several locations across the island.

The Chinese experts will start with Karon and Kamala. After Kamala, the Chinese state enterprise is to tackle wastewater 'problems' in Cherng Talay (including Bang Tao), Sakhu (including Nai Yang) and Srisoonthorn.

"This initiative is a key step in solving the wastewater issues that affect Phuket's image as a tourist destination. By installing underground systems, more space will be available above ground for other uses," Governor Sophon said.

Police CCTV gets Cherng Talay boost

CHERNG TALAY POLICE have officially launched their new 'CCTV Control and Command Center' to "enhance security and improve law enforcement efficiency" in the rapidly expanding subdistrict.

The inauguration, held on Feb 6, was presided over by Cherng Talay Police Chief Pol Col Wiraphong Rakkhito on behalf of Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Col Sinlert Sukhum.

The event was attended by local officials, including Manoch Panchalad, Chief of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor), and Paitoon Thepthong, head of the 'Police Administration Inspection and Monitoring Committee' stationed with Cherng Talay Police.

"Currently, Cherng Talay is experiencing rapid social and economic growth. It has become increasingly popular with foreign tourists, and many have chosen to settle in the area and nearby regions. New schools and shopping malls have opened, and the number of housing and condominium projects has risen," Cherng Talay



Photo: Cherng Talay Police

Police noted in announcing the new 'command centre'.

"To address this, the Cherng Talay Police Station transformed a storage area on the second floor of the station into a state-of-the-art CCTV monitoring facility," the announcement added.

The project involved integrating surveillance camera systems from the Cherng Talay Municipality and Cherng Talay OrBorTor into a centralised monitoring hub, the announcement explained.

Additionally, new solar-powered CCTV cameras have been installed at strategic locations, including in front of Kajonkiet School (Pasak) and Yok Yang Yon shop, which falls under the jurisdiction of Srisoonthorn Municipality and Thalung Police Station.

The new system aims to improve traffic management and bolster security, particularly in high-risk areas such as gold shops.

The control center now operates a surveillance network comprising:

- 86 CCTV systems from Cherng Talay Municipality, with eight units featuring license plate recognition capabilities.

- 243 CCTV systems from Cherng Talay OrBorTor, with five units equipped for license plate recognition.

- 18 solar-powered CCTV cameras.

"By integrating these systems, officers can now monitor footage remotely via mobile devices, with all feeds linked to the centralized CCTV command center," Cherng Talay Police explained.

"This significantly improves operational efficiency, ensuring a more proactive approach to public safety and increasing public satisfaction with law enforcement services.

"We anticipate that the enhanced surveillance capabilities will deter crime, assist in investigations and create a safer environment for both residents and visitors in Cherng Talay," the announcement said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Vachira donations exceed target

SURPLUS DONATIONS made for the construction of a new cancer treatment building for Vachira Phuket Hospital will be used for buying essential medical equipment for the centre, Weerasak Lothongkam, Director of Vachira Phuket Hospital, has confirmed.

The confirmation follows donations for the cancer centre exceeding the B290 million target. As of late Monday (Feb 10), donations had already reached B306mn.

"While the donations have reached the target, we are still accepting further contributions," Dr Weerasak told *The Phuket News*.

"The additional donations will be used to purchase essential medical equipment, tools and supplies for the radiology department," he said.

Organisers of the fund-raising campaign, with strong support by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat, have enjoyed a surge in donations in recent days, along with a



boost from a 'Pha Pa Chai Saeng' fundraising event held last Friday and Saturday (Feb 7-8).

Rawiphen Kingkaew, Deputy Director of Vachira Phuket Hospital, previously explained that Vachira Phuket Hospital was in critical need of a cancer-treatment facility.

"Vachira currently serves around 1,000 new cancer patients each year from Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi. About 500 of these patients require radiation therapy, but the hospital currently lacks the facilities to provide it," she said.

"Vachira Phuket Hospital currently offers chemotherapy and surgery for cancer patients but does not have radiation therapy facilities. Instead, patients must travel to Surat Thani, Nakhon Sri

Thammarat, Songkhla or Bangkok for care.

"While treatment costs can be covered through various healthcare funds, patients and their families must bear the expenses for travel, accommodation and food," she added.

"For those facing financial difficulties, these additional costs can be overwhelming, often forcing them to forgo radiation therapy – reducing their chances of recovery and relief from the disease," she added.

"While the Ministry of Public Health has allocated a budget for essential medical equipment, including a 4D high-energy particle accelerator radiation therapy machine worth B120mn and a treatment simulation and planning machine worth B32mn, a specialised building must be constructed to house them," Ms Rawiphen said.

Of note, all donations made will receive twice the value of the donation as a tax deduction.

The Phuket News

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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FRI FEBRUARY 14

High: +36°
Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT FEBRUARY 15

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Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN FEBRUARY 16

High: +35°
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

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Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE FEBRUARY 18

High: +35°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED FEBRUARY 19

High: +37°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 20

High: +36°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

Foreigner warned for 'washing feet'

OFFICIALS FROM Phuket Immigration and the Phuket Provincial Employment Office have investigated a viral video showing a foreign man washing customers' feet at a massage shop on Phra Metta Rd, Patong.

The footage, which surfaced on social media late last week, sparked criticism over foreigners allegedly "stealing jobs from Thais".

Officers arrived at the shop around 12:30pm last Friday (Feb 7) to investigate the foreign man performing work at the salon.

The shop's owner, Ms Supawadi (surname withheld), 54, identified the man in the video as her husband, Mr Robert (surname withheld), a 63-year-old Dutch national.

She clarified that the incident occurred on Feb 4 at about 10:58pm and that she was unaware the video had been recorded.

Ms Supawadi asserted that her husband is not an employee of the shop and was not hired to perform any work that would take away jobs from Thai workers.

Further investigation confirmed that Mr. Robert is in Thailand on a legal

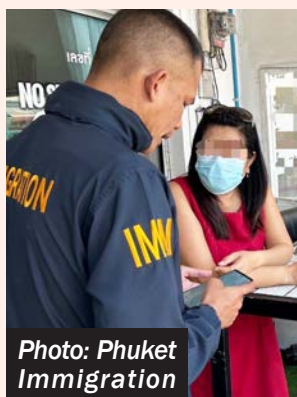


Photo: Phuket Immigration

retirement visa, has sufficient financial means, and does not require employment.

Officials reviewed the situation and determined that he was apparently not in violation of employment regulations.

However, officers warned him to avoid actions that might create public misunderstandings.

They also reminded the establishment to comply with all legal regulations, including refraining from employing underage workers, hiring unauthorized foreign employees or engaging in illicit activities.

Officials from the Ministry of Public Health and the Provincial Police had inspected the shop on Feb 6 and found no evidence of illegal activity, Immigration officers confirmed.

The Phuket News

Russian ransomware hackers hunted down

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Officers from the Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau (CCIB), in collaboration with the Immigration Bureau and Region 8 Police, have arrested four Russians in Phuket linked to Phobos ransomware attacks, following an international request from Switzerland.

The suspects, aged 27-29, are accused of extorting over 1,000 victims worldwide, causing financial damages exceeding US\$16 million (more than B545mn), police reported.

The operation, carried out on Monday (Feb 10), was led by CCIB Commander Pol Lt Gen Trairong Phiwpaen alongside senior officers from the Immigration Bureau and Region 8 Police.

Officers from the three branches of Royal Thai Police raided locations in Muang and Thalang Districts, apprehending the four Russian nationals and seizing over 40 pieces of evidence, including mobile phones, laptops and digital wallets.

According to Pol Lt Gen Trairong, the arrests followed an urgent request from the Swiss government and the United States,



Photo: CCIB

which sought Thailand's cooperation in extraditing individuals involved in international cybercrime.

The US has cited its charges as conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States and conspiracy to commit wire fraud, said an official report of the raids.

The suspects, who were under international police warrants, had entered Thailand and operated as part of a transnational criminal organisation, Lt Gen Trairong said.

Lt Gen Trairong did not name the four suspects. While some reports of the raids said that all four suspects arrested were men, photos of the arrests provided by the CCIB showed what appeared to two men and two women arrested.

Investigations revealed that between Apr 30, 2023 and Oct 26, 2024, the group used the Phobos ransomware to attack at least 17

companies in Switzerland.

The hackers accessed and encrypted critical data, demanding ransom payments in cryptocurrency in exchange for decryption keys. Victims who refused to pay were subjected to further threats, including warnings of data leaks or sales.

Authorities also discovered that the suspects used Ming-Service, a cryptocurrency mixing service, to obscure transaction trails on the blockchain, making it difficult to track illicit payments. The global scope of the attacks resulted in financial damages amounting to over US\$16mn, Lt Gen Trairong noted.

Officials have confirmed ongoing legal proceedings for their extradition and further investigation into their criminal network. Lt Gen Trairong did not clarify whether the four will be extradited to either Switzerland or the United States.

Drunk French tourist crashes into Patong traffic officer

A TRAFFIC POLICE officer was injured when a drunk French tourist on a motorcycle crashed into him on Phra Metta Rd in Patong early on Feb 4

Pol Lt Thanapat Sombhuwet, Deputy Inspector (Investigation) of Patong Police Station, was notified of the incident, in front of the Bangkok Bank branch, at 7:14am and requested officers to inspect the scene.

Officers arrived to find two motorcycles involved



Photo: Patong Police

in the collision. One was a white Yamaha NMAX police patrol motorbike driven by Pol Sgt Maj Phradon Sawangsaengsai,

who sustained injuries and was transported to Patong Hospital for treatment.

The other was a black Honda ADV 160, registered

in Phuket, driven by Mohammed Jeafar, a French national, who also sustained injuries.

According to Pol Sgt Maj Phradon, he was patrolling the area and heading towards the Pearl Roundabout at the southern end of Patong when Mr Mohammed, traveling in the opposite direction, veered into his lane and collided with his motorcycle, causing damage and injuries.

Investigators conducted an inspection of the accident site, documented the scene with photographs, and took

Mr Mohammed into custody at Patong Police Station.

A breathalyser test revealed an alcohol level of 0.58, exceeding the legal limit.

Consequently, Mr Mohammed was arrested and is now facing legal proceedings for his actions, Patong Police reported.

The exact charges against Mr Mohammed at the time had yet to be confirmed.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Phuket spends B40mn on waste sorting facility

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Phuket City Municipality is moving forward with plans to install a municipal solid waste sorting facility at the province's waste disposal centre in Saphan Hin, on the outskirts of Phuket Town.

The project, which involves pouring concrete over Pit 4 of the landfill, is set to be completed by the end of this month, Deputy Mayor Suphachok La-onghphet told *The Phuket News*.

The project aims "to increase efficiency in waste processing by separating waste before incineration, which will help speed up the burning process", Mr Suphachok said.

"Phuket City Municipality, together with Siam Cement Group (SCG), has begun pouring cement to create a stable foundation for the new sorting machine," he added.

"I can't say how much area it will cover. That depends on the facility's size and SCG's assessment," Mr Suphachok said.

The B40 million project, funded by B35mn from the central government and B5mn from Phuket City Municipality, covers cement pouring, landfill clearing and machine installation.



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

The project aims to expand the waste disposal area and manage overflow while awaiting the completion of the new incinerator in 2027, Mr Suphachok added.

"We need this facility to separate waste. It will help us to burn waste faster," Mr Suphachok explained, adding that 400 tonnes of waste are buried daily, putting increasing pressure on Phuket's waste management system.

Deputy Mayor Suphachok in November, before the huge surge of visitors to Phuket over the new Year, noted that waste from local government bodies and businesses across Phuket was already pouring in at roughly 1,400 tonnes a day.

However, the island's single incinerator can only burn 700 tonnes per day, resulting in an overflow of

around 400-500 tonnes sent to landfills – beyond their current capacity.

The surge in the volume of solid waste is attributed to Phuket's growing tourism sector and the expansion of local businesses and households.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat last month confirmed that from January through September last year Phuket welcomed more than 9 million visitors to the island. This year tourism officials are trying for even more.

Once operational, the waste sorting facility is expected to reduce incineration time and improve overall waste disposal efficiency, Mr Suphachok said, adding that it will help provide a more sustainable solution for the province.

Baby sea turtles hatch at Kata Noi

MARINE OFFICIALS were able to successfully assist around 70 baby sea turtles into the sea after they hatched on Kata Noi Beach on Feb 6. However, some hatchlings were found weak or unwell, prompting intervention from marine conservation experts.

The Andaman Sea Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center was alerted to the hatching by a Facebook user, AU Freedom, who reported the event occurring on Kata Noi Beach.

Locals had already set up a perimeter around the nesting site to protect the hatchlings before officials arrived, reported the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR).

Upon inspection, the officers, alongside teams from the Phuket Marine Resources Conservation Center and the Office of Marine and Coastal Resources Region 10 branch, confirmed that the hatchlings belonged to the olive ridley sea



Photo: DMCR

turtle species (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).

While most successfully made it to the sea, officials discovered 13 dead turtles, nine undeveloped eggs and one weak turtle with an abnormal shell.

The surviving but fragile hatchling was taken to the Sireetarn Marine Endangered Animals Rescue Center at Cape Panwa for medical care and rehabilitation before its eventual release.

Sea turtles are a protected species in Thailand, and conservation efforts continue to support their nesting and survival along the country's coastlines.

The DMCR encourages beachgoers and locals to report any sightings of turtle nests to help safeguard these endangered creatures.

The Phuket News

Construction begins on 'prison park'

CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN ON a large green space to be dedicated as a public park at the site of the old Phuket Prison in Phuket Town.

The project, spearheaded by the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), aims to transform the 33-rai site into a recreational area complete with an observation tower, a multipurpose pavilion and a pagoda.

The development also includes a parking area accommodating some 300 vehicles to alleviate inner-city traffic congestion.

Project contractors have commenced work by leveling the site and placing piles along the old prison wall. Sayan Kaewsringam, project manager for SPM 5988 Co Ltd confirmed that the initial phase is well underway, with machinery deployed to prepare the foundation.

Pile-driving for the observation tower has begun, while additional equipment is expected to arrive next week to begin work on other key structures, including the multipurpose pavilion and the pagoda.

The initiative is being carried out under the leadership of Rewat Areerob, who on Feb 1 was re-elected as President of the PPAO. He has yet to be officially installed for his second term.

The park's development aligns with efforts to create more public green spaces and enhance urban infrastructure. In addition to providing a scenic and accessible recreational area, the new park is expected to ease traffic flow in central Phuket.

The adjacent parking facility will serve visitors to nearby educational institutions,



Photo: PR Phuket

government offices, and heritage roads in the Phuket Old Town area.

The construction is projected to be completed by the end of 2025, marking a significant milestone in Phuket's urban development, said an official report of the work underway.

A budget of B169.5 million was approved for the project in June last year, yet work initially began with the demolition of the prison walls in November 2022.

Krisana Thipayachan, Commander of Phuket Provincial Prison at the time, explained that the move to transform the old prison into a tourism attraction came under the direction of Ayut Sinthapphan, then Director-General of the Department of Corrections.

Built some 120 years ago, the prison remains one of the oldest remaining prisons still standing in the country, Mr Krisana said.

The prison covers just over 41 rai, with much of the site undeveloped as the buildings clustered close to Damrong Rd.

"By designating the development of the Old Phuket Prison area in Phuket Town for public use to become a green area, it will become the lungs of Phuket Town," Mr Krisana said. *The Phuket News*

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Tourist arrivals surge 21%

THAILAND HAS RECORDED a 21% increase in foreign tourist arrivals since the start of the year, as international visitors appear largely unfazed by recent safety concerns linked to a high-profile human trafficking case.

According to data released by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports on Tuesday, Feb 4, a total of 3.97 million tourists visited Thailand as of Feb 2, with Chinese visitors making up 710,687 of that number.

In January alone, arrivals surged 22% to reach 3.7mn.

The surge was partly driven by travel for Chinese New Year, which fell on Jan 29 this year. The ministry reported that 946,958 tourists arrived during the Lunar New Year holiday week, a 7.5% increase compared to the previous week. In 2023, Chinese New Year was observed on Feb 10, affecting year-on-year comparisons.

Thailand recently ramped up security meas-



Photo: AoT Phuket

ures following reports that some Chinese tour groups were canceling trips after the widely publicised abduction of Chinese actor Wang Xing. The actor was allegedly trafficked to work in an illegal call centre in Myanmar near the Thai border before being rescued last month.

China remains Thailand's largest source of foreign tourists, with 6.7mn arrivals recorded out of a total of 35.5mn visitors in 2024.

So far this year, Thailand has generated B195 billion in revenue from foreign travelers, the tourism ministry said. The country has set an ambitious target of earning B3.5 trillion from foreign and domestic tourism in 2024 – matching pre-pandemic revenue levels seen in 2019.

Bangkok Post

Raids target foreigners illegally in business

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket police have conducted a series of raids targeting three foreign-operated businesses found operating illegally.

Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, Commander of Phuket Provincial Police, alongside other senior officers from the Crime Suppression Division, announced the arrests last Friday (Feb 7).

The raids were carried out under search warrants issued by the Phuket Provincial Court and focused on a daycare center in Pa Khlok, a childcare facility in Cherng Talay, and a Muay Thai gym in Chalong.

Under search warrant No. 28/2568, officers inspected the Chunga Changa daycare centre in baan Suan Neramit in Moo 8, Pa khlok, Pa Khlok, which was found to be operated as a juristic person.

Ten foreign children aged 2-4 were present at the facility.



Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

A Russian national, named by police only as 'Mrs Alina', identified herself as a nanny and partner of the company.

Upon investigation, authorities determined that Mr Boonthawi Chang Lek, a 31-year-old Thai national, was the company director. He was arrested on charges of "operating a daycare center without permission".

The company is now also under investigation for potential violations of the Foreign Business Act B.E. 2542, namely for using a nominee.

A second raid, under search warrant No. 27/2568, targeted the 'ThaiLivingKids' daycare centre in

Cherng Talay. Officers discovered 25-30 children at the location and arrested four foreign nationals, named by police as:

- Dmitrii Shumilov, 43, Russian, charged with "operating a daycare without permission" and "employing foreigners without work permits".

- Svetlana Ogai, 43, Russian, charged with "working without a work permit or beyond authorised scope".

- Koipish Alena, 40, Belarusian, charged with "working without a work permit or beyond authorised scope".

- Sergey Konon, 34, Kazakh, charged with

"working without a work permit or beyond authorised scope".

The four were taken to Cherng Talay Police Station for further legal proceedings. Police will also investigate the company's foreign shareholders for potential legal violations. Phuket Provincial Police reported.

The final raid took place at Phuket Fight Club Co Ltd in Soi Palai, Chalong, under search warrant No. 30/2568. The gym, which provides boxing lessons to both Thai and foreign students, had approximately 30-40 people in attendance at the time of the search.

Officers arrested 'Ms Phraephet Rattana', 32, a Thai national and director of Phuket Fight Club Co Ltd. She was charged with "establishing a private school outside the system without permission".

Provincial Police stated in their release that all three businesses will face further scrutiny regarding potential violations of Thailand's business and labour laws.

GHB rolls out mortgages for married LGBTQ+ couples

THE GOVERNMENT HOUSING Bank (GHB), a state financial institution specialising in mortgages, is committed to supporting the government's policy on gender equality, launching a loan programme tailored for LGBTQ+ couples.

According to GHB President Kamonpop Veerapala, with the marriage equality law coming into effect on Jan 23, individuals of all gender identities now have the right to register their marriage equally under the law.

To celebrate the month of love, he said GHB aims to support LGBTQ+ couples in achieving housing stability by allowing them to apply for joint loans across all GHB mortgage products. This applies to both salaried employees and self-employed individuals.

LGBTQ+ couples can also apply for a loan under the 'GHB Home for You 2025' programme, which offers competitive interest rates.

For salaried employees whose companies have a payroll deduction loan programme with GHB (a welfare loan), the interest rate is 2.30% per year for the first year and an average of 2.90% for the first three years.

For both company employees and self-employed individuals under the same programme, the first-year interest rate is 3.50% per year, with an average rate of 4.10% over the first three years.

Mr Kamonpop said as a state-owned financial institution with the mission



GHB offers mortgages for LGBTQ+ couples. Photo: Bangkok Post

'Helping Thai People Own Homes', GHB is committed to supporting all forms of love by providing LGBTQ+ couples with housing stability.

LGBTQ+ couples, whether salaried employees or self-employed individuals, can apply for joint home loans for any GHB mortgage product with no minimum income requirement.

The primary and co-borrowers must co-own the property, and applicants must be between 20 and 70 years old.

For example, a B1 million loan would result in monthly instalments of just B3,200, he said.

GHB's low-interest loan programme is open for applications from now until Mar 31, with approval and contract signing required by Apr 30. Bangkok Post

BDO

DEADLINE FOR PERSONAL INCOME TAX RETURNS
31 MARCH 2025

The personal income tax filing deadline for the **2024 tax year** in Thailand is **31 March 2025**. This deadline is important for **Thai tax residents** as well as certain **non-residents**.

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Contact Us Email: infophuket@bdo.th Telephone: 076-273518

New pressure to lift alcoholic drinks ban

BANGKOK
Bangkok Post

Hotels and businesses that sell alcohol called on the government on Monday (Feb 10) to lift the ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages from 2pm to 5pm, saying the prohibition is outdated.

Such calls come while a bill amending the alcohol beverages control law is in line to next enter its second and third readings in the House of Representatives. The draft amendment has already been scrutinised and approved by the House's special committee vetting it, officials have confirmed.

The 2pm to 5pm alcohol sale ban was introduced in 1972 to prevent civil servants from drinking alcohol while working, said Kawee Sakawee, chairman of the Thai Alcohol Beverage Business Association (Tabba).

It is about time to change the more than five-decade-old regulation, Mr Kawee said.

"While Thai people might be familiar with the ban and have no problems with buying alcohol outside of the prohibited period, foreigners visiting Thailand might not be prepared to compromise on their



relaxation time upon arriving here," Mr Kawee said.

The alcohol beverages industry has generated around B600 billion a year in income and pays about B150bn in revenue to the government, he said.

Responding to concerns raised over the possibility of lifting the alcohol sale ban resulting in negative consequences, including a rise in drink-driving incidents, Mr Kawee said he fully supports strict law enforcement against driving under the influence, which should help foster responsible drinkers in Thai society.

Thienprasit Chaiyapatranun, president of the Thai Hotels Association, said the association continues to receive many complaints from hotel guests over the alcohol sales ban.

"The government's policy and

campaigns for attracting more tourists into the country deserve credit, but outdated regulations which are no longer practical or suitable to the current social context, such as the 2-5pm alcohol sales ban, should be cancelled," Mr Thienprasit explained.

A study has found that European tourists who visit a country in Asia typically set aside about US\$250 (B8,475) per person for food and beverages per day, he said, adding if Thailand lifts the alcohol sales ban, the country will have a better chance of earning more tourist dollars.

"If the government decides to lift the ban now, not only hotels and large restaurants will benefit but also the many small eateries and bars," said Praphawi Hemathat, secretary-general to the Craft Beer Trade Association (Thailand).



Sea barrier better than relocating Bangkok

BANGKOK

A HOUSE STUDY disagrees with a proposal by a Pheu Thai Party lawmaker to move the capital city of Bangkok to Nakhon Ratchasima province.

The issue is too big and will need a referendum, a thorough impact assessment and a large budget to implement, said the Interior Ministry, which was asked to form a House committee to study the matter.

It said the committee found it would make more sense to build a strong system around Bangkok, which is thought to be sinking, and surrounding provinces, to protect them.

The capital relocation motion was first raised by Pheu Thai Party MP for Nakhon Ratchasima, Patchara Jantararungtong, in Oct 2023.

The Cabinet then decided to give the Interior Ministry the authority to set up a panel to collect input on two options: relocating the capital or the construction of a barrier system for Bangkok to help avert the sinking problem.

On Feb 4, a Cabinet meeting acknowledged the panel's study which stated a referendum must be conducted and an impact assessment would be in order, given a large investment for the project.

The study favours a sea barrier or the building of regional centres to relieve the administrative workload of central state agencies in the capital.

The project would also have far-reaching impacts on businesses, employment and people's way of life, the study concluded.

Bangkok Post

PM commits to strengthen China ties after Beijing trip

BANGKOK

PRIME MINISTER PAETONGTARN Shinawatra concluded her official visit to China last Saturday (Feb 8), with both countries committing to strengthening cooperation in future industries such as electric vehicles and artificial intelligence.

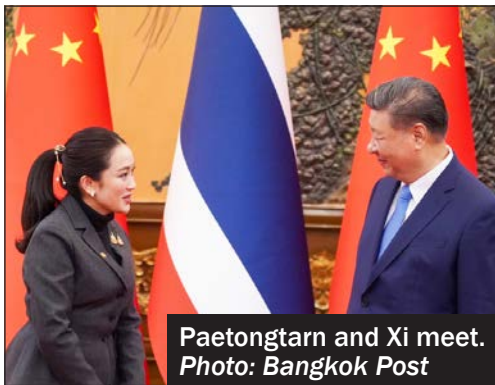
Her visit, which marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations, focused on reinforcing the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership, expanding cooperation in multiple sectors and setting the stage for the next 50 years of mutual growth and collaboration.

While in Beijing Ms Paetongtarn met President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji.

Their discussions covered an array of topics, ranging from economic cooperation and technological innovation to environmental and security matters.

One key topic discussed during the visit was their commitment to further develop the second phase of the high-speed rail project in Thailand, which will connects Nakhon Ratchasima province to Nong Khai, spanning 357 kilometres and facilitating cross-border travel to Laos and eventually China.

The project is expected to be completed in 2032 and is regarded as having huge economic potential as a regional trade link.




Thailand also reaffirmed its support for the One-China Policy, with Thailand backing China's territorial integrity, including on issues related to Taiwan, as well as the Belt and Road Initiative.






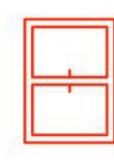
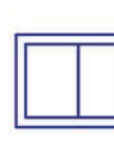
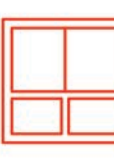








Furthermore, both nations agreed to deepening ties in agriculture, biotechnology, healthcare and on addressing global challenges, including climate change, regional security and cybercrime.

Ms Paetongtarn said both countries have agreed to join hands to improve critical sectors, such as EV, AI, semiconductors, digital economy, nuclear technology, green energy, finance, trade and investment, as well as to combat PM2.5 pollution and crack down on transnational crimes.

In addition, she said that she had invited Mr Li to make an official visit to Thailand in celebration of the milestone year of friendly relations between the two countries, adding he gladly accepted the invitation. Bangkok Post



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The JOYA of Cherng Talay

Joanna Matlub

Nestled in the central stretch of Boat Avenue, Cherng Talay, JOYA offers an enticing dining experience in its newly refurbished space. The ambience is intimate, with soft, dim lighting accentuating on-trend crystal lights, distressed mirrors and a bottle-green tiled bar area. Deep red and green velvet seating adds to the warmth, while the décor is both modern and inviting. The bar itself is a unique focal point, with books overhead adding a whimsical touch. Overseen by a knowledgeable bar manager, the bar staff are efficient and professional, whipping up playful, custom drinks to start your evening off.

After sitting at the bar area taking our evening in, we moved to our table, though the option to dine al fresco in the fanned outdoor area was also tempting. From here, you can enjoy people-watching while listening to smooth music that adds to the relaxed vibe. The manager was attentive and suggested we try a few starters to share and highlighted some of JOYA's signature main dishes.

To begin, we had a generous portion of the smoky Baba Ganoush, served with fresh yoghurt and warm roti; an innovative twist that lent a new dimension to this classic dip. The rich, deep flavours paired well with the lightness



of the yoghurt, creating a balanced and memorable bite. My personal favourite from the starters was the Anchovy Toast with Roasted Peppers, served on perfectly crisp sourdough. The punchy flavours were definitely bold, yet still delicate; they made a lasting impression. Lastly, we tried the Beef Tartare topped with a generous shaving of parmesan and enhanced by earthy truffle notes. Another substantial and enjoyable dish.

For the mains, we indulged in the hearty Lamb Ragout, served with pearl barley. Unusually, it was a warming and wintery dish, but it actually worked well, and we understood why this was one of their signatures as the lamb was so tender it practically melted under my knife. Combined with the in-



tense flavours, it was something different and homely on offer. For the second main course, we selected the Grilled Duck Breast, which came beautifully presented along with a sweet, tangy sauce and smooth pumpkin purée. The slices of duck revealed a tender interior with a slight blush of pink, a good sign of skilled cooking.

To end, we shared the No-Bake Cheesecake served with mango. A fresh and deconstructed take on dessert that was light, refreshing and the perfect ending to our meal. Although it is not something we typically highlight, on this one occasion it is really worth mentioning: A trip to the dramatic, all-black washroom added a unique and unexpected touch to the evening, so make an excuse to retouch your makeup!



Within the bustling Boat Avenue area, JOYA is a delightful option for dining with friends or on a romantic night out. It stands apart from some of the other eateries in the area with its inventive twists on classic dishes, a thoughtful and sometimes homely menu with generous portions and friendly management. With trendy, modern décor and the option to dine indoors or out, it turned out to be a great spot to enjoy an evening in the heart of Cherng Talay.

JOYA, on Boat Avenue, near Villa Market, Cherng Talay. Open: 8am-12am. Reservations: 094-7372468. Website: www.joyaphuket.com Facebook: [JoyaBistroPhuket](https://www.facebook.com/JoyaBistroPhuket) Instagram: [Joya_phuket](https://www.instagram.com/Joya_phuket)



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Cleaning up

The dirty work of protecting Phuket's most valuable natural resource

Todd Miller

"It's hard, dirty work. And sometimes shocking," Michelle Mouillé says of cleaning up around the island. With over 95 kilometres of coastline, Phuket boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. These beaches are a major draw for visitors and play a crucial role in the local economy through tourism.

But Phuket's most treasured natural resource is at risk of being marred by debris, particularly during the monsoon season when trash from other places washes up on our shores.

Michelle, a 27-year resident of Phuket, recognised an urgent need to do something about this.

Toward a Solution

The pandemic lockdown created time and space for Michelle to tackle the persistent problem of marine debris afflicting Phuket.

"There was no dedicated organisation doing this. As a foundation, we could bring everyone together to focus on the problem of cleaning the beaches and managing the rubbish responsibly," she tells me. "But in the pandemic, no one had the funds to help. So, I created a foundation to raise money elsewhere for this cause."

Michelle launched the Sustainable Maikhao Foundation (SMF) to promote environmental awareness, education and action.

The first beach cleanup at Mai Khao occurred in June 2020. Three hotels joined the effort. "We were all wearing masks and walking toward a central location on the beach," Michelle recalls. "It worked well – the start of a good collaboration – and brought everyone together on this issue."

From that initial effort, SMF has expanded its footprint to include six beaches and two islands, collecting more than 25 tonnes of rubbish in aggregate. This debris would otherwise clutter Phuket's white sands and sea floor and jeopardise marine life.

*Sustainable Maikhao Foundation
by the numbers:*

- 280 beach cleanups
- 7,820 cleanup volunteers
- More than 25,000kg of waste removed from beaches
- More than 8,000kg of this waste recycled, reused or upcycled
- More than 16,000kg incinerated or landfilled

Shifting Mindsets

"People don't realise how much rubbish accumulates on Phuket's beaches," Michelle says of the shock that often accompanies new volunteers. Each SMF-organised cleanup includes an introductory briefing that describes the magnitude of the rubbish problem and tries to connect everyone to the issue. "Often," she says, "the beach cleanups help to shift people's mindsets."

Cleaning rubbish from Phuket's

beaches is one thing. Disposing all that trash is another.

The rubbish collected from the cleanups is sorted into 16 categories, then weighed and recorded to gather data, which is shared with other local and international organisations. Of the 16 classifications of rubbish, only three are sent to the incinerators and landfill. The debris from the remaining 13 categories is either recycled, upcycled or reused.

Partnerships

Four months after conducting its first beach cleanup, Sustainable Maikhao Foundation held its first Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) event. These partnership events – involving hotels, governmental organisations and local and international companies – are a key pillar of the Foundation's ongoing efforts.

In addition to local partners, SMF works with out-of-town organisations to provide a CSR component for various conferences that are held in Phuket. Typically, these organisers want to create for their delegates a team-building opportunity that makes a positive impact. Banks, energy firms, retailers and management consultants are some of the Thai and foreign organisations who have done their part to help protect Phuket's natural beauty through these corporate partnerships.

Eco Education

Education is another vital part of Sustainable Maikhao Foundation's mission. Since launching educational workshops three years ago, over 150 seminars have been delivered on ocean conservation and rubbish management. More than 5,000 participants of all ages now better understand and appreciate Phuket's fragile marine ecosystem after participating in these workshops.

By raising awareness about Phuket's marine debris problem, educating on viable solutions and promoting action, SMF works to sustainably protect Phuket's most valuable natural resource.

For better or worse?

Michelle, a native South African, fell in love with Mai Khao during her first visit to the island nearly three decades ago. Recalling the rice paddies, buffalo and abundance of leatherback turtles that populated the area, she's inspired to help conserve and sustain this beautiful natural environment.

I asked the founder of Sustainable Maikhao the central question on my mind: nearly five years on: is the problem getting bigger or smaller?

In many respects, there is noticeable improvement, Michelle asserts. "Awareness is much better. More groups, especially schools, universities, government and community organisations are getting involved. And there's less long-term rubbish than before," she declares. Long term rubbish is debris that has accumulated on the beaches over time and often embeds in beach vegetation.

"BUT," she then interjects after an extended pause. "There's much more plastic



CSR Celebration. Photo: Chalit Saeton



Collection. Photo: Medsai from Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach



Michelle - beach cleanup briefing. Photo: Club Med Phuket

consumption today, some of which ends up in the waters and on the beaches. The amount of cleanups does not balance the amount of plastic usage. We're making progress, but there's much more work to be done."

Her final words to me: "There are many things we can do. But we need more volunteers and partners to do more."



SUSTAINABLE MAIKHAO
FOUNDATION
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The Sustainable Maikhao Foundation welcomes interested corporate partners and volunteers to join the ongoing effort to

connect and empower the community to preserve Phuket's natural environment.
sustainablemaikhaofoundation.org

WINDOW ON PHUKET

February/March 2025 issue



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POP QUIZ

- Who was Zeus's wife?
- Do cockroaches have hearts?
- Which is the largest island in the world?
- What percentage of an iceberg remains unseen underwater?
- What is the name for a dog created by crossing a Labrador Retriever and a Poodle?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

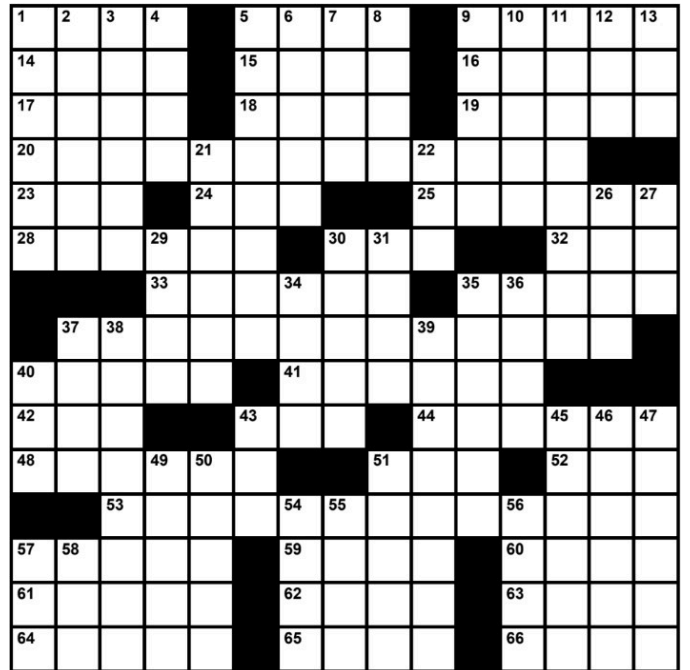
4	6			2			9	5
	9	5					3	8
			9		3			
8		1		4		5		9
6		2		9		1		8
			4		5			
	4	7				8	3	
3	1			6			5	4

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
- Santa's present carrier
 - Physics calculation
 - Goes with Saxon
 - S-shaped molding
 - Chip in?
 - Fabric
 - Part
 - Back of the house
 - Rumba relative
 - Start of a house?
 - In-flight info, for short
 - Consume
 - Jane Eyre, e.g.
 - It's always sold in mint condition
 - Appear
 - "We __ family"
 - Gas used in welding
 - Wolf, coyote, fox, dog family
 - House plan related
 - Maids
 - Actress Bloom
 - Alter, in a way
 - Not just "a"
 - "Indian Idol," for example
 - Italian town
 - Absorbed, as a cost
 - Can you dig it?
 - House to love
- Down
- "Home ____"
 - Young salmon
 - Bachchan, for one (var.)
 - Danger
 - HOMES part
 - Whine
 - Add color to
 - Red or whitetail?
 - Potato, slangily
 - Cold dessert
 - Short-eared rabbit
 - Abdominal
 - Fall (over)
 - "Besame mucho" singer
 - Concerning
 - For men only
 - Balkan native
 - Knight's "suit"
 - Civil rights org.
 - Equestrians' field day
 - Court ploy
 - "Walking on Thin Ice" singer
 - "Six Feet Under" subjects?
 - What a house stands on
26. Fleshy seed covering
27. "Waking ____ Devine" (1998 film)
29. Microsoft support rep
30. Nee Al (anagram)
31. Gut areas
34. Carve in stone
35. Horse move
36. God of war
37. "The ____ have it"
38. Butting equipment
39. Snigger maker
40. "Bingo!"
43. Backgammon impossibility
45. Attach a hose
46. An alloy
47. Supposed, for Shakespeare
49. Building style
50. Refine, as metal
51. Eagle home
54. Didn't dillydally
55. Ending with hard or soft
56. Shakira's don't lie
57. Appropriate
58. Orchid arrangement

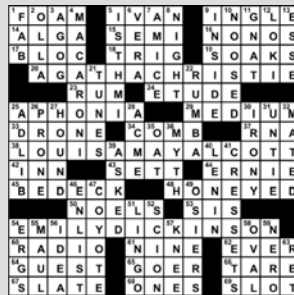
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

- (1) His sister, Hera; (2) Yes; (3) Greenland (Australia is a continent); (4) 90%; (5) Labradorpoodle, or labrapoodle



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

2

beats per minute is how slow an alligator can lower its heart rate while resting.

84

seconds into a conversation is how long it takes before questions arise asking for clarification, like "Who? What?"

450

people die falling out of beds in the United States each year.

1,000

bibles printed in 1631 left the "not" out of "Thou shall not commit adultery" – most were burned, but a handful still exist.

500,000

US dollars a year is how much Uberfacts founder/creator makes from his Uberfacts Tweets.

61

million

paggers were in use in 1994.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



The tranquility of Mai Khao. Photo by Tina Olitakič

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

This week in history

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.

Feb 16, 1923

Howard Carter unseals the burial chamber of Pharaoh Tutankhamun (pronounced 'tut-ankh-amun').

Feb 17, 1867

Scottish merchant ship SS *Dido* becomes the first ship to pass through the Suez Canal.

Feb 18, 2013

Armed robbers steal a haul of diamonds worth US\$50



Howard Carter opens the innermost shrine of King Tutankhamun's tomb.

million during a raid at Brussels Airport in Belgium.

Feb 19, 356 AD

Emperor Constantius II issues a decree closing all pagan temples in the Roman Empire.

Feb 20, 1913

King O'Malley drives in the first survey peg to mark commencement of work on the construction of the Australian capital Canberra.

Source: Wikipedia

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Grow Boating Evening - March 2025

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

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WED15OCT



Thailand (Bangkok) Amusement & Attraction Park Expo 2025 (TAAPE)
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Thailand (Bangkok) Amusement & Attraction Parks Expo

Thailand (Bangkok) Amusement & Attraction Parks Expo (TAAPE 2025) will make its appearance in IMPACT Exhibition Centre, Bangkok, Thailand on October 15-17, 2025! The exhibition aims to bring together global amusement equipment manufacturers, theme park operators, amusement service providers and industry experts to discuss the development trend of the amusement industry, display the latest amusement equipment and creative design. The exhibition jointly build a platform for exchange and cooperation, brand promotion and market expansion. Look forward to meeting you in Thailand and start a wonderful amusement trip together!

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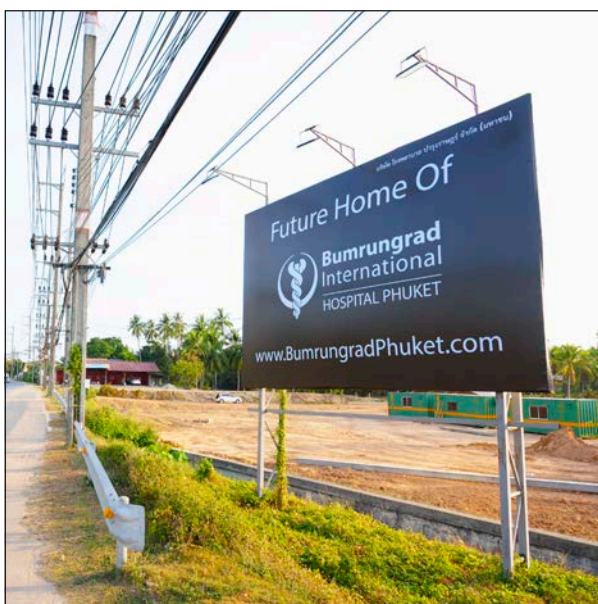
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BUMRUNGRAD INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL PHUKET

Bumrungrad International Hospital Phuket Marks Groundbreaking Ceremony, A Significant Milestone for Health Tourism in Thailand & A Catalyst for Mai Khao Community Development. Phuket, Thailand – February 5, 2025 – Bumrungrad International Hospital Phuket has officially marked a major milestone with its groundbreaking ceremony, signaling the beginning of construction for its state-of-the-art healthcare facility. This development is set to further elevate Thailand's status as a global destination for medical excellence and health tourism. The ceremony was attended by Mr Chai Sophonpanich, Chairman of the Board of Bumrungrad International Hospital; Mrs Linda Lisahapanya, Managing Director; Mr Aniello Sorrentino PhD, Corporate Chief Strategy Officer; Ms Artirat Charukitpipat PhD, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Mark Schatten, BIH Board Member, and Mr David Thomas Boucher, Chief Executive Officer of Bumrungrad International Hospital Phuket, alongside other senior executives. Bumrungrad International Hospital Phuket is designed to be a premier 50,000 square metre, 212-bed acute care facility, providing world-class medical and VitalLife scientific wellness services to local residents, expatriates and international patients seeking high-quality healthcare. The hospital will uphold Bumrungrad's renowned standards, offering seamless access to top-tier medical expertise. Beyond enhancing healthcare accessibility, Bumrungrad Phuket will contribute significantly to the region's economic growth, creating employment opportunities and reinforcing Phuket's reputation as a leading hub for wellness and medical tourism.



GROW BOATING EVENING - FEBRUARY 2025

Another fantastic evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm. Big thanks to the drinks sponsor for the evening ASAP Marine Trading. Established in 2008, ASAP Marine Trading Co Ltd has been a reliable supplier of yacht products for many years. See asap-marine.com/en/ As always a delicious buffet was provided by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar. Come and join in the fun at the March event, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. Find out more at facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket



Photo: AFP

LIV Golf players get direct path to US Open

GOLF

LIV GOLF PLAYERS have been given a direct path into the US Open after the US Golf Association announced new exemption categories for this year's June 12-15 event on Feb 5.

The US Open becomes the first major to provide a direct path for LIV talent into the field, with an exempt spot reserved at Oakmont for the top player not otherwise exempt among LIV's top three in the individual standings as of May 19, the day after this year's PGA Championship.

There will be seven events before the cutoff this year in the Saudi-backed series, starting with last week's event in

Saudi Arabia followed by those in Adelaide, Hong Kong, Singapore, Miami, Mexico City and South Korea.

In addition to the full exemption this year, a local exemption will be awarded to the top 10 LIV players as of Apr 7, the Monday of Masters week. That puts them into the 36-hole final qualifying for US Open spots.

Starting in 2026 for the US Open at Shinnecock Hills, the top three not already exempt from LIV's 2025 final standings will earn a US Open berth as will the top un-exempt player in the LIV top three in May 2026.

Since LIV's 2022 debut, the US PGA Tour has banned LIV players from competing in PGA events. AFP

Pepper's Golf Day a big hit

GOLF

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Pepper's Sports Bar hosted its annual Golf Day on Feb 2 with enthusiasts of the sport and casual players alike getting involved in the fun.

The popular Tinlay Place-based bar staged the event at the usual venue of Laguna Golf Phuket where 50 players were faced with the challenge of not only 18 tough holes but swelteringly hot conditions.

There was huge diversity among the players, with juniors aged 14 competing with and against a field of more seasoned individuals. Equally diverse was the skill level on show, with beginners and genuine amateurs mixing it with extremely capable players, making for a truly enjoyable occasion for all involved.

Steve Turner and Brad Edman were the nett winners of the competition, while Niall Quinn and Werner Bellgardt were the gross winners.

Several other categories saw players receiving trophies and gifts at the evening award ceremony held at Pepper's Bar afterwards, including teenager Olivia Ashman who won longest female drive on the day.

A plentiful barbecue, overseen by Pepper's dutiful staff, was also on offer to fill hungry stomachs after a taxing day out on the golf course.



Photo: Supplied

The popular event has been running for many years now and always generates a healthy turnout and fun-filled day for all involved. Furthermore, the event serves a broader purpose within the local community by helping raise funds for selected charities or those in need.

This year the proceeds raised were donated to help support medical costs endured by the bar's manager Steve Barrett who was suddenly taken sick and hospitalised several weeks ago. Steve has been receiving ongoing care and doctors and

hopeful he will soon be on the mend, but the financial toll has been significant and the support was therefore warmly received and appreciated.

The funds raised were added to those collected at the bar's weekly quiz in addition to generous private donations from a variety of friends and patrons of the bar, amounting to a total of approximately B120,000.

Everyone in the local community and at *The Phuket News* extends their heartfelt wishes for Steve to make a full recovery as soon as possible.

Eagles fly high to defeat Chiefs and win Super Bowl

NFL

THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES soared to a crushing 40-22 Super Bowl victory over the Kansas City Chiefs last Sunday (Feb 9), shattering their opponents' bid for a historic hat-trick of NFL titles in a rout watched by President Donald Trump.

Philadelphia quarterback Jalen Hurts threw for two touchdowns and rushed for another as the Eagles avenged their agonising Super Bowl defeat to the Chiefs two years ago in emphatic style at New Orleans' Superdome.

"I've been able to use every experience and learn from it – the good, the bad, all of it – to pursue my own greatness," Hurts said.

"But I couldn't do any of these things without the guys around me. We had a special group this year – we were able to learn from the past, get some nice new pieces and get over that hump."

The Chiefs had been bidding to become the first team in history to win three consecutive Vince Lombardi trophies following Super Bowl victories in 2023 and 2024.

But Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes – who was sacked six times and threw two interceptions – never looked like leading his team to glory as



Photo: AFP

the Eagles' iron defense and clinical offense dominated throughout.

The Eagles effectively had the game won by half-time, powering into a 24-0 lead at the break after three unanswered touchdowns from Hurts, Cooper DeJean and A.J. Brown.

They extended the lead to 34-0 late in the third quarter before Kansas City finally grabbed three late consolation touchdowns. Eagles kicker Jake Elliott bagged four field goals.

Sunday's extravaganza was watched by a star-studded 65,719 crowd bristling with celebrities and VIPs headed by Trump, who became the first sitting US President to attend the Super Bowl after jetting into New Orleans from Florida on Air Force One earlier in the day following a round of golf with Tiger Woods. AFP

England edge France in Six Nations thriller

RUGBY

ELLIOT DALY'S TRY a minute from time helped England to a thrilling 26-25 Six Nations win over France at a rainswept Twickenham last Saturday (Feb 8).

Fin Smith, starting his first Test at fly-half but playing like a seasoned No 10, then added the clinching conversion following the veteran replacement's score for a win that eased the pressure on beleaguered England coach Steve Borthwick.

France were 25-19 ahead with just six minutes left when winger Louis Bielle-Biarrey scored his second try after England replacement Fin Baxter powered over for a try which Fin Smith converted following two missed goal-kicks from Marcus Smith.

England's victory ended a run of seven straight defeats by major nations, a sequence notable for the team's lack of composure in the closing stages.

But with Fin Smith pulling the strings in style, England kept their cool late



Daly charges to score. Photo: AFP

before 32-year-old Daly, who had only been on the field for three minutes, went over in front of a capacity crowd of more than 81,000.

Italy sent Wales spiralling deeper into crisis after triumphing 22-15 and handing their sorry opponents a record-extending 14th consecutive Test defeat in front of delighted fans in Rome.

Ange Capuozzo scored the hosts' only try at a

soaking Stadio Olimpico with Tommaso Allan's quality kicking also condemning Wales to a defeat which could be key to deciding the destination of the wooden spoon.

Wales have lost all eight of their Six Nations fixtures since winning in the Italian capital two years ago and slump to 12th in the World Rugby rankings, below Georgia, is the lowest they have ever been. AFP

Pilgrims shock Reds in FA Cup

FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool suffered a stunning FA Cup exit last Sunday (Feb 9) in a 1-0 defeat to Championship strugglers Plymouth as Arne Slot's decision to field a weakened team came back to haunt him.

Ryan Hardie's second-half penalty sealed The Pilgrim's epic upset and ended Liverpool's quest for a quadruple. In a remarkably successful first season in charge of the Reds, it was a rare blunder by former Feyenoord boss Slot as he rested key players including Virgil van Dijk, Mohamed Salah, Andrew Robertson and Cody Gakpo.

It was also only the fourth time that a team top of the Premier League had been eliminated from the FA Cup by a lower division club.

"We were not having a very good day. A result like this is the outcome," a deflated Slot said afterwards.

Elsewhere, Brighton's Kaoru Mitoma sent Chelsea crashing out of the competition as the Japan star sealed a 2-1 win on Saturday.

Chelsea have not won a domestic trophy since lifting the FA Cup in 2018 and their wait will go on for another season as the Seagulls bounced back impressively from last weekend's 7-0 thrashing by Nottingham Forest, the second worst defeat in the club's 123-year history.



Plymouth's Nikola Katic beats Liverpool's Diogo Jota to head the ball. Photo: AFP

Kevin De Bruyne spared Manchester City's blushes in their 2-1 victory at third-tier Leyton Orient.

City were rocked when Jamie Donley's long-range effort came back off the bar and rebounded in off City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega to give Orient a shock early lead before Abdulkodir Khusanov equalised and De Bruyne struck the winner 11 minutes from time.

Newcastle came from behind to win 3-2 against Birmingham at St Andrew's, with the home side taking the lead through Ethan Laird after just 42 seconds.

A quickfire double from Joe Willock and Callum Wilson turned the tie in Newcastle's favour before Tomoki Iwata's blistering strike levelled for the League One leaders.

Willock then struck the winner in the 82nd minute for the Magpies.

Bottom of the Premier League and seemingly destined for relegation, Southampton got no respite as Burnley won 1-0 at St Mary's, while Rodrigo Muniz scored twice as Fulham won 2-1 at League One Wigan.

Aston Villa defeated Tottenham 2-1 to increase the pressure on under-fire Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou, while Wolves cruised to a 2-0 win against Blackburn Rovers and Crystal Palace triumphed 2-0 at Doncaster Rovers on Monday.

In the last FA Cup tie at Goodison Park, Everton were beaten 2-0 by Bournemouth, Ipswich swept to a 4-1 win against Frank Lampard's Coventry and Millwall beat Championship leaders Leeds 2-0.



Nai Yang set to get windy

WINDSURFING

Continued from page 14

...competition and opportunities to learn from the best underscored the event's mission to grow the sport in Thailand.

The organisers are confident the Phuket event will be similarly successful as the sport of windsurfing continues to grow across the region.

"We are excited at the opportunity to grow the sport nationally and further afield," says Romeo.

"We are really looking forward to coming to Phuket and welcoming a

diverse range of competitors to one of the most beautiful spots on the calendar," he added.

"We welcome and encourage people to come along and support and also welcome any local businesses interested to support as sponsors.

"For example we are looking for a boat to host the race committee so it would be great if anyone could volunteer for that."

Further information can be found at the Windsurfer Thailand Facebook and Instagram pages or by contacting Romeo (English and Thai) on 086-973-5790.

The Phuket News

Pressure mounts on Tum after yet another defeat

FOOTBALL

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS back; that familiar feeling continues for the Phuket Andaman FC (PAFC) faithful.

Last Sunday's (Feb 9) fixture away at Pattani FC was always going to be tough and so it transpired as PAFC fell to a 2-1 defeat against the fourth-placed team.

However, the manner of the defeat and the questionable tactical approach adopted by Coach Tum will leave many supporters scratching their heads. Instead of sticking with the 3-5-2 formation that yielded a more positive performance last time out, the team inexplicably switched to a 4-3-3, a system they have not used at all under the current manager. This tactical gamble backfired spectacularly.

Adding to the confusion, Kai Boham was handed a starting berth in the unfamiliar position of right-back, only to be substituted after 35 minutes. With no apparent injury, this decision hardly instills confidence in the player and raises questions about the coach's man-management. PAFC were also hampered by the absence of two of their overseas stars, David Danielsson (illness) and Luke Pavon (unknown).

While a cautious approach away against one of the league's stronger



Coach Tum. Photo: Supplied

teams is understandable, PAFC's narrow formation, with both full-backs and wingers constantly inverting, allowed Pattani to attack with impunity down the flanks.

The Lobsters struggled to string a meaningful series of passes together and, until their consolation goal in the 95th minute, rarely looked like troubling the Pattani goalkeeper. Their attacking threat was virtually non-existent.

This latest defeat leaves Phuket languishing in 10th position, precariously close to the relegation zone, just three points above the drop.

Coach Tum's job appears safe for the time being, having only taken over three matches prior to the end of the first leg of the season, and with the club's well-documented financial difficulties.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find any positives in his current stewardship of the team. Serious questions need to be asked about his tactics, team selections and ability to motivate the players. Simon Causton



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Sport

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Pepper's bar hosts annual golf day > p14

FIRST CLASS

Local Dojo tops national rankings

The Phuket Dojo team continue to go from strength to strength. Photo: Supplied



MMA

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

They may be temporarily homeless yet the dynamic team at Phuket Dojo are not letting it affect their performance as the medals continue to roll in at national and international competition level.

Previously based at Blue Tree in Cherng Talay before being forced to leave at the end of last year, coach Alexis Plantard and his legion of dedicated students were awarded the title of Best Judo Club in Thailand 2025 catering for children between the ages of 5 and 12 by the National Judo Federation on Jan 22.

This fantastic achievement

meant a hat-trick of titles after the club was awarded the same accolade in both 2023 and 2024.

Such high performance levels were evident at the Thailand National Judo Championships on Jan 18-19 in Bangkok where the team came away with 12 medals.

On day one of the contest gold medals went to Damir, fighting in a very strong field of 15 opponents, Daniil, Lea and Meera, who also secured her green belt classification.

Alex and Max B both performed admirably to win silver medals, the latter in his first competition, while bronze medals were secured by Max, Dima and Micha, the latter of whom was also contesting his first official competition.

Fellow students Iroslav,

Andrei, Leo, Marko, Sagit and Philippe represented the Dojo with distinction although they just failed to make the podium, something hard work and dedication in training will no doubt rectify in future.

Day two saw David win silver in of a competitive field of 27 opponents, while Danil won bronze also in a field of 27 opponents and Nailya won bronze in her first competition.

The medal haul was enough for the Phuket team to be ranked as number one in the competition, while Lea won the top fighter award within the girls' 5-10 year old class.

DOMINATED

A week previous the team were in Singapore where they practically

cleaned up, winning a total of nine medals and three trophies, including best team of the tournament.

Lea, Danil and David all won golds, while Domantas and Sagit scored silvers and Daniil, Varlam, Andrei, and Aleksandr all secured bronze.

Dima, Sagit and Aleksandr also won gold in their team event in the children's division, while David, Domantas and Danil did likewise in the teenager age class and Lea, Varlam and Daniil earned bronze in the youth division.

Particular credit must go to 5-year-old Lea who competed in the boys class up to 7 years of age and completely dominated all her opponents, listening well to coach Alexis' instructions and carrying

them out perfectly. Along with her teammates, she represented Phuket in style and was duly rewarded with the top overall team award.

There is much more ahead this year for the team and expectations are high. At time of press, discussions with a new venue are at an advanced stage, meaning the team will once again have a permanent place to train and call home.

Once they are settled again and back to dedicated training, expect the medals, trophies and accolades to flood in once again as they continue their impressive drive to become recognised as the outright leading Dojo in Southeast Asia.

For more information please visit the Dojo Phuket website at: <https://judophuket.com/>

Phuket to host national windsurfing competition

WINDSURFING

PHUKET IS GEARING UP to host the latest leg of the Windsurfer LT Thailand National Championships next weekend (Jan 22-23) as the picturesque setting of Nai Yang Beach welcomes windsurfing enthusiasts from all over to compete.

It is the latest competition in an ever-expanding calendar as the sport of windsurfing continues to grow in popularity and participation.

Adding extra spice to proceedings is the confirmation

that 10-time World Windsurfing Champion and three-time Olympic athlete Riccardo Giordano of Italy will be leading the charge and throwing down the challenge to others to compete.

Most recently the competition was held at the Amara Watersports Windsurfing Club in Jomtien, Pattaya, where a diverse group of 30 participants ranging from youngsters to seasoned professionals celebrated the sport's inclusive and competitive spirit across the weekend of Jan 25-26.

Competitors hailed from all corners of the globe, including

Austria, China, the Netherlands and Spain, adding a truly international flair to the event.

Further competitions this year in Thailand will see the Asian International Event in Hua Hin (Mar 29-30), the Songkran Windsurfer Open, in Jomtien (Apr 26-27), the Summer Trophy in Koh Samui (June 7-8), the Winter Trophy in Bangkok (Nov 22-23) and the Bangsaray Invitational (Dec 5-6).

The action isn't just limited to the water, as witnessed in Pattaya last month where spectators lined the beach,

cheering enthusiastically as competitors passed the finishing gate, set right near the shoreline for maximum excitement.

"This is the beauty of the Windsurfer LT class," explained Romeo Romei, one of the chief organisers behind the series. "The equipment is standardised, ensuring a fair and even playing field. Whether you're a pro or a beginner, you can compete and have fun," he added.

Olympian Giordano was also involved at the Pattaya event where he was joined by Albert Pijoan, a renowned wave-riding champion. Together with Thai

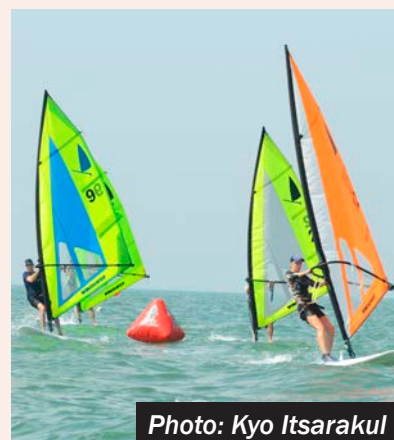


Photo: Kyo Itsarakul

Olympic Windsurfing star Amara Wichithong, they hosted a short teaching clinic, offering valuable insights and techniques to participants of all skill levels. The combination of accessible...

Continued on page 14