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# MONUMENTAL

## A STANDING TRIBUTE TO PHUKET'S FAMED HEROINES



The Heroines Monument pictured recently installed in 1967.  
Photo: Thao Thep Krasattri Thao Sri Soonthorn Foundation

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Thousands of people from across the island this weekend are celebrating the victory of Phuket people, led by famed Phuket Heroines Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn, over Burmese invaders 240 years ago.

The annual Phuket Heroines Festival, commemorating the Battle of Thalang, is being held at Victory Field in Tambon Thepkrasattri, with the traditional nightly re-enactment of the auspicious battle in 1785 taking centre stage.

Thai actresses Anyarin 'Tubtim' Terathananpat and Kessarin 'Nui' Ektawatkul are playing the lead roles in the historical drama, which

has a cast of hundreds and is accompanied with an impressive light-and-sound show.

Nui, a 45-year-old film actress and former national taekwondo champion, will play Thao Thepkrasattri, colloquially called 'Ya Chan' (pronounced 'Jun'), while Tubtim, a 34-year-old actress most recently known for her role in the 2024 film 'Mae Nak Talu Miti', will portray the younger sister Thao Sri Soonthorn, 'Ya Mook'.

The tribute re-enactment is being held over three nights, from Mar 13-15, with traditional historical performance featured alongside cultural exhibitions, local food and OTOP product sales at the site.

### THE LEGEND

The tale of the two sisters is well known, and well documented.

Burmese invaders arrived and attacked villages on the island in the Nine Armies War during the reign of King Rama I.

In 1785, during the attacks on Southern Thailand, and especially along the Andaman coast, Lady Chan's husband, Phraya Phimon, died, leaving the position of Governor of Thalang vacant.

Lady Chan had actually been placed under arrest due to "unresolved taxes" and was being held at Pak Phra (the name for Takua Thung in Phang Nga at the time) when the Burmese attacked there, and she fled back to Thalang.

Warned about more impending attacks on the island, Lady Chan and her sister, Mook, led the people in a successful resistance of the Burmese marauders, who were forced to retreat on March 13, 1785.

King Rama I honoured the sisters with the titles 'Thao Thep Krasattri' for Lady Chan and 'Thao Sri Soonthorn' for Lady Mook. It remains the only time such high royal titles have been bestowed to people outside the royal family.

### THE MONUMENT

However, it is the monument at one of the most important crossroads in the province that most foreigners know best of the famed Phuket Heroines.

"The significance of the monument can be viewed in many ways. If you are from Phuket, you will see them as sacred objects of the province, or at least as important ancestral figures that people from Phuket respect and worship, explained Kan Rabsombat, Director of the Thalang National Museum.

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its final race



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# News



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## Officials target 14,000 school dropouts in Phuket

PHUKET OFFICIALS are ramping up efforts to reintegrate children and youths who have dropped out of the education system, with a goal of achieving 'Thailand Zero Dropout' in the province.

A total of 14,282 children have been identified as dropouts across 14 categories, officials revealed during a meeting held on Monday (Mar 10).

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat chaired the meeting at the Phuket Provincial Education Area Office, bringing together education officials and representatives from various agencies.

The discussions focused on strategies to support children who are out of the system and ensure they have access to education or skills development programs.

The latest data highlights that 642 children remain in need of urgent assistance, categorised into six key groups: those with disabilities or behavioural problems, those



suffering from chronic illnesses, children from low-income families, those engaged in household work, working children and those requiring special aid.

The initiative follows a government policy aimed at reforming education and ensuring equal access for all children.

The Cabinet approved measures on May 28 last year to tackle the issue nationwide, prompting Governor Sophon to establish a dedicated committee Jan 20 this year.

As part of the next steps, officials will visit affected communities in Phuket by the end of April to provide direct support to children and families.

A follow-up meeting will be held in early May to assess progress and determine further actions.

*The Phuket News*

# On the fast track to high-end promotion

The Phuket News  
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After just 10 months of active service as chief of the Phuket Airport Immigration unit, Pol Col Padthongtew Damapong, son of an older brother of Khunying Potjaman na Pombejra, the ex-wife of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, has been promoted to the post of Immigration Chief of Nonthaburi Province, which forms part of 'Greater Bangkok'.

Before his posting to Phuket airport, Pol Col Padthongtew also spent just 10 months as the head of an immigration administration unit in Bangkok.

Due to its proximity to Bangkok, Nonthaburi is considered a suburb of the capital and is part of the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, or 'Greater Bangkok'.

Pol Col Padthongtew's promotion was announced in an order signed by Pol Lt Gen Phanumas Bunyalak, Commander of the



Pol Col Padthongtew Damapong at a meeting with then-Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin in August last year. Photo: Phuket Airport Immigration / file

Immigration Bureau, on Feb 28. The order came into effect on Mar 3.

The new chief of Phuket Airport Immigration is Pol Col Russarin Teerapattanakul, who has arrived from her previous post as Deputy Director of the Immigration Bureau's Immigration Division 4.

Phuket Airport Immigration in a post online announced her arrival, with glowing remarks about Pol Col Russarin being the first female officer to head Phuket Airport Immigration.

Phuket Airport Immigration at time of press had not posted any notices confirm-

ing the promotion of Pol Col Col Padthongtew to Nonthaburi.

Pol Col Padthongtew took up the post of Phuket Airport Immigration chief in the reshuffle of Nov 29, 2023 – again under dubious circumstances as to the speed of his climbing the ranks.

Although he officially spent 15 months as chief of the Immigration division stationed at Phuket International Airport, Pol Col Padthongtew was not even reported as Phuket Airport Immigration chief even by Phuket Airport Immigration themselves since Oct 1 last

year. The last time he was reported as Phuket Airport Immigration chief was Sept 30 last year.

During Pol Col Padthongtew's physical absence from Phuket, Pol Col Atisak Panya, Superintendent of Immigration Division 2, was repeatedly and consistently reported as 'Acting Superintendent of the Phuket Airport Immigration Checkpoint'.

Rangsaman Rome of the-then Move Forward Party (now the People's Party) in 2023 questioned the promotion of Pol Col Padthongtew, then 41, to the highly coveted position in Phuket, as it came just 10 months after he was appointed as the chief of an Immigration administrative unit in Bangkok.

Pol Col Padthongtew is the son of an older brother of Khunying Potjaman na Pombejra, the ex-wife of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Khunying Potjaman's father, Pol Gen Preawphan Damapong, was a former national police chief.

## Heroines Monument still marking Phuket history

*Continued from page 1*

"Another perspective is in terms of beliefs and local religions. In addition to the historical beliefs of Phuket, there are also rituals related to Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn which are performed at the provincial or city level. These two people are very important in terms of history and ethnic beliefs," he added.

Construction of the monument was first initiated by a committee of local residents and officials on Jan 19, 1962. The Fine Arts Department assigned respected artist Sanan Silakorn as the sculptor in 1965, and the foundation stone was laid at the auspicious time of 9:09am on April 28, 1966.

The installation of the sculpture onto the pedestal was honoured nearly a year later, on Mar 24, 1967.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great (Rama IX)

and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit the Queen Mother presided over the grand opening ceremony of the monument on May 23 that year.

### THE DESIGN

"The sculptures of Lady Chan and Lady Mook are cast in bronze, standing larger than human body size, at one and a half times the size of an average person," Mr Kan explained.

Lady Chan and Lady Mook stand on a three-metre-high base, showing strength and determination. Lady Chan is on the right, while Lady Mook is on the left.

Both figures stand with confidence, wearing a Dok Krathum haircut, a loincloth, a long-sleeved shirt and a cloth draped in a 'tabengman' style. Each Heroine firmly holds a round-tipped sword in their right hand, facing north with a look of strong bravery.

Eluding most people is how the artist Sanan Silakorn came to

create the faces of the two Heroines on the monument.

"From what I have seen in historical documents, people in Phuket selected the faces most commonly believed to be what the two sisters would have looked like, by considering the facial features of their descendants," Mr Kan said.

"At that time, people from across the entire province had to select the faces for the sculptor. As for the gestures and postures, the sculptor came up with those by himself," he added.

The construction process spanned many years, involving careful planning and significant financial efforts.

"Discussions on erecting the monument date back to the reign of King Rama VI, who emphasised the importance of honouring these sacrifice ladies figures," Mr Kan noted.

"However, the project gained new momentum under Field

Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, with initial funds raised through public donations and expenses carefully managed in stages," he added.

The expenses were divided into several installments, starting from casting the metal, making the prototype and the cost of creating the base.

"The total construction cost was estimated at B106,000 [in 1967], which included B100,000 for the casting of bronze statues and B6,000 for the engraved inscription," Mr Kan said.

The Fine Arts Department oversaw the project, ensuring the monument was built to honour the legacy of the two Heroines.

### THE LOCATION

But the most common question most foreigners ask regarding the monument remains: 'Why place it there?'

Positioned at the heart of Phuket, it serves as a site for



Photo: Thao Thep Krasattri  
Thao Sri Soonthorn Foundation

people to pay homage to these revered heroines, Mr Kan explained.

"Initially, the roads were not as developed as they are today, and the monument served as a focal point for those entering the province. Over time, as Phuket grew, the monument became a landmark that embodies both history and modernity," he added.

"Thalang used to be a small town. As it developed, it caused traffic congestion. The reason that this site was chosen is because in the past there were no communities in the area, no Robinson Lifestyle mall and no big roads. It was a road that everyone had to pass before entering Phuket Town," Mr Kan concluded.

# Condos under scrutiny for size

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Supoj Rotruang Na Nongkhai, Chief Inspector of the Ministry of Interior, conducted a two-day inspection visit to Phuket last week to investigate complaints regarding two 'extra large' condominium construction projects in Cherng Talay as well as issues involving the Phuket Provincial Land Office revoking land ownership documents.

Mr Supoj, a former Phuket Vice Governor, led a meeting at the Thalang District Office on Mar 4, joined by current Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong and Thalang District Chief Siwat Rawangkul, along with inspectors from the Ministry of Interior and heads of relevant local government agencies.

The first issue that the meeting assessed was the legitimacy of two condominium projects, 'Siamese Bangtao 1' and 'Siamese Bangtao 2' on the Don Jom Tao Rd (Route 4018) in Moo 8, Cherng Talay.

Officials reviewed the operations of agencies involved, including the Phuket Provincial Land Office, the Phuket office of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE Phuket) and the Phuket Provincial Public Works and Town & Country Planning Office.

Also reviewed were the involvement of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administrative Organisation (Or-BorTor), led by current Chief Manoch Punchalad.

Natthakrit Phonphet, Deputy Director of the MNRE Phuket office, explained to *The Phuket News* that the assessment involved summoning an official representative from Erawana Group to clarify the construction details of the two Siamese Bangtao condominium projects.

Officials are reviewing whether the buildings qualify as 'extra-large buildings', a classification for structures used as residences or businesses with a total floor area of 10,000 square metres or more, Mr Natthakrit explained.

"If these projects are



Photo: PR Phuket

deemed extra-large buildings, they would be in violation of the Building Control Act and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations," he said.

He also emphasised concerns about whether the views of local residents have been fully considered.

"The construction of a condominium requires a transparent public hearing process," Mr Natthakrit noted.

"The investigation into these issues is still ongoing," he added.

The meeting also reviewed the appeal by Nopparot Piriyahtawittham

and Prawit Sinsaophak for the return of revoked land ownership rights for plots registered under NorSor 3 Kor documents Nos. 1363, 1364 and 1365, which was discussed.

Phuket Provincial Land Chief Phirayot Srisuwan, declined to provide details on the case, stating that he has assigned the Thalang Land Office – which Mr Phirayot oversees – to handle the matter.

"The case is now under review by the Thalang Land Office," he said.

"The office is currently assessing legal procedures and potential solutions," he added, declining to com-

ment on the case any further.

Ministry of Interior Chief Inspector Mr Supoj emphasised the importance of conducting thorough investigations based on legal frameworks and ensuring public interests are protected.

He stressed that all agencies must operate with transparency to ensure fairness for all parties involved.

## ASSURANCE

Rakkiat Deetphin, a policy specialist at the Phuket office of the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning (DPT Phuket), assured *The Phuket News* that the Siamese Bangtao projects did not fall under the category of high-rise or extra-large buildings,

Mr Rakkiat said that the investigation confirmed that both condominium projects are located on land designated as 'yellow zone' low-density residential areas, as defined by DPT Phuket regulations.

"The construction of condominiums is permitted

in this area, and the projects do not meet the criteria for extra-large buildings as outlined in Ministerial Regulation No. 33 (1992)," he said.

"By law, a building is considered extra-large if its total area exceeds 10,000 square metres. The inspection found that each building in the project does not exceed," he added.

Furthermore, the projects have not yet begun construction, with the land currently fenced off, Mr Rakkiat said.

"They remain in the process of obtaining approval for their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report from the EIA Report Review Committee within Phuket's Environmental Protection Area," he explained.

"The projects have also yet to receive a building permit from the Cherng Talay Or-BorTor," he noted.

"During the meeting, representatives of the Erawana Company acknowledged the explanations provided by officials and raised no objections," Mr Rakkiat concluded.

## Officials review road-safety strategies

THE PHUKET ROAD SAFETY CENTER has held a workshop aimed at analysing the causes of road accidents to reduce risk factors and enhance road safety across the province

The event, held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 4, was titled 'Techniques for Analysing Causes of Road Accidents According to Risk Factors'.

Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong presided over the workshop, while Sopon Thongsai, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM Phuket) and Secretary-General of the Phuket Road Safety Center Committee, provided an overview of the objectives.

In his opening address, Vice Governor Adul emphasised that road accidents pose a serious threat to lives, property and economic growth, particularly in Phuket, where tourism is a key industry.

He stressed the need for continuous preventive measures based on precise data to address risks in different areas.

By fostering collaboration among provincial, district, and local safety agencies, officials aim to systematically implement accident prevention and reduction strategies, he said.

The workshop was designed to equip participants with analytical techniques to assess accident causes related to human behaviour, vehicles, road conditions and environmental factors.

The event featured expert-led sessions on key topics, including:

- 'Support for Road Accident Cause Analysis from the Roles of Police and Hospitals' – presented by Pol Col Jirasak



Photo: PR Phuket

Siemsak, Deputy Commander of Phuket Provincial Police, and Lt Col Rattakorn Paenduang, Public Health Specialist at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

- 'Causes of Road Accidents, Elements of Driving, and Accident Prediction' – conducted by instructors from the Honda Safety Driving Center in Phuket.

- 'Vehicles, Blind Spots and Accident Analysis from Sample Cases' – also led by experts from the Honda Safety Driving Center.

Additionally, group training sessions were held where participants analysed real-world accident scenarios and presented their findings.

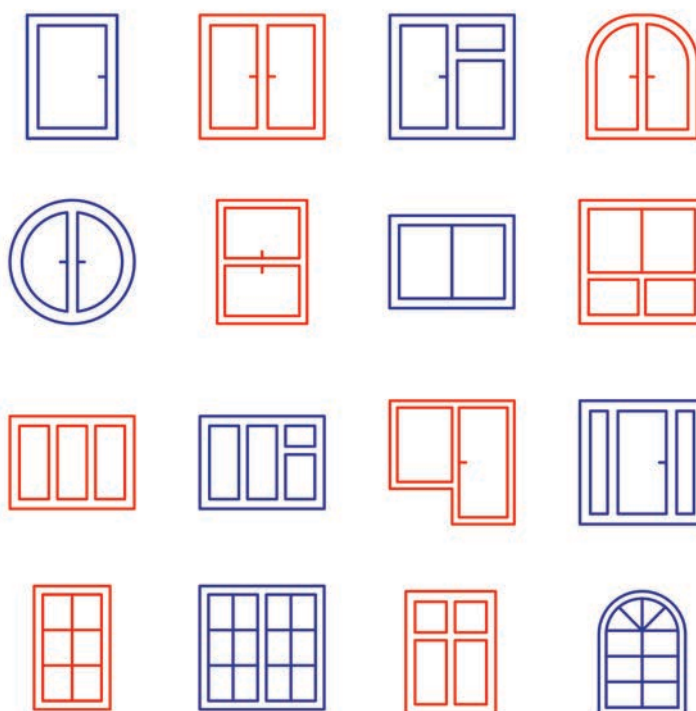
The training initiative is expected to enhance the capabilities of officials from all three districts in Phuket in conducting accurate accident analyses and implementing effective prevention measures, said an official report of the event.

According to national road-safety agency ThaiRSC, as of Tuesday (Mar 11) 16 people had died and 6,745 had been injured in road accidents in Phuket so far this year.

Last year, 147 people were killed in road accidents in Phuket and a staggering 25,968 people were injured, ThaiRSC reports. *The Phuket News*



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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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FRI MARCH 14

High: +36°  
Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT MARCH 15

High: +36°  
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN MARCH 16

High: +35°  
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

MON MARCH 17

High: +35°  
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE MARCH 18

High: +35°  
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED MARCH 19

High: +37°  
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 20

High: +36°  
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

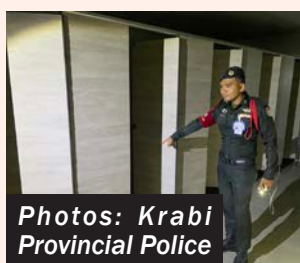
## British man arrested at Krabi airport with 37kg of cannabis

A BRITISH NATIONAL has been arrested at Krabi International Airport after authorities discovered more than 34 kilograms of cannabis concealed in suitcases, officials have confirmed.

Krabi Provincial Police reported that the incident unfolded at about 11:50pm last Saturday (Mar 8) when airport staff found a suspicious bag hidden in the men's bathroom on the upper floor of the International Departures Terminal.

Upon arrival, officers found a blue, wheeled suitcase containing many packages. Airport customs officials, using X-ray screening in the Arrivals Terminal, revealed 35 packages of cannabis flower buds of various strains.

The drugs were packed in double-layer vacuum-sealed bags, likely to prevent odour detection, with the total weight – including packaging – amounting to 37.84 kilograms, police reported. The packages were packed into two suitcases.



Photos: Krabi Provincial Police

Following the discovery, authorities arrested the suspect (name withheld at the request of police), on charges related to drug trafficking and customs violations.

Police confirmed that the man was charged under several sections of Thai law, including attempting to export goods not cleared by customs, violating the Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicine Wisdom Act, and breaching regulations on controlled herbs under the Ministry of Public Health's directives.

The seized drugs and related evidence were handed over to investigators at Nuea Khlong Police Station for further legal proceedings.

At last report, the case remained under investigation. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

## Passport forgeries land jail sentences

The Phuket News  
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Phuket Provincial Court has issued a verdict in six criminal cases involving Afghan and Kazakh nationals charged with passport forgery and related offenses.

The ruling was delivered on Mar 5, addressing cases numbered Tor 144/2568 to Tor 149/2568, with the Phuket Provincial Public Prosecutor as the plaintiff.

The defendants were charged with forging passports, using forged passports and providing false information to officials in an attempt to deceive immigration officers and the public.

The court found the defendants guilty as charged.

In cases No. Tor 144/2568 and Tor 146/2568, the defendants received a four-year prison sentence, later reduced to two years due to mitigating circumstances, including their confession.

Similarly, in cases No. Tor 145/2568 and Tor 147/2568 to Tor 149/2568, the defendants were sentenced to two years, reduced



Photo: Phuket Airport Immigration / file

to one year in prison without suspension.

The case stemmed from the arrest of five Afghan tourists who presented forged Kazakh passports to immigration officers at Phuket International Airport in an attempt to enter Thailand in December.

Their forged passports were designed to closely resemble legitimate passports. The sentencing follows the arrest of three men and one woman – all initially reported as Afghan nationals – at Phuket Airport's International Arrivals Hall on Dec 10.

Officers took them to Sakhu Police Station, where they were charged with using or possessing a forged passport.

Photos of the arrests posted online by immigration officials showed five seized Kazakh passports, though only four individuals were initially reported arrested. Authorities did not clarify the discrepancy.

Those arrests came just one day after two men – both reported as Afghan nationals – were apprehended at the airport's International Departures Hall on Dec 9 while attempting to leave Thailand and using forged Kazakh passports.

Identified as Abdul Bashir Kawoskgar, 24, and Mustafa Ahadi, 20, the two men were trying to board Bangkok Airways flight PG276 to catch a connecting flight to Milan, Italy.

## Canadian, 80, dies from heat

POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING the death of an 80-year-old Canadian woman whose body was found dead at Kata Beach last week.

Pol Lt Col M.L. Sanya Suksawat, Deputy Chief of Investigation at Karon Police, was called at about 1:20pm on Mar 5 by a lifeguard who discovered the body near the Karon Municipality Office.

Police arrived to find a crowd of onlookers had gathered around the site.

The deceased was found dressed in a swimsuit, lying face down on a beach towel on the sand. The woman's red sandals were still by her feet and her black waist bag was still beside her head.

Officers noted that the deceased had red rashes on her back and legs. However, an initial examination found no



Photo: Karon Police

signs of a struggle or physical assault.

Police later revealed that the woman was 80 years old and a Canadian citizen. She had checked into her hotel on Mar 3, and was to check out on Mar 6. CCTV showed her leaving her hotel at 10:23am. She asked for directions and appeared normal.

Doctors estimated her time of death four to six hours before discovery, and after a preliminary deemed that the woman most likely died from heatstroke.

Her body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for post-mortem examination. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

## Good Samaritans attacked

PATONG POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING an altercation on Bangla Rd, where a group of transgender women allegedly attacked two Thai women. When foreign tourists then intervened to stop the assault, they too became victims of the violence.

The incident was brought to public attention through a video shared by Facebook user Sudjat Palat. The footage, lasting 29 seconds, shows three transgender individuals chasing a male foreign tourist. The video quickly gained traction online, sparking heated debate among netizens about the behaviour of both the attackers and the tourists.

The attack occurred at about 5:15am on Mar 5, said Pol Lt Col Pongpipat Khamchumphu of the Patong Police.

Officers received reports of a fight involving an Israeli tourist, two Thai women and a group of transgender individuals.



Screenshot: Sudjat Palat / Facebook

Police identified some of the alleged attackers as Suwicha Maisen, 20, Aphisit Nuikaew, 28, and Siwaphum Michan, 29, along with one or two others whose identities remain unknown.

The investigation revealed that the group had initially assaulted two Thai women, Wilaiporn Vomontree, 21, and Sunisa Thongmon, 23.

Israeli tourists Nathan Serebrinsky and Ofir Tsimihi attempted to intervene but were subsequently drawn into a scuffle, resulting in injuries to both parties.

Officers are now working to track down the remaining suspects and bring them to justice, Patong Police reported. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

# Ronnarong recognised for work

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Phuket Vice Governor Ronnarong Thipsiri has been promoted to the position of Deputy Director-General of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA).

The promotion was announced following an order issued by the Ministry of Interior on Mar 4.

Mr Ronnarong travelled to Bangkok last Friday (Mar 7) to prepare for his new role, which he will officially begin on Monday (Mar 10).

At the time of Mr Ronnarong's transfer, *The Phuket News* was told that his replacement has not yet been announced.

Also, neither of the other two Phuket Vice Governors, Adul Chuthong and Samawit Suphanphai, had been ordered to transfer.

Mr Ronnarong expressed his gratitude to the new position that he received.

"I am delighted and grateful for the trust my superiors have placed in me by assigning me to this position," he told *The Phuket News*.

"In the past, it depended on the judgment of my superiors.



Ronnarong Thipsiri. Photo: PR Phuket

Being a Vice Governor of Phuket was something I never asked for. When my superiors saw that I should take on the role of Vice Governor, I accepted," he explained.

"And when they ordered me to return and help work at DOPA, I was happy to go back and do that again," he continued.

"However, no matter where I work or what position I hold, I work for the people and for the country," he added.

Mr Ronnarong arrived in Phuket on Oct 1 last year. Before coming to Phuket, he was previously Inspector-General of the DOPA.

During his brief tenure of just over five months in Phuket, Mr Ronnarong was actively involved in addressing several major cases affecting the province.

His efforts have included overseeing an investigation of a teacher accused in a kindergarten beating case, leading inspections of commercial fishing boats to combat human trafficking and confirming corruption charges against three Phuket mayors.

Reflecting on his albeit short term as a Vice Governor of Phuket, Mr Ronnarong, said, "I have come to realise that Phuket is a wonderful place to live. The locals are kind-hearted people.

"The area of the province is small, and the land is limited. There are only three districts, with a population of about 400,000 registered households. However, there are hundreds of thousands of unregistered people, which makes the issues more complicated.

"Nonetheless, the people of Phuket continue to help one another within the province, which I am impressed by," he said.

In addressing key issues affecting people on the island, Mr Ronnarong noted, "What has impressed me the most is the way the private sector, public sector and various government agencies

come together in cooperation to resolve the issues.

"In the future, there may be an opportunity for me to return to Phuket as the Deputy Director-General of the DOPA to work and help take care of the province to make it better," he added.

"When you consider the number of officials in Phuket responsible for law enforcement compared with the total population, including the hidden population, tourists, migrant workers and those who come seeking both legal and illegal benefits, the situation becomes complex.

"If I receive complaints or coordination requests from Phuket, I may be able to step in and address this matter, since I have gained a clearer understanding of the complex problems currently facing Phuket," Mr Ronnarong noted.

Mr Ronnarong said he had no idea why his term as Vice Governor was so brief, as most Vice Governor postings are for at least one year, usually a full two years.

"In this case, three Deputy Director-General positions at DOPA were vacant. The commander made the decision and selected the most suitable people to oversee and support the department's operations," Mr Ronnarong said.

## Vachira advances weight loss surgery, care for obese, disabled patients

VACHIRA PHUKET Hospital, the main government hospital on the island, has announced significant progress in weight loss surgery and care for obese and disabled patients, with hospital director Dr Wirasak Lothongkam reaffirming the facility's commitment to becoming a "world-class medical centre".

"Obesity remains a growing public health concern in Thailand, with statistics indicating that one in 10 Thais is overweight," Dr Wirasak said.

"This condition can lead to both physical and mental health issues, including knee and back pain, sleep apnea, diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

"Additionally, obesity can impact mental well-being, leading to discrimination, reduced economic opportunities and depression," he added.

Treatment options for obesity range from dietary and exercise interventions to medication and surgery.

For patients with severe obesity, weight loss surgery



remains the most effective solution. These procedures, which either reduce stomach size or alter nutrient absorption, have shown long-term success in maintaining weight loss, Dr Wirasak explained.

"Since 2015, Vachira Phuket Hospital has been at the forefront of weight loss treatment with its 'Endoscopic Bariatric Surgery' program. Over the past decade, more than 3,400 patients have received care from the hospital's multidisciplinary team, which includes surgeons, endocrinologists, nutritionists, psychiatrists, anesthesiologists and physical therapists," he said.

The hospital's excellence in bariatric surgery has been recognised by the US-based Surgical Review Corporation, which has certified Vachira Phuket Hospital as a

centre of excellence. The certification underscores the hospital's adherence to international standards of safety and quality in obesity treatment, Dr Wirasak noted.

"The recognition is a crucial step toward positioning Vachira Phuket Hospital as a leading institution in medical tourism and aligns with the Phuket Provincial Health Strategy 2023-2027. The strategy focuses on transforming Phuket into a hub for universal health and high-value medical services," he added.

Looking ahead, Vachira Phuket Hospital remains dedicated to improving medical services, increasing treatment accessibility for obese and disabled patients, and further enhancing its status as a globally recognised medical center, Dr Wirasak concluded.

*The Phuket News*



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## MoT scuppers plan to transfer airports to AoT

THE MINISTRY OF Transport has made a U-turn on an earlier decision to hand over all state-run airports across the country to the Airports of Thailand Plc.

Deputy Transport Minister Manaporn Chroensri said in a recent exclusive interview with Daily News that the Department of Airports, which is under her supervision, decided to keep local airports with the agency, instead of transferring them in phases to AoT.

A department official last Friday (Mar 7) confirmed to the *Bangkok Post* the statement attributed to the deputy minister the day before.

The move is a complete reversal of a policy that called for AoT to ultimately take full control of 28 out of 29 airports now under the administration of the department.

The transfer was to start with airports in Krabi, Udon Thani and Buri Ram. The government led by then-prime minister Prayut Chan-o-cha agreed in principle on the change at a Cabinet meeting on Aug 30, 2023.



**Nakhon Sri Thammarat airport was among the airports to be handed over.**  
Photo: Bangkok Post

Mae Sot airport in Tak province was not on the transfer list.

The Transport Ministry at the time was controlled by the Bhumjaithai Party but it is now overseen by the Pheu Thai Party.

Ms Manaporn said keeping all provincial airports under full state control would benefit the country as they could promote the local economy and tourism. But the department needed to seek better ways to develop them to ensure they could stand on their own feet financially rather than relying on aid from taxpayers.

The department suffered B80 million in losses from operating the 29 airports in the fiscal year 2024.

*Bangkok Post*

# PM sets out tourism vision at ITB Berlin

*Bangkok Post*

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra outlined a vision to promote Thailand as a world-class tourism destination at a global travel trade show in Berlin last week.

PM Paetongtarn reaffirmed the government's commitment to sustainable tourism, improving infrastructure, promoting the country's soft power and ensuring visitors' safety.

PM Paetongtarn made the remarks during a keynote speech at the Amazing Thailand Networking Event, organised as part of the Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin 2025 (ITB Berlin 2025) event at CityCube in the German capital.

Government spokesman Jirayu Houngsub summarised the key points. He said the year 2025 has been designated as 'Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism & Sports Year 2025' as



Photo: Government House

tourism is one of the key strategies to drive the country's economic growth.

Ms Paetongtarn said last year, the government boosted GDP through tourism as the number of foreign visitors exceeded the target of 35 million, generating more than €47.4 billion (B1.7 trillion), or about 15% of GDP.

She said the government aims to attract 39 million international visitors this year and generate €98bn (B3,565trn), with the num-

ber of visitors from Europe projected at 10.6mn, bringing some €24.2 billion (B880.44bn).

In light of this, the government has devised measures to achieve these goals through the Thailand Tourism vision of upgrading Thailand as a world-class tourism destination. They include boosting tourist convenience by improving visa procedures and visa exemptions for visitors from 93 countries and territories.

The government also

wanted to ensure tourist safety. Emergency response measures had been devised to help tourists at various tourist spots.

The PM added that infrastructure development is another strategy to boost tourism. The government seeks to develop Thailand into a regional aviation hub to accommodate 250mn passengers annually.

This requires expanding Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports, upgrading U-Tapao, Phuket and Chiang Mai airports, and building new airports, including Andaman and Lanna airports, she said.

The government was also committed to promoting soft power by making the most of local wisdom with the support of innovation and highly skilled workers to add value to Thai products and services.

The prime minister also stressed the importance of making Thailand a global medical hub and boosting eco-tourism.

## Phuket top tourism earner

THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND Sports has revealed the top 10 provinces in Thailand that generated the highest revenue from tourism in 2024. Phuket leads the list, bringing in B497.5 billion.

The news was confirmed in an infographic posted by the Phuket branch of the Public relations Department (PR Phuket) on Monday night (Mar 10).

Chonburi, home to the popular beach town of Pattaya, followed in second place with B316.8bn. Surat Thani, which includes the island destinations of Koh Samui and Koh Pha-ngan, ranked third with B119.1bn.

Other provinces in the top 10 included the highly promoted Chiang Mai (B103.8bn), followed by Krabi (B91bn), and Prachuap Khiri Khan (B51.7bn), which



is home to the resort town of Hua Hin, popular as a getaway destination for people living in Bangkok.

The list is rounded out by Phang Nga (B50.9bn), Songkhla (B50.3bn), Chiang Rai (B46.2bn), and Rayong (B36.4bn).

*The Phuket News*

# Where to eat in PHUKET

March/April 2025 issue

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# 'Joe Ferrari' death raises doubts

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Relatives of Pol Col Thitisan 'Joe Ferrari' Utthanaphon say they do not believe he committed suicide by hanging himself in prison and have asked to keep his body for a post-mortem examination to uncover the truth.

Thitisan, 43, a police officer convicted for the torture and killing of a drug suspect in 2021, was found hanged in his cell at Klong Prem Central Prison in Bangkok last Friday night (Mar 7).

The Department of Corrections (DoC) issued a statement the following day confirming prison officials were notified of an inmate's death at 8:50pm on Friday. The prisoner was found sitting against his cell door with "bruised fingers and no pulse," the statement said. A towel around his neck was tied to the cell door.

He was later identified as Thitisan, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment and had served three



The exact details relating to former cop Thitisan 'Joe Ferrari' Utthanaphon's death have yet to be determined. Photo: Bangkok Post

years and six months in Zone 5 of the prison. CCTV footage showed that no one had entered the cell, but an autopsy is being conducted to determine the exact cause of death.

On Monday, Justice Minister Tawee Sodsong ordered the DoC to publicly release the unedited full version of CCTV footage related to the prison death.

The request came as the warder who Thitisan's mother accused of bullying her son on several occasions

was transferred from Area 7 in the prison. The warder was identified as Sitthiphon Kaeo-khambong.

The transfer was made to clear the way for an investigation into Thitisan's alleged unfair treatment and the order, signed by Phadet Ringrot, acting chief of the prison, will remain effective until the facts in the allegation are known.

Minister Tawee said that a sub-committee for screening possible acts of torture and enforced disappearance

has been established and tasked with examining facts about Thitisan's death.

Mr Tawee further explained that the probe into the death is split into two core parts: the actual cause of his death and the motivation behind it.

He added that the sub-committee and the Central Institute of Forensic Science are working together on these issues and the two bodies also serve as a go-between between the DoC and the family of the

dead inmate, which are in conflict over the death.

Pol Maj Gen Chetsada Suaysom, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Division, said the police would also summon DoC doctors and other officials concerned for questioning.

The Office of Police Forensic Science is examining the towel found at the scene, as well as all forensic evidence, CCTV footage, and statements given by witnesses.

### PARANOID

Five to six people, including the warder assigned to work in the same area of Thitisan's cell and a witness who rushed to help him, will be questioned, officials confirmed.

They added that Thitisan received a visit from his wife around noon last Friday and prison officers did not observe anything unusual at the time. It was disclosed that Thitisan had underlying health conditions, including an anxiety disorder for which he had been receiving treatment and medication.

His most recent

consultation with a psychiatrist was on Feb 18. Officials said that he exhibited paranoid behaviour, fearing that other inmates might assault him.

Thitisan had also been diagnosed with dyslipidemia, a cholesterol imbalance, and essential tremor, a neurological condition that causes involuntary shaking of the hands.

However, his relatives do not believe he took his own life, claiming he was previously assaulted by a prison official while in detention.

His mother said that in January, Thitisan said he saw another prisoner watch pornography on a mobile phone, which violated prison rules, and when he reported the incident to a prison official, the official scolded and attacked him, accusing him of insubordination.

She said the incident had a severe impact on Thitisan's mental health, worsening his illnesses.

The DoC on Monday issued a second statement insisting there was no foul play in Thitisan's death, as speculated.

## Thai ministers plan China trip to check on Uyghurs

### BANGKOK

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER Phumtham Wechayachai says he and Justice Minister Tawee Sodsong will visit the Xinjiang region of China on Mar 18 to check on the condition of the 40 Uyghurs who were deported there after 11 years in detention in Thailand.

Mr Phumtham also repeated the government's position that no country other than China wanted the detainees and its repatriation of the Uyghurs to China on Feb 27 adhered strictly to legal requirements, despite the decision drawing widespread international criticism.

While the Thai government has maintained that no country offered to take the detainees, Reuters reported on Mar 5 that over the past decade, Canada, the United States and Australia had approached Thailand about doing so. However, Thai authorities did not act on the requests for fear of angering China, the report said.

Mr Phumtham, who is also the defence minister, reiterated that Thailand had accommodated the Uyghurs for 11 years without major issues. The government sought assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to grant them refugee status in the first few years.



An Uyghur man (centre) is reunited with relatives in Kashgar, Xinjiang on Feb 27. Photo: Chinese Embassy Bangkok

Of the original group of about 350 who had entered Thailand illegally, about 170 were released to Turkey in July 2015, but it accepted only women, children and the elderly. About a week later, 109 – mostly men – were deported to China. Their whereabouts now are unknown. The rest were kept in immigration detention in Thailand.

### TWO OPTIONS

Mr Phumtham said he told "powerful countries" that Thailand had two options: repatriating these individuals to their country of origin or sending them to a third country willing to accept them.

However, despite expressions of sympathy for the Uyghurs, no nation had formally agreed to take them in, he said.

He explained that since China had identified these individuals as its citizens with verifiable addresses, Thailand had a legal obligation to return them. The

UNHCR, he added, never officially designated them as refugees, so they were still classified as illegal immigrants.

Mr Phumtham affirmed that the government would have never sent anyone back to China if they were likely to be tortured or harmed, adding that the Chinese government provided written assurances regarding human rights protections.

Consequently, he said, he decided, along with Pol Col Tawee and Foreign Affairs Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, to repatriate the 40 Uyghur men.

However, Phil Robertson, the Bangkok-based director of Asia Human Rights and Labour Advocates, said on Feb 28 the Thai government "has finally done the unthinkable."

He said Thailand should resign its seat on the UN Human Rights Council "to show responsibility for its outrageous and unacceptable action." Bangkok Post

## Court annuls student hairstyle restrictions

### BANGKOK

THE SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE Court has revoked a controversial 50-year-old Education Ministry regulation that severely limited the way students could style their hair.

The court's ruling, announced on Mar 5, brings to an end a highly controversial issue that had sparked spats involving teachers, students and parents.

The court ordered the annulment of a regulation the ministry issued in 1975, effective immediately, on the grounds it violated individual freedom protected by the constitution and was out of touch with a changing society.

Enforcement of the rule had a negative impact on students and was contrary to the provisions of the Child Protection Act 2003, according to the court.

The regulation set hairstyles deemed acceptable for male and female students in schools supervised by the ministry. Boys were not



Photo: Bangkok Post

allowed beards or moustaches and had to cut their hair short. Girls were not allowed to grow their hair below their ears or to wear any makeup at all.

Its purpose was to groom them to be good boys and girls for their parents and teachers and good citizens for the nation as a whole.

The regulation was based on an order issued by a ruling military junta in 1972 regarding hairstyles deemed appropriate for students.

"The order of the military regime and the ministry regulation in dispute cannot be considered as being for the utmost benefit of the students," the court said.

The court ruling means the ministry will now leave the issue of hairstyles up to individual schools. Bangkok Post

# Phuket Needs More Shady Deals



## BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel

baz\_gunner2000@yahoo.com

There's a creeping blight of 7-Elevens, Makros, SuperCheaps and Lotus's slowly eating into the leafy fabric of once pristine Phuket. We all know that.

And while it is easy to be critical of this urbanisation of what was not long ago a sleepy, heavily forested and undeveloped island, when we want a late-night bottle of milk or unhealthy sugar-laden snack, these manifestations of "progress" are used by all of us at one time or another.

However, while we all enjoy the benefits of convenient shopping, that doesn't mean these outlets have to be built without any tree cover, does it?

Trees are not just pretty window-dressing around shopping malls and domestic residences, they play a vital ecological role in many ways and are actually essential for good human health.

For example, green foliage provides vital habitat for birds and small mammals and trees cleanse the air of pollutants such as nitrogen and sulphur dioxide from industry and carbon dioxide from car exhausts.

And guess what? Convenience stores and shopping mall car parks are full of car exhaust!

Just one hundred trees can "eat" five tons of carbon dioxide in a year, so imagine how much more pleasant shopping would be with the shade and air cleansing properties of lots of nice leafy trees as part of the experience.

Trees even save money for the shop or property owner. Just three trees, strategically-placed around a house, have been shown to reduce the annual air conditioning bill by half. Think how much Mister Lotus's,



Phuket is rapidly losing its green spaces. Photo: Supplied

or Khun Big C could save by reducing the heat-trapping properties of their shopping centres through a healthy covering of trees.

Yet every Phuket shopping mall offers a virtual wasteland of blistering concrete in which to park. A few spindly saplings attempt to battle against the searing heat and establish themselves, but what happened to all the healthy mature trees that were bulldozed out of the way to build the mall in the first place? Why not build around them, or at least re-plant them once the concrete pouring boys have finished their devilish work?

### SHADY BOULEVARDS

And while we are at it, where are all Phuket's leafy parks and boulevards?

Every great city boasts such green public places where one can walk a dog, or stroll hand-in-hand with a loved one. London has Hyde Park, New York has Central Park and San Francisco has Golden Gate Park. Even congested cities like Hanoi and Delhi have shady boulevards, but where are Phuket's?

We started with almost total tree cover on this island and now there's virtually no wild forest left, just the soil-degrading monoculture of rubber and palm oil trees... and hardly any walking boulevards in sight!

Trees can even save lives as they bind the topsoil of hillside residential developments and absorb all that monsoon rainfall, then slowly release it back into the environment through transpiration.

Phuket has experienced many mudslides in heavy rains with buildings being left precariously balanced, or washed down hillsides. Last August's appalling flood disaster from the Big Buddha car park on the Nakkerd Hills which left 13 dead is just the latest in a long list of such catastrophes which have resulted from rapacious, tree-killing development, much of it illegal.

We should make substantial tree cover an integral, even legally-mandated, part of every development to save future lives and increase human happiness. This is no idle tree-huggers claim... trees really do make us happier.

Many scientific studies have shown that office workers who can see trees as they toil are more productive and get sick less often than those in enclosed environment which are barren of plant life. Prisoners and hospital patients who share their living spaces with plants and trees show accelerated rates of release for good behaviour, or recovery from illness.

It's patently obvious that humans and trees were designed to live and thrive together. So, why doesn't Phuket start practicing what it preaches in all those glossy brochures showing residential and commercial developments with abundant happy people walking around among abundant happy trees?

Thailand's beloved former King, Rama 9, was an ardent supporter of agro-forestry and tree protection, surely the very least we can do is follow his advice and save the trees for our own economic and emotional good.



## The April/May 2025 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

Distributed in resorts/hotels lobbies, in a high number of restaurants and coffee shops, plus inserted in one issue of *The Phuket News* each month, it is a great way to Talk to Phuket.

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# Selling yourself and your brand with AI

## AI EDGE

Joe Smith

**A**I has revolutionised how businesses and individuals promote themselves. Yet much AI-generated content is bland, robotic and forgettable. Why? Because too many assume they can type in a simple prompt, press a button and expect genius to emerge. That's not how to unlock AI's creative potential.

AI is the most powerful tool marketers have ever had, but it's not a magic button. To get the best results, you need smart prompts, iterative refinement and a human touch. In this column, we'll explore where AI excels, where it falls short, and how to shape its output into marketing that truly connects.

ChatGPT was originally a text generator, so we'll start with written content – web pages, emails, blogs and social posts – before exploring how AI can repurpose these into other media formats.

The best place to start using AI in marketing is brainstorming. Human marketers run out of steam after half a dozen ideas for, say, a blog. But you can instruct your LLM (large language model) to produce 50 or 100 and cherry-pick the best. It helps to specify that you want “original”, “attention-grabbing” or even “shocking” ideas for your content.



Once you've settled on an idea, don't ask AI to generate the full article immediately. Instead, instruct it to flesh out the concept first, before asking it to create the finished piece. The purpose here is two-fold. The machine will produce better results if you instruct it to reflect on its previous outputs. It also gives you the chance to iterate – to nudge your AI towards an ideal result over multiple short prompts.

You must then humanise the result. This is an indispensable skill in an AI age where authentic human voices become increasingly scarce. Review the AI's output and identify where it reveals itself as machine-generated. Giveaways of AI-generated copy include the lack of clear authorial perspective, repetition, a lack of emotion, noncom-

mittal and tentative stances and verbose output.

Ruthlessly cut these out. In your edits, apply the time-honoured rules of good writing. Be clear, concise and direct. Favour short words over long ones, the active over the passive voice and positive over negative formulations.

You can maximise the impact of your humanising efforts by focussing on a few high-value targets. Lose the bullet-points beloved of LLMs. Make bold, confident statements and remove AI's tendency to hedge. Insert your personal experience where you can.

With your written copy in hand, you can now repurpose it to create content for any other format. This is another AI superpower. AI intuitively understands the conventions and audiences of social

media, so that you can simply upload your piece and prompt: “Convert this into posts optimised for Facebook, Instagram and X.”

Then use your copy to generate pictures. Ask your AI to recommend 15 impactful images to illustrate your piece. Pick your favourite and instruct it to create a prompt for a text-to-image generator. Again, this extra step improves the output while also giving you the chance to refine the prompt. Then go ahead and copy and paste it back into the instruction box. You can further improve this output by asking your model to “perfect that image” a few times.

Ready to break into video? Apps like Synthesia and Runway ML can take your written content and convert it into clips. Upload your text into ChatGPT or Gemini and ask it to convert the text into prompts for a text-to-video generator, then paste the output back into the app.

AI-generated content can be mediocre – don't let yours be. Follow the above advice and profit from an endless trove of marketing material on a par with the best human output.

*Joe Smith is Founder of the AI consultancy 2Sigma Consultants. He studied AI at Imperial College Business School and is researching AI's effects on cognition at Lancaster University. He is author of The Optimized Marketer, a book on how to use AI to promote your business and yourself. Contact joe@2Sigmaconsultants.com.*

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### POP QUIZ

- What weather phenomenon is used to describe South Africa's multicultural diversity?
- Do dolphins and whales sleep?
- Who was the third astronaut on the Apollo 11 moon landing mission with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin?
- What in Spain is El Gordo?
- 'The First Day of Summer' annual public holiday is celebrated in which European country in April?

Answers below, centre

### Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

- Twosome
- P.D.Q.
- Finance magazine
- Kashmir clan
- Chronicle
- Madison Square Garden, e.g.
- Fill to excess
- Property conveyor
- Is a loving person
- Days \_\_\_\_
- Orinoco, e.g.
- Ridiculously incongruous
- French game
- Capital city
- Central points
- In the preceding month: abbr.
- Ready for battle
- Whisper sweet nothings
- Wild about
- "\_\_\_\_ So Vain"
- Indirect implication
- \_\_\_\_ algebra
- Degree in math?
- Mont Blanc, e.g.
- Cooperate closely
- Issuances
- Department

Down

- Narrow margin
- West Samoan monetary unit
- Freudian topics
- Aboriginal tribe
- Don't cut
- See-through wrap
- Banned apple spray
- Confined
- Secret society: var.
- "She flies with her own wings" is its motto
- Student of Seneca
- Hydroxyl compound
- .9144 meter
- Incursion
- Engaged
- Old adders

- Trace mineral
- Cowell
- World govt. in TV's "Futurama"
- African primate
- Lingering trace
- Braid
- The "U" of UHF
- Early anesthetic
- Like some memories
- Soldier's helmet, slangily
- Drawing
- Age
- Disentangle
- C2H6
- Climbing herbs
- Noted caravel
- Joins
- Bypass
- Important Indian
- "Good shot!"
- "Go ahead!"
- Homebuilder's strip
- It was introduced in 1912
- Butcher's offering
- Like pie

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:  
(1) Rainbow Nation; (2) Yes; (3) Michael Collins; (4) The Spanish Lottery  
(El Gordo means "fat one";) (5) Iceland

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

### Solutions to last week's puzzles:

AWNS TYSON SLAY

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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

**1**  
person is killed by a drunk driver every 39 minutes in the US

**5**  
times around the equator is the equivalent distance a person will walk in an average lifetime

**17**  
hours a day is the average a cat sleeps

**90**  
percent of all wine produced in the world is meant to be consumed within a year or two from when it is made – an older wine is not always better.

**5,000**  
heart transplants take place around the world annually – almost 85% of those patients live at least one year with their new heart.

Source: *Uberfacts*

## ISLAND VIEW

Dance like no one is watching – sunset at Nai Harn Beach. Photo by Sutharat Khaodee.

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket? Email it to [editor3@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:editor3@classactmedia.co.th)

## This week in history

**Mar 14, 1794**  
Eli Whitney is granted a patent for the cotton gin.

**Mar 15, 44 BC**  
The assassination of Julius Caesar takes place on the Ides of March.

**Mar 16, 1995**  
Mississippi formally ratifies the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitu-

tion, becoming the last state to approve the abolition of slavery.

**Mar 17, 1957**  
A plane crash in Cebu, Philippines, kills Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay and 24 others.

**March 18, 1922**  
In India, Mahatma Gandhi is sentenced to six years in

Mahatma Gandhi.

prison for civil disobedience, of which he serves only two.

**Mar 19, 1831**  
First documented bank heist in US history, when burglars stole \$245,000 (1831 values) from the City Bank (now Citibank) on Wall Street. Most of the money was recovered.

**Mar 20, 1956**  
Tunisia gains independence from France.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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### Phuket Business Networking - March 2025

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SUN
16 MAR

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MON
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WED
19 MAR

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22 MAR

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Michelle Mouille  
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March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025  
1 - 5 PM  
at Bangkok Hospital Phuket (1<sup>st</sup> floor)

Fundraising for Sustainable Maikhao Foundation

### Care for the SEA: Monthly Charity Expat Market

Care for the SEA (Sustainable, Environment, Awareness) Monthly Charity Expat Market. Fundraising for Sustainable Maikhao Foundation. First Market: March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, from 1-5 PM at Bangkok Hospital Phuket (1<sup>st</sup> Floor). Recycle Goods, Healthy Eats, and Expert Talks on the Topic "Tropical Diseases: Our Health, Our Planet" by Dr. Aubonphan Buppajarntham, Infectious Disease Specialist; Dr. Auraya Sinthong, Pediatrics Specialist; and Michelle Mouillé, Sustainable Maikhao Foundation Founder. To reserve a booth or donate, please call 063 078 8899 or email [Phuket.Expatcard@bgh.co.th](mailto:Phuket.Expatcard@bgh.co.th). Patrick, [Phuket.Expatcard@bgh.co.th](mailto:Phuket.Expatcard@bgh.co.th), 063 078 8899

THU
27 MAR

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FRI
4 APR



### Grow Boating Evening - April 2025

We look forward to seeing you at the April event at Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm. Drinks sponsor for the evening will be Phuket Boat Lagoon. Grow Your Boating Lifestyle with Thailand's Premier Marina. See [phuketboatlagoon.com](http://phuketboatlagoon.com) There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. Find us at [facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket/](https://facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket/)

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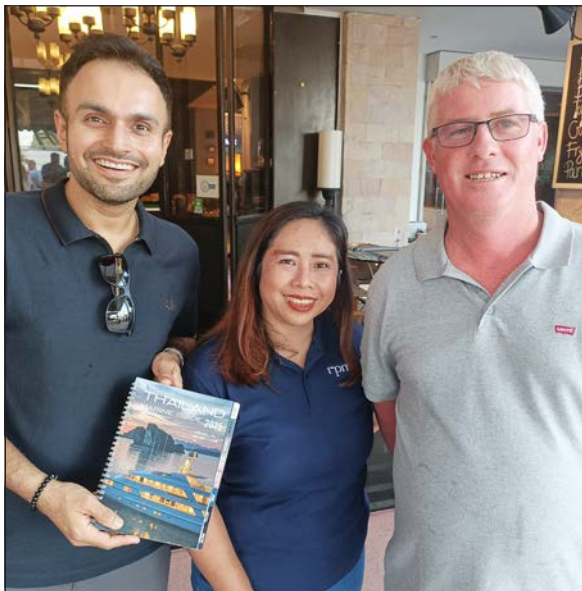
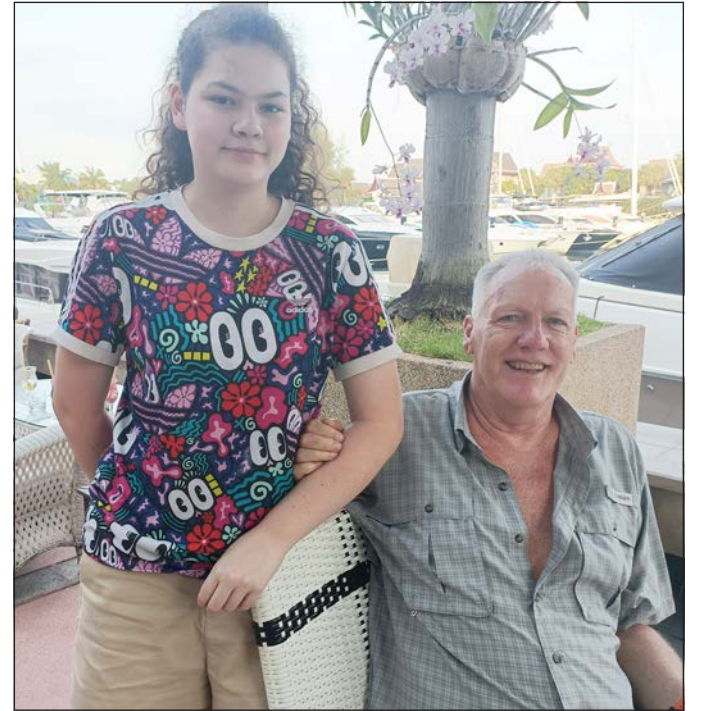
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## GROW BOATING EVENING - MARCH 2025

Once again a great evening of networking with the marine industry and others who enjoy boating at Isola restaurant at Royal Phuket Marina on Friday, March 7. There was a delicious buffet sponsored by Isola Restaurant for all attendees and drinks sponsored by Royal Phuket Marina. Come and join in the fun, at next month's event, everyone is welcome. More details at [facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket](https://facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket)



## Charity walk-run to fund student scholarships

### RUNNING

THE 'WALK-RUN FOR Our Students' event has been confirmed to take place on Sunday, Mar 23 at Phuket Wittayalai School and the surrounding area, with all proceeds going towards helping fund scholarships to enable selected students from the school to further their education.

The race is open to alumni and current students of the school as well as the general public and will be categorised as follows:

- A 3.5 kilometre Fun Run. Entry fees: 350 general public; B200 Phuket Wittayalai School students; B299 Students from other institutions.
  - A 10.5km Mini Marathon. Entry fee B400.
  - A VIP class where participants can race either distance and will receive an exclusive shirt and a commemorative medal. Entry fee: B1,000.
- Trophies will be awarded to the top five



Photo: PR Phuket

finishers in each race class as well as cash prizes as follows: B2,000 to first place; B1,000 to second place; and B500 to third place.

Komkrit Thongtan, Chairman The Phuket Wittayalai Alumni Foundation, explained at a press conference held last Saturday (Mar 8) to announce the event that since 1990 scholarships of B5,000 had been distributed to 25 students from Phuket Wittayalai School per year and 13 students had used the scholarship to study to become teachers before returning to Phuket Wittayalai School to teach.

For more information and to register visit the Soft Events website or call 081-5694042.

The Phuket News

## France close in on Six Nations

### RUGBY

AFP

France will have to seal the Six Nations title without injured talisman Antoine Dupont but last Saturday's (Mar 8) devastating display in beating Ireland 42-27 is significant according to No 8 Gregory Alldritt as it showed they can triumph in "huge matches".

The manner of how French captain Dupont suffered a suspected cruciate ligament injury in a ruck in the first-half left both Alldritt and head coach Fabien Galthie seething.

Both claimed the scrum-half widely considered to be the best player in the world was targeted by lock Tadhg Beirne, though, the referee Angus Gardner and the Irish interim head coach Simon Easterby begged to differ.

Whatever the disciplinary outcome as France have cited Beirne and prop Andrew Porter, who they also claim is responsible, the French have to beat the Scotland at home tomorrow (Mar 15) to secure the title.

They have had to make do without 28-year-old Dupont owing to injury before – for part of the pool stage of the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

However, even with his return and wearing a protective mask they slipped to a traumatic quarter-final defeat at the Stade de France to South Africa.



France were impressive against Ireland. Photo: AFP

This was one instance of what Alldritt referred to of the "huge matches" the French have lost since Galthie took over after the 2019 World Cup.

Defeat at the hands of Ireland in 2023 and last year's Six Nations hammering by the same opponents in Marseille, where Dupont was absent as he pursued his ultimately successful dream of Olympic Sevens gold, would likely fall into the same category.

An error-strewn performance in the 26-25 defeat by England last month had posed question marks over whether for all their talent they choked when the pressure was on.

This failure to deliver titles is reflected in just achieving the 2022 Grand Slam under Galthie, finishing second in the other four Six Nations campaigns.

"Before the game we were masters of our destiny," said Alldritt, who took over as skipper after Dupont's exit just before the half hour mark.

"We were getting a little fed up to fall short from time to time in huge matches.

"And I think today is a huge match," he added.

Galthie said the team responded well after the disappointment of the match against England.

"We have something good going. It is not yet achieved, but we have scored 26 tries, not counting those we have let slip.

"We have to be very humble because all that is down to work, developing it and it makes us stronger.

"For the moment, in any case, defences have trouble containing us." Scotland have been duly warned.

## LeBron breaks 50,000-point NBA scoring barrier

### BASKETBALL

LEBRON JAMES BECAME the first player in NBA history to score 50,000 career points on Mar 4, extending his lead as the league's all-time record scorer by reaching a milestone tally that may never be surpassed.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar went into the game against the New Orleans Pelicans with 49,999 regular and postseason points after a 17-point performance in his previous game, a win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

It did not take long for the 40-year-old NBA icon to get the solitary point needed to reach the 50,000-point barrier.

James, who is in dazzling form in the 22<sup>nd</sup> season of a glittering career, gathered a pass from Luka Doncic and unfurled a sublime 25-foot three-pointer to move to 50,002 points with the Crypto.com Arena crowd roaring their acclaim.

James finished with 34 points, eight rebounds as the



LeBron James (right) shoots to hit the 50,000 point mark. Photo: AFP

Lakers went on to win 136-115 – their seventh straight victory.

"I'm not going to sugarcoat it – it's a hell of a lot of points," James said afterwards.

"I'm super blessed to be able to put up that many points in my career in the best league in the world and against the best players in the world – it's pretty special."

James had passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's previous all-time regular-season scoring record of 38,387 points in 2023 – itself a record that had stood for 39 years. AFP

## South Africa targets F1 return

### FORMULA ONE

THREE DECADES AFTER Formula One engines last roared on African tarmac, South Africa is mounting a bid to organise a new Grand Prix and bring the world championship back to the continent.

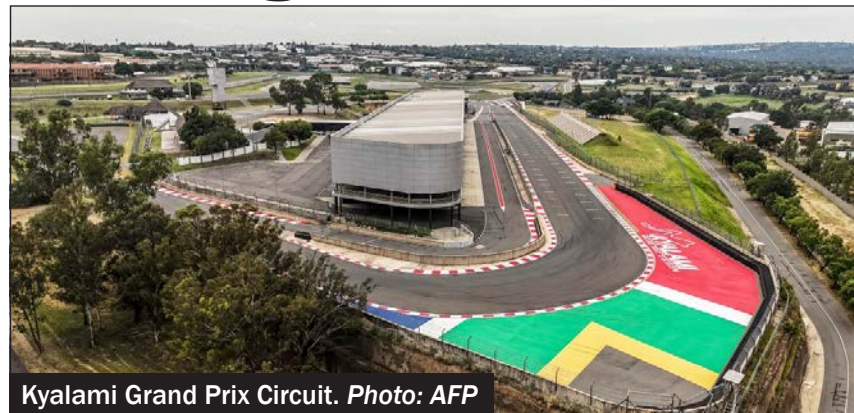
Competition to host the high-octane spectacle is between two tracks: a street circuit in Cape Town and the less picturesque but historic Kyalami race track outside of Johannesburg.

A committee set up by sports minister Gayton McKenzie will choose the winning bid in the third quarter of the year.

The challenging Kyalami circuit – which zigzags about 30 kilometres outside Johannesburg and where the track is painted with a huge, colourful South African flag – once hosted nail-biting races and legendary drivers.

However, the track is certified as Grade 2, just a level below that needed for a F1 race and it will require some work to host an event.

The alternative circuit would snake through the streets of Cape Town. Winding its way around the stadium built for the 2010 men's football World Cup in the shadow of the emblematic Lion's Head mountain overlooking the ocean, the route has already hosted a Formula E race in 2023.



Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit. Photo: AFP

The last grand prix on African soil was held in 1993, the year before South Africa's first democratic elections that ended apartheid. It was won by Alain Prost in a Williams.

The sport previously witnessed some historic moments in the country, including a threatened strike led by Niki Lauda in 1982 against a racing "super-licence" restricting drivers' contractual freedom.

South Africa also boasts the continent's only world champion, Ferrari's Jody Scheckter in 1979.

South Africa's bid to host F1 can count on the support of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who has long advocated for an African Grand Prix.

"We can't be adding races in other locations and continuing to ignore Africa," Hamilton said last August.

Creating a race on the continent would not require excluding other venues as the F1 calendar is always expanding. The upcoming season counts seven more Grand Prix than in 2009, for example.

Yet the real battle may be less between the two rival cities than against Rwanda, whose President Paul Kagame was at the Singapore Grand Prix last September to meet the sport's governing body the FIA and F1 owners Liberty Media.

The central African country already sponsors football giants Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain and is a partner of the NBA.

Rwanda's F1 bid, however, could be hampered by its involvement in the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Already calls are mounting to withdraw the cycling Road World Championships, planned in Kigali in September. AFP

# Liverpool in cruise control

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Premier League leaders Liverpool needed two Mohamed Salah penalties to beat bottom-of-the-table Southampton 3-1 last Saturday (Mar 8) to stretch their lead at the top to a massive 15 points, despite a lethargic first 45 minutes.

Southampton have taken just nine points from 28 games all season, but stunned Anfield when Will Smallbone fired the visitors in front in first-half stoppage time.

Liverpool boss Arne Slot made three changes at half-time, introducing Harvey Elliott, Alexis MacAllister and Andy Robertson and the changes had the desired effect with two goals in three minutes before the hour mark.

Darwin Nunez levelled before he was then upended inside the area and Salah converted from the spot.

The Egyptian slotted home a second penalty two minutes from time to take his tally for the season to 32 goals.

It now appears more a matter of when not if Liverpool will clinch just their second league title in 35 years after second-placed Arsenal were held to a 1-1 by Manchester United on Sunday.

United captain Bruno Fernandes put the hosts ahead with a superb free-kick in first half stoppage-time before Declan Rice's clinical finish from just inside the United area hauled Arsenal level in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute.



Mo Salah celebrates. Photo: AFP

Nottingham Forest took a giant step towards the Champions League with a 1-0 win over Manchester City.

Forest pulled four points clear of City in third thanks to Callum Hudson-Odoi's late winner at the City Ground.

Two-time European champions, Forest have not experienced the continent's top competition since 1980.

But they are closing in on the Champions League with a top-five finish almost certain to be enough thanks to the strong performance of English teams in Europe this season.

City remain fourth and are looking over their shoulders after a ninth league defeat of the season.

At Stamford Bridge, Marc Cucurella struck with a long-range rocket in the second half as Chelsea beat Leicester 1-0 to move above

Manchester City into fourth place, while Newcastle defeated West Ham 1-0.

Aston Villa closed to within two points of the top four as Ollie Watkins came back to haunt Brentford once more in a 1-0 win in west London, and Brighton boosted their own Champions League hopes courtesy of Joao Pedro's 98<sup>th</sup> minute penalty to beat Fulham 2-1.

Crystal Palace climbed up to 11<sup>th</sup> after beating Ipswich 1-0 thanks to Ismaila Sarr's winner, the Eagles' ninth win in their last 11 games in all competitions.

Wolves edged six points clear of the relegation zone after a 1-1 draw against Everton. Marshall Munetsi cancelled out Jack Harrison's opener for the visitors at Molineux as Everton extended their unbeaten league run to eight games.

# FAT chief meets with FIFA top brass

## FOOTBALL

NUALPHAN LAMSAM, president of the Football Association of Thailand (FAT), met with FIFA president Gianni Infantino and secretary general Mattias Grafstrom at the headquarters of the world governing body in Zurich, Switzerland on Mar 5 to discuss various issues for the development of Thai football.

"I am very pleased to meet with the president of the Football Association of Thailand Ms Nualphan Lamsam," said Infantino.

"The Thai national team have been successful under her leadership and we [FIFA] are very happy to provide guidance to young boys and girls in her beautiful country to know about football," he added.

Ms Nualphan had also met with Infantino in Doha, Qatar, during the 2024 Fifa Intercontinental Cup final match between Spain's Real Madrid and Mexico's Pachuca in December last year.

She has also been invited to attend the Club



Nualphan (left) and Infantino in Zurich. Photo: Bangkok Post

World Cup, which will be held in the United States from June 14 to July 13 this year.

Meanwhile, the FAT has announced the cancellation of the domestic U23 League.

The association will organise a U21 competition instead on the same lines as in England starting next season.

The FAT will also change the quota of foreign and ASEAN players to five-plus-two per match in Thai League 1 next season.

"Allowing more players in a Thai League 1 game could have an impact on the national team, so we have decided to use this criteria in the next season on a trial basis," Ms Nualphan explained. *Bangkok Post*

# PAFC still toiling on pitch despite investment boost

## FOOTBALL

WHILE NEWS OF FRESH investment into the club was a timely boost for Phuket Andaman FC (PAFC), on the pitch their struggles remain following a tense 0-0 draw at home against Krabi FC last Saturday (Mar 8).

Amidst a battle against relegation, PAFC have confirmed the arrival of a new investor, Khun Chanon Vanichvarakij. While the exact financial details of the investment remain undisclosed, Khun "Che" brings valuable business acumen and a network of connections through his senior role at Bangkok-based Cosmo Acrylics.

The extent of his influence and the specific contacts he brings to the club are yet to be fully revealed, but the investment itself signals a vote of confidence in the club's future.

This injection of support comes at a critical juncture, as PAFC fight to retain their T3 status. The club also recently announced that their U23 academy initiative is nearing capacity, demonstrating a commitment to developing young talent and building a sustainable future as well as increased revenue from academy fees.

On the pitch, however, the team is struggling. The 0-0 draw against Krabi



FC was a tense and cagey affair, with both sides displaying a mix of nerves and attacking intent. PAFC had the better chances in the first half, with a shot deflecting off the bar and a diving header forcing a good save from the Krabi keeper.

In the second half, Phuket keeper Anawin 'Bee' Rodthanon was called upon to make several crucial saves to keep the scores level.

The draw does little to alleviate PAFC's precarious position in the league. They remain just three points ahead of bottom club Yala City, who have a game in hand.

The coming weeks will be crucial in determining PAFC's immediate fate, and whether the new investment is in vain or is building a solid foundation for the future.

With no wins in this leg of the season, some have speculated that the team has simply forgotten how to win. Perhaps the hypothesis is right; they simply do not know how to win anymore. *Simon Causton*

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# Sport

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**PAFC stuck in relegation scrap > p15**



Buriram International Circuit may have hosted its final MotoGP race amidst rumours the government is prepared to scrap the event. Photo: AFP

## MOTO GP

Bangkok Post

The government has revealed it is considering ending the contract to host the MotoGP Grand Prix if the race is found to be not worth investing in.

The reports surfaced amid a growing rift between the Pheu Thai and Bhumjaithai parties – the main members of the ruling coalition.

The race has been held at Chang International Circuit in Buriram since 2018. The northeastern province is known to be the political stronghold of the Bhumjaithai Party.

Pheu Thai and Bhumjaithai have clashed over several key issues in recent months, including the size of the majority required to pass the charter amendment referendum, the proposal to establish casino-entertainment

complexes in the country, as well as the push to amend Section 256 of the constitution, which would pave the way for a charter rewrite.

In the wake of the reports, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said on Mar 3 that no decision has been made and that, ultimately, the decision will be based on revenues, not politics.

The PM said authorities would consider all relevant statistics pertaining to the event before deciding whether or not the contract would be extended.

“I would like everyone to consider the business aspect [of hosting the race], for instance, the income for the province and the country,” she said.

“Who owns the circuit is another matter. I prefer to consider the issue in a rational manner,” the prime minister said.

Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) Governor, Gongsak Yodmani, downplayed the reports,

saying he never told the press that the government was considering such a move.

“Officials are still discussing the issue,” he said, adding that the SAT will submit the relevant information to the government so authorities can make an informed decision.

“This year’s event set new records, with the race generating economic benefits exceeding B5 billion... as such, the competition to host the event [if the government decides to end its sponsorship] will be fierce, with many countries expected to queue up for it.”

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Reports of the government’s plan to end its sponsorship of the MotoGP Grand Prix event surfaced after politician-turned-sports-promoter Newin Chidchob took to Facebook on Mar 2 to say that he had been officially in-

formed by the SAT that the government will end the contract to host the race after next year’s event.

Unless the government changes its mind, MotoGP 2026 in Buriram would be the last event of its kind in Thailand, said Mr Newin, who is also the chairman of Chang International Circuit.

Mr Newin is widely seen as the de facto leader of the Bhumjaithai Party, which is currently locked in a dispute with Pheu Thai’s de facto leader, former PM Thaksin Shinawatra, over land ownership.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is headed by Sorawong Thienthong, a member of the Pheu Thai Party.

In his post, Mr Newin said he regretted the government’s decision to pull out of hosting the race, especially considering the economic benefits of holding the Grand Prix in the country.

“The MotoGP event cost the

government no more than B500 million a year, and private sector sponsorship brought in at least B300mn,” he said.

“But this results in the circulation of more than B5 billion, which boosts business and stimulates the economy,” he wrote.

This year’s edition of the race, officially called the 2025 PT Grand Prix of Thailand, was held between Feb 28 and Mar 2. The race, which was the opening event of the 2025 MotoGP calendar, drew about 224,624 spectators – a record for the circuit – and injected B5.04bn into the economies of Buriram and its surrounding provinces.

The government signed a deal to host the MotoGP Grand Prix at Buri Ram’s Chang International Circuit from 2018 to 2020, with an annual fee of B300mn.

The contract was extended again from 2021 until 2025, with the fee rising to B324mn annually.

## Patong hosts the Air Sea Land Phuket Sports and Music Festival 2025

### ALL SPORTS

THE POPULAR AIR SEA LAND Phuket Sports and Music Festival takes place in Patong this weekend, with tens of thousand of people expected to participate.

The four day event started yesterday (Mar 13) and runs through until Sunday, taking place at the northern area of Patong Beach near the dolphin roundabout and at Jungceylon

shopping mall at the top end of Bangla Rd.

Somewhere in the region of 15,000 to 20,000 people are expected to attend across the four days and it is estimated the event will generate approximately B120 million, organisers said.

Four principle sports will be contested, including Muay Thai, 3x3 basketball and a teqball tournament, which will all be held at Patong Beach, and a Taekwondo tournament, to be staged at Jungceylon.



Photo: Supplied

Furthermore, there will be live musical enteratinment at the end of each day’s action, to be held at Patong Beach, including artists The Toys and UrboyTJ as

well as popular DJs such as 22 Bullets, Roxy June and Tong Apollo. There will also be a wide range of stalls selling street food and refreshments, with many drinks pormotions included.

Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, president of the Sports Association of Phuket, oversaw a press conference on Feb 27 at Simon Cabaret in Patong to confirm the event. Joining him were: Surasak Kedchantuk, Deputy Governor of the Thai

Sports Promotion Department at the Ministry of Tourism and Sports; Samawit Suphanpai, Phuket Vice Governor; and Awut Nuchet, Patong deputy mayor of Patong district.

Mr Surasak explained that the event is a key part of the agency’s ‘Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year’ campaign utilising sports tourism to help generate revenue nationally. The campaign has targeted to net over B3 trillion in 2025, he said.

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