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DON'T RUN

MORE THAN 2,000 VISA-FREE 'RUNNERS' REFUSED AT AIRPORT



Phuket Airport Immigration Chief Pol Col Rasarin Thiraphatthanaku. Photo: Phuket Airport Immigration

Natanaree Likidwatanasakun
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Immigration officials in Phuket have begun enforcing some of the toughest screening measures in years as the national crackdown on so-called “visa runners” intensifies, with officers warning that repeated visa-free entries, unclear travel plans and suspicious behaviour will now almost certainly lead to denial of entry.

Speaking to *The Phuket News*, Phuket Immigration Chief Col Kriangkrai Ariyaying said the new enforcement push is aimed squarely at ensuring tourists

entering the country on visa-free stays are here for “real tourism” – not long-term living, undeclared work or activities linked to criminal networks.

“We consider the primary objective of the government’s policy to encourage tourists to enter for real tourism, particularly those using the visa-free programme,” Col Kriangkrai said.

He explained that airport and border officials have been ordered to strictly examine three core indicators of genuine tourism:

1. Travel itinerary – where travellers intend to go and what they plan to do;

2. Accommodation bookings – whether reservations are confirmed and appropriate for the length of stay;

3. Reasonable duration – the expected number of days or nights a typical tourist would spend in the country.

“If a tourist cannot provide an answer about where they intend to go or how they plan to stay, they will be denied entry,” he said.

150 DAYS

Col Kriangkrai said officers nationwide have now been instructed to actively monitor foreigners who appear to be using

visa-free entries as a substitute for long-term residence.

A typical tourist visit, he explained, usually lasts no more than 10 days, while Thailand’s visa-exemption scheme allows a maximum of 60 days, extendable for another 30 days, totalling 90 days.

However, the practice of leaving the country briefly and returning on a new 60-day visa exemption – commonly called a “visa run” – has allowed some foreigners to remain in Thailand for 150 days or more in a single sequence. This, he said, is now considered abnormal.

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tournament



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PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

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Phuket leads visa-free crackdown

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“Multiple entries or visa runs resulting in a total visit of 150 days are considered abnormal. We are now intensifying our enforcement. Stays exceeding 150 days or more than two entries must be screened to determine their exact purpose,” Col Kriangkrai said.

He added that visitors who fail screening may be refused entry at the airport or, if later caught working illegally, arrested, prosecuted, have their visa revoked, and be deported and blacklisted.

VISA RUNS

Phuket Immigration has formally notified all visa agencies that facilitating visa runs for tourists intending to abuse visa entry privileges is no longer acceptable.

The only exceptions are for travellers whose purpose of visit is not tourism and whose documentation supports their case.

“If any company is found to be violating these measures, legal action will be taken against both the responsible company and the tourist,” Col Kriangkrai said.

He urged media outlets nationwide to help communicate the rules and penalties, saying this will support law enforcement as Thailand works to reduce foreign criminal activity.

PHUKET LEADS REFUSALS

Nationwide, the Immigration Bureau has already refused entry to 2,900 people this year for suspicious patterns of travel.

At Phuket International Airport alone, Immigration officers have deported approximately 2,000 travellers who failed to meet entry criteria, said Pol Col Rasarin Thiraphatthanakun, Chief of



Phuket Immigration Chief Col Kriangkrai Ariyaying. Photo: Phuket Immigration

Phuket Airport Immigration.

“The threshold for initiating intensive screening is a total stay exceeding 150 days,” Col Rasarin said, confirming the national standard now being used at all international entry points.

She emphasised that once the 150-day marker is reached – either through repeat entries or a combination of stays and extensions – travellers will be interviewed. Whether they are then refused entry depends on their answers.

“If suspicious behaviour is detected, deportation is possible,” he added.

The airport has listed its key red flags as:

1. Signs the traveller is actually working in Thailand;
2. Inability to answer basic questions about travel plans;
3. No clear itinerary;
4. Lack of funds required by law;
5. No valid return ticket;
6. Suspicious demeanour;
7. Frequent border crossings.

Phuket Airport Immigration has also seen a surge in counterfeit or unpaid return tickets – documents created to make it appear as though a traveller intends to leave Thailand.

“Many passengers create fake

tickets by booking without paying or confirming their return flight,” Col Rasarin said. “We have strict measures in place to detect this. If a ticket is found to be counterfeit, or if payment has not been made, the traveller will be deemed to have not declared their innocence from the start and will be immediately deported.”

CASE-BY-CASE

While the crackdown is strict, Col Rasarin stressed that immigration officers still have discretion in exceptional circumstances.

“This decision is not heartless,” he said. “If the traveller has other compelling reasons, such as processing family support documents or having family members here, we will consider their case individually.”

She noted that the Phuket Airport Immigration Bureau is responsible strictly for entry and exit processes inside the airport. Issues involving external visa agencies or off-airport procedures fall under other departments and cannot be commented on by the airport division.

NATIONAL ORDER

The intensified screening follows a nationwide directive issued after an urgent meeting on Nov 12,

chaired by Pol Lt Gen Panumas Boonyalak, Commissioner-General of the Immigration Bureau. The meeting, held at 8:30am, came after policy orders handed down by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and National Police Chief Pol Gen Kittirat Panpetch.

The meeting’s aim was clear: stop the use of visa-free entries as cover for cybercrime, money laundering, cross-border scams, illegal labour, and other “grey zone” activity.

Pol Maj Gen Cherngron Rimphidi, the Bureau spokesperson, said all provincial immigration commanders have been instructed to tighten checks immediately.

“The Immigration Bureau has been assigned to prevent foreigners from disguising themselves as tourists to conduct transactions linked to crime, particularly cybercrime, money laundering, or human exploitation,” he said.

The Immigration Bureau’s national order highlights four enforcement priorities:

1. Stricter screening of visa-free entries: Anyone entering visa-free more than twice without sufficient justification will likely be refused entry. Thai authorities say these patterns “are not typical of tourists”.

2. Targeting border-area offenders: Foreigners deported through high-risk regions such as the Mae Sot-Myawaddy border – long associated with scam networks – will be denied re-entry to Thailand.

3. Reviewing and revoking suspicious visa extensions: Provincial offices have been instructed to re-examine past extensions and revoke them if

they appear to support repeated visa runs or concealed work.

4. Nationwide overstay enforcement: Immigration offices must step up operations to locate and deport foreigners overstaying their visas, with results to be publicly reported.

‘NOT HARM TOURISM’

Despite concerns from long-term visitors and digital nomads, senior Immigration officials insist the measures are aimed at protecting the country and its legitimate tourism sector – not discouraging visitors.

Pol Maj Gen Cherngron said any increase in processing times at passport control will be limited. Screening each person will take “no more than 45 seconds”, though peak-time queues may still take more than 40 minutes.

He stressed that the goal is to filter out high-risk individuals while welcoming genuine tourists.

“These steps will strengthen confidence in Thailand as a safe destination,” he said. “This will help select high-quality tourists who contribute more to Thailand’s economy.”

Phuket Immigration Chief Col Kriangkrai said the message is simple: Thailand welcomes tourists – but those using visa-free entries must be able to clearly explain their travel plans, demonstrate they can support themselves, and show a legitimate intention to stay for a reasonable tourism period.

“In summary, we are strictly screening tourists using the free visa to distinguish genuine tourists from those illegally working or travelling excessively,” Col Kriangkrai said. “This will lead to denial of entry or subsequent arrest.”

Nirat starts first day as Governor of Phuket with meeting in Bangkok

NIRAT PHONGSITTHAWORN began his first day as Governor of Phuket on Monday (Nov 17) not in Phuket, but in Bangkok, at a meeting with the Permanent Secretary of Culture.

A local government report said he “immediately began” work on Thailand Biennale, Phuket 2025. The report said the meeting highlighted preparations for the major contemporary art festival.

The report did not mention that the meeting took place in Bangkok. Traditionally, incoming

Phuket Governors start their first day on the island, but Mr Nirat has been based in Bangkok for several years as Director-General of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA).

The report stated that Mr Nirat met Culture Ministry Permanent Secretary Prasop Riangngen to review progress on the Biennale. OCAC Director Kesorn Kamnerdpetch also joined the briefing.

According to the report, the Governor confirmed that Phuket is preparing across all fronts – venues, staff,



Photo: PR Phuket

communications, and visitor facilitation. The province will soon present an updated readiness report to Culture Minister Sabida Thaiset. Mr Nirat will inspect venues and preparations himself on Nov 21, the report said.

The Ministry of Culture noted that the 2025 Biennale is progressing accord-

ing to plan, with works by 65 Thai and international artists now under development. Thirteen “activity pavilions” are being prepared as core exhibition sites, alongside parallel events expected to run throughout the five-month festival. Both sides also discussed plans for the opening ceremony on Nov 29, which will be held in a tone of mourning and gratitude for Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the Queen Mother.

Mr Nirat’s transfer to Phuket was confirmed last week through the Royal

Gazette after an unusually long delay, despite Cabinet approval on Oct 14.

Originally from Bangkok, he previously served as Governor of Chiang Mai, Bueng Kan and Udon Thani before moving to DOPA headquarters. He was later appointed DOPA Director-General during the short-lived acting premiership of Phumtham Wechayachai. His recent promotions have come during the tenure of Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

He replaces Saransak Srikruanetra, who ended his

duties on Nov 12 after just 42 days in office – the shortest term of any Phuket Governor. Mr Saransak began his new posting as Governor of Nong Khai on Monday. He told *The Phuket News* he was sad to leave, saying he enjoyed working with the people of Phuket despite the challenges.

Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai has also been transferred, appointed Vice Governor of Nakhon Pathom effective Nov 11. His replacement has not yet been announced.

The Phuket News

FBI targets hacker arrested

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Multiple international outlets are reporting that the 35-year-old man arrested in Phuket by Thai cyber police last week is likely Russian GRU military intelligence officer Aleksey Lukashev.

The Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau (CCIB) confirmed the arrest on Nov 12 following a coordinated investigation with the FBI, Phuket Immigration, Region 8 Crime Suppression Division, Phuket Provincial Police, the Tourist Police Bureau, the Police Forensic Science Office, and the Office of the Attorney General. Local Phuket agencies have not released any information about the case.

According to the CCIB report, Thai authorities were alerted after CCIB Commissioner Pol Lt Gen Surapol Prembut received intelligence from the FBI that a “world-class hacker” – previously linked to cyberattacks on government institutions in Europe and the US – had entered Thailand



Photo / Image: CCIB / FBI

and was hiding in Phuket.

The man arrived at Phuket International Airport on Oct 30 and checked into a hotel in Thalang District. Officers from Phuket Immigration tracked his movements before coordinating with prosecutors to obtain an arrest warrant under the Extradition Act of 2008.

A Criminal Court search warrant was then executed at the hotel, where investigators seized laptops, mobile phones and “digital wallets” for forensic examination.

FBI agents were present as observers. The suspect was charged as a person requested for extradition by the United States and handed over to the Office of the Attorney General to begin the extradition process.

The case drew further international attention after UK outlet ‘The Sun US’ reported that Thai police had likely detained GRU officer Aleksey Lukashev, linking him to two major operations: the hacking of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign and cyber activity surrounding

the Skripal Novichok poisonings. The report noted that blurred images from the arrest closely resemble the FBI’s wanted notice for Lukashev and that FBI personnel were present in Phuket during the operation.

Lukashev, a senior lieutenant in Russia’s GRU Unit 26165 – also known as APT28 or ‘Fancy Bear’ – is accused of hacking computers belonging to US political organisations during the 2016 election, phishing the email account of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta,

conducting cyber activity connected to the Skripal case, and carrying out attacks on government bodies across Europe and the United States. He appears on the FBI’s Most Wanted list and is subject to UK sanctions.

Following the arrest, Russia-based investigative outlet ‘The Insider’ independently concluded that only one GRU hacker on the FBI’s wanted list matches the age released by Thai authorities: Aleksey Viktorovich Lukashev. The outlet reported that Lukashev, born in Murmansk, is wanted in the US for conspiracy to commit computer intrusions, identity theft, domain fraud and money laundering. He allegedly used multiple aliases, including ‘Den Katenberg’ and ‘Yuliana Martynova’. A US federal court issued a warrant for his arrest in 2018. According to ‘The Insider’, APT28/Fancy Bear has been linked to attacks on the White House, NATO, WADA, the IOC, the German Bundestag and ministries across Europe, as

well as targeting Russian opposition figures, NGOs and journalists.

OPERATION 293

The CCIB report said that as part of the wider “Operation 293”, Thai cyber police also seized digital assets linked to the suspect. Investigators said malware connected to the man had stolen authentication keys and cryptocurrency trading credentials from Thai victims. More than B14 million in digital assets was recovered in cooperation with Tether and Thai exchange Bitkub. At least six Thai victims were identified, with reported losses exceeding 100,000 USDT.

CCIB emphasised that the arrest was made under Thailand’s extradition law rather than on immigration-related offences. The suspect remains in custody and has not been publicly named as the investigation continues. The bureau said the case marks a significant step in strengthening cooperation with the FBI against transnational cyber-crime.

Big Buddha remains closed

THE TOURIST-POPULAR BIG BUDDHA viewpoint and temple complex on the hills separating Kata and Chalong remains closed as the Phuket Provincial Court has approved a class action lawsuit filed by residents affected by the landslide last year.

Relatives of victims of the deadly landslide in Kata on Aug 23 last year filed a formal complaint against the Phra Phuttha Ming Mongkol Sattha 45 Foundation and its president Suporn Wanichkul.

Triggered by heavy rain in the early hours, the landslide killed 13 people, injured 19 others and damaged dozens of homes. Soil from the hill cascaded down, burying houses and buildings in Soi Patak 2, Karon.

“The Big Buddha viewpoint will remain closed until compensation is paid to affected residents and the court case is concluded,” Rattanawangso Panrak, Abbot of Wat Kittisangkharom (Wat Kata), confirmed to *The Phuket News* last week.

Phuket Bar Association President Runnapha Phutkaew explained that the Phuket Provincial Court accepted Civil Case No. 520/2568 as a class action on Nov 6.

The case was filed by 25 residents from Kata and Karon who suffered losses from the landslide near the Big Buddha viewpoint.

The court found that the case met the conditions for a group action, allowing the plaintiffs to represent all affected residents collectively. Once the case is finalised, the judgment will apply to all group members under the same ruling, Ms Runnapha said.

Ms Runnapha noted that she and her legal team, operating under Lawyers



Photo: The Phuket News / file

Council Order No. 282/2567, have provided legal support to the affected community since the incident.

“The court has not yet set a date for judgment. It has only accepted the case and begun the investigation,” she said.

Ms Runnapha recounted how negotiations were held between the Abbot of Wat Kata and local residents in July. At that time, no agreement had been reached, but further talks had borne fruit. Later talks resulted in the Abbot agreeing that the viewpoint would not reopen until compensation had been settled.

Other negotiations between the Phra Phuttha Ming Mongkol Sattha 45 Foundation and the affected residents have also been held, Ms Runnapha said, but no settlement has been reached.

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun



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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 11 m/s

SAT NOVEMBER 22



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Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN NOVEMBER 23



High: +35°
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Wind 11 m/s

MON NOVEMBER 24



High: +35°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE NOVEMBER 25



High: +35°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED NOVEMBER 26



High: +37°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU NOVEMBER 27



High: +36°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

Robbery sole motive for guide murder

POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED that robbery was the sole motive behind the murder of Phuket tour guide Orathai 'Guide Klang' Aryupong, 56, whose body was found inside her car in Ratsada on Nov 10.

Phuket City Police on Nov 11 brought the suspect, Jirasak Yodbamrungs, 43, from Phang Nga, to reenact the crime at three locations: the site of the murder, the gold shop where he sold the victim's jewellery, and the spot where he abandoned her car.

The reenactment was conducted under the supervision of Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, with support from senior provincial and city police officers.

Pol Maj Gen Sinlert said evidence and the suspect's own confession showed robbery was the only motive. "His testimony shows that the crime was committed solely to acquire property. There was no other motive," he said.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Police said Jirasak, who was heavily in debt, stole a gold necklace, two gold-framed Buddha images, a mobile phone and a red handbag. He later sold the necklace for B48,420 at a gold shop inside Lotus's Phuket on the bypass road.

Officers are now tracing his spending and have already recovered several stolen items, including the victim's phones and watches. Investigators said there is no indication that anyone else was involved.

Ms Orathai was reported missing on Nov 7 after failing to return home. CCTV footage later showed her being followed to her car at Lotus's Phuket by Jirasak, who entered her vehicle and stayed inside for two hours before driving away.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Sister feared killed by Cambodian scam gang

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Police in Takua Thung District in Phang Nga, locate just north of Phuket, are investigating a complaint from a local woman who claimed her sister had been killed by members of a scam gang in Poipet, Cambodia – though officers say no evidence has been found to support the alleged death.

The report, filed with Khok Kloi Police on Nov 12, identified the complainant as Malee Na Cholkhet, 21, of Moo 8, Khlong Khian, Takua Thung. Ms Malee told police she received a LINE call at about 11:30pm on Nov 10 from her brother-in-law, Wayu Khiewpairee, who claimed her sister, Suda Cholkhet, 26, had been killed after being "punished" by a Poipet scam syndicate she had been working for.

Mr Wayu allegedly urged Ms Malee to travel to Cambodia to retrieve the body so funeral rites could be held in Phang Nga. Instead, she contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,



Photo: Khok Kloi Police Station

where officials advised her to file a police report.

Investigators led by Pol Lt Col Amornthep Kermee questioned Ms Malee but found no substantiating evidence. She could not provide photos, documents or any confirmation of Ms Suda's death beyond the LINE call. Police checks also revealed no record of Ms Suda leaving Thailand, suggesting she may not have travelled to Cambodia. Officers examined the background of Mr Wayu, 20, listed as living in Sattahip, Chonburi, but his current whereabouts are unknown.

Khok Kloi Police recorded the matter as a daily report and forwarded it upward through the chain

of command due to its potential cross-border implications.

The case has since been escalated to senior levels of the Royal Thai Police, including National Police Chief Pol Gen Kittirat Phanphet, as well as regional and provincial commanders.

Station Superintendent Pol Col Woraphong Phrom-in said officers are coordinating with relevant agencies to verify the facts.

"At this stage, there is no concrete evidence to confirm that Ms Suda has died or travelled abroad, Pol Col Woraphong said.

"We are working to confirm her status and locate the individuals mentioned," he said.

Drunk driver wipes out U-turn barriers

A PICKUP TRUCK DRIVER has been arrested after crashing into a line of government-owned highway barriers in Thalang while allegedly more than twice the legal alcohol limit.

Thalang Police reported that the incident occurred at about 7:30pm on Nov 13 at the Bang Khanun Forest Park U-turn on Thepkasattri Rd, in Tambon Thepkasattri.

Officers arrived at the scene to find orange Highway Department barriers damaged. The vehicle involved, a Toyota pickup with Buriram plates, was identified as being driven by Panya Promthongphan.

Police brought Mr Panya to Thalang Police Station for an alcohol test, which returned a reading of 112mg/100ml – well above Thailand's legal limit of 50mg.

He was subsequently charged

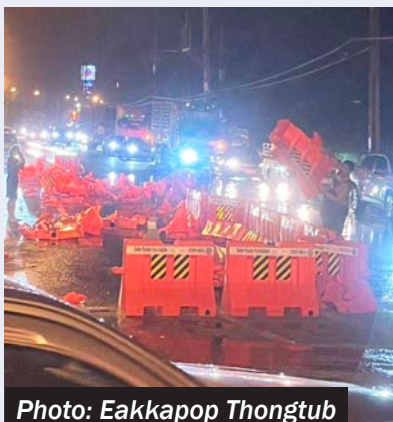


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

with driving under the influence and reckless driving causing damage to government property, confirmed Thalang Police.

Mr Panya was detained for legal proceedings. Local officials will file the official damage assessment with police, reported Pol Lt Anusorn Klinkeaw of the Thalang Police, who is conducting the investigation.

Eakkapop Thongtub

EV bus fails to climb hill, slams into shop

TWO TOURISTS SUSTAINED minor injuries after a Phuket Smart Bus electric bus lost power and rolled backwards down a slope before crashing into a building in Karon last week.

The accident occurred at about 12:30pm on Nov 12 near the 'Tom Yum Kung' intersection on Khok Tonod-Rawai Road. The EV passenger bus was being driven by 57-year-old Pakin Chanplad when it reportedly lost engine power while climbing a steep incline.

The bus rolled backwards, hitting a parked car behind it before continuing down the slope and striking another car parked in front of the Relax Massage Shop. The impact sent the bus partially into the shop's front area, causing damage to both the vehicle and the building.

Two female tourists on board the bus sustained minor injuries and were taken to Chalong Hospital for treatment. No fatalities were reported.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Karon Police officers arrived at the scene shortly after the crash. Investigators started collecting witness statements and inspecting the site to determine the exact cause of the incident.

PKCD Co Ltd, the operator of the Phuket Smart Bus service, later issued an emergency statement confirming the incident and assuring the public that safety remains its top priority.

"Phuket Smart Bus Co Ltd operates its business with the highest priority on the safety of passengers, the public, and surrounding property. The company will repair any damage and fully cooperate with relevant authorities in the investigation," the statement said. Eakkapop Thongtub

Biennale prep nearly complete

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Phuket is preparing to unveil the Thailand Biennale, Phuket 2025 – a world-class international contemporary art festival set to transform the island into a living gallery of art and culture from November 2025 to April 2026.

The festival, themed ‘Eternal Kalpa: Rebalancing Art, History and Humanity’, will feature works by 65 artists from 25 countries, including 23 Thai and 42 international creators. The event aims to promote Phuket as an international art city while boosting the province’s creative economy and tourism profile.

At a meeting of the Public Relations Subcommittee for the Thailand Biennale held at Phuket Provincial Hall this week, Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai chaired discussions on preparations and promotion strategies for the event.

Among those in attendance were Phuket Cultural Officer Puangphaka Chaowai, Public Relations Officer Sophon Kiemkarn, and Phuket Journalists Association President Salinee Prab, with Kesorn Kamnerdpetch, Director of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC), joining online from Bangkok.



The meeting reviewed progress toward the festival’s official opening on Nov 29 at Saphan Hin in Phuket Town, which will be presided over by the Prime Minister, joined by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, and the Governor of Phuket.

The opening ceremony will include a contemporary art parade, cultural performances, and introductions by curators and artists, followed by a tour of selected installations.

ON TRACK

Prasop Riangngen, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, said during a recent inspection visit to Phuket that preparations for the Biennale were over 70% complete, with installations and site preparations progressing smoothly.

“The strong cooperation of all sectors – government, private, artistic, and community – has ensured steady progress,” he said. “We are confident that the Thailand Biennale, Phuket 2025 will be a landmark event, enhancing Thailand’s cultural prestige and creative economy.”

The festival is expected to generate in excess of B30 billion in economic circulation and attract at least three million visitors during its five-month run, he added.

ISLANDWIDE

The Biennale will span three districts – Mueang Phuket, Kathu and Thalang – featuring both indoor and outdoor installations and performances. Thirteen exhibition spaces, or ‘pavilions’, will showcase works inspired by the island’s landscapes, history, and communities.

Among the featured venues are:

- 4 Kor Artland Pavilion (“Glom Klao, Kot Fah Hom Din, Kor Sin, Klom Klao Kalpa”) in Kathu
- Yang Won Pavilion by the Gwangju Biennale at Wisit Panwa Pier
- Tua Bang-Ko Jan Pavilion by Atta Studio Co Ltd at Saphan Hin
- “Nuai Rueang Rao” Pavilion by Forum Co Ltd at the Phuket Tai Hua Museum
- Sea Sand Sun Pavilion by Ctrl+R Collective at Nai Harn Beach
- Instant Kalpa(s) by Juan Pablo Garcia Sossa in Phuket Old Town

Plus several others, including the Andaman, Ao Thai, Lanna, Ok Lay, Dragon Force and Pop Form Pop City pavilions.

The festival’s artistic framework will be divided into four conceptual sections: History – rebalancing and revitalising neglected history; Temporal Diversity – promoting equality of time and experience; Transcending – crossing cultural and geographical boundaries; and Love for the Earth – reflecting compassion for all living beings and harmony with nature.

CREATIVE SHOWCASE

Beyond exhibitions, the Thailand

Biennale will feature music, performance art, talks, workshops, and community engagement activities throughout the city. Permanent sculptures and installations will also be created at key sites such as Saphan Hin, leaving a lasting legacy for residents and visitors alike.

Phuket authorities, local organisations, and the private sector have joined forces to prepare venues, beautify public areas, and ensure the island is ready to welcome visitors. Hotels, restaurants, and transport operators are also partnering to support the event.

“Phuket is already recognised as a world-class tourism destination,” Mr Prasop said. “This Biennale will showcase the province as a global art city and reinforce Thailand’s reputation as a hub for creativity and culture.”

The Office of Contemporary Art and Culture is planning a press preview from Nov 28-30, allowing media to explore the exhibition sites ahead of the official opening.

Mr Prasop concluded with an invitation to all: “We welcome artists, students and visitors from around the world to experience art that opens the city, opens the heart, and opens new opportunities for Thailand’s creative economy.”

Patong Tunnel plans head back to EIA

PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAVE met to review the proposed Muang Mai-Koh Kao-Kathu Expressway, emphasising that any future development must comply with strict environmental protection rules.

The 5/2025 meeting of the Working Group for Supervision and Monitoring of Environmental Protection in Phuket’s Environmental Protection Areas was held at 9:30am on Nov 13 at the Phuket Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Office (MNRE Phuket).

The session was chaired by Natthakrit Phonphet, Director of the office, on assignment from Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai.

A key agenda item was the Expressway Authority of Thailand’s plan to develop the Muang Mai-Koh Kao-Kathu Expressway, a route that falls within land designated as an environmentally protected area under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment’s 2024 regulations, said an official report of the meeting.

However, evident from photos at the meeting but not mentioned in the report is that included in the project title was the now revised Patong Tunnel project.

The Expressway Authority has hired a consortium of consultants – MAA Consultants Co Ltd, Asian Engineering Consultants Co Ltd, PSK Consultants Co Ltd, and Pre-Development Consultants Co Ltd – to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project.



The EIA report will be submitted to Phuket Provincial Office for review and comment before any request is made for land-use approval or construction permission.

Officials reviewed the project layout, proposed environmental safeguards, and mitigation measures designed to ensure the expressway meets all regulatory criteria. The discussion focused on maintaining transparency, minimising ecological disruption, and protecting Phuket’s long-term environmental balance.

The working group also addressed other issues related to the management of environmentally protected areas, aiming to strengthen coordination among agencies and uphold the policies of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, said an official report of the meeting.

Further public consultations and provincial reviews are expected as the EIA process continues, the official report noted. *The Phuket News*




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Policy board lifts afternoon ban on the sale of alcohol

THE NATIONAL ALCOHOL Policy Committee last week agreed to scrap the long-standing ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages between 2pm and 5pm, citing the need to boost spending during festive seasons.

The new regulation is expected to take effect 15 days after public consultation, without requiring Cabinet approval.

However, the panel has yet to decide whether to extend drinking hours at entertainment venues.

Speaking after chairing the committee's second meeting at Government House on Nov 13, Deputy Prime Minister Sophon Zarum said the move aimed to stimulate tourism and economic activity during peak tourism periods such as New Year and Songkran.

"The afternoon sales ban was introduced long ago to prevent civil servants from drinking during office hours.

"But that era is over – government officials no longer drink in the afternoon. Today, officials do not go out drinking during



Photo: Bangkok Post

working hours, so the ban should be lifted," said Mr Sophon.

He earlier said Thai authorities would discuss lifting the ban on afternoon alcohol sales after facing heavy criticism from businesses and the public.

Tourism operators had proposed extending closing hours to 4am, but the Ministry of Public Health and medical experts have opposed the idea, citing accident statistics showing a spike in fatalities from 2am to 3am, Mr Sophon said.

The deputy prime minister assigned the panel to continue discussions to reach a compromise.

He also noted that while the Public Health Ministry traditionally promotes alcohol-free campaigns during New Year, such measures must be realistic.

Bangkok Post

Phuket tourist arrivals prove to be resilient

Bangkok Post

A mix of Asian and European markets has helped Phuket outpace the rest of the country in terms of tourism recovery, with arrivals during the first 10 months up year-on-year, while hotels have maintained room rates and occupancy during the current high season.

As of October, the number of tourists flying direct to Phuket tallied 4.16 million, increasing from 4.09mn year-on-year and reaching 97.5% of the total recorded in 2019.

Russia led the top 10 source markets with 832,976 visitors, almost doubling the numbers from India and China in second and third place, which recorded 488,387 and 476,743 arrivals, respectively. Rounding out the top 10 were Australia, the UK, Germany, Malaysia, South Korea, France and Kazakhstan.

The Tourism and Sports Ministry reported on Nov 11 nationwide arrivals as of



A cruise liner sits in Patong Bay earlier this week. The number of tourists arriving in Phuket has reached 97.5% of arrivals in 2019. Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Nov 10 decreased by 7.14% year-on-year to 27.6mn tourists, generating B1.27 trillion, down 4.5%.

The top five markets nationwide were Malaysia with 3.9mn, followed by China (3.8mn), India (2mn), Russia (1.4mn), and South Korea (1.3mn). Sixth through tenth were Japan, the UK, the US, Taiwan and Singapore.

Regionally, the Asia-Pacific market contracted by 13.8% during the first three quarters this year, in sharp contrast to Europe, which recorded 12% growth.

Suksit Suvunditkul, president of the southern chapter of the Thai Hotels Association, said the average occupancy in Phuket last month was 75% with the average room rate standing at 3,049 baht, up from 71% and 2,681 baht, respectively, year-on-year.

In November and December, the average occupancy rate on hand stands at 77%, while the room rate has surged by 50% compared with October, driven by high tourism demand, particularly from long-haul markets.

"The average room rate during this high season is expected to remain stable or experience a slight decrease compared to a very solid record in 2024. However, any reduction would be far less severe than the low season, which saw a significant drop from last year," said Mr Suksit.

He said the Chinese market in Phuket remained weak, aligning with the trend nationwide which saw a sharp fall of 33% in the first three quarters. Direct flights to Phuket from second-tier cities in China were significantly reduced, resulting in a plunge in mass Chinese tour groups, said Mr Suksit.

According to the hotel business operator sentiment index in October, the average occupancy of hotels nationwide closed at 63%, while it is anticipated to reach 67% in November.

Hotels in the South and East of the country are still expected to gain stronger long-haul markets than other parts of the country.

Carabao Group set to produce Tsingtao beer

SET-LISTED CARABAO GROUP Plc is preparing to produce Tsingtao beer as an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) in Thailand.

Sathien Sathientham, chief executive of Carabao Group, said the company has partnered with Tsingtao Brewery and plans to serve as the OEM manufacturer for Tsingtao beer in Thailand, as well as its distributor.

Production is expected to begin in 2026, with Thailand potentially serving as a manufacturing and export base to other countries within Southeast Asia.

The company is also in talks with Tsingtao regarding the distribution of Carabao energy drink products in China, leveraging the Chinese company's strong logistics network.

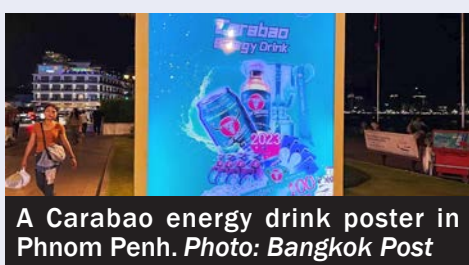
The initial plan is to launch in two to three provinces, one being Shandong, while it is also considering a launch in Yunnan province, where Carabao previously had a market presence.

The move could be a strategic effort to diversify risk and tap into new opportunities.

He said the brand is gaining recognition, partly due to its sponsorship of England's Football League Cup, widely known as the Carabao Cup.

According to its 2024 annual report, international sales accounted for about 27% of the company's total revenue.

Mr Sathien said this year's energy drink sales domestically have been strong, with the company becoming the



A Carabao energy drink poster in Phnom Penh. Photo: Bangkok Post

market leader and capturing around 30% of the market share.

He said the territorial tension between Thailand and Cambodia, which resulted in the closure of the border, had impacted the company, as it has been unable to export its products to Cambodia.

Mr Sathien said this situation has heightened nationalist sentiment in both countries. In Cambodia, he observed influencers criticising stores that sell Thai products.

According to its 2024 annual report, Carabao Group entered into a joint venture with partners in Cambodia.

"To mitigate long-term uncertainties regarding product imports, the company has accelerated its plan to build a manufacturing plant in Cambodia, which is now expected to commence commercial operations by the end of 2025," stated a filing to the SET.

He confirmed the manufacturing plant is proceeding as planned, but the firm must determine an appropriate timeline for production and market launch.

"I hope there will be a solution to this issue," said Mr Sathien. Bangkok Post

Co-pay boon for food delivery giants

GRAB REPORTS RECEIVING MORE than 1 million orders under the 'Khon La Khrueng Plus' ('Half-Half Plus') co-payment scheme, while Line Man Wongnai has recorded 2mn orders.

Users started using this scheme for online food delivery on Nov 7. As of Nov 11, 19.8mn out of 20mn participants in the scheme successfully spent a total of B1.8 billion baht, according to the Finance Ministry.

Of the total, B15.4 billion represented the state's co-payment contribution.

Spending for online food delivery services tallied B486mn during this period, based on information from 900,000 participating food merchants.

Chantsuda Thananitayaudom, country head of Grab Thailand, said the scheme received overwhelming interest from both consumers and food merchants, supported by government subsidies that truly help stimulate spending, especially for food businesses.

This impact is not limited to in-store purchases, but is also clearly reflected in food delivery orders.

Grab recorded over 1mn orders as part of the scheme, while participating merchants saw their sales increase by an average of three times compared to normal periods.

The most popular use was orders for lunch, with the average value of each order ranging from B80-120.

Popular single-dish meals included papaya salad, noodles and fried chicken, while Thai tea was the most popular beverage. The provinces with the highest



Thais have spent B486 million under the Khon La Khrueng Plus scheme for online food delivery services. Photo: Wisuttipong Rodpai / Bangkok Post

usage on delivery platforms were Bangkok, followed by Chon Buri, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima and Chiang Mai.

"In this phase, the number of merchants registering to participate in the programme with Grab has increased by more than 50%, and many small and street food vendors and participating merchants have enjoyed an average sales growth of more than three times, underscoring the success of the government's 'Big Quick Win' policy," Ms Chantsuda said.

Ordering frequency increased significantly, with the number of users placing two or more orders per day rising 2.5 times compared to regular periods. The most popular dishes were somtam, followed by noodles and fried chicken. The top beverages were Thai tea, green tea/matcha and iced cocoa.

"The average hourly earnings of drivers have increased by 13% since the programme began. Likewise, suppliers and distributors of food and beverage ingredients also benefited from increased activity," said Ms Chantsuda. Bangkok Post

US halts Thai trade talks

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The United States has suspended trade negotiations with Thailand after the latter announced it was halting all work on a peace agreement signed with Cambodia last month, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said last Saturday (Nov 15).

Ministry spokesman Nikorndej Balankura said Thailand received notification on Friday night from the Deputy US Trade Representative that the US side was seeking a temporary suspension of talks for a reciprocal trade framework agreement.

Thailand was told that negotiations could resume once it commits to complying with the agreement it signed last month in Kuala Lumpur in the presence of President Donald Trump, said Mr Nikorndej.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul announced earlier that Thailand was suspending participation in the agreement after an incident on Nov 10 in which a landmine blast injured four Thai soldiers in Sa Kaeo province.

"Thailand has consistently affirmed that security and safety issues, especially the bilateral issue between Thailand and Cambodia, must be considered separate from trade issues, which are a bilateral matter of mutual benefit between Thailand and the US," Mr Nikorndej said on Saturday.

The news emerged after President



Anutin and Trump sign the Cambodia and Thailand ceasefire agreement at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on Oct 26. Photo: AFP

Donald Trump held phone calls late Friday with the Thai and Cambodian prime ministers, expressing concern about recent developments in their border dispute.

Trump struck an upbeat note when he addressed reporters onboard Air Force One as he flew to Florida.

"I stopped a war just today through the use of tariffs, the threat of tariffs," Trump said after being asked whether he was referring to Thailand and Cambodia.

"I spoke to the prime ministers of both countries and they're doing great. I think they're going to be fine," he said.

In his conversation with Mr Trump, Prime Minister Anutin stressed that Thailand remains committed to peace, but the Cambodian side must accept the facts and take responsibility for the latest landmine incident, including taking measures to

prevent similar events in the future, Mr Nikorndej said.

"Therefore, moving forward largely depends on Cambodia's stance," he said.

Anutin followed up by calling Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in his capacity as the ASEAN chairman, telling him that landmine clearance is the "core of the agreement" in the Joint Declaration signed with Cambodia.

Mr Anwar subsequently posted on X that Cambodia and Thailand were ready to "continue choosing the space for dialogue and diplomatic efforts as an effective path to resolution".

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said in a Facebook post on Saturday that Phnom Penh would continue to implement the agreement and hoped both sides would continue to work together in accordance with the agreed principles and mechanisms.

House dissolution date confirmed

BANGKOK

PRIME MINISTER'S Office Minister Paradorn Prissanananthakul said on Monday (Nov 17) that the government's timeline for dissolving the House at the end of January remains unchanged, while the government is fully prepared for a no-confidence debate, if held.

Mr Paradorn said it is still unclear whether the opposition will proceed with a no-confidence debate. Regardless, he believes all Cabinet ministers are ready to clarify any issues raised.

"The prime minister has already made clear that the government is ready for parliamentary scrutiny in any form," he said.

He confirmed that during a coalition meeting on Sunday, parties were reassured that the dissolution timeline – agreed upon the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the People's Party – remains intact, with the deadline still set for Jan 31, 2026.

On concerns about



Photo: Bangkok Post

whether the minority government could survive if there is a vote after a no-confidence debate, Mr Paradorn replied: "The prime minister announced on day one that this is a minority government with only around 140 votes. If the House does not support us, we cannot win any major vote, including a no-confidence vote."

He, however, stressed that the administration, which has been in office for only 47 days, has not faced any corruption or misconduct issues.

In response to opposition claims of "grey figures" linked to the government, Mr Paradorn said they are free to raise their concerns in parliament.

Bangkok Post

Aids hospice temple retrieves B10bn of embezzled assets

LOPBURI

POLICE HAVE RETRIEVED ASSETS worth about B10 billion acquired earlier with donations embezzled from the Aids hospice temple, Wat Phrabat Namphu, in Lopburi province.

The recovery effort began in August following the arrest of the temple's former abbot and his aide, Pol Maj Gen Pattanasak Bupasuan, commander of the Crime Suppression Division, told a press conference at the CSD on Nov 13.

Police first began investigating in April after receiving a complaint that donations were being diverted at the temple, which took in large sums from local and international supporters of its well-known work with HIV/Aids patients.

The investigations focused on Alongkot Phoolmook, the former abbot of the temple, and his aide and fund-raiser Seksan "Mor Bee" Sapsubbakul.

Pol Maj Gen Pattanasak said the assets had been retrieved from many people to be returned to the temple as donors originally intended. They included 60 vehicles and land rights documents covering about 7,200 rai (11.5 square kilometres).

Mr Alongkot, formerly known as Luang Phor Alongkot, 65, and Mr



Dozens of land title deeds retrieved for Wat Phrabat Namphu displayed on Nov 13. Photo: Bangkok Post

Seksan, 43, were arrested on Aug 26. The former abbot was charged with temple fund embezzlement, malfeasance by a public official and money-laundering. Mr Seksan was charged with supporting embezzlement by a government official.

Senior monks at temples throughout Thailand are officially considered government officials as they receive a monthly stipend under a centuries-old tradition of royal patronage that continues under public administration today.

During the arrest, police seized two title deeds for land and buildings worth B70 million, three vehicles worth B8mn, B2mn in cash and three luxury bags worth B400,000 from Mr Seksan. Also seized were 21 cheques for B52mn and B500,000 in cash from Mr Alongkot.

Bangkok Post

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Good landing for latest Predator film

David Griffiths

Have you ever had that feeling after watching a movie of being not sure exactly what you thought of it? It doesn't happen very often to me but it has with *Predator: Badlands*. Part of me wants to dislike the film for taking one of the most ferocious creatures of 1980s cinema and making them like a *Star Wars* character, while on the flipside I want to congratulate screenwriter Patrick Aison (*Last Light*) and director Dan Trachtenberg (*Prey*) for giving us such an amazing insight into the culture of the Yautja. Such good insight in fact that you start to wonder whether we were wrong about these 'predators' all along.

The film itself centres around a Yautja named Dek (Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamantangi – *Red, White & Brass*) who is the runt of his family. When he makes the decision to travel to the death planet – Genna – to kill the elusive Kalisk – his brother, Kwei (Michael Homik – *Avatar: The Way of Water*) tries to stop him. Not wanting Dek to embarrass their family, their Father (Reuben de Jong – *Spartacus*) orders Kwei to kill Dek. When Kwei refuses to do so their Father attacks him.

While battling against his father Kwei sets the controls for a ship to take Dek to Genna. As the ship departs Dek becomes horrified to watch his Father deliver the fatal blow to Kwei.

Upon his arrival on Genna Dek soon learns why it is known as the death planet. It seems that there are creatures and even plants that have the ability to kill you around every corner. Dek tries to battle on but ends up finding himself being helped by a damaged synthetic called Thia (Elle Fanning – *Super 8*).

While Dek feels he doesn't need help he ends up taking Thia on the journey to find the Kalisk with him which puts them both on a collision course with



Thia's sister, Tessa (also played by Fanning), who plans on following whatever plans have been given to her by the Weyland-Yutani Corporation.

Insight

The storyline maybe basic but it is creative the way the filmmakers have given the audience more of an insight into the Yautja. The problem here though is that in other aspects the film lacks creativity. While some of the characters feel like they have been given a Disney *Star Wars* makeover more of an issue to me was the fact that some elements of the film felt a little too close to the storyline and aesthetics of the first *Avatar* film.

While I do see the comparison of Bud (Ravi Narayan – *Sweet Tooth*) to some of the characters from *Star Wars* the one thing you can't say is that he is as annoying as Jar Jar Binks – and the twist around his character does make him an important piece to the *Badlands* jigsaw.

Given all that though I still can't say that I hated *Predator: Badlands*. I like the fact that this becomes in a way a villain origins story. The fact that Trachtenberg is creative enough to be able to intro-

duce the 'human' side to a character that any film nerd has been brought up to view as a vicious monster is kind of impressive. Not only do you end up liking Dek you actually end up barracking for him.

The creativity doesn't stop there either. Trachtenberg and Aison have brought together a stunning world in the form of Genna. The dangerous vegetation and creatures bring an air of originality to the film while the look of Genna is captured brilliantly by cinematographer Jeff Cutter (*10 Cloverfield Lane*), whose work makes this a film that you could easily watch over and over.

Also on the positive side of *Predator: Badlands* is the performance of Fanning. She literally has to put in a Jekyll and Hyde performance here as she plays the naïve and kind Thia and also the mean-spirited and ruthless Tessa. Fanning shines playing Thia while her performance even manages to overcome the clichés that litter the character of Tessa and make her truly unlikable.

While you can argue that *Badlands* simply doesn't match the brilliance of *Prey* it does bring a whole new side to the *Predator* universe. The big question now is where does things go from here. Now the Yautja are 'likeable', what happens next time they come across a group of humans?

Still *Badlands* is well worth a watch. It might be predictable at times but it does more than enough to be an enjoyable watch.

Predator: Badlands is currently screening in Phuket and is rated '15'. 3/5 Stars

David Griffiths has been working as a film journalist for over 25 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. He currently hosts a film podcast called *The Popcorn Conspiracy*. He is also a Rotten Tomatoes accredited reviewer and is an alternate judge for the Golden Globes Awards. You can follow him at Facebook: *SubcultureEntertainmentAus*.

The January/February 2026 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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Photos: Azzurra Phuket



A taste of Italy reimaged by the Andaman Sea

ADVERTORIAL

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A dining experience with soul

Azzurra evokes the leisurely charm of southern Italy, where meals are shared and time flows gently. Interiors ad-

orned in sky-blue and sandy tones reflect the calm of coastal living, while the open kitchen flickers with the golden glow of a wood-fired oven. The scent of baking dough and the sight of gelato being scooped add a touch of theatre and nostalgia to the evening.

Guests may relax indoors in cool comfort or choose the al fresco terrace kissed by the sea breeze. For an especially romantic setting, the upper deck offers panoramic views – a perfect vantage point for Phuket's magnificent sunsets, where dining becomes an unhurried ritual.

Signature flavours to savour

Begin your culinary journey with Azzurra's standout selections include Antipasto Misto, Insalata Azzurra, Melanzane Parmigiana, Lasagne alla Bolognese and Gnocchi ai Quattro Formaggi e Pistacchio – a delicate balance of creamy cheeses and pistachio.

Seafood aficionados will relish the Tagliolini al Nero di Seppia e Aragosta and Napoletana Alici Marinate e Stracci-

atella, while Risotto ai Porcini e Tartufo and the 1.3 kg Bistecca alla Fiorentina promise indulgent richness. Finish with the classic Baba al Rum, a dessert full of Neapolitan spirit.

The art of living with a luminous heart

Azzurra encapsulates what Italians call Cuore Luminoso "The Luminous Heart," a reflection of genuine warmth and joy in every detail. More than a restaurant, it celebrates l'arte di vivere – the art of living gracefully. For Italians, to live well is to treasure quality over quantity: the pleasure of fine food and wine, the laughter of good company and moments immersed in beauty, culture and nature.

From sunrise to midnight

Open daily from 6am to midnight, Azzurra welcomes guests from the first light of morning to the last glow of night. Begin with an authentic Italian breakfast – aromatic espresso in traditional moka pot, warm pastries and simple delights made with heart. Re-

turn at sundown for refined coastal dining and nights alive with music and wine.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, the restaurant comes alive with SaporediJazz: an evening where Italian and Sicilian musicians blend soulful rhythms with the elegance of fine vino and cuisine. It is an encounter of sound, flavour and friendship beneath the stars.

At Azzurra, each gathering is a heartfelt reflection of joy – glasses raised, waves murmuring beyond the terrace and the radiant soul of Italy illuminated by the Andaman Sea. Visit Azzurra to rediscover the art of living beautifully, where every flavour, every note and every moment lingers long after the night ends.

Azzurra Restaurant, Angsana Laguna Phuket, 10 Moo. 4 Srisoonthorn Road, Chermg Talay, Amphur Talang, Phuket 83110. For more information call +66 76 358 500 or visit <https://www.angsana.com/thailand/laguna-phuket/dining/azzurra-restaurant>.

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POP QUIZ

- Which sea on Earth has no beaches?
- What was Charles Dickens' last (unfinished) novel?
- Who is the Patron Saint of thieves?
- According to his business card what job did Al Capone do?
- Which country was the first to introduce old age pensions?

Answers below, centre

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Heart

5. Lettuce variety

9. Feel blindly

14. Berry

15. Methane's lack

16. Two-time U.S. Open winner

17. World's smallest republic

19. About-face

20. Neptune, Diana

22. Sleep phenomenon

23. Title ____

24. Greet the day

28. Birthplaces of fungi

29. Easy mark

32. Drive out

33. Sweeping story

34. Authority

35. Bacchus, Ceres

38. Civic group

39. Kind of diagram

40. Indigo-yielding shrubs

41. Lilliputian

42. Chaotic places

43. Sultan of ____

44. Cord fiber

45. Zealot

46. Minerva, Cupid, Pluto

54. U.S. physicist

55. Circus performer

56. Cereal killer

57. Do perfectly

58. Word with ball or possum

59. "A merry heart ____ good like a medicine": Proverbs

60. Knock dead

61. Swing around

Gilpin

13. Coastal raptors

18. In a flippant manner

21. Military mission, slangily

24. Moisten

25. Banish

26. Bicycle part

27. Certain column

28. Vaulted recesses

29. Fabric for a doll?

30. Anoint

31. Zoroastrian

33. Spaniards et al.

34. Restaurant handout

36. Leaf opening

37. Famous Stewart

42. Highest point

43. Actively

44. Slave

45. Water wheel

46. Took off on

47. Member of the arum family

48. Extremely popular

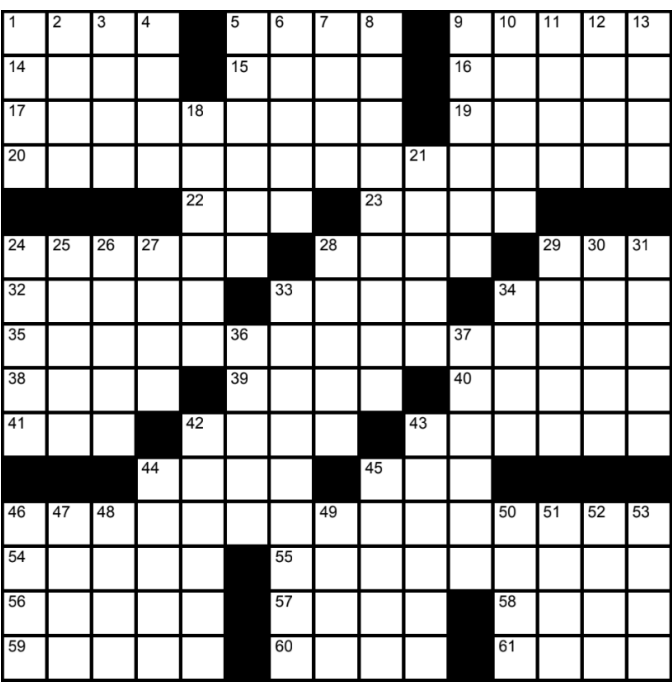
49. Bona fide

50. Skiing mecca

51. River in Germany

52. Birthright seller

53. Eye problem



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:
1) Sargasso Sea; 2) The Mystery of Edwin Drood; 3) St Nicholas;
4) Sell secondhand furniture; 5) Germany

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

A	S	C	I		G	A	L	A	S		T	I	F				
B	O	O	N		A	N	A	L	O	G	I	C	A	L			
B	U	Y	S		A	P	I	G	I	N	A	P	O	K	E		
A	S	P	I	R	E		B	A	S	I	N	E	D				
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S	W	I	Z				D	O	N	E		E	S	S	E		

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1.7

percent of women say they would only date a shorter man, according to a recent survey.

49

percent of women only want to date men who are taller than they are, said the same survey.

96

bags of feces, urine and vomit were left on the Moon by the Apollo missions.

1,000

tons of classified documents are incinerated by the CIA each year to heat water, protect information and reduce waste.

1 million

minutes old is a person when they have lived 19 years and 4 days.

Source: Uberfacts


ISLAND VIEW

Bang Tao sunset. Photo by Lineke van Nederpelt

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

This week in history

Nov 21, 1676
The Danish astronomer Ole Rømer presents the first quantitative measurements of the speed of light.

Nov 22, 1963
U.S. President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas. 

Nov 23, 1991
Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury announces in a statement that he is HIV-positive. He dies the following day.

Nov 24, 1221
Genghis Khan defeats the renegade Khwarazmian prince Jalal al-Din at the Battle of the Indus, completing the Mongol conquest of Central Asia.

Nov 25, 1947
New Zealand ratifies the Statute of Westminster and thus becomes independent of legislative control by the United Kingdom.

Nov 26, 1778
In the Hawaiian Islands, Captain James Cook becomes the first European to visit Maui.

Nov 27, 1978
In San Francisco, city mayor George Moscone and openly gay city supervisor Harvey Milk are assassinated by former supervisor Dan White.

Source: Wikipedia

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The host of the month of November, Vincent Delsol, and his team gave a warm welcome to all Skalleagues and friends of Skål for a great evening at Phuket Pullman Panwa Beach Resort. It was an elegant evening by the sea beginning with the AGM (members only) followed by networking drinks at Edge Beach Club, followed by a Thai Night Market-themed dinner at Aqua Restaurant. Another great evening of celebrating friendship, culture and the vibrant spirit of Thailand. Visit facebook.com/SkalPhuket to get details of next month's dinner.

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Honda LPGA Thailand returns with an increased prize pot

GOLF

THE 19TH EDITION OF the Honda LPGA Thailand next year will feature 72 top LPGA Tour players, competing for an increased total prize fund of US\$1.8 million (approximately B66mn), up from US\$1.7mn.

The event, will take place from Feb 19-22, 2026, at Siam Country Club, Old Course in Pattaya, Chonburi.

“Women’s golf continues to grow in popularity and plays an increasingly important role in promoting gender equality in sports,” said Toshio Kuwahara, president and CEO of Asian Honda Motor Co Ltd, at a press conference on Nov 10.

“As the title sponsor of the Honda LPGA Thailand since 2006, Honda is proud to announce the 19th edition of the tournament in 2026, which will bring together 72 of the world’s top female golfers for an exciting competition in February.”

Winnie Heng, senior vice president and managing director of tournament organiser IMG Services (Thailand) Co Ltd,



Jeeno Thitikul. Photo: Bangkok Post

said: “Earlier this year, we recorded over 50,000 spectators on-site, reaffirming the strong and continuous growth of golf in Thailand and across Asia. There is no better time than now to embrace the sport of golf.”

Before the official field announcement in January 2026, attention is focused on standout Thai and Japanese golfers.

Among Thai players are world No.1 Jeeno Thitikul, Patty Tavatanakit, Ariya Jutanugarn, and Chanettee Wannasaen, while Japanese players such as Miyu Yamashita, Rio Takeda and Mao Saiko have also been in strong form in 2025.

“Whenever I have a break from competing, I like to return to Thailand but it’s even more special to get to play a tournament there,” said Jeeno.

Bangkok Post

Double joy for Thai shuttlers

BADMINTON

Bangkok Post

It was a great day for Thai badminton last Sunday (Nov 16) at the Kumamoto Masters Japan 2025 as Ratchanok Intanon won the women’s singles title while Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran won the mixed doubles.

Ratchanok claimed her second World Tour title of the year after winning the US\$475,000 (B15.2 million) event at the Kumamoto Prefectural Gymnasium, almost 10 months after her first at the Indonesia Masters in January. Both were Super 500 events.

Third seed Ratchanok took 41 minutes to defeat former champion Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia 21-16, 22-20 in the women’s singles final.

The victory was the first-ever title in Japan for Ratchanok and was the 30-year-old Thai star’s eighth World Tour title overall.

Following the victory, Ratchanok moved up one



Dechapol and Supissara celebrate winning match point. Photo: Bangkok Post

spot to No.8 in the world after the new rankings were released by the Badminton World Federation on Monday.

A great day for Thai shuttlers started with Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran retaining their mixed doubles crown, taking home the title they won exactly a year ago.

In a rematch of last year’s mixed doubles final, top seeds Dechapol and Supissara again needed three games to overcome

French second seeds Tom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue, the world No.5 pair.

The Thais prevailed 21-18, 14-21, 21-18 after 69 entertaining minutes to complete back-to-back titles. Their final match-up last year also went the distance.

The Kumamoto title – their fifth of 2025 – means the world No.3 pair have won at all four levels this year, following victories at the Malaysia Open (Super 1000), the Thailand Masters (Super 300), the Singapore

Open and the China Masters (Super 750).

In the men’s singles final, Kodai Naraoka won an all-Japanese clash against Kenta Nishimoto, Korean top seeds Kim Won-Ho and Seo Seung-Jae rallied to beat Hiroki Midorikawa and Kyohei Yamashita in the men’s doubles final, while Malaysia’s Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan defeated Japan’s Rin Iwanaga and Kie Nakanishi in the women’s doubles title.

Thai rookie Ekpharit on top at Taiwan Open

GOLF

THAILAND’S EKPHARIT Wu overcame local hero Hung Chien-yao on the closing stretch of the US\$400,000 (B13 million) Taiwan Glass Taifong Open last Sunday (Nov 16) to win his first title on the Asian Tour in his rookie season by two shots.

The 26-year-old Wu shot a five-under par 67 round at the par-72 Taifong Golf Club, and benefited from a late stumble by Hung (70), who made back-to-back bogeys on the 15th and 16th holes to open the door for Ekpharit, who finished the tournament on 20-under.

The win not only helped Ekpharit jump from 73rd to 28th in the Asian Tour Order of Merit, it also secures him a spot in the US\$5mn PIF Saudi International presented by SoftBank Investment Advisers in Riyadh next week.

Ekpharit started the day one shot behind Hung and



Ekpharit. Photo: Asian Tour

finally caught up with the local star with his fourth birdie of the day on the seventh hole.

The two players were neck and neck before Hung dropped a shot on the par-three 15th and followed it up with another bogey on the par-four 16th from behind a fairway tree.

Hung’s chances depended on how he handled the two par-five finishing holes, but he parred both, leaving the path clear for Ekpharit to advance and triumph.

“It’s so special for me, very emotional. All the hard work that I put in is for moments like these,” said the Thai afterwards. Asian Tour

Thailand revs up for high-octane race

MOTO GP

THAILAND WILL ONCE AGAIN take centre stage in the world of motorsport when it hosts the immensely popular PT Grand Prix of Thailand for the seventh consecutive year next year.

The Feb 27-Mar 1 event at Buriram’s Chang International Circuit will serve as the curtain-raiser for the MotoGP season for the second year running, while a pre-season test will also take place at the same venue on Feb 21-22.

Under the concept “More than a Race”, the 2026 event promises to deliver a turbocharged, action-packed, and immersive fan experience. Thailand aims to deliver the most memorable stop on the MotoGP calendar and is targeting to hit new attendance records.

“Thailand hosting MotoGP for the seventh consecutive year and serving as the season-opening race for the second year in a row, is no coincidence. It is the result of the dedicated efforts of all involved sectors,” said Dr Gongsak Yodmani, Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) during a press conference on Nov 11.

“Thailand aims to give every visitor an authentic taste of Thailand’s charm and leave a lasting impression that stands out from any other circuit in the world.



A digital backdrop showcases that the Grandstand tickets were snapped up within three minutes and 21 seconds of the official launch on Nov 11. Photo: Bangkok Post

“Thai GP is more than just a race, it is a strategic tool that drives the economy through sport tourism, generating both direct and indirect economic value across tourism, hotels, transportation, and supply chains. These tangible benefits demonstrate the impact Thailand has achieved as a MotoGP host,” he added.

Dr Gongsak also confirmed that the government has approved a plan to extend Thailand’s tenure as a host of the MotoGP race from 2027 to 2031 after the end of its current contract next year.

Dorna Sports, the MotoGP rights holder, expressed gratitude to Thailand for their outstanding collaboration and commitment in hosting the race.

“Thailand is recognised as a highly significant market for

MotoGP in the region, with a strong and passionate fan base and great potential to further expand its audience. Thai GP is among the most attended races on the MotoGP calendar, offering fans a world-class experience both on and off the track,” said Amparo Porto, senior director of Dorna Sports.

The Nov 11 event also marked the official launch of ticket sales for the 2026 race with the Grandstand tickets selling out within three minutes and 21 seconds.

Fans can purchase tickets at Counter Service All Ticket in 7-Eleven stores nationwide, or online via the AllTicket website. For more information and updates, fans can follow the Chang Circuit Buri Ram Facebook page or stay connected through Line by adding @changcircuit. Bangkok Post

Stokes bats away doubts, says England Ashes ready

CRICKET

AFP

Captain Ben Stokes has denied that England are unprepared for the Ashes series against Australia after a chorus of criticism led by legends Ian Botham and Geoffrey Boycott.

England's full squad only assembled in Perth last weekend, some coming from a white-ball series in New Zealand where they crashed 3-0, while others arrived in dribs and drabs ahead of the opening Test in Perth today (Nov 21).

In contrast, almost all of Australia's Ashes squad have been playing domestic Sheffield Shield matches around the country.

Boycott wrote in a recent column for British newspaper *The Telegraph* that England's preparations were "madness".

"If they win in Australia it will be in spite of their lack of match practice, not because of it. Match practice would give them a better chance," he said.

Botham last month said a lack of warm-ups against Australian state sides "borders on arrogance" and renewed his criticism last week.

"I think historically, you have to acclimatise when you come down here," he said on Nov 12.



Stokes claims he and his team are ready for the upcoming Test series Down Under. Photo: AFP

"You've got to remember there's 24 million people down here, not 11. And you have to take that on board.

"The ball does seem to get to you quicker (in Perth) and the light's different. There's all kinds of things go into the melting pot."

But Stokes is adamant England are ready for what will be a gruelling five-Test showdown as they bid to win a first series in Australia since 2010-2011.

"I don't really know what we're supposed to do, to be honest," said the talismanic all-rounder, who has not played any cricket since July after a shoulder injury.

"The schedule is pretty jam-packed to be able to sort of prepare the way our teams probably would have done 10-15-20-30 years ago. There's a lot of factors that have changed over the years of cricket.

"We've been preparing for this for a very long time. We put a lot of time and effort into how we prepare for every series, and that hasn't changed with this one.

"So from the 21st of this month, we know that we would have put everything possible that we could have done to be in the right place."

England, who last lifted the Ashes urn at home in 2015, have a terrible recent record in Australia, losing 13 of the last 15 Tests. The other two were drawn.

"They're a phenomenal team, especially in their home, so we know the next two-and-a-half months is going to be tough for us," Stokes said of Australia.

"But I think all the series that have gone past, whether that be in Australia or England, I don't think count for much."

War Elephants start Hudson reign with Singapore win

FOOTBALL

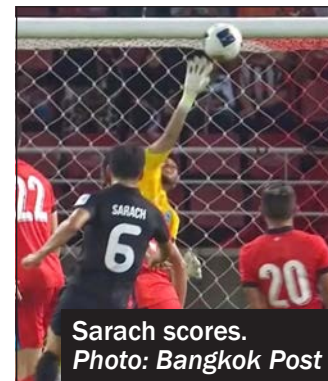
THAILAND SECURED A 3-2 win over Singapore in a friendly football match at Thammasat Stadium in Pathum Thani province on Nov 13 in what was interim head coach Anthony Hudson's first game in charge.

Fans at the 25,000-capacity stadium cheered as the War Elephants started strong, with Sarach Yooyen opening the scoring in the 15th minute. However, Singapore responded quickly with Glen Kweh levelling the score two minutes later.

In the second-half Thailand regained the lead when Theerathon Bunmathan scored in the 47th minute before Seksan Ratree's strike in the 53rd minute sealed the victory for the home side.

Kweh scored his second for the visitors in the 62nd minute, although ultimately it was not enough.

Despite limited preparation, Hudson praised the players' response during training and their determination to beat a strong Singapore side.



Sarach scores. Photo: Bangkok Post

The game also marked the debut of Thai-English forward Jude Soonsup-Bell, who plays for Grimsby Town in English Football League Two.

The 20-year-old, who previously came through the academies of Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, said that the call-up was a proud moment for both himself and his family.

Prior to the match, Hudson said the game was more than a warm-up, insisting that the focus is firmly on winning and building momentum towards Asian Cup qualification. At time of press, Thailand were set to play Sri Lanka in Colombo on Tuesday (Nov 18) in an AFC Asian Cup qualifier.

Bangkok Post

Ford fuels England's belief



THE GLOBAL RUGBY COACH

ENGLAND MIGHT HAVE ENJOYED a rare win against New Zealand last Saturday (Nov 15) but questions still remain about the team.

George Ford scored two drop goals just when England needed to steady the ship in the 33-19 win, but is the team really improving at a fast enough rate?

England has copied the South African model of having a bench equally as strong as the starters. In Henry Pollock, they have an enigma. The 20-year-old is box office, a considerable talent, and while his personality and antics are not to everyone's liking, he's an outstanding player. Watch this space.

Similarly, questions surround the All Blacks. Are they in decline? They certainly are not the force they used to be. Their forwards don't dominate and they lack on and off-field presence.

It was a bad day for the Southern Hemisphere with Ireland easily overwhelming Australia 46-19. Former Aussie greats are seriously questioning the players' attitudes. The Wallabies host the World Cup in 2027 but any more performances like this and they will not get out of the pool stage.

Ireland, however, can rely on two young and talented fly-halves in Prendergast and Crowley and you can



George Ford. Photo: AFP

win a World Cup with outstanding fly-halves.

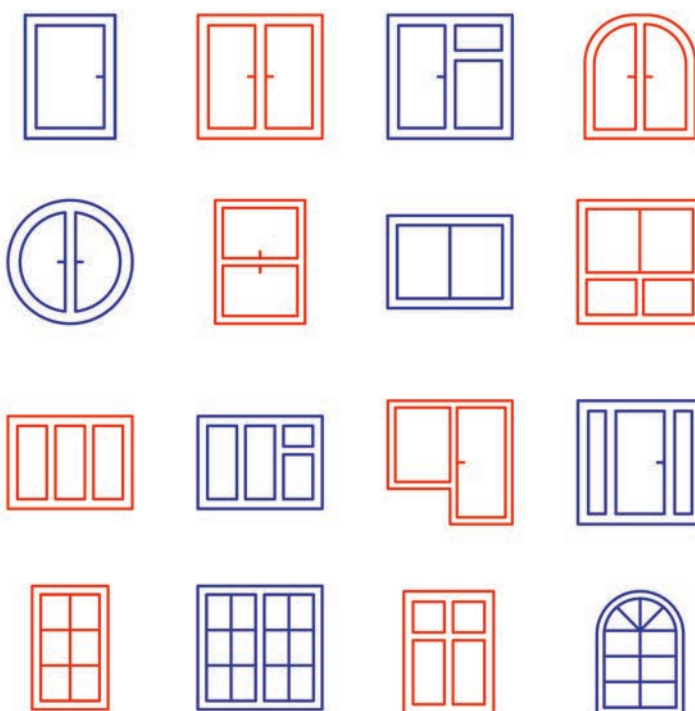
Wales beat Japan 24-23 thanks to a last-minute penalty, while South Africa won a tricky fixture against Italy 32-14 despite having a player sent off. The Springboks are completely unflappable and get on with the job until it is done.

France defeated Fiji 34-21 but were guilty of serious complacency after taking a 21-0 lead before being pegged back to 21-21. Fiji are a 60-minute team and a little ill-disciplined. Play for longer and be less reckless and the big win is just around the corner. France is France. They may explode and play exhilarating rugby at any time.

Leading 21-0, Scotland were cruising to an easy win against Argentina. To lose 24-33 says a lot for Scotland's demise and Argentina's character.



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Badminton trio go big in Japan > p14

ROARING SUCCESS

Thailand Tigers win tense AFL Andaman Cup Final

The victorious Thailand Tigers with their winners medals and the trophy. Photo: Supplied

AFL

Andrew McMillan

The recent 2025 Pacific Cross Health Insurance AFL Andaman Cup delivered one of its most thrilling conclusions yet, with the Thailand Tigers clinching the title in a heart-stopping grand final against the Bali Geckos at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang on Oct 25.

It was a fitting finale to a day of spirited football and tight results. Despite heavy morning rain falling on an already wet ground, the skies cleared after the first game and conditions improved throughout the day.

Four teams – Thailand Tigers, Phuket Power, Bali Geckos and Singapore Sharks battled it out across six hotly-contested preliminary matches before Thailand and Bali emerged to face off in the grand final.

Both finalists fielded small squads of just 10 players, yet their intensity never wavered. In a gripping final, the Tigers came from behind to beat last year's cup holders, the Bali Geckos, 5.0

(30) to 4.3 (27). The win was sealed in the most dramatic fashion possible. Marking the ball seconds before the final siren, Phuket local and Thailand Tigers representative Billy Costoglou calmly slotted a set shot from 25 metres out to deliver the win.

The crowd erupted, celebrating both the Tigers' triumph and the emotional farewell of tournament founder Alan Sutherland, who played his final game in Tigers colours.

A minute's silence was held post-match to honour the passing of Queen Mother Sirikit, whose death the previous evening cast a respectful hush over the closing ceremony.

COMPETITIVE FORCE

While the silverware went to the Tigers, the Phuket Power side earned praise for their determination, teamwork and steady rise as a competitive force in regional AFL. Phuket rolled out 12 debutants, a remarkable statistic that underscored the club's commitment to developing local talent and expanding the game in southern Thailand.

Among the newcomers, Thomas Powell stood out with his speed, clean hands around the contest and composure under pressure, earning him the Best Local Player Award (sponsored by Lady Pie). Meanwhile, Cillian O'Neill impressed coaches with his strength in defence and willingness to compete.

Phuket's inexperience of wet weather AFL was evident during the first game. As conditions improved, only some polish in front of the goals stopped the locals from getting a win. Each game showed greater structure and more cohesive ball movement, laying a foundation for future success. Phuket's results – narrow losses to Thailand (2.2–14 to 3.1–19), Singapore (4.6–30 to 5.1–31) and Bali (0.2–2 to 3.3–21).

Phuket's contribution extended beyond their own squad, with eight local players representing the Thailand Tigers during the tournament. Five of those players took to the field in the grand final where their impact gave Thailand a considerable advantage.

None shone brighter than

Costoglou, the Phuket hotelier whose after-the-siren set shot sealed the Tigers' victory and earned him the Umpires Award (sponsored by Australian Visas Thailand). It was a storybook ending, a local hero delivering a championship moment in front of a home crowd.

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Game 1: Bali Geckos 3.4 (22) def. Singapore Sharks 3.1 (19); **Game 2:** Thailand Tigers 3.1 (19) def. Phuket Power 2.2 (14); **Game 3:** Singapore Sharks 5.1 (31) def. Phuket Power 4.6 (30); **Game 4:** Bali Geckos 4.3 (27) def. Thailand Tigers 3.2 (20); **Game 5:** Bali Geckos 3.3 (21) def. Phuket Power 0.2 (2); **Game 6:** Thailand Tigers 3.5 (23) def. Singapore Sharks 3.1 (19); **Grand Final:** Thailand Tigers 5.0 (30) def. Bali Geckos 4.3 (27)

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

- Best Player of the Tournament: Brodie Grumley (Bali Geckos) – Sponsored by *The Phuket News*
- Best Local Player: Thomas Powell (Phuket Power) – Sponsored by Lady Pie

- Leading Goal Kicker: Gerard Barnes (Thailand Tigers) – Sponsored by NH Boat Lagoon Phuket Resort

- Umpires Award: Billy Costoglou (Phuket Power) – Sponsored by Australian Visas Thailand

This year's Andaman Cup was made possible through the generous support of: Pacific Cross Health Insurance (Naming Rights Sponsor, 5th year running); Lady Pie; NH Boat Lagoon Phuket Resort; Australian Visas Thailand; Thai Expat Club; and *The Phuket News*.

The 2025 Pacific Cross Health Insurance AFL Andaman Cup was more than just a masters AFL tournament, from the first bounce to the final siren, players and supporters alike embraced the spirit of camaraderie that defines AFL in Asia.

For Phuket Power, the journey continues. With a vibrant new squad, strong community backing, and visible year-on-year improvement, their day in the sun feels closer than ever.

And for the Thailand Tigers, it was a day that will live long in Andaman Cup history.

Phuket wrestle back inter-provincial golf title

GOLF

HOME ADVANTAGE certainly came into effect recently as the sixth annual edition of the "Rider Cup Golf Tournament Singha Nuea – Suea Tai" saw team Phuket wrestle the trophy away from their opponents from Chiang Mai.

The good-natured inter-provincial golf tournament takes place each year between amateur teams representing Chiang Rai

(Singha Nuea) and Phuket (Suea Tai) provinces. Teams are made up largely by local officials and government representatives with the host venue oscillating year-on-year.

This year saw the action return to Phuket on Saturday, Nov 8 at the Blue Canyon Country Club where the home team managed to outplay their opponents and secure a trophy that had been held by the team from the northern province for the past two years.

The Phuket team included



Photo: Sports Association of Phuket

Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, head of the Phuket Sports Association and a member of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) board, who was joined by: Pol Col Akanit Danpitaksan, deputy commander of the Phuket Provincial Police who also

serves as president of the Phuket Golf Association; Boonjuan Phanit, assistant judge of the region 8 Court of Appeals; and selected officials.

The Chiang Rai team consisted of: Narasak Sukomboon, Deputy Governor of Chiang Rai Province; Thanukiat Chanchum, Manager of the National Sports Development Fund at the SAT; Rattana Chongsuthanamanee, President of the Chiang Rai Provincial Sports Association; Chan-

yanan Chuesirithaworn, Director of the Chiang Rai SAT; and Somchai Chanpratuang, President of the Chiang Rai Provincial Golf Association.

The annual competition was first held on Jan 8, 2022 to develop good relations between the two provinces while promoting the sports industry in Thailand, explained Pol Col Akanit in his welcome address to participants.

Each year's competition also sees a range of corpor-

ate social responsibility (CSR) themed initiatives take place, with 10 scholarships worth B2,000 each offered to support educational development for children in Phuket this year.

Additional valued support that made this year's event possible came from the Phuket Provincial Sports Association, The Par Phuket Hotel, Burapha Marine and private donors Ms Parichat Wiwattanan, Mr Pakin Rerksamruang.

The Phuket News