

RUSSIANS JAILED FOR B30MN KIDNAP, EXTORTION > PAGE 3

## PALMED OFF



Photo: PR Phuket

## HUNGRY CATERPILLARS THREATEN TREES AT ICONIC LAEM PROMTHER VIEWPOINT

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat has ordered officials to ramp up their efforts to save palm trees from dying at the popular tourist viewpoint Laem Promthep, overlooking the southernmost point on the island.

The trees are a key component at the iconic viewing spot and over the years have been part of the scenic attraction that has drawn millions

of visitors, but they are now under serious threat of being destroyed by caterpillars that are continuing to eat away at the palms.

Before Songkran, Governor Sophon led a team of agricultural experts and other officials to inspect the site and demanded that immediate action be taken to eliminate the problem. If remedial action could not be taken, the trees might die off and ultimately have a detrimental impact on Phuket's image in the eyes of tourism.

Joining Governor Sophon were

Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos, Jarasri Khamphirasingh of the Phuket Provincial Agriculture Office, along with the Mueang District Chief and a host of public sector officials.

The palm trees are synonymous with one of Phuket's most famous landmarks and it would be devastating to lose them to such pests, Governor Sophon said.

The caterpillars have been even more prevalent of late due to the lack of rainfall in the area, which continued for several months, he added.

Ms Jarasri explained that black-headed caterpillars, which increased in intensity as food plantations developed across the country, feed off palm trees, specifically coconuts, sugar palms, dates, areca nuts and palm oil.

Once an outbreak of the caterpillars is detected the leaves of the tree will turn brown and wilt, similar to those affected by termites. Once the outbreak occurs it can spread rapidly and be devastating to the ultimate health of the trees, she said.

The method for containing and...

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Governor gets heavy with water plan



### LIFE PAGE 7

Phuket Veterans Dawn Service to honour Anzacs



### SPORT PAGE 12

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# News



**Immigration joins business raids > p4**

## Woman charged for dumping kittens

Soi Dog Foundation

A Thai woman has been charged with animal cruelty and fined B10,000 after abandoning 42 kittens by the side of a road in Mai Khao.

The kittens were discovered by staff from Soi Dog Foundation, which operates a sanctuary for stray dogs and cats in the district. Sadly, 12 of the kittens were found dead on arrival.

CCTV footage captured the incident which took place on Oct 6, 2023. In the video, 'Ms.A' can be seen removing the kittens from the cargo bed of her pickup truck before fleeing the scene.

The kittens had been crammed into small, uncovered cages and driven over 200 kilometres during a rainstorm. Veterinary checks confirmed that the surviving kittens were fatigued and dehydrated due to the distance



The surviving kittens were fatigued and dehydrated due to the distance travelled and exposure to adverse weather conditions. Photo: Soi Dog Foundation

travelled and exposure to adverse weather conditions.

During a subsequent investigation carried out by Soi Dog's Social Change team, Ms A confessed that she had taken the kittens from a temple in Surat Thani before embarking on the journey to Mai Khao.

Soi Dog's Social Change

team visited the temple and discovered that the kittens had been under the care of a local monk. He provides daily support for temple cats and dogs, working alongside local volunteers to spay/neuter and vaccinate them. He was deceived by the intentions of Ms A, who claimed that she had already found prospective

owners for the kittens, and that she would be delivering them to their new homes.

When questioned, Ms A claimed that she was unaware her actions were against the law and that she felt sorry for the kittens and merely wanted to help them.

Sakdapol Thongjan, Soi Dog's Social Change Man-

ager, reiterated that every dog and cat can live happily in their own community if there are animal feeders in the area to support them. In the interest of animal welfare, they should also be spayed/neutered and vaccinated to ensure that they are in good health and to protect everyone from the spread of disease, including rabies. Moving animals to a shelter does not provide a long-term solution for their care.

"We understand that Ms A wanted those kittens to have better lives, but she went the wrong way about it, and the act of dumping them is illegal. Furthermore, driving them for such a long distance is an action without any concern for their welfare," Mr Sakdapol added.

Following the investigation, the Phuket Livestock Development Office filed charges against Ms A under the Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animal Act. She

pleaded guilty and received a B10,000 fine along with a criminal record.

Established in Phuket in 2003, Soi Dog Foundation is South-east 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.

# HAND OVER THE KEYS, NOT BIG FEES

## COMMISSION-FREE FLAT RATE SALES

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## Officials scramble to save palms

Continued from page 1

...destroying the black-headed caterpillars involves cutting the leaves on the lower part of the tree where the pests tend to be more prevalent and burning them. This is also known as the 'Karma method', Ms Jarasiri explained. It is crucial that trees impacted by the pests are not removed and re-planted elsewhere, she added.

The Phuket Agricultural Office has also started releasing 200 Bracon Hebetor parasitoid 'minute wasps' per rai throughout the area each evening at dusk for a limited time, which will also help control the black-headed caterpillar problem.

Chemicals could also be injected into the tree's trunks or sprayed onto the leaves by injection to help eradicate the pests, Ms Jarasiri said. An insecticide crop protector known as emamectin benzoate distributed at a dose of 30 millilitres per tree is especially effective, she added.

Mayor Aroon explained that Governor Sophon had instructed him to work with



Photo: PR Phuket

local government, the provincial agricultural office and local district leaders to stamp out the threat from the caterpillars by being extra diligent and surveying all local areas to ensure there are no more outbreaks.

Mayor Aroon specifically urged farmers in the area and owners of old plantations to check the trees in their areas to ensure their plots do not become breeding grounds for the pests.

Funds have been allocated to deal with the issue and initial action will see leaf cutting and burning to try and eliminate the threat, Mayor Aroon added.

This is not the first time officials have had to fight to keep the trees alive at Laem Phromthep. A huge replanting at the iconic viewpoint was carried out in 2010 because the palms were "too old" and being eaten by insects.

The saplings, each about two metres tall, were provided by the tourist-popular Nong Nooch Botanical Garden in Pattaya, while the sugar palm seeds were provided by the Rawai Elders Club.

Then in 2019, Nong Nooch Botanical Garden was called in again, this time to provide 70 sugar palms.



# Water management plan ordered from the top

The Phuket News  
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Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat has ordered local officials to deliver their plans for water management for the coming wet season – and to make sure there is enough water supply for the dry season next year – so the provincial water plan can be submitted to the Office of Natural Water Resources (ONWR) by the end of the month.

Governor Sophon last week gave officials until Wednesday this week (Apr 17) to submit their plans. The order came at Phuket Provincial Hall on Apr 9 during a video conference meeting with ONWR Secretary-General Dr Surasri Kidtimonton, who chaired the meeting from the ONWR headquarters in Bangkok.

Joining Governor Sophon for the meeting were Phuket Vice Governor Norasak Suksomboon; Sophon Thongsai, Head of the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM-Phuket); and Suthiphong Suwandechakul, Assistant Manager of Phuket branch of the Provincial Waterworks Authority (PWA).

The need for a water-management plan for the coming wet season and the dry season next year was described as “urgently needed to solve the problem”.

“The problem is readiness, uniqueness



DDPM-Phuket Chief Sophon Thongsai inspected the reservoirs just before Songkran to review the situation. Photo: PR Phuket

and desire to request budget support,” said an official report of the meeting.

The sudden urgency came in the days leading up to the Songkram festival, when the ONWR reported that the Bang Wad reservoir in Kathu was only 24% full.

The Klong Kata reservoir in Chalong at the time was 34% full, but the Bang Neow Dum reservoir in Srisoonthorn was still about 52% full.

Not mentioned in the official report were any concerns about Phuket hosting many more tourists next year. The

current goal is for Thailand to welcome 36 million tourists in 2024, generating some B3.5 trillion in tourism revenue.

During the ‘Ignite Tourism Thailand’ policy launch earlier this month by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, Tourism and Sports Minister Ms. Sudawan Wangsaphakijkosol said, “In 2025, Thailand’s tourism is set to experience growth on an unprecedented scale.”

The national tourism policy aims to make Thailand a global aviation hub, handling more than 150 million air travellers annually by 2030.



The five arrested in January. Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

## Russians jailed for kidnap, extortion

FIVE RUSSIAN MEN charged with kidnap and extortion of a Russian couple in Phuket Town in January have each been sentenced to serve two years in jail.

The Phuket Provincial Court confirmed the guilty verdict and the sentencing on Apr 10.

The men, not named in the court announcement, were each originally sentenced to four years’ in jail, but their sentences were halved as they had plead guilty to the charges, the court noted.

The five were arrested by police after Belarusian national Albert Viviankou, 23, and his wife were abducted in Phuket Town on the evening of Jan 31. A group of men forced them into a black Hyundai minivan and took them to a house near the Naka Market.

The gang then forced the

couple to transfer US\$801,200 (nearly B30 million) in an unspecified cryptocurrency. The Belarusian man and his wife were then released unharmed not far from the abduction scene.

With the couple safe, police moved in and arrested the men and seized evidence from the scene.

Although the court statement did not name the men, reports by police at the time of their arrest named the gang of five as: Zalm Nalchikov, 37; Oleg Bogdanov, 30; Azamat Nagoev, 36; Islam Abdokov, 29; and Aslan Abazov, 36.

In its statement, Phuket Provincial Court noted that although the Russian men were tourists, they had committed a serious offence.

The jail terms are to be served with hesitation, the court noted. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

## US Ambassador visits Phuket

US AMBASSADOR TO Thailand Robert F. Godec visited Phuket earlier this month as part of the US Embassy’s Consular Outreach Visit to Phuket and ‘Town Hall’ meeting held at The Westin Siray Bay Resort.

While in Phuket, Amb Godec also met with Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat to discuss topics ranging from tourist safety to Phuket’s effort to become a special administrative area.

Accompanying Amb Godec were Consul-General Kathryn Flachsart and other officials from the US Department of State. Representing Phuket at the meeting on Apr 4 were Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Col Teerawat Liamsuwan along with senior officers from Phuket Immigration, Phuket Tourist Police and other relevant agencies.

The US Embassy officials “arrived to introduce themselves and discuss the issues of tourist safety, especially regarding sexual assaults and crime,” said an official report of the meeting.

Other topics discussed included the implementa-



Amb Godec at the meeting with Gov Sophon and Col Teerawat. Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

tion of the visa exemption program for US nationals and Thailand’s readiness to counter and mitigate the effects of various disasters.

Officials briefed the US Embassy delegation on these topics, with an emphasis on creating safety and orderliness in Phuket to promote the island as a tourism destination.

Phuket officials also requested Ambassador Godec’s support in informing American tourists about the importance of correct behaviour and adherence to Thai laws “to allow citizens and tourists to live happily in Phuket.”

A report by Phuket Provincial Police highlighted the issue of Phuket’s effort

to become a special administrative area with more freedom in budget allocation for provincial development.

As part of his visit, Mr. Godec enjoyed a sunrise run, spent time by the sea, visited the Thai Hua Museum and the Mai Khao Turtle Sanctuary, and delved into Phuket’s history.

“Terrific visit to the Phuket Thaihua Museum today! Learned about the fascinating history of Phuket from our very knowledgeable young guides, who spoke excellent English. Did you know Phuket was once called Jungceylon? The name dates all the way back to 1511,” the US Embassy quoted Amb Godec as saying.

*The Phuket News*

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED APRIL 24



High: +37°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU APRIL 25



High: +36°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Imported goods face VAT

Bangkok Post

Following a mandate from Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, the government looks set to impose a 7% value-added tax (VAT) on imported goods valued from B1 up, commencing in May.

Goods sold for less than B1,500 per parcel and imported to Thailand are currently exempt from VAT.

Speaking after the weekly Cabinet meeting on Apr 9, Deputy Finance Minister Julapun Amornvivat said the Finance Ministry and the Revenue Department have made progress and are finalising relevant legislation.

Legislation on VAT collection is expected to be completed by May, said Mr Julapun.

"The prime minister emphasised for a second time VAT must be collected for goods valued less than B1,500 per parcel," he said.

"VAT collection is to ensure fairness for small businesses in Thailand, as both foreign and domestic operators will have to pay taxes at the same rate."

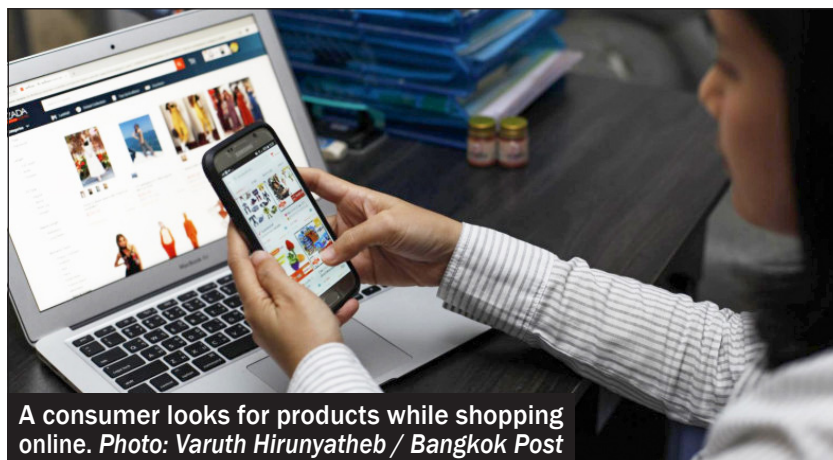
According to Mr Julapun, the new initiative should also increase government tax revenue.

## LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Thanawat Malabuppha, honorary president and advisor of the Thai e-Commerce Association, said the new measure should improve the competitiveness of local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

An influx of low-priced Chinese goods have flooded into Thailand, with warehouses in the country allowing swift delivery to local consumers and VAT exemption.

The Chinese products are sold on e-commerce platforms such as Lazada



A consumer looks for products while shopping online. Photo: Varuth Hirunyatheb / Bangkok Post

and Shopee as well as social commerce channel TikTok Shop.

The majority of popular products priced below B1,500 comprise mobile accessories, gadgets, power banks, clothes and utility products.

Mr Thanawat said Chinese suppliers authorised both local and Chinese distributors to sell products on e-marketplaces, resulting in price competition at the expense of local SMEs.

He said collection of VAT on these goods should reduce the trade deficit with China, which is B1 trillion per year.

Paul Srivorakul, chief executive of aCommerce, a leading e-commerce enabler, said the government implemented this policy because it helps protect local businesses from unfair competition.

The new rule ensures that all goods, regardless of origin, are subject to the same tax standards, levelling the playing field for local products and domestic businesses, he said.

This move should increase government revenue through import duties and VAT, said Mr Paul.

This revenue could be significant

given the volume of low-value imports, as e-commerce accounts for 15% of retail value today, he said.

However, enforcing the duties on low-value goods might complicate customs procedures, potentially slowing the import of legitimate goods and affecting businesses that rely on imported products, said Mr Paul.

Lazada, Shopee and TikTok Shop benefit greatly from cheap imported goods, but may face challenges if the new rule affects consumer purchasing behaviour, he said.

However, the benefits to local SMEs and the Thai economy far outweigh the impact on Chinese e-commerce platforms and local consumer sentiment, said Mr Paul.

Thailand also needs a simplified tax structure, possibly a flat-rate tax model for low-value imports to ease the administrative burden on customs and businesses, he said.

Another concern is whether the customs process is data- and technology-driven, said Mr Paul.

"I'm sure the government has an automated system for declaring, assessing and collecting duties," he said.

"These systems are key to stream-

lining processes at scale, and most importantly will reduce the opportunities for misdeclaration and evasion."

## FAIRER COMPETITION

Sangchai Theerakulwanich, president of the Federation of Thai SMEs, said the move is a fresh attempt to promote fair trade.

Importers could previously undercut Thai SMEs, which are required to pay the levy, he said.

Cheap imports are usually ordered online, causing local sellers who cannot compete to shut down, said Mr Sangchai.

Some SMEs need to adjust by adopting importation of goods, he said.

Mr Sangchai also wants better state monitoring of border trade following reports that some sellers avoided customs duties by smuggling goods into Thailand from neighbouring countries.

The government cannot only focus on goods ordered via e-commerce channels, he said.

"Thai entrepreneurs are already at a disadvantage because goods, especially from Chinese manufacturers, have lower costs," said Mr Sangchai.

"We need measures to protect our SMEs."

The Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) stressed earlier SMEs need better protection against the flood of cheap Chinese products to maintain their competitiveness.

Some products require inspection because they may not meet safety or environmental standards, said the FTI.

The import of Chinese products has caused some local manufacturers, especially SMEs, to reduce production by 50%, said Kriengkrai Thiennukul, chairman of the FTI.

## Immigration joins business raids

PHUKET IMMIGRATION HAS confirmed its role in the raid on the Octopus restaurant in Chong Talay earlier this month, and confirmed that a second raid had been conducted at ST Accounting in Chalong.

The confirmation came through a slew of announcements posted on the Phuket Immigration official Facebook page on Apr 8.

Phuket Immigration recognised that it had joined the raids on Apr 4, specifically naming the Octopus restaurant and ST Accounting as the targets in two raids.

Of note, none of the reports of the raids posted by Phuket Provin-

cial Police, Region 8 Police or even the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) mentioned Immigration officers or ST Accounting.

Phuket Immigration noted in its posts online only one arrest as a result of the raids, that of a 'Mr Pavel', 47, which was already openly noted in police reports.

The raids were conducted with the intent of enforcing the Foreign Business Act, with special focus on the illegal use of nominees, Phuket Immigration explained.

ST Accounting has already come under close scrutiny for setting up companies using nominees following a raid by Department of Special

Investigation (DSI) officers in June last year.

DSI Director General Pol Maj Suriya Singhakamol, in Phuket to lead the raid, explained that the company was under investigation for its involvement in facilitating nearly 70 foreigners illegally operating companies with holdings worth an estimated total of B440 million.

In its slew of posts online, Phuket Immigration confirmed that nine other businesses were inspected for illegal use of nominees. The inspections by officers from the DSI, Phuket Immigration Phuket Provincial Police, the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports Office and Phuket Tourist Police.



Photo: Phuket Immigration

The businesses were named as: 1) Sea Sunday Co Ltd; 2) Travanta Travel Co Ltd; 3) Crystal Cruise Co Ltd; 4) Joy Joy Scuba Co Ltd; 5) BBS-Tour Co Ltd; 6) AIM Diving Co Ltd; 7) HF Solutions Co Ltd; 8) Marlin Fishing Club Co Ltd; 9) Andaman Diving and Travel Co Ltd.

No offences were found, Phuket Immigration confirmed.

The Phuket News



# Bracing for refugee influx

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Thailand is prepared to accept 100,000 refugees fleeing fighting in Myanmar after rebel forces seized control of Myawaddy, a border town opposite Tak's Mae Sot district, according to Foreign Affairs Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara.

Speaking after a meeting on Apr 9 about the Myanmar situation between Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, the chief of the defence forces and the army commander, Mr Parnpree, said the government had made necessary preparations to accommodate an influx of refugees in safe areas temporarily.

"If the number of people fleeing the conflict exceeds 100,000, agencies concerned have assured us that they can still manage the situation," he said, noting the Foreign Affairs Ministry plans to hold talks with other countries to seek assistance if needed.

The meeting was held to assess the situation in the neighbouring country after the Myanmar government sought permission for Thailand to allow three special flights from Yangon to Mae Sot to evacuate Myanmar military officials and their families to safe areas.

Mr Parnpree said the meeting also discussed the border trade situation after a 30% drop in activity in Mae Sot district.

He said the Thai-Myanmar border remains open, but if the fighting disrupts the transportation of goods, routes will



Karen refugees on the bank of the Salween River along the Thai-Myanmar border. The Thai government says it will take 100,000 fleeing the ongoing war in Myanmar. Photo: Bangkok Post

be shifted to other border provinces, such as Ranong.

According to the foreign minister, Mr Srettha has also ordered the establishment of a committee, with himself as chair, comprising representatives from the National Security Council (NSC), the Foreign Affairs Ministry, and security agencies.

He said a subcommittee will also be formed to assess the situation regularly so critical issues can be relayed swiftly to the central committee. Citing the Thai embassy in Yangon, he said there were presently no reports of violence in Myawaddy.

Mr Parnpree insisted the government allowed Myanmar aircraft to land in Mae Sot district for humanitarian reasons, following a request made through the Myanmar embassy in Thailand.

He went on to say that the request was for the transport of civilians and documents, not military personnel, weapons or cash assets from state bank branches in Myawaddy, as reported by some media outlets.

When asked about possible peace talks in Myanmar, Mr Parnpree said that Thailand would do its best to promote dialogue regardless of any difficulties.

Mr Srettha posted on X on Apr 9 that the government's policy on Myanmar is to ensure peace and stability in the neighbouring country for the mutual benefit of the people of the two nations.

He said Thailand will provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict, mitigate possible impacts on the country and set up a working committee to ensure these measures are implemented efficiently.



Photo: Department of Provincial Administration

## Cabinet endorses casino report

### BANGKOK

A SPECIAL HOUSE COMMITTEE report on legalising entertainment complexes with casinos in Thailand was endorsed by the Cabinet on Apr 9.

The entertainment complex project is one of the key elements in the government's "fun economy" sector, which includes tourism, sports, entertainment venues and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) businesses.

The Cabinet proposed entertainment complexes should be based near international airport to cater to international visitors and that a "casino tax" should be created and imposed to subsequently enable the government to help a wider range of people in society.

The Cabinet also suggested the government should not be the sole investor in such a project, or else it could face new budgetary burdens. It is ideal

to have joint investments with several private partners and grant them a concessionaire in exchange.

The Cabinet also remarked that a specific government organisation should be set up to deal with possible negative impacts of the proposed entertainment complex, while a specific law should be passed for use to regulate this new business directly.

Public participation and public hearings will also need to be conducted to decide whether the government should proceed with the proposed casino proposal.

The House committee's report was met with strong objections from a large group of university academics who warned that legalising casinos in Thailand could do more harm than good.

The Ministry of Finance was also assigned to conduct an additional study on the feasibility of the investment, which must be done within 30 days. Bangkok Post

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**Answers below, centre**

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5. Reply	the Year winner	26. ____-tzu
9. Founder of PLF	59. Flip over	27. Hostel
14. Succulent plant	60. Indian music	28. Plath, for one
15. Weapon	61. Cathedral area	29. Approval
16. Disinclined	62. Hospital cry	30. Cantina cooker
17. Old time city in	63. Eagerly excited	33. Ran, as colors
Central China	64. Money, slang	34. Statement of
18. Letter opener	65. City north of	belief
19. So much in	Cologne	35. Vaccines
Spanish	66. Priestly title	37. Judge
20. 1978 Record of	67. Commotions	38. Even so
the Year winner		39. Joyful
23. Wine cask	Down	
material	1. Bills	exclamation
24. Declare	2. Mixture	40. Draw upon
25. Err	3. Alternative to a	43. Free (from)
29. W. C. Fields	fence	44. Aquatic rodents
persona	4. The "B" in N.B.	45. Some solvents
31. ____ judicata	5. Porter	47. Fodder
32. Asian capital	6. Command to a	49. English 101
33. River in Mexico	dog	subject
36. 1974 Record of	7. Calf's meat	50. Weighed down
the Year winner	8. Prefix with scope	51. Energy
(with "I")	or meter	53. Animal catcher
41. Weatherspoon of	9. Some singers	54. "Minimum"
the W.N.B.A.	10. Swine	amount
42. Dessert	11. Online ad	55. Well known Lady
sandwiches	12. Duds	56. Newspaper piece
43. Chill	13. Young swine	57. Olympics city
46. Promising words	21. Title role for	after St. Moritz
47. Bandage	Susan Sarandon	
48. Spot	22. String bean's	58. Realizes

## Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) Two; (2) Roland Garros; (3) Golden Horde; (4) Hamilton, Canada (1930); (5) Skype

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F	O	C	E	L	I	R	O	R	E	R	N

**Source: Uberfacts**



# ISLAND VIEW

Rising sun at Saphan Hin. Photo by Sutharat Husted

Rising sun at Saphan Hin. *Photo by Sutharat Husted*

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Source: Wikipedia



# A day for remembrance

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

**P**huket Veterans (PV), formally known as the International Veterans Association (IVA) will hold a Dawn Service on Kamala Beach for Anzac Day next Thursday (Apr 25).

Anzac Day is a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that broadly commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders "who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations" and "the contribution and suffering of all those who have served". More recently, the annual event, commemorated at locations around the world, remembers all those who have fallen in military conflict.

The service next Thursday will be held on Kamala Beach near the police station from 5:20am to 6:30am. Dress for the occasion is smart casual, and service medals can be worn, explained Phuket Veterans (IVA) President Wayne Scanlan.

"I sincerely hope to see as many people as possible at the Dawn Service. There is plenty of parking and public toilets are available. At the completion of the service we will retire to a closely watering hole for a traditional Anzac breakfast," he added.

Phuket Veterans hold services for Remembrance and Anzac days each



Kevin and Gus Mansfield at the 2023 Anzac Day Dawn Service last year, joined by the then Australian Consul-General for Phuket Matthew Barclay. Photo: Supplied

year. "Prior to and during these days, 'Poppies' are sold to raise funds for the Royal British Legion (UK) and the Returned Service League (Aus). This is called the Poppy Appeal," Mr Scanlan explained.

"The money raised helps these organisations provide support to Veterans as well as providing maintenance to the many war grave sites around the world. The support given by all who donate, ensures that veteran support for those that need it, as well as the remembrance of the fallen. Phuket Veterans fully support both of these organisations."

Phuket Veterans (PV) was formed on the island only a handful of years ago. The members are a group of like-minded serving and former members of the armed forces from around the world that come together during our social events and support each other

when needed.

"We also support the local community through our Crisis Response Program. We have several members from the emergency services, such as firefighters, police officers and paramedics as members of our group," Mr Scanlan noted.

Mental health and wellness of former servicemen and women is also a priority for the community group. "Our ethos and main focus is to provide Mental Health support to Military Veterans & Emergency Service personnel," Mr Scanlan said.

"To this end, Phuket Veterans are raising donations to create a Mental Health Counselling Room where individuals can attend to receive the support they require. Four of our members have recently completed their [FAA Level 2 in First Aid for Mental Health]

so we can assist in helping our members and others when needed.

"If you would like to help us raise funds for this facility, you can purchase a Phuket Veterans 'Lest we forget 2024' pin from several outlets around the island. Heroes bar, Aussie bar, Expat Sports Bar and the Halfway Inn Restaurant, all in Patong, will have these pins available at B120 each. They will also be available for purchase at the Anzac Dawn Service. All funds go directly to this initiative," Mr Scanlan noted.

A key development of the Phuket Veterans has been its 'Crisis Response Team', namely in the event that a disaster like the tsunami of 2004 occurs again, Mr Scanlan also pointed out.

"Phuket Veterans conduct regular training in first aid, search and rescue, rope safety, water rescue, ground to air emergency signalling, fieldcraft and self reliance," he said.

"We conduct this training so we can be of assistance to the local authorities if requested. We have recently opened up our Crisis Response Training to non-veteran volunteers and ran our first course for them in February. The feedback we received was excellent," he added.

Phuket Veterans will conduct another free training day in June. People interested in attending the free training are asked to send an SMS to 089-5870819 so they can be contacted by the Phuket Veterans' CRT Coordinator.



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## UFE PHUKET MONTHLY NETWORKING EVENT MARKS NEW AWARD

UFE Phuket held its monthly networking event on April 9 at Pickleball Club Kathu, the friendly monthly evening of UFE Phuket was enhanced by the presentation of the UFE world of mutual aid trophy, awarded to UFE Phuket. Congratulations to the members, who, thanks to their membership and participation, contributed to the award. Another great evening, with good appetisers from Kim's Café and the warm welcome from the Pickleball and UFE teams.



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The **map** of PHUKET English 中文 Русский

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**PHUKET BIKE WEEK 2024**  
Amazing Experience Ride Together

### PHUKET BIKE WEEK 2024 Amazing Experience Ride Together

One of the biggest motorcycle events in Asia, will celebrate the 28th Anniversary on 19th-20th April 2024 at Patong Beach. This event will be bring together riders and motorcyclists, expecting to draw over 5,000 motorcycles, 50,000 visitors from all around the world. The highlights of this year's event include Motorcycle Exhibition featuring "Green Energy" High-speed Electric Motorcycle, a blend of power and eco-innovation from various leading brands, International Bike Parades "Ride for Peace", Custom Bike contest, Miss Phuket Bike Week contest, Live Entertainment, Motorcycle accessories local and international venders and many more. Join us for the motorcycle convoy, the activities that promote Safe Riding campaign – Helmets on heads; lights on bikes, and Donations. More at facebook.com/phuketbikeweek

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**THU 25 APR**



**ANZAC DAWN SERVICE**

### ANZAC Dawn Service

Phuket Veterans would like to invite you to our ANZAC Day memorial service to be held on Kamala Beach, near the Kamala Police station, at 5:30am. Dress smart casual/uniform. On this day Australians and New Zealanders come together to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in WW1. More info contact Wayne on 081 708 7702.

**SAT 27 APR**



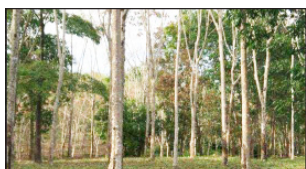
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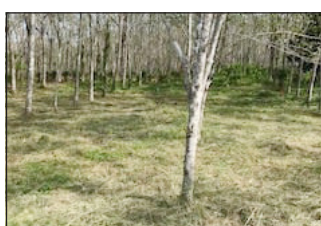
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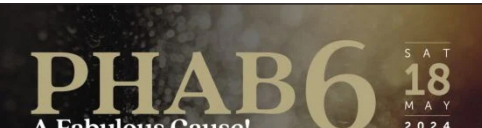
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# Koh Samui beach volleyball tournament makes its mark

**BEACH VOLLEYBALL**

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Over 135 top athletes from more than 28 countries competed at the ‘TAT Samui Open Beach Volleyball’ on Koh Samui on the weekend of Mar 29-31.

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual edition of the hugely popular international tournament was held at SEEN Beach Club and proved to be an outstanding success for all involved, while simultaneously providing a welcome boost to the local economy.

There were a total of 88 team spots, that were all filled several months ahead of the tournament, competing in four divisions: men’s 2x2; women’s 2x2; mixed 2x2; and quads 4x4.

Teams were competing for prize money of B100,000 over the three-day event as well trophies, medals, sponsor vouchers and volleyball gear and apparel.

Perfect weather conditions created the ideal setting for play as competition got underway and over 600 enthusiastic spectators basked in the sun and marvelled at the form of athletes from all over the world, including Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia.

Once the action concluded on the beach each day there were an array of entertainment activities available at establishments such as the SEEN Beach Club,



Photo: Antonio Tadeu Dias

Charlie’s House Restaurant, Tropical Murphy’s Restaurant and Bar and Lost Beach Bar and Restaurant Chaweng.

Similarly, there were events on hand throughout the day for visitors to enjoy when they were not watching the action on the sand, including local Island tours, disc golf, quad tours and boat tours to Angthong Marine Park.

“We are proud to promote beach volleyball in Southern Asia and on Koh Samui and to hold this annual event on our beautiful island,” said Cord Biggs from organiser Biggs Island Productions. “Along with our main sponsors, sincere appreciation is also given to all our Island supporters who helped make this event possible.

“We hope to see you all next year at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Samui Open Beach Volleyball Tournament,” he concluded.

Presenting and main sponsors in-

cluded the Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) & Amazing Thailand, SEEN Beach Club/Avani Hotel Chaweng and Koh Samui Municipality.

Island supporters included 69 Slam, Trend Fashion, Lost Beach Bar, Samui Padel, Crawshaws Solicitor, Bar Bowls Samui, Monkey Samui Golden Ale, Black Sticky, Discovery Divers, IAM Sportswear, Charlie’s House Bar, Topical Murphys, Samui Disc Golf, Samui Rescue and B2 Development.

The Samui-based international tournament was originated by organiser Biggs Island Productions in 2016 in recognising the growing global interest in beach volleyball and has since been held annually on Koh Samui.

For further information contact Cord Biggs on Tel/WhatsApp: +66898737172, at [info@BiggsIslandProductions.com](mailto:info@BiggsIslandProductions.com) or visit: [facebook.com/SamuiOpen](https://facebook.com/SamuiOpen)

## Thais secure four spots for Paris Olympic weightlifting

### WEIGHTLIFTING

TEAM THAILAND HAVE secured four berths at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris following their success at the World Weightlifting Championships in Phuket.

The competition, otherwise known as the “2024 I.W.F. World Cup,” took place at the Khun Lert Phokarak Convention Center at Phuket Rajabhat University (PRU) between Mar 31 and Apr 11. with over 1,600 athletes and officials taking part from more than 120 countries.

Team Thailand won a total of seven medals, including six silver and one bronze, which was sufficient to secure the four spots at the summer extravaganza in the French capital.

The quota includes two spots for male athletes in the 61kg and 73kg weight classes and two spots for female athletes in the 49kg and over 81kg categories.

At time of press the Thai team were still hopeful of securing further qualification place for Paris 2024 in the women’s 59kg and men’s 102kg weight classes.

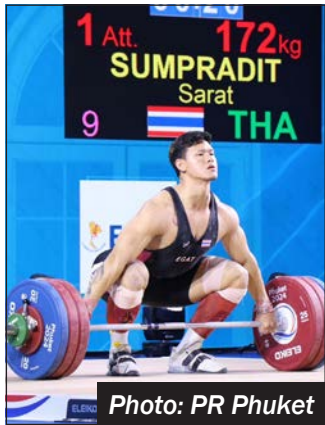


Photo: PR Phuket

Maj Gen Intharat Yodbangtoey, President of The Amateur Weightlifting Association of Thailand, said he was delighted with the performance of all Thai competitors.

Knowing the country had at least four spots for the biggest tournament in the world later this year was very impressive and more than most other countries, he added.

Which athletes will represent Thailand has yet to be confirmed although Thanyathorn Sukcharoen and Surachana Khambao in the women’s 49kg and over 81kg and Teerapat Chomchuen and Teeraphong Silachai in the men’s 61kg and 74kg are considered the favourites to claim the spots.

The Phuket News



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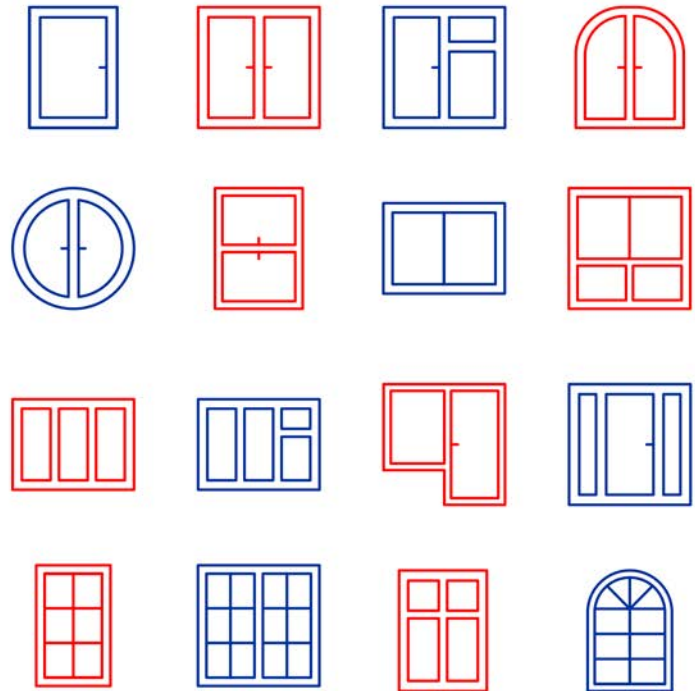
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# Sport

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**Samui beach volleyball a big hit > p11**

## HARD POWER



### Muay Thai key to Phuket 'Soft Power' drive

The visiting Chinese students at the T&Y Muay Thai gym in Chalong. Photo: Sports Association of Phuket

#### MUAY THAI

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Officials in Phuket are targeting the national sport of Muay Thai as a key component in their ongoing 'Soft Power' drive to attract increased tourists and revenue to the island.

Muay Thai, otherwise known as the "art of eight limbs", is regarded as a key tool in the national government's soft power strategy designed to help enhance the country's image internationally while attracting tourists to its shores.

As part of the promotional drive the Sports Association of Phuket has partnered with

local company T&Y Group and embarked on a trip to Beijing, China on Mar 7-10 to meet with thousands of Muay Thai students and gym owners in an effort to encourage them to visit Phuket to hone their skills as part of a program known as "TY Training The Trainer @Phuket Thailand."

The first group of approximately 100 students and instructors from China registered to take the course landed at Phuket International Airport on Apr 3 and were met by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat and Sports Association of Phuket President Thammawat Wongcharoenyot as part of an official welcoming ceremony. The training course took place between Apr 7-17 at the T&Y

Muay Thai gym on Soi Ta-ia in Chalong.

#### SOFT POWER PUSH

The promotion of Thailand's national sport has been high on the agenda under Prime Minister Srettha with Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the deputy chairperson of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, confirming in January that she is pushing to have Muay Thai become an Olympic sport.

Ms Paetongtarn is seeking to make Muay Thai more popular among foreigners through a range of initiatives, such as incorporating a ranking system similar to Taekwondo's belt ranking system, aiding Muay Thai teachers in becoming more professional and fostering

more Muay Thai competitions at all levels. The government is also contemplating granting a special 90-day visa for foreigners who want to visit Thailand to practise Muay Thai.

As part of this initiative, Thailand sent eight Muay Thai experts to Saudi Arabia earlier this month to train the country's military and national boxers.

In February plans were confirmed for a Muay Thai masterclass to be conducted in England later in the year where foreigners would learn from internationally recognised Muay Thai masters, such as Rodtang Jitmuangnon, Buakaw Banchamek and Superbon Singha Mawynn.

It is hoped such initiatives

will inspire such foreigners to visit Thailand to further their studies while also their encouraging friends to do likewise, which could significantly boost Thai tourism.

#### INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED

Phuket is internationally renowned for training and developing local and international talent with 43 officially registered Muay Thai camps across the island, including the famous Tiger Muay Thai and Bangtao Muay Thai & MMA gyms, also boasting two top-class standard boxing stadiums in Patong Beach Boxing Stadium and Bangla Boxing Stadium.

A raft of local and international talent has either been

based in Phuket or graced the various Muay Thai gyms here at some stage on their way to starring on the global stage through promotions such as the UFC and ONE Championship; Alexander Volkanovski, Anatoly Malykhin, Loma Lookboonmee, Rafael Fiziev, Petr Yan, Valentina Shevchenko, Celest Hansen and Israel Adesanya are just a handful of such examples.

Of note, Phuket hosted the sixth edition of the International and Thai Martial Arts (ITMA) Games between Mar 10-17 at the indoor stadium in Saphan Hin where over 1,200 athletes from 50 countries contested a variety of martial arts disciplines including competitions in Muay Thai, Kickboxing, Karate and Jiu Jitsu.

## Flying Dutchman Van Engelen wins Tour of Thailand

#### CYCLING

ROOJAI INSURANCE CYCLIST Adne Van Engelen was crowned the overall winner of the 2024 Tour of Thailand cycling race in Phetchabun on Apr 6.

Dutchman Van Engelen finished the six-day race in a total time of 22 hours 20 minutes and 32 seconds to land the title and take home the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Cup.

Thanakhan Chaiyasombat of Thailand Continental Cycling

team secured second place with a time of 22h 20m 41s and Anatolii Budiak of Terengganu Cycling team finished third in 22h 20m 44s.

Thanakhan also claimed the race's Best Asean Rider award, while his Thailand Continental Cycling teammates Peerapol Chawchiankwang and Noppachai Klahan claimed second and third places respectively in the same category.

Roojai Insurance captured the team title with a total time of 67h 2m 47s, with Thailand Continental Cycling team coming in second place in 67h 4m 14s and Tereng-



Van Engelen poses with the trophy. Photo: Bangkok Post

ganu Cycling securing third in 67h 7m 35s.

Roojai also won the sixth and final stage in 13h 17m 21s, followed by Thailand Continental Cycling team and St George Continental

Cycling in second and third places respectively.

Meanwhile, Thailand's Jutatip Maneephan won the Women's Tour of Thailand 2024 and was awarded the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Cup and a B150,000 cash bonus.

The Thailand Women's Cycling team rider won the third and final stage from Bueng Sam Phan to Si Thep Historical Park on Apr 10, covering the distance of 61.30km, in a time of 1h 29m 43s, securing the title with a total time of 6h 49m 18s.

Australian rider Claudia Marcks

of Bikewheels.com.au captured second place and Vietnamese Nguyen Thi That, who won the first and second stage, took third place.

Jutatip, 35, also swept the other two individual titles of Best Asean Rider and Best Sprinter award.

Malaysia national team won the overall team title with a total time of 20h 29m 15s.

The three-day women's race started on Apr 8 with 12 teams competing over a distance of 278.2km across routes in Phitsanulok, Uttaradit, Sukhothai and Phetchabun.

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