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# TOO MUCH?



Patong Beach on Aug 14, 2024. Photo: Patong Surf Life Saving

## LEADING FIGURES QUESTION PHUKET'S 'OVER-TOURISTED' LABEL

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Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, President of the Phuket Tourism Association, has challenged Phuket being branded the 'most crowded tourist destination in the world' as reported by UK daily newspapers, citing a survey posted online by a money transfers website.

The reports in the UK press, including by the *Daily Express* and *The Mirror*, sparked a slew of rewritten articles by a host of websites,

all repeating the same report. One article featured the headline 'Phuket's overtourism: Is Thailand's holiday hotspot ruined?' without the article even checking the data sources.

Mr Thaneth explained to *The Phuket News* the long-standing problem with such reports: that the statistics used may be misleading due to the huge difference between the number of Thais registered as living on the island, compared with the actual number of people working and living in Phuket.

"The official population of Phuket

is around 400,000, but there's a hidden population of Thais who still maintain their original registrations elsewhere [in Thailand]. Many bring their families, including children and grandchildren, to live and study here," Mr Thaneth said.

Mr Thaneth said he understood how the official statistics could lead people who are not familiar with Phuket or do not live here to make the false assumption about the number of people actually living on the island.

"The statistic can be viewed from two perspectives, but I agree that

their research holds true, but only if it's based solely on the number of registered residents," Mr Thaneth said.

"When looking at the [MoneyTransfers] website, it looks like overtourism because of the 'hidden population' who did not register... I am afraid that the image reflected through the numbers may be a bit exaggerated to use the word 'over-touristed' because it portrays that wherever you walk in Phuket, you will only see international visitors or tourists.

"By using that word it feels like...

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Flash floods continue to dampen spirits



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Nong Fiat ready to show she's 'Got Talent'



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Disappointing season opener for Phuket FC



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PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE



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# News



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## Tourist numbers held in focus

Continued from page 1

...tourists are everywhere, but in reality, if you come to Phuket and try to take pictures at Patong, Kata, Karon, Rawai or other beaches or popular destinations like the Phuket Old Town, you will not feel like there are so many people that there is no place to walk," he said.

"But when there are reports with research done like this, it does not reflect reality. They didn't come down to look," Mr Thaneth said.

### THE REPORT

The survey report posted online by MoneyTransfers.com, titled 'The Most & Least 'Over-Touristed' Destinations Around The World' and marked as provided by contributor data analyst Yasmin Purnell, determined that the number of tourists visiting Phuket on average outnumbered local residents by 118:1.

The article states as its methodology: "We sourced the data on international arrivals from a Euromonitor International study and all population data and figures for most visited countries from World Population Review. These data sets were then used to calculate the estimated number of tourists



Tourists at the Lard Yai Walking Street Market in Phuket Town. Photo: The Phuket News / file

per inhabitant for each city and country."

The report gave Phuket the title of the 'Most Over-Touristed' Destination Around The World' with a ratio of 118.5 tourists per local residents.

Pattaya placed second with a ratio of 98.7, while the rural province of Krabi placed third with a ratio of 72.2.

All three destinations in Thailand are prone to the same problem of underreporting the actual number of local residents due to Thais not updating their official address

with the civil registration database, as doing so would cost them their right to vote in their home constituency in their home province.

The highest-ranked 'over-touristed' destination outside Thailand went to Muğla, Turkey, which placed fourth with a ratio of 40.2, followed by Hurghada, Egypt, with a ratio of 28.6.

However, World Population Review does not provide a population figure for Phuket, or explain how World Population Review determines the

figure used in the 'overtourism' report. Also, there is no link to the 'Euromonitor International study' cited as the other source for the article.

The Phuket News emailed MoneyTransfers.com for confirmation of the figures used in the study. However, at time of press, five days later, The Phuket News still had yet to receive a reply.

Due to the nature of the methodology reported, it cannot be determined whether or not the figure used for the number of tourists included domestic

tourists – that is, Thais visiting from other provinces.

Regarding international visitors, the one agency that can provide statistics on the number of foreigners actually on Phuket at any given time is the Phuket Immigration Office. By law, all owners and/or operators of rented accommodations must report any foreigners staying in their properties, regardless whether the foreigners are tourists or not. However, Phuket Immigration has stopped publicly reporting that figure.

### HELD BACK

In Phuket's drive towards becoming a 'sustainable destination', Mr Thaneth, who has also served previously as President of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, said Thais coming to live and work in Phuket not updating their official address to Phuket was continuing to hamper Phuket's drive to develop its infrastructure.

"It doesn't just affect the statistical number of people who are registered [as living in Phuket], it makes it difficult to request the right budget from the government, which we never get," Mr Thaneth said.

"I want to see people in Phuket change their household

registration. I want to see the hidden population, the actual number of people who have moved to live and work in Phuket.

"Having a more accurate population figure for Phuket will lead to better budget allocation. The current provincial development budget is only about B160-170 million, less than some other provinces, even though Phuket generated more than B300 billion in income in 2023. This year it may reach B600bn, as in the first six months of this year Phuket had already generated more than B246bn," he explained

"But the government allocated only this much budget... So instead of focusing on research I would like to see the existing hidden population move their registration correctly for other benefits such as budget allocation to develop the province more and more services to be provided more comprehensively.

"This is especially important when it comes to hospitals and medical treatment. The budget allocated is for only the registered population, but the actual number of people local facilities need to treat is much, much higher. This is a big problem," Mr Thaneth said.

## Parliamentary committee talks Phuket's tourism future

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tourism Committee held a seminar in Phuket last Sunday (Sept 15) to explore new directions for the island's tourism sector and open discussions on the 'creative economy'.

The event, titled 'Transforming Phuket's Future', was hosted at Dara Hotel, with participation from key figures in government, the private sector, and civil society.

The seminar was inaugurated by Phuket Vice Governor Norasak Suksomboon, alongside Atthaphon Traisri, Vice Chairman of the Tourism Committee.

Also taking part were Patong Mayor Chalernsak Maneesri and Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee, along with Bhummiti Ruktaengam, an advisor to the Phuket Tourist Association and also President of the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation (มูลนิธิพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวยั่งยืน).



Photo: PR Phuket

In his address, Vice Governor Norasak explained that Phuket has a population of over 1.2 million people, but only 417,891 are officially registered residents.

The remaining 800,000 are a mix of tourists and local residents, most of whom work in the tourism sector, he said.

"Phuket's economy is heavily reliant on tourism, which accounts for 92.9% of its income. In 2023, tourism generated over B388 billion, making Phuket the top earner in Southern Thailand and second in the country after Bangkok. This was a 100.38% increase from 2022. The number of tourists also rose

to 11.3mn in 2023, an increase of 100.77% from the previous year," Vice Governor Norasak noted.

Phuket International Airport handles direct flights from 18 countries, covering more than 65 cities, in addition to domestic flights. On average, there are 1,900 flights per week, or about 270 per day. The

province also has a deep-sea port that accommodates large cruise ships, with about four ships arriving or departing each week, and supports five world-class yachts. On average, 15 yachts arrive and depart each week, he said.

The province is implementing a 20-year development plan (2023-2042) with a vision to transform Phuket into a "new economic city" driven by sustainability, Vice Governor Norasak explained,

The vision is for Phuket to become a "new economic city" based on sustainable development, balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and social equality.

The goal is to diversify Phuket's economy, moving beyond tourism to create a more balanced and resilient economy. This shift is part of a broader strategy based on 10+ key economic and social pillars for development (GEMMSSTTF), he added. *The Phuket News*



# More flash floods strike

The Phuket News  
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Residents in the southern parts of the island woke Tuesday morning (Sept 16) to nearly a week of heavy rain easing, after all day and a night of continual heavy downpours.

Phuket Town officials were on watch throughout Monday night, manning pumps deployed throughout the town and monitoring the water level in the Bang Yai Canal.

Klong Bang Yai came close to bursting its banks, but held its water, Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas confirmed. Mayor Saroj was out in the rain throughout the night during the flood-watch vigil.

In Chalong, floodwater across both Chao Fa Wet and Chao Fa East roads that disrupted traffic late Monday afternoon had cleared by Tuesday morning, with only some areas still waiting for standing water to clear.

In Rawai, however, a section of the side of Wiset Rd in the Saiyuan area has collapsed. The affected area is about 50 metres long and has been marked off for safety. Motorists have been advised to



exercise caution when driving past the affected area.

During the onslaught of continual driving rain late on Monday, Karon Municipality evacuated 17 residents from flash flood-prone areas to Wat Kittisangkaram (Wat Kata) for temporary shelter. as a precaution – following the landslide below the Big Buddha viewpoint on Aug 23 that killed 13 people, injured 19 others and damaged or destroyed more than 50 homes.

Mueang Phuket District Chief Worasit Phutjib visited the flood-affected areas on Monday, joined by Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee and Karon Mayor Jadet Wicharsorn, and local village leaders, to ensure disaster-response plans were in effect.

Mr Worasit ordered the Phuket branch of the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor) and other agencies to provide immediate assistance in flood-struck areas.

Many areas throughout Mueang District were affected by flash floods, including Patrak Rd in front of Por Piang Market in Baan Kata, as well as Baan Khok Chang on the Borrae-Khao Khad Rd, and various other roads across Tambon Karon, Wichit, and Rawai.

In many cases, water inundated homes, while fallen trees caused damage to power lines, the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM) reported.

The flash floods throughout Chalong on Monday fol-

lowed Cherrng Talay suffering flash floods from heavy downpours last Friday (Sept 13).

Many roads throughout the area were flooded, slowing traffic dramatically, in some locations bringing it to a standstill altogether.

Officials were closely monitoring the situation, especially as the region remains in the middle of monsoon season, reported DDPM Phuket.

Even if the rain subsides, local authorities are urging all residents to remain vigilant until further notice, the agency said.

The Thai Meteorological Department (TMD) on Monday forecast that heavy rains would intensify by today (Sept 20), and finally ease on Sunday (Sept 22).



Photo: Karon Police

## Big Buddha foundation charged for encroachment

SUPORN WANICHKUL, chairman of the Phra Phuttha Ming Mongol Sattha 45 Foundation, which operates the Big Buddha complex atop the hills between Chalong and Karon, has been charged with illegal encroachment and clearing of protected forest land.

Suporn was called to Karon Police Station on Sept 11 to have the charge presented to him by Pol Lt Col Ekkasak Kwanwan, an Investigation Officer with Karon Police.

The same charge was also presented against the Phra Phuttha Ming Mongol Sattha 45 Foundation.

Both entities were accused of jointly engaging in activities such as constructing, clearing, burning forests, or occupying forest land without permission.

Suporn has personally denied the charge, and denied

the charge on behalf of the foundation.

The charge follows the Royal Forest Department investigating a complaint filed by local residents in Karon, who blamed illegal construction at the tourist-popular Big Buddha viewpoint for the deadly landslide on Aug 23 that killed 13 people, injured 19 others and destroyed or damaged more than 50 homes.

In conducting their investigation, RFD officers seized more than five rai of land at the Big Buddha viewpoint deemed to have been illegally expanded on by the foundation.

RFD Deputy Director-General Bannaruk Sermtong told *The Phuket News*, that if the foundation and its persons were found guilty of illegal encroachment, illegal structures at the site will be demolished.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Rainfall jars handed out as disaster warning devices

VILLAGE HEADMEN (PHU YAI BAAN) from 30 risk areas across the island have been given rainfall measuring devices in the hope their use will help provide some warning to residents of flash floods and landslides.

Suwaphak Imsamut, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Mineral Resources, handed over the rainfall measuring devices and landslide risk maps to the 30 community leaders at an event at Phuket Provincial Hall on Sept 11, presided over by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat.

The distribution of the devices – essentially just plastic jars with a measuring label – is part of an initiative to create a local monitoring network aimed at issuing timely warnings to residents in landslide-prone areas, Mr Suwaphak explained.

The headmen were given instruction on the correct methods for using the rainfall gauges, ensuring their proper application for local-level alerts. The measuring labels feature different colours for the level of danger, from green at the bottom indicating a low level of rainfall, to red at the top indicating the jar is almost full, thus indicating the greater risk of flash floods and landslides.

Governor Sophon emphasised the need for such preventive measures following a recent landslide in the Kata ws still of great concern to those affected, said an official report of the event.

The deadly landslide at Kata on Aug 23 killed 13 people, injured 19 others and destroyed or damaged more than 50 homes.

Governor Sophon noted that while soil



Photo: PR Phuket

movement measuring devices would also be provided in the future, the rainfall gauges were an immediate step toward warning residents of potential dangers.

Village leaders were also instructed to form community communication networks, including LINE messaging groups, as a means of early surveillance and sharing warnings.

Mr Suwaphak highlighted that in addition to monitoring equipment, public awareness and understanding of landslide risks remained crucial.

The Department of Mineral Resources has studied risk areas extensively, and the rainfall gauges were designed to enhance local confidence and safety. Training and the use of risk maps will further support these efforts, he said.

The Department of Mineral Resources was also coordinating with Kasetsart University and Prince of Songkla University to develop measures to prevent landslides from reaching communities, adding another layer of protection, Mr Suwaphak added. *The Phuket News*

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

www.foreca.com

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Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT SEPTEMBER 21



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Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN SEPTEMBER 22



High: +35°

Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

MON SEPTEMBER 23



High: +35°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE SEPTEMBER 24



High: +35°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED SEPTEMBER 25



High: +37°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU SEPTEMBER 26



High: +36°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Gunman on the run arrested in Pa Khlok

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a 37-year-old man from Koh Yao Yai fleeing charges related to a home invasion and threats carried out with the use of "military style weapons" after he arrived in Phuket at Bang Rong Pier in Pa Khlok.

Officers arrested 37-year-old Thanongsak Jennari at a location near Bang Rong Pier on Sept 10, said an official report of his arrest.

Thanongsak, registered as living in Tambon Phru Nai, on the lower half of Koh Yao Yai, was wanted under arrest warrant No. 172/2567 issued by Phang Nga Provincial Court on Aug 5, said the report.

Authorities had been tracking Thanongsak's movements and located him near a restaurant at Bang Rong Pier. He was reportedly attempting to evade arrest by hiding in a nearby mangrove forest when he was caught.

Involved in the arrest were officers from Region 8 Police and Phuket Provincial Police, as well as officers from Phang Nga and Koh Yao Police Station.

According to the police



Photo: PR Phuket

report, the arrest warrant was issued on charges including attempted physical harm, armed home invasion and illegal possession of firearms.

The charges specifically related to: together attempting to harm someone physically or mentally, breaking into someone's home at night using force or threats with a gun, committing the crime as a group with two or more people, illegally possessing a firearm without permission, and carrying a firearm in public places like cities, villages, or roads without a valid reason.

Thanongsak was allegedly among a group of men who had reportedly been planning an attack against a rival party in the area.

After his arrest, Thanongsak confessed his identity and acknowledged the charges, the report noted.

He was then handed over to Koh Yao Police.

The Phuket News

## Patong surf rescues keep mounting up

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Lifeguards at Patong Beach rescued 24 people from rip currents through August, including one unconscious person and another exhausted individual. Both were sent to Patong Hospital for treatment.

Confirmation of the tally came through the Patong Surf Life saving monthly report released earlier this week, detailing assistance provided to tourists during both daytime and nighttime shifts.

As usual, the report highlights the wide range of incidents where lifeguards rendered first aid and other services to beachgoers, clearly indicating the vital role they play in tourists' safety at the island's most popular beach.

In addition to the rip-current rescues, lifeguards needed to provide assistance to one person who was exhausted after being knocked down by waves.

Four people received first aid for marine animal stings, and two people sustained different injuries in the water, one requiring hospital treatment after being cut by a sharp object.

Lifeguards assisted four



Photo: Patong Surf Life Saving

people in other minor incidents, with 14 injured in "water toy" accidents – four of whom required hospital care.

Highlighting the varied nature of the assistance lifeguards provide, one lost child was reunited with their parents, one tourist's belongings were safely returned and first aid was provided in one fight-related incident that required lifeguards to intervene.

The report also noted the Patong lifeguards' essential ongoing programme to provide surf safety and danger awareness education to young children at three schools in the area.

Overall, seven people were transported to the hospital during the daytime. There were 44 incidents classified as minor, six as moderate, and one as severe.

While lifeguards exit the beach at sunset each day, many of them continue their work to provide assistance to people at the beach during the nighttime through their 'Patong Baywatch' team.

During August, lifeguards on night patrol at Patong Beach escorted one intoxicated person to Patong Police Station, while two others, under the influence of herbal substances, were taken to Patong Hospital.

Also at night, two individuals were caught in strong currents and required hospital treatment, as did two people involved in road accidents.

In a less dangerous night incident, another tourist's belongings were returned safely.

A total of seven cases were sent to the hospital at night, with one incident classified as minor and seven as moderate.

## B3mn of cannabis destroyed in Srisoonthorn warehouse fire

MORE THAN B3 MILLION OF cannabis was destroyed in a fire at a warehouse in Srisoonthorn early last Sunday morning (Sept 15).

Police and firefighters were called to the scene, a warehouse belonging to J.L. Development in Moo 4, Srisoonthorn, just before 7:30am.

Soon to arrive at the scene firefighters from Srisoonthorn and Cherg Talay Municipalities took over 30 minutes to bring the fire under control.

Fortunately, no injuries or fatalities were reported.

The facility, used for growing cannabis, had an automated electrical system for water and temperature control, which is believed to have malfunctioned, police said.

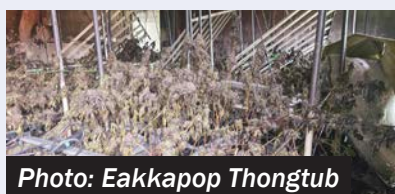


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Forensic officers are conducting further investigations to confirm the exact cause of the blaze, but at this stage the fire is suspected to have started from an electrical short circuit, with initial damage centred on the control cabinet and circuit board.

The warehouse was rented by 29-year-old Mr Isarapong (surname withheld), who had been cultivating cannabis for about a year, police noted.

The fire caused significant financial loss, estimated to exceed B3mn, police said. Eakkapop Thongtub

## Garbage collector killed by car in Patong

A MUNICIPAL STREET CLEANER was killed in a three-vehicle collision in front of Wat Suwan Kiriwong School in Patong early Tuesday morning (Sept 17).

Police were called to the scene, on Phra Barami Rd about 370 metres from Wat Patong itself, at about 5am.

Officers and rescue workers arrived to find the body of a Myanmar national named as 'Aung Aung', who was employed as a garbage collector by Patong Municipality.

Initial investigations revealed that Wirasak Yimseng, the driver of a white Nissan Almera, lost control of his vehicle while driving from Patong Hill towards Patong Beach.

His car struck Mr Aung, who was working at the time.

The crash also involved a grey Honda City driven by Chinese national Tang Xiao Lan, which skidded into another vehicle – a black Toyota Corona Altis owned by Ronnarong Kongmuang, 39, which had been

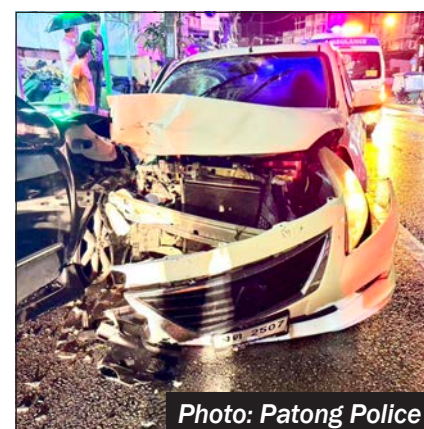


Photo: Patong Police

parked nearby.

Emergency responders transported Mr Yimseng and the deceased to Patong Hospital.

Police officers conducted an inspection of the scene, gathering forensic evidence.

Initial alcohol tests for Mr. Yimseng came back negative, but further blood tests are underway as the investigation continues, police reported.

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Phuket wins national anti-corruption award

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Provincial Governance Committee and the Phuket Chamber of Commerce have been recognised for their outstanding efforts in preventing and monitoring corruption, receiving the prestigious 'White Space Network Model Award' for the fiscal year 2024.

The award ceremony, held at the Best Western Plus Wanda Grand Hotel in Nonthaburi on Sept 11, was presided over by Bhumivisan Kasemsook, Secretary-General of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC).

Key figures representing Phuket present to receive the award included Ruenvadee Suwanmongkol, Inspector-General of the Prime Minister's Office; Phiraphi Ongcharoen, Vice Chairman of the Phuket Provincial Governance Committee; and Kongsak Khoo-pongsakorn, President of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce.

The award highlights Phuket's success in establishing a strong anti-corruption



Photo: PR Phuket

network under the PACC Network Project to Surveillance Corruption, known as 'PACC Connect', explained an official report of the event.

The Phuket network excelled in evaluations, scoring over 80 points, and was recognised among the 56 networks rated 'excellent' nationwide, the report added.

In total, 91 networks across Thailand were recognised, with 59 receiving honorary plaques, including 56 'excellent' networks and three 'good' networks. Notably, 10 networks

from the upper southern region, including those from Surat Thani, Krabi and Ranong, were also honoured for their contributions.

Ananya Rakmanee of the PACC, explained that the PACC office, as a key part of the government, has been focused on preventing and eliminating corruption by involving the public and ensuring better access to justice.

"This starts with building trust and confidence, empowering people, and creating strong networks," she said.

Through initiatives like public forums and the PACC 'Open House', the PACC offers a space for civil society to come together, discuss problems, think through solutions, and take collective action to address corruption and the hardships faced by local communities.

"The PACC also plays a key role in monitoring, staying alert, and gathering information about corruption or cases of unfairness involving government officials," Ms Ananya said.

## Workshop held to bolster road safety

PHUKET OFFICIALS HELD a workshop last week aimed at boosting road safety measures across provincial government agencies as part of a larger project to bolster road safety initiatives throughout the province.

The event, on Sept 10, was titled 'Driving the Organisational Measures for Road Safety in Phuket Province', with Sopon Thongsai, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM Phuket), chairing proceedings.

Representatives from multiple sectors, including Benchawan Udom, Head of Prevention and Operation at the Provincial Disaster Office, and road safety experts from various local institutions such as Phuket Rajabhat University and the Phuket Provincial Police, also took part.

Ms Benchawan highlighted the alarming rise in road fatalities, with 168 deaths in 2023 alone, and the numbers continuing to rise. As of June 2024, Phuket had already recorded 110 deaths, matching the target set for the entire year according to the Road Safety Master Plan 2021-2027.



Photo: PR Phuket

The majority of victims were working-age individuals, aged 25-45, whose deaths have caused significant economic and social impacts on families and the wider community, Ms Benchawan said.

She emphasised the need for collective action and raised awareness of road safety among government personnel at all levels, urging them to set a positive example by following traffic laws, particularly by promoting helmet use. The project's goal is to implement organisational road safety measures across Phuket to foster behavioural change and reduce road accident fatalities.

DDPM Phuket Chief Mr Sopon added that road accidents pose a major threat not only to individuals but also to the province's economic development and reputation as a tourism destination.

The Phuket News

## Phuket rallies to deliver relief aid for flood victims in the North

EFFORTS BY THE KUSOLDHARM Phuket Foundation to deliver much-needed flood relief aid to flood victims in Chiang Rai and other affected areas in the North are well underway, with the first truck loaded with items donated in Phuket arriving in Chiang Rai last Sunday (Sept 15).

The truck had departed Phuket at about 3:30pm last Friday (Sept 13), after foundation president Lek Tantiwongpaisan announced the flood-relief campaign only one day earlier.

Local residents responded immediately with money and essential goods such as rice, clothing, drinking water and other supplies.

The overwhelming support led to a temporary halt in accepting donations, as there was no more storage space at the foundation's headquarters in Phuket Town, where donations were marshalled and loaded onto trucks, including an 18-wheeler and a 22-wheeled truck and trailer.



Photo: Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation

The fifth truck loaded with relief supplies departed Phuket for the North about 3:30pm last Friday.

More aid packages were prepared for upcoming shipments. Trucks six and seven were soon to follow, and arrived in Nong Khai with donated relief items on Monday (Sept 16).

Assisting the efforts in Phuket were personnel from the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command, Royal Volunteers, students from the Student Loan Fund Club of Phuket Rajabhat University, Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor) personnel, among other government officials

alongside local residents.

Moving forward, the foundation is shifting its focus to monetary donations to streamline the relief process and help fund long-term recovery efforts for the victims.

Donations can be made at the foundation head office or through a bank transfer.

"Thank you to the many Phuket residents for your generous donations. Due to the overwhelming number of donated items and to make transportation easier over long distances, Kusoldharm Foundation will no longer be accepting physical donations," the foundation announced last Friday.

"Instead, you can contribute by donating cash in two ways: either by giving at the donation table at the foundation, or by transferring funds to the Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation's savings account at the Bank of Ayudhya, account number 297-1-08886-3, available 24 hours a day," the foundation noted. *The Phuket News*



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## Mid-priced hotels struggled in August

TOURISTS IN THE MID-priced and budget segments remain sensitive to prices, meaning hotels rated less than four stars struggled to maintain their room and occupancy rates in August.

Thienprasit Chaiyapatrannun, President of the Thai Hotels Association (THA), said while the average occupancy rate of hotels nationwide improved to 61.8% from 58.4% year-on-year last month, the figure still lagged the pre-pandemic rate of 64.7%, according to the hotel operator sentiment index for August.

Regarding the categories, he said the situation for hotels rated three stars or lower is worrisome as the average occupancy for the segment decreased to 49.3%, while hotels with four stars or higher reported a surge in the occupancy rate to 68.8%.

Mr Thienprasit said 40% of the 106 respondents were unable to fully resume their revenue, while 20% of them believed they would have to wait until the second quarter or second half of next year to return to normal.

Some 7% expressed pessimism about the situation,



Tourists pose for snaps at Tha Tien pier alongside the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok. Photo: Apichart Jinakul / Bangkok Post

predicting they would never fully recover to the pre-pandemic level.

Only 31% said they had already recorded higher revenue than the pre-pandemic level, mostly driven by increasing room rates after investing in renovations and upgrading their services.

The main markets for these hotels were foreigners, representing more than 50% of their occupancy, mostly from China, the Middle East, Europe and other countries in Asia.

However, most hotels that could not raise their selling prices said the price sensitivity among their targeted customers was the most critical reason (63%), followed by intense competition (55%) and a decrease in bookings (42%).

Bangkok Post

## Go Wholesale dispute talks stall for opening

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A meeting held last week has given little reprieve to the concerns raised by vendors from Phuket City Municipality Fresh Market 2, on Ong Sim Pai Rd in Phuket Town, over the opening hours of the new Go Wholesale 'Agricultural Market' branch to open this month just down the road.

The vendors had already submitted a formal request for their concerns to be addressed only days earlier, during a small protest held on Sept 10.

The vendors requested that the Go Wholesale store delay its daily opening time to reduce competition during early business hours.

The meeting held last Friday (Sept 13), chaired by Vice Governor Norasak Suksomboon, brought together representatives from various provincial offices, including the Phuket Provincial Commerce Office, Phuket Provincial Statistics Office, Mueang Phuket District and Phuket City Municipality, as well as Central Food Wholesale Co Ltd, which operates Go Wholesale, and the local vendors.

Also present was Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas.

Despite extensive discussions, no final agreement was reached. However, the meeting made two key recommendations.



Photo: PR Phuket

First, that Go Wholesale's representatives will present the vendors' request to postpone the store's opening from 6am to 10:30am to the company's executives. A decision is expected by Sept 23.

Second, that the Phuket Provincial Statistics Office will collect data on the vendors' business performance before and after the store's opening to assess the impact on local livelihoods.

The Go Wholesale representatives at the meeting expressed a willingness to cooperate, stating that they would relay the vendors' concerns to the store's board of directors, said an official report of the meeting.

The company also outlined plans to support the local market, including

promoting OTOP products, offering 10 stalls for rotating market vendors inside the store, and using celebrities and influencers to help market their products.

The Go Wholesale representatives emphasised the commitment of the company, Central Food Wholesale Co Ltd, to working with the local community, with plans to develop the market "into a clean, modern space that attracts both tourists and locals".

The company aims to be a long-term partner in the community's growth and success, the representatives said.

Further discussions are expected as both sides work toward a mutually beneficial solution, concluded the official report of the meeting.



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# PM vows faster flood payouts

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra has promised to speed up compensation payments to flood victims and set up a new emergency alert system.

She made the remarks at the first meeting of the flood, storm, and mudslide situation administration and management committee at Government House on Monday (Sept 16) to address the flooding woes and post-inundation recovery efforts.

From Aug 16 to Sept 15 flooding has killed 43 people, injured 24 others and affected 133,040 families in 28 provinces, half of which were in the North, Chaiwat Chuntirapong, director-general of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, said on Monday.

The government has also set up the flood victims assistance operations centre, with Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai as its director.

Ms Paetongtarn said that compensation payments under the existing criteria are not



Rescue workers deliver necessities to flood victims in Chiang Rai province on Sunday (Sept 15). Photo: Bangkok Post

proportionate to the extensive damage caused by flooding in several provinces.

“Compensation should be speedy and sensible. Compensation amounts are restricted by the existing criteria, but the damage is very considerable,” the prime minister said, adding the criteria need to be revised to ensure more compensation.

“For example, flooding in Chiang Rai’s Mae Sai [district]

lasted three days, but damage was substantial,” she said.

### EMERGENCY ALERT

Ms Paetongtarn also said budget will be allocated to set up a new emergency alert system called “cell broadcast service” that would send text alerts to all mobile phone users in the country in an emergency. The service is scheduled to be introduced by mid-2025, she said.

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) gave the project the go-ahead following a test by True Corp in July. AIS carried out its own testing in March.

When triggered by an emergency event, the system will send an alert to all mobile phone users in Thailand, including foreign tourists. The alert will be sent out in five languages – Thai, English,

Chinese, Japanese, and Russian – along with images and audio messages.

The emergency alert system is a collaboration between the NBTC, mobile phone operators and the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation.

Cell broadcast technology allows emergency warnings to be sent to all devices connected to mobile networks within a specific target area or across the nation, depending on the importance.

### DAMAGE ESTIMATE

A senior provincial official said on Monday that the repair bill for flood-damaged houses in Chiang Rai’s Mae Sai district alone is estimated at B500 million. The crisis is not over, with many areas of the border town still underwater.

Kanchit Chumpoodaeng, director of the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation office in Chiang Rai, said the damage estimate was based on the number of houses and shops ravaged by the huge flood in the district and the official rate set for repairs in the state budget, which is B49,500 for each house.

He said at least 10,000

houses and shops in Mae Sai were confirmed flood-damaged, and he expected the number to rise as the water drained off and officials could conduct a thorough survey.

“The figures are only for housing repairs. Other related expenses are not included,” Mr Kanchit said.

Mae Sai district, especially the municipality, was the hardest hit in Chiang Rai province after the Sai River burst its banks on Sept 10. Residents said it was the worst flooding in four decades.

Mr Kanchit said some areas in the district town were still underwater and could only be reached by Navy SEALs. Helicopters were airdropping essential supplies to people stranded by the floodwater and those who did not want to leave their homes.

Mae Sai district has opened 17 temporary shelters for victims, and Chiang Rai municipality two. He said the situation in other flooded districts was gradually returning to normal, including in Muang district.

The flooding in Chiang Rai has taken 12 lives to date, with three people recovering from injuries.

## State hospitals ‘facing financial troubles’

### NAKHON RATCHASIMA

DR OPAS KANKAWINPONG, permanent secretary of the Public Health Ministry, has admitted that state-owned hospitals nationwide are facing financial problems, and cooperation is urgently needed from their directors to help fix the issue.

Dr Opas said last Friday (Sept 13) the ministry is struggling to run the public health system due to an insufficient budget, which is affecting around 1,000 hospitals that fall under its responsibility.

The budget shortage will lead to less funding for medical staff and investment in medical technology for hospitals nationwide, he said.

“We have more than a thousand hospitals, and we have to manage costs such as salaries, medicine, water, electricity, and various maintenance costs. We spend about B10 billion on management and renovations at these hospitals a month. For internal management, such as cash reserves, we need to have at least 3-6 months of cash reserves, which means we need at least B60bn.

“When asked how much money the ministry has, no one could really tell us before because each hospital does its own budgeting. But when the Financial Data Hub system was launched recently, we discovered we have about B40bn in maintenance funds, but only B20bn of that is our cash reserve, while the other B20bn is an accounting figure, such as debts.

“In summary, we have only B20bn



Photo: Bangkok Post

left in cash reserves which is far from the B60bn which is needed,” he said.

Dr Opas said the ministry also needs to allocate an investment budget of B500 million for each of the 13 health authorities nationwide. The budget is not that big as this amount cannot put up a building at one hospital and there are still expenses for various pieces of equipment that need to be invested in.

“The amount of money is limited so we would like to see cooperation from all directors of state-owned hospitals in terms of improving management for the people’s benefit,” he said.

“Next year, the ministry will adjust its administrative structure by decentralising and empowering local offices which we hope will improve the situation.”

Bangkok Post

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# Mid-monsoon comes alive

Simon Lomas

As many people know, places in the tropics like Phuket are not always wall to wall sunshine. From May till November is really the monsoon season. This does not mean several months of hurricanes, storms and heavy rain. This is actually a great time for wildlife. Suddenly the island is green again and, like Spring in so many other places, bursts into life. The same happens here.

By August and September the first rains have come and gone and everything has had a good two to three months to grow again. Many of the birds that were around for the past six months have gone to where they go to breed or avoid the rains, while others make the most of the new plants and seeds they live on, like the White Rumped and Scaly Munia.

With the burst of new plants and flowers brought out by the early rains we get lots of new baby birds that hatched a few weeks ago now all feasting on the nectar from the new flowers, in particular the various beautiful sunbirds. Here in Phuket we have many types from the Ornate Sunbird, Crimson Sunbird, Brown-throated Sunbird, to name just a few. The day is filled with birdsong just as soon as you get out of the din of the towns.

The new meadows and grasslands bursting into life bring huge numbers of butterflies in their thousands. So many in fact the grass areas in the hills above the holiday towns are a must if you like wildlife or photography. It is worth having an afternoon exploring. It does not take long between showers and a few rays of sun before they swarm out to get a bit of warmth. So, it's an easy way to spend an afternoon on a non-beach or lazy day.

If you walk, and keep your eyes open, you will see a lot more than birds and butterflies. Many times



The White Rumped and Scaly Munia.

when looking for very small birds I have seen things that seem very odd to me as a European. Among them, one time was a small flying lizard flitting from tree to tree. It's known as 'Thai flying dragon', or barred flying dragon (*Draco taeniopterus*), and is a 'flying' lizard capable of gliding from tree to tree. They are small but once you see them you will see they are everywhere.

However, do be slightly wary when getting too close to plants like the banana plant (it is a plant, not tree; well, actually it's a herb) but we won't spend time on that now as there really is so much wildlife to see. You do get small tree snakes that really are cute. They are not venomous, but if get too close they could give a little nip if they feel you are a threat. As with most snakes they will flee if they can instead of fight. These little guys will just go about their business and

not mind you at all. They feed on geckos, small frogs and the like – and the ones I was watching were trying to catch very small birds called Flower Peckers. Without any luck, I may add, but still nice to watch.

Something that did give me quite a surprise was something I really did not expect up a tree above my head: a monitor lizard. They are fairly common in Phuket. They can grow up to two metres long in Thailand and weigh up to 70-90kg at the very top end, and so large in size they could see a medium-sized dog as prey. Most you see are around 1.5m long, but are normally on the ground or even swimming. So to see one above my head was a bit of a shock.

When you do see one, don't panic or get too close as they can run up to 22 miles per hour (36km/h), which is faster than most of us. BUT don't worry, they can't run for long. They can't breathe and run at the same time. So they do a short spurt and stop. So as long as you have a good head start, you should be fine.

I did see one during COVID that was around waist height and two metres long (though longer with the tail, but I have been told two metres is really the biggest they get). It stopped and looked at us, so we stopped as it was clear it did not want us around it. Then it just went on its way. I may have to do a whole article on lizards as there are so many here.

So, for nature lovers Phuket in the monsoon season is a great place to be as it is cheaper, away from the crowds, less humid and with so much varied wildlife that so many people will not see, as they just don't venture away from the towns. As a photographer and nature lover, I can see so much potential for nature tourism and photography here in Phuket... if only people just knew that so much was here.

*Simon Lomas is an expat who has been living in Phuket for more than 12 years, and takes enjoying nature and the island's surroundings to heart.*

## The November/December 2024 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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**Natnaree Likidwanasakun**  
reporter1@classactmedia.co.th

**F**ans of Prapapon 'Nong Fiat' Sreemoung, better known as Phuket's 'Queen on Street', will be cheering for the 15-year-old in her live audition for Britain's Got Talent in London in November.

Nong Fiat's application was accepted last week (Sept 12), but she told *The Phuket News* that she will not be able to perform her audition until November.

"If I get on this show, it will change my life. It's a world-class show. If I can pass the audition and get to record the show, I will achieve a key goal," Nong Fiat said.

Not getting ahead of herself, Nong Fiat said she still had yet to select which song she to perform in her audition. "Right now I am practicing several songs, but which one I will perform [at the audition] I am still not sure," she said.

Unlike the US version of the international talent show franchise, now with spin-offs in 89 countries, the original British version created by Simon Cowell – just like the Thai version Thailand's Got Talent – allows foreigners to enter.

Nong Fiat recently returned to Phuket from a tour to Canada, hot on the heels of her winning the Pop Vocal 14- to 17-year-old category in live stage performance contest held as part of the Concurso Internacional 'Aire Nuevo' international music festival on the outskirts of Barcelona.

Nong Fiat won the award with her female rock version of 'The Final Countdown' by rock band Europe, originally released in 1986.

"My journey through Canada has been incredibly fun, exciting and challenging. It was my second time there, and it felt just as exciting as my first time in Spain," Nong Fiat recounted.

"It was overwhelming that I've connected with more international fans, and more people are recognising my name and talent. I would love to visit Japan and Switzerland; they are the top countries on my travel list," she added.

Now back in Phuket, Nong Fiat has her sights set on achieving higher accolades. "My ultimate goal is to become a

famous singer and earn enough money so that my parents no longer have to work," Nong Fiat told *The Phuket News*.

"Even reaching this point hasn't been easy. There have been tiring and discouraging moments. However, when I'm on stage and see the audience smiling and happy, it makes it all worth it," she said.

Still just a teenager, young Nong Fiat has already learned the importance of practice and dedication. "I practice every day, even after school, dedicating at least two hours daily to it," she said.

"I started playing the guitar three years ago, though I've been singing since I was seven. At first, it was challenging to play the guitar and sing simultaneously, but practice makes perfect, I've improved over time. Now, I truly enjoy both," she smiled.

Made famous by her performances at the Lard Yai Walking Street Market in Phuket Town, and now performing at many other events across the island, Nong Fiat stays true to her roots.

"I still play live performances at the market and on the streets nearly every day. On school nights, I play for just an hour between 7pm and 8pm, but on Friday and Saturday nights, I stay out until 9 pm," she explained.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

"I don't consider myself fully successful yet, but I've achieved a level of success that allows me to take the next step in my singing career," Nong Fiat said modestly.

"I'm currently preparing my new single, which we finished recording one month ago in Sweden. It will be released soon, so please stay tuned for it.

"I recently completed recording another two songs in Thailand and I am excited about releasing more original music in the future," Nong Fiat explained.

In addition to writing original songs, Nong Fiat is also expanding her music abilities. "I've recently started learning new instruments, like the violin and a bit of piano, and I'm really enjoying the experience," she said.

"I see myself appearing on shows as a singer, going on concert tours, and keep growing as an artist," she added.

A surprise for most fans is that Nong Fiat looks to the late, great Michael Jackson as one of her key in-

spirational figures. "I admire his style and the way he sings," she said.

"I'm also inspired by a performance on the Thai TV show *Mask Singer*, where Black Crow Mask did an unforgettable cover of 'Zombie'. His unique voice made it one of the best covers I've ever heard, and it truly inspired me," Nong Fiat added.

"My dad is also a musician, and I believe his support and encouragement have played a big role in shaping who I am today."

Nong Fiat hopes other youngsters also find inspiration to pursue their dreams.

"I want to tell all the youngsters with dreams: pursue whatever you aspire to. I also want to thank everyone in Phuket who has helped me reach this point and given me the opportunity to perform.

"A heartfelt thanks to all the kind supporters and fans who always encourage me," Nong Fiat said.

*Follow Nong Fiat's journey and successes through her 'Queen on Street' Facebook and Instagram pages, and check out her latest songs and performances at her 'Queen on Street' YouTube channel.*



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**Phuket News** - Talking to Phuket



POP QUIZ

- 1. What are the three basic parts of an atom?
- 2. Under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, which three provinces of Thailand were ceded to the United Kingdom, only to later become states of Malaysia?
- 3. Which toy, invented by George Lerner in 1949, was the first toy advertised on television?
- 4. Where does Homer Simpson work?
- 5. Damascus is the capital of which Middle Eastern country?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

  - 1. Weaken
  - 5. Literally, "king"
  - 9. Ring around the collar?
  - 14. Biblical birthright seller
  - 15. "\_\_\_ Got Tonight"
  - 16. Geneva's river
  - 17. Incompetent one
  - 19. Right hands
  - 20. Quaint stopover
  - 22. Bill encl.
  - 23. Acad.
  - 24. Rained-on sparkler
  - 27. Jim-dandy
  - 29. Couple
  - 32. Exchange phrase
  - 36. Arrived
  - 39. Indulgent meal
  - 41. Staying power?
  - 42. Fuse
  - 43. Keats piece
  - 44. Class
  - 46. Trophy for a matador
  - 47. Cast
  - 49. "When We Were Kings" subject
  - 52. Meal partner
- Down

  - 1. Emily of "Our Town"
  - 2. Vacation spot
  - 3. Glorify
  - 4. Bluefins
  - 5. Stockholm native
  - 6. Basil, e.g.
  - 7. Allege as fact
  - 8. "\_\_\_ My Room," Incubus tune
  - 9. Strong liquors
  - 10. Geological fault
  - 11. Last part
  - 12. Change machine input
  - 13. Makeup, e.g.
  - 18. Kind of 13-Down
  - 21. Lack of vigor
  - 24. "Same here!"
  - 25. Single
- 26. Aircraft with no pilot
  - 27. Craft
  - 28. Chilled
  - 29. Uptight
  - 30. Neo-Pagan nature religion
  - 31. Survey choice
  - 33. Ostrich relative
  - 34. Feather's partner
  - 35. Kidney's tube
  - 37. Without exception
  - 38. Expected
  - 40. Common conjunction
  - 45. Wallet find
  - 47. Sound of contempt
  - 48. Wiesbaden's state
  - 49. Are relevant
  - 50. High school subj.
  - 51. Unsuitable
  - 52. "Mama" speaker
  - 53. Necroph\_\_\_
  - 54. Like some drinks
  - 55. Scent
  - 56. Drone, e.g.
  - 57. Old World bird
  - 58. Guisado cooker
  - 59. Literary adverb

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Electron, proton and neutron; 2) Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu; 3) Mr Potato Head; 4) A nuclear power plant; 5) Syria

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
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60							61							
62							63				64			
65							66					67		

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

14	H	A	G	R	I	1	V	E	R	A	B	B	E	S							
15						15	I	R	E	I	M	A	G	O	D	R	O	V	E		
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9	4	8	1	2	5	7	6	3
7	1	5	6	3	8	2	4	9
8	5	4	2	7	9	6	3	1
6	3	9	4	5	1	8	2	7
1	2	7	3	8	6	5	9	4
5	9	6	8	4	7	3	1	2
4	7	3	5	1	2	9	8	6
2	8	1	9	6	3	4	7	5

GOT YOUR NUMBER

4

out of 10 Americans have never moved from their hometown.

5

minutes is how long the capybara, the world's largest rodent, can stay underwater at a time.

20

pounds (9.07kg) of eggplant contains the same amount of nicotine found in one cigarette.

61

percent is how much a US job applicant's chances can be negatively affected by having a visible tattoo.

111

is how many handbags the average woman in the UK will own in her lifetime.

420,000

people die every year from tainted food.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Gone fishing at Sarasin. Photo by Mila Pashina

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

This week in history

Sept 20, 2011

The United States military ends its 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy, allowing gay men and women to serve openly for the first time.

Sept 21, 1934

The classic novel *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, is published. The initial print run of 1,500 copies sells out by December.

Sept 22, 1979

A bright double-flash, resembling the detonation of a nuclear weapon, is observed near the Prince Edward Islands by a satellite overhead. The cause of the double-flash is never determined.



Bob Marley in concert, 1980.

Sept 23, 1980

Bob Marley plays what would be the last concert of his life in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Diagnosed with acral lentiginous melanoma in 1977, he dies on May 11, 1981 in Miami at age 36.

Sept 24, 2007

Between 30,000 and 100,000 people take part in anti-government protests in Yangon, Burma, the largest in 20 years.

Sept 25, 1513

Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa reaches what will become known as the Pacific Ocean.

Sept 26, 1973

Concorde makes its first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic in record-breaking time.

Source: Wikipedia



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26 OCT

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## MISS MOM PHUKET THAILAND 2024

The Miss Mom Phuket Thailand 2024 final round was held on the evening of Sept 14, 2024 at BTC Space - Blockchain Technology Center in Chalong. It started with the 14 contestants, who walked the runway and introduced themselves, before being reduced to the final 10, who answered questions, and then selection of the final five.

Congratulations to Phuket native #MMP13 Besuad, Mrs. Somjai Nonteraransi, who was crowned Miss Mom Phuket Thailand 2024 and awarded a sash, B100,000 cash and many other prizes.

The first runner-up - MMP 07 Siriwan Yeram, received the crown, sash, B50,000 cash and other prizes.

2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-up - MMP 03 Numtan - Mrs. Mattayavee Jantarattanavong

3<sup>rd</sup> Runner-up - MMP 08 Apichaya Raknai

4<sup>th</sup> Runner-up - MMP 05 Mayurapon Boonsiripanich

Congratulations to all the contestants.



## PHUKET BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT - SEPTEMBER

Phuket Business Networking (PBN) returned for its first event in a few years at the Oasis Bar in Koh Kaew on Friday, Sept 13. A great evening of relaxed networking that the inclement weather could not dampen, everyone left with a pocket full of business cards from an assortment of local businesses and a range of new contacts. Check out the next event - [facebook.com/phuketbusinessnetworking](https://facebook.com/phuketbusinessnetworking)



# Piastri beats Leclerc in Baku classic

## FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato  
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Oscar Piastri defeated pole-getter Charles Leclerc in an absorbing tactical contest for victory at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix last Sunday (Sept 15).

Piastri pinched the lead with a gutsy overtake into the first turn on lap 20, afterwards putting on a masterclass of defensive driving to hold back Leclerc for 29 laps before the Ferrari driver's tyres finally expired from the strain of the pursuit.

Piastri had two opportunities to vie for victory after Leclerc aced his start from pole to lead into the first turn. With the race expected to be run with just a single pit stop, the Australian knew that the clean air of the lead would be crucial to getting the tyres to the end and so pushed Leclerc hard in the opening laps looking for a gap in his defences.

It bit the McLaren driver hard, however, with his medium-compound tyres overheating quickly, dropping him almost six second off the lead as the pit stop window opened.

Sergio Pérez, who was running a close third in comfortably his best weekend performance since April, sought to capitalise by pitting early, on lap 13, but Red Bull Racing's undercut was foiled by Lando Norris.

The Briton started 15<sup>th</sup> on the



Piastri celebrates with his team after his win in Baku last Sunday (Sept 15). Photo: AFP

grid after a disastrous qualifying, but Pérez's early stop dropped him just behind the sister McLaren, which duly did its best to hold him up through the twisty middle sector.

It was enough to ensure Piastri could pit and rejoin with net second place intact. He then picked his opportunity to pounce on lap 20 with a great exit from the last braking zone giving him strong run down the 2.2-kilometre front straight into the first turn.

Leclerc watched the Australian

in his mirrors and was relieved to see him too far back to make a move when he hit the brakes – or so he thought.

With a late-braking move, Piastri dived ambitiously down the unguarded apex and pulled up his McLaren just in time to make the corner, picking Leclerc's pocket and changing the complexion of the race.

Leclerc had been unfazed by the move, assuming he'd have an opportunity to fight back later in the race, but he found his parries

easily rebuffed as the laps wore on. Piastri was nailing his exit from the last braking zone to make the most of McLaren's small top-speed advantage, keeping the door firmly closed.

### COOL AND COLLECTED

The pressure was immense from Baku specialist Leclerc, but Piastri never cracked. Cool and collected in the face of an assault from a driver with almost four times as many

starts in a car that was more than 0.3 seconds quicker in qualifying, he broke the challenge in the final laps to claim his second career victory.

"I think that ranks as probably the best win of my career," he said. Trying to soak up that pressure for so long in that race that was incredibly tough."

Pérez had seemed sure to finish at least third before his tangle with Sainz wiped both drivers out of the race and George Russell drove through the debris field to collect an unlikely final podium place.

Norris completed a disciplined recovery drive from 15<sup>th</sup> on the grid to overtake title rival Max Verstappen with two laps to go, compounding the Dutchman's poor weekend by reducing the championship gap to 59 points.

Fernando Alonso finished sixth ahead of superb Williams duo Alex Albon and Franco Colapinto, who combined to score 10 points and move the team up to eighth in the constructors standings ahead of Alpine. Colapinto, in just his second grand prix and first visit to Baku, was particularly impressive, running a 41-lap stint on a single set of tyres to finish the race.

Lewis Hamilton finished ninth ahead of an excellent Oliver Bearman, who took the suspended Kevin Magnussen's car to 10<sup>th</sup>, one place ahead of teammate Nico Hülkenberg, in just his second F1 start.

## Thai Paralympic athletes to receive cash rewards

### PARALYMPICS

THAILAND'S PARALYMPIC athletes are set to receive at least B135 million in cash rewards for their medal-winning performances at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

The National Sports Development Fund recently announced the payouts, including B43.2mn for six gold medals, B52.8mn for 11 silver, and B39mn for 13 bronze.

The country's athletes secured 30 medals, placing Thailand 21<sup>st</sup> in the overall standings, Thailand's best performance in Paralympic history, surpassing the six gold, silver and bronze medals won at the 2016 Rio Games.

China topped the medal table, followed by Great Britain and the United States.

Thai wheelchair fencer Saysunee Jana, who won three gold medals and one bronze, will receive



Photo: NNT

B24.6mn for her achievements in the foil, sabre and epee categories.

The 50-year-old made Paralympics history in Paris as the first female wheelchair fencer to win three gold medals.

The achievement brings Saysunee's total Paralympic gold medal count to five, with her first win dating back to the 2004 Summer Paralympics in Athens. Over two decades, she has competed in six Paralympic Games, consistently displaying her dominance in

wheelchair fencing.

Her victory in France places her among the top athletes in the sport, joining Roberto Marson, who won three gold medals in individual fencing in 1968.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra praised all of Thailand's para-athletes for their hard work and dedication, expressing pride in their achievements and optimism for the future of Thai Paralympic sports.

NNT

## Students complete first theory certificate in Muay Thai training

### MUAY THAI

THE FIRST OFFICIAL theory training programme for Thais wishing to teach and coach Muay Thai as part of Thailand's soft power tourism drive was launched in Phuket recently.

The two-day course on Sept 11-12, designed by the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) and the National Office of the Boxing Commission, delivered specific theory teachings relating to the national sport that are aligned with international standards.

The course is part of the government's One Family One Soft Power (OFOS) policy whereby a target of one member per family is encouraged to develop their creative skill-set in a variety of areas that highlight Thai culture, be it cooking, singing, designing, art, sports or other areas.

As many Thais are exposed to Muay Thai at a very young age, the government policy aims to encourage local residents to capitalise and upgrade their skills so as to be able to engage in the sport in a more specific manner and have the



Photo: SAT

chance to earn a decent living.

The classroom teaching complemented physical teaching work conducted in selected gyms across the island to ensure students are fully versed on all aspects of the sport and thus qualified to teach the sport as a trainer.

Additionally the course focused on the practicalities behind Muay Thai competition management, gym management and becoming an official Muay Thai referee.

Phuket Governor Sophon Sunwannarat oversaw the course's official launch ceremony at the Seabed Grand Hotel in Phuket Town and distributed certificates of recognition to all students who had attended once the course had concluded.

Teaching the increasingly popular sport of Muay Thai in Phuket is considered a key component in the government's ongoing soft power drive to

attract increased tourists and revenue to the island.

Phuket in particular 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, while the island also boasts 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.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was previously the deputy chairperson of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee under the Srettha Thavisin government.

With Ms Paetongtarn confirming in January that she is pushing to have Muay Thai become an Olympic sport, it is safe to assume that further promotion of the sport under her tenure as PM will only increase. *The Phuket News*



# Gunners dig deep for ugly win

## FOOTBALL

**AFP**  
Mikel Arteta saluted Arsenal's hunger as the gritty Gunners ignored the absence of Declan Rice and Martin Odegaard to clinch an "ugly" 1-0 win at bitter rivals Tottenham last Sunday (Sept 15).

Arteta's side were without skipper Odegaard due to an ankle injury suffered on Norway duty, while fellow midfielder Rice served a suspension for his red card against Brighton in their last league game.

But the Premier League title contenders dug deep with a combative display, benefitting from Tottenham's latest display of wasteful finishing before Gabriel Magalhaes bagged the winner in the second half.

"Super happy obviously. We know what it means for our club and our people to win a north London derby," Arteta said afterwards.

"We had moments in the game where we had to suffer. We had to adapt a little bit because of some of the players we lost. There were no excuses, no crying. The players have thick skin. Sometimes to win you have to do the ugly things and they love to do that."

The second placed Gunners are two points behind Manchester City who they meet on Sunday (Sept 22) at the defending champions' Etihad Stadium.

Pep Guardiola's team beat Brentford 2-1 last Saturday (Sept 14) thanks to another two goals from super striker Erling Haaland.



Arsenal's Gabriel Magalhaes rises high to score the winner against Spurs last Sunday (Sept 15). Photo: AFP

Only the post denied Haaland another hat-trick but he now has a Premier League record nine goals in the first four games of the season.

Liverpool's perfect start under Arne Slot came to a stunning end as Nottingham Forest won 1-0 at Anfield in Saturday's early game.

Forest had not won at Anfield in the top flight for 55 years but the home faithful were stunned when Callum Hudson-Odoi fired in the winner 18 minutes from time.

Liverpool had won all three of their opening games under Slot without conceding, but were sloppy and sluggish after the international break and made to pay.

Victory lifts Forest into fifth with eight points from their opening four games.

Elsewhere, Manchester United eased

the pressure on Erik ten Hag with a comfortable 3-0 win at Southampton with Andre Onana's penalty save denying Cameron Archer before goals from Matthijs de Ligt, Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho sealed the three points.

Aston Villa moved up to third after beating Everton 3-2, the Toffees blowing a two-goal lead for the second consecutive game, while Christopher Nkunku struck late to hand Chelsea's billion-pound squad an unconvincing 1-0 win at Bournemouth.

Brighton remain unbeaten but were unable to break down Ipswich in a 0-0 draw at the Amex, Crystal Palace came from 2-0 down to salvage a 2-2 draw against Leicester and West Ham snatched a 1-1 draw at Fulham.



Photo: AFP

## Thailand to host AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup

### BEACH SOCCER

THE ASIAN FOOTBALL Confederation has selected Thailand to host the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup 2025, it was confirmed last Saturday (Sept 14).

The AFC has sent a letter to the Football Association of Thailand (FAT), confirming the country's selection as the host of the next year's tournament.

This will be the third time that the Kingdom will organise the beach soccer event after staging it in 2019 and 2023 in Pattaya.

As the host country, the Thai national beach soccer national team will be awarded a spot in the finals.

They will be placed in Pot 1 for the draw while the names of the other 15 nations have yet to be confirmed.

The competition will be held in March next year in Pattaya.

The winners, runners-up and the third-place team will qualify for the 2025 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Seychelles in May.

Meanwhile, Thailand kicked off their 2024 FIFA Futsal World Cup campaign with a 2-1 victory over Croatia in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, last Saturday.

Muhammad Osamanmusa put the Thais ahead in the third minute of the Group B match, which served as the opening game of the tournament, before Ronnachai Junwongsuk added a second.

Antonio Sekulic pulled one back for Croatia who then went all out for an equaliser. Thailand survived the onslaught, however, and picked up their first three points of the tournament.

The other opponents in their group are Cuba and five-time futsal world champions Brazil.

Bangkok Post

## War Elephants impress with statement win in Vietnam

### FOOTBALL

THAILAND'S COME-from-behind 2-1 victory over regional arch-rivals Vietnam in the LP Bank Cup game in Hanoi on Sept 10 has left their coach Masatada Ishii feeling upbeat about the future.

The War Elephants had left out several big names from their squad for the three-nation event, including playmaker Chanathip Songkrasin and striker Teerasil Dangda.

Thailand were scheduled to face Russia on Sept 7 but the match was called off after Typhoon Yagi hit Hanoi and other parts of Vietnam.

Hosts Vietnam surged ahead in the 21<sup>st</sup> minute when striker Nguyen Thien Linh struck, but the Thais needed only five minutes to get on an even footing thanks to a fine effort by Suphanat Mueanta.

Patrik Gustavsson then fired home the winner after 40 minutes to get on the



Suphanat (No.10) celebrates with Jonathan Khemdee. Photo: Bangkok Post

scoresheet in his debut game for the senior national team.

Ishii was full of praise for his men – especially Suphanat – after the game.

"Every player performed the way we expected him to, but Suphanat stood out for his versatility – he did exceptionally well both as a winger and striker. I can't say which position suits him more, but he just gets in the mix of everything in an amazingly effective way," said the Japanese coach.

"While it did allow us extra time to prepare for the Vietnam game, it's a pity that our match with Russia had to be cancelled," he added.

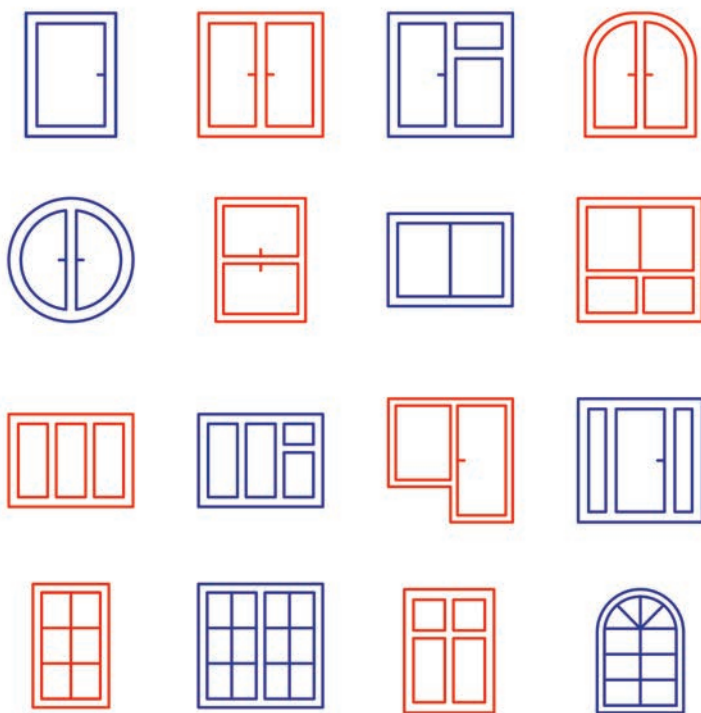
"In the beginning, the Vietnamese played a quick attacking game which made us concede the goal. We made a few adjustments and were able to hit back with two goals.

"I have told the players to go back to their clubs and try to upgrade their game further. This is a bunch of players with great potential. They are all in with a chance to be a part of the national team in the future again."

Thailand will next take part in the 50<sup>th</sup> King's Cup football tournament, which will take place in Songkhla next month during the FIFA Day break. Bangkok Post



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# Sport



**Beach soccer  
tourney set for  
Thailand > p15**

# STICKY START

## Phuket Andaman FC lose season opener



Torky Abdelrahman scores the equaliser for Phuket Andaman FC in their season opener last Sunday (Sept 15). Photo: Supplied

### FOOTBALL

Simon Causton

Some pills are hard to swallow, and the fact that their home pitch is unfit to play on is one Phuket Andaman FC (PAFC) will have to come to terms with as soon as possible.

Heavy rain for two hours before kick-off made the pitch almost unplayable and spoiled the new owners' debut at Surakul Stadium last Sunday (Sept 15) as they were defeated 2-1 by FC Yala.

The stadium is municipally owned, leaving the maintenance and groundkeeping out of the club's control, which may cause some headaches for what remains of the rainy season.

Judging the players on their per-

formance against Yala is incredibly hard. Russ Horsley has stated that his team was to play progressive, passing, attacking football, but sadly this was almost impossible last Sunday.

FC Yala, affectionately known as 'The Jigsaws', dominated with their more route-one style of play, their two towering centre-backs emphasising their height advantage all over the pitch. This direct style was evident as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> minute when they launched a quick counter-attack which culminated in captain Lassamano's nimble shot giving the visitors the lead.

PAFC came back into the game, trying to play the ball to feet where possible and tested the opposition goalkeeper through 'Bank' Sarod shortly after.

The game then became stop-start,

with players unable to stay on their feet due to the surface and free kicks for both sides aplenty.

The Lobsters drew level from a set piece in the 15<sup>th</sup> minute when 'Ohm' Attagorn's free kick from the left was taken nicely by new Egyptian star Torky Abdelrahman, who swivelled and shot home to bring some relief to the 400 fans who braved the weather to support their team.

### MESMERISING

Yala's distribution was superior, though, and it was evident that they were a more cohesive unit than this new Phuket Andaman team, who are still bonding after a disrupted pre-season due to the delayed takeover. From a well-taken corner, Lassamano doubled his tally and took Yala into half-time the far happier team.

The game resumed and was stop-start for most of the second half. The introduction of Ivory Coast signing Bebe Coulibary added some much-needed drive to Phuket on the hour mark, and from then on, they started playing the ball to feet with more success.

'Game' Satawat had several mesmerising runs down the left wing, Bebe was scythed down after a brilliant shimmy, and 'Preuk' Kitipat was unlucky to see his shot from distance deflected in injury time. However, Yala were able to hold strong and deserved the victory.

Match Day one is far from a fair reflection of the new-look Phuket Andaman FC, who showed glimmers of promise in the second half. Better conditions, more time to bond, and a well-thought-out plan B

for these occasions will surely see them have far better days ahead.

**PAFC line-up (formation: 4-2-3-1):** 'Bee' Anawin (Goalkeeper); 'Kla' Patapee (Captain); 'Bass' Akkharadech; 'Petch' Chinnatan; 'Bank' Sarod; TorkyAbdelrahman; 'Game' Satawat; 'Ball' Muhammad; 'Min' Kittinan; 'Chao Phum' Sathaporn; 'Ohm' Athagorn.

**Substitutes:** 'Pang' Mumadirfan (GK); 'Not' Kanin; 'Rahman' Abdelrahman (85'); 'Prem' Sackoy; 'Chao Pan' Kwanchai; 'Preuk' Kitipat (85'); 'Pong' Pokpong; 'Wa' Wuttichai; 'Keng' Patapee (70'); Bebe Coulibary (60').

The loss to FC Yala leaves Phuket Andaman FC sitting in 9<sup>th</sup> place in the 12-team table after one game. Their next game is tomorrow (Sat, Sept 21) away at PT Satun, kick-off 4pm.

## Vagabonds to reignite rivalry with Southerners at the ACG



THE GLOBAL  
RUGBY COACH

THOSE WHO LIKE THEIR senior rugby fast and physical are in for a treat tomorrow (Sept 21) as the Phuket Vagabonds play their great rivals from the capital, the Bangkok Southerners, at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang, kick-off 4:30pm.

The Southerners are a well-established club with many tournament successes meaning the Vagabonds will need to be at their

very best to beat them.

Last time out the Vagabonds, led by the irrepressible Dan Ashburn, won a feisty and competitive encounter against Krabi. Tomorrow's contest will have the same intensity and if the Vagabonds are to win, they will need all the quality play they can muster. It will be a front foot encounter with the more disciplined team over the 80 minutes likely to win.

When pride is on the line it becomes more than just a game and support can help motivate the Vagabonds players that extra yard

so why not come along and support your local rugby team?

All are welcome to the family-friendly environment at the ACG, with drinks and refreshments served throughout (I can personally vouch for the delicious pies!). It is a great place to not only watch some engaging rugby action but to also meet new friends.

I witnessed more of the fine work done by and at the ACG last Saturday morning (Sept 14) when I had the pleasure of attending a Vagabonds junior Academy session.

The Academy meets every

Saturday morning from 9am for 90 minutes and caters for children between the ages of 6 and 16.

If your child is interested in learning how to play rugby, I would urge you to consider taking him or her along as the sessions are fun, safe and well organised. It is also a great opportunity for young players to make new friends.

The Vagabonds' under-16 side, which also contained several members from the under-14 side, were in action last Saturday when they lost away in Krabi.

The youngsters get their chance



Photo: Supplied

for revenge when the Krabi Rugby Cup is played at the same venue on Oct 26 and 27.

For more details on rugby at the ACG contact [rugby@phuketvagabonds.com](mailto:rugby@phuketvagabonds.com) or visit their Facebook page.