

OFFICIALS UNDER FIRE FOR FREEDOM BEACH VENDORS > PAGE 3

ON WATCH



Photo: Phuket Irrigation Office

RESIDENTS URGED TO CONSERVE WATER, OFFICIALS PONDER B1BN WATER PLAN

The Phuket News
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Udomphon Kan, Director of the Phuket Provincial office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket), has urged Phuket residents to conserve water use as a measure to help avoid any water shortages as the 'dry season' continues.

Mr Udomphon assured that Phuket has enough water reserves for now, but expressed his concern for readiness in case water levels at the island's three main reservoirs continue to fall as the dry season progresses.

According to the most recent reservoir report by the Phuket Provincial Irrigation Office, Bang Wad Reservoir in Kathu has 7.1 million cubic meters of water (about 69.6% full), Bang Neow Dum Reservoir in Srisoonthorn has 5.69mn cubic meters of water (about 73% full) and Klong Kata Reservoir in Chalong has 2.54mn cubic meters of water (61.4% full).

"The volume of water in all three reservoirs is expected to carry us through until April, and we have additional water sources from local tin mine ponds. Regardless, we are still seeking additional sources in case they become needed," he said.

"We ask for cooperation from the people to use water economically and understand its value as much as possible," Mr Udomphon said.

"And we ask for [the government] public relations to emphasise compliance with the government's nine measures to support us through the dry season," he added.

DDPM-Phuket has pumps, trucks and personnel ready in case they need to be deployed to help provide water to any areas on the island found without water supply, Mr Udomphon said.

SPLASH SPLURGE
The Phuket Provincial Water Re-

sources Subcommittee last week reviewed a list of water-resource projects costing in total more than B1 billion.

The meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Feb 7, was chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Norasak Suksombun and attended by representatives of various government agencies.

The agenda included discussions on rainfall patterns across the island, water levels in the three main reservoirs, water consumption and tap water production, with reports from the Southern Western Meteorological Center, the Phuket Irrigation...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



NEWS PAGE 3

Uproar over lion cub at local cafe



LIFE PAGE 8

Happy Doggo boost for Soi Dog



SPORT PAGE 16

MMA star lauds Phuket as hub



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PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

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News



Airport braces for visa-free influx > p6

Water worries on tap

Continued from page 1

...Office, the Phuket Waterworks Authority and Phuket City Municipality.

A significant point of discussion was the consideration of project plans aligned with the water resources action plan for fiscal year 2025, as well as those approved by the Cabinet during the mobile Cabinet meeting in Ranong on Jan 23.

Notably, at the mobile Cabinet meeting, the Office of the National Water Resources (ONWR) urged Phuket officials to submit additional water resources action plans and proposals for project plans, emphasising the importance of adherence to deadlines and procedural protocols, said an official report of the meeting.

It was disclosed that Phuket Provincial Office had reviewed 40 water resources project plans, totaling B601,259,000. The plans included various initiatives aimed at enhancing water resource management infrastructure and capabilities across the province.

The 40 projects were separated into two separate categories, with one category comprising 38 projects requiring a total budget of B575.449 million.

Among those were 30 projects under the Phuket Irrigation Office requiring a total of B426,019,000; four projects by the Phuket Waterworks Authority (PWA) requiring B24.195mn; a further two projects by the PWA requiring B22.244mn; one wastewater project requiring B85.481mn; and one project by Thepkra-sattri Municipality, whose



Udomphon Kan, chief of DDPM-Phuket, Photo: PR Phuket

budget requirements was not reported.

The second category comprised the two water projects already approved by Cabinet: the reinforcement of the banks of Klong Bang Yai nest to Satee Phuket School under a budget of B25.810mn, with a B15mn line of credit extended to the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) to complete the project; and a PWA project to expand water distribution system throughout Na Ko-Bang Jo Rd area in Srisoonthorn under a budget of B10.81mn.

The official report of the meeting made no mention of the long-awaited water-supply pipeline from Phang Nga, progress of which stalled in Bangkok long before the national election in last year.

In closing, the meeting underscored the necessity of reviewing and approving project plans in accordance with the established water resource action plan.

The deliberations reflected a concerted effort to address the evolving water resource needs of Phuket, ensuring sustainable management and accessibility for its residents, concluded the report.

Spate of small wildfires spurs burnoff warning

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Firefighters have repeated their call for people to report any wildfires by calling the 199 emergency hotline after a series of small fires across the island, including one razing a Chinese cemetery in Phuket Town and another destroying a car in Kamala.

Firefighters from the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) branch at Phuket City Municipality were called to the fire at the Chinese cemetery at the foot of Khao Rang in Phuket Town at 4:45pm on Feb 8.

A fire team was dispatched to the scene and soon had the fire under control, preventing the flames from spreading further.

One firefighter noted that dry grass brought on by dry conditions had fuelled the fire.

Earlier that same day, at about 1:20pm, DDPM officers from Chalong Municipality were called to a wildfire in Soi Thanuthep, in Chalong.

Again, the firefighters soon had the flames under control, but warned local residents of burning off dry vegetation. Photos from the scene suggest that one of the local residents was burning branches or something similar, and in the process the fire got out of control.

As the dry season continues, local residents have been advised to refrain from



Photo: DDPM Phuket City Municipality

activities that could spark uncontrollable fires, such as burning garbage or carelessly discarding lit cigarettes. As the Chinese New Year celebrations continue to unfold, the importance of caution was emphasised even further concerning measures such as creating fire protection lines and ensuring candles and incense sticks were fully extinguished were recommended to safeguard against potential blazes.

The national DDPM head branch has urged people to be careful in observing Chinese New Year traditions. People have been asked to not leave lit candles and incense sticks unattended, and to conduct ritual burning of gilded paper

only in fireproof containers, and to not use firecrackers in areas where there is a high risk of fire.

However, the fires continued last Sunday evening (Feb 11) when a fire that was started in order to burn off grass cuttings on an empty lot in Kamala is believed to have spread and set alight a car parked on the edge of the lot, completely destroying the car.

Kamala Police were informed of the fire, in Moo 1, Kamala, at about 7:30pm.

Police and firefighters arrived to find the car ablaze. The lot had already been razed by the fire.

Firefighters took some 20 minutes to bring the fire under

control. The car, a Honda Civic registered in Betong, Yala Province, had already been gutted by the flames.

Police learned that grass on the lot, which has a boundary wall along three sides, had been cut, and the grass cuttings had been set alight.

Strong winds had fuelled the flames, and spread the fire to the car, parked on the street side of the lot.

The owner of the car told police that he had parked the said car since morning. He had heard the shouts of fire by local residents, but paid no attention until he heard that a car beside the lot had also caught fire.

Police said they were continuing their investigation.

Officials urged to resolve Soi Ta-ia traffic woes

WATCHARA JARURIYANON, Managing Director of the renowned Tiger Muay Thai training facility on Soi Ta-ia in Chalong, has called for authorities to take steps to alleviate traffic congestion along the small, but busy, street.

Mr Watchara's call for help in resolving Soi-Ta-ia's traffic woes came at a meeting to support the government's scheme to grant four tourists 90-day stays under a special 'Muay Thai visa' in order to learn and practice Muay Thai in

Thailand.

"As a boxing camp operator, I am pleased that the government supports the issue of special visas for tourists to practice Muay Thai for 90 days, which will bring in more tourists and those interested in traveling to practice boxing in Phuket," Mr Watchara said.

"It will stimulate the economy. In this regard, the guidelines for boxing in most provinces consider it as a practice for health," he added.

"However, there are a large number of boxing camps in Phuket, both legally registered

and unregistered. Therefore, we would like government agencies to come and support us," he noted.

"Moreover, in the area of Soi Ta-ia, there are many boxing training facilities and fitness camps. But there is still the problem of traffic congestion due to the narrow road. Therefore, if the province helps support In this matter, it would be a very good thing," Mr Watchara said.

At the meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday (Feb 9), Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat explained

that authorities were ramping up their efforts to promote Muay Thai as a 'Soft Power' in the hope of attracting more tourists interested in coming to practice the sport in Phuket.

Thammawat Wongcharoenyot, President of the Sports Association of Phuket, praised the move to introduce a special 90-visa for Muay Thai tourists.

"It is a good policy. There are 43 boxing camps in Phuket, including Tiger Muay Thai, Rawai Jersey Boxing Camp, Kru O Muay Thai, Singpatong Dragon Muay Thai, Kangaroo Muay Thai, Ratchai Muay Thai,



Much of the traffic congestion along the busy Soi Ta-ia in Chalong is caused by cars parked along both sides of the road. Photo: The Phuket News

Phuket Fight Club, Chang Thai Gym, Sinbee Muay Thai and Eagle Muay Thai, as well as venues such as Patong Beach Boxing Stadium, Kamala Muay Thai, Bangla Revolution Boxing Stadium, Phuket Muay Thai, and so on," he said.

"In total the camps have

about 2,500 boxers training each day. The income generated by the boxing camps averages B500,000 per day. Boxing stadium management groups report an average income of B350,000 per match," he added. *The Phuket News*

Officials hunt lion cub misuse at tourist cafe

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Police and wildlife officials are tracking down the whereabouts of a lion cub that was put on display at a cafe north of Phuket Town so tourists could take photos of it.

Chinthep Kanghae, head of the Khao Phra Thaew Non-Hunting Area in Thalang, which is responsible for wildlife animals in Phuket, led an inspection of The Glass House Cafe and Space on Ratsada-Anusorn Rd in Ratsada on Monday (Feb 12).

Joining the inspection were Phuket City Police Deputy Chief Pol Lt Boonphob Thibbut and other officers from the Phuket City Police, along with officers from the Phuket Tourist Police and Phuket Forestry Office.

At the cafe the officers were greeted by a Chinese national who presented himself only as "Mr Khai", who said he was a friend of the owner of the cafe.

Mr Khai was invited to Phuket Police City Police



Photo: Supplied

Station to answer questions about the lion cub, which had sparked an uproar online by people concerned about the animal's welfare.

Mr Khai told police that the lion cub had been brought to Phuket from Bangkok. The cub was kept at a house in Chalong for about 15 days before the owner brought it to the cafe.

The cub was put on display for visitors to see for two to three hours a day, and was taken home to Chalong every night by its owner – who so far has remained unnamed.

Officials noted that Mr

Khai spoke very little Thai. However, officers confirmed that Mr Khai told them that the owner of the lion cub was in Krabi and was to return to Phuket on Monday night.

The investigating officers met with Phuket City Police Chief Pol Col Prathueng Phonmana to discuss the further investigation, and said they were to coordinate with the Chalong Police Chief before deciding on requesting a search warrant for the house where the lion was said to be kept.

Mr Chinthep, head of the Khao Phra Thaew Non-

Hunting Area in Thalang, said officers were also investigating whether the lion cub was brought to Phuket legally.

"We are currently conducting a preliminary investigation. So far the lion has not yet been found, so it is not yet known whether the lion came legally or not," Mr Chinthep said.

"Lions are controlled under the Wild Animal Conservation and Protection Act of 2019 and require permission to possess and must be raised at the registered place of possession," he added.

Mr Chinthep confirmed that his officers had not seen documents that validated legal ownership of the cub, or confirming that it had been transported to Phuket with the correct permission.

"We've inspected the cafe, but we haven't found any lion cubs. So we have contacted the cafe owner to bring the lion cub and documents to show to officials, and we are coordinating with the local police in order to issue a summons to ask for more information," Mr Chinthep said.

Roads close for festival

KEY ROADS IN THE HEART of Phuket Old Town are closed from 6pm to 11pm each night as the 'Phuket Festival' returns for Chinese New Year.

The 'Phuket Festival 2024' is being held from Feb 15-17. The three-day event features a variety of festivities, including a light and sound show, cultural performances and a colourful parade.

A major feature of the festival will be at least 432 vendors setting up stalls along key roads throughout the Old Town area, said Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas. In order to allow the vendors to set up their stalls, sections of Thepkasattri Rd, Phuket Rd, Thalang Rd, Soi Rommanee, Krabi Rd, Phang Nga Rd, Soi Pradit and Takua Pa Rd will be closed each night.

"The festival will show the world the power and greatness of the Phuket Chinese New Year events," Mr Saroj said.

"Phuket City Municipality understands the importance of preserving the Phuket Old Town and wants to promote tourism to the town. We have joined forces to help create awareness among Phuket people to realise the value of their local cultural heritage and the traditional way of life that has been passed down



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

from their ancestors. This will stimulate the economy in urban areas, and Phuket province," he said.

The festival is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by promoting economic growth and valuable employment, together helping to reduce inequality, he added.

There will be eight 'check-in' features set up throughout the Old Town area, where visitors can take photos and have a 'festival passport' stamped. People who collect all eight stamps will be able to join several activities, Mayor Saroj explained, adding that anyone can pick up a 'festival passport' at any of the eight check-in points.

The festival will also feature the traditional parade, this year involving more than 300 youths and adults, and there will be a main stage and six 'mini stages' set up for live performances each night, he noted. *The Phuket News*

Forest officials to explain vendors at Freedom Beach

PHUKET GOVERNOR Sophon Suwannarat has ordered the Phuket branch of the Royal Forest Department to submit a formal report on why beach vendors have been allowed to operate at Freedom Beach, and to explain any monies collected from the vendors.

The order came at a meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Monday afternoon (Feb 12), following an inspection of the popular beach, located in Karon, on the southern side of the headland just south of Patong, earlier on Monday morning.

Of note, confirmation of the Governor's order came via a post online by Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee, the House of Representatives member for Phuket District 2.

The inspection of the beach by Mr Chalermpong and accompanying officials found "about 10" operators providing services to tourists at the popular beach.

The operators said they had been granted permission to operate on the beach by the Phuket branch of the Royal Forest Department, Mr



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee / Facebook

Chalermpong reported.

At the meeting on Monday were the Director of the Phuket office of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE Phuket), the Kathu District Chief, the Mayor of Karon, the Superintendent of Karon Police Station, the Superintendent of Patong Police Station, the chief of the Phuket Forestry Center as well as representatives from other relevant agencies, Mr Chalermpong noted.

Faisan Nupichai, Director of the Phuket Forestry Center, explained that the forest area at Freedom Beach was part of the Nakkerd Hills Reserve Forest covering an area of 48 rai, 2 ngan, 11 square wah (77,644sqm), including the area of the beach.

The area in question is currently in the process of be-

ing prepared to be designated a "recreational forest", Mr Faisan said.

Coastal erosion had resulted in beach sand moving into the original area designated as protected forest, meaning the original boundary now extended onto the sand, Mr Faisan said.

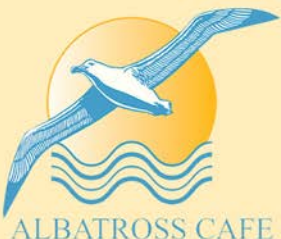

MNRE Phuket Director Watthanaphong Suksai pointed out that before the meeting there was a call for officials to explain details of the situation.


As for the issue of claiming benefits from officials, a committee should be appointed to investigate the matter, Mr Watthanaphong also said.

Governor Sophon noted that the area in question was clearly marked as under the responsibility of the RFD. He tasked Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong to oversee the provision of personnel or any other needs to see the matter investigated.

"We would like the Forest Department or the responsible agency to investigate as soon as possible to make everything transparent," Mr Chalermpong said.

The Phuket News



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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 11 m/s

SAT FEBRUARY 17

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Wind 11 m/s

SUN FEBRUARY 18

High: +31°
Low: +27°
Wind 11 m/s

MON FEBRUARY 19

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Wind 4 m/s

TUE FEBRUARY 20

High: +32°
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Wind 4 m/s

WED FEBRUARY 21

High: +30°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 22

High: +30°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

Brit arrested for fake euros

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A British man has been arrested in Phuket for passing fake euro banknotes, while another British national who has left the country remains wanted by Thai police also for passing fake currency.

Police arrested British national Tobias William Scutt Drew, 33, at 3:15pm on Feb 7, confirmed Sakhu Police.

He was found in possession of 89 fake €200 banknotes and a range of banknotes of genuine currency: 272 £20 banknotes and 54 £10 banknotes; and 198 B1,000 banknotes, one B500 banknote and five B100 banknotes.

The location of his arrest was not confirmed in the report.

He was taken to Sakhu Police Station and charged under Section 240 and Section 241 of the Thai Criminal Code, which pertains to producing and distributing counterfeit currency.

Drew denied the charges



Photo: Sakhu Police

against him.

Pol Lt Chapinya Suriyathamkul of Sakhu Police explained that Drew's arrest followed a complaint filed by Sakhu resident Chanjira Lao-lang, 50, at 8pm on Feb 6.

Ms Chanjira reported that a foreign man had come to her

currency exchange kiosk to exchange five €200 banknotes for B37,850.

Police identified the man as Drew, and obtained an arrest warrant from the Phuket Provincial Court (warrant No. 65/67) issued on Feb 7, Lt Chapinya confirmed.

During questioning it was confirmed that Drew had entered Thailand on Dec 2 and extended his stay in the country on Jan 31.

Drew said that he was staying at the MBC Condotel in Moo 5, Mai Khao, with fellow British national Ozeias Da

Silva, 45, and had arranged to exchange currency with him.

Drew later transferred US\$34,900 in cryptocurrency (about B1.24 million) to Da Silva on Feb 5. In return, he received a number of €200 banknotes and the outstanding amount equivalent to B674,800 in Thai currency and other banknotes.

After that, Drew took five of €200 banknotes to the currency exchange in Sakhu.

At about 3pm on Feb 7, Drew took banknotes totaling €1,000 to an exchange currency in Kamala, and at about 4pm on Feb 7 went to exchange currency in Cherng Talay, police reported.

Police have since confirmed that Da Silva had presented counterfeit euro banknotes at a local currency exchange in the Tha Chatchai Police area three times, exchanging a total of €3,000 in banknotes (about B116,000).

Da Silva has been confirmed as leaving the country at 8:50pm on Feb 7.

Police are continuing their investigation.



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Russian couple duped of B720k in fake villa booking

TOURIST POLICE have reported a couple from Russia losing B720,000 in a prepaid villa booking after arriving in Phuket to be told there was no villa.

Phuket Tourist Police reported the incident on Feb 6, marking officers providing assistance to the couple at Cherng Talay Police Station, where they filed a complaint.

The couple had transferred the B720,000 as a deposit paid online before

their arrival. However, upon arrival on the island the couple discovered that no one had booked any villa for them, Tourist Police explained.

The couple were not named in the brief post online by Phuket Tourist Police, and the villa the couple had paid to rent was also not identified.

The couple have now coordinated with a lawyer to proceed with legal action, Tourist Police said.

The Phuket News

Chinese tourist claims he was robbed, only to later admit he lied

A CHINESE TOURIST WHO CLAIMED he was robbed by a motorcycle taxi driver has admitted that he fabricated the whole story.

Chinese national Xing Jingwei claimed B20,000 was stolen from him following an altercation with the driver of the motorcycle taxi in Patong in the early hours of Feb 8, police confirmed.

Xing said to police that he had alighted the motorcycle taxi around 1am on returning to his Patong hotel following an evening spent in Baan Mon. Police reports did not specify which hotel Xing was staying at.

As the fare was being paid an argument broke out between Xing and the driver of the motorcycle taxi, who police later confirmed as 22-year-old 'Mr Pan'.

Police stated that eye witness reports at the scene recall Xing attempted to chase the motorcycle and grabbed the rear of the vehicle before he fell and injured his elbow.

Xing then entered the hotel he was staying at and reported to staff at the reception desk that he had been robbed of B20,000 by the motorcycle driver. Police were notified in due course.

Police managed to track down Mr Pan via his Honda Wave motorcycle which had Nakhon Sri Thammarat license plates.

Mr Pan explained that an argument had broken out when he dropped Xing off at his



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

hotel in Patong due to language difficulties and Xing claiming he was being charged too much. Frustrated at not being able to communicate effectively, Pan decided to drive away from the scene, knowing he had done no wrong. He categorically denied taking B20,000 from Xing, police confirmed.

Police questioned Xing further at Patong Police Station in the hope of better understanding the situation.

It was during this further questioning that Xing admitted he had made up the part of the story where he had been robbed of B20,000, although police did not state why exactly he had decided to do so, nor did they state whether any charges would be brought against him for doing so.

Eakkapop Thongtub

the Phuket News

Phuket eyes international award for festivals, events

The Phuket News
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Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat has assigned a task force to prepare Phuket's application for the 2024 IFEA World Festival & Event City Award in the 2024 IFEA/Haas & Wilkerson Pinnacle Awards Competition.

The idea for Phuket to enter the international awards contest was put forward by Pattanachai Singhawara, Director of the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) Southern Region Office, at a meeting at Provincial Hall last Friday (Feb 9).

"The IFEA World Festival & Event City Award was designed and created as a way for the global festivals and events industry to openly encourage, support, learn from and recognise positive local environments for festivals and events worldwide," explains IFEA on its official website.

"Festivals and events create tremendous community and economic capital in the markets that they serve, but the partnership with and support



Photo: PR Phuket

from the local community, at all levels, is critical to the success and sustainability of existing festivals and events, as well as the ability to attract and encourage new events.

"Through this special award the IFEA is pleased to recognize and fly the flag of those cities and markets who have worked, through concerted efforts, to provide an environment conducive to successful festivals and events," IFEA notes.

The 'Pinnacle Awards' have 62 categories, differentiated by type and form of festivals hosted, and budget

amounts dedicated for hosting events.

Governor Sophon assigned a 'working group' to prepare the necessary documents for Phuket's entry in the competition, said an official report of the meeting.

The task force comprises officials from a wide range of local government agencies, the report added. Among those to take lead roles in drafting the entry application is the TCEB, along with Assoc Prof Dr Kulda Phetwarun, Head of Tourism Management of the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism at the Prince of

Songkla University, Phuket Campus.

Phuket hosts many 'festival events' throughout the year that highlight Phuket's cultural identity and its prowess for hosting other major events,, including the Phuket Vegetarian Festival, Phuket Lobster Festival, Seafood Festival, Lantern Festival, Chinese New Year and the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, among others, noted the official report

"The working group will select the top 10 most outstanding and important festivals to be used in the presentation of Phuket Province," the report explained.

"If Phuket Province wins the award, it will have a positive impact on the tourism of Phuket Province and Thailand, both in terms of stimulating the economy and public image, with our cultural tourism to become more and more widely known," Governor Sophon said.

The working group must submit its initial application by April 30. The deadline for the submission of full applications is July 17, and the winners are to be announced on Aug 14.



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Crackdown nabs illegal tour guide in Phuket Old Town

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a foreign national for working illegally as a tour guide in the heart of the Phuket Old Town area.

Tourist Police arrested the man in Soi Rommanee at about 3:50pm on Feb 6.

The man was named by police only as "Mr Chang Ding", 31, who officers said was carrying an identity card confirming that he was not a Thai national.

The man was taken to Phuket City Police Station and charged with working without a work permit and acting as a tour

guide without obtaining a tour guide license as required under Section 49 and Section 86 of the Tourism Business and Tour Guides Act

The arrest follows the Tourist Police launching a campaign against illegal operators in the tourism industry, with special focus on illegal tour guides, police reported.

Police are accepting tip-offs, police added in their report. Tourist Police can be contacted by calling their hotline 1155.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Patong tuk-tuk driver fined for allowing tourist dancing on roof

PATONG POLICE HAVE FINED A tuk-tuk driver for allowing a tourist to dance on the roof of his vehicle on the Patong beach road after a video of the incident was posted on social media.

Police in their report last Saturday (Feb 10) did not confirm how much the fine was, but said the issuing of the fine was a warning to other tuk-tuk drivers to not allow the same behaviour. Tourists were likewise warned to not engage in any similar dangerous antics.

The tuk-tuk driver, Yongyut Hasan, explained to reporters last Sunday (Feb 11) that he felt he had little control over the incident.

He had picked up tourists in Kata and was taking them to Bangla Rd. en route, the tourists asked to play their own music through Bluetooth, and one of the tourists was standing on the back of the tuk-tuk while the tuk-tuk was in motion. Mr Yongyut told the tourist to get back inside the cab.

Then when the tuk-tuk became stuck in traffic on Thaweewong Rd (the beach road), one of the tourists climbed on top of the tuk-tuk and danced while the tuk-tuk was not in motion.

Mr Yongyut told the tourist to get down and get back inside the tuk-tuk, which the tourist did as the traffic had eased a little and the tuk-tuk was not inching its way forward along the road.

Then when tuk-tuk stopped in the traffic again, the tourist climbed back out and danced on the vehicle's roof again.

Mr Yongyut told the tourist to get down and scolded him for dancing on the roof of



Screenshot: via Patong Police

his tuk-tuk. The tourist apologised for his behaviour and the group and Mr Yongyut parted ways as they were already close to Bangla Rd by that time, but by then someone had recorded the dancing on a phone and posted it to social media, he said.

"I wanted to ask the police what am I was supposed to do after I had already warned the tourist. Sometimes we warn them and they don't listen. They don't care. They assume they hired us," Mr Yongyut said.

"No one wants tourists to ride on the back and bounce the car or climb onto the roof. The tuk-tuk is our livelihood. Every driver loves his or her car. No one will let a passenger go up and dance on the roof causing damage. It's not worth the cost," Mr Yongyut continued.

"I'd like to ask people to think carefully before commenting on anything they see posted. Sometimes seeing only 10-20 seconds of a clip can't be used to judge anything at all," Mr Yongyut said. Eakkapop Thongtub

Sarasin festival to highlight Phuket-Phang Nga relations

THE SARASIN FESTIVAL will return to the Sarasin Bridge this weekend (Feb 16-19), marking a resurgence in efforts to strengthen ties between sister cities Phang Nga and Phuket and to bolster tourism in the region.

The festival will also mark a series of events being held between the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) and the Phang Nga Provincial Administrative Organisation (PAO) aimed at enhancing community engagement and economic opportunities.

The festival and series of jointly organised events were announced by Phang Nga Vice Governor Niracha Bunditchat at a press launch held on Sarasin Bridge on Feb 6.

At the press launch, PPAO President Rewat Areerob and Phang Nga PAO President Tharathip Thongcherm signed a Memorandum of Understanding for each provincial authority to support the events.

The event lineup includes



Photo: PR Phuket

three key projects scheduled between February and March. The projects include the "Project to Build Relationships with the Younger Generation (Phang Nga - Phuket)" from Feb 16-18, the "Community Tourism Event Project" to be held at the Sarasin Bridge on Feb 16-18, and the "Seafood Festival Project Phang Nga Province" scheduled from Mar 1-3 along the Thai Mueang beachfront in Phang Nga.

Ms Bunditchat expressed her delight at the focus on tourism and the economy by the Phang Nga PAO. She commended the organisation for its efforts, particularly highlighting the upcoming "Ban Si Muang Nong Relationship Project (Phang Nga - Phuket)" as a crucial step in promoting tourism

and stimulating economic growth in the region.

Mr Thongcherm emphasised the importance of building relationships with sister cities like Phuket to promote tourism and provide marketing opportunities for local products.

He outlined the organisation's goals of job creation, economic stimulation, and cultural preservation through these initiatives.

Mr Thongcherm also highlighted plans to improve transportation infrastructure, including the Andaman Ring Road Development Project, which aims to connect Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi provinces. The project, actually launched many years ago, seeks to enhance water transportation, reduce travel time, and support tourism and economic growth in the region.

The event serves as a testament to the dedication of both provinces towards achieving these shared goals, said the report..

The Phuket News

Bracing for visa-free influx

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Jakkaphon Tangsutthitham, who serves as Deputy Secretary-General to the Prime Minister, and Royal Thai Police Spokesman Pol Lt Gen Achayon Kraithong arrived in Phuket on Feb 7 to be briefed on safety and security measures to be rolled out with special consideration of the China visa-free policy coming into effect on Mar 1.

Mr Jakkaphon, a defeated Pheu Thai parliamentary candidate in Chiang Mai, and Lt Gen Achayon landed at Phuket International Airport to be welcomed by Phuket Vice Governor Sattha Thongkam and a host of Phuket's top-ranking law-enforcement authorities.

At a meeting held at the airport, Mr Jakkaphon said that the government's important policy is to drive tourism.

"The Prime Minister aims to develop Thailand into a world-class tourism destination. Therefore, we need to create an impression on tourists even before they travel, starting from booking airline tickets. And we need to develop technology to support services, such as ensuring safety, so that when tourists travel here, they are impressed and want to come back again," he said.

Royal Thai Police spokesman Pol Lt Gen Achayon said, "We ask



the police to help take care of the safety of tourists, especially the issue of taxis that attack tourists. Let's help prevent and suppress this, including the number of accidents resulting from drowning, and we ask the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports Office to give importance to tour guides. Let there be strict control

"However, if there is information about foreign tourists who have committed crimes, please request immigration to conduct an inspection. Let's work together to prosecute in strict accordance with the law," he added.

Region 8 Police Commander Pol Lt Gen Suraphong Thanomchit explained that any tourists caught engaged in criminal behaviour will be added to a list for deportation after they have faced legal proceedings.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum detailed measures including increased surveillance, hotline support, and enhanced police presence at tourist sites to prevent crime.

"Phuket Provincial Police has surveyed and analysed data from 16 public markets, 15 islands, 30 cultural attractions, nine viewpoints, and established a centre to receive incident reports, which is linked to the 1155 hotline [to contact Tourist Police] to providing Chinese interpreters to support investigations," he said.

"We are also recruiting volunteers and coordinating with partners in the operating unit network to use CCTV to control crime, and increasing patrols by officers in important tourist spots, making arrangements for traffic police to facilitate traffic at

important tourist attractions and for officers to strictly arrest any persons engaged in illegal acts in order to reduce crime," he added.

Following the briefing, Mr Jakkaphon and his team conducted an inspection of immigration operations at Phuket Airport to ensure readiness in personnel and technology.

"As for the issue of managing tourists who come to cause trouble, legal action will be taken, but with caution and gentleness, taking into account international relations as well," Mr Jakkaphon said.

"Operations will be based on the principle that happiness must belong to the Thai people," he said.

INFLUX

Separate from Mr Jakkaphon's visit, Wirintra Paphakityotphat, head of the Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT) Region 11 branch, said that industry operators expected the number of Chinese tourists coming to Phuket to double during Chinese New Year, which started last Saturday (Feb 10).

"The number of Chinese tourists arriving in Phuket has averaged about 5,000 a day since Jan 1. It is expected that number will increase to 10,000 a day during Chinese New Year," she said.

"It is further expected that the number of Chinese tourists will continue to increase, as the government has opened a free visa arrangement

between Thailand and China. It is believed that this will cause more Chinese tourists to travel as per the government's goals," she added.

Following his visit, Mr Jakkaphon reported himself that Phuket reported that the number of passengers traveling to Phuket is already about 30,000 people per day, of which approximately 20,000 are foreign tourists flying from abroad, with Russian, Chinese and Indian tourists leading the way.

Mr Jakkaphon also noted:

AI technology is used to detect passenger density in order to manage checkpoints in a timely manner in relation to passengers.

Provincial Police and Tourist Police have set up a centre to receive tourist notifications, with interpreters and volunteers participating.

The number of CCTV cameras has been increased to take care of safety at various tourist attractions.

Water safety care by the Marine Police and the Marine Department are inspecting safety equipment on vessels, including life jackets, and issuing warnings about swimming, and have arranged for 24-hour response in the event of an emergency (on the water)

"As for road safety issues, there has been integration with all sectors in a campaign to reduce accidents that occur with tourists, by coordinating closely with various embassies," Mr Jakkaphon said.

Big plans to drive Andaman marine tourism to B5trn

A SEMINAR HELD IN Phuket last week revealed plans to develop marine tourism in the Andaman coast area to help achieve a revenue goal of B5 trillion.

The event, organised by the Senate Tourism Committee, was held at the Pogo Design Hotel in Phuket Town on Feb 8, with a focus on how southern Andaman provinces and communities can maximise their potential to become established centres of marine tourism.

Gen Thanasak Patimaprakon, Chairman of the Senate Tourism Committee, opened the seminar, which saw over 200 attendees, including executives from the private sector joining representatives from the six southern provinces on the Andaman coast of Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Ranong, Trang and Satun.

Gen Thanasak explained how the event was essentially a brainstorming session where presenters and attendees could offer suggestions on how to increase the proportion of high quality tourists in the region to reach the lofty goal of B5trn in tourism-related revenue.

Expert speakers who deliv-



A cruise liner drops anchor in Patong Bay. Photo: Patong Police

ered presentations included: Somruedee Chitjong, Deputy Governor for Domestic Markets from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT); Natthira Phaengkun, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Tourism Ministry of Tourism and Sports; Kornwut Banyongworapinit, Director of the Local Administration Development and Promotion Division Department of Local Administration; Wattana Choksuwanich, President of the Thai Cruise Business Operators Association; and Wirintra Paphakityotphat, Chairman of the Phuket Tourism Industry Council.

While no specific recommendations or outcomes were detailed, officials declared the event a success in bringing private and public sector entities together to make a start on a roadmap that can

see the region become globally recognised as a leading maritime tourism region.

The seminar came one day after Gen Thanasak and his delegation unveiled plans for the development of Phuket to become a port of entry for small luxury ships.

Welcomed by Phuket Vice Governor Norasak Suksomboon, Gen Thanasak chaired a meeting held at the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command (3AC) headquarters at Cape Panwa, with RTN 3AC Commander Vice Admiral Suchat Thampitakwet joining the proceedings.

Also present were Phuket Marine Chief Natchapong Pranit along with representatives from government agencies and from the private sector.

Central to the discussions were plans to develop Phuket Deep Sea Port at Ao Makham to serve as a home port for small cruise ships. Presentations highlighted the readiness of the port to accommodate luxury ships, focusing on immigration and customs procedures, safety measures and passenger facilities.

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Illicit drug limit set for avoiding punishment

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

A ceiling has been set by the Public Health Ministry, below which people possessing illicit drugs will be regarded as drug users not liable for legal punishment.

The ceiling issued under an order signed by Public Health Minister Cholnan Srikaew was announced in the Royal Gazette last Friday (Feb 9).

The measure was launched in tandem with Section 107 of the Narcotics Code requiring the minister to release a ministerial regulation specifying the maximum amounts by which people can possess illicit drugs and are still regarded as users, as opposed to drug traders or traffickers who face much tougher punishment.

For example, an offender who has in his or her possession up to five meth pills or 500 milligrammes at the time of arrest is to be treated by law as a drug user. Under the law, people who harbour small amounts of an illicit



Students in Samut Prakan wear paper hats with anti-drug abuse messages to mark World Drug Day in June 2022. Photo: Bangkok Post

drug are assumed to have the intent to consume it. They should undergo rehab and be spared imprisonment.

Dr Cholnan said the proposal was put to a public hearing over the course of two weeks. After that, it was forwarded to the Cabinet for approval and then published in the Royal Gazette.

Ceilings for other popular drugs were also put in place: MDEA (a substitute amphetamine) of up to five

units or 1,250mg; heroin, up to 300mg; LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), a potent psychedelic drug, up to 100mg; ecstasy, up to 1,250mg.

Other ceilings are cocaine, up to 200mg; opium, up to 5,000mg; cannabis extracts with more than 0.2% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, up to 30ml in liquid form; and ketamine, up to 500mg in crystal or powder form.

The regulation will be adopted as a guideline for law

enforcement officials in seeking prosecution of individuals in drug cases.

However, Dr Cholnan insisted conditions apply when considering if drug users can escape legal punishment.

First they must consent to attending a drug rehab programme. Second, they must stay for the duration and satisfy all rehab criteria and third, they must be certified as having completed rehab. The individuals must meet all three criteria before they can be spared punishment.

The minister said he has been misquoted by netizens who criticised him for taking a soft stance on drug abuse.

Meanwhile, Narcotics Suppression Bureau commissioner Pol Lt Gen Kirisak Tantinvachai said that despite the ceilings, an offender found with a small amount of drug still may be subject to heavy punishment if the circumstances of the crime warrant it.

If it could be proven they possess even a small amount of drug with the intent to trade or export, they are liable for a hefty jail term, he added.

Artificial insemination push to boost birth rate

BANGKOK

THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC Health will soon announce measures to promote artificial insemination among people wanting to be parents, including among the LGBTQ community, as part of efforts to boost the birth rate.

Minister Cholnan Srikaew said during a meeting with Jos Vandelaer, the World Health Organisation (WHO) representative for Thailand, at Nakhonping Hospital on Monday (Feb 12) that the ministry has assigned the Department of Health (DoH) to come up with measures to support access to infertility treatments and preconception counselling.

The DoH was told to find ways to maximise the ability to provide intrauterine insemination (IUI) and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) services for those in need.

A law amendment to make infertility treatment accessible to single women and the LGBTQ community is also under consideration and is expected to be tabled in March.

The ministry plans to push infertility treatment as a fun-



Photo: Bangkok Post

damental benefit covered by the nation's health security scheme under the "Give Birth, Great World" campaign as part of the national agenda, said Dr Cholnan.

The ministry has been working to protect the reproductive and sexual health rights of people, especially those in sensitive groups. This mission has received good support from international agencies, including the WHO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), he said.

According to the Interior Ministry, the current population is 66,052,615, down 0.06%, or 37,860, compared to 2022. The number of births last year – 485,085 – was the lowest in 70 years.

Bangkok Post

Protest against Thaksin's release

BANGKOK

A GROUP OF PROTESTERS gathered outside the Justice Ministry on Monday (Feb 12) opposing the expected release of Thaksin Shinawatra from prison without having spent a day behind bars.

"Thaksin is only a prisoner in name," Pichit Chaimongkol, leader of the Students and Peoples Network for Thailand Reform, declared – to cheers from other demonstrators and some spectators.

The group of demonstrators present was relatively small, with some waving the national Thai flag.

However, Mr Pichit predicted their number would grow over time, as more people stood up to show their opposition to the privileged treatment accorded Thaksin.

"Do not count us out Thaksin. This issue will definitely be triggered, because many people are thinking the same," he said.

The rally came amid speculation that Thaksin's name would be included in



Protesters gather outside the Justice Ministry in Bangkok on Monday (Feb 12). Photo: Bangkok Post

the list of prison inmates recommended for royal clemency that the Corrections Department was expected to hand to Justice Minister Tawee Sodsong on Monday.

"The truth is Thaksin was never in jail and he will receive a special pardon," Mr Pichit said, reading from a letter also calling for equal treatment for all in the justice system. "Officials have conspired on this issue."

Thaksin has been staying on the 14th floor of a wing of the Police General Hospital, ostensibly for treatment for serious illness. He was transferred there from the prison hospital less than a day after arriving back in Thailand last August after

15 years as a fugitive living overseas.

The swift transfer raised doubts whether he would ever spend a day in prison despite his sentencing in absentia on charges of abuse of authority while prime minister.

While there has been no confirmation of his pending release, his daughter Paetongtarn hopes to see him home soon and has prepared the family manor for his home coming.

Justice Minister Tawee was visiting the southern border provinces on Monday where demonstrators accused him of intentionally avoiding a meeting with them.

Bangkok Post



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Soi Dog teams up with Happy Doggo

Soi Dog Foundation

In a unified effort to transform the lives of Thailand's street dogs, Niall Harbison and his organisation Happy Doggo have joined forces with the renowned Soi Dog Foundation on a large-scale spay/neuter project which will see 2,000 dogs sterilised and vaccinated every single month.

Designed to humanely reduce the overpopulation of street dogs, stem the spread of disease between them and enhance their overall quality of life, the project launched into action in the Southern province of Surat Thani on Jan 30. On the first day of operation, 47 dogs underwent spay/neuter surgery and received life-saving vaccinations against diseases including rabies, distemper and parvovirus.

Carrying this momentum forward are two fully equipped mobile clinic teams who will move strategically around the province, humanely capturing then neutering and vaccinating street dogs before returning them safely to their territories. Together, the teams have the capacity to reach 90-100 street dogs a day – or over 20,000 a year – preventing an untold number of puppies from being born into short lives of suffering on the streets.

"There are somewhere between 8 and 15 million street dogs in Thailand. Mass sterilisation really is the only way to fix this once and for all," said Niall at the project launch.

"We've been working towards this project for months, and I'm so happy to see it in action. Soi Dog Foundation's vets, rescue officers and staff on the ground are just incredible. The amount of lives saved will be staggering," he added.

Based on the nearby island of Koh Samui, Niall has gained international renown for his work feeding, sterilising and treating street dogs, which he documents online. At the heart of his organisation Happy



Niall Harbison with rescue puppies ready to be vaccinated.

Doggo is a mission to fix the street dog problem on a global scale through sterilisation and emergency medical care.

This mission is shared with the Phuket-based Soi Dog Foundation, who have been advocating for the welfare of street dogs and cats in Thailand and across Asia for over 20 years.

Alongside rescue, treatment, adoption, education and community outreach initiatives, Soi Dog operates the largest spay/neuter and vaccination programme of its kind in the world, and last year became the first organisation in history to reach one million neutered and vaccinated animals.

"It's an absolute pleasure to partner with Niall and Happy Doggo to help spread the impact of this critical work even further and wider," said Soi Dog Foundation CEO Louise Rose.

"The more we join together and share experiences

and expertise, the closer we move towards the day we see an end to the suffering of stray animals in Thailand, in Asia and beyond. Ultimately, this is what we're all working towards," she added.

Neither Soi Dog Foundation nor Happy Doggo receive any government funding to carry out their work; both depend upon donations from animal lovers around the world who share their passion for improving the lives of homeless animals.

The two organisations look forward to working closely together to make a lasting difference to the lives of street dogs in Thailand, reducing their suffering humanely and effectively.

Happy Doggo is a registered UK Charity (1203875), founded in 2023. Their aim is to reduce the suffering of dogs worldwide, with particular focus on Thailand and Southeast Asia. They are privileged to have a diverse group of trustees, each of whom lend their unique expertise to guide Happy Doggo's growth. Contact: woof@happydoggo.com. Website: www.happydoggo.com

Established in Phuket in 2003, Soi Dog Foundation is Southeast Asia's largest organisation helping stray animals. Its mission is to improve the welfare of dogs and cats in Asia, resulting in better lives for both the animal and human communities, to create a society without homeless animals and to ultimately end animal cruelty.

The Gill Dalley sanctuary in Phuket is home to over 1,800 animals. Soi Dog also has a treatment facility in Bangkok and responds to crisis situations throughout Thailand. The organisation is dedicated to implementing effective, sustainable solutions that reduce the suffering of dogs and cats in Asia, runs entirely on donations and works efficiently so all donations are used to help animals as effectively as possible. Contact: info@soidog.org. Website: www.soidog.org



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AGENTS WELCOME





A Thai girl in Monet's garden



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel

baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

My diminutive Thai partner Pattie and I had travelled to Paris to take in the dramatic tourist attractions of that most contradictory of cities. Historically and artistically stunning, yes, but equally frustrating and downright annoying in many of its present guises.

Street protests and uncollected garbage, price-gouging and dismissive arrogance seemed to have become accepted parts of the current Parisian cocktail and I could sense that Pattie was becoming disenchanted. Like any first-time visitor, she'd heard so much about the City of Light and her naturally high expectations were being thrashed before my very eyes.

I decided a trip out of the city was called for and where better to head than the incredible gardens of that big, bearded botanical Impressionist painter Claude Monet in Giverny on the banks of the Seine some 60 kilometres northwest of Paris.

But how to get there?

An intriguing answer came from the eccentrically-named Fat Tire Bicycle Tour Company (www.fattiretours.com) who offered a full-day cycling trip to see, up close and personal, the fabulous flowers, ponds, bridges and water lilies that so inspired Monet's wondrous daubing.

Next morning, bright and early, saw Pattie and I joining a group of ardent Pedal-files assembling at the Gare Saint-Lazare for Fat Tire's full-day tour led by bouncy, pony-tailed Amelia who proved to be a foun-



tain of knowledge about French art, having acquired a degree in the history of art from Columbia University.

Our eclectic group included tattooed and abundantly pierced digital wanderers with selfie sticks akimbo, through to ardently bearded culture vultures, plus a brace of smiley American grandparents with real, old-fashioned cameras slung around their bobbing necks.

We piled aboard the train for an hour's ride west of Paris along the Seine, then disembarked and got kitted out with our bikes, which had been languishing in a riverside shed awaiting our arrival.

After a short briefing about how not to fall off our bikes, we rode to the country market in Vernon to buy our picnic lunch. This featured a fabulous selection of local produce including wondrous salads, meats, freshly-baked breads, cheeses to die for and of course flagons of local wines at low, non-Thailand tax rated, prices.

Pattie, being an excellent cook, was in her element. She, like many Thai girls, learned to cook at her mama's knee, the knee in question having been lo-

cated in the family home in the middle of Krabi Town. Couple that enviable early baptism into the culinary arts with a subsequent university degree in medical science, within which studying healthy nutrition was a prominent part, and you can understand Pattie's unbridled enthusiasm for superb, healthy foods.

We loaded up our backpacks with produce and headed off for a group picnic lunch on the banks of the Seine beside an ancient stone bridge surrounded by a 'gaggle' of garrulous ducks who were obviously well versed in the art of begging for morsels from gullible day-tripping cyclists.

Post-lunch we pedalled the short distance along the river pathway to the tiny village of Giverny and Monet's stunning house where we then spent a glorious few hours walking about Monet's famous gardens, lily pools and Japanese bridges, drinking in the riotous floral incandescence that inspired the master in his famous impressionist paintings.

The gardens are truly magnificent and one can understand why Monet dedicated so much of his time and genius to capturing on canvas these magnificent scenes. We saw the now water-logged punt, in which the great man used to sit for hours on end painting en plein air and the fairytale Japanese Bridge which he made so famous in his depictions of *Les Nymphéas*.

Now I may be a little biased in this, but I can't help thinking that if Monet had had the privilege of seeing this stunning Thai smile amidst his beloved begonias and roses, he would have immediately reached for his pallet and brushes and the result would have been a painting to rival that highly overrated smile of Leonardo's *Moaning Lisa*!

But as I say, I could well be a little biased.

'Bicycling' Baz Daniel has been penning his Blazing Saddles column, chronicling his cycling adventures in Phuket and beyond, since 2013.

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44. ___ of Maine (toothpaste brand)	24. Little League coach, often	52. Building block
45. Kind of dancer	25. Doom	53. Attention-getter
49. Wool source	26. Love feasts	54. Cambodian currency
52. Raised	27. Invoice word	55. In ___ (actually)
56. Castaway locale?	28. Camera part	57. Ottoman officer
58. Gem stone	29. Cheerful tune	
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1) Six; 2) 90%; 3) Joint Photographic Experts Group; 4) Irishman Samuel Beckett; 5) 112

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Source: Uberfacts

Brahminy Kite. *Photo by Simon Lomas*

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

Source: Wikipedia

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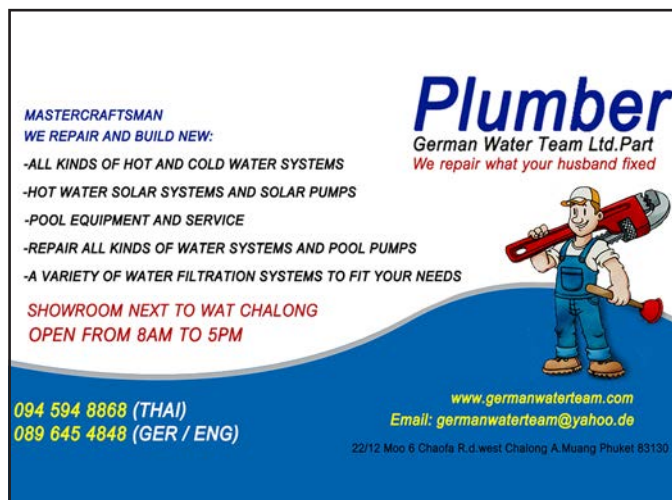
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MON 19 FEB

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www.shakersphuket.com
shakersphuket@gmail.com
FB: shakersphuket

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WED 21 FEB

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Oli: 081 891 4381
www.shakersphuket.com
shakersphuket@gmail.com
FB: shakersphuket

Wednesday 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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Grow Boating Evening
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FRI 8 MAR

International Women's Day Lunch

International Women's Day Lunch
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Volvo V60-2.0 Recharge T8 4WD Wagon. 2021. 48,xxx km. Turbo charged Supercharged 407 hp. Plug-in Hybrid - Gas - Full Electric. Black Onyx Metallic. Contact LINE ID: pma97139 Mr. Philip, Rawai

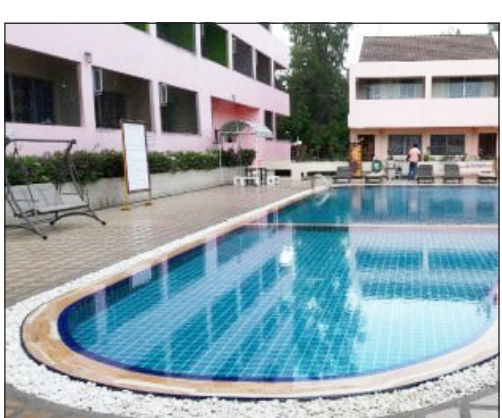
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JASON WINDER (DJ WILDER) MEMORY DAY

A group of close friends and family joined Nicky and James, sister and brother-in-law of Jason, to remember Jason's life in Phuket. Held at the Barcelo Coconut Island (formerly The Village Coconut Island) on Feb 3, friends from all over the island and some flying in from overseas all came together to celebrate the life of a true legend. Sawasdee Khrap Pee Nong Khrap.



GROW BOATING NETWORKING EVENT FEB 2024

An enthusiastic crowd gathered at the Boardwalk Bistro and bar on Feb 9 to enjoy drinks sponsored by Thailand Marine Guide and Lalizas Thailand. Grow Boating is a networking event centered around the local marine industry with people from all industries and sectors from across the island joining in for a great evening every month.



The Thai players with the trophy. Photo: Bangkok Post

Thais win All Asia Cup

POLO

THAILAND DEFEATED Brunei 6-3 in the final of the All Asia Cup 2024 at the VS Sports Club and Siam Polo Park in Samut Prakan last Sunday (Feb 11).

The victorious Thai team received the winner's trophy from Aimon Srivaddhanaprabha, the Chairperson of the King Power Group.

Thailand's Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha was named the Most Valuable Player.

The Thailand Polo Association (TPA), which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, organised the event, which featured teams from five countries – China, Brunei, the Philippines, Mongolia and Thailand.

Notable polo athletes involved included HRH Prince Abdul Mateen ibni Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, HRH Princess Azemah Ni'matul Bolkiah, HRH Prince Jeffrey Bolkiah and HRH Prince

Bahar Jeffrey Bolkiah of the Brunei national team.

Conducted for the sixth time this year in accordance with the vision of Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha to develop the capabilities of Asean polo athletes to be internationally recognised and broaden the awareness of the sport, the All Asia Cup stands as one of the most outstanding tournaments in Asia, said TPA president Kanoksakdi Bhinsaeng.

On the occasion of the anniversary, a special exhibition was held to showcase the TPA history, success stories and future aspirations following the vision of late Vichai, the founder and the first president of the association.

"We hope that polo will be one of the sports included in the SEA Games next year where we are aiming to win the gold medal after we won bronze in 2007 [Nakhon Ratchasima] and silver in 2017 [Kuala Lumpur]," Aiyawatt said. *Bangkok Post*

Hamilton shock Ferrari switch a 'childhood dream'

FORMULA ONE

AFP

Lewis Hamilton said his "childhood dream" to race for Ferrari fuelled his bombshell decision to agree to join the team next year.

Hamilton, a seven-time Formula One world champion, will leave Mercedes at the end of the 2024 season in a stunning switch to Ferrari.

The 39-year-old had signed a new two-year deal with Mercedes worth £100 million (B4.5 billion) last August.

But last week Hamilton activated a break clause to seal his move to the Italian team after admitting the prospect of "driving in Ferrari red" was too hard to turn down.

"It's been a crazy few days which have been filled with a whole range of emotions," Hamilton said in a statement posted on his social media channels.

"But as you all now know, after an incredible 11 years at Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team, the time has come for me to start a new chapter in my life and I will be joining Scuderia Ferrari in 2025.

"I feel incredibly fortunate, after achieving things with Mercedes that I could only have dreamed of as a kid, that I now have the chance to fulfil another childhood dream. Driving in Ferrari red. "Mercedes has been a huge part of



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton will join Ferrari in 2025. Photo: AFP

my life since I was 13 years old, so this decision has been the hardest I've ever had to make."

Hamilton won six of his world titles during a seven-year period between 2014 and 2020.

But the British driver has struggled to match Red Bull rival Max Verstappen since he missed out on what would have been a record world championship in 2021 in controversial fashion.

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff insisted he had no concerns over Hamilton's integrity ahead of his final season.

And Hamilton made clear his respect for Wolff and the Mercedes organisation as he said: "I'm incredibly proud of all that we've achieved together and I'm very grateful for the hard work and dedication

of everyone I have worked with over the years and of course Toto, for his friendship, guidance and leadership.

"Together we have won titles, broken records and become the most successful Driver-Team partnership in F1 history.

"But the time is right to make a change and take on a new challenge. I still remember the feeling of taking a leap of faith into the unknown when I first joined Mercedes in 2013."

Pledging to bow out on a high note with Mercedes, Hamilton added: "I am more driven than ever, I am fitter and more focused than ever and I want to help Mercedes win once again.

"I am 100% committed to the job I need to do and determined to end my partnership with the team on a high."

WINDOW ON PHUKET

February/March 2024 issue



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Ireland on course for successive Six Nations Grand Slam titles

RUGBY

IRELAND CONTINUED TO LOOK A class above their European rivals as they thrashed Italy 36-0 in Dublin last Sunday (Feb 11) despite coach Andy Farrell making six changes to his starting XV.

It was the first time Ireland had 'nilled' their opponents in a Championship game since a 17-0 win against England back in the 1987 Five Nations.

No team in the Six Nations era has yet won back-to-back Grand Slams, but following a 17th successive home victory in all competitions it is hard to see where Ireland will slip-up.

Elsewhere, Steve Borthwick praised England's resilience as they "found a way to win" after coming from behind to beat Wales 16-14 in a tense Six Nations encounter at Twickenham last Saturday.

England were losing 14-5 to Wales at half-time before full-back Freddie Steward inspired a rousing comeback to secure the win.

Never before had England been nine points down at home and still won.

Scotland were denied a perfect start to the Championship by a matter of inches and a questionable refereeing decision at the death in losing 20-16 to France, but Harry Paterson's brilliant Test debut offered some consolation.

The Edinburgh back was not even due



Jack Crowley scores for Ireland in their 36-0 win against Italy. Photo: AFP

to start until Kyle Steyn pulled out of the morning of Saturday's game to attend the birth of his child.

Paterson was making only his seventh start as a professional, not that his inexperience showed, even though he admitted to a moment of "panic" when he got the call from Scotland coach Gregor Townsend to start at full-back.

"It's one of the best debuts I've ever seen," said Townsend.

"Going up against that French backline on a wet day at Murrayfield, he was excellent. To play like that was fantastic and gives us a lot of encouragement about where Harry can go over these next few years."

Townsend's team are at home to England next Saturday (Feb 24) and even though Paterson faces competition from Steyn and the injured Blair Kinghorn, he may now be the long-term heir to retired Scotland full-back Stuart Hogg. *AFP*

Liverpool retain top spot

FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool returned to the Premier League summit with a hard-fought 3-1 win against relegation-threatened Burnley last Saturday (Feb 10) after champions Manchester City briefly replaced them at the top.

The Anfield side are hunting a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title in Jurgen Klopp's final season in charge but once again have relentless City snapping at their heels.

Liverpool were not at their fluent best against Vincent Kompany's men but did enough to get over the line on what Klopp called a "super difficult" day thanks to goals from Diogo Jota, Luis Diaz and Drawin Nunez.

City, who had earlier beaten Everton 2-0 thanks to a brace from striker Erling Haaland, are now two points behind Liverpool with a game in hand as they chase an unprecedented fourth consecutive English top-flight title.

Pep Guardiola's men have won their past 10 games in all competitions but the Spaniard was concerned with the way they laboured against struggling Everton, who remain in the relegation zone.

"We talked at half time and I told them, 'what do you expect, to come here and win 5-0? Come on. Life is tough and football is tough'."

Arsenal remain level on points with City in third place following a 6-0 demolition job against West Ham United on



Darwin Nunez scores Liverpool's third goal in the 3-1 win against Burnley. Photo: AFP

Sunday, with Declan Rice among the scorers on his first return to his former club.

Elsewhere, Brennan Johnson struck a dramatic winner in the sixth minute of stoppage time to fire Tottenham back into the top four with a dramatic 2-1 win against Brighton.

The teams looked set to share the spoils after Pape Sarr cancelled out Pascal Gross's early penalty in the 61st minute.

But South Korean star Son Heung-min, back from Asian Cup duty, teed up fellow substitute Johnson in the dying seconds to earn a vital victory.

"It's fair to say that we are still a work in progress but we had a world-class player in Son, who makes the most difficult ball look simple to set up Brennan," said Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou.

Newcastle beat Nottingham Forest 3-2 with Brazilian midfielder Bruno Guimaraes scoring twice for Eddie Howe's team. Newcastle climb to seventh in the table but Forest have now taken just one point from their past four matches.

Scott McTominay scored a late winner as Manchester United beat Aston Villa 2-1, while Conor Gallagher struck twice for Chelsea to condemn his former club Crystal Palace to a damaging 3-1 defeat on Monday.

Bottom side Sheffield United beat Luton 3-1 and Rodrigo Muniz scored twice as Fulham beat Bournemouth by the same scoreline.

Brentford saw off Wolves 2-0 courtesy of Christian Norgaard's first-half header and a fine team goal late in the game finished off by Ivan Toney.



'Madam Pang' elected Thailand football chief

FOOTBALL

NUALPHAN LAMSAM HAS promised to make an all-out effort to rid Thai football of its problems as soon as possible after claiming a historic victory to become the first woman ever to take over the helm of a national football governing body in Asia.

The Football Association of Thailand (FAT) presidential election concluded on Feb 8 with Nualphan grabbing 68 of the total 73 votes to take another slice of history by polling 93% of the votes – the highest ever in the 108-year history of the association.

The election also brought to an end the eight-year reign of Pol Gen Somyot Poompunmuang as the FAT president.

A beaming Nualphan, nicknamed "Madam Pang" by the

Thai media, said after her election: "There are a number of problems facing the association, and I and my team will start tackling them soon."

Speaking on the subject of financial problems being faced by different Thai league teams, Nualphan said: "In the first 100 days, I must say that Thai League 3 – or maybe every league – teams could face a lot of financial problems."

"We would need time to settle in the job and then there is the matter of receiving the remaining budget for the year from the outgoing administration."

"But rest assured that I have a capable team of council members to take care of the matter."

"As for the sponsors, we will be approaching people who love Thai football."

Bangkok Post

Mahomes inspires Chiefs to Super Bowl victory over 49ers

NFL

PATRICK MAHOMES PULLED OFF another Super Bowl comeback last Sunday (Feb 11) as the Kansas City Chiefs snatched a thrilling 25-22 overtime victory over the San Francisco 49ers to win their third NFL championship in five seasons.

In a perfectly scripted finale before a celebrity-studded Las Vegas crowd including pop icon Taylor Swift, Mahomes hit Mecole Hardman in the end zone with just three seconds of overtime remaining to seal a dramatic win in what was the longest Super Bowl in history.

The win makes Kansas City the first team to win back-to-back Lombardi Trophies in two decades, cementing the franchise's right to be regarded as the NFL's latest dynasty.

"It means a ton," Mahomes said. "With the adversity we dealt with this year and to come through, the guys never faltered."

Mahomes also warned the Chiefs' rivals that their latest win was just the start of their dynasty.

"We're not done," he said. "We've got a young team. We're going to keep this thing going."

For long periods, however, it looked as if Kansas City would be denied by San Francisco's ferocious defense.

Chiefs star Travis Kelce – the boyfriend of watching singer Swift – had a nightmare start to the game, at one stage blowing up



Kansas City Chiefs players and staff celebrate. Photo: AFP

on the sidelines at Kansas City head coach Andy Reid in an extraordinary outburst.

But with Mahomes pulling the strings, the Chiefs finally battled through a below-par performance to deliver when it mattered once more.

The quarterback coolly marched Kansas City upfield to the three-yard line, and then popped the winning pass to Hardman to seal victory.

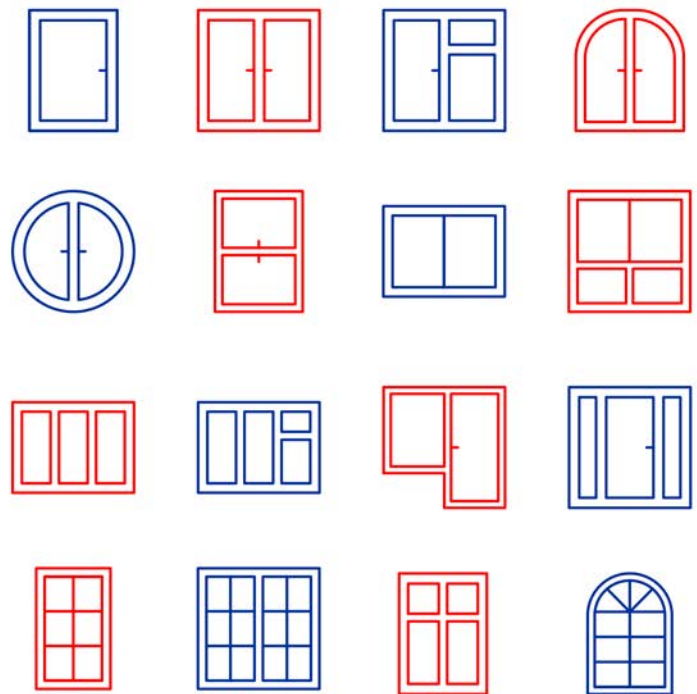
"Just the whole game was our whole entire season, the defense just keeping us in there and then the offense making plays when it counted," Mahomes said.

"I'm just proud of the guys. They kept believing. And I'm proud of the coaches for calling up those plays."

It marked the third time that Mahomes has led Kansas City back from double-digit deficits to win the Super Bowl, sealing his reputation as the heir apparent to the legendary Tom Brady. AFP



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Sport



Chiefs win Superbowl thriller > p15

FIGHT HUB

Phuket a top fight destination, says MMA legend



MMA legend Georges St. Pierre shows off his skills during a demonstration at Bang Tao Muay Thai & MMA gym. Photo: JP Mestanza

MMA

JP Mestanza
tv@classactmedia.co.th

The potential for Phuket to further cement itself as a premier destination for high-level combat sports is right there for the taking, according to Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) legend and former two-division UFC champion Georges St. Pierre.

As one of the longest-reigning UFC champions in history, along with multiple accolades in the sport, the French-Canadian knows a thing or two about what makes a champion fighter.

During a recent meet-and-greet session at the Bang Tao Muay Thai & MMA gym in January, St. Pierre spoke with fans and coaches from across the region to answer questions about his career, as well as the future of the sport.

The 42-year-old first retired from the sport in 2013, after successfully defending his UFC Welterweight title (77.27kg) for the ninth time in a row. However, he then came out of retirement in 2017 to defeat Michael Bisping via submission in the third round to win his second title, the UFC Middleweight title (84kg). Following this victory St. Pierre then immediately

retired for good.

In St. Pierre's eyes, Thailand has the framework, training and coaches necessary to become a destination for the best fighters in the world.

"In Thailand, they have a chance at the infrastructure to have places like [Bang Tao Muay Thai & MMA] that are incredible and could be accessible to everybody in the world, in a way that they can come here for a training camp, and they can learn," he said.

The island is already home to a litany of high-level, world-class fight gyms for fighters to ply their trade. In addition, Phuket has about three active Muay Thai stadiums in which

athletes can also choose to have striking battles any day of the week.

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

UNIQUE INSIGHT

St. Pierre is no stranger to the island, as the MMA legend trained under the watchful eyes of top-tier Phuket Muay Thai trainers Kru Yod Wilek

Sornnon and Kru Lamsongkram Chuwattana in 2012 and 2013. This familiarity with the training in Phuket's martial arts environment gives him unique insight into the prospects of the island's rising MMA scene.

Since 2013, Phuket has become a major hub for fighters worldwide, especially from Southern Russia and the Anzac region. With time, Phuket has also become the preferred training camp destination of several champion fighters plying their trade across several top-tier promotions, from ONE Championship to the Professional Fighters League (PFL) to the UFC. Several of

these fighters even call Phuket their full-time home.

During the Q&A session, St. Pierre spoke about the area's potential to attract top-tier combat sports athletes continuously, and the area's evolution.

"Of course, Thailand is known for Muay Thai, but you can also learn Jiu Jitsu, they can develop their skills. So it's no longer for Muay Thai, it's for everything mixed martial arts so I think it's very good.

"There's a lot of potential for fighters who come here for training camp, I think it's great for the sport, and increases the level of competition," St. Pierre concluded.

Inaugural Sri Soonthorn Half Marathon sees healthy turnout

RUNNING

CLOSE TO 1,400 PEOPLE participated in the Sri Soonthorn Half Marathon last Sunday (Feb 11), with organisers declaring the inaugural event a huge success.

Taking place at Baan Bang Niew Dam in Thalang, the event was split into four separate race categories, namely: a 3.5 kilometre 'walk for health'; a 5km fun run; a 10km mini marathon; and the 21km half marathon.

Competitors were not split by gender, with age divisions in each race category instead made up of under-19 years old, 20-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-49

years old, 50-59 years old, and 60 years and above.

Participants were made up of local Phuket residents, people from nearby provinces and from overseas, with Thais and foreigners all getting involved. A total of 243 people took part in the walk, 418 people participated in the fun run, 331 people entered the mini marathon and 406 people took on the half marathon.

Trophies were awarded to the top 10 finishing athletes in the men's and women's half marathon and mini marathon, while the top five male and female finishers in the fun run all also received a trophy.

Cash prizes were also awarded as follows: in the half marathon,



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

B2,500 to first place, B2,000 to second, B1,500 for third, B1,200 for fourth and B1,000 for fifth. First place finisher in the mini marathon received B2,000, second place B1,500, third place B1,200, fourth B1,000 and fifth B800. The

top finisher in the fun run received B1,500, B1,200 went to second, B1,00 to third, B500 to fourth and B500 to fifth.

The opening ceremony took place at 5:30am last Sunday at the designated race start point at Bang Niew Dam Reservoir, overseen by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat.

Governor Sophon was joined by Sri Soonthorn Mayor Chalermphon Kerdap, members of the executive race committee, local council members, selected heads of government agencies, village headmen, local residents, foreigners and local school children.

Mr Chalermphon expressed his delight at the successful organisational

tion of the event, the first of its kind in the Srisoonthorn area, stating it was a great initiative to encourage all local residents to use their spare time wisely to adopt a healthier lifestyle by taking up exercise.

Furthermore, Mr Chalermphon explained how the event would provide a welcome boost for tourism and the local economy by attracting participants from local provinces and foreign countries.

Mr Chalermphon acknowledged the high participation turnout for the inaugural event, adding it was a positive sign for the future that demonstrated the event will no doubt grow year-on-year to become a key fixture.

Eakkapop Thongtub