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# BOOKED

## CRACKDOWN SETS SIGHTS ON ILLEGAL HOTELS

Photo: PR Phuket

The Phuket News  
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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anutin Charnvirakul has ordered action against at least 19 tourist accommodation venues on the island deemed to be operating illegally as hotels.

Speaking at an event at Ley Phang Beach, where Anutin claimed victory in reclaiming beachfront land from illegal encroachers, the Deputy PM announced that 19 venues, totaling more than 800 guest rooms, were found to provide rooms on a daily basis in the style of a hotel but were operating without a hotel license.

Anutin said he became aware of the illegal hotels through information provided by the Kathu District Office, saying that many of the illegal hotels

were located in the Malin Plaza area in Patong, as well as other areas in Kathu District.

Anutin highlighted that his policy, and that of Deputy Minister of Interior Chada Thaiseth, was “to emphasise policies to organise society and suppress influential people”.

Therefore, he ordered the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA), under the direction of DOPA Director-General Orasit Samphan-tarat, to conduct a fact check on the information provided and investigate.

It was found that there were establishments that advertised and opened daily rooms in the style of hotels. The businesses collected room rent on a daily basis, but had no hotel business license, Anutin said.

“And the owner/administrator, most of them are foreigners. The inspection found 19 targets, totaling

more than 800 rooms,” he said.

Officials had been tasked with proceeding with the investigation in order to press charges against offenders, he said.

The investigating officers comprised officials from the Drug Suppression and Peacekeeping Operations Team (DOPA Force), the Department of Provincial Administration, Phuket Provincial Office, Kathu District Office, Phuket Provincial Police, Patong Police Station as well as officials from the Phuket Provincial Public Works and Town & Country Planning Office and from the Phuket Provincial Revenue Office, he added.

The official report of his announcement marked that illegally operating a hotel without a licence was punishable under Section 15 and Section 59 of the Hotel Act, B.E. 2004. If found guilty, the offender faces up to one

year in jail or a fine of up to B20,000, or both – and a daily fine of up to B15,000 throughout the period that the violation has continued.

“The actions of operators in this manner affect Thailand in various ways, whether it is safety and hygiene for the people who use the service, and the safety of the building that may have been altered without permission,” Anutin said.

“And in the economic aspect, there may be tax evasion and activities related to money laundering by foreign capital groups,” he added.

“In addition, some illegal foreign investor groups have monopolistic behaviour in attracting foreign tourists from the same nation to stay. This will affect local operators and operators with legal licences.

“The Department of Provincial Administration has therefore...

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# News



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## Free Phuket Town EV bus set for delayed launch

THE LAUNCH OF THE free electric bus service in Phuket Town has been delayed, and will now launch today (May 17).

The delay was announced by the local consortium of companies Phuket City Development Co Ltd (PKCD) on May 8. The service was initially announced to start on May 9.

“The Opening day of EV bus ‘The Dragon Line’ will be commenced on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024,” said the announcement.

“Apologize for the delay due to the licensing process, and thank you for your understanding and support,” the announcement added.

PKCD joined forces with the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation to launch the free air-conditioned electric bus service in Phuket Town.

The service, free for all local residents and tourists, will initially operate every day as a trial period. Buses will operate along a circular route every 30 minutes, from 11am to 10pm.

The bus route features 16 stops, as follows:

- Opposite Limelight Phuket
- CIMB (CIMB Bank)
- Phuket Terminal 1 (the old bus terminal)
- Royal Phuket City Hotel
- Opposite Pearl Hotel
- Kaset Market (Fresh Market)
- Office Mate
- Ko-Ang Seafood



Photo: PKCD

- Opposite Red Plaza
- Coffee talk (next to SCB Bank)
- Opposite Krunghthai Bank
- Islamic Bank
- Phuket Thaihua Museum
- Dibuk Rd
- Wat Mongkolnimit
- Limelight Phuket

Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, Chairman of the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation, noted at the project launch last month that the project was the result of “the problem of traffic congestion and the problem of insufficient parking in Phuket Town”.

“The project provides a travel option for tourists and local residents, and helps them choose to use public transportation, especially by using a clean energy vehicle,” he said.

“This project will use electric buses to reduce air pollution. This will help reduce the problem of carbon dioxide that is caused by air pollution as well and promote and support exchanges and connections between government agencies and the private sector, and related sectors,” Mr Bhumikitti concluded.

The Phuket News

# Campaign underway to target illegal hotels

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...integrated with relevant agencies to arrest illegal offenders, including in matters such as building modifications and building misuse, tax evasion and money laundering,” he concluded.

### A SOFTER APPROACH

While Anutin was speaking to the media at Lay Phang, Deputy Minister of Interior Chada Thaised and his entourage travelled to Patong in person to explain the investigations there.

Mr Chada explained that the investigations were launched following complaints submitted by Kathu District Chief Theeraphong Chuaychu.

In total, 21 properties were under investigation for operating without a licence, but only two were deemed to be “owned” by foreigners and managed by Thai people, Mr Chada said.

A key concern was work such as converting a commercial building into a hotel to provide services to the public, namely tourists, Mr Chada said.

Mr Chada also pointed out that a softer approach was being taken than Antunin was alluding to while speaking to the press at Ley Phang.

“We talked and understood with establishment owners and administrators in order to proceed according to the law correctly. Initially, wrongdoing was found. Therefore, comparisons and fines have



Photo: PR Phuket

been carried out according to the law along with recommendations to business owners to proceed correctly by contacting and enquiring with the local administrative organisation [Patong Municipality] and the Kathu District Office to find a solution together,” Mr Chada said.

“Operating a hotel business without a licence affects business operators who operate legally. They are robbed of their jobs and careers. In addition, illegal hotels may not have a security system. If there is a fire or incident in the hotel, tourists staying may not receive security protection and various rights of care and assistance,” he added.

“While visiting the area this time, we listened to opinions from business operators who have been stuck with problems regarding requesting a licence or being able to legally operate correctly. This information will be used to find solutions to solve problems together so that everyone can operate under

the same law,” Mr Chada noted.

“The Ministry of Interior has a plan to fix this. The overall city plan is modernised to keep up with the expansion of the economy and the context of the country,” he said.

Mr Chada’s closing remarks tacitly admitted all the ongoing issues local guest accommodation operators in Phuket have had to contend with to legally register as hotels.

Gen Anupong Paochinda, Minister of Interior at the time, on June 7 last year issued the required ministerial regulation change to allow small guest accommodation venues – namely “boutique hotels” – to be legally registered as hotels, as long as they complied with safety requirements.

The ministerial regulation change came into effect on June 20 last year.

Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT) President Chamnan Srisawat himself was in Phuket in June last year to head a two-day ‘SME Restart’ event, promoting the fact that small

hotels could finally register as legally recognised hotels.

However, Phuket remained the only province in the country where the bureaucratic mechanisms were not in place to allow small and boutique hotels to register to become legally recognised as hotels under the law.

The unexplained delay in Phuket officials allowing small hotels to register resulted in a delegation representing small hotel owners in Phuket appealing to the Senate for help in September last year.

Only in February this year did Kathu District Office finally have an online system through which operators could register to have their small accommodation venues legally registered as hotels.

Yet despite even that announcement, Wirintra Paphakityotphat, head of the Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT) Region 11 branch, which represents Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi, still had to include in a special request to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin during his visit to Phuket only last month for the central government to provide assistance to small hotels, pending follow-up and approval – concerning the determination of areas and environmental protection measures within Phuket by the end of April, as per a draft announcement from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

## UK Ambassador Gooding meets the Governor

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON Suwannarat welcomed British Ambassador to Thailand Mark Gooding to the island on May 7, with discussions focusing on tourist safety.

The meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall, was held to help develop relations between Phuket and the British Government, said a report by the Phuket branch of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

Governor Sophon emphasised the significance of safeguarding tourists, particularly in mitigating road accidents involving motorcycles and ensuring water safety, said the report.

The Governor also highlighted the collaborative effort between the Phuket Provincial Office and various consular representatives in disseminating vital information and

promoting cultural respect among visitors, the report continued.

Of note, the British Government does not have a consulate in Phuket.

Highlighting the positive contribution of British tourists to Phuket’s tourism industry, Governor Sophon noted that travelers from the United Kingdom ranked fourth in terms of number of visitors, and that very few British tourists were involved in crimes.

Governor Sophon reiterated Phuket provincial officials’ commitment “to nurturing a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors”, the PR Phuket report said.

With a focus on land, air and water safety, Phuket provincial officials have rolled out comprehensive measures aimed at minimising risks

for tourists, the report noted.

For land transportation, stringent regulations have been implemented, including thorough inspection of driver’s license documents and providing essential information about Phuket’s challenging road conditions, the report said.

Emphasis was placed on adhering to traffic rules, particularly the mandatory use of safety helmets, it added.

With regards to water safety, lifeguards are stationed along the beaches in three shifts of eight hours each, ensuring round-the-clock surveillance and swift response to emergencies, the report said.

The Phuket News understands that the only beach where there are any night patrols is at Patong, where

night patrols that include lifeguards are carried out through a project by the Patong Development Foundation, founded and headed by Preechavude ‘Prab’ Keesin, son of former Patong Mayor Pian Keesin.

Red flags warn tourists where swimming is prohibited due to dangerous conditions, namely strong rip currents, the report continued, though in reality the red ‘no swimming’ flags are often ignored.

Efforts are also underway to enhance safety protocols for activities such as parasailing, with the establishment of specialised associations dedicated to upholding security principles and safety standards, the report said.

The collaborative efforts between Phuket Province and the British



Photo: PR Phuket

Embassy underscore a shared commitment to prioritizing tourist safety and fostering sustainable tourism practices. As Phuket continues to welcome visitors from around the globe, these proactive measures aim to ensure a memorable and secure experience for all, the report concluded. The Phuket News



# Anutin declares war on local influential people

The Phuket News  
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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anutin Charnvirakul has declared a campaign to eradicate influential people, both Thai nationals and foreigners, in Phuket.

Deputy PM Anutin announced the campaign in front of an assembly of 550 officers at Phuket Provincial Police Station on May 9.

Addressing the need to tackle various forms of criminal activity, including drug trafficking, illegal gambling, human trafficking, and environmental degradation, Deputy PM Anutin emphasised the “urgency of the situation”, said an official report of the assembly.

He outlined a multi-pronged approach involving the deployment of special task forces at both provincial and district levels, comprising administrative officials, military personnel and law enforcement officers.

Among those present for



Photo: PR Phuket

the assembly were Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat and leading figures from national law-enforcement agencies.

Joining DPM Anutin were Deputy Minister of Interior Chada Thaiset along with, Oransit Samphantharat, Director-General of the Department of Provincial Administration; Pornpoj Penpas, Director-General of the Department of Land; Sayam Sirimongkol, Director-General of the Community Development Department; Gen Kriangkrai Srirak, Chairman of the Ad-

visory Group to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior; and Traisulee Traisanakul, Secretary to the Minister of Interior and spokesman for the Ministry of Interior.

Leading the Phuket contingent was Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, joined by heads of local government agencies, local administrative organisations (OrBorTor and municipalities), police officers and members of the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor).

Of note, at the assembly

Deputy PM Anutin was wearing his uniform bearing the official insignia of the OrSor featuring the White Elephant. As Minister of Interior, Deputy PM Anutin serves as the commander of the OrSor throughout the country.

The campaign is aimed at bolstering security and order in the Phuket area, Deputy PM Anutin said.

The campaign is focussed on organising social order and targeting influential figures. He also highlighted the government’s commitment to this cause under the directive of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin.

The operation, which involves more than 550 officials from various agencies, aims to swiftly address societal issues and clamp down on criminal elements plaguing the region. Special attention will be given to areas experiencing heightened criminal activities, with a focus on disrupting criminal networks and ensuring the safety and well-being of residents and tourists alike, Deputy PM Anutin said.

## British expat killed as van runs red light

LOCAL RESIDENTS IN Kamala have expressed outrage over the lack of action taken against a Phuket van driver who struck and killed a 65-year-old British woman on May 5.

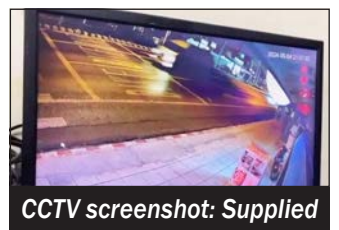
Zoe Luckett, a long-term resident in Kamala, was killed by a white passenger van at the main intersection in Kamala about 9pm.

The van driver had run a red light at the intersection at speed. After hitting Ms Luckett, and sending her body more than 20 metres down the road, the van came to a stop.

However, the speed of the van and the force of the impact killed Ms Luckett instantly. Regardless, an ambulance soon arrived and transported Ms Luckett’s body to Patong Hospital, where she was formally pronounced dead.

Kamala Police have yet to respond to or publicly recognise the accident. Police told local residents that the CCTV cameras at the intersection were not working, and hence did not record the incident.

However, CCTV footage from local businesses in the area has been refused by police, local residents told *The Phuket News*.



CCTV screenshot: Supplied

One source claimed that the driver of the van was not even subjected to an alcohol test.

“We want justice for Zoe first and foremost,” one local expat told *The Phuket News*.

“And secondly we want to highlight the danger of this main road that has become nothing short of a race track for taxis and motorbikes, with multiple deaths occurring here since it became a four-lane highway in the middle of a small town,” the expat noted.

“We need to push for traffic control (speed humps and signage) to stop these speeding idiots and stop any further deaths in our small town. How much is one life worth versus the small cost of installing traffic control measures,” he added.

Ms Luckett was a long-term resident expat living in Kamala for many years and loved by the whole community, the expat concluded.

*The Phuket News*

## Phuket 'Pride' to go on show

IN AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE inclusivity and stimulate tourism, Phuket City Municipality is gearing up to host its ‘Discover Phuket Pride 2024 @ Old Town’ festival. Scheduled for Saturday, June 29, the event aims to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community while driving economic growth in the urban area.

In announcing the event, Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas emphasised the collaborative effort between the municipality, government agencies, civil society groups and the private sector to make the event a reality.

The goal is to showcase Phuket as a welcoming destination for all and to foster understanding and acceptance of diverse sexualities in society, Mayor Saroj said.

“Phuket, known internationally as a tourist hotspot, embraces its status as a city open to various rights and diversities. Among these is the LGBTQ+ community, which advocates for the rights of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities,” Mayor Saroj noted.

The event aims to promote coexistence and equality by raising awareness about LGBTQ+ rights and fostering social acceptance. Pride parades, such as ‘Discover Phuket Pride 2024 @ Old Town’ are to held annually in June, designated as ‘Pride Month’ to commemorate the Stonewall Riots of June 1969, Mayor Saroj explained.

Scheduled to take place from 5pm to 7pm in the historic Phuket Old Town area, the event will feature a vibrant parade show-



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

casing the grand rainbow flag – a symbol of LGBTQ+ pride and diversity around the world. More than 300 participants have already registered to join the procession, highlighting the community’s enthusiasm and support, mayor Saroj explained.

In addition to the parade, the event will offer various activities organized by government agencies, private enterprises and community groups, including concerts by renowned artists, campaigns promoting awareness about sexually transmitted diseases and initiatives aimed at boosting tourism and the local economy.

“Discover Phuket Pride 2024 @ Old Town” promises to be a celebration of diversity, equality, and unity, reinforcing Phuket’s reputation as an inclusive and welcoming destination for all travelers. With its blend of cultural heritage, entertainment, and advocacy, the event is set to become a highlight on Phuket’s annual calendar, attracting visitors from around the world,” Mayor Saroj said. *The Phuket News*



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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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FRI MAY 17



High: +36°

Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT MAY 18



High: +36°

Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN MAY 19



High: +35°

Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

MON MAY 20



High: +35°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE MAY 21



High: +35°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED MAY 22



High: +37°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MAY 23



High: +36°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Suspect arrested for Soi Ta-ia acid attack

POLICE HAVE TRACKED down and arrested the suspect wanted for an acid attack on Soi Ta-ia in Chalong.

Officers arrested Chaeree Pantoh, 33, at a friend's rented house near Baan Samkong School, Chalong Police Chief Col Ekkarat Plaiduang confirmed.

Considering the nature of the attack, Phuket Provincial Police Chief Pol Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong ordered officers to expedite their investigation and to track down the suspect as quickly as possible.

Two teams of officers were assigned the case, with one team to gather the evidence required and obtain an arrest warrant, the other to track down the suspect, Pol Col Ekkarat explained.

The incident occurred at 11:20pm on May 7, he said.

The victim was a salesperson at a pharmacy, he added.

The culprit drove up on a motorbike, splashed acid onto the victim then fled on the motorbike, he explained.

Chaeree then sought medical attention at a hospital in Phuket Town before seeking refuge at a friend's place in Samkong, where officers arrested him, Pol Col Ekkarat said.

Chaeree has been charged



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

with assault causing serious harm, Pol Col Ekkarat confirmed.

A friend of the victim told reporters that Chaeree and the victim were not lovers, and never had been.

The victim was the object of Chaeree's desire. The feelings were not reciprocated.

"The two of them aren't lovers. They were just friends from the same district. Only he thought they were seeing each other," the friend said.

"The victim once told me that this man had a jealous, overthinking temperament," she added.

"I feel very bad about what happened to my friend. This man is very selfish. Even when they ate noodles [my friend] had to pay for it. She helped him with everything.

"This man is terrible... My friend is a beautiful person and has a good personality, and my friend had acid splashed all over her because of him," she said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Man confesses to shooting friend

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A 40-year-old man whose body was found in the jungle behind the Karon View Point late on May 5 was shot by a friend who thought he was a mouse deer.

Police were alerted to the discovery of the body at about 11:30pm. Officers arrived at the scene, in the jungle behind the Sabai Corner Restaurant, to find the body of Haschai Khaokhem, 40.

Police noted Mr Haschai's body was lying in an unusual position. His head was resting on his backpack. A head-mounted flashlight and a rudimentary pellet rifle lay nearby.

Mr Haschai's body was sent to Vachira Phuket Hospital, where forensic doctors confirmed that he had one bullet wound. The bullet had entered under the right armpit and came to a stop in Mr Haschai's mouth.

On learning the post-mortem results, police yesterday soon arrived at the home of Chana Chulak, 47, a resident of Khok Tanod Rd in Karon,



Photo: Karon Police

who was the last person to see Mr Haschai when the pair had gone hunting together on Saturday.

Mr Chana confessed that he had shot Mr Haschai, but by accident.

The pair were hunting in the dark at about 4am on Saturday when Mr Chana believed he saw a mouse deer through the undergrowth. He raised his homemade rifle (made to fire 12-gauge shotgun cartridges) and shot once, only to hear his friend Mr Haschai call out, "Brother! I'm hit!"

Mr Chana said he rushed to help his friend, but Mr Haschai was already unconscious. He placed Mr Haschai's shoulder bag under his head and began

performing CPR.

Unable to resuscitate his friend, he fled in fear of what might happen to if he were held responsible for his friend's death.

Mr Chana had remained at home, until police arrived at his house.

Police searched the house, and Mr Chana showed them where he kept his rifle.

He also took officers to where he had thrown into the jungle shotgun cartridges from his rifle and the clothes he wore on the day of the shooting.

Mr Chana was taken to Karon Police Station for further questioning and further legal action, police confirmed.

## Russian woman struck, killed by pickup on bypass road

A 23-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN woman was struck and killed by a pickup truck on the bypass road early Monday morning (May 13).

Phuket City Police were called to the scene, on the southbound lanes on the approach to the Samkong Underpass, at 2:17am.

Police and Kusoldharm Foundation rescue workers arrived to find a four-door Ford Ranger pickup registered in Khon Kaen stopped on the road.

About 15 metres away on the road was the body of the woman, wearing a black crop top and black pants.

Her body of the woman, identified as Karina Medvedeva, was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital.



Photo: Phuket City Police

During their initial investigation, police were told that the pickup was travelling southbound along the bypass road when the woman ran out onto the road. The driver was unable to avoid hitting her.

Police recorded the statement and contacted Russian consular officials in order to inform the woman's family of her death.

At last report it was understood that police were continuing their investigation into the accident.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Uzbek man drowns at Kata Noi

A 41-YEAR-OLD TOURIST FROM Uzbekistan has died after being caught in a strong rip current at Kata Noi Beach.

Sadullo Tashtemirovich Saidov, 41, was pronounced dead at Chalong Hospital on May 6. Karon Police were informed of his death at about 3:30pm.

Investigating Mr Saidov's death, Pol Lt Peerawat Yodtor of the Karon Police learned that Mr Saidov was among a group of 11 friends staying at a nearby resort. He checked in on May 5 and was to check out on May 12.

Mr Saidov went swimming alone at about midday on May 6.

Before going to swim, a security guard at the hotel warned him that it was a red flag area, meaning swimming was prohibited due to strong waves.

Mr Saidov ignored the warning and went swimming alone, police reported.

After less than five minutes in the water, Mr Saidov encountered difficulties. He was caught in a strong rip current and was being pulled away from the beach.

He called out for help and tried to swim back to the beach, but the current was too



Photo: TAC Phuket / file

strong. Tiring from his efforts, Mr Saidov lost his strength and floated face down in the water, police noted in their report.

Lifeguards managed to recover Mr Saidov from the water, but by the time they had him back on the beach he had a weak pulse, police reported.

The lifeguards administered CPR and called for rescue workers to arrive, but their efforts were unable to keep Mr Saidov alive.

With no pulse and unresponsive, Mr Saidov was rushed to Chalong Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival, the police report concluded.

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Deaths of dugongs spur action

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) Pol Gen Patcharawat Wongsuwan has ordered national parks officials and other marine wildlife officers to ramp up measures to protect dugongs, including in Phuket, after two dugongs, believed to be mother and child, were found dead washed ashore at Koh Mak Noi, near famed Koh Panyee, in Phang Nga Bay.

The order from Deputy PM Pol Gen Patcharawat was posted online by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) last Saturday (May 11), but the date of when the two dugongs were found dead was not reported.

DMCR officers arrived at the beach near Laem Pratok on Koh Mak Noi with Ao Phang Nga National Park officers to find that both dugongs were female. The larger adult female was 3.3 metres long, while the young female calf was 2.2m long.

Despite initial reports that the dugongs had been killed by an “accident”, namely by a boat



Photo: NNT

propeller, were unconfirmed, DMCR officers reported.

The officers found no wounds on the bodies, which were brought back to the Sireetarn Marine Endangered Animals Rescue Centre in Phuket for further examination in the hope of confirming the cause of death.

However, both dugongs had died very recently, officers confirmed.

The officers spoke with local villagers in the area to educate them about dugongs, which are understood to migrate from the waters off Trang

province to feed on seagrass in Phang Nga Bay.

Pol Gen Patcharawat called a meeting to order more to be done to protect dugongs, as he said at least 20 had been found dead in local waters since the beginning of the year.

Present in person to receive the order was former DMCR Director Atthaphon Charoenchansa, who now serves as Acting Director-General of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), and current DMCR Director-General Pinsak Suraswadi.

Also present was Chaiwat Limlikit-aksorn, Director of the Office of National Parks along with Permsak Kongkaew, who as the Director of the Conservation Area Management Office No. 5 (Nakhon Sri Thammarat) is also the chief of the Andaman Sea National Park.

Fishing in sea grass areas was strictly prohibited, Pol Gen Patcharawat said.

Also, boats are not to exceed speeds of 3 knots in known seagrass areas, and not to exceed speeds over 20 knots in any areas where

dugongs are known to inhabit, he added.

“We need to jointly analyse and find ways to determine measures to care for, protect and prevent injury and death of rare marine animals, especially dugongs,” Pol Gen Patcharawat said.

“Currently, dugongs are being stranded or dying. Due to global warming, seagrass resources, which are the source of food for dugongs, are deteriorating, resulting in the movement of dugong populations.

“They are moving to other seagrass areas where they may be a lot of water transport and fishing activities, which affects the livelihood and habitats of dugongs and death from water accidents can occur,” he added.

“At Hat Nappharat Thara-Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park, measures have been presented to preserve dugongs and seagrass beds in order to mark seagrass zones and risk areas that dugongs use on their migratory journeys to find food,” Pol Gen Patcharawat confirmed.

“As such, we need to create measures and guidelines for protecting dugongs and seagrass areas in the area

and have national parks make announcements to serve as an example of practice in the area and to expand the results to marine protected areas in the area in the future,” he said.

Marine officials were specifically ordered to ramp up patrols at protected seagrass areas to counter illegal fishing.

Pol Gen Patcharawat noted that the DMCR had identified 11 protected seagrass areas in Phang Nga Bay where such measures are to be carried out.

The two known protected seagrass areas in Phuket are at Ao Tang Khen off Cape Panwa and at Ao Pa Khlok, both off Phuket’s east coast.

The remaining nine known protected seagrass areas were given as: Ao Ban Khlong Khian, Phang Nga; Koh Mak, Phang Nga; Chong Lard, Koh Yao, Phang Nga; Ao Tha Pom, Krabi; Ao Nang, Krabi; Ao Nam Mao, Krabi; Koh Sriboya, Koh Pu, Krabi; Koh Lanta, Krabi; and Laem Sai, Krabi.

Any persons seeing illegal fishing in protected areas or any other activities that endanger dugongs, or see a dugong in distress, were urged to the DMCR Volunteer project on the hotline 1362.

## Deputy PM spotlights environmental concerns

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) Pol Gen Patcharawat Wongsuwan has called on local authorities to take measures to combat environmental pollution in Phuket and the surrounding waters.

Speaking during a visit to Phuket on May 8, Pol Gen Patcharawat expressed his concern over the accumulation of fishing net waste and monsoon debris, which pose a threat to both tourism and marine ecosystems.

He called on the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) to devise effective countermeasures to mitigate these issues and safeguard the region’s coral reefs from bleaching, said an official report of his visit.

Pol Gen Patcharawat on May 8 inaugurated the new Phuket Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Office. He spoke with local residents and heard their grievances, ranging from wastewater treatment to land allocation for housing in mangrove forest areas.

Ratsada Municipality council member Teera Phumchuai thanked Pol Gen Patcharawat for meeting with local villagers and hearing their complaints. However, he highlighted the pressing need to address coastal erosion and expedite the urban forest project for sustainable development.

In response, Pol Gen Patcharawat promised to expedite the “Mangrove Forest Ban Ao Kung, Tha Le, Lang Daeng,



Photo: PR Phuket

Phuket,” urban forest project by June, and emphasised the importance of community involvement in environmental conservation efforts, said the report.

Addressing wastewater treatment concerns, Pol Gen Patcharawat highlighted the need for collaborative efforts between the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) and local authorities to implement effective management plans.

He reiterated the government’s commitment to combating waste pollution, assigning the DMCR to tackle fishing net and monsoon waste issues ahead of the upcoming season to minimise environmental impact.

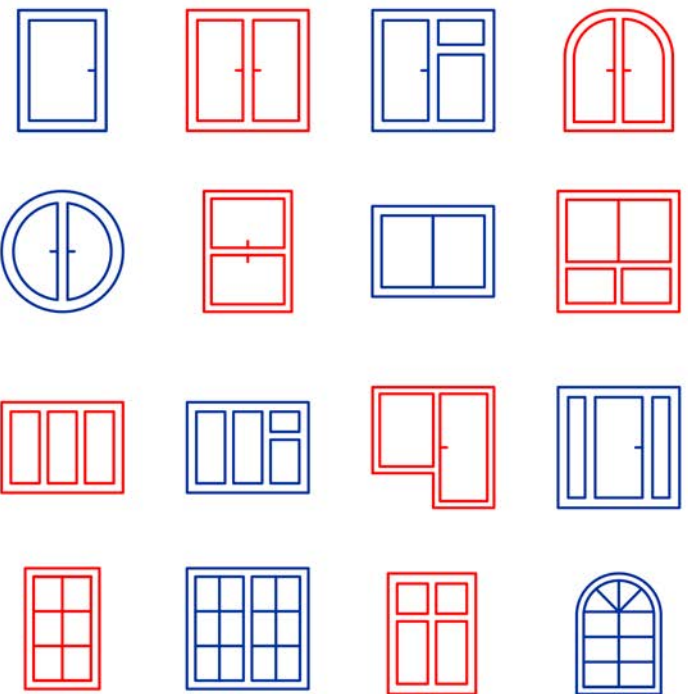
Continuing his tour, Pol Gen Patcharawat visited the Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center of the Upper Andaman Sea at Cape Panwa to assess coral bleaching and discuss sustainable solutions with village representatives.

He highlighted the importance of addressing coastal erosion in the Sai Kaew Beach area, and called for the planting of more trees to preserve the delicate ecosystem.

The Phuket News



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Photo: NNT / file

## Visa exemptions for India, Taiwan extended

THE CABINET HAS approved a proposal to extend visa exemptions for tourists from India and Taiwan for an additional six months to enhance the influx of foreign visitors and stimulate the economy.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin announced that the waiver that expired last Friday (May 10) would now continue until Nov 11, allowing travelers from these countries to stay in Thailand for up to 30 days per visit.

The extension capitalizes on the success of the initial visa waiver that started last November. Normally, tourists from India and Taiwan can stay for 15 days under a visa-on-arrival scheme; however, the extended waiver now allows a 30-day visit, doubling the allowed period.

In the first four months of 2024, Thailand welcomed over 12 million foreign tourists, a 39% increase from the same period in the previous year. Tourists from China, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea, and India made up half of the total arrivals this year, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

Tourism plays a vital role in Thailand's economy, supporting approximately 20% of total jobs and contributing about 12% to the country's GDP, which is estimated at B18 trillion.

The government plans to attract 80mn tourists annually by 2027, setting its sights on doubling the record numbers seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

*National News  
Bureau of Thailand*

# 'Seaplane tourism' set to take off by December

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Deputy Minister of Transport Manaporn Charoensri was in Phuket last week to chair the opening of a three-day workshop aimed at launching the country's first 'seaplane tourism' venture.

Ms Manaporn chaired the opening of the workshop, titled 'First Seaplane Operations Toward Thailand's Aviation Hub', at the Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach resort on May 8.

The initiative aligns with Prime Minister Settha Thavisin's policies aimed at boosting the national economy, enhancing air transportation efficiency, promoting seaplane operations to boost tourism, generating income for the country, elevating aviation standards, and positioning Thailand as a regional aviation hub, Ms Manaporn said.

Moreover, seaplane operations can play a vital role in medical support, public health and disaster relief efforts, she added.



Photo: PR Phuket

The aim is to accommodate the anticipated growth in passenger volume and flight frequency effectively, Ms Manaporn noted.

The Ministry of Transport is committed to implementing crucial policies to bolster the potential of the country's airports and air transport, as outlined in Section 1 of its operating policy "Transport opens the door for trade and tourism: Creating a hub for connecting all dimensions of travel", she explained.

"The policy involves promoting and supporting collaboration across all sectors to establish concrete seaplane

operations in Thailand by 2024. The workshop serves as a starting point for agencies, both public and private, to collaborate, exchange ideas, provide feedback, and ensure that seaplane operations adhere to international standards, laws, and national regulations for safe operation," she said.

Suttipong Kongpool, Director of the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), highlighted the CAAT's primary mission of regulating flight operation safety and airport standards.

"The CAAT is prepared to support projects related to sea airports and temporary

landing areas for aircraft on water. This marks the inception of setting standards and regulations for sea airports and temporary landings to align with international aviation standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization [ICAO]," Mr Suttipong said.

"The goal is to promote and develop seaplane operations in Thailand to meet international safety standards and issue licenses to support demonstration flights by December 2024, as per the Ministry of Transport's objectives," he added.

Nopasit Chakpitak, President and CEO of Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Co Ltd (Aerothai), said, "The workshop aims to foster understanding and cooperation among agencies regarding roles, duties, requirements, laws, regulations and coordination processes.

"This collaboration is crucial for advancing the aviation industry, boosting the economy, and positioning Thailand as the aviation hub of the region."

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## Phuket lures Middle East tourists at Dubai travel fair

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OVER 30 Phuket hospitality businesses travelled to Dubai last week to showcase the island's attractions at the Arabian Travel Market 2024 (ATM 2024).

Targeting high-spending tourists from the Middle East is among priority moves to offset the continuing seasonal declines in arrivals from Russia and Europe.

The ATM 2024 fair, from May 6-9, set a new record with more than 46,000 attendees from 160 countries over four days, surpassing the pre-event forecast of 41,000. This attendance included 33,500 "visitors", according to the event organisers.

Thailand's delegation was led by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Thapanee Kiatpaiboon.

With Phuket being a key destination for Middle Eastern tourists, the island's representation included over 30 hospitality stakeholders.

Leading the Phuket delegation were Phongsura Khuphongsakorn, Secretary to the President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), and Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, President of the Phuket Tourist Association (PTA).

"Visitors were introduced to various Phuket products tied to community tourism, such as Phuket pineapple pies, Tao Sor desserts, cashew nuts and Thai tea. There were activities for visitors to taste and get to know local products, which received a



Phuket hospitality businesses anticipate a boost in arrivals from the Middle East following their participation in Arabian Travel Market 2024. Photo: PTA

lot of attention from the attendees," stated the PTA in a post-event release.

The business-to-business component was also successful. The focus was on niche groups like luxury travellers, families and newly married couples, who are considered quality tourists with high purchasing power able to visit Phuket throughout the year, most importantly, in the low season.

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS) of Thailand, international arrivals in 2023 totalled 28.1 million, a 154.4% increase year-on-year, with 600,499 of those visitors coming from the Middle East (+98.8%). In the first quarter of 2024, total arrivals reached 9.3 million (+43.5%), with 88,024 from the Middle East (+12.2%).

*The Phuket News*







# Why Phuket needs quality tourism

## STEP BY STEP

Simon Causton

**T**alk to any local expat about life on the island and within the first few sentences we guarantee a gripe about traffic or overdevelopment. Expats and locals alike love living in Phuket with its beautiful beaches, lush rainforest and cosmopolitan vibe. However, the island's undeniable beauty has come at a cost. Unbridled mass tourism has cast a shadow over paradise, leading to environmental degradation, infrastructure strain and a dilution of the very essence that attracts tourists in the first place.

Phuket must prioritise quality over quantity in its tourism strategy. By attracting high-value visitors who appreciate the island's unique offerings, Phuket can ensure a sustainable future for its tourism industry, environment and cultural heritage.

### THE ALLURE AND ALLURE'S COST: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Tourism undeniably fuels Phuket's economy. It provides jobs for thousands of locals, generates revenue for businesses and contributes significantly to Thailand's GDP. During the COVID pandemic, the island suffered harshly due to a lack of visitors and their spending – as Phuket's tourism industry



Image: Simon Causton

contracted by 85%.

At the time of the pandemic, there were calls from all sides for the island to rebuild its tourism with an emphasis on quality over quantity. However, as is evident by the just-completed high season the sheer volume of tourists has pushed the island beyond its capacity. Overcrowded beaches, strained infrastructure and polluted waterways paint a stark picture of the consequences of unchecked growth.

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOLL

Mass tourism leads to increased waste generation, both on land and at sea. Plastic pollution which is so rife in

Thailand with no restraints on single-use items chokes coral reefs, while improper waste disposal contaminates water sources and disrupts local ecosystems. Uncontrolled development to accommodate tourist influx destroys natural habitats and displaces native wildlife.

### INFRASTRUCTURE UNDER PRESSURE

The island's transportation network is straining at the seams to cope with the constant influx of visitors. Traffic congestion plagues major roads, with lines of tourist minibuses and irate taxi drivers blocking the island's major arteries, tied with woefully insufficient public transport options force reliance on private vehicles, further exacerbating the problem. Water and electricity infrastructure also feels the strain, with frequent shortages and disruptions becoming a reality.

### A DILUTION OF CULTURE

The character of Phuket is slowly being eroded by mass tourism. Local traditions and customs are often commercialised to cater to tourists' expectations, leading to a loss of authenticity. The focus shifts from cultural immersion to mass-produced experiences, diminishing the very essence that makes Phuket unique. The huge residential development of most areas has led to rows and rows of white concrete squares and rectangles with no significant Thai design aspect.

### LEARNING FROM OTHERS: A GLOBAL TREND

Phuket isn't alone in facing these challenges. Popular tourist destinations worldwide, from Venice to Amsterdam, are grappling with the negative impacts of mass tourism. In response, many are implementing strategies to promote quality over quantity. Amsterdam, for instance, has enacted a ban on new hotels within the city centre to curb overcrowding. There have been protests by locals in the Canary Islands over the past few weeks about the region's policy toward tourists, with a desire to move to a more sustainable model. These examples serve as valuable lessons for Phuket.

### THE PATH TO SUSTAINABLE PARADISE: EMBRACING QUALITY TOURISM

The solution lies in a paradigm shift. Phuket's tourism industry needs to focus on attracting discerning travellers who value authentic experiences and

responsible practices. This shift has numerous benefits:

- **Reduced Environmental Impact:** Fewer tourists translate into less waste generation and a lower ecological footprint. Eco-friendly tourism practices can be nurtured, from promoting responsible waste disposal to supporting sustainable businesses.
- **Revitalised Infrastructure:** With a smaller tourist base, infrastructure can breathe a sigh of relief. Traffic congestion can be eased, and resources can be reallocated to improve existing infrastructure and develop sustainable transportation options.
- **Preserving Cultural Heritage:** Focusing on quality tourism encourages interaction with local communities and appreciation for their traditions. This leads to a more authentic cultural experience for visitors and fosters respect for the island's heritage.

- **Economic Benefits Retained:** High-value visitors often spend more on experiences, local crafts and quality accommodations. This ensures that the economic benefits of tourism reach a broader spectrum, benefiting local businesses and communities. This is not always a simple swap, we can't imagine many taxi drivers will look to retrain to serve higher-end quality tourists rather than their current 'easy option'.

### IMPLEMENTING THE SHIFT: A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

Shifting to quality tourism requires a multi-pronged approach, encompassing government regulations, industry initiatives and tourist education:

- **Government Regulation:** The government can play a crucial role by implementing regulations to limit tourist numbers, incentivise sustainable practices and discourage harmful activities. Zoning restrictions can protect natural areas, while regulations on waste disposal and water usage can promote responsible tourism.
- **Industry Initiatives:** The tourism industry itself needs to embrace the change. Hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies can collaborate to offer eco-friendly tours, promote local culture and prioritise responsible practices. Certification programs that recognise sustainable businesses can provide valuable incentives.
- **Tourist Education:** Educating tourists about the island's environmental and cultural sensitivities is crucial. Information campaigns can highlight responsible behaviour, promote sustainable choices and encourage visitors to respect local customs.

### EMBRACING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The island feels like it is at breaking point and now is the time to make a change and try to strike a balance between tourism and sustainability. By prioritising quality over quantity, the island can preserve its natural splendour, safeguard its cultural heritage and ensure economic prosperity for generations to come. A shift towards quality tourism isn't just about protecting the environment – it's about protecting the very soul of Phuket.

*Simon Causton is a long-time Phuket resident, founder of Citadel Phuket and author of 'The Phuket Periodical' newsletter. X (Twitter): @SimonCauston*

## Where to eat in PHUKET

May/June 2024 issue



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# Early green season on the beach

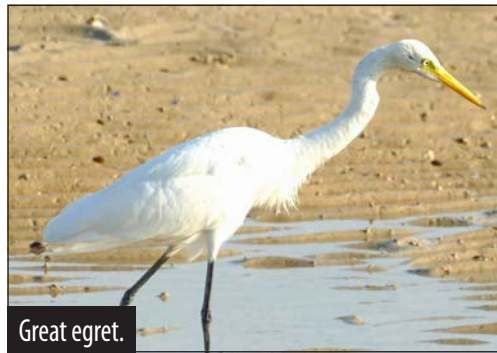
## NATURAL PHUKET

Simon Lomas

After the crowds of high season have gone and the craziness of Songkran is a long gone memory, the island of Phuket enters what's locally known as the 'Green Season'. In most holiday destinations when it gets quieter it's known as the 'off-season' or 'low season'. Here it's called the green season for a very good reason. The first rains have come and all the plants burst into life. The island becomes green again. It really is like the island is coming alive again.

Now the winds are starting to change and the weather is starting to come from the west/southwest directly off the sea into most of Phuket's beach resorts. The sea loses its blue colour and the waves start to roll in. The majority of the plastic chairs that have littered the beaches for the past five months have been packed away with just a couple of rows placed back under the shade of the trees. The small swimming pens for tourists have been removed as well as the two large jetties for the cruise ship passengers to come and go. Even the number of jet-skis that normally are strewn all over the beach in the high season have been reduced due to the surf and on shore winds.

The beach once again can be beau-



Great egret.



Greater sand plover.



Sparrow sand bath.



Pacific reef heron.

tiful and be home to all the wild sea birds here on Phuket.

Now every morning you will see birds like the Great Egret and Little Egret wading in the shallows feasting on the small fish. Both these birds are fairly similar to look at. They both fish by wading in the shallows. Both have bright white feathers and long black legs. The great Egret has a yellow or orange bill where the Little Egret has a black bill. The other difference as the name says the Little Egret is smaller. But if you do not know which is which as you do not have both together to

compare then the bill colour is the easy way to tell them apart.

Normally alongside the egrets you will find several charcoal grey wading birds. These are Pacific Reef Herons. These look similar to the Egrets but with dark grey feathers rather than white. They have black bills and dark legs with a yellow tinge to them. They, too, feed in the shallows on small fish, crabs and other shellfish. These birds also have very bright yellow eyes. Both the Egrets and the Herons if you walk slowly towards them you can get quite close, 15-20 metres if you are in a quiet

location, which makes for good photos. Both birds fly slowly and just glide above the waves effortlessly.

In the quieter areas you can also find small sandy coloured birds, normally not wading as the waves are too strong but paddling in the pools left on the beach. This is the Greater Sand Plover, which is by far the most common here. There are other types but to be fair I have not seen any yet. These you will find on the sand and shallow pools rather than in the actual sea unless it is a very calm day. They feed on small shellfish, insects and worms found in the sand. As long as you don't scare them and walk real slow so they can see you, you can get really close, maybe 10 feet (just a couple of metres) – so again these are good for a close look and some good photos.

As with most areas where you have people you also have pigeons and lots of sparrows all feeding on the leftovers that people leave on the beach. Sparrows here are quite entertaining to watch, hopping around in small groups and having sand baths in the shade of the trees. But as these birds are here in numbers all year round, I may come back to them another day.

So for now it really is worth going for a walk with the camera nice and early as the crowds have gone and the sun rises as about as early as it gets here on Phuket with it being sunrise around 6:10am. Then it's nice and cool, quiet and perfect for a stroll along the now clear beaches before breakfast.







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**Answers below, centre**

## Easy

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28. Red ink amount	4. Flea market deal	48. Civil rights org.
32. Nigerian language	5. Circus site	49. Paternity identifier
33. Crackerjack	6. Stand up to	50. Brilliant success
35. Female chaperone	7. Dead letters?	51. Conflict
37. Roundtable	8. Fit for farming	52. Circle overhead?
40. Like this puzzle	9. Bottled spirits	53. Auth. unknown
41. Reed section	10. Chatters idly	54. Holiday ____
member	11. Don Juan	55. Philistine
42. Atlantic catch	12. Oil grp.	56. Gay Talese's "____
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45. Match parts	19. Bill's partner in love	59. Hurt
46. Camp craft	23. Dump	

1) Pumpkinville; 2) Aesop; 3) Further away; 4) Anne Hathaway (m. 1582-1616); 5) 2004

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[illegible]

**Source: Uberfacts**

**ISLAND VIEW**

Kamala Beach. Photo by Alena Plotnikova

Kamala Beach. *Photo by Alena Plotnikova*

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Infamous American bank robbers Bonnie and Clyde are ambushed by police and killed in Bienville Parish, Louisiana.  
*Source: Wikipedia*



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### AustCham Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners

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AUSTCHAM THAILAND MEMBERS BRIEFING ON PRIORITIZING SKIN HEALTH IN A FAST-PACED WORLD FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS  
Friday 24th May 2024 17:00 - 18:00 hrs.  
Angsana Laguna Phuket (TBC)  
Free of charge for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members



### AustCham Thailand Members Briefing

Before Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners, join us for an insightful discussion at our AustCham Thailand Members Briefing on 'Prioritizing Skin Health in a Fast-Paced World for Business Professionals' from Bangkok Hospital Phuket & Siriroj on Friday 24 May 2024, 17.00 - 18.00 hrs at Angsana Laguna Phuket. Free for AustCham, partner Chambers' and Australian Alumni Members. Email - office@austchamthailand.com



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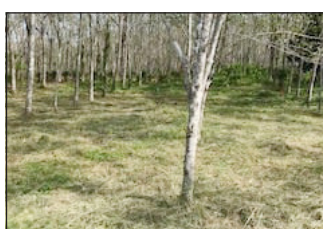
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## MASH CHARITY GOLF EVENT

Held at the Lakes Course at Blue Canyon Country Club on May 8, over 100 golfers hit off for a good cause. All proceeds went to the Phuket Special Education Center Kathu, Phuket Sunshine Village, Disabled Sailing Thailand and other deserving causes. A wonderful dinner followed the golf with prize giving to the individual and team winners, plus closest to the pin on all par 3s. Congrats to the organisers, sponsors and all players for a well arranged and fun event.

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## Former England cricketer Panesar to stand for election

### CRICKET

FORMER ENGLAND cricketer Monty Panesar is to stand at the next UK general election for the fringe Workers Party of Britain.

Party leader George Galloway, a left-wing fire-brand, has confirmed Panesar is one of 200 candidates the party is putting up for the vote.

Born in Luton to Sikh parents who emigrated from the Indian Punjab, left-arm spinner Panesar, 42, played 50 tests for England, taking 167 wickets between 2006 and 2013, becoming a firm fan favourite and a distinctive figure in the field in his black patka.

He will stand in Ealing Southall constituency, a majority Sikh area in west London, at the vote, which is expected to be held later this year.

To be elected, he will have to overturn a 16,084 majority set by Virendra Sharma from the main opposition Labour party at the last national poll in 2019.



Panesar in action. Photo: AFP

Panesar said he wanted to stand up for the working class and address Britain's increasing wealth gap, something he claims the current Labour party is failing to do.

"When I played for England there was so much support from the fans and the whole nation when they put me where I am today," he said.

"It's my turn now to actually help the working-class people, whatever problems they have. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting bigger and bigger."

The Workers Party has set out a 10-point programme, including a call for "an end to imperialist wars and financial domination, starting with withdrawal from NATO". AFP

## Minister hints at FIFA World Cup bid

### FOOTBALL

Bangkok Post

Thailand can still consider bidding for future FIFA World Cups says new Tourism and Sports Minister Serm Sak Pongpanit.

The ministry wants to promote sports tourism with a goal of generating B3.5 trillion in revenue from related activities this year, he said.

Mr Serm Sak said Thailand has a good opportunity to bid for the World Cup together with other Southeast Asian nations in the future after it hosted Southeast Asia's first FIFA World Congress this week (May 13-17).

Gongsak Yodmanee, Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), said a World Cup bid has been a long-term goal of the agency.

In 2019, Southeast Asian nations including Thailand agreed to bid for the 2034 World Cup, setting up a technical working group to prepare. However, the countries failed to develop a bid, with many supporting Saudi Arabia, which was ultimately awarded the tournament.

The 2026 World Cup will be held in Canada, the United States and Mexico. In 2030, Spain, Portugal and Morocco will host the majority of games, with one "celebratory game" each being held in Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay.

Hosting the 74<sup>th</sup> FIFA Congress is a significant milestone for Thailand as it becomes the first ASEAN nation and the fifth in Asia to organise the prestigious global football gathering.



Lionel Messi (centre) celebrates with teammates as Argentina win the 2022 World Cup in Doha, Qatar. Photo: AFP

Mr Serm Sak described the congress as a key international event, involving FIFA members from 211 countries and an audience exceeding 3,000 attendees, in addition to global television viewers. The event is expected to boost Thailand's tourism and showcase the nation's cultural heritage and hospitality, which is aligned with Thailand's 'Soft Power' strategy.

Football Association of Thailand President Nualphan Lamsam expressed her appreciation for the extensive support from the government and various agencies that enabled Thailand to secure the congress's hosting rights and a meeting to select the host country for the Women's World Cup 2027.

Mr Gongsak stated that FIFA's recognition of Thailand's capability to host an international event such as this would

foster greater interest and participation in football across the country, especially among the youth.

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) Director Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya also discussed the expected economic impact of the congress, predicting it would generate substantial revenue and employment opportunities.

He detailed that the event is projected to bring in about B228 million in revenue and add B126mn in value to the Thai economy while creating more than 160 jobs.

The TCEB director attributed the successful bid to a cooperative effort between the agency and the Thai Football Association, supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, under the "One Ministry One Convention" initiative.

## Thai athlete honored by Olympic Museum

### OLYMPICS

AGNESE 'CHOMPHOO' Campeol, an 18-year-old Thai athlete, has been honoured by the Olympic Museum with an exhibition of her sports outfits and equipment at the museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, on May 3.

Agnese secured the first medal for the Thai national team at the Winter Youth Olympic Games 2024 in Gangwon, South Korea, in January this year, clinching a silver in the women's monobob competition in bobsleigh.

Khunying Patama Leewadtrakul, a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) who is also the chairperson of the IOC's Culture and Olympic Heritage Commission, stated that Agnese and Thailand are highly honoured by the selection to showcase her sports attire and equipment at the Olympic Museum, under the guidance and coordination of the Culture and Olympic Heritage Commission.



Khunying (left) and Agnese. Photo: Bangkok Post

Agnese began her journey with the Ski and Snowboard Association of Thailand, where they actively sought athletes interested in participating in the Winter Youth Olympic Games. Her determination to compete led her to receive support from programs like the New Horizons Programme and the PyeongChang Legacy Foundation.

Following her landmark Olympic triumph Agnese expressed her emotions, stating, "I'm so confused, and so proud. I was a little bit nervous at the start, but I said to myself, 'I can do it.'"

Khunying Patama highlighted the historical significance of Agnese's medal for the Thai national team and emphasised that Agnese will serve as a role model for Thai teenagers, encouraging them to take an interest in the Winter Youth Olympics. Bangkok Post

## Olympics' future bright, says Bach

### OLYMPICS

DESPITE THREATS FROM climate change, AI-enhanced doping or competition from e-sports, the boss of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) believes the future has never looked so bright for his sports movement.

Thomas Bach, a 70-year-old German fencer, has run the Switzerland-based guardian of the Olympic Games since 2013 when interest in hosting the event was near rock-bottom after repeated scandals over costs and corruption.

Its diminished appeal was clear at the time of bidding for the 2024 and 2028 Summer Olympics when there were only two candidates, Paris and Los Angeles, who divided the honours between themselves.

Since then, the 2032 Games have been awarded to Brisbane, Australia, and Bach claims there are "double-digit" numbers of countries in the running for 2036.

"We have never been in such a favourable position. We have never seen such a high interest in hosting the Olympic Games," he said on Apr 27.

After a string of Games in Western democracies, 2036 could be an opportunity for Saudi Arabia, sole candidate for the 2032 FIFA World Cup; Qatar, a losing candidate for 2032; Indonesia or India.

"We are now 12 years away from



IOC President Thomas Bach. Photo: AFP

these Games, so it is way too early to comment on any of these interests," Bach replied when asked about Saudi Arabia and Qatar, whose human rights records would make them contested destinations.

Bach attributes the revival of interest in hosting the Olympics to reforms undertaken on his watch, which have sought to put an end to the wasteful spending that has near-bankrupted several host cities in the past.

Instead of oversized and gleaming new stadiums and facilities that often fall empty afterwards, the IOC now encourages the use of existing or temporary infrastructure.

An estimated 96% of the sport during Paris 2024, which begins on July 26, will take place in existing or temporary locations, while LA 2028 might reach 100%.

As a result, French organisers claim that their event will be responsible for around half the carbon emissions of previous editions in London 2012 and Rio in 2016.

Bach also stressed the importance of the ongoing revolution in artificial intelligence, which led the IOC to recently unveil a strategy to harness the computer technology to help athletes. But he warned too of the potential downside – of AI-powered medical advances enabling even more sophisticated cheating.

The development of e-sports is also creating a growing challenge for eyeballs, particularly among young people.

"I don't think that you will see e-sports events at the Olympic Games, but you may see very soon its own Olympic e-sports Games," he said. AFP



# Title comes down to the wire

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester City closed in on a fourth consecutive Premier League title by thrashing Fulham 4-0 last Saturday (May 11), while Burnley were relegated from the top flight after a 2-1 defeat at Tottenham.

There was no twist in the title race at Craven Cottage as goals from Phil Foden and Julian Alvarez added to two strikes from Josko Gvardiol.

Croatian Gvardiol could have become the first defender in Premier League history to score a hat-trick when City were awarded a penalty in stoppage time although he turned down the chance to take it, handing the ball to Alvarez to round off the scoring.

"My players like to play with pressure, they are used to it. The players enjoy this feeling," City manager Pep Guardiola said. "The destiny [of the title] is in our hands."

However, Arsenal are pushing the defending champions all the way after they won 1-0 at Manchester United.

Leandro Trossard's 20<sup>th</sup> minute goal secured the Gunners' first win at Old Trafford in 17 years to leave Mikel Arteta's men top of the league on 86 points, one ahead of City.

At time of press City still had to visit Tottenham to play their game in hand although, regardless of that result, either team could win the league on the final day of the season on Sunday (May 19).

Elsewhere, Liverpool confirmed their



Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol celebrates his second goal in the 4-0 win at Fulham. Photo: AFP

third place finish following a pulsating 3-3 draw with Aston Villa on Monday while Spurs kept their chance of Champions League football next season alive by coming from behind to send Burnley to the Championship.

"Today the Premier League is over but tomorrow we start day one of doing everything we can to get back to the Premier League," said Burnley boss Vincent Kompany.

Luton will also almost certainly be back in the Championship next season after blowing a 1-0 lead and losing to West Ham in David Moyes' final home game in charge of the Hammers.

"These players and supporters have given me the best 18 months of my life,"

said Luton manager Rob Edwards, who broke down in tears after full-time. "It's a huge sorry, but a huge thank you."

With Luton set to join Burnley and Sheffield United in going down, all three promoted clubs will be relegated to expose the growing gulf between the top two divisions.

Nottingham Forest missed the chance to mathematically confirm Luton's relegation by blowing a late lead to lose 3-2 to Chelsea while Crystal Palace's stunning form since the arrival of Oliver Glasner as manager continued with a 3-1 win at Wolves.

In other games Abdoulaye Doucoure scored as Everton beat Sheffield United 1-0 while Brentford beat Bournemouth 2-1.



PM Srettha meets former Liverpool players Steve McManaman, Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen at Government House on May 3. Photo: Bangkok Post

## PM touts Liverpool-Man Utd legends match

### FOOTBALL

THE GOVERNMENT IS keen to bring retired football stars from Liverpool and Manchester United to play in Thailand, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin confirmed earlier this month.

The prime minister raised the possibility of a match featuring legends of the storied English Premier League clubs in talks with three former famous Liverpool footballers at Government House on Friday, May 3.

"We are ready to be a destination for football fans in the region," Mr Srettha, an avid Liverpool fan, wrote in a message posted on his X account.

The government aims to make Thailand a hub of sports and entertainment events to rival Singapore, which sealed an exclusive deal for six concerts by superstar Taylor Swift in Southeast Asia earlier this year.

Mr Srettha said there could possibly be more than one match between players from the two clubs: one group aged between 40 and 50 years and another comprising over-50 players.

The three former Liverpool legends – Michael Owen, Steve McManaman and Robbie Fowler – were visiting to promote the club's activities in Thailand at an event organised by the marketing agency Influos that ran from Friday, May 3 to Sunday, May 5.

Bangkok Post

## World Rugby ditches scrum option from free-kick

### RUGBY

TEAMS WILL NO LONGER be able opt for a scrum when awarded a free-kick as one of three law changes designed to make rugby union more entertaining, World Rugby announced on May 9.

The new rules take effect from July 1 and so will be in force for England's two-Test tour of New Zealand that month.

Officials hope removing the scrum as an option will encourage more open play with free-kicks having to be either kicked or tapped.

Another change concerns when players are put onside during kicks in open play, meaning anyone offside must now try to retreat, creating more space in which to play for the opposition.

Under the existing rule, referred to as the 'Dupont Law' after the France scrum-half Antoine Dupont exposed the loophole in the previous wording, players in an offside position were



Photo: AFP

able to advance forward once an opponent caught the ball and ran five metres or passed the ball.

The upshot was prolonged bouts of 'kick tennis' which often proved frustrating to watch for spectators.

The third and final change announced was the banning of the 'crocodile roll' – the potentially dangerous act of rolling a player who is on their feet out of the tackle area. The offence will now be punished by a penalty.

World Rugby has also announced the trial of a revised red card process that will be observed in competitions such as the

WXV women's tournament and the Pacific Nations Cup.

It will see automatic bans applied for red cards involving foul play, while a player sent off can be replaced by another player from the bench after 20 minutes, restoring a side to its full strength of 15 players.

"I believe that the law amendments and suite of closed trials will add to the entertainment factor," said World Rugby chairman Bill Beaumont.

"As with all trials, we will comprehensively review their effectiveness and take feedback from across the game," the former England captain added. AFP

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# Sport



Thais eye  
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## GAME ON



### Phuket readies for popular Rugby 11s tournament

Local favourites the Phuket Vagabonds will be looking to impress once the tournament gets underway. Photo: Supplied

#### RUGBY

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A recently renovated Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang is gearing up to play host to the highly anticipated Amora Hotels & Resorts Phuket International Dimbulla Rugby 11s Tournament next month.

Teams will be flying into Phuket from across the region to join local sides and take part in the hugely popular event across the weekend of June 7-9 which has a truly worthy cause at heart – raising funds for the Asia Center Foundation scholarship fund for underprivileged children.

The Athena Siam Coffin Dodgers vets kick off the tournament on Friday, June 7, while Bank Muamalat Bullets

and Dingo's Rugby, last year's winners in both the men's and women's open divisions respectively, will be back to defend their titles.

With teams from Australia, the Middle East, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Thailand competing, it promises to be an action packed weekend at one of Asia's premier social rugby events. With 16 teams in the Open tournament, 12 teams in the vets tournament and eight teams in the over 45s, along with an expanded Ladies rugby competition, rivalry will be fierce on and off the pitch.

The Men's Open Tournament will see 16 teams competing in four groups of four teams with a round robin stage of three games per team on the Saturday and a minimum of two games per team during the knockout

stages on Sunday's final day of competition.

The Ladies Open will see eight teams competing in two groups of four teams with a round-robin stage of three games per team on the Saturday and a minimum of two games during Sunday's knockout stages.

Teams confirmed so far for the Men's Open include: Groote Eylandt Mudchicks and Swamp Dogs Rugby, both from Australia; Ningbo Rhinos from China; USRC Tigers and SCAA Causeway Bay-watch RFC, both from Hong Kong; South Klang Dragon Rugby Club (SKDRC), Bank Muamalat Bullets and Sembilang Drua Rugby, all from Malaysia; The Hyde Street Gulls from New Zealand; Pronto Rugby from the UK; Raw Dogs from the United States; dual UK/USA team

Renegade Rugby; and the Bangkok Bangers, Bangkok Southerners, Chiang Mai Cobras and local favourites the Phuket Vagabonds representing Thailand.

Teams confirmed so far for the Ladies Open include: Kafrine Lakour from Reunion; Sandy Phoonanis from Hong Kong; KL Tigers and Dingoes RC, both from Malaysia; and Thailand's Bangers Belles.

Teams confirmed so far for the Athena Siam Coffin Dodgers Over 35s include: HFTT from Australia; the Asian Japanese Dragons representing the broader Asian region; the HK Bulls from Hong Kong; the BROB Parametric Peregrine from Malaysia; the Chiang Mai Cobras and Phuket Viagrabonds from Thailand; Barrelhouse Rugby Club from the UAE; and Pronto Rugby from the UK.

Teams confirmed so far for the Whitesmiths Group One Foot in the Grave Over 45s include: the Asian Japanese Dragons representing broader Asia; the Grafton Big River Bullrouts, Pally Pigs and Moorabbin Rams, all from Australia; the HKFC Contemptibles from Hong Kong; the KL Tigers from Malaysia; the San Miguel Wanderers Wrinklies from Singapore; and the Taipei Silverbacks from Taiwan.

The groupings and draw will be posted on Macooco.com once all entries are in and will be updated game by game as the weekend progresses.

The highest standards of health, safety and support will be in place with full, ongoing access to drinking water, ice and electrolyte powders to help rehydrate and combat

the heat across the weekend, while massage tents will help soothe weary limbs.

Medical facilities will be run by the Bangkok Hospital Siriroj. Basic attention at the ground is covered but more serious injuries that need hospital attention will need to be paid for so insurance coverage is strongly urged for all participants.

In addition to the onfield action, this year's event sees the return of the popular Tour Virgin Beauty Pageant, which will be held on the Saturday evening at the Amora's NORA Beach Club at Bang Tao Beach with a buffet and live musical entertainment for all teams to enjoy.

For more details on all of the above and anything related to the tournament please visit the Phuket International Rugby 10s Facebook page.

## First Chinese Muay Thai training tourists arrive under 'Special Visa'

#### MUAY THAI

THE FIRST GROUP OF eight Chinese tourists has arrived in Phuket to learn Muay Thai under 90-day 'Non-Ed' visas as part of the country's policy to promote 'soft power'.

Led by Paitoon Chutima-kornkul, advisor to the Prime Minister and the sports sub-committee, a delegation of officials extended a warm welcome to the arrivals at Phuket International Airport on Saturday, May 4.

The introduction of the Non-



Photo: PR Phuket

Immigrant ED Visa, commonly known as the 'Non-Ed' Visa, allows a 30-day addition to the previous allowance of 60 days, Mr Paitoon said.

As such, the new visa avoids the necessity of visitors to return home or travel to other countries for visa

extensions, allowing the Muay Thai students to continue their training uninterrupted, he added.

The policy by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin to develop and promote Thailand's 'soft power', including Muay Thai, has garnered

significant traction, Mr Paiboon noted.

Representatives from several countries have engaged with the Sports Authority of Thailand's (SAT) Board of Boxing Sport, which stands poised to provide comprehensive assistance to program participants in navigating requisite documentation, he said.

Mr Paitoon underscored the program's potential to elevate the global prominence of Muay Thai, concurrently fostering broader appreciation for Thailand's sporting endeavours on an international scale.

Meanwhile, Pimol Srivikorn,

an advisor to the Prime Minister and chairman of the sports sub-committee within the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, explained that the SAT and his sub-committee had conducted a second trial to grant certificates to Muay Thai teachers to allow them to teach overseas.

Eleven candidates had passed the trial, he said.

"They will be teaching Muay Thai from tomorrow [May 5] to Thursday in Saudi Arabia, which is interested in bringing in Muay Thai trainers from Thailand," Mr Pimol said. *The Phuket News*