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# CHARGED



From left: Kamala OrBorTor Chief Jutta Dumlak, Pa Khlok Mayor Panya Samphaorat and Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos. Photos: Pa Khlok Municipality / Kamala OrBorTor / Rawai Municipality

## THREE MAYORS FIGHT CORRUPTION CHARGES IN COURT

**Natnaree Likidwatanasakun**  
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Three Phuket mayors – Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos, Pa Khlok Mayor Panya Samphaorat and Jutta Dumlak, Chief of the Kamala Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) – are all currently fighting corruption charges in court, Phuket Vice Governor Ronnarong Thipsiri has confirmed.

The three cases were highlighted by Vice Governor Ronnarong to *The Phuket News*, as

he explained that provincial officials were ramping up their efforts to curtail corruption on the island.

Pa Khlok Mayor Panya was charged by the Phuket branch of National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) for “neglecting duties” related to public land. The Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct accepted the case on March 30, 2022, V/Gov Ronnarong explained.

Kamala OrBorTor Chief Jutta was charged by Phuket NACC for “corruption or misconduct in

public office” in relation to the issuance of building permits. The Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases accepted the case on Dec 19, 2023, he added.

Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos was reported by the Phuket NACC for corruption related to issuing building permits. The Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct accepted the case against Mayor Aroon on Sept 28, 2020.

However, no action was taken until the Supreme Administrative Court in September last year ruled that the office of the Rawai Mayor

and a committee that performed the environment impact studies for the Eva Beach project in Rawai had “acted unlawfully and negligently in performing duties as required by law”.

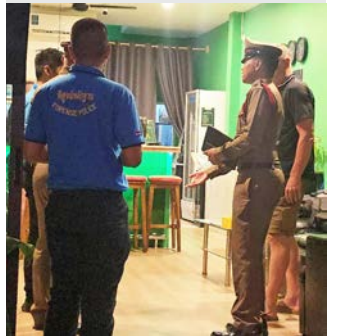
Phuket NACC Chief Suwat Saowarat confirmed to *The Phuket News*, “Two of them, OrBorTor Chief Jutta and Mayor Aroon, have been suspended from their duties.

“Only Mayor Panya decided to file a petition with the Administrative Court, which issued a Temporary Protection Order allowing him to continue performing his duties,” he said...

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# Mayors face graft charges

Continued from page 1

Although not fully forthcoming with details about the three cases, Phuket NACC Chief Suwat confirmed to *The Phuket News* that his office did bring the charges against the three mayors.

Mr Suwat also confirmed that all cases handled by his office are those involving corruption of more than half a million baht. Cases involving less than that are handled by the Public Sector Ant-Corruption Commission (PACC).

V/Gov Ronnarong confirmed this week that Juta and Aroon both are not receiving their standard government salary while the corruption cases are heard against them in court, in accordance with regulations under the Comptroller-General's Department.

## MISSING IN ACTION

While Panya is currently still performing his duties as Pa Khlok Mayor, Juta and Aroon have both been prohibited from their official duties for months.

With no irony, all three were not present when Phuket officials, led by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat, marked International Anti-Corruption Day earlier this month, on Dec 9.

When questioned by *The Phuket News*, Kamala OrBorTor



Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) present when court officials inspect the Eva Beach project in 2015. Photo: *The Phuket News* / file

confirmed that Juta was temporarily suspended while facing charges of corruption, but declined to recognise any details of the case against him. The office also declined to confirm exactly when Juta was suspended.

Rawai Municipality's response was worse. Acting on a tip-off that Aroon had been suspended while facing corruption charges, *The Phuket News* contacted Rawai Municipality on Aug 23, only to be told that Aroon was not in the office as he had injured his back in a fall while cycling.

The officer *The Phuket News* spoke with, who declined to be named, later said that Aroon had returned to work and was assisting villagers affected by the floods at that time. However, Rawai Municipality continued to fail to show

Aroon performing official duties in their official reports and Facebook posts.

By September, Rawai Municipality maintained that Aroon was acting as mayor, but was away attending a seminar in Nonthaburi. Rawai Municipality then declined to provide any comment on its own mayor facing corruption charges, with no notices informing the public.

## 'ALLEGED'

Aroon faces charges for wrongly issuing construction permits for the Eva Beach project – twice, V/Gov Ronnarong explained

The case against Pa Khlok Mayor Panya involved land that was originally designated as a public road.

"Ownership of the land

changed, and the new owner was unaware that part of the area had been allocated for public use. After purchasing the land, the new owner expanded it and planted palm trees along the original public road. The mayor was accused of not revoking the changes or taking action against the new owner," Mr Ronnarong explained.

"Like Aroon, Kamala OrBorTor Chief Juta also faced charges related to wrongly issuing building permits, and the mayor remains suspended from duty," he added.

## CLEANING HOUSE

"I have been working on this issue for a long time, as I am a former Inspector-General of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA)," Mr Ronnarong said.

"When I took up the position of Vice Governor, I formed a committee comprising the Phuket Provincial Office, Phuket NACC and the PACC to address corruption seriously, learn from the cases and educate those who are unaware of the law," he explained.

"For those who are aware, they should not repeat these actions. I do not want this cycle to continue, where issues arise, get covered up and lead to another investigation," Mr Ronnarong said.

Mr Ronnarong emphasised

that corruption charges in Phuket tend to fall into two categories: those who are clearly and undeniably corrupt; and those who make "mistakes" due to a lack of understanding of the law.

"To clarify on the second type, some officials may not be aware of the situation and simply certify documents or approvals proposed by others," he said.

"For example, newly appointed district chiefs in areas like Kathu, who have little experience with land law enforcement and a lack of understanding of the boundaries between public and private areas, may be unaware of signing the important documents," he added.

Mr Ronnarong pointed out that many officials in Phuket are not locals, and often have no idea of where official boundaries of public land lay.

"For instance, permits on forest boundaries are managed by the Phuket Royal Forest Department (RFD), but if Phuket RFD officers do not attend meetings, district chiefs remain unaware of these boundaries.

"Without clear information, they [officials] may sign off on decisions without truly understanding the area in question, especially when the ownership isn't clearly defined," he said.

## Parade celebrates UNESCO recognition

A GRAND PARADE WAS HELD ON the streets of Phuket Town last Saturday (Dec 14) to celebrate two Thai cultural heritage products being acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Tom Yum Goong, a spicy and sour Thai shrimp soup, and Kebaya, a garment traditionally worn by women, were both recently listed as intangible cultural heritage of humanity by the UN-related global organisation.

The parade, led by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat, was organised by the Ministry of Culture, together with the Phuket Provincial Office, the Peranakan Association of Thailand and local residents.

Many of the participants in the parade were adorned in kebaya costumes as they made their way along a 850-metre route from Suan Luang to the Blue Elephant Restaurant, with large numbers of tourists watching on and taking photos of the parade.

Ahead of the parade there was an official inauguration ceremony led by Governor Sophon, who was joined by his wife, Mrs Busadee, who as the Governor's wife serves President of the Phuket branch of the Red Cross Society of Thailand and as President of the Phuket branch of Interior Ministry Housewives Association.

Also in attendance was Prasop Riangngan, Director-General of the Department of Cultural Promotion, in addition to representatives from the Ministry of Culture, experts from the Committee for the Promotion and Preservation of Cultural Heritage, selected



Photo: PR Phuket

members of government agencies, executives of local administrative organisations, honorary consuls and the president of the Peranakan Association of Thailand.

In his opening remarks Governor Sophon expressed his delight at both items being recognised by such an esteemed international body, adding it is something that will make Thai people feel very proud.

It will also continue to help develop the cultural economy to create jobs, generate income and enhance economic stability as many tourists will now be more aware of both items and curious to know more, he added.

Governor Sophon further explained that the Kebaya costume in particular is a shared culture of five countries in Southeast Asia, which reflects the strong relationship between them that has existed for over 400 years.

"Kebaya is a costume that has transcended time," he said. "It connects the communities of Thai Buddhists, Muslims, Chinese, Javanese and Peranakans and there is beauty that comes from the joint creation of women in various communities."

*The Phuket News*

## Crackdown on illegal jet-skis spurs B500mn fine windfall

PHUKET MARINE OFFICIALS continued their crackdown on illegal jet-skis last week, issuing fines of B10,000 per unregistered jet-ski found to be illegally rented out to tourists.

In total, officers issued the maximum B10,000 fine per illegal jet-ski for each of the 51 illegal jet-skis found in just two weeks, raking in a windfall of fines of more than half a million baht in half a month.

In the latest "inspection", announced on Dec 12, officers found 17 illegal jet-skis being rented out by operators at Laem Nga in Ratsada, north of Phuket Town, and providing services at Koh Mali and Koh Pae, off Phuket's east coast.

The inspection was conducted at 9am, with a host of senior Phuket marine officials taking part, including Phuket Marine Chief Natchapong Pranit and Prawet Suphachai, Director of the Marine Department Region 5 branch.

A Marine Police boat was used to patrol the area, noted an official report of the inspection.

Officers discovered 17 jet-skis operating without valid licenses, a violation of Section 9 of the Thai Navigation Act B.E. 2481, amended by Section 60 (No. 14) B.E. 2535. The law stipulates a fine of up to B10,000 per offense, said the report.



Photo: Phuket Marine Office

The operators were charged and fined the maximum penalty of B10,000 per jet-ski. The operators were also instructed to cease using the jet-skis for tourist services until they complied with legal requirements.

Another inspection just two days earlier (Dec 10) saw jet-ski operators at A.E. Pier on Koh Siray fined B250,000 for renting out unlicensed jet-skis to tourists.

An inspection at Ao Por Pier and Yamu Pier in Thalang that same morning saw the operator of a passenger boat with an expired license fined the maximum B10,000 and ordered to cease operations until his vessel was legal.

An inspection by officials at Laem Sai Pier in Tambon Thepkasattri on Dec 9 found 10 unlicensed jet-skis being used to rent out to tourists, with the same penalties applied. Likewise, officials found 10 unlicensed jet-skis at Ao Por Pier on Dec 4.

Just six illegal jet-skis were found at Cape Yamu, Pa Khlok, on Nov 28, when the crackdown began. *The Phuket News*



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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 11 m/s

SUN DECEMBER 22



High: +35°

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MON DECEMBER 23



High: +35°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE DECEMBER 24



High: +35°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED DECEMBER 25



High: +37°

Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU DECEMBER 26



High: +36°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Belarusian charged for drunken assault on police

A 39-YEAR-YEAR Belarusian man last week faced charges for resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer and being drunk and disorderly after an incident at a hotel in Karon on Dec 11.

Karon Police were called to the hotel at 3:10am.

Officers arrived to find the Belarusian tourist, later identified as Siarhei Asychuk, acting frantically and drunk, and attempting to harm anyone who approached him.

Every time the officers approached him, Asychuk, dressed in only his underwear, roared and struck out at the officers.

His wife and children were standing nearby. One of his children repeatedly cried out, "Mama".

Police officers asked his wife to try to persuade him, but Asychuk continued his frantic episode.

After about 10 minutes, police had Asychuk in custody, though it was not clear whether that was finally through Asychuk's willingness. A large man,



Image: Eakkapop Thongtub

Asychuk easily fended off the officers' attempts to restrain him.

One officer wielding a baton gained Asychuk's specific attention. Asychuk continued to approach the officer, and the officer kept backing until eventually the officer fled down the street with Asychuk chasing after him.

Asychuk then returned to the scene where his wife and children, and the officers were waiting.

Asychuk was taken to Karon Police Station, where he was detained overnight. He was to be charged in court the next day, while his wife and children returned home without him.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Mother-in-law slain over family feud

Eakkapop Thongtub  
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A 27-year-old man shot his mother-in-law in the face at a popular bar and restaurant in Koh Kaew last week, then surrendered to police.

The suspect claimed the shooting was provoked by years of verbal abuse toward his parents.

Phuket City Police and rescue workers were called to the bar, in Moo 4, Koh Kaew, at about 8pm on Dec 12. Despite CPR and swift transport to Mission Hospital, the woman\* succumbed to her injuries.

The suspect, Natchipong Laokham, 27, later surrendered at Phuket City Police Station. Described as hot-tempered with a prior criminal record, Natchipong reportedly admitted to the shooting and provided his account of events.

Tensions had been simmering between Natchipong and his mother-in-law, stemming from her alleged ongoing insults directed at his parents.

Natchipong said he went to the bar-restaurant only to drink. During the encounter,



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

the woman allegedly made offensive gestures and continued her tirade, leading to an argument.

In a fit of rage, Natchipong pulled out a gun and shot the woman once before contacting police to report the crime. When officers did not arrive promptly, he drove himself to Phuket City Police Station to turn himself in.

Phuket Provincial Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum confirmed that Natchipong had been charged with multiple offenses, including murder, illegal possession of a firearm, carrying a weapon in public without just cause, and firing a gun in a public area without justification.

The operators of the bar

and restaurant issued the statement: "The incident happened around 8pm on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024. We believe both parties were known to each other and were Thai nationals. We applaud our staff who went above and beyond and did what they could at the scene, including initiating CPR.

"A person has been arrested. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family at this tragic time and we are cooperating fully with the police on this matter. We are unable to comment any further as this is an ongoing investigation," the statement concluded.

\* The woman's name is being withheld to respect a request from the family.

## Chinese murder suspect arrested at airport

A CHINESE NATIONAL suspected of murder in his home country has been arrested at Phuket International Airport after arriving on a flight from Shanghai.

Phuket Immigration reported that last Friday night (Dec 13) an order was issued to intercept Quan Guofeng, who is wanted for murder in China.

He became a suspect after engaging in an altercation that resulted in the death of another person, they said.

Chinese authorities requested their Thai counterparts deny



Photo: Phuket Airport Immigration

entry and return Quan for legal proceedings after learning he was travelling on Shanghai Airlines flight FM 831 to Phuket.

Immigration officials boarded the plane after it landed around 11:15pm and detained the suspect in his seat. He was denied entry to Thailand on suspicion of being a threat to the public and national security. *Bangkok Post*

## Hit-and-run drags victim 800m

THE DRIVER RESPONSIBLE for the fatal hit-and-run early last Saturday morning (Dec 14), killing a 22-year-old man and dragging his body for 800 metres, has surrendered to police and will face charges, Thalang Police have confirmed.

The incident occurred at about 3:20am, along Srisoonthorn Rd near the Bang Jo Intersection.

The victim, identified as 22-year-old Kunlachat Ampaisan, was riding a green-and-black Honda LS125 motorbike, registered in Phang Nga, Thalang Police said in their statement.

Thalang Police, in cooperation with Cherng Talay Police, investigated the scene and launched an immediate search for the perpetrator.

It appeared from initial

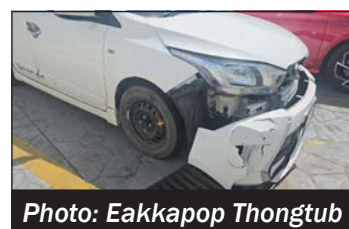


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

investigations that a vehicle heading from Baan Manik had turned right off Srisoonthorn Rd onto Soi Cherng Talay 4 just ahead of Wat Cherng Talay, before colliding with Mr Kunlachat and, instead of stopping on impact, decided to flee the scene.

However, in doing so he dragged Mr Kunlachat with him for about 800 metres before the body came loose and the car drove off.

Police and medical workers discovered the body of Kunlachat in an alley near a sharp curve on Soi Cherng Talay 4. He was pronounced

dead at the scene.

Authorities later identified the car driver as Wuttharat Butda, 41, who was driving a white Toyota Yaris 1.2E, registered in Phuket.

At around 10am last Saturday, Wuttharat surrendered himself to the police, bringing the vehicle involved in the collision to Thalang Police Station. Officers seized the car as evidence to collect forensic data and examine traces of the collision.

Police conducted an alcohol test using a breathalyser and also sent Wuttharat for a blood alcohol test at a medical facility.

Wuttharat faces charges of reckless driving causing death, fleeing the scene without providing assistance, and failing to report the incident to authorities immediately. *Eakkapop Thongtub*



# 'Expressway' project inches ahead

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat hosted a meeting on Monday (Dec 16) with representatives from the Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) to discuss progress on the 'Phuket Expressway Project', better known among islanders as the 'Patong Tunnel' project and the 'Muang Mai-Koh Kaew-Kathu Expressway' project.

At the meeting, at Phuket Provincial Hall, were key officials, including Pichet Kongsri, Chairman of EXAT's Legal Subcommittee, and Kulkanya Tumsen, EXAT Deputy Governor (Law).

The 'Phuket Expressway Project', aimed at addressing traffic congestion and boosting the island's tourism appeal, is being developed in two phases, explained an official report of the meeting.

Phase 1 (Kathu-Patong Section): Spanning 3.9km, this section involves an investment of B16.76 billion, comprising B5.79bn for land acquisition and B10.96bn for construction.

Land acquisition is underway, and the project's investment model is expected to be finalised and approved by the Cabinet by



the end of 2024, said the report.

Phase 2 (Muang Mai-Koh Kaew-Kathu Section): A 30.62km stretch of elevated expressway with an budget of B45.87bn, comprising B22.35bn for land acquisition and B23.52bn for construction. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report is in progress and will soon be submitted to the National Environment Board (NEB), noted the report.

"The route will shorten the journey from 35km to 28km and cut travel time from 90 minutes to just 20 minutes," noted the report.

"The project aims to alleviate severe traffic congestion, enhance the quality of life for residents, and strengthen Phuket's tourism infrastructure," the report added.

Governor Sophon expressed

gratitude to EXAT for prioritising the project, stating, "This expressway will play a crucial role in solving Phuket's traffic challenges and supporting the province's overall development."

## STOP-START

Originally, the project – proposed for decades before any action was taken – was to be developed as a single project through a public-private partnership (PPP). However, a lack of interest during the bidding process in April last year saw the project receive no bids from contractors,

In response, EXAT proposed to the Ministry of Transport to revise the investment plan, allowing EXAT to take full control of the funding and construction.

Instead of revising the project

into two set of wholly revised plans, and budgets and going through the bidding process again, EXAT in August this year sent a formal letter to the Ministry of Transport, stating that any adjustments to the tunnel design would require a complete reassessment of the project's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, a process that could delay the project by at least one year.

To avoid such delays, EXAT decided to self-finance the project, with an estimated budget of B16bn.

The decision came despite recommendations from the Ministry of Transport to consider modifications that could lower construction costs and enhance safety, noted a brief report posted online by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP).

## FORWARD MOTION

At its 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary celebrations on Nov 27, EXAT specifically mentioned as a point of pride among its current projects, "There is also a plan to expand expressway routes to various regions, including the Phuket Expressway Project, Phase 1 (Kathu-Patong Section) and Phase 2 (Muang Mai-Koh Kaew-Kathu Section),"

Just over a month earlier, on

Oct 15, Governor Sophon and Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) President Rewat Areerob welcomed a delegation from EXAT led by Ms Kulkanlaya to further discuss the project's plans who spent three days inspecting areas for the planned construction.

During the visit, Ms Kulkanya explained that the project was moving forward with the preliminary determination of property prices in Tambon Patong. A total of 110 "cases" (plots), covering 160 buildings, were addressed, she said.

Ms Kulkanya and her team over Oct 16-18 joined committee meetings for setting initial real estate prices. The committee included representatives from the Department of Land, the Department of Treasury, the Kathu District Office and Patong Municipality, with the Director of the Land Ownership Division of EXAT joining proceedings.

The meetings finalised property prices for the plots in question.

Property owners were to sign agreements, and compensation – estimated at about B150 million – was to be distributed in installments starting last month (November 2024), with payments expected to conclude by the end of the year.

## Phuket marks Disabled People's Day

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON Suwannarat marked Disabled People's Day 2024 at a special event held at Phuket Rajabhat University last week.

The event, held on Dec 11 under the theme 'Promoting Disabled Leaders for a Sustainable Future', aimed to highlight the potential of individuals with disabilities and promote equal opportunities for all.

The event saw a large turnout from public representatives, relevant agencies and disabled communities.

In his opening remarks, Governor Sophon emphasised the government's commitment to fostering collaboration across all sectors to transform challenges into hope, opportunity and equality.

He stated that the event reflects the province's [sic] dedication to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities through improved access to education, careers and legal rights.

The event featured various activities designed to support and showcase the talents of individuals with disabilities, including:

- Career Services: Job recruitment facilitated by the Phuket Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office in partnership with businesses and agencies.

- Activity Booths: Art and music performances by disabled groups, clothing giveaways and medical services provided by local hospitals.

- Recognition and Rewards: Plaques of honour for government agencies adhering to disability employment laws, prize giveaways and special recognition for disabled attendees.



- Performances: Cultural displays and performances by students from the Phuket Special Education Center and members of the Autistic Parents Association of Thalang District.

This year marked the 29<sup>th</sup> Disabled People's Day in Phuket since its inception in 1996. The event continues to raise awareness about the value and potential of people with disabilities as essential contributors to society.

The celebration event yesterday received strong support from both government and private sectors, highlighting a shared vision of building an inclusive, equitable society.

Organisers emphasized the importance of creating a sustainable future where individuals with disabilities can live with dignity, stability and equal opportunities.

The event concluded with a reaffirmation of Phuket's commitment to ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, has a place in an open and supportive community. *The Phuket News*

## Christmas Day Family Feast at SSC!

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Passengers arriving on the inaugural Aero Nomad Airlines (KA) India - Phuket flight KA7797 are welcomed at Phuket International Airport on Dec 5. Photo: AoT Phuket

## Tourist arrivals approach 33mn ahead of New Year

THAILAND HAS WELCOMED 32.7 million foreign tourists as of Dec 8 this year and they have spent a total of about B1.5 trillion, the government said last Sunday (Dec 15).

The top five nationalities were Chinese (6.3mn), Malaysians (4.6mn), Indians (1.9mn), South Koreans (1.7mn) and Russian (1.5mn).

Jirayu Hounsub, spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office, said on Sunday that the remaining 20-plus days in Dec are expected to attract long-haul visitors, notably those from Europe.

Inbound seat capacity rose by 10% in the second half of 2024 due to the government's tourism campaigns and the continued implementation of the "Ease of Travelling" measures, which help facilitate travel to Thailand.

Mr Jirayu welcomed Italian airline Neos's Friday launch of direct flights from Ostrava - an industrial city in the northeast of the Czech Republic - to Phuket, saying it could help achieve the target of drawing 60,000 Czech travellers to Thailand in 2024. *Bangkok Post*

# Developers' profits set to fall more than 10%

Bangkok Post

The combined profits of listed housing developers are expected to decline by more than 10% this year compared with 2023, driven by intense market competition and aggressive discount campaigns to capture dwindling demand.

Sumitra Wongpakdee, managing director of property research and consultancy Terra Media and Consulting, said a sluggish market prompted developers to make significant adjustments this year.

"Many developers resorted to price cuts and promotional campaigns to lift sales, willingly sacrificing profit margins to maintain their yearly revenue targets," she said.

During the first nine months of 2024, 35 listed housing developers reported a combined net profit of B20.8 billion on revenue totalling B223bn, compared with B38.5bn in net profit and B331bn in revenue for the full 2023.



A miniature housing model is displayed at a house and condo fair held at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center. Photo: Somchai Poomlard / Bangkok Post

The net profit margin to revenue ratio dropped to 9.3%, down from 11.6% at the end of 2023 and 13.1% in 2022, according to Terra.

The combined revenue of the 35 listed housing developers is projected to decrease by 5-8%, tallying around B300bn by the end of 2024, noted the consultancy.

Only a few developers are expected to meet their annual targets, having achieved more than 63% of their goals in the first nine

months, while others fell short, with some reaching only 36-38% of their annual targets.

According to Kasikorn Securities, 12 listed developers under its analysis reported a combined net profit of B7.5bn in the third quarter, a decline of 8% year-on-year and 2% quarter-on-quarter.

While the results aligned with market and internal estimates, they were underwhelming, as quarter-on-quarter growth

was absent despite significant condo backlog transfers during the previous three months, according to the brokerage.

The combined net profit for the first nine months of 2024 fell 20% year-on-year to B21.3bn and is expected to plunge 11% by year-end, noted Kasikorn Securities.

In the third quarter, the 12 listed developers, particularly those with joint ventures, saw a significant rise in transfer value both year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter, driven by the transfer of condo backlogs.

This was reflected in a significant rise in profit contributions from investments. However, intense market competition, especially in low-rise houses, led to a drop in gross profit margin for residential properties.

The 12 developers reported a decrease of 1.0 percentage point year-on-year and 0.5 percentage points quarter-on-quarter, reaching a four-year low of 30.6%.

## Senate committee visits to boost sustainable tourism, SME development

A DELEGATION FROM THE Senate Committee on Commerce and Industry visited Phuket last week to review and discuss strategies for fostering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the province's tourism sector.

The delegation, welcomed by Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai, was led by Vice Chairmen and Phuket native Nipon Ekwanich, joined by Tuangkun Songthamwat and Sahaphan Rungrojanaphanich.

The visit brought together key stakeholders, including heads of government agencies, private sector representatives and local administrative organisations. The representatives present shared insights and provided updates on the current status of tourism-related SMEs in Phuket, along with the challenges they face, said an official report of the meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Dec 13.

One major topic was the need for better support systems for small business operators, particularly in obtaining legal permissions for hotels and other small enterprises. It was strongly urged to simplify the process of obtaining hotel business licenses, which remains a significant obstacle for many business operators.

The discussions also underscored the importance of collaborative efforts



Photo: PR Phuket

between government and the private sector to enhance the competitiveness of Phuket's SMEs. "By building stronger partnerships, stakeholders aim to enable local businesses to thrive in both domestic and international markets, fostering long-term sustainability," said the report.

The Senate Committee's visit also highlighted broader ambitions to position Phuket as a model city for the 'new economy'. The vision focuses not only on improving the quality of life for residents but also on ensuring economic stability and sustainability across multiple dimensions, the report added.

As Phuket continues its recovery and growth in the wake of global tourism challenges, the collaborative initiatives discussed during the visit signal a promising future for the province's role as a leader in sustainable tourism and economic innovation, the report concluded. *The Phuket News*

## Average salary to increase 5% next year

THE AVERAGE EMPLOYEE SALARY in Thailand is set to increase by 5.0% in 2025, equivalent to this year, according to Mercer, a human resources and professional services consultancy.

Mercer's Total Remuneration Survey 2024 analyses remuneration trends and policies across more than 5,000 roles in over 700 companies in Thailand.

The analysis found salaries are set to increase at the same pace as in 2024, with all of the companies surveyed set to provide increases in 2025, compared with 99.8% in 2024.

The top factors influencing salary increases in 2025 are individual performance, salary range, organisation performance and the organisation's competitiveness in the job market, according to Mercer.

Some 91% of the organisations surveyed reported having short-term incentive plans such as bonuses, while the percentage of companies offering long-term incentives such as stock options grew from 78.9% in 2023 to 80.7% in 2024. Among other observations:

The consumer goods industry is focused on base salaries, which account for 75% of total remuneration packages. The automotive industry offers the highest percentage of short-term incentives, making up 23% of total remuneration packages.

The life sciences industry remains the highest-paying sector in Thailand, offering 20% more than the average for annual base salaries.

Despite the prevalence of flexible benefit schemes internationally, their use in Thailand remains limited, with less than



Photo: Bangkok Post

one-quarter of surveyed companies offering these benefits to their employees.

"The average salary increase of 5% in 2025 reflects an ongoing commitment by Thai organisations to invest in their workforces," said Thira Laulathaphol, career principal at Mercer's Thailand.

"With 100% of surveyed companies planning salary increases, it is clear that Thailand has a competitive job market. In this environment, it is crucial for HR leaders to adopt a holistic approach to total compensation. This includes salary adjustments and short-term and long-term incentives, while addressing the evolving well-being needs of employees.

"By effectively adapting to changing expectations, organisations can attract and retain top talent in an increasingly complex landscape." *Bangkok Post*



# PM touts economic plans

**BANGKOK**  
Bangkok Post

In a Dec 12 televised address to recap the government's performance in its first three months in office, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra pledged a raft of new populist measures to boost the economy and improve people's livelihoods next year.

"2025 will be a year of opportunities," she said on the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand channel. "The government will deliver tangible results for a better future."

New measures that will be rolled out next year include the "One District, One Scholarship" programme, funded by revenues generated by lottery ticket sales from the Government Lottery Office, to expand educational opportunities for underprivileged students, the PM explained.

The government will also introduce the "One District, One Summer Camp" initiative to allow students to attend short-term overseas language training, she added.

Ms Paetongtarn added that district schools will also be upgraded with the aid of technology and enhanced teaching resources in order to strengthen students' skills in languages and artificial intelligence.

The small-medium-large village and community development pro-



Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra during the NBT Channel address on Dec 12. Photo: Bangkok Post

gramme will also be rolled out to empower local communities to identify and address their own challenges, to be supported by funds distributed through village and urban community networks.

To support medium-sized enterprises, which serve as the backbone of the Thai economy, a B5 billion fund will be allocated to help them.

Housing initiatives will also be another priority, with the "Homes for Thais" programme providing high-quality condominium units with 99-year leases and rent starting at about B4,000 per month, offering many citizens access to homeownership, the PM said.

The government will also push for a B20 flat rate for all electric train lines serving Greater Bangkok, while the digital wallet handout scheme to drive the economic recovery and digital transformation will continue, she added.

The second phase of the cash distribution programme will provide

cash to 4 million senior citizens by Chinese New Year, followed by a third phase targeting the general public to sustain the momentum of the economic recovery, the PM explained.

Debt relief will also be prioritised, with measures focusing on household debts, home and car loans, including a three-year interest payment suspension scheme, as well as full debt forgiveness for smaller debt obligations under B5,000, she said.

Water management remains a top priority, with measures being developed to mitigate both flooding and drought, including promoted collaboration between the state and private sectors for canal dredging and studying large-scale floodway projects to provide lasting solutions.

"Our mission is to empower citizens, reduce centralised power and build a nation where everyone has the opportunity to prosper with dignity. Together, we will make 2025 a year of progress and hope, setting the stage for a brighter decade ahead," Ms Paetongtarn said.

# Floods continue to devastate the south

**BANGKOK**

FLOODING CONTINUES to wreak havoc in five southern provinces, with at least 128,000 families impacted, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation reported on Monday (Dec 16).

Director-General Pasakorn Boonyalak said 1,998 villages reported flooding in Chumphon, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phatthalung, Ranong and Surat Thani provinces and 128,035 households were in trouble.

In Chumphon, floods were reported in Lamae, Lang Suan, Muang, Pathiu, Phato, Sawi, Tha Sae and Thung Tako districts.

In Phatthalung, floods hit Khuan Khanun, Khao Chaison, Kong Ra, Muang, Sri Banphot and Sri Nakharin districts, while in Ranong, there was flooding Kra Buri, La-un and Muang districts.

Mr Pasakorn did confirm, however, that the water levels were decreasing in all areas mentioned above.

Water levels continued to rise in Nakhon Sri Tham-



Flooding in Nakhon Sri Thammarat. Photo: Bangkok Post

marat, where flooding hit Bang Khan, Chalerm Prakiat, Chang Klang, Chua-ua, Chawang, Chian Yai, Chulabhorn, Hua Sai, Khanom, Lan Saka, Muang, Na Bon, Nop Thi Tam, Pak Phanang, Phipun, Phra Phrom, Phrommakhiri, Ron Phibun, Sichon, Tha Sala and Thung Song districts.

Similarly in Surat Thani, the areas of Ban Na San, Chaiya, Don Sak, Kanchanadit, Koh Pha-ngan, Koh Samui, Muang, Tha Chana and Tha Chang districts experienced floods and the water levels continued to rise.

Mr Pasakorn said eight people had been confirmed killed by the flooding in the five provinces.

So far this southern wet season, flooding has struck 11 southern provinces, killed 35 people in total and affected 737,091 households, he said. Bangkok Post

# Grenade attack at Tak fair leaves 3 dead, scores injured

**UMPHANG**

AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE WERE killed and scores injured when a grenade was thrown into an annual fair in Umphang district of Tak province late last Friday night (Dec 13).

The attack occurred at the Red Cross Doi Loyfa fair, said Pol Col Supakorn Phiphatphimpha, chief of Umphang police. The incident was reported to police about 11:30pm and two teenagers, aged 16 and 17, were subsequently arrested.

The grenade was thrown in front of a dance stage where residents and visitors were dancing to the music. The blast prompted people to flee for their own safety. Many fell to the ground in front of the stage, according to witnesses.

Pol Lt Gen Archayon Kraithong, spokesman for the Royal Thai Police Office, said that three people were killed and 48 others injured in the grenade attack.

The force of the explosion killed two people on the spot. The injured were rushed to Umphang Hospital after rescue workers provided first aid.

Some Thai media outlets reported the incident resulted in four fatalities.

Following the attack, police and soldiers arrested two male suspects: a



The site of the attack. Photo: Bangkok Post

Thai national and a member of the Karen National Union (KNU), said Pol Lt Gen Archayon. The KNU member, identified only as Jorithu, was previously arrested for drug offences in February this year.


During questioning, Jorithu admitted to carrying a shoulder bag containing the explosive to target a rival gang.

According to reports, the explosion was caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) and was linked to ongoing conflicts between teenage groups that began during the Songkran festival.







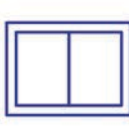









Manot Phoniam, chief of Umphang district, said the fair was held for seven nights, from Dec 8 to Dec 14. Teams of village volunteers, police and soldiers were arranged to beef up security during the event, said Mr Manot.




The event featured multiple show stages, and the attack took place at the traditional dance stage, he added.

About 8,000 to 9,000 people attended the annual Red Cross fair in this northern border district. Bangkok Post



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# Phuket and the ‘Pink Dollar’

## LGBTQIA+

Josh O'Neill

Phuket has long been celebrated for its stunning beaches, vibrant nightlife and unique cultural blend. With the legalisation of gay marriage via Thailand’s Marriage Equality Law on Jan 22, 2025, Phuket is poised to strengthen its reputation as a safe and welcoming destination, particularly for the LGBTQIA+ community. Beyond its scenic beauty, Phuket is now ready to become a global leader in ‘inclusive tourism’, a move that not only celebrates diversity but also taps into the powerful economic influence of the ‘Pink Dollar’.

The LGBTQIA+ community represents one of the most influential market segments in the global travel industry. Studies show that LGBTQIA+ travellers often spend more on experiences, accommodations and dining and in 2021 the global LGBTQIA+ travel market was estimated at US\$200 billion, highlighting the significant contribution of this community to the global economy. For Phuket, which already has a reputation for being open and inclusive, this presents a golden opportunity to attract travellers seeking safe and welcoming spaces and experiences.

Phuket’s vibrant LGBTQIA+ scene and community add to its appeal. Visitors can enjoy a variety of events and attractions, including the colourful Pride celebrations in June, which bring locals, expats and tourists together to celebrate diversity. In Patong there are daily performances that showcase the creativity and energy of the LGBTQIA+ community, while many restaurants, bars, and clubs create welcoming spaces where everyone feels at home. Phuket’s attractions extend far beyond nightlife, with pet-friendly cafes, outdoor adventures, and some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.



To ensure Phuket’s ‘inclusive tourism’ success, businesses and communities must go beyond surface-level support. ‘Pink washing’, a term used to describe token gestures of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity without meaningful action, is a growing concern. Hanging a rainbow flag or running a Pride-themed promotion is no longer acceptable. Visitors, especially from the LGBTQIA+ community, are increasingly discerning and expect businesses to back up their words with genuine practices. Inclusive language and staff training are essential steps for ensuring every guest feels respected and valued, not just during Pride events but all year round.

Phuket’s inclusive environment and proactive approach set it apart from other destinations like Bali or Bangkok. Initiatives like PFAM’s Community Connect events foster a sense of belonging and provide a platform for discussions about inclusivity and respect. These gatherings create opportunities for businesses to engage directly with the community, demonstrating their commitment to making Phuket a more inclusive destination.

The upcoming Marriage Equality Law further enhances Phuket’s position as a leading LGBTQIA+ destination. For all businesses, this is a chance to showcase authentic inclusivity, build meaningful con-

nections with this community, and capitalise on the spending power of LGBTQIA+ travellers. Businesses that embrace this opportunity can contribute to a more inclusive society while also benefiting economically.

The steps to achieve this are straightforward but impactful such as focussing on providing staff with training on inclusive language and cultural sensitivity to create a welcoming environment. Supporting, sponsoring and being involved in local events and activities demonstrates genuine solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community. Adopting consistent and authentic practices ensures that inclusivity becomes an integral part of a business’s identity, not just a seasonal marketing tactic.

Phuket is entering a pivotal moment in its evolution as a global destination for ‘inclusive tourism’. The island has always been a place where people from all walks of life come together, but now it has the chance to lead by example. By embracing diversity, respecting differences, and fostering an inclusive environment, Phuket can become a beacon of inclusivity not just in Thailand but throughout Southeast Asia.

The Pink Dollar represents more than economic potential; it symbolises the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels valued and celebrated. This is a time to act, to commit to inclusivity, and to ensure that every visitor leaves not only with fond memories but with a sense of being truly welcomed. The future of Phuket lies in its ability to celebrate what makes it unique—its diversity, its warmth, and its unwavering embrace of all who visit.

Josh O'Neill, a dedicated LGBTQIA+ advocate and community leader, leverages his expertise in DEI, events and cultural engagement to spotlight Phuket’s current affairs and vibrant community life. Contact at PFAM International: Phone / WhatsApp 099-9989274. Email: support@pfaminternational.com



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# Cheers to better health!

## WELLTHWISE

Libby Heath

**B**ehind the pop of a cork, or the glow of celebration is a sobering truth: alcohol, a frequent social staple, can be a dangerous companion.

Chemically speaking, the alcohol we drink, ethanol, is a toxin; a poisonous substance that can harm or disrupt biological processes in other organisms. When alcohol is metabolised by the liver, it is converted into acetaldehyde, a highly toxic compound that is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen because it damages DNA and proteins, contributing to cancer risks.

Because alcohol is both hydrophilic (water-soluble) and lipophilic (fat-soluble), it can permeate all types of cells. The water solubility allows ethanol to be quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and contributes to its quick psychoactive effects. Its fat solubility allows ethanol to permeate the blood-brain barrier, the selective membrane that protects the brain by only allowing certain molecules to pass through while blocking harmful ones.

Once in the brain, alcohol affects the central nervous system by altering the function of neurotransmitters, leading to a wide range of effects. This contributes to such behaviours as diminished inhibitions, increased impulsivity, memory disruptions and loss of coordination. Sound familiar?

Alcohol disrupts the tight junctions between cells in the intestinal lining, allowing toxins, bacteria and undigested food particles to pass into the bloodstream, aka 'Leaky Gut'. It also indiscriminately kills the bacteria of the gut microbiota, often beneficial bacteria, creating a microbial imbalance. That dysbiosis may lead to gastrointestinal symptoms, impaired digestion and systemic health problems such as depression,



obesity and metabolic disorders. The liver works overtime. The face, hands and feet swell up in response to electrolyte imbalances. Worthless calories add up. Visceral fat accumulates.

Despite its initial sedative effect, alcohol disrupts sleep by interfering with its structure. It suppresses REM (rapid eye movement), the critical stage of the sleep cycle that provides physical, cognitive and emotional benefits, and leads to fragmented sleep. A rebound effect increases wakefulness causing many to wake up earlier than usual, reducing overall sleep time. The diuretic effect of alcohol increases the need to urinate at night, another disruption. In response, the body retains water to compensate for loss of fluids, which can result in bloating. Alcohol relaxes the muscles of the throat and airway, worsening conditions such as sleep apnea or snoring. Shall I go on?

People who consistently drink as little as one drink per night experience increases in the stress hormone cortisol, even in the absence of alcohol. When they are not drinking, they feel more stress and anxiety. The more you drink, the more tolerant you become. You get less of the feel-good surge and more of the pain signaling. You chase a moving target.

Chronic alcohol use refers to the consistent or repeated consumption of alcohol over an extended period.

According to the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) heavy drinking is defined as: Men: more than 14 drinks per week, more than four drinks on any day. Women: more than seven drinks per week or more than three drinks on any day. Yikes.

Is there a safe level of alcohol consumption? Science and common sense would say, "No."

In August 2023 I decided to give up alcohol. I had been on a quest to find actionable brain health strategies. I found the Huberman Lab podcast and listened to 'Episode 86: What Alcohol Does to Your Body, Brain & Health'. It was like being struck by lightning. All I could think was, "What have I been doing to my body in the name of socialising and stress management!?" The switch flipped. Other than a rare celebratory glass of sparkling wine, my drinking days are behind me.

My own experience has been transformative. I dropped weight from my mid-section. My skin glows. I sleep well. My mood is peaceful and consistent. I am eager to exercise in the mornings. I get dress-drunk now. All the money that I do not spend on alcohol goes into a special shopping fund.

Others may not find it so easy to stop. Social pressures, ritual, dependence and outright addiction can make change difficult. Define your why. Plan ahead by stocking alternatives and informing hosts. Replace old habits with new rituals and activities. Build support from family and friends. If you decide that you want to quit but cannot, I urge you to seek professional help or group support. AA has been saving lives since 1935. There is a group nearby hoping that you will join them.

Alcohol free? All the cool kids are doing it.

*Libby Heath shares her insights and advice through her column 'Wellthwise' here in The Phuket News. Please note that if you have a condition that requires medical treatment, consult your doctor. Contact Libby at: BeWellthwise@gmail.com*



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POP QUIZ

1. What Xmas product did Sir Henry Cole produce in 1843?

2. In the Christmas film 'Gremlins', what did Billy name the mogwai given to him as a gift?

3. Which traditional Christmas vegetable is a cross between a cabbage and a turnip?

4. According to the song, what did my true love bring to me on the third day of Christmas?

5. Santa originally had only eight reindeer. Which reindeer was created – and added – in 1939?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Jewish month

5. Sternward

10. Betting game

14. Flower holder

15. Diving bird

16. Dash

17. Antarctic denizens

20. Long Island county

21. Choice of phrase

22. "The possession of fools": Herodotus

25. Selling point

26. Pawn

30. Mild, as weather

32. Hindu garment

33. Part of O.H.M.S.

34. Greek deity

39. South African herb

42. Walk nonchalantly

43. Demagogue, for short

44. Limerick language

45. Breakfast sizzler

47. Choral clubs

48. \_\_\_-frutti

52. Confused

54. Exaggerate a performance

56. Calm

61. Cow parsleys

Down

1. Smooth

2. Tibetan priest

3. Fed. agency

4. Bruce and Spike

5. Love affair

6. Sticker

7. French collagist

8. Embroidery yarn

9. Atlantic City attraction

10. Conflicts

11. Handle

12. Cooktop

13. Start

18. Absorbed

19. Grew older

23. Nile bird

24. Mechanical damper

26. Entreats

27. Mother of the Titans

64. Forearm bone

65. Orchestra seat

66. Business

67. It may be due

68. Well

69. What every child wants

28. Sea eagles

29. Approaching

31. Crumbly soil

33. "Hey!"

35. Old Chinese money

36. Charter

37. Existence (Lat.)

38. Cereal grasses

40. Using cautious and slow strategy to wear down opposition

41. Seeming eternity

46. Cat's delight

47. Highlander

48. Brimless hat

49. Throat dangler

50. Early years in a century

51. Doctor

53. English exam finale, often

55. A sparkling wine

57. Utter in a grating voice

58. Canyon effect

59. Glower

60. Notice

62. "\_\_\_ to worry"

63. Home extension

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
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61								62	63					
64					65						66			
67					68						69			

Visit: [www.ilovecrosswords.com](http://www.ilovecrosswords.com)

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

M	A	I	L	B	O	B	S	A	C	M	E
A	L	O	E	I	D	I	O	T	B	O	I
N	O	W	I	N	S	I	T	U	A	T	I
E	T	A	I	S	N	T	M	U	D	P	I
				S	P	A		R	A	C	E
A	B	L	Y	U	P	P	E	R	S	L	I
B	R	A	N	D	O	A	S	I	S	E	D
Y	O	U	C	A	N	T	W	I	N	E	M
S	I	R	N	O	E	N	D	E	A	S	E
S	L	A	T	I	N	S	E	T	L	E	S
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W	I	N	S	O	M	E	L	O	S	E	S
A	N	N	E								
M	E	S	S								

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

3

days a year – Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter – are when Americans watch the least amount of pornography.

13

nanometers in size is still large enough to be detected by human touch.

15

minutes is how long it took Mariah Carey to write "All I Want For Christmas Is You", which has earned her US\$60 million in royalties.

923

words in the English language break the 'i before e' grammar rule and only 44 words actually abide by it.

29.9 billion

US dollars is expected to be spent on gift cards in the US this holiday season.

Source: [Uberfacts](#)

ISLAND VIEW

Spirit of Phuket Town. Photo by Tina Olitakič

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

This week in history

Dec 20, 1955

Cardiff is proclaimed the capital city of Wales.

Dec 21, 1988

A bomb explodes on board Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, killing 270. This is to date the deadliest air disaster to occur on British soil.

Dec 22, 1968

Cultural Revolution: People's Daily posted the instructions of Mao Zedong that "The

intellectual youth must go to the country, and will be educated from living in rural poverty."

Dec 23, 2007

An agreement is made for the Kingdom of Nepal to be abolished and the country to become a federal republic with the Prime Minister becoming head of state.

Dec 24, 1826

The Eggnog Riot at the United States Military Academy West Point begins, involving more

than one-third of the cadets by the time it ceased on Christmas morning; 20 of them

were court-martialed.

Dec 25, 1989

Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena, are condemned to death and executed by firing squad, ending 42 years of Communist rule in Romania.

Dec 26, 1991

The Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union meets and formally dissolves the Soviet Union, thus formally ending the Cold War since it began in 1947. Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Ceaușescu (centre) with Deng Xiaoping (left) and Leonid Brezhnev in 1965.

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FRI20DEC



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### Grow Boating Evening - January 2025

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WED8JAN



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THU9JAN



### Thailand International Boat Show 2025

The Thailand International Boat Show 2025 A Luxury Lifestyle Event (TIBS) will take place at the award-winning Phuket Yacht Haven Marina between 9 - 12 January 2025, with over 6,000 visitors and more than 100 exhibitors expected to attend. Targeting those with an interest in boating and luxury lifestyle. Yachts of all sizes, both power and sail, will be on display in-the-water ranging from dinghies and day trippers up to superyachts. More Information please contact us by email: [info@thailandinternationalboatshow.com](mailto:info@thailandinternationalboatshow.com)

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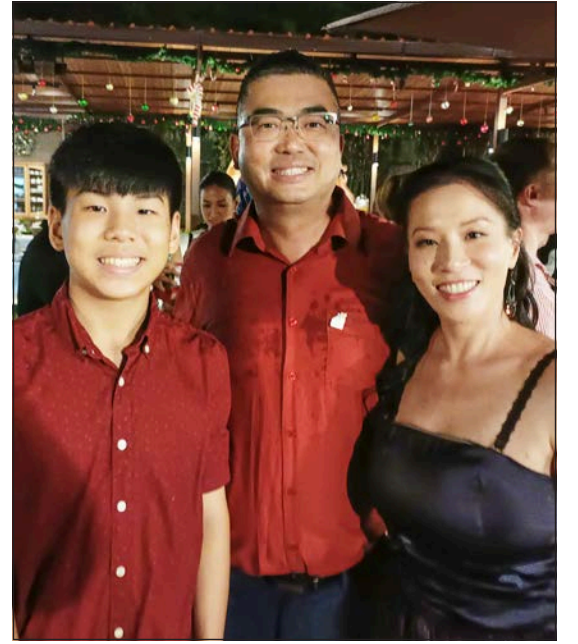
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## ROTARY CLUB OF PATONG CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Rotary Club of Patong Beach held its annual Christmas dinner on December 10 at the wonderful Eden Valley Phuket - Christmas Village in Pa Khlok. A sell-out gathering of Rotary members and guests enjoyed the sumptuous buffet, carol singing by the children from St Euthrasia Banya Literacy Center and live music from local musician Moody Paul. And not to forget the visit from Santa, a jolly time was had by all.



## SKAL PHUKET'S YEAR-END CELEBRATION

The final Skai Phuket dinner of the year was held on Thursday, December 12, at the Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town, hosted by Skai Phuket's esteemed member Pamela Ong. Pamela and her team ensured a great evening to celebrate an incredible 2024. Pre-dinner networking was held by the pool followed by a buffet of delicious food at the Krua Talad Yai Restaurant. For more info on Skai Phuket and how it can help you to connect with fellow tourism professionals, visit [facebook.com/SkaiPhuket](https://facebook.com/SkaiPhuket)



# Clash of the Thaitans

## BOWLS

Robert Knight

Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> proved anything but unlucky for Sireet-Don “Wan” Sirimuangjan Eddon as she won her first “major” title at Kamala Bowls Club against “Nid Noi” Worada Junkiri in an all-Thai ladies affair last Friday (Dec 13).

A total of 22 players took to the green in relatively cool conditions to contest the Donald Moore trophy, named in memory of the club’s founder.

A new format was used for the competition with all playing the preliminary round and 11 winners plus five lucky losers making it through to the last 16 knockout stage.

The random draw pitted four ladies against one another, with Nid Noi and Alison Ostrom Duvarney winning, leaving Wan and Clare Parkes hoping that their points loss difference would be good enough to make it into the lucky losers category.

Wan eventually scraped through to the main draw by just a solitary point, while Clare was relegated to the “plate” competition for the unlucky losers, joining other notable casualties Dot Barker and Rob Knight.



Winners Wan and Paul hold their trophies with fellow finalists Duncan and Nid Noi. Photo: Robert Knight

### FINE MARGINS

In the last 16, Nid Noi was drawn against husband Glenn Collins, with the former taking the spoils in a surprisingly easy victory over her other half.

Most of the other last 16 matches were close affairs, with Dean Lambert needing a sudden

death end to see off Frank Born, while Tony Fifield arguably caused the shock of the round by beating serial winner Ron “3peat” Blackwood who had made the long journey from Phetchabun in an attempt to add to his long list of past successes. The exception to this rule was Wan who returned

to form with a record 19-2 victory over Derek “Dr Rock” Chalmers.

The quarter-finals saw a very tight session of matches, with Ray “The Rocket” Austin defeating Peter “The Kaiser” Kuschel with the last bowl of their match and Carl “The Mesh” Mesham producing a Lazarus like recovery to snatch an unlikely draw against Tony and then win the sudden death extra end.

Wan sneaked through to the semi-finals after beating Dean Simmonds by the finest of margins 5-4 and Nid Noi edged past Par “Pat” Alm 8-6.

The first semi-final saw Nid Noi take on The Mesh, both champions of singles tournaments last year, and a tight affair was therefore expected. However, this did not materialise as Nid Noi ran out the comfortable winner 12-2 with 2 ends remaining.

The other semi-final between Ray “The Rocket” and Wan was much tighter affair with Wan finally progressing by a score of 7-6.

### QUALITY BOWLS

This meant the final was a repeat of the preliminary round match between Nid Noi and Wan, aptly described by Dean Simmonds as the “Clash of the Thaitans” with

Wan looking to avenge her earlier defeat to her counterpart.

Despite a tight start with both players delivering quality bowls, Nid Noi stretched away to a 7-1 lead after 6 ends, leaving things looking ominous for Wan.

However, what followed was a remarkable turn around by Wan as she delivered a maximum score of 4 on end 8 to reduce the deficit to 7-6 before scoring 2 points on both ends 9 and 10, meaning she secured her first ever “major” title at the club.

As seems to be a recent trend of keeping it in the family, Wan’s husband Paul “Policeman” Eddon beat “Dunking” Duncan Kennedy in the “plate” final to complete a clean sweep for the clearly delighted Eddons.

The next tournament on Jan 10, 2025 is the annual “Pryder Cup” team tournament when The Colonials take on The Rest of the World.

*Kamala Lawn Bowls Club is open six days a week and all equipment is provided. Group bookings available for private tournaments, company or social events and celebrations with buffet food at reasonable rates. For further information contact the club on 094 898 7476.*

## ‘Running at Wichit’ event confirmed

### RUNNING

ORGANISERS HAVE confirmed the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the hugely popular “Running at Wichit” event will take place on Sunday, Feb 2, 2025 and that registration is now open.

The event will take place at Sri Phuanart Park on Pattana Thongthin Rd in Wichit and incorporate three separate race distances: a 4-kilometre fun run, a 10.3km mini marathon and a 21.5km half marathon.

There are entrance fees attached to all three categories as follows: fun run B250; mini marathon B300; and half marathon B450.

There will be prizes up for grabs for the top finishers in each race category, while all participants will receive a medal on competing their respective distance, organisers confirmed.

There will also be a cut-off time for the 21.5km half marathon of three hours and thirty minutes, organisers stated.

A chip timing system will be used to determine each



participant’s finish place and subsequent race ranking and bib transfers between runners is not allowed – anyone found to have violated this condition will be automatically disqualified, organisers confirmed.

Registration via LINE can be done at: <https://liff.line.me/16556186.../event/hKzxLmsADz1nXKBpoyvQ/> or via the SOFTEVENTS app on iOS/Android at: <https://soft.events/app.link>.

For more information including how to register online and a guide to the three separate race routes on the day visit: <https://soft.events/run/running-wichit-17>.

The Phuket News

## Countdown on to ASEAN Para Games

### ASEAN PARA GAMES

THE COUNTDOWN TO THE 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games (APG13) is officially underway, with organisers stating the occasion will promote inclusivity and equality in sports while safeguarding the environment.

An official launch countdown event was held in Bangkok on Dec 8 ahead of the biennial event, which will take place in Nakhon Ratchasima between Jan 20-26 next year.

The event will be the largest regional Para Games yet, featuring 20 sports; archery, para-athletics, para-badminton, boccia, chess, para-cycling, football 5-a-side, CP football, goalball, judo, para-powerlifting, shooting, para-swimming, table tennis, sitting volleyball, tenpin bowling, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, e-Sports and wheelchair fencing. Two other yet to be confirmed sports will also be featured as demonstration exercises, officials said.

The launch event was officiated by Thailand’s Minister of Tourism and Sports, Surawong Thienthong who was joined by ASEAN Para Sports Federation (APSF) President, Major General Osoth Bhavilai.

“The 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games Thailand 2025 is not just any other



The Dec 8 launch event. Photo: Supplied

competitive event. It embodies the ideals of sustainability, inclusivity and ASEAN unity. We are dedicated to hosting Games that inspire and unite the region while promoting our Green Games initiatives,” he said at the launch event.

Under the Green Games initiative, organisers are set to promote the usage of renewable energy, public and shared transportation to minimise carbon emissions, the use of biodegradable and recyclable materials at venues, and smart applications to optimise resource management and reduce energy consumption. These measures aim to raise awareness of environmental impacts both during and beyond the Games.

Highlighting the cultural and social significance of the event, the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games will carry the theme “Create Pride Together.”

The official mascot, Nong Jai Kaeng, a spirited Korat cat, symbolises determination, unity and camaraderie, embodying the heart of the Games.

With 20 sports on offer, the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games 2025 is set to be the largest celebration of para sports in the history of the Games. The stage is set for the ASEAN community to come together and celebrate the achievements of para-athletes, ensuring that APG13 leaves a lasting legacy of inclusion, equality and sporting excellence.

“APSF will collaborate closely with the Thai government, the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) and NPC Thailand to ensure that Thailand delivers great a Games and sets new benchmarks for future Games,” Major General Bhavilai said at the launch event.

“We will work hand in hand with host countries to further our agenda of inclusivity, equality, and empowerment for para-athletes in the region. I urge all Thais and the ASEAN community to make APG13 an impactful and memorable event,” Major General Bhavilai added.

The Phuket News



# Guardiola needing 'Pep' talk

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester United scored two late goals last Sunday (Dec 15) to secure a 2-1 win and deepen the pain for beleaguered Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola.

The Premier League clash at the Etihad saw City defender Josko Gvardiol open the scoring before Bruno Fernandes levelled from the penalty spot in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute and Amad Diallo struck two minutes later.

Defending champions City – who have dominated English football over the past decade – now have just one win in 11 games in all competitions and Guardiola is desperately searching for answers.

"I don't have a defence, I'm the boss, I'm the manager and I'm not good enough. It's as simple as that," he said after the game.

Elsewhere, Enzo Maresca's high-flying Chelsea beat Brentford 2-1 at Stamford Bridge to close to within two points of long-time leaders Liverpool, who are on 36 points.

But Maresca is still being coy over his side's title chances.

"It's not about how many games we win," he said. "It's about being realistic. There are things we have to do better. That's why I said for me we are not ready."

On Saturday, Diogo Jota rescued Liverpool as the Premier League leaders recovered from Andy



Manchester United's players celebrate their 2-1 win against rivals City. Photo: AFP

Robertson's early red card to snatch a 2-2 draw with Fulham.

Andreas Pereira had put Fulham ahead before Cody Gakpo equalised. Rodrigo Muniz then scored for Fulham meaning, with just four minutes left at Anfield, Arne Slot's side were in danger of losing for just the second time in 15 top-flight games this season before Jota grabbed a valuable late equaliser.

"I don't think I could have asked for more from my players, especially after going down to 10 men," Slot said afterwards.

Arsenal's title challenge was dented by a goalless draw against Everton, the Gunners' lack of firepower outside of set pieces once again evident as they were hampered by a failure to turn pressure and possession into goals.

After a second successive league draw, third-placed Arsenal remain six

points behind Liverpool, who have a game in hand on last season's runners-up.

Nottingham Forest staged a dramatic late fightback to beat Aston Villa 2-1 at the City Ground, while Newcastle handed Ruud van Nistelrooy his first defeat as Leicester boss with a 4-0 rout at St James' Park and Ismaila Sarr scored twice as Crystal Palace moved four points clear of the relegation zone following a 3-1 victory at Brighton.

Elsewhere, Jack Taylor's stoppage-time goal gave Ipswich a priceless 2-1 win over relegation rivals Wolves at Molineux who then sacked manager Gary O'Neil.

Southampton also parted company with their manager Russell Martin following a 5-0 hammering by Tottenham on Sunday, with all the goals coming in a frantic first half.



Photo: AFP

## PGA-LPGA pairs joy for Patty and Jake

### GOLF

THAILAND'S PATTY Tavatanakit and American Jake Knapp birdied two of the last three holes last Sunday (Dec 15) to grab a one-stroke victory at the Grant Thornton Invitational, a PGA and LPGA pairs tournament.

Patty and Knapp finished the 54-hole tournament on 27-under-par 189 after firing a seven-under 65 in the final round at Tiburon Golf Club in Naples, Florida, to claim \$500,000 (B17 million) each for the triumph.

Birdies at the par-3 16<sup>th</sup> and par-5 17<sup>th</sup> combined with three other birdies and an opening eagle in a bogey-free last day lifted Knapp and Patty over runners-up Tom Kim of South Korea and Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand, who

birdied 17 and 18 to finish on 190 after a closing 64.

The 16-duo tournament featured a first-round scramble format, an alternate-shot format in round two and a final-round modified four-ball in which golfers play their partner's tee shot to the conclusion of the hole.

Knapp and Patty combined for a 58 in the opening round and a 66 in round two while Kim and Jeeno opened with a 62 and closed with back-to-back rounds of 64.

Knapp, 30, captured his first PGA Tour title in February at the Mexico Open.

Patty, 25, won her first LPGA title at a major, the 2021 ANA Inspiration and added prior titles in back-to-back weeks this past February at the LPGA Thailand event and the Saudi Ladies International. AFP

## Saudi Arabia to host 2034 World Cup

### FOOTBALL

FIFA HAVE CONFIRMED THAT Saudi Arabia will host the 2034 World Cup, underlining the Gulf kingdom's growing influence in world sport despite criticism of the country's human rights record.

At the same time, a virtual Congress of world football's governing body confirmed that Morocco, Spain and Portugal will be joint hosts of the 2030 World Cup, in which three games will also be played in South America.

The Saudi bid was waved through by acclamation during the meeting of FIFA's 211 national member associations on Dec 11, with no rivals standing in its way.

"It is a proud day, a day of celebration, a day that we invite the entire world to Saudi Arabia," said Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Faisal al Saud, the Saudi Minister of Sports.

"We intend to have an extraordinary version of the World Cup in our kingdom," he added.

However, there was immediate condemnation from rights groups who insisted that handing the organisation of the tournament to the country puts the lives of construction workers at risk and "marks a moment of great danger".

FIFA had invoked its principle of rotating the World Cup between continents, which meant only bids



Saudi celebrations on Dec 11. Photo: AFP

from Asia or Oceania were welcome for 2034.

Controversially, the body gave potential bidders barely a month last year to submit candidacies, and Australia and Indonesia abandoned their interest.

That left Saudi Arabia as the sole candidate, clearing the way for the World Cup to return to the Gulf region so soon after Qatar hosted in 2022.

The kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has been using sport for some time to amass influence and improve its global image - critics say he is effectively "sportswashing" by diverting attention from Saudi Arabia's rights record.

"We are inclusive and we are non-discriminatory, and we want to obtain positive social impact," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said.

"We are of course aware of critics and fears, and I fully trust our hosts to address all open points from this process and deliver a

FIFA World Cup which meets expectations."

He added that "social improvements and positive human rights impacts" are "responsibilities of hosting a World Cup."

Rights groups highlight mass executions in Saudi Arabia and allegations of torture, as well as restrictions on women under the conservative country's male guardianship system. Free expression is severely restricted, too.

"Based on clear evidence to date, FIFA knows workers will be exploited and even die without fundamental reforms in Saudi Arabia, and yet has chosen to press ahead regardless," said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International's Head of Labour Rights and Sport.

England's Football Association meanwhile said it had received assurances from Saudi Arabia that LGBTQ fans would be "safe and welcome" at the tournament.

AFP

## War Elephants take over top spot in ASEAN Cup

### FOOTBALL

PATRIK GUSTAVSSON grabbed a second-half winner as defending champions Thailand edged Malaysia 1-0 at Rajamangala National Stadium last Saturday (Dec 14) for their second straight ASEAN Mitsubishi Electric Cup Group A victory to snatch the top spot in the pool.

Thailand, the seven-time winners, returning to action for the first time since the 10-0 defeat of Timor Leste on Dec 8, found Malaysia hard to break down in the first half.

But the deadlock was finally broken on 57 minutes when Patrik Gustavsson bagged what proved to be the winner. It was his second goal in as many matches and first for Thailand on home soil.

"We are glad to have picked up three points from this game. Every player tried to fight hard and our bench also did a good job," Thailand coach Masatada Ishii



Gustavsson celebrates. Photo: PR

told a post-match press conference.

"Our offensive game may not be beautiful, so we'll have to try and fix it. I think our all three midfielders played well both in offence and defence, but they weren't too focused on defending.

"Today, we won because of the Thai football fans who packed the stadium. I do understand that the fans wanted to see more attacking game but it depends on the opponents. I wanted to win more as this was important."

Thailand have leapfrogged Malaysia and Singapore into top spot in Group A on goal difference.

The War Elephants landed in Singapore on Sunday for their next match which was scheduled for Tuesday (Dec 17). *Bangkok Post*





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