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RAIDED



Screenshot: Ride With Gabi / YouTube

OFFICIALS RAID CHARITY SCHOOL FOR HELPING MYANMAR CHILDREN

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

In a move that has shocked many expats across the island, Phuket officials have raided a free charity-run school that provides free education and free lunches to Myanmar migrant children in the largest slum on the island.

The raid followed popular YouTuber 'Ride with Gabi' posting a video titled 'The Other Side of Phuket', highlighting the huge impoverished community in the Soi Kingkaew area, near the

Phuket Fishing Port on the east side of Phuket Town.

As pointed out in the video, nearly all the people in the slum are Myanmar migrant workers, or children of migrant workers.

The video stirred controversy online. 'Gabi' opens the video highlighting Phuket's global reputation as a tourism destination with its popular beaches, nightlife and tours to nearby islands. Yet he rightly points out that Phuket is home to more than 20 slums on the island, the largest of which is the Soi Kingkaew area.

"Most of the people here are not

from Thailand and they do not have any rights here in Phuket," Gabi says in his opening comments.

He highlights the level of poverty the entire community lives in, but also spotlights the good work by local charity 'Good Shepherd Phuket Town' in providing free education, and free school lunches, for children in the impoverished community.

A key point Gabi makes is that many of the people living in the slum are not recognised by the Thai government, a fact that makes access to services very difficult to impossible.

Although under Thai law all children regardless of origin or legal status are entitled to free education, accessing free education has presented many "challenges".

VIRAL

After the video was released, social media was flooded with comments, many expressing frustration and concern.

Among the comments were, "This happened because government officials were negligent" and "Phuket is turning a blind eye to this".

One comment read, "The Provincial Education Office must..."

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Demolitions at Bang Tao Beach underway



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7th Floor still an elevation of high standards



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Thai FA to sue ex-boss over bad finances



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Lile-it™

PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE



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News



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Officials raid school for slum kids

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...take legal action against those responsible for neglecting their duty under Section 157.”

The Phuket Provincial Office has already confirmed a press conference will be held in response to the video.

The ‘Ride with Gabi’ YouTube channel has grown in popularity over the years.

‘Gabi’ has chosen to keep his real name from public view, despite a 15-minute video titled ‘My Story’ detailing his life events, including his childhood growing up north of Lake Como in Italy and his work history in hospitality.

‘Ride with Gabi’ has 234,000 subscribers. According to vidIQ, the channel has received 32.44 million views in the past month.

He has also spotlighted impoverished communities living in slums in Bangkok, Pakistan and India.

‘Ride with Gabi’ earns ‘Gabi’ about US\$1,500-4,400 (about B50,535-148,200) a month from his YouTube account alone.

BACKLASH

Without making any mention of the video, Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong chaired a high-profile press conference at Phuket Provincial Hall on Monday (Mar 17) to explain – according to an official report – that Phuket authorities “have addressed concerns regarding reports of a foreign-run



The living conditions in the Soi Kingkaew slum. Screenshot: ‘Ride with Gabi’ / YouTube

Myanmar community and a free school operating in the province”.

The school, operated by the ‘Good Shepherd Phuket Town’ Foundation, has been ordered to halt formal teaching, but is allowed to continue to provide activities for children and youths, Vice Governor Adul said.

Vice Governor Adul stated that Phuket authorities had dispatched officials to inspect the foundation earlier on Monday, but gave no reason for the inspection. The official report made no mention of the ‘Ride with Gabi’ video.

The Phuket Provincial Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), along with the Phuket Provincial Employment Office, the Phuket Provincial Administration Office (PPAO), Mueang Phuket District

Office, Phuket Immigration and the Phuket Provincial office of Social Development and Human Security, conducted a fact-finding visit to the school, located in Soi Hatchananiwet 2/9, said the report.

The investigation revealed the presence of three foreign volunteers – an American, an Irish national and a Hong Kong Chinese national – were offering their services without receiving financial compensation.

Officials confirmed that, according to the Office of the Council of State, volunteering for a public charity organisation does not constitute employment and does not require a work permit, the report said.

Additionally, 10 foreigners held valid work permits, including one

German national, one individual without registration status and eight Myanmar nationals, the report added.

Phuket Immigration and the Provincial Employment Office have requested documentation from the parents of over 300 children enrolled at the foundation to verify their immigration and employment status.

The Phuket Provincial Education Office has been assigned to investigate whether the foundation was operating an unauthorised educational institution. If found in violation, offenders could face up to one year in prison or a fine of up to B20,000, the report warned.

Meanwhile, formal education at the foundation will cease, but children and youths will still be allowed to participate in non-academic activities.

Phuket officials emphasised their commitment to maintaining social order and managing foreign workers in accordance with government regulations, the report said.

Further inspections and legal actions will be carried out as necessary to ensure compliance with the law, the report concluded.

TURNABOUT

The move by Phuket officials to investigate the Good Shepherd school shocked expats across the island, as the school has gained a reputation for outstanding work in supporting children living in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Phuket.

The school has operated for decades, with open support by many high-ranking officials over the

years. The school has always been accepted as providing a service where Thai government agencies have either failed – or chosen to neglect.

Officials such as Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai were at the school as recently as last November to support a campaign against violence against women and children.

Present to support the campaign were representatives from the Phuket Provincial Prosecutor’s Office, the Phuket Juvenile and Family Court Office, local government agencies and community volunteers.

Also present was Sompit Srikhamhaeng, Director of the Social Development and Human Security Phuket office.

Mr Sompit was present at the press conference on Monday announcing the probe into the school’s activities.

The investigation also came just days after Minister of Education Pol Gen Phemphun Chidchob was in Phuket last Saturday (Mar 15) to inaugurate a workshop aimed at driving the educational development strategy at regional and provincial levels.

The event, held at the Phuket Merlin Hotel in Phuket Town, brought together key education officials and stakeholders to align efforts with the government’s ‘Learn Well, Be Happy’ policy.

NACC refuses to investigate Ratsada Mayor over constructions

THE PHUKET OFFICE OF the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has refused to investigate allegations of dereliction of duty against Ratsada Mayor Nakarin Yosaengrat over the construction of houses on a public road.

The complaint, which raised concerns over land ownership and use at the intersection of Trang Rd in Moo 3, Ratsada, was dismissed by the NACC Phuket office, which in turn placed the onus on local authorities to address the issue.

Confirmation of the NACC Phuket office, operated under Director Suwat Saowaran, came at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 11 chaired by



Ratsada Mayor Nakarin Yosaengrat. Photo: PR Phuket

Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai.

The meeting, attended by representatives from relevant

government agencies, was held to discuss the dispute.

Investigations conducted by the Phuket Provincial Land

Office, Mueang Phuket District Office and Ratsada Municipality revealed that the land in question falls under the jurisdiction of Ratsada Municipality, said an official report of the meeting.

However, there is no land title deed confirming private ownership, nor any record of the area being officially designated as public land, despite its historical use as a thoroughfare, the report added.

Adding to the complexity of the issue, the structures in question were built over a decade ago and have been assigned official house numbers.

This has led to uncertainty regarding the legality of their presence on the site, the report said.

While the complainant sought action from the NACC, the commission opted not to take up the case, the report added.

No further details about the alleged illegal construction – or failure by officials to administer the land in question – were included in the report.

The controversy highlights the broader issue of land use management and the oversight of public spaces by government officials.

Vice Governor Samawit emphasised the need for a thorough review to ensure a legally sound resolution and prevent similar disputes in the future, the report concluded.

The Phuket News

Demolitions begin at Bang Tao

The Phuket News

editor@classactmedia.co.th

Private business operators at the southern end of Bang Tao Beach have started removing illegal structures from along the beach following an inspection – and threat of legal action – by officials.

The move follows Phuket officials, in collaboration with anti-corruption agencies, intensifying efforts to remove unauthorised structures encroaching on public land at Bang Tao Beach in Cherng Talay.

The ongoing crackdown is part of a broader initiative to combat corruption and enforce public land regulations, ensuring that public spaces remain accessible to the community.

Leading the recent inspections was Suwat Saowarat, Director of the Phuket office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC Phuket), accompanied by officials from multiple agencies, including the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) Region 8 office, the Phuket branch of Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc), the Phuket Marine Office, Thalang District officials and the Cherng Talay Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor).



Photo: PR Phuket

The latest inspection, conducted last Sunday (Mar 16), followed reports from the Phuket STRONG-Sufficiency Economy Anti-Corruption Club, which highlighted illegal construction by businesses, including the Beachfront Phuket Hotel. The hotel last Sunday began demolishing encroaching structures, including large rock piles on the beachfront.

However, other concrete structures remained, posing demolition challenges. The hotel management assured officials they were working to complete the removal process by the end of March, acknowledging the importance of compliance with public land regulations.

Authorities previously investigated the area on Jan 22

and revisited it on Mar 11, uncovering a pattern of repeated encroachment. While some structures identified earlier had been partially demolished, others had been newly constructed, including restaurants, stone walls, and relaxation areas that restricted public access. The ongoing cycle of illegal development has raised concerns about how such construction was permitted in the first place, Mr Suwat said.

In response, officials on Mar 11 mandated the immediate removal of unauthorised structures and issued warnings to businesses. Landowners were instructed to provide official title deeds and tax records to clarify property boundaries. The Phuket Marine Office was tasked with identifying waterway encroach-

ments, working alongside local authorities to ensure compliance with coastal access regulations. Local authorities joining the latest crackdown, albeit late, stressed that any failure to comply would result in forced demolitions and legal consequences.

Despite these efforts, the official report of the Mar 11 inspection did not clarify why the Cherng Talay OrBorTor, led by Chief Manoch Puchalad, had allowed such structures to be built on public land initially. This lack of explanation has raised questions about oversight and enforcement failures. Regardless, in their latest missives local officials reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring regulations are upheld moving forward and preventing future encroachments.

Most business operators expressed willingness to cooperate, pledging to review their properties and remove encroaching structures. Some acknowledged the challenges in determining exact land boundaries due to unclear property deeds, Mr Suwat said.

However, he made it clear that businesses failing to comply with removal orders would face legal action, including forced demolitions and financial penalties.

The NACC Phuket office emphasised the importance of upholding public access to the beach while maintaining legal compliance. Moving forward, authorities plan to continue investigations, enforce land-use regulations and implement sustainable solutions to prevent further encroachment. This includes setting up clearer guidelines for businesses operating near public land and increasing penalties for violations.

Local officials have also pledged to improve monitoring efforts. Regular inspections will be carried out to prevent further encroachment, and new reporting mechanisms will be established to allow residents and advocacy groups to alert authorities to potential violations. The collaboration between government agencies and civil society groups will be crucial in ensuring that businesses and property owners adhere to land-use laws.

Mr Suwat encouraged residents and visitors to report any suspected encroachments to local authorities to help maintain the integrity of public land.

The NACC and its partner agencies remain committed to holding violators accountable, he assured.

Locals fight to keep inherited land in Freedom Beach forest

LAWYERS REPRESENTING the heirs of a landowner have petitioned the Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc) to suspend the designation of a large area at Freedom Beach as a recreational forest, claiming unresolved land rights issues.

Lt Cdr Phongsakorn Itsamut of ISOC Phuket received the petition from lawyers acting on behalf of the heirs of Panthong Na Ranong on Mar 13.

The lawyers argued that Mr Panthong's land was covered by Chanote title deeds 46250 and 46251.

The deeds were legally issued but became entangled in a forgery case, leading to its seizure as evidence, the lawyers said.

While other affected title deeds were revoked, Mr Panthong's remained valid. However, when he sought their return, authorities informed him they had been destroyed, the lawyers said.



Photo: PR Phuket

The Royal Forest Department declared 41 rai at Freedom Beach a recreational forest on Jan 31, preventing the heirs from reclaiming their land.

The lawyers have since taken the matter to the Administrative Court to have the Phuket Provincial Land Office return the original title deeds to Mr

Panthong's heirs.

They are also requesting the Phuket Governor to halt the forest designation pending legal resolution.

Lt Cdr Phongsakorn stated that authorities will review the evidence and submit findings to the governor to ensure fairness to all parties.

The Phuket News



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Wind 4 m/s

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High: +37°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 27

High: +36°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

Nigerian hoons arrested for 'doing doughnuts'

POLICE ARRESTED two men after a dangerous driving incident at Koh Kaew intersection on Mar 11, which began with reports of them performing 'doughnuts' in the middle of the road.

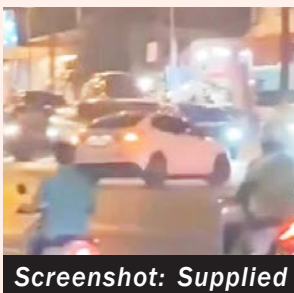
The white Mazda2 was first reported around 10:30pm after multiple complaints to police.

A Thalang traffic officer spotted the vehicle at Bang Khu intersection at 9:58pm and attempted a pursuit, but the driver fled at high speed along the bypass road.

Police later tracked the car back north to Soi Koh Kaew 23, where the suspects tried to escape again.

The chase ended in Soi Nanachat 2, which is a dead-end street. The men abandoned the car and ran into a nearby forest but were caught after a struggle with officers.

Both suspects, who were shirtless and intoxicated, resisted arrest, causing minor injuries to themselves and officers.



Screenshot: Supplied

Unable to communicate in English and lacking identification, they were taken to Phuket City Police Station.

Authorities later identified one suspect as Anamere George, a Nigerian national with an outstanding arrest warrant issued by Phuket Provincial Court in August 2023.

He was wanted for overstaying a visa and possession of Category 2 narcotics (cocaine), with the case active until 2038.

At the time of their arrests, the second suspect remained unidentified due to a lack of documents.

At last report both men remained in custody as police continue their investigation.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Body found belived to be missing American

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Patong Police have requested DNA test confirmation to determine whether the body found south of Phuket last Sunday (Mar 16) is that of missing American tourist Nina Ng, from New York.

Ms Ng, well known among many expats in Phuket for her charity work, disappeared while taking a jet-ski ride off Patong Beach on Feb 27.

A boat captain operating nearby reported that at around 9:40am, he saw the tourist remove her life jacket and jump into the water about one kilometre from the beach.

Before that, Ms Ng was last seen renting a jet-ski from the southern end of Patong Beach at about 1pm.

Rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation, along with dive teams and lifeguards, mobilised to assist in the search for Ms Ng.

However, they were unable to find her. After three days the search was reduced to an appeal to the public for help.



Photo: PPAO

The body found between Koh Bon and Koh Racha last Sunday, due to its condition, was initially thought to be a man. The body was brought ashore at Chalong Pier.

Now police are working on the presumption that the body is that of Ms Ng.

Pol Col Rungrit Rattanaphakdee, Superintendent of Chalong Police Station, which is responsible for the marine area where the body was found, told *The Phuket News* that the clothes that the body was found in matched the description of those Ms Ng was last seen wearing.

Pol Col Rungrit confirmed that the information had been handed over to the Patong Police, who are responsible for the case.

Pol Lt Col Suchart Chumphusang, head of Investigation, at Patong Police Station, told *The Phuket News* that he was confident the body had been correctly identified.

The Phuket News was also told that identification of tattoos had also contributed to the confidence that Ms Ng's body had been found.

Regardless, Pol Lt Col Suchart said that a DNA test had been requested to confirm the identification.

Opportunist car thief arrested

A 48-YEAR-OLD MAN HAS been arrested after stealing a parked car that had been left with the engine running outside a convenience store in Patong.

The suspect, identified as Pradit Phomduang from Trang province, was apprehended by police in Ratsada, after police tracked the stolen vehicle using its GPS system.

According to police reports, the incident occurred around 1am when the car's owner, Chanyanuch Boon-anan, 27, parked her white-black Suzuki Swift sedan in front of a 7-Eleven store on Phra Mettha Rd in Patong.

She left the engine running while she stepped inside.

When she returned, the car was gone.

Ms Chanyanuch promptly reported the theft to Patong Police, leading officers to initiate a search.



Photo: Patong Police

Using the car's GPS tracking system, officers located the vehicle in Ratsada and coordinated with Phuket City Police to intercept it.

On stopping the vehicle, officers identified the driver as Pradit. He admitted to stealing the car from outside the 7-Eleven. A search of the vehicle found no illegal items, and he was taken into custody.

Police have charged Pradit with "theft or receiving stolen goods at night". He confessed to the crime and was handed over to Patong Police Station for further legal proceedings, police reported.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Brit arrested for knife-threat

PATONG POLICE HAVE tracked down and arrested a British man for threatening a motorcyclist with a knife following a collision with a motorbike in front of Patong Hospital.

The incident spurred a backlash by netizens after videos of the incident went viral on local social media channels last week.

The incident occurred when a white Ford four-door pickup truck, occupied by three foreign nationals, collided with a motorcycle, injuring the rider, Patong Police said in a report posted online late on Mar 13.

Witnesses reported that after the crash, the foreigners exited their vehicle, and one of them brandished a knife, threatening the injured motorcyclist, said the report.

On learning about the incident, Patong Police Chief Pol Col Chalermchai Hirasawat ordered an immediate investigation, led by



Photo: Patong Police

Pol Lt Col Suchart Chumphusang and Pol Lt Col Saran Chaiwat, along with the station's investigation team.

Officers swiftly tracked down the three individuals and brought them in for questioning, Patong Police said.

The driver of the pickup truck, a 26-year-old British man, admitted to driving the vehicle and threatening the victim with a knife, Patong police confirmed.

His two British companions were also present at the police station during the questioning.

The British man, unnamed in the report, was charged with reckless driving causing harm, property damage and carrying a weapon, Patong Police said. *The Phuket News*

Call for turtle, dugong protection

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) Chalermchai Sri-on has called for urgent and collective action to address the ongoing seagrass and dugong conservation crisis.

Speaking at a turtle release ceremony at Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort last Friday (Mar 14), Mr Chalermchai emphasised the need for cooperation from all sectors to ensure the survival of the endangered marine species.

He noted that various stakeholders, including the Royal Thai Navy, private sector and volunteer citizens, have been actively involved in efforts to protect dugongs.

While there has been a notable increase in seagrass planting initiatives, the damage to these vital marine habitats has also escalated, necessitating continuous rehabilitation efforts, he said.

To supplement conservation strategies, researchers have been exploring alternative plant species that dugongs might consume. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop food sources that dugongs can easily consume, such as food capsules. Authorities are also urging fishermen to avoid



Photo: PR Phuket

harming dugongs and to exercise caution while sailing in their habitats. Advanced technology is being employed to monitor and mitigate dugong losses.

Mr Chalermchai highlighted a decline in the number of dugong deaths due to accidental encounters, indicating progress in conservation efforts. However, he pointed out the persistence of misconceptions regarding dugong tusks, urging the public to preserve these animals as a whole rather than seeing their tusks as separate valuables.

He also reassured that dugong migrations between Trang and Phuket are part of their natural behaviour, driven by food availability. If their feeding grounds remain abundant, the

dugong population in the region is expected to grow.

Mr Chalermchai called on the public to contribute to the conservation of dugongs and the country's natural resources, stressing the importance of protecting these marine creatures for future generations.

TURTLES

MNRE Minister Chalermchai last Friday also joined a turtle release ceremony organised by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) in collaboration with the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command.

The event took place at Ao Tang Khen and marked an important step in tracking and preserving green sea turtles.

The initiative aligns with the royal intention of His Royal Highness Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti to support sea turtle conservation through satellite tracking, said an official report of the event.

The DMCR installed 'Spot375' satellite transmitters on two three-year-old green sea turtles to monitor their feeding grounds, habitats and survival rates. The devices, operating via the Argos satellite system, provide precise location data and record water temperatures, ensuring long-term research benefits.

The ceremony was attended by Vice Admiral Suwat Donsakul, Commander of the Third Area Command, along with senior officials from the MNRE, conservation volunteers, local communities and private sector representatives, including Vincent Delsol, General Manager of Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort.

During the event, Minister Chalermchai led officials, military personnel and attendees in honouring the conservation efforts of His Royal Highness Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti. A special highlight was the release of a two-year-six-month-old hawksbill sea turtle named 'Poseidon', weighing six kilogrammes, along

with another hawksbill turtle named 'Phrommin', rescued and rehabilitated at the Sireetarn Marine Endangered Animals Rescue Center.

Following the turtle release, attendees observed a drone demonstration showcasing advanced marine monitoring techniques. Three drones and one 'Dock DJI' unit were deployed for surveying dugongs, monitoring seagrass restoration, and tracking marine ecosystems. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles ('drones') in daily environmental surveillance at Ao Tang Khen has shown promising results in protecting marine habitats, Mr Chalermchai said.

The event also featured an exhibition on sea turtle conservation, marine biodiversity and seagrass restoration efforts. Representatives from the Phang Nga Naval Base's Sea Turtle Conservation Center and Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort's CSR initiative provided insights into environmental threats and restoration projects.

As part of the occasion, the 'Love the sea with all your heart' honorary badge and certificates were awarded to citizen marine scientists who contributed to dugong monitoring and seagrass conservation.

Phuket Town pilots drinkable tap water

PHUKET TOWN MAYOR Saroj Angkanapilas led a public event at Phuket City Municipality's Waterworks Division on Damrong Rd last week to announce the progress made in bringing potable tap water to residents of Phuket Town.

Joining Mayor Saroj at the event, on Mar 13, were key city officials, including Deputy Mayor Suphot La-ongphet, Secretary to the Mayor Niti Petchpradabsakul, Advisor to the Mayor Chuea Kongchin, Phuket City Council President Wanarat Phruekpratin, Vice President Thanatphat Thanirat along with council members, Waterworks Division Director Charan Klaewthanong, and other government representatives.

Mayor Saroj emphasised the importance of providing clean and safe tap water to Phuket Town residents.

The water sampled in the project had been quality tested by relevant agencies and met the Department of Health's standards, Mayor Saroj said.



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

At the event, Deputy Mayor Suphot presented the results of the water quality tests, conducted by Southern Thai Consulting Co Ltd in Srisoonthorn, to the public.

However, further improvements to the water pipe system are necessary to ensure that tap water reaching households remains clean and safe for consumption, Mayor Saroj

explained.

Currently, officials are studying the existing water infrastructure and planning operations to expand the project, Mayor Saroj said.

"The long-term goal is to enhance Phuket's municipal water system, ensuring all residents have access to high-quality drinking water in the future," Mayor Saroj said.

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Phuket launches 'Green Hotel Sandbox'

CHALERMCHAI SRI-ON, MINISTER of Natural Resources and Environment, officially launched the sustainable tourism initiative 'Green Hotel Plus Phuket Sandbox' at an event in Phuket Town last week.

The event, at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on Mar 13, brought together key stakeholders, including Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong, Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) President Rewat Areerob, as well as representatives from government agencies, the public sector and the hotel industry.

Organised by the Department of Climate Change and Environment, the initiative seeks to address the environmental impact of Thailand's booming tourism sector.

In 2024, tourism generated B1.67 trillion in revenue, but Phuket alone contributed 3.16 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 0.82% of the country's total, Mr Chalermchai said.

The Minister emphasised the need for a shift to a low-carbon, sustainable tourism model to mitigate these effects and align with global trends.

The 'Green Hotel Plus' certification, developed under the initiative, sets criteria for eco-friendly hotel management in accordance with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) standards.

The project is a collaborative effort between the Department of Climate



Photo: PR Phuket

Change and Environment, the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation, hotel operators and academic institutions. Its goal is to certify approximately 600 Phuket hotels to international environmental standards by February 2026.

Beyond local impact, the initiative also supports Thailand's role as a leader in sustainable tourism on the global stage, Mr Chalermchai said.

Phuket is set to host the World Sustainable Tourism Conference from Mar 31 to Apr 4, 2026, providing a platform for exchanging knowledge and strategies for eco-conscious tourism development, he added.

The 'Green Hotel Plus Phuket Sandbox' project marks a significant step in Thailand's efforts to balance tourism growth with environmental responsibility, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable practices in the hospitality sector, Mr Chalermchai concluded.

The Phuket News

Visa-free stay in Thailand to be cut to 30 days

THE PERIOD OF VISA-free stays in Thailand is set to be reduced from 60 days to 30 days as related authorities have agreed in principle to the move in an effort to curb the risk of illegal businesses exploiting the visa exemption scheme, according to the Tourism and Sports Ministry.

Tourism and Sports Minister Sorawong Thienthong said the Foreign Ministry acknowledged the issue as it had been widely discussed among all related stakeholders in the past few weeks.

He said they all agreed in principle to reduce the period of stay from 60 days to 30 days for citizens from countries granted a visa exemption under the programme. However, additional details would be discussed before formally announcing the adjustment to the regulation.

Since July 2024, the government has allowed passport holders from 93 countries to enter Thailand for tourism purposes for a period not exceeding 60 days. This had earlier been granted to citizens of 57 countries.



Photo: Bangkok Post / file

However, tourism operators expressed concern over the extended period as long-haul tourists typically stayed for only 14-21 days on average, while short-haul travellers spent less than two weeks per trip or around seven days on average.

The Association of Thai Travel Agents earlier raised this concern with the ministry as there is a growing number of foreigners illegally working or conducting businesses in the country, while the Thai Hotels Association believed this was partly to blame for the increase in the number of condos being illegally rented out to guests on a daily basis.

Given the recent call by a former member of parliament in Phuket urging the government to crack down on foreign businesses using nominees and reduce the visa-free period to 30 days,

Natthiya Thaweevong, the ministry's permanent secretary, said the ministry has instructed the Tourism Department to enforce the Tourism Business and Tourist Guide Act more seriously.

She said the special joint operational centre operated by six authorities, including the Tourism Department and Tourist Police, has consistently investigated illicit activities taking place in Phuket and five other popular tourism-related areas, namely Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Koh Samui and Bangkok.

She said the department revoked the licences of 40 companies in 2024 as they were found guilty of secretly changing the authorised directors and the proportion of directors and shareholders, resulting in their disqualification from operating a tourism business.

In Phuket, 15 tour companies' licences have been revoked. She said there was also the case of a Thai committee of a tour company also being registered under five different company names.

Bangkok Post

Thai casino cities revealed

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The special committee overseeing the entertainment complex project has announced the first four locations that will house casinos, amid much public criticism.

Nikom Boonwiset, the vice-chairman of the special committee, said on Mar 13 that the panel is initially eyeing four major tourist provinces – Bangkok, Chonburi, Chiang Mai and Phuket.

Mr Nikom, an MP of the ruling Pheu Thai Party, noted that the B500 billion project is expected to attract at least 50 million visitors annually and create at least 40,000 employment positions, which will help generate tremendous income for Thailand and boost the country's economic growth.

Several international investors have already shown interest in investing in the project, Mr Nikom said.

According to him, each complex will feature a five-star hotel, a world-class shopping mall, an amusement park, a sports arena, a convention hall and a large exhibition centre, with less than 10% of the space being allocated for a casino.

However, Mr Nikom said those who oppose the project have led the public to think that the entertainment complexes are focused solely on the casino aspect due to prejudice and bias against the government.



Protesters rally against the government's draft law to establish casino entertainment complexes, in front of Government House on Mar 11. Photo: Chanat Katanyu

OBJECTION

The Entertainment Complex Bill was originally scheduled to be presented at the Cabinet meeting Mar 11.

However, the presentation had to be postponed because the Ministry of Finance was in the process of currently receiving public feedback through its website until last Friday (Mar 14).

According to a source, there were growing concerns from protest groups who submitted letters of objection to Government House.

Therefore, the ministry was expected to revise the draft and send it back to the Cabinet after considering public opinion.

Meanwhile, Thanakorn Khomkrit, the secretary-general of the Stop Gambling Foundation, has criticised the current version of the Entertainment

Complex Bill for containing loopholes and lacking tight measures to prevent young people who gamble from developing a gambling habit.

Mr Thanakorn said that the foundation has found that the bill contains ambiguity in terms of regulations and lacks clear stipulations on the number of casino facilities, the size and proportion of gambling spaces and frameworks on licence fees and tax rates.

He added that the latest version of the bill allows the casino licensee to arrange for other businesses to facilitate those entering a casino.

The anti-gambling foundation is concerned about whether the current definition of "other businesses" may lead to a loophole for money laundering through a brokerage company, aka the junket service.

Dengue jab trial to begin

BANGKOK

THE MINISTRY OF Public Health has announced it will launch a dengue vaccination trial in Nakhon Phanom province next month. If successful, the vaccine will be included in the universal healthcare scheme, says Minister Somsak Thepsutin.

Mr Somsak, who chaired the National Communicable Disease Committee's meeting on Mar 10, said the committee agreed to launch a study into dengue fever vaccinations in children, hoping it will help to decide whether the vaccine is worth investing in as part of universal healthcare benefits.

Even though the number of dengue patients in Thailand is generally falling, the mortality rate remains high.

The study on dengue vaccinations will be conducted for three years on 30,000 children aged seven to 10, Mr Somsak said.

The vaccination will be piloted in Nakhon



Photo: Bangkok Post

Phanom on Apr 4 before expanding to Ayutthaya.

Dengue fever is one of a handful of major communicable diseases the committee is working to control. The others are influenza, monkey pox, and Hepatitis B and C.

Responding to the rise in influenza infections, with 165,333 cases and 14 fatalities reported this year, the committee also agreed to increase the national stock of influenza vaccine from 4.5 million to 6mn doses.

As most influenza outbreaks have been found in six provinces, namely Phayao, Lamphun, Chiang Rai, Phuket, Chiang Mai and Bangkok, as well as in schools, prisons and military clusters, extra doses will be allocated to these places accordingly.

Bangkok Post

Defence volunteer blown up by time bomb in car

PATTANI

A DEFENCE VOLUNTEER WAS blown up by a time bomb, placed in her car by separatist insurgents, while on her way to work in Kapho district on Monday (Mar 17).

Suyanee Seeba survived the attack and was rushed to hospital for treatment of serious injuries.

Police said the bomb had been hidden in the Suzuki Swift sedan Ms Suyanee was driving on a road to the district office. It exploded at 10:10am.

Ms Suyanee managed to open the car door and flee the vehicle as it was engulfed in flames. Her injuries were serious and she was later transferred from Kapho Hospital to Pattani Hospital in Muang district, police said.

Police believe the car was destroyed by an insurgent's bomb timed to detonate after she was expected to reach the district office and parked the car there.

It follows the recent attack on the district office in Sungai Kolok district in Narathiwat province.

The office was attacked with multiple bombs and gunfire on Mar 8, killing two defence volunteers on night guard and leaving 14 other people injured, including civilians.

The bombs detonated by suspected



Photo: Abdullah Benjakat

insurgents caused extensive damage to buildings in the district office compound, including the auditorium that also houses the section dealing with border passes.

District chief Supeeyan Taemohseng announced the resumption of the border pass service last Friday (Mar 14), following a period of suspension after the attack.

Around 300 people apply for the temporary travel document at the office each day to cross the border into Kelantan state in Malaysia.

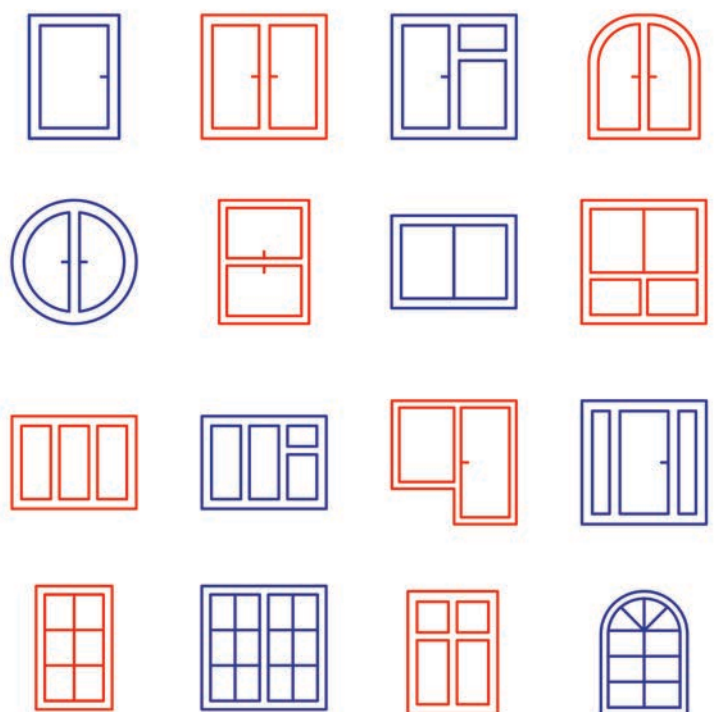
Bombs also went off at three other locations in Sungai Kolok on Mar 8, but no injuries were reported.

According to the Songkhla Tourism Promotion Association, violence in Thailand's deep South, which prompted Malaysia to advise its citizens to delay visits to these areas, is likely to result in 10% of bookings being cancelled, as operators urge the government to seek a long-term solution to restore confidence.

Bangkok Post



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Phuket gains ground as LGBTQIA+ hub

LGBTQIA+

Josh O'Neill

Phuket has once again proven why it stands at the forefront of LGBTQIA+ diversity, equity and inclusion in Southeast Asia. On Mar 14, the Bangkok Rainbow Organisation, in collaboration with Diversity In Thailand (DIT) and TransTalents Consulting Group, hosted the groundbreaking '3P Paradigm: Sustainable Impact Through Pride-Public-Private Partnership' seminar at Prince of Songkla University (PSU) in Phuket.

With over 100 participants, including LGBTQIA+ advocates, Pride event organisers, corporate representatives, government officials and HR professionals, the seminar focused on strengthening long-term partnerships to ensure that Phuket remains a leader in equality and inclusion.

Why Phuket matters in the LGBTQIA+ landscape

Phuket's growing reputation as an LGBTQIA+ destination is no accident. Thailand has long been recognised as a welcoming country for LGBTQIA+ individuals, with a deep-rooted cultural emphasis on tolerance and acceptance.

Phuket takes this inclusivity a step further, emerging as one of the most progressive and LGBTQIA+-friendly regions in the country. The island is not just a tourist paradise but a safe space for self-expression, community building and activism.

From its vibrant Pride festivals and LGBTQIA+-owned businesses to its strong expat presence and forward-thinking policies, Phuket has fostered an environment where everyone – regardless of identity – feels seen, valued, and respected. The combination of a thriving tourism industry, a diverse population and a



The 3P Paradigm seminar. Photo: Supplied

supportive local community has solidified Phuket's reputation as a beacon of equality in Southeast Asia.

As one of the most visited destinations in Asia, Phuket sees millions of tourists every year, many of whom come from countries where LGBTQIA+ rights are still under threat. This makes Phuket not just a vacation spot but a symbol of hope.

The seminar recognised the economic and social power of this diversity and worked to create stronger connections between government bodies, private enterprises and LGBTQIA+ advocates to ensure continued progress.

A step towards hosting global LGBTQIA+ events

One of the key takeaways from the seminar was the push to position Phuket as a hub for international LGBTQIA+ events, including partnering to host WorldPride relevant events in tourism, sports, health and wellness and other major gatherings. With Thailand's recent marriage equality law putting the country ahead of many others in the region, Phuket is in a prime position to lead the charge.

During the event, local organisations were encouraged to submit funding proposals and event ideas that could help bring world-class LGBTQIA+ celebrations and conferences to Phuket. Whether it's festivals, academic summits on LGBTQIA+ rights, or sustainability-focused community projects, the seminar emphasised that Phuket's potential is limitless.

The business of inclusion

Beyond celebrations, the event also highlighted how corporate and government partnerships benefit from Phuket's inclusivity. Unlike some other countries, Thailand understands and appreciates that businesses that embrace diversity and equity initiatives not only contribute to positive social change but also attract a larger customer base, particularly from the international market.

With sustainability and human rights becoming critical factors in global tourism, ensuring that Phuket remains a leader in LGBTQIA+ inclusivity is not just a social mission – it's a smart business strategy.

What's next?

With discussions, workshops and collaborations initiated at the seminar, the next step is turning ideas into action. There is growing interest in expanding LGBTQIA+ initiatives in Phuket, and the partnerships formed at this event will play a crucial role in ensuring continued progress.

As Phuket pushes forward as a leading LGBTQIA+ hub in Asia, the hope is that future events will cement its place on the global stage. With continued support from businesses, government agencies and the LGBTQIA+ community, Phuket is set to become not just a tourist hotspot, but a centre for equality, diversity and progress.

Let's keep the conversation going, and let's keep building a brighter, more inclusive future – right here in Phuket!

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

The May/June 2025 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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Seventh heaven at Bang Tao Beach

Joanna Matlub

As the highest restaurant in Bang Tao, 7th Floor Restaurant & Bar offers a dining experience with impressive panoramic sunset views.

Overlooking the contemporary infinity pool that glows a deep blue in the evening, the setting is really quite special. We arrived as a gentle breeze was drifting through the open-air seating area and decided to start our evening at the outdoor deck area, which felt like we were on the top deck of a luxurious cruise ship. Here we enjoyed the perfect base to watch the sunset which illuminated the sky with unobstructed Andaman Sea views.

We then moved inside for our evening meal, where we appreciated the thoughtful and interesting décor of their open-air restaurant, including a dazzling gold ceiling centrepiece and a more formal feeling versus outside, yet still with an atmosphere of elegance.

The menu is focussed on Mediterranean flavours, infused with French, Italian, Greek, Thai and Western influences and dishes. Ingredients are carefully sourced, with premium imports from Italy, such as tomatoes and flour, ensuring the authenticity of their homemade pasta.

One of the standout dishes is the 'Homemade Tagliatelle with Burrata' – the rich and creamy burrata was nicely plated in the middle of the rustic to-



mato sauce. Another must-try is the duck massaman curry, where tender, confit-style French duck is slow-cooked in a fragrant sauce that balances sweetness and spice.

Beyond the food, the bar area is an inviting space to enjoy signature and classic drinks while watching the sunset and beyond into the evening. A good spot for a pre-dinner beverage before settling in for a meal under a canopy of delicate, star-like lights. Floor-to-ceiling windows blur the lines between indoor and outdoor dining, ensuring that every table enjoys the full splendour of the view.

Service is polished and polite, reflecting the restaurant's commitment to a professional dining experience. To end the meal on a sweet note, the classic tiramisu arrived beautifully presented, adorned with a delicate flutter of gold leaf that elevates the classic dish.

With the bonus of on-site parking just moments from Bang Tao Beach, 7th Floor Restaurant offers unobstructed panoramic views of the Andaman Sea, making it the perfect setting for leisurely lunches overlooking the infinity pool, or evening meals under the glow-



ing sky. Worth a visit for the opportunity to take in the stunning seascape while indulging in eclectic Mediterranean-inspired cuisine.

7th Floor Restaurant & Bar is situated on the 7th floor of the Sole Mio Boutique Hotel & Wellness, 32 Moo 5, Cherng Talay. Open daily for Breakfast (7am-10:30am), lunch (11am-5pm) and dinner (5pm-11pm). For more information visit <https://7floor-restaurant.com/> or contact via Tel: +66(0)61-174-0021; or email: 7floor-restaurant@solemiophuket.com.

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POP QUIZ

1. Where does the Dalai Lama currently live?

2. How many strings would you commonly find on a marionette?

3. From which plant is denim made?

4. In which city is the NFL Hall of Fame located?

5. What is a group of pandas known as?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. More than some

5. "___ Smile" (1976 hit)

9. Spray setting

13. Lou Gehrig, on the diamond

14. Donnybrook

15. Knowing about

16. Artist Bonheur

17. Be part of the cast

18. Brought into play

19. Simple addition

22. Elton John, e.g.

23. ___ souci

24. Mozart's "L'___ del Cairo"

27. Like a bunch

29. Debonair

32. Undergrad degs.

33. Catches

36. Whole alternative

37. Ecstatic

42. Old German duchy name

43. Ready for anything

44. Wrath

45. Layers

47. It's found in banks

49. Blonde's secret, maybe

50. Vex, with "at"

52. Word from the

decks

54. Literary homeowners

62. Shades

63. Roundish

64. Christiania, now

65. Tropical fruit

66. Rewards

67. Simpleton

68. Some beans

69. "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto)

70. Chops

Down

1. Big do

2. "Crazy" bird

3. Yorkshire river

4. Snares

5. Jiffs

6. Karen Carpenter, for one

7. Checks, with in

8. Trojan hero

9. Greek dish

10. Acad.

11. Potpourri

12. Big deal

14. Gibb brother

20. Ceiling

21. Occupied, as a lavatory

24. ___-Wan Kenobi

25. Art able to

26. Very, in music

28. Australian rock band

30. Clear

31. File material

34. "Harper Valley ___"

35. Jerk

38. Textual interpretation

39. "From the Earth to the Moon" writer

40. Signals

41. Society page word

46. Strauss opera

48. Storm part

51. Other halves

53. Age

54. As a result

55. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" writer

56. Bank

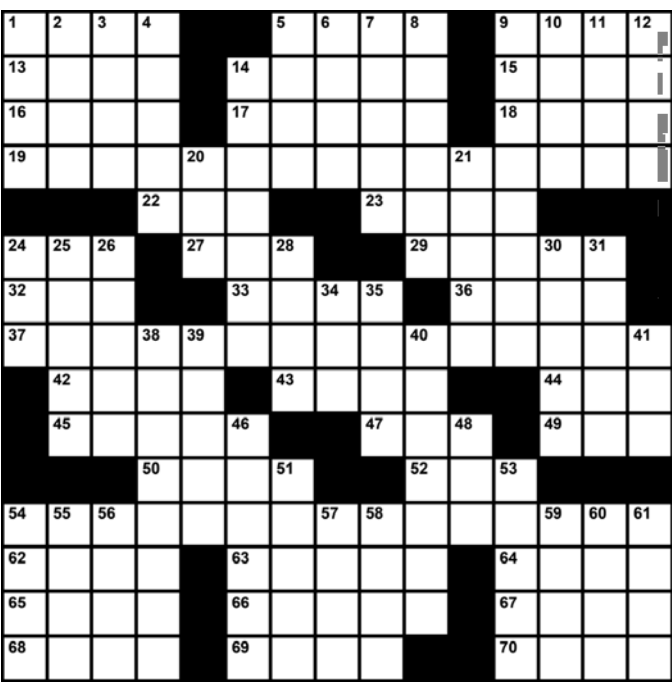
57. "Little piggies"

58. All alternative

59. "Cast Away" setting

60. Worm or lamp

61. Creates a lawn



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

T	E	M	A	S	A	P	M	O	N	E	V
N	A	G	A	T	A	L	E	A	R	E	N
C	L	O	Y	T	R	A	N	S	F	E	R
H	A	S	A	H	E	A	R	T	O	F	G
A	B	S	U	R	D	P	E	T	A	N	Q
B	O	I	S	E	F	O	C	I	T	U	L
A	R	M	E	D	T	O	H	E	T	E	E
C	O	O	I	N	T	O	Y	O	U	R	E
I	N	N	U	E	N	D	O	L	I	N	E
N	T	H	P	E	N						
W	O	R	K	H	A	N	D	I	N	G	L
E	M	A	N	A	T	I	O	N	S	A	R
D	I	J	O	N	G	I	T	E	T	E	A
S	T	A	T	E	E	T	A	S	H	O	L

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

31

people are struck by lightening and killed in America each year

200

galaxies in the universe are estimated to exist for every human on earth

1.5

hours per week is the average time a British adult spends exercising

3

hours per week is the average time a British adult spends on the toilet

11

minutes on average is how much smoking a single cigarette shortens your life expectancy

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Inventive tide patterns at Mai Khao Beach. Photo by Pete Atkinson

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket? Email it to editor3@classactmedia.co.th

This week in history

Mar 21, 1952

Alan Freed presents the Moondog Coronation Ball, the first rock and roll concert, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Mar 22, 1622

Jamestown massacre: Algonquians kill 347 English settlers around Jamestown, Virginia, a third of the colony's population, during the Second Anglo-Powhatan War.

Mar 23, 1956

Pakistan becomes the first Islamic republic in the world. This date is now celebrated as Republic Day in Pakistan.

Mar 24, 1921

The 1921 Women's Olympiad began in Monte Carlo, becoming the first international women's sports event

March 25, 421

Italian city Venice is founded

Mar 26, 1945

World War II: The Battle of Iwo Jima ends as the island is officially secured by American forces.

Mar 27, 1513

Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León reaches the northern end of The Bahamas on his first voyage to Florida.

American forces plant the flag at Iwo Jima.

with the dedication of the first church, that of San Giacomo

di Rialto on the islet of Rialto.

Source: Wikipedia

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PHUKET BUSINESS NETWORKING - MARCH

After a few months break during the high season, the Phuket Business Networking (PBN) event returned on Friday, March 14. Held at the Oasis Bar in Koh Kaew, a great mix of like-minded people from all over the island exchanged ideas, business cards and laughter while enjoying a few cold ones. Thanks to all who attended and to the team at the Oasis Bar for looking after us all. For details of the next event visit facebook.com/PhuketBusinessNetworking

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F1 CEO in Bangkok to discuss Thailand race

FORMULA ONE

F1 CEO STEFANO Domenicali was set to visit Thailand this week for talks over a potential race in Bangkok.

The 2025 F1 calendar includes 24 grands prix although there are still many potential new hosts seeking a spot in future years.

The Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort will drop off the calendar after 2026, the Belgian Grand Prix has signed an agreement to host races on a rotational basis while Madrid will replace Barcelona as host of the Spanish Grand Prix from 2026 to 2035.

"The good thing that we were able to do in the last couple of years has been to focus on the places that we believe represent the future for Formula 1," Domenicali explained on Mar 14.

"In terms of promoters and tracks that we are already at, we have a



Domenicali. Photo: AFP

long-term standing agreement with a lot of them that enables them to invest, to improve the facility, to improve the quality of the entertainment that we need to give to our fans.

"There is a potential interest to develop something in Bangkok," he added.

Hopes for a street race around Bangkok arose last year when former prime minister Srettha Thavisin revealed he had held talks with Domenicali after the Italian grand prix.

Srettha, who was replaced in August 2024, said hosting an F1 race "resonates with our policy to place Thailand on the global radar for international events and activities." *Bangkok Post*

Norris takes season opener

FORMULA ONE

AFP

Lando Norris signalled his championship ambitions with a stirring victory over Max Verstappen in a thrilling conclusion to a rain-soaked Australian Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 16).

The opening round of the season had looked set to be a straightforward all-McLaren contest, with pole-getter Norris holding off parries from teammate Oscar Piastri, who started alongside him on the front row.

But the race turned on its head on lap 44 of 57 when heavy rain suddenly returned to Albert Park and both Norris and Piastri sailed off the road at the third-last corner as the grip instantly evaporated.

Norris rejoined with his almost 20-second lead over the next non-McLaren greatly diminished, but Piastri wasn't so lucky, ending up stuck in the grass run-off zone. By the time he reversed out of the quagmire he was a defeated last.

The race then moved in favour of Verstappen when new teammate Liam Lawson spun into the barriers exiting turn 1. The safety car was called, and when all remaining drivers not yet on wet-weather rubber pitted, Norris and Verstappen rose to the top of the order.

The race resumed with five laps remaining, setting up an almighty duel between last year's top two in the drivers championship.



Norris celebrates on the podium. Photo: AFP

The McLaren car should have been fast enough to comfortably hold off the Red Bull Racing machine, but the Briton was carrying damage from earlier in the race, and a wobble at the super-fast turn 6 right-hander allowed Verstappen to get within a second of the leading orange car.

The Dutchman, who had written himself off for victory ahead of the weekend, menaced in Norris's mirrors, daring him to make another mistake. Through the middle sector, especially through the fastest turns, he had an advantage that seemed sure to give him a look at a race-winning overtake.

But Norris was steadfast in defence, nailing his lines through the crucial final sector to ensure

Verstappen could never get a run at him down the front straight.

He took the chequered flag just 0.895 seconds ahead of Verstappen to put himself on top of the drivers championship for the first time in his career.

George Russell scored an unlikely podium for Mercedes, with his 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli, rising from 16th on the grid to finish fourth, while Thai star Alex Albon finished a superb fifth for Williams ahead of Aston Martin's Lance Stroll and Sauber's Nico Hülkenberg.

Charles Leclerc was Ferrari's best-placed entry in eighth, Oscar Piastri recovered to ninth and Lewis Hamilton finished 10th in his first race for Ferrari.

'The Mesh' finds form to land Kamala pairs title

BOWLS

THE PHUKET LAWN BOWLS Pairs tournament was held earlier this month at Kamala Bowls Club with not only all of the island's regular resident bowlers involved but a number of holidaymakers pitching in too.

The Mar 8 competition saw a round robin format played out to ensure everyone got two games, with the winners progressing to the semi-finals.

Fortune favoured fairness with the draw as no prominent players were ultimately paired together, despite players picked randomly from a hat.

Once play got underway a series of high quality games were contested before the final pairs of Carl "The Mesh" Mesham and partner Rose Swaffield were pitted against the veteran duo of George Sasanow and Coventry Tom.

George and Tom had a great start in the final showdown to take the lead and were threatening to run away with the contest before The Mesh got a lucky



The winners. Photo: Supplied

deflection to win a crucial end and swing the momentum in his and Rose's favour.

Finding the form that saw him win the singles title last month, The Mesh turned on the style to ensure he added the pairs title to his trophy cabinet, with partner Rose also taking home a winner's medal.

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. For further information contact the club on 094-898 7476. *The Phuket News*

France sweep to Six Nations title

RUGBY

FRANCE SWEEPED TO THE Six Nations title with a 35-16 victory over Scotland last Saturday (Mar 15), edging out bitter rivals England whose 68-14 rout of hapless Wales had sent the championship battle down to the wire.

On a chilly night in Paris, France held their nerve to emerge champions for the first time since their Grand Slam-winning campaign of 2022.

Les Bleus, who were only 16-13 ahead at the break at the Stade de France, ran in four tries to secure a bonus-point victory and a one-point winning margin over England in the final standings.

Ireland's slender hopes of wrapping up a third successive Six Nations ended despite defeating Italy 22-17 in Rome in the day's opening match.

France full-back Thomas Ramos starred with 20 points to lead his team to victory, making light of the absence of iconic scrum-half Antoine Dupont who was injured in last week's victory in Ireland.

Ramos's haul included a try as part of a 19-point blitz in a 20-minute spell just after the interval although France missed out on



The France team celebrate. Photo: AFP

the Grand Slam after their narrow round two loss away to England last month.

WOODEN SPOON

In Cardiff, England scored 10 tries with a bonus-point triumph which had temporarily moved them top of the table and piled the pressure on France.

England had their match in Wales all but wrapped up at half-time after scoring five tries to lead 33-7 at the break before adding five more tries in the second half.

That allowed England to surpass their previous record Six Nations winning margin over Wales of 40 points set during a 50-10 success at Twickenham in 2006.

For Wales, their 17th successive Test defeat represented an unwanted record for a Tier One country in the professional era.

Their 11th straight championship loss meant they had finished with back-to-back wooden spoons for the first time.

In Rome, Italy took the lead at the Stadio Olimpico through Monty Ioane's 12th minute try but then played more than half the match at least a man down after Michele Lamaro and Giacomo Nicotera were yellow-carded, while No 8 Ross Vintcent was shown a 20-minute red card for a head-on-head challenge.

Ireland hooker Dan Sheehan scored a hat-trick of tries, with full-back Hugo Keenan also crossing Italy's line.

Gonzalo Quesada's Italy side finished fifth in the table with five points, two points above Wales.

"We were not all that far away off getting a win which would have been incredible but at the same time there's a lot of which we can be proud," said Quesada. *AFP*

Forest eye Champions League

FOOTBALL

AFP

Third-placed Nottingham Forest have Champions League qualification for next season firmly in their sights after a 4-2 win against Ipswich in the Premier League last Saturday (Mar 15).

Forest's charge towards Europe's top club competition for the first time since 1980 continued with a dominant display at Portman Road.

The visitors struck three times in six first-half minutes to close to within four points of second-placed Arsenal and move six clear of Manchester City.

Forest's Nikola Milenkovic controlled a loose ball inside the area and blasted in on off the underside of the bar to open the floodgates.

Anthony Elanga then drilled in his first goal since Boxing Day at the end of a blistering Forest counter-attack.

Two minutes later Elanga took advantage of dreadful Ipswich defending to sprint clear and slot in his second of the afternoon.

"There is a good spell in the first half that really changed the game for six minutes," said Forest boss Nuno Espirito Santo, who is not getting carried away dreaming of Champions League football.

"We have to focus on ourselves. Work as much as we can because there is a lot of football to be played yet."



Nottingham Forest's Anthony Elanga (centre) scored twice in the 4-2 win at Ipswich. Photo: AFP

Jens Cajuste and George Hirst scored late consolation goals for Kieran McKenna's men either side of Jota Silva's fourth for Forest.

Meanwhile, Manchester City failed to ease fears of missing out on next season's Champions League after twice blowing the lead to draw 2-2 against Brighton.

Erling Haaland and Omar Marmoush put City in front, but high-flying Brighton extended their unbeaten run to seven games thanks to Pervis Estupinan's free-kick and an Abdurkadir Khusanov own goal.

A top-five Premier League finish will almost certainly secure a Champions League place this season thanks to English clubs' strong performances in European competition.

A point leaves City still in fifth, just one point ahead of Brighton in seventh.

Second-placed Arsenal beat Chelsea 1-0 thanks to a first-half Mikel Merino goal, while Manchester United compounded Leicester's relegation fears with a comprehensive 3-0 win and Fulham overcame Tottenham 2-0.

Ipswich's uphill task to beat the drop suffered another blow as Wolves pulled nine points clear of the bottom three with a 2-1 victory at Southampton thanks to a double from Jorgen Strand Larsen.

Paul Onuachu pulled a goal back but Southampton remain on course to post the worst ever points tally in Premier League history.

Bournemouth's bid to qualify for Europe for the first time is fading after a 2-1 home defeat to Brentford, while Everton extended their unbeaten league run to nine games thanks to Jake O'Brien's 90th minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw against West Ham.



Photo: AFP

Toon on song to end long trophy drought

FOOTBALL

NEWCASTLE ENDED their 56-year trophy drought in stunning style as Dan Burn and Alexander Isak sealed a 2-1 win against Liverpool in the League Cup final last Sunday (Mar 16).

Eddie Howe's side made history at Wembley with a superb display that left the runaway Premier League leaders shell-shocked.

Burn put 'The Toon' ahead late in the first half and Isak's 27th goal in all competitions doubled their lead after the interval.

Federico Chiesa got one back in the closing seconds, but Newcastle held on for their first major silverware since the 1969 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.

That success in the predecessor to the Europa League is a relic of a bygone era, but this long-awaited triumph will be forever

etched in the memories of the Newcastle fans who turned one half of Wembley into a roiling sea of black and white with their ecstatic celebrations.

It was also Newcastle's first major domestic prize dating back 70 years to the 1955 FA Cup.

Since the Magpies lifted the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, 30 different English teams had won silverware, while Liverpool had clinched 38 major trophies in that time.

They had endured five relegations to the second tier since their last trophy, with club legends like Alan Shearer, Paul Gascoigne and Malcolm MacDonald failing to win silverware in their time on Tyneside.

But after losing the 2023 League Cup final against Manchester United, Howe's team returned to Wembley and set the record straight at last. AFP

Torky returns to haunt PAFC and add to relegation fears

FOOTBALL

RANONG UNITED DEFEATED Phuket Andaman FC (PAFC) 1-0 in a pivotal clash at the Ranong Stadium last Sunday (Mar 16), a result that leaves Phuket in a precarious position at the foot of the table.

To make matters worse, the decisive goal was scored by former PAFC forward Abdelrahman Osama Mohamed (Torky), who returned to haunt his old club. Let go by PAFC in December upon the expiration of his contract, Torky proved to be the difference between the two sides.

The match was a tense affair, crucial for both teams' survival hopes, with PAFC looking to build from the back and Ranong content to sit in their 4-4-2 formation, aiming to capitalise on any errors.

The first half was a largely uneventful affair, with neither side creating many clear-cut chances. The game lacked flow, punctuated by a bizarre six-minute delay to repair a hole in the net. Spectators also noted the poor condition of the pitch markings, which were barely visible from the stands.

In the second half, PAFC upped the tempo and enjoyed a sustained period of possession and territory but failed to turn this dominance into goals.



Photo: Supplied

Ranong then punished PAFC on the counter-attack and Torky was on hand to score, delivering a painful blow to his former employers.

PAFC's best chance to salvage a point came with the final kick of the game. A loose ball from a corner fell invitingly, but the resulting shot curled agonisingly over the crossbar, leaving PAFC to rue their missed opportunity.

While this performance was generally much improved, it highlighted PAFC's persistent issues: a lack of chance creation and goal scoring. As it stands, this is not a recipe for success. The loss leaves PAFC at the bottom of the table. The only positive is that their relegation rivals, Yala City, also lost, meaning they are still within reach with two games to go. Simon Causton

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Sport



Magpies win silverware at last > p15

FAT SPAT

Thai FA to sue ex-chief over debt



Football Association of Thailand President Nualphan Lamsam after the Mar 11 press conference. Photo: Supplied. INSET: Former FAT chief Somyot Poompunmuang. Photo: Bangkok Post

FOOTBALL

Bangkok Post

The Football Association of Thailand (FAT) has approved the decision to pursue legal action against former chief Pol Gen Somyot Poompunmuang for alleged mismanagement that caused financial damage.

The cash-strapped FAT suffered the latest blow when the Supreme Court on Mar 6 ordered the association to pay B360 million in damages to Siam Sport Syndicate Plc for an “unfair” termination of a privileges and TV rights contract.

An official press conference five days later saw reigning FAT president Nualphan Lamsam, affectionately nicknamed Madam Pang by the Thai media, explain the burgeoning debt the FAT has to handle.

“I have decided to bring this matter to the attention of the FAT executive board immediately because in the lawsuit under

Section 76 of the Civil and Commercial Act, the second defendant was the former FAT chief and the executive board at that time,” Ms Nualphan explained.

TEARS

Somyot had served as the head of the national association for two terms spanning eight years and had terminated the Siam Sport contract in 2016.

Ms Nualphan took over the reins of the FAT in February last year following a landslide victory, winning a record 68 votes from 73 members to become the association’s first-ever female president.

“When I came in, there was nothing. There was only debt in the FAT and I just asked for sympathy and encouragement from the football fans and media,” she said at the press conference before bursting into tears.

“These problems were left for me to solve. I am a woman with a kind heart, and I feel bad every time we talk about bad things,” said Ms Nualphan.

“After Somyot’s era, the FAT had only B27 million in its account with a debt of B132mn. We also borrowed money from FIFA to the tune of another B155mn, and have to pay it in annual instalments with FIFA deducting the amount from our support money,” she added.

Commenting on the Supreme Court ruling, Ms Nualphan said: “The cancellation of the contract with Siam Sport caused significant damage to the Thai football industry.

“The B360mn has become a debt that the FAT will have to pay.

“I respect the judgment of the Supreme Court. The termination of the Siam Sports contract was not correct or fair, and it all happened before I took over as the FAT president.

“I have decided to bring this matter to the attention of the FAT executive board immediately because in the lawsuit under Section 76 of the Civil and Commercial Act, the second defendants were the former FAT chief and the executive board at that time.”

SYMPATHY

Tourism and Sports Minister Sorawong Thienthong said on Mar 12 that his agency cannot provide any financial assistance for the purpose of FAT repaying its debts, even though the ministry has sympathy.

Neither could the money from the National Sports Development Fund be granted to the FAT for this purpose as the fund is strictly intended for sports development, not paying debts, he said.

Mr Sorawong said all the ministry could do is arrange talks between Siam Sport Syndicate Plc and the FAT to negotiate the terms and other details of how the court-ordered financial compensation will be paid.

In an attempt to help with the matter, a special campaign, “Thai people love Thai football”, has been approved for launch to raise funds to pay off the FAT’s debt caused by the lawsuit and also for the development of the Thai national team via the sale of T-shirts, donations and fund-raising activities, details of

which the FAT will announce in due course.

Mr Somyot, meanwhile, said he was not worried about the lawsuit while offering clarification on the termination of the contract with Siam Sport Syndicate Plc while he was the FAT chief. He explained the cancellation concerned the latter’s right to take care of benefits and privileges of the FAT, not the right to broadcast Thai League matches, which had been granted to TrueVisions.

The FAT in return continues receiving payments for the broadcasting right from TrueVisions, he said.

Siam Sport Syndicate Plc sued the FAT for damages because the company purchased a TV broadcasting mobile unit and other equipment in advance, adding that it had nothing to do with the broadcasting rights of these matches.

As for the B155mn debt the FAT owed to FIFA, the money was spent on the FAT’s operations and aid, Mr Somyot concluded.

Phuket to host inter-province ‘Quadrangular Sports Competition’

ALL SPORTS

A WEEK-LONG MULTI-SPORTS competition organised as a joint initiative by authorities in Phuket and Nakhon Sri Thammarat starts on Sunday (Mar 23).

“The 21st Phuket Quadrangular Sports Competition, 2025” will be held at Saphan Hin Stadium in Phuket and run until next Saturday (Mar 29). Participants will be officials from both each respective province, with a number of special selected guests also competing.

The five main sports being

contested will consist of football, sepak takraw, petanque, snooker and golf, with additional fun competitions of “Golf for the Poor” and “Marble Claw”.

A press conference to announce the event was held on Mar 9 at the Bhukitta Boutique Hotel in Talat Yai, overseen by Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, president of the Sports Association of Phuket, and Dr Kamon Sukban, president of the Sports Association of Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

Also in attendance was: Wiraphan Chumanee, Vice



Photo: PR Phuket

President of the Phuket Trang Association; Mayureerat Kaewyarat, President of the Phuket Andaman Northern Association; Pol. Col. Yongyut Krongmalai, President of the Phuket Andaman Isan Association; and Rawi Ketthaphan,

Advisor to the Songkhla Association of Phuket Province.

Dr Kamon explained the event is supported by various sports clubs and associations from Phuket and Nakhon Sri Thammarat and is organised under the concept of “friendship over victory” to foster stronger relations between officials from each province.

It is also hoped the event will encourage a healthier, more active lifestyle among youngsters from both provinces.

Mr Thammarat echoed these sentiments, stressing that the

event was more about leveraging the competitive nature of sports to build and sustain relationships between people, while promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The opening ceremony will take place at 1pm on Sunday (Mar 23) at Saphan Hin Sports Center, with the closing ceremony at the same venue on Mar 29 from 6:30pm.

There will also be an after party following the closing ceremony with a musical performance by the ‘Khon Nong Hong’ band.

The event is free to attend and everyone is welcome throughout the week. *The Phuket News*