

LAEM NGA BEACH RECLAIMED FOR THE PUBLIC > PAGE 5

FALLOUT

URS FEHR FALLOUT SPURS CRACKDOWN, 33 FOREIGNERS ARRESTED IN ONE WEEK

Phuket Provincial Police Commander
Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum explains the
crackdown results so far. Photo: PR Phuket



The Phuket News
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Police across the island have arrested more than 30 people in just the first week of the campaign to crack down on foreigners breaking laws in the fallout of the Urs Fehr case, which has caused outrage has spurred officials into action.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum confirmed last Friday (Mar 8) that police arrested 33 foreigners last week. Of those, 11 were Russian nationals and five were Myanmar nationals, he said, noting those two groups account for half of those arrested.

The most common charge levied

against the foreigners was working illegally, Maj Gen Sinlert said.

The campaign came as the Phuket Provincial Police posted a message on their official Facebook page, saying, “Right now, in every area in Phuket, the police are taking offenses committed by tourists seriously. We want the people of Phuket to trust us.”

The campaign also follows Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, in response to the case involving 45-year-old Swiss expat Fehr (see page 3), publicly confirming that he had instructed the Royal Thai Police and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to step up measures to ensure foreigners comply with the laws.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior

Minister Anutin Charnvirakul warned foreigners living in Thailand to abide by the law or their visas would be revoked, while Maj Gen Sinlert said officials would consider a blacklist or visa revocation against foreigners who break the law in Phuket.

THE ARRESTS

Among the more high-profile arrests involving foreigners was that of British national Ryan Horner, 34, arrested by officials in Karon on Mar 7. He was apprehended around 4pm at the Big Buddha Temple and arrested for working illegally as a tour guide.

Russian nationals Aryna Burkevich, 26, and Yulia Fedorova, 38, were arrested at Thaiko Snake Farm

in Chalong for working illegally, as was Elena Ilina, 34, at Nak Snake Farm and Show in Wichit. In all three cases charges against the employer were not mentioned in the reports.

Russian Tatiana Zaichkina, 22, and Timur Tuktalov, 26, were arrested under a search warrant in Moo 4, Wichit, and charged with overstaying in the country since Feb 1, while Australian Carl Ken Haddad, 22, was arrested at the Nong Harn lagoon in Karon for illegal possession of diazepam, which in Thailand is classified as a Category 4 psychotropic substance.

Sakhu Police on arrested Russian national Andrei Alexandrov, 37, at a currency exchange booth near Nai Yang Beach after it was found his...

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Fehr visa revoked,
foundation to go



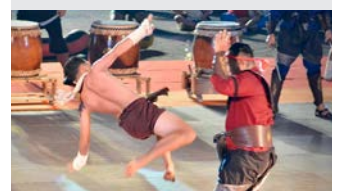
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The ‘hom’ age
of excellence



SPORT PAGE 16

Phuket MMA
fest kicks off



Lile-itTM

PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

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News



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cleared from
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NACC targets Cape Yamu estate

Eakkapop Thongtub

The Phuket office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC Phuket) has launched an investigation into the land document issued for Cape Yamu Villas to determine whether the luxury housing estate encroaches onto public land at Yamu Beach in Pa Klok.

The investigation is also to determine whether any corrupt officials were involved.

NACC Phuket Director Suwat Saowaran on Mar 5 inspected the site where the concrete steps central to the Swiss expat Urs Fehr case were demolished just one day earlier.

Joining Mr Suwat was Panya Samphaorat, Chief of the Pa Khlok Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor), and a host of other officials.

"We are investigating whether construction has encroached on a public areas, and the issuance of land title documents for the entire plot of more than 120 rai, which is known to contain approximately



Photo: PR Phuket

30-32 villas," Mr Suwat said.

"We will check to see if government officials or civil servants were involved or not, and if it is found

that in any case there are officials taking action.

"The NACC has no qualms and performs its duties according to its

authority, and is truly doing it for the people," Mr Suwat said.

"If government officials were involved and performed their du-

ties incorrectly, we will take legal action," he said.

Mr Suwat confirmed that NACC Phuket was acting on information provided by the local anti-corruption group 'STRONG Club - Sufficiency Mind Against Corruption Phuket Province'.

The group has been attributed to releasing copies of land documents for the housing development, operated by Phuket Peninsula Estate Co Ltd. Of note, the group has not publicly posted copies of the land documents on its own official Facebook page.

Reports citing the STRONG group showed land documents for the area originally covering just over 90 rai, but a later land document issued for the same plot was marked as covering 106 rai.

Mr Suwat said NACC Phuket officials were investigating the area, which he said covered 120 rai.

Pa Khlok OrBorTor Chief Mr Panya said that if the project was found to be encroaching on public land, his office will take legal action.

DOPA, OrSor brought in to assist in crackdown on 'bad foreigners'

Continued from page 1

...permit to stay expired. He was charged for overstay even though at the time of his arrest he had overstayed in the country just one day.

In Cherng Talay, police arrested British national Adam Howard-Fleming, 35, and two Myanmar men, named as Eingwe Win, 34, and Yian Nay Su, 28, and Myanmar woman Su Su Khaing, 29, for working illegally without a work permit or for performing work not listed in the work permit at the Mekka Jerk restaurant near the Bang Tao Night Market

Kathu Police arrested a 26-year-old Australian man, not named in their report, at a rented room near the Si Kor Intersection in Kathu for overstaying in the country by 34 days. The Australian was also wanted for failing to pay B178,185 in hospital fees after he was involved in a motorbike accident in January.

In Patong, police arrested a 28-year-old Romanian man, not named in their report, on Phra Metta Rd for working illegally by

selling tours to tourists.

Four Myanmar workers were arrested at the construction site of Beachfront Bliss Condo in Nai Yang. None of the workers were able to provide passports or work permits, and were charged for illegally entering the country and working illegally. The report made no mention of legal action against their employer.

The arrests continued with Russian national Denis Gai-kov, 34, arrested for working illegally at the 'Bada Bing' cannabis store in Wichit, while in Mai Khao Kazakhstan national Yekaterina Fyodorova, 50, was arrested in front of MBC Condotel for working without a work permit by "driving a vehicle for hire".

DOPA, ORSOR JOIN EFFORTS

Following orders from PM Srettha and Deputy PM Anutin, the national head of the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor) was in Phuket last week to confirm that his personnel will be assisting in the crackdown on 'influential foreigners' across Phuket.

National OrSor Director Pol Lt Col Khetrat Chansin



One Russian man was arrested in Sakhu for just one day overstay. Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

made the announcement at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 6 chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Sattha Thongkham.

Pol Lt Col Khetrat explained that the Director-General of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) had assigned a team from the OrSor to come to Phuket to follow up on the case of crackdown on influential people in Phuket

The crackdown is to "emphasise the suppression of foreign mafia, to prevent Thailand from becoming a source of money laundering", he said.

"In accordance with orders from the Prime Minister and

the Minister of Interior [Mr Srettha], we are ready to follow the progress of the investigation of the Swiss citizen who caused bodily harm to a Thai female doctor [Urs Fehr]," Pol Lt Col Khetrat said.

The objective of the campaign was "helping and curing the suffering, and maintaining happiness, for the people", he added.

"A 'field visit' found a problem that the people wanted to expedite investigation [into] and resolution [of], namely encroachment on public areas, both beach areas and all areas," he continued.

The aim of this part of the OrSor's involvement was "to

truly return the area for people to use together", Pol Lt Col Khetrat said.

Regarding the "emphasis on cracking down on influential people", the crackdown was to specifically target "especially foreigners who come to travel and do business".

"That [the crackdown] must be carried out correctly according to all aspects of the law, to prevent Phuket and all areas of Thailand from becoming a source of money laundering, of foreigners who commit illegal acts," Pol Lt Col Khetrat said.

"People should be confident that the Department of Provincial Administration and the Ministry of Interior are definitely not abandoning the people. We are asking the public to help monitor and report clues. Currently, it is an era of online communication that can be accessed quickly, and we will be able to provide timely care and assistance to the people," he said.

OrSor personnel will also be assisting with checks on Bangla Rd in Patong, Pol Lt Col Khetrat noted, as part of the policy "to suppress drugs, human trafficking and

accelerating social order".

"We are ready to support and help because Bangla and the Patong areas are considered the heart of the country and are a source of income from tourism in Thailand," he said.

Vice Governor Sattha explained that officials will continue to target businesses operated by foreigners to ensure no illegalities, including the use of nominee shareholders, (see page 6).

"The central government will work with the local government to further investigate the matter... including the issue of foreign business operations. It must be verified that the shares are actually held by foreigners and Thai people. In the correct proportion, and that there are no Thai nominees," he said.

"This is an important issue because the government does not want foreigners using Thailand as a money laundering area, and Thailand must not have foreign mafia who come to use Thailand as a source of livelihood. It must be monitored," he added.

Fehr visa revoked, faces probes

The Phuket News
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Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat has confirmed that the order has been signed to revoke Urs Fehr's permit to stay and that provincial authorities will request that the Green Elephant Wildlife foundation, registered by the 45-year-old Swiss expat, be dissolved.

Fehr has been charged with physical and mental assault after allegedly kicking Thandao Chandam, a Dibuk Hospital doctor, who was sitting on steps in front of his rented luxury villa at Yamu Beach in Pa Khlok on Feb 24.

The steps were later deemed to be on public land, spurring a protest by local residents to reclaim the beach for public use and an investigation into the estate developer for encroaching onto public land (see page 2).

Following the incident, Fehr and his wife, Khanuengnit, apologised. The Swiss said he did not kick the doctor, but slipped while approaching her, causing his foot to come into contact with her back.

NO APPEAL

Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said that he would not consider any appeal made by Fehr.

He said he would block any at-



tempt to reverse the Immigration Bureau's decision to revoke Fehr's permit to stay, widely and mistakenly called 'visas'.

"Does anyone [not] want to see his visa revoked? Not this interior minister," Mr Anutin said during a visit to Si Sa Ket last Friday (Mar 8).

Mr Fehr had 48 hours to appeal the bureau's decision, signed on Mar 6 by Pol Maj Gen Songprote Sirisukha, Commander of Immigration Division 6.

Although the bureau is under the police force, the interior minister is directly involved in permits to stay issued to foreigners living in the country.

Pol Maj Gen Songprote has said

he will be allowed to stay in Thailand on bail to defend his case in court.

However, Mr Anutin said the court case will not be used as an excuse for Mr Fehr to regain his business visa.

"The court case can continue," he said. "It has nothing to do with the visa issue."

FOUNDATION

"The Phuket provincial hall through public prosecutors will ask a court to dissolve the elephant foundation," Governor Sophon said at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall last Saturday (Mar 9) joined by Ministry of Interior Deputy Permanent Secretary Chamnanwit Terat and Phuket

Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum.

Regarding the request to dissolve the Green Elephant Wildlife Foundation, Governor Sophon said an investigation had been launched into the foundation and the Green Elephant Sanctuary Park in Cherno Talay operated by Fehr using the same logo.

"Clarification must be made within 30 days. If wrongdoing is found, legal action will be taken immediately," Gov Sophon said.

Governor Sophon also confirmed that an investigation of the land where the Fehr incident occurred is underway. Steps at the site have already been demolished as they were

found to be on public land, he said.

The Phuket News has been informed that steps in front of other villas at the luxury housing estate have also been removed.

Pa Khlok Municipality is continuing with legal action over encroachment on public land at Yamu Beach, Gov Sophon continued.

The Governor also confirmed that an order to revoke Fehr's permit to stay had already been signed. However, Fehr will be allowed to remain in the country to appeal the charge of assault against him.

Fehr has been granted bail but is not permitted to leave Phuket and must report himself to authorities every 15 days.

The Thalang District Office has revoked gun licences for a rifle and a handgun held in possession by Fehr and the foundation, Gov Sophon also confirmed.

"And in the case of suspicion of money laundering, the DSI will come to investigate on Mar 15," Gov Sophon said.

Mr Chamnanwit had emphasised to Governor Sophon to hurry to ensure that all issues related to the Fehr case "are resolved as quickly as possible", said an official report of the meeting.

"Because the Minister of Interior is looking for the peace and order that will result to help tourism to recover quickly," he said.

Villagers demand to maintain land rights at Khao Phra Thaeo

A GROUP OF VILLAGERS gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall last week to demand their rights to continue occupying their plots in the Khao Phra Thaeo Non-Hunting Area in Thalang.

The group said their demand stemmed from what they perceive as a blatant deprivation of their rights to land for farming and living.

Led by Somphak Thongkaew, the villagers on Mar 4 submitted a formal request addressed to Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat, urging for redress and protection.

The request was received by Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong, joined by Chintep Kanghae, head of the Khao Phra Thaeo Non-Hunting Area.

The Khao Phra Thaeo Non-Hunting Area is a wildlife and plant protected area under the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

Ms Somphak explained that a survey carried out by the Office of Conservation



Area Administration Region 5 in Nakhon Sri Thammarat has resulted in the redrawing of the boundaries of the Khao Phra Thaeo Non-Hunting Area, in Tambon Thepkasattri.

The new boundaries had unjustly stripped the villagers of their agricultural land rights, which were verified under a Cabinet resolution issued on June 30, 1998, she said.

Vice Governor Adul assured Ms Somphak and the accompanying villagers that the issue had been brought

to the attention of the highest levels of authority in the province.

Officials are currently conducting an inspection to ascertain the extent of the harm suffered by the villagers, he said.

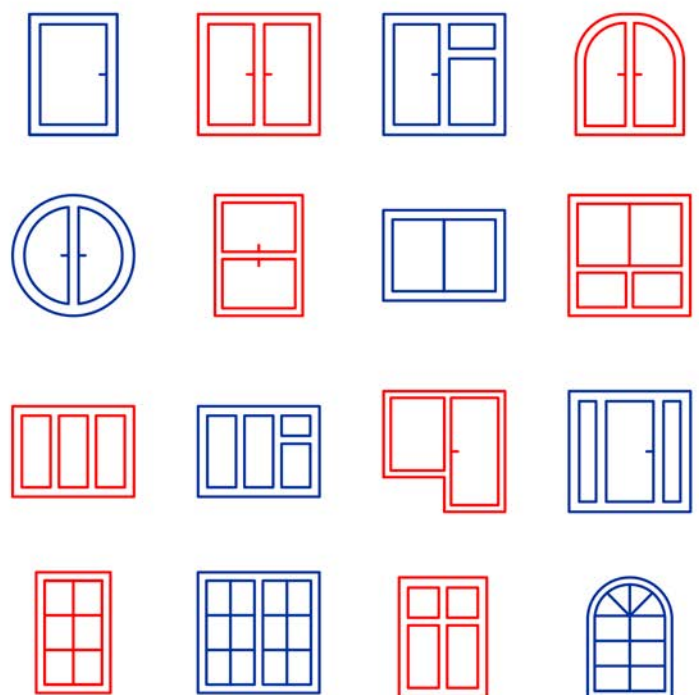
If found eligible, compensation will be provided in accordance with existing rules and laws, V/Gov Adul noted.

The villagers vowed to monitor the progress closely, hopeful for a swift resolution to their plight.

The Phuket News



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Wind 11 m/s

MON MARCH 18

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Wind 4 m/s

TUE MARCH 19

High: +36°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

WED MARCH 20

High: +36°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 21

High: +36°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

Sunbeds cleared at Laem Singh

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Kamala Police together with officials from the Kamala Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) last week removed an illegal sunbed operator from the once-popular Laem Singh Beach

Police officers led by Kamala Police Chief Pol Col Somsak Thongkhang, and joined by Kamala OrBorTor Deputy Chief Santad Khummit arrived at the beach on Mar 6 and explained to the operator that no businesses may be operated on the sand at Laem Singh as the beach has been designated a 'protected area'.

The sunbed operator, whose name and nationality not included in official reports, was reportedly "arrested and prosecuted according to law".

The sunbeds and umbrellas were ordered to be removed "immediately".

According to official reports, the operator was ordered to pay a fine at the Kamala OrBorTor offices and was warned that if they continued to violate the law, they would be prosecuted for trespassing.

Laem Singh Beach was declared a 'business-free' beach in the 'beach cleanup operation' by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) in 2014, just months after the coup of that year.

The 'cleanup operation' was to remove all illegal vendors from Phuket beaches and 're-organise' beaches to prevent operators from occupying too much space, exclusively, even



Photo: PR Phuket

when paying local municipalities, on the sands at Phuket's most popular tourist beaches.

However, Bangkok Broadcasting & TV Co Ltd (BBTV), the company that broadcasts Thai TV Channel 7, privatised access to Laem Singh Beach in July 2016 and started charging B100 per person to cross beachfront land that the company claims to own.

By April, 2017, BBTV closed off access across its land to Laem Singh Beach entirely, with the help of the Phuket Highways Office installing a barrier to prevent people from making their way to the beach.

The private company closing off access to Laem Singh Beach came with the support of Col Dusadee

Arawuit, at that time Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice; and Lt Col Prawut Wongseenin, at that time Director of the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) Bureau of Consumer Protection and Environmental Crime; and from Col Santi Sakuntanark, at that time Commander of the Royal Thai Army 25th Infantry Regiment, based in Phuket.

Col Dusadee noted, "We have been informed of this situation several times and many officers have investigated this case. At this stage we will not release any details of our investigation, but we have already found officials involved in this issue have been transferred and some people

have even died, namely [former Phuket Land Chief] Tawatchai Anukul".

"Our investigation is continuing, we are checking the SorKor 1 and NorSor 3 land deeds, and satellite images of the area. Also, this case is still being heard in court. I want to the two parties to be at peace until the court reaches its decision," he said.

Former Phuket land chief Tawatchai Anukul was found hanged in his cell at the DSI headquarters in Bangkok in 2016.

No further investigations into the land titles, upgrades and transfers he approved during his time as Chief of the Phuket Land Office, or during his tenure as Chief of the Thalang Land Office, were ever continued.

Russian women arrested for prostitution in Patong

POLICE LAST WEEK ANNOUNCED the arrest of two Russian women for prostitution at a hotel room on Phra Metta Rd in Patong.

Through an undercover officer, an appointment was made through WhatsApp to meet the women at the hotel room about 10pm on Mar 4 for the agreed service fee of B13,000 per person, plus B1,000 travel expenses.

At about 10:30pm, the undercover officer gave the signal and officers moved in to make the arrests, police said.

The women arrested were named as Anna Britousova, 19, and Olga Puchkova, 23, police explained on Mar 6.

Seized as evidence were 14 B1,000 banknotes found in Ms



Photo: Patong Police

Britousova's shoulder bag and 13 B1,000 banknotes found in Ms Puchkova's shoulder bag, and three Durex condoms that were on the bed "ready for use".

The women were taken to Patong Police Station and charged with prostitution.

The women were also to face further charges under the Immigration Act, police confirmed.

The Phuket News

Italian man in care after naked episode at temple

AN ITALIAN MAN HAS BEEN taken to hospital for care after he caused a disturbance at Wat Cherg Talay last week, stripping off and lying naked on the floor in front of a Buddha statue.

Cherg Talay Police were called to the temple at about 7:30pm on Mar 5.

The Italian man was found on the floor in front of the Buddha statue in the sermon hall. The man was naked and lying akimbo. His shirt and shorts were on the floor nearby.

Officers placed the man under protective custody and removed him from the scene.

Wongpong Saejia later arrived at Cherg Talay Police Station to file a formal complaint against the man.

Wongpong said the man went "crazy" and had damaged a microphone at the temple.

Cherg Talay Police noted they



The man was taken into care and to a hospital for treatment, police said.

were continuing their investigation.

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

Eakkapop Thongtub

the Phuket News

Laem Nga Beach reclaimed

The Phuket News
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Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat visited Laem Nga Beach, at the northern end of Koh Siray, last Sunday (Mar 10) to inspect plans to reclaim the beach for public use.

The visit followed local villagers gathering at the site last Thursday (Mar 7) to protest access to the beach being closed off by a private landowner.

The villagers called for public access to the beach to be restored. Many held up placards and shouted slogans, accusing private business operators of claiming exclusive rights to public land.

Police were present at the protest, but no violent incidents were reported.

In response, Vice Governor Sattha Thongkham invited the protesters to have representatives join discussions at Phuket Provincial Hall last Thursday. Present for the discussions were Ratsada Mayor Nakarin Yosaengrat and a host of other relevant officials.

At the meeting, the villagers present a list of demands, chiefly that the "private sector"



Photo: PR Phuket

must immediately restore access to Laem Nga Beach. The villagers also called for the private landowner to improve the path to the beach, make it clean and to install electric lighting to make the path safe to traverse at night.

The villagers also called for officials to investigate whether the land ownership and acquisition of the land was legal.

The road to the beach, 1.5km long and 10 metres wide, was a public road built by the Department of Rural Roads in 2016 and was designated Rural Road PorKor

4097, the villagers explained.

Provincial officials had previously inspected the area and negotiated with the landowner, Laem Nga Development Co Ltd, but the road was closed and no further action had proceeded, the villagers noted.

The company claimed that it owned the land that the last 468m of road to the beach was built on, the villagers explained.

Ratsada Mayor Mr Nakarin explained that he had already been in discussion with the landowner, who had agreed to reopen access to the beach within 15 days.

However, some villagers had already taken down some of the tin panels blocking the beach access, he noted.

Three days later, last Sunday, Governor Sophon inspected the beach. Joining Governor Sophon for the inspection were Saransak Srikrueaet, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA).

"Today we came to Laem Nga to inspect the area and talk with the landowner. Who have kindly opened the area to go down to the public beach," Governor Sophon said.

"However, the Phuket Provincial Office and related agencies must help take care of safety and the matter of waste management," he added.

"At the same time, the Muang Phuket District Chief and Ratsada Mayor have been assigned to organise guards to be on duty to maintain security, and organise rubbish bins and lighting at the entrance," he said.

"We are also discussing having two 'Pho Thong' buses to facilitate tourists travelling into the Laem Nga area. If the move to have Pho Thong buses provided is supported, it will make it more convenient because the road space is narrow and there is no parking," Governor Sophon explained.

"We also ask people to not set up sunbeds and umbrellas, or set up any sales outlets at all, at the beach. We want it to be a natural beach for the people of Phuket and so tourists can really experience nature," he said.

"And thank you to the owner of the area who has opened a path to be able to travel to the beach, which helps to promote tourism to the area. Many tourists came to the beach before

COVID-19," he added, noting that they will now have the opportunity to visit the beach again.

"After this there will be a Big Cleaning Day at Laem Nga, including pruning trees in the area to ensure safety for the people," Governor Sophon said.

"I would like to leave a message to the local residents and tourists who will travel to Laem Nga. Please follow the recommendations of Ratsada Municipality, which will post signs for people to observe, such as warning against littering and setting up any shops to sell things, including sunbed and beach umbrella services," he added.

"People are asked to strictly observe this so many people can come to fish and play in the water. Your children and grandchildren will be able to come to play in the water, because Laem Nga is a beach for everyone," Governor Sophon concluded.

While the Governor was at the beach, local residents came to enjoy the first day of the beach being reclaimed. Governor Sophon also joined a quick cleanup of picking up trash that had washed ashore.

Leatherback lays eggs at Mai Khao

A LEATHERBACK TURTLE nest was found buried on Mai Khao Beach on Monday (Mar 11) near where aircraft landing and taking off at Phuket International Airport pass overhead.

Turtle tracks in the sand at the site were reported to officials at 6:50am, reported the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

Officers from the 2nd Marine National Park Operations Center, under Sirinat National Park, and from the Khao Lampi-Hat Thai Mueang National Park arrived to investigate.

The tracks indicated that the turtle shell was 110cm and the turtle had a flipper span of 190cm.

The nest was found buried 60cm deep into the sand, with a nesting hole 45cm wide, officials reported.

The nest was located nearly 25 metres from the high tide mark, leading the officers to believe it was not at risk of flooding. Hence the officers decided to not relocate the eggs to a safer site.

The area was marked off protection and officers have



Photo: DNP

been assigned to watch over the nest to ensure it remains undisturbed.

The DNP did not confirm how many eggs were in the nest, but did report that the eggs were 5.45cm long, on average.

Baby leatherback turtles are expected to hatch from the eggs in about 55-60 days, some time around May 5-10.

Respected marine biologist Dr Thon Thamrongnawasawat joked on Facebook that the turtles might want to see the planes flying over-

head, too.

"Do you think you are the only ones who want to see an airplane? I want to see it!" he joked.

More seriously, Dr Thon noted that a leatherback turtle laying eggs on the beach was a good indication for the area.

"It's truly an amazing picture. A big airport with some of the world's rarest turtles laying eggs in front of the runway. Use it for good promotion," he said.

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Airlines to cut Songkran fares

SIX AIRLINES WILL ADD 104 flights and give a discount of about 20% on early morning and late night domestic flights during the Songkran holidays as an economy option for travellers, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT).

CAAT deputy director-general Sarun Benjanirut said on Monday (Mar 11) the move is in response to Transport Minister Suriya Juangruangreangkit's recent call for lower airfares during festivals to help ease the problem of expensive tickets for domestic flights.

The CAAT held a meeting on Feb 28 with six airlines – Thai Airways (THAI), Thai AirAsia, Bangkok Airways, Thai LionAir, NokAir and Thai Vietjet – to discuss the high price of airfares.

Mr Sarun said these airlines have agreed to operate 104 extra flights, which will provide 17,874 additional seats, on Apr 11, 12, 15 and 16 to destinations including Phuket, Chiang Mai, Samui, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani and Khon Kaen.

"Many of these flights



Suvarnabhumi airport packed with travellers during Songkran in April last year. Photo: Bangkok Post

will operate outside normal flight hours, either in the early morning or late at night, and so the fares will be lowered to attract travellers," he said.

The Transport Ministry predicts about 15.45 million people will travel by public transport from Apr 11-17 this year, with interprovincial buses likely to remain the favourite mode of transport.

The Cabinet has approved Apr 12 as a special government holiday, allowing a five-day break, and approved a budget of B104mn for holding the extended Maha Songkran World Water Festival with the goal of attracting over 200,000 visitors and generating B3.125 billion in revenue.

Bangkok Post

TAT survey shows marked surge in tourist spending

Bangkok Post

Foreign tourists spent more on accommodation following the pandemic and opted for street food more than fine dining, while TikTok has gained prominence among people seeking information and inspiration for trips to the nation, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

Teerasil Tapen, deputy governor for digital R&D at TAT, said an agency survey of 30,054 tourists in 2023 found individual travellers reported average spending of B50,900 per trip, increasing from B48,209 in 2019 and B44,607 in 2022.

Accommodation accounted for B23,518 per trip, rising from B18,451 prior to the pandemic and B19,235 in 2022.

Tourists preferred to stay in more luxury hotels or resorts after paying higher airfares, he said.

Mr Teerasil said meal choices also changed as the number of tourists opting for street food increased from 63% to 77.3%.



Foreigners stroll along Chatuchak weekend market. Photo: Apichart Jinakul / Bangkok Post

The affordability of street food resulted in lower expenditure on food and beverage as tourists spent B4,094 on average for this category, down from B5,875 in 2019.

"We noticed people craved street food more than before as they sought local travel experiences, while the popularity of fine dining dropped from 47.7% in 2019 to 43.2% last year," he said.

"The preference for street food helped spur tourism expenditure to [be distributed]

more local operators."

Among all nationalities, tourists from the Middle East were the biggest spenders with an average of B88,512 per trip, followed by those from Oceania (B64,860), the US (B60,474) and Europe (B59,345).

Mr Teerasil said 53.7% of individual travellers relied on online bookings via websites or apps to book their trips and services in Thailand, while travel agents or tour operators accounted for 22.6%, as

some people still prefer using services from agents, such as one-day tours or accommodation from contracts with agent companies.

The TAT's digital department requested around B180 million in the fiscal 2024 budget, and he said the agency will mainly use social media to penetrate platforms that have the potential to feed information directly to targeted tourists.

As of 2023, TAT had more than 6.4mn followers on its official Line account, while the Amazing Thailand Facebook page had 2.6mn, and X 201,456 followers.

However, the fastest growing platform in 2022-2023 was TikTok, rising 97.2% to almost 30,000 users within a year, followed by 10% growth of Instagram followers, tallying almost 200,000 users.

Mr Teerasil said the number of followers on all TAT social platforms was much higher as each global TAT office has its own channels to communicate in local languages, such as China's unique social media platforms.

Nominee search turns up 400 firms

MORE THAN 400 COMPANIES IN popular tourism cities tend to operate their businesses using nominees, according to the Business Development Department.

Auramon Supthaweethum, the department director-general, on Mar 6 said staff had carried out an inspection of firms suspected of acting as nominees for foreign corporations in major tourism provinces including Phuket, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Surat Thani and Chon Buri.

In-depth inspections were conducted on businesses in the hospitality sector, including those managing tour guides, restaurants, car rentals and hotels, and real estate.

The agency found that 419 firms may be acting as business nominees; 313 of them were ordered to submit more documents for verification.

The department is also working with the Tourism Department and the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) to check 59 firms suspected to be operating as nominees in Phuket.

One of the 59 firms is the Elephant Sanctuary Park Phuket run by Urs 'David' Fehr, 45 – a Swiss man who stirred controversy for allegedly kicking a doctor whom he accused of trespassing on his rented resort last month – and his Thai wife, Khanuengnit (see page 3).

An investigation showed the firm was registered as a tour guide business with three shareholders. Checks confirmed 51% of the shares are held between Ms Khanuengnit and another Thai, while the remaining 49% is owned by Mr Fehr. Thus,



Auramon Supthaweethum, director-general of the Business Development Department. Photo: Bangkok Post

the firm is not considered to be operating under a nominee.

The inspection followed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by the Tourism Department to resolve proxy tourism businesses through the cooperation of six agencies – the Tourism Department, the office of the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Department of Business Development, the DSI, the Tourist Police Bureau and the Immigration Bureau.

An operation centre was established at the Tourism Department to solve the proxy business problem. Also, a joint panel was up and running to design measures to elevate the standard of tourism businesses.

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Senate prepares to grill Cabinet over Thaksin

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Senate is planning to grill the Pheu-Thai-led government in a general debate on Mar 25 over its treatment of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Senator Kittisak Rattanawaraha said the grilling of the Cabinet would focus on parole granted to Thaksin by the Ministry of Justice and how the ministry allowed him to be kept in hospital detention until his release on parole.

All senators who have signed up for the debate are more than ready to question the government about its controversial handling of the Thaksin case, and none of them are afraid of facing a libel suit, Mr Kittisak said on Monday (Mar 11).

"If we let something wrong proceed without doing something about it, how can we later teach our children [about what is right and what is wrong]," he said.

Some of Thaksin's close associates have already threatened to sue anyone who brings up this matter and damages Thaksin's reputation, he said.

Mr Kittisak said a former MP has already been sued for making public a photo of Thaksin kicking a sandbag vigorously while living abroad, along with a photo of the former premier in a



Former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Photo: Bangkok Post

state where he claimed he was seriously ill after returning to Thailand.

A total of 36 senators have so far signed up to speak in the coming debate.

The Senate has been given 12 hours to conduct its debate, while three hours will be allotted to the government to defend itself against Senate allegations, said Mr Kittisak.

The Senate had actually requested two days for the debate, but the government only gave one day, said Senator Seree Suwanpanont.

And due to the time limit, the number of debaters might end up being cut if the government won't change its mind and allow the debate to be extended to two days, he said.

"This will be our last chance to

conduct a general debate, and we will try our best," he said.

The most common area of proposed debate topics is the government's alleged failure to tackle economic difficulties, said Mr Seree.

While the country has many problems to deal with, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has appeared to be enjoying a high number of overseas trips in recent months, said the senator.

Pheu Thai list-MP Visuth Chainaroon, in his capacity as government chief whip, said the government is well prepared for the Senate general debate, which will be followed by a similar general debate being sought by the opposition after the 2024 budget bill passes its second and third readings, supposedly on Mar 20.

Government intensifies fight against forest fires

BANGKOK

NATURAL RESOURCES and Environment Minister Pol Gen Patcharawat Wongsuwan on Monday (Mar 11) delivered a stern warning to those responsible for igniting forest fires, declaring those found guilty will be met with severe legal repercussions.

His comments came as he rolled out measures to combat the escalating issue and the surge in PM2.5 pollution in the North.

A key strategy involves the reassignment of forces and the introduction of a "forest closure" policy, effectively banning entry into critical forested regions to prevent fires.

The policy highlights the government's commitment to protecting these areas and holding violators accountable, outlining various approaches to firefighting, including ground surveillance, patrolling, aerial firefighting efforts and constant monitoring of hotspots to prevent the outbreak of fires.

Pol Gen Patcharawat has called for enhanced coordination between local agri-



Photo: NNT

cultural authorities and the establishment of a provincial operational center to oversee these efforts. This center, led by the provincial governor, is tasked with consolidating actions against the illegal burning of farm waste and other activities contributing to forest fires and pollution, he said.

The minister also stressed the importance of public communication and awareness regarding the dangers of PM2.5 pollution, seeking to address the dual challenges of forest fires and air quality deterioration with urgency and efficiency.

Forty-eight provinces were blanketed with hazardous levels of PM2.5 on Monday morning and 11 provinces, mostly in the North, faced red levels of pollution, with Chiang Mai suffering the most. NNT

Macaque assault victims to now receive compensation

LOP BURI

THE NATURAL RESOURCES and environment minister has ordered compensation for people affected by macaque-related incidents, following a request for reimbursement by a woman injured by a monkey in Lop Buri.

A macaque attacked and injured local woman Ari-kanta Kanchanasinmetha, in Lop Buri on Mar 6 as it attempted to take her food, leaving her with a dislocated left knee and other minor injuries.

She filed a complaint with the police seeking accountability from the authorities in the town where the monkeys are both a big tourist attraction and a big nuisance and the government has taken action to address the matter.

Pol Gen Phatcharawat Wongsuwan has directed the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation (DNP) to add



A campaign has been launched to discipline macaques in Lop Buri. Photo: Bangkok Post

macaques to its list of wild animals whose actions warrant compensation for victims, alongside elephants and gaur, which are already included.

A source said B100,000 would be paid if a victim dies or is disabled as a result of a macaque attack.

People who are injured by the monkeys will receive maximum medical reimbursement of B30,000 and compensation of B300 per day for a maximum of 180 days during which they are unable to work.

Atthapol Charoenchansa, the DNP director-general,

has instructed the department's Wildlife Conservation Office to look into other measures to reduce the risk of attacks.

He recommended installing brighter street lights, especially in areas where people are at risk of getting attacked by monkeys at night, and putting up warning signs about the risk.

The macaque population in Lop Buri was 5,709 at the end of last year, including 2,206 in the municipality, down from more than 9,000 in 2018 as a result of sterilisation campaigns.

The DNP last month launched a new campaign with local authorities to control urban macaques by disciplining, moving and sterilising them.

Mr Atthapol said at the time that cages would be set up where macaques would be trained to behave. The monkeys would be sterilised, moved to a macaque facility in tambon Pho Kao Ton and released into natural habitats.

Bangkok Post



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Memories of a 'Happy Hooker'



A MEAL WITH...

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

I recently heard the sad news that an old friend and enthusiastic Phuket visitor named Sid Carter had passed away in his English hometown of Southampton. Sid visited Phuket several times and was a great lover of the Andaman region's many charms. His passing made me reflect on the more contemplative and immersive style of tourism which Sid loved, compared with the hedonistic excess which seems to be today's norm.

I met Sid in November 2005 after I'd recently taken over the editorship of the glossy monthly 'Greater Phuket Magazine' and an early assignment saw me angling for a berth aboard one of the boats participating in the dubiously-named 'Up It' Big Game Fishing tournament, which was run annually out of the ramshackle beachside Tamarind Bar overlooking Chalong Bay.

Good fortune smiled on me, as one of a quartet of English 'Hookers' had succumbed to the charms of a local lass and abandoned his fishing chair aboard the boat they'd chartered.

So, on a blistering morning in November I took the place of the errant Lothario aboard a cruiser populated by a trio of beer-guzzling Englishmen hell-bent on emulating Ernest Hemingway's piscatorial, and possibly alcoholic, excesses.

As we cruised out to the deep Andaman waters beyond the continental shelf, I had the pleasure of meeting Sidney Carter from Southampton on England's southeast coast for the first time. He gave me a wry, understated smile, which over the years I came to recognise as a signature of Sid's wry, understated



Image: Seth Bareiss

sense of humour. He explained that the 'lads' were all passionate fishermen who'd saved all year for this trip and intended to make the most of it.

Looking about me, I realised that the lads were not really 'lads' at all, as their median age hovered somewhere in the late 50s, but what they lacked in youth they certainly made up for with their laddish banter, boyish enthusiasm and that unshakable optimism which seems to characterise followers of this particular sport.

Gentlemanly protocols had been established over morning coffee about how we would take turns to handle the rods whenever there was a strike. These were immediately forgotten as bodies were shouldered out of the way and tackle boxes went flying as soon as the first fish of the day bit.

Sid was soon in the ancient fighting chair and Pete was fighting his fish standing up, with his rod butt stuck in a very painful-looking part of his anatomy. The battle raged for about 10 minutes of sweating, pumping, swearing action, then we saw the startling silver arrows of the fish darting through the water, as firstly a very angry Wahoo, and then an even angrier

Barracuda, were pulled aboard.

The day progressed in a blur of fishy action, blazing sunshine, copious libations and enormous fun and camaraderie.

Sid and I bonded over celebratory drinks that evening in the Tamarind Bar and I learned that we had much in common in addition to our shared passion for fishing. We shared work backgrounds in the advertising and communications industries; a passion for 'slow' immersive travel and getting to know other cultures and peoples; a love of good food complemented by the occasional 'tipple'; and a love of music and in particular jazz, although it turned out that Sid was indeed a very accomplished saxophonist with his own band 'Sunflower', who were well-known around the Southampton environs.

Our friendship blossomed and over the following years Sid came and stayed with me at my beachside cottage on Chalong Bay at the appropriately-named 'Fisherman Way'. We journeyed down to Koh Lanta and stayed together in a sumptuous mountainside pool villa at Pimalai Resort overlooking the fabulous Kantiang Bay, then in little wooden fishermen's cottages out on stilts over the water in Lanta Old Town.

I also had the pleasure of staying with Sid at his house in Southampton near the lovely River Itchen, one of England's most famous trout streams. I also enjoyed Sid playing and singing at jazz gigs in Southampton's live music venues.

Whether on the deck of that chaotic heaving fishing boat off Phuket, where I first met him, or on the quiet evening terrace of his local the White Swan pub overlooking the River Itchen, Sid always struck me as a kind, gentle soul, a true 'gentleman' with all the charming old-fashioned values which that approbation conjures up. The sort of Phuket aficionado who perhaps represents a quieter, gentler type of touristic appreciation than seems to be the norm today.



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AGENTS WELCOME

'hom' is where the heart is

Joanna Matlub

To merely label hom as a restaurant would be a huge understatement; it truly is so much more. Consider it as an entire journey, which begins to unfold the moment you step into the hotel lobby. From then on, every detail was meticulously attended to with refinement and elegance.

We savoured panoramic mountain views before our short stroll toward hom, nestled within the breathtaking Sawan Pavilion. Guided through a shimmering silver walkway, delicate wisps of smoke created an enchanting cloud-like sensation. The dramatic white façade, inspired by Thai mythology, added to its heavenly allure.

The stage had been perfectly set as we ascended the steps to hom, where the ethereal setting welcomed us with intricate white and silver details. The captivating Montarop flower chandelier, known as a heavenly bloom, illuminating the ceiling art, continuing the entwined story.

The journey from source to plate is meticulously planned, prioritising ingredients from Phuket and Thailand. Menu development begins only after suitable ingredients are found, with each dish incorporating ancient fermentation techniques to elevate flavours while consistently honouring the authentic essence of each ingredient.

Chef Ricardo demonstrates his passion for discovery through innovative menus and progressive culinary practices. With experience at numerous Michelin-starred restaurants worldwide, he collaborates with his team to refine and elevate the menu's fermentation techniques.

To ignite our curiosity, only the main ingredient for each course was listed on our elegant, personalised menu cards, building anticipation for the hom experi-



Photo: hom

ence 10-moments menu. As we journeyed through, we were captivated and intrigued with creative plating, unique flavour combinations and diverse fermentation techniques.

I wish I could detail all 10 delectable moments, each impressing with unexpected flavours. However, focussing on some key highlights, the Coconut & Caviar stands out, eloquently described as both humble and extravagant. Encouraged to gently scrape young, silky coconut and combine it with smoked Hua Hin caviar, surrounded by fermented fish sauce, the mingling flavours created a delicate smoky finish, showcasing culinary finesse.

Another noteworthy moment unfolded as a huge jar of SCOBY, the mother of kombucha, set the stage for the symbiotic fermentation culture in the Oyster & SCOBY. The visually stunning course featured cured SCOBY and oysters with a red curry seasoned, deep purple wrapping. Dehydrated hand towels provided between courses allowed us to fully immerse ourselves, delicately using our hands to enhance our

connection with the complex, juicy, sweet and spicy taste sensations.

The intriguingly named Milk Skin offered Chef Ricardo's twist on Portuguese Rissóis, inventively using milk instead of flour to craft a skin filled with local fragrant black crab and fermented long beans. Served with a smooth, vibrant yellow safflower emulsion derived from the thistle-like plant's flowers. Halfway through the menu, yet another absolutely delicious moment came with the grilled local Grouper, accompanied by a spinach-mustard purée that tantalised with a distinct kick, complemented by delicate pandan foam.

The dessert finale continued the impressive culinary elevation with Smoked Custard; a rich blend of intense smoke balanced by the sweet strawberries and granita. Reluctant for the experience to end, the 10th moment, Mango Ice Cream, was a standout finish. Beyond its simple description, we discovered layers of refreshing mango ice cream, paired with miso and kaffir lime leaf-infused meringue on a white chocolate crumble. A divine conclusion to the menu experience.

A truly phenomenal journey orchestrated by the entire team, delivering an exquisite and innovative culinary adventure. Using intricate, ancient techniques and local ingredients, this dining experience creates an unexpected, refined evening for true connoisseurs seeking a genuine gastronomic journey.

hom Restaurant is located at the Sawan Pavilion, the heart of The InterContinental Phuket. Price range: More than B1,200 Best to book a table. Major credit cards accepted. Car park on site No area for smoking Free WiFi hotspot. Open Tuesday-Saturday. Dinner starts 6:30pm. Reservations: +66 966 404 526. Website: hom-restaurant.com. Facebook: homrestaurantphuket. Instagram: homrestaurant


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POP QUIZ

- Which scholar supposedly exclaimed 'Eureka'?
- Gymnophobia is the fear of what?
- What was the name of Bruce Lee's final film?
- Who wrote A Dictionary of the English Language, published on April 15, 1755?
- The silver coin 'fuppence', worth four pence, as better known by what name?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

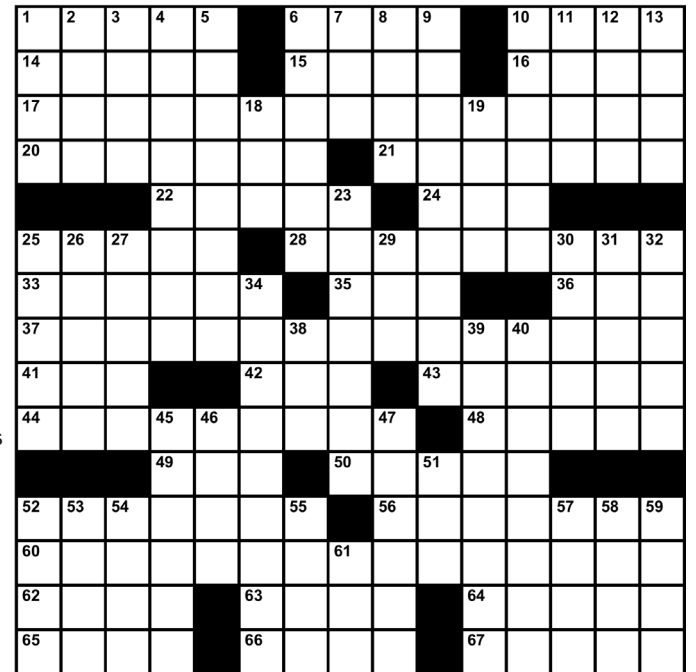
			4	6	5			
	5						2	
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	4	3	1		2	9	5	
		8	6		4	2		
8		4				3		1
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			9	3	1			

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Across | animal | 13. Capone nemesis |
| 1. Fleet | resembling a | 18. Known formerly |
| 6. Unattractive | swine | as |
| tangelo? | 52. Most frugal | 19. Cellist, to friends |
| 10. "Death in Venice" | 56. Encounter | 23. Penny, for one |
| author | 60. Gentle nature | 25. Beeped |
| 14. Saudi neighbor | 62. Cream additive | 26. Suffering |
| 15. Indian bread | 63. Piece of a | 27. Blockheads |
| 16. Instrument in a | comet? | 29. Hole goal |
| wind quintet | 64. Unstable | 30. Amount of hair |
| 17. Florence Littauer | 65. Floor it | 31. Follow |
| book | 66. Coastal raptors | 32. Irritates |
| 20. Siren | 67. English region | 34. White iron pyrites |
| 21. Resumes, in a way | with an Earl | 38. ___ Offensive |
| 22. Appears | Down | 39. Clear-cut |
| 24. Highball ingredient | 1. Climbing gear | 40. Nerve |
| 25. Treaties | 2. Call from the flock | inflammation |
| 28. Fan | 3. Hair line | 45. Storage spot |
| 33. Radiant | 4. Took a firm stand | 46. Scraped (out) |
| 35. Keep out | 5. Bishop | 47. King and Alt |
| 36. Genetic inits. | 6. Divests of | 51. Hindu month |
| 37. Easygoing quality | weapons | 52. Card game for |
| 41. Eliminate | 7. Filly | three |
| 42. Cartoon canine | 8. Burrow | 53. Fortune |
| 43. Prepares to golf | 9. Explain | 54. Celebes buffalo |
| 44. Having trouble | 10. Janitor, at times | 55. Bygone leader |
| reading | 11. Cutting the | 57. Beats by a hair |
| 48. Blends | mustard | 58. Hit the bottle |
| 49. Alias preceder | 12. It may be proper | 59. Jet black |
| 50. Endangered | | 61. Fasten |

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

- 1) Archimedes; 2) Fear of nudity; 3) 'Enter The Dragon'; 4) Samuel Johnson; 5) A Great



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

S H O P	S C A M	H A S I D	7	8	6	5	2	4	9	1	3
H E R O	L A M A	A G O R A	5	3	4	1	8	9	7	2	6
A L A R	U R I C	S A L O N	1	2	9	3	6	7	8	4	5
W I N T H	E B R A S S	R I N G	6	4	1	7	9	3	5	8	2
L O G I A	S O U L		2	7	8	4	5	6	3	9	1
A V O N	M E G O H M		9	5	3	8	1	2	6	7	4
F O R	O N I C E	O L I O	4	1	5	6	7	8	2	3	9
O V E R	C O M E T	H O D D S	3	9	7	2	4	5	1	6	8
R A T E	S P A I N	S E T	8	6	2	9	3	1	4	5	7
E L E V E N	L E A F										
S L Y R E	T I A R A										
B E A T A C H A L	E N G E R										
O N S E T	O R E O	D I R E									
M O I R E	N E A R	E L A N									
B L A N D	E D D Y	R E N T									

GOT YOUR NUMBER

10.5

percent of the adult population worldwide has diabetes, with almost half unaware that they are living with the condition, according to the International Diabetes Federation.

41

percent of women and 9% of men admit to crying at work, according to one research study.

2015

was the first year since 1974 that nobody climbed to the top of Mount Everest.

81,000

drug overdose deaths were recorded in the US in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

220 million

is how many smell receptors Basset hounds have. The portion of their brains tied to sense of smell is 40 times that of a human.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Surin Beach Sunset. Photo by Alena Plotnikova

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

This week in history

Mar 15, 1985

The first Internet domain name is registered (symbolics.com).

Mar 16, 597 BC

Babylonians capture Jerusalem, and replace Jeconiah with Zedekiah as king.

Mar 17, 1963

Mount Agung erupts on Bali

killing more than 1,100 people.

Mar 18, 1241

First Mongol invasion of Poland: Mongols overwhelm Polish armies in Kraków in the Battle of Chmielnik and plunder the city.

Mar 19, 1932

The Sydney Harbour Bridge is opened.



A US Marine stands guard at Rumaylah Oil Fields in Southern Iraq.

Mar 20, 2003

Invasion of Iraq: In the early

hours of the morning, the United States and three other countries (the UK, Australia and Poland) begin military operations in Iraq.

Mar 21, 2006

The social media site Twitter is founded. (Renamed 'X' on July 23, 2023)

Source: *Wikipedia*

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Monday BBQ Night

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Sausages, Fish, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet and veggies, Choice of potatoes, cold and hot sauces, Bread, Buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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ALINDA VILLAS GRAND OPENING

Held on Mar 1 at the recently completed show villa on site, developers, local real estate agents and guests celebrated the unveiling of this beautifully crafted home, showcasing modern living and functionality. With the development team consisting of Samuel Gandossi (project management), Thierry Chausse (villa design), Boonjak Athikapun and Chayut Cheecharoen (Construction Partner - Prudent Building Co., Ltd), and Autcharawan (Gay) Pratumwan (project legal council), this is not just another pool villa development, it is the home you have been looking for.



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March/April 2024 issue

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Photo: AFP

Thailand looks to host Formula E, says PM

FORMULA E

PRIME MINISTER Srettha Thavisin has announced plans to host Formula E in Thailand next year.

Mr Srettha posted on his X account last Saturday (Mar 9) that he had spoken with executives of Formula E, which organises electric-vehicle racing competitions around the world, and the company is interested in organising an EV racing competition in Thailand.

Formula E is officially known as the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship. The competition was launched in Beijing in 2014 and later earned the FIA world championship status.

The premier said Thailand is making a shift towards using EV cars, with orders for EV cars reaching

40% of total car orders made since the end of last year.

"Therefore, I think it is good to bring the Formula E racing competition to Thailand to stimulate the economy and development of the country's infrastructure while reinforcing the policy of reducing the amount of carbon emissions," he said.

He said Formula E executives will come to explore the area in Chiang Mai next week to study the feasibility of holding a Formula E competition in Thailand for the first time. The event will help promote Thailand as a regional tourism hub, he said.

Also joining him in the discussions was Paetongtarn Shinawatra, leader of the ruling Pheu Thai Party and deputy chair of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee. *Bangkok Post*

Verstappen cruises in Saudi

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen cruised to his 100th career podium and a second comfortable victory of the season ahead of Red Bull Racing teammate Sergio Pérez at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix last Saturday (Mar 9).

Verstappen came close to executing another perfect race after his flawless evening in Bahrain one week earlier, but an early safety car for the crashed-out Lance Stroll shuffled him to second behind Lando Norris after lap 7 as most the field made their mandatory sole pit stops.

The break in Verstappen's hold on top spot didn't last long, however. It took just three laps after the grand prix resumed on lap 10 for the reigning champion to snake his way past the McLaren on the super fast street track, from which moment he was never headed in a gentle gallop to an easy victory.

"It was a very good race," he said. "The whole weekend the car has been performing really well, probably a little bit better than expected even. Overall of course very pleased to win here."

In addition to the victory being Verstappen's 100th podium, it was also Red Bull Racing's 115th win, taking it past the victory tally of the historic Williams team in just its 20th year in Formula 1.

Teammate Pérez was a reliable second, up from third on the grid, after making short work of front row starter



Max Verstappen celebrates with his trophy after an easy victory at the Saudi Arabia Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 10), his 100th podium finish. Photo: AFP

Charles Leclerc early in the race and then Norris and Lewis Hamilton after the safety car, with both Britons being shuffled forwards after choosing not to stop during the caution.

With Pérez fast enough to totally negate a five-second penalty picked up for being unsafely released from his pit stop during the frenetic safety car period, Charles Leclerc was powerless but to accept third, with Ferrari again Red Bull Racing's closest challenger but stuck several seconds down the road.

Oscar Piastri finished a strong fourth ahead of Fernando Alonso after putting a robust around-the-outside move on the

Spaniard early in the race. Alonso in turn was left defending against George Russell to hold fifth in the final laps.

Ferrari debutant Oliver Bearman scored superb points for seventh in an excellent debut. The F2 star exceeded expectations after being hauled from the junior series to replace Carlos Sainz just hours before final practice to surely put himself in the frame for a full-time set on the 2025 grid.

Norris and Hamilton finished eighth and ninth behind the rookie with Nico Hülkenberg rounding off the top 10 and Thai driver Alex Albon finishing in 11th place.

Phetjeeja wins undisputed ONE kickboxing world title

MMA

PHETJEEJA LUKJAOPORONGTOM had a battle on her hands against outgoing American kickboxing icon Janet Todd, but the 22-year-old phenomenon is now the undisputed ONE women's atomweight kickboxing world champion.

In the ONE Fight Night 20 headliner last Saturday (Mar 9), Phetjeeja, known as "The Queen," was simply one step ahead of Todd on home soil at Bangkok's Lumpinee Boxing Stadium.

The pair put on a battle befitting of the main event, which happened to fall a day after International Women's Day last Friday, capping off ONE's all-female card with a back-and-forth contest.

It was Phetjeeja's array of accurate punches that proved the difference over five rounds, netting her a final round knockdown and, ultimately, the unanimous decision victory.



Phetjeeja Lukjaoporontom celebrates her victory over Janet Todd last Saturday (Mar 9). Photo: Bangkok Post

Todd gave an emotional speech to the packed crowd post-fight, as she draws the curtain on her storied 52-fight professional career.

Meanwhile, Allycia Hellen Rodrigues got the job done in the co-main event, defending her ONE women's atomweight Muay Thai world title against the ultra-tough Spanish contender Cristina Morales.

The Brazilian star's dominance in the clinch allowed her to batter the body of Morales, slowing down the activity of her foe and earning her the judges' nod.

After the fight the 25-year-old called out Stamp Fairtex for her next encounter, who she won the title from in 2020. *Bangkok Post*

Joshua shows his class to defeat Ngannou with brutal second-round KO

BOXING

TWO-TIME WORLD champion Anthony Joshua knocked out mixed martial arts star Francis Ngannou in just the second round of their widely-hyped heavyweight clash in Saudi Arabia last Saturday (Mar 9), with his promoter quickly declaring him the division's "number one" fighter.

Joshua had his Cameroonian opponent on the canvas in the first round and twice more in the second in a brutal and brief exhibition of punching power.

Ngannou, 37, a former UFC heavyweight champion, was taking part in only his second professional boxing match, having lost a split decision to Tyson Fury in an October fight that saw him put the WBC champion on the canvas in the third round.

"When I saw the fight with Tyson Fury, I thought, 'I want some of that'. He is a great champion and this doesn't take anything away from his capabilities," said Joshua of Ngannou.

"I told him not to leave boxing. He's two fights in and



Joshua (left) knocks Ngannou to the canvas. Photo: AFP

he fought the best."

Joshua, a former unified WBO, WBA and IBF heavyweight champion, went into the fight on the back of three successive wins.

Before that, however, he lost back-to-back fights to Oleksandr Usyk, who will take on Fury for the undisputed heavyweight title in Saudi Arabia in May.

The fight only got under way at 3:30am local time but weary fans enjoyed a sensational start when Joshua quickly sent Ngannou to the canvas in the opening round with a brutal right to the chin.

It got worse for the Cameroonian when he was knocked down again in the second round,

just managing to beat the count.

His resistance lasted only a few more moments after he was sent to the canvas again for the third and final time.

Ngannou lay on his back for some time and needed medical treatment inside the ring before being helped back to his stool.

Joshua, 34, was reportedly being paid US\$50 million (£1.7 billion) for his clash with the MMA star, whose rags-to-riches story had captivated the sport.

Ngannou grew up in abject poverty, working as a child labourer in a sand quarry for under \$2 a day.

He then made his way to Europe, even sleeping rough in a car park in Paris before a local coach took him under his wing and steered him to boxing.

Joshua's victory immediately sparked feverish talk of a mega-fight with either Usyk or Fury.

"You're looking at the number one heavyweight in the world," said promoter Eddie Hearn.

"On this form, there is no man that can beat him. Tyson Fury, please beat Usyk, because you will get the biggest fight in the history of the sport." *AFP*

Gunners move into top spot

FOOTBALL

AFP
Arsenal moved to the top of the Premier League after Liverpool and Manchester City shared a pulsating 1-1 draw in their title showdown last Sunday (Mar 10).

Arsenal are level on 64 points with Liverpool but are ahead due to their superior goal difference, boosted in recent weeks after a series of impressive, high-scoring displays.

However, it took an 89th minute winner from Kai Havertz to secure the points in their 2-1 win against Brentford last Saturday, with Declan Rice the Gunners' other scorer.

"Massive win for us. These points were so important. We didn't play our best in the first half but it's even better to win it this way," said match-winner Havertz.

City took the lead at Anfield through John Stones' first-half strike, but Alexis Mac Allister equalised with a penalty soon after the interval following a foul by Ederson on Darwin Nunez.

Pep Guardiola's men are one point adrift of the top two, with all three teams having 10 games left.

In a title race for the ages, Arsenal will travel to City for a potentially decisive clash in both sides' next league game on Mar 31.

Elsewhere, Tottenham's Champions League ambitions received a major boost after they demolished Aston Villa 4-0.

Ange Postecoglou's side went on



Kai Havertz powers in Arsenal's late winner against Brentford. Photo: AFP

a second-half goal spree in the rain-soaked West Midlands with goals from James Maddison, Brennan Johnson, Son Heung-min and Timo Werner.

Villa, who had captain John McGinn sent off in the second half for a crude lunge on Destiny Udogie, remain in fourth spot on 55 points but Spurs are breathing down their necks, two points behind with a game in hand.

Manchester United defeated Everton 2-0 at Old Trafford thanks to penalties from Marcus Rashford and Bruno Fernandes respectively.

Everton sit four points above the relegation zone as their winless league run extended to 11 games although Nottingham Forest remain below them after losing 1-0 at Brighton.

Elsewhere, second bottom Burnley

blew a two-goal lead as Danny Ings' last-gasp equaliser rescued a 2-2 draw for West Ham, while third bottom Luton secured a priceless 1-1 draw at Crystal Palace thanks to Cauley Woodrow's 96th minute leveller.

Sheffield United also blew a two-goal lead and remain bottom of the table after Bournemouth hit back to rescue a 2-2 draw at the Vitality Stadium, while Wolves improved their prospects of qualifying for Europe next season with a 2-1 win against Fulham at Molineux to climb up to ninth.

Chelsea, meanwhile, remain outside the top 10 despite a spirited 3-2 win against Newcastle on Monday thanks to goals from Niklas Jackson, Cole Palmer and substitute Mykhailo Mudryk. The Blues are in 11th place on 39 points.



Masatada Ishii. Photo: Bangkok Post

Chanathip returns for crucial South Korea ties

FOOTBALL

PLAYMAKER CHANATHIP Songkrasin has returned to the Thailand national team after coach Masatada Ishii named his 23-man squad for the crucial home-and-away qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup against South Korea later this month.

The BG Pathum United midfielder was not included in the team for the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar last month due to injury.

"Chanathip Songkrasin was actually on our list for the friendly against Japan on New Year's Day and the AFC Asian Cup but eventually we didn't call him up because of injury problems," said Ishii.

"This time we have him in the team because he's fit again. He is a class player and hopefully he can help the team

in these two matches against South Korea."

Uthai Thani goalkeeper Boonyakiat Wongsajam was given his first call-up while four foreign-based players – Supachok Sarachat, Nicholas Mickelson, Elias Dolah and Suphanat Mueanta – were all included in the squad.

The players reported for training yesterday (Mar 14) at Novotel Future Park Hotel in Bangkok.

Thailand will play Group C favourites South Korea in the second phase of the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup finals on Mar 21 at Seoul World Cup stadium while the second leg at Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium will take place five days later.

Thailand are second in Group C with three points from two games while South Korea have six points.

Bangkok Post

England scupper Irish hopes as Six Nations heats up

RUGBY

THE SIX NATIONS SPARKED INTO life last weekend with some pulsating action as England scuppered Ireland's dream of back-to-back Grand Slams, Italy defeated Scotland and France added to the pressure on Wales.

England impressed in their 23-22 win over Ireland at Twickenham on Saturday (Mar 9), demonstrating admirable game awareness to rally from 17-8 behind early in the second half and producing a display of pace, power and skill topped off by Marcus Smith's decisive last-ditch drop-goal.

England coach Steve Borthwick's decision to once again opt for George Furbank over Freddie Steward paid dividends as Furbank's scorching diagonal run and slick pass helped pave the way for a fifth-minute try by Ollie Lawrence that wiped out Ireland's early 3-0 lead.

It was England's best performance since their 2019 World Cup semi-final win over New Zealand and gave them an outside shot of dethroning Ireland as champions in the final round.

Meanwhile, Italy coach Gonzalo Quetzada affectionately referred to his team as "nutters" after the Azzurri ended their 11-year wait for a home win in the Six Nations with a well-deserved 31-29 defeat of Scotland in Rome.

But it was the mentality of Scotland,



England's Marcus Smith (left) offloads the ball against Ireland. Photo: AFP

fresh from a win over England, that was once more under the spotlight.

Scotland were 14-3 ahead after 12 minutes and 22-16 in front at the break but a second half capitulation saw things slip badly at the Stadio Olimpico.

France, without star scrum-half Antoine Dupont who is concentrating on sevens ahead of the Paris Olympics, made a lacklustre start to the tournament and were fortunate to escape with a draw against Italy.

But there were signs of their trademark power and backline panache on show during a 45-24 win over Wales in Cardiff on Sunday, with experienced centre Gael Fickou producing a typically elegant finish to score the first of France's five tries at the Principality Stadium.

The 29-year-old also helped steady a youthful France team by living up to his billing as defence captain with several thumping tackles as Wales suffered a fourth straight defeat of the Championship. AFP



editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Sport



Arsenal go top in tight title race > p15

BOUT TIME

Phuket hosts major MMA festival

Two youngsters clash in a Muay Thai bout as the week-long ITMA tournament got underway last Sunday (Mar 10). Photo: Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation / Facebook

MMA
The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A major, week-long international mixed martial arts (MMA) event with over 1,200 athletes from 52 countries participating was officially opened in Phuket last Sunday (Mar 10).

The sixth annual edition of the International and Thai Martial Arts (ITMA) Games is taking place at the indoor stadium in Saphan Hin until Sunday (Mar 17) with participants contesting a wide range of martial arts disciplines including Muay Thai, Kickboxing, Karate and Jiu Jitsu. Competition has been determined by age and weight, from

the cadet division, incorporating 8-10 years old, through adult (19-39) to masters (40-45), typically with three rounds of competition of varying duration, depending on the class.

Countries represented include Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, the United States, England, Wales, Krygistan, Ecuador, Cyprus, India, Germany, Chile, Indonesia, Australia, Greece, Italy, Hong Kong, Iran and France.

The event was officially opened last Sunday by Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), who was joined at the Saphan Hin facility by Charatdet Ulit, President of the Phra Chao Suea Muay Thai Sports Association, and a host of

government officials.

“Phuket is honoured to host this prestigious event and we are most grateful that the Phra Chao Suea Muay Thai Sports Association had confidence in the province’s ability to organise such an important occasion,” commented Mr Rewat.

“On behalf of all Phuketians I extend a warm welcome to all athletes, coaching staff and spectators from over 52 countries for what will be an outstanding week of martial arts action.”

Mr Charatdet explained that event has been held previously four times in Bangkok and once in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and that it is a martial arts festival with a distinct Thai identity that is

unique within the international community.

CELEBRATION OF WAI KRU

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

The multi-discipline competition sees rules and regulations run in accordance with a number of major international organisations, including: WMBF; WMO; Union Boxing Federation; Dap Thai Society, covering Thai

sword fighting; International Sport Karate/Kickboxing Association (IKSA); Carlson Gracie Federation, covering Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (Gi and No Gi); and International Fighting Sport Association (IFSA), covering amateur MMA and Jeet Kune Do.

On the fringes of the competition are a series of interactive workshops and seminars where attendees have opportunity to learn more about the intricacies of a variety of mixed martial arts, including: a WMO ring officials refreshers course; a WMO ring officials course for Muay Thai; a Muay Boran and Dap Thai seminar; an ISKA ring officials course for Kickboxing; an MMA ring officials course; and a Sagat

Muay Thai Seminar.

To close the event on Sunday there will be the annual Wai Kru Ceremony held by the Kru Muay Thai Association (KMA). “Wai Kru” is to show respect and thanks to one’s teacher and their lineage of teachers, for passing down their skills and knowledge and this auspicious occasion sees a grand display of tradition, respect, history and culture of Thailand’s most precious martial arts.

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

Dates confirmed for 20th BISP Soccer 7s tournament

FOOTBALL

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL School, Phuket (BISP) has confirmed dates for its hugely-popular annual Soccer 7s tournament later this year.

The 20th edition of the BISP Soccer 7s, one of the largest school-based football tournaments in Asia, the Middle East and Oceania, will take place on Nov 22-23, welcoming teams from international schools all across the region to the Koh Kaew campus.

There will be two days of exciting football action on both the Friday and Saturday as boys and girls teams take to the field, including teams from local schools in Phuket, from around Thailand and further afield.

In addition to the on-field action, there will be a variety of attractions off it, including a range of student performances, musical entertainment and a host of interactive virtual reality (VR) games, with the latter blending technology with sportsmanship to provide participants a truly immersive gaming experience.

Furthermore there will be a range of stalls offering delicious



Action from last year's Soccer 7s tournament. Photo: BISP

food and beverages to keep players and spectators refreshed throughout.

The tournament is always played with the highest regard to respect and sportsmanship, where all play-

ers, parents and coaches serve as ambassadors for their respective schools.

Last year saw a total of 112 teams competing in the two-day tournament at the school’s campus in Koh Kaew, including squads from Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, South Korea, India, China, the Philippines and Vietnam.

The 2023 BISP Soccer 7s was a treat for football enthusiasts as a staggering 376 games were played across the two days with a total 1,190 goals scored – a healthy average of three goals per game.

With favourable weather con-

ditions across both days, it meant plenty of engaging play on the field, with a whole range of off-field activities on hand to keep spectators and non-active teams entertained.

For many of the players and teams involved, last year was their first involvement with the BISP Soccer 7s and the feedback was universally popular, emphasising what the whole BISP community is capable of providing when it pulls together.

More information can be accessed at the BISP Soccer 7s website at: <https://www.bisphuket.ac.th/bisp7s/>.

The Phuket News