

B3BN ROAD MEGAPROJECTS GET CORRUPTION CHECK > PAGE 3

SEX DRIVE



Photo: AFP / file

MOVE TO LEGALISE SEX WORK GETS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT IN PATONG

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Patong's leading figures are unanimous in their support for making sex work legal, saying that the regulation of Phuket's key informal industry will bring greater safety and better health protection for sex workers and customers alike.

"Thailand is renowned for its sex industry, yet the country maintains a hypocritical stance towards it," Weerawit Kreuasombat, President of the Patong Entertainment Business Association (PEBA) told *The Phuket News*.

"Patpong [in Bangkok], Pattaya

and Patong are well known among tourists for the sex industry. Thai government officials and police acknowledge the activities, but choose to keep quiet," Mr Weerawit added. The legalisation of sex work gained momentum last October when former Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin pledged to push to pass three bills, including legalising prostitution by amending the 1996 Act on illegal prostitution suppression and prevention.

The other two laws promised to be introduced were the 'Marriage Equality Law', passed by the Senate on June 18, and a recognition bill to allow transgender people to amend their gender marker in their official

identity documents, yet to be ratified.

Since then, however, discussion on the issue has fallen silent. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who at 37 years old was last Friday (Aug 16) selected as the 31st Prime Minister of Thailand, has yet to announce her policy on the issue of making sex work legal. Ms Paetongtarn was last in Phuket to join the Pride parade in Patong in June.

Mr Weerawit said "legalising sex work made plain sense. In addition to the obvious economic benefit and making sex trade earnings a taxable income, legalising sex work would absolutely bring a positive effect, especially in terms of safety and protection for sex workers and for

customers", he said.

"The world keeps changing and developing, so we need to change. We cannot stay quiet like before. We know Thailand is a Buddhist country but we need to change our perspective toward the future," he added.

If made legal, venues providing sex workers would be regulated and contained to specific areas, Mr Weerawit noted.

"The work and conditions would be open to inspection by a range of government offices providing services, including health checks, and just like the entertainment zones for venues allowed to remain open until 4am, we can make sure that no such venues...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

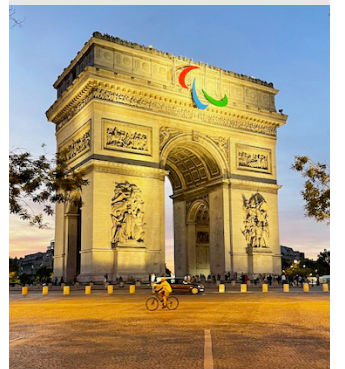
NEWS PAGE 3

Swiss expat
'David' set to
face sentencing



LIFE PAGE 9

Well-travelled
Todd Miller will
always have Paris



SPORT PAGE 16

Muay Thai in
Phuket receives
glowing report



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News



Por Tor festival gets underway > p5

Patong pushes for legal sex work

Continued from page 1

...are near schools or temples,” he explained.

SAFE SEX

Mr Weerwait was adamant that the greatest effect of legalising sex work would be the greater awareness of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and making sure venue operators and sex workers were aware of prevention and treatment options available.

“The PEBA already visits bar owners and operators to call on them to have sex workers receive health checks. If ‘sex work zones’ are created, we can make sure that all sex workers receive free health checks every month,” Mr Weerawit explained.

Patong Mayor Chalernsak Manesri, and his sister Deputy Mayor Lalita, both agreed that health issues were their greatest concern.

Patong Mayor Chalernsak told *The Phuket News*, “I believe legalisation would lead to better control and safety for both sex workers and tourists. It will help track and elevate safety and security and bring more sex workers into the system for proper health checks and protection measures.”

For Deputy Mayor Lalita, curtailing the risk of serious diseases was top priority. “In 2022 there were 5,542 known HIV cases in Phuket, with 714 in Patong. In 2023, that number grew to 5,922 cases in Phuket, with 785 in Patong. This year there are 6,283 known HIV cases in Phuket, with 822 in Patong,” she said.

“Seeing these numbers constantly increasing makes me worry,” Deputy Mayor Lalita added.

Local government health officials are aware of the number of infections, but do not publicly publish them, she noted.



PEBA President Mr Weerawit says legalising sex work will at least put an end to the hypocrisy. Photo: Patong Municipality

Both Mayor Chalernsak and Deputy Mayor Lalita are aware of the issues, including the stigma, lack of access to healthcare, and the challenges sex workers face in seeking help from government services.

“The challenge with sex worker groups is that they often feel uncomfortable or embarrassed seeking help from government agencies and instead prefer support from NGOs,” Deputy Mayor Lalita told *The Phuket News*.

“Additionally, when the Phuket Public Health Office [PPHO] visits areas where sex workers are present, neighbours may become curious and question what’s happening, which can cause further discomfort for the sex workers. Consequently, a sensitive and careful approach is needed to engage with these groups effectively,” she added.

Mayor Chalernsak argued, “The problem is that in the past, disease control was better managed when people worked under stricter bar regulations. Each bar was responsible for controlling diseases and ensuring no infections or viruses were present. Nowadays, sex work is more accessible, and more people can work in the industry freely without oversight

from bar owners.”

ROLE OF NGOS

Deputy Mayor Lalita told *The Phuket News*, “So far, from my observation, sex worker groups prefer NGOs over PPHO or government services. NGOs are more understanding, know how to approach this group, and receive good training and processes. Currently, government service providers are often inexperienced, with a low level of understanding of the issues. They need better training and clear guidelines to effectively serve this community.”

“The government should begin by training their organisational teams and establishing a dedicated department to support and oversee sex workers. It’s essential for the government to understand how and where to access these communities, ensuring the protection of their information while building trust in the system. Instead of waiting for sex workers to come forward, the government should proactively reach out,” she said.

“I think sex workers should be able to access support without intermediaries or fear of judgement. Legalising sex work is important,

but building trust in government services is even more crucial. The government needs to ensure that information is kept safe and secure, protect privacy, and maintain confidentiality in the services provided,” Ms Lalita added.

EXPLOITATION

“I am not worried about people who work directly for the bar owners. Instead, I worry about the number of freelance sex workers who walk on the street and approach the tourists,” Deputy Mayor Lalita said.

“This gap in legal control creates opportunities for exploitation, with some individuals taking advantage of the situation or sex workers themselves seeking to benefit from tourists. Legalising sex work in Thailand could improve regulation, allowing for better tracking and oversight. This would enhance safety and security for both tourists and those using these services,” she added.

“I’m also increasingly concerned about young teenagers entering the sex industry voluntarily, and there are more than in the past,” Ms Lalita said.

Mayor Chalernsak pointed out, “Sex workers are now more accessible and their reasons for entering the industry have changed. Unlike in the past, where financial difficulties or family burdens were common factors, today many sex workers are drawn to the profession by the potential for high income and other benefits.”

Patong Police Chief Chalermchai Hersawat pointed out that his officers were focusing their efforts on protection of minors, as evidenced by the spate of raids and arrests earlier this year that saw the bar owners and operators arrested and fined for having minors working in venues where ‘physical services’

were provided.

The heightened focus followed A special operations team from the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) raiding the Velvet bar off Bangla Rd in March last year where two women were charged with sex trafficking underage prostitutes, the youngest of whom was 15 years old.

WELCOME MOVE

Khun A, a 23-year-old sex worker in the Phunphol area in Phuket Town, welcomed the move of finally becoming legal.

“Legalisation would significantly improve the situation, particularly in terms of healthcare. Currently, I pay B1,000 per month for necessary health checks. Legal status would allow me access to public healthcare comfortably, and ensure regular blood tests and PV exams [pelvic examinations] without the high costs,” she said.

Khun B, a 31-year-old sex worker also in Phunphol agreed. “Legalisation sex worker could reduce rape cases by providing a legal outlet for desires, thus protecting both sex workers and the general public.”

Khun C, a 28-year-old sex worker in Patong, argued “Legalisation would guarantee improved health services and safety measures. In Patong, where I work more independently, the risks are higher. It’s disheartening to enter a government hospital and admit that I work as a sex worker. Legalisation of sex work would ensure these issues are addressed more seriously,” she believes.

All three agreed that being legally able to provide sex services would also be physically much safer. By working for a bar or other venue, better protection from customers would be guaranteed by the venue operator.

B8mn study for ‘New Landmark’ faces scrutiny

A GROUP OF YOUNG council members in Phuket have criticised the allocation of B8 million for a feasibility study to develop a ‘new landmark’ 40-storey high-rise in the heart of Phuket Town.

The group, which goes by the name ‘Kon Noom Team’, held a press conference at the Maimorn resort in Wichit on Aug 13 to discuss key points from the 2025 fiscal year budget proposal for Phuket City Municipality, explained a report by the Phuket branch

of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

The event, led by Pisut Sutjindawong and other council members, raised concerns over the allocation of B8 million for a study to develop a new landmark in the city.

The proposed budget, which aims to study the development of an 11-rai area between Phra Aram Bridge and Montri Road, was criticised as an inefficient use of funds.

The team argued that with the current municipal administration nearing the end of

its term in March 2024, it is uncertain whether a new administration would continue the project.

They suggested postponing the study, citing previous instances where budget allocations for similar studies did not result in tangible benefits.

The proposed landmark includes a 40-storey building on an area of 11.11 rai built under a budget of B3,397,660, with the site featuring a hotel, convention centre, shopping mall, plaza and underground parking for 1,000 cars.

The project’s location with-

in Phuket’s Old Town raises concerns about its compatibility with the area’s heritage preservation regulations. The team also pointed out that the project has not been subjected to public consultation.

Additionally, the team highlighted irregularities in the 2025 budget proposal, including a three-year, B86mn contract for private water management. They claimed the contract violated local government budget procedures and lacked proper council approval.

The team also questioned



Image: Kon Noom Team

the significant increase in various budget categories, particularly those related to water management, which saw a more than 400% increase from the previous year’s budget.

They called for media and public scrutiny of these budget allocations to ensure

transparency and accountability.

The press conference concluded with a call to action for the media and citizens of Phuket to join the team in monitoring the municipality’s budget and expenditures.

The Phuket News

Swiss expat Uhrs Fehr sentencing set for Sept

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The trial of Swiss expat Uhrs Fehr, also reported by Thai media as 'Swiss David', for kicking a woman doctor in front of his rented luxury villa in Pa Khlok in February is currently set to conclude early September.

Fehr, founder of the Green Elephant Sanctuary Park in Cherno Talay, was charged with assault after a formal complaint was filed with police by the doctor, Thandao Chandam.

Dr Thandao, a doctor at Dibuk Hospital, was sitting on steps to Yamu Beach in front of Fehr's rented luxury villa with her friend to watch the full moon on Feb 24 when Fehr approached them and yelled at them to leave. That was when he allegedly kicked Dr Thandao in the back.

Fehr has consistently denied that he kicked Dr Thandao. He instead claims that slipped while approaching her.

A video of the incident circulated online, fuelling



Urs Fehr at a meeting with officials and the Phuket Governor in March. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub / file

anti-foreigner sentiment among many local residents and a protest on the beach in front of the luxury villa estate that Fehr was staying at amid claims that foreigners living there were attempting to claim the area as a "private beach".

It was later reported that Fehr and his wife, Khanuengnit, misunderstood that the pair were intruding into his property. However, officials later confirmed that the steps to the beach were illegally built on seaside public land. The steps were later demolished.

Despite the Immigration Bureau's announcement that it had revoked Fehr's permit to stay in early March, he remains in the country – indeed, still in Phuket – confirmed Anuphong Panarat, Secretary to the Governor of Phuket.

"Mr Fehr is currently involved in a legal process, focusing solely on fighting an assault charge at this time," Mr Anuphong told *The Phuket News*.

"Mr Fehr is still in Thailand, staying at his house in Phuket, as he awaits the court's

sentence and be handed down the necessary sentence on Sept 3," Mr Anupong added.

"Regarding his business in Thailand, I do not believe it is a concern or issue because he is not currently operating any business; he just holds a temporary visa.

"The company has other shareholders, so it is not solely his, and therefore has no impact. He is still allowed to stay in the country to fight the case, and actions are in progress," Mr Anuphong explained.

Dr Thandao told *The Phuket News* that she welcomes an end to the case.

"The only reason David still holds a visa and remains in Thailand is that he stands accused in an ongoing case. However, Sept 3 will be the day his punishment will be finalised," Dr Thandao said.

The Immigration Bureau has granted Fehr a recurring stay of 30 days while he is on bail, with conditions requiring him to live in approved housing, check in with authorities every 15 days, avoid work or illegal activities, and stay in the country, she explained.

Airport holds full-scale aircraft recovery drill

AIRPORTS OF THAILAND (AoT) emergency services personnel at Phuket International Airport conducted a full-scale drill for the recovery of a disabled aircraft early last Saturday (Aug 17).

The drill, held at 1:30am in the airside area aircraft parking areas 31-32, was designed to improve the preparedness and confidence of airport personnel, ensuring the safety and smooth operation of the airport, explained Phuket Airport General Manager Monchai Tanode.

The exercise aimed to ensure that all relevant departments are familiar with and experienced in the procedures outlined for such scenarios, particularly under challenging weather conditions with low visibility, he said.

Director of Airport Operations, Tuanchai Tansuriyawong, provided an overview of the exercise's objectives, emphasising its importance in maintaining passenger safety.

In addition to personnel from airline companies, ground service operators, and other relevant government agencies, also taking part in the exercise were representa-



Photo: Airports of Thailand

tives from the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) and the Office of the Accident and Incident Investigation Committee.

The exercise simulated a real situation in May this year when an aircraft was unable to move off the runway due to a failure in its hydraulic steering system, necessitating the use of a pushback tractor to clear the way.

Emergency personnel at the airport also held an emergency-response drill on July 10, with an exercise simulating an aircraft sliding off the runway.

Under Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) regulations, airports in Thailand must conduct a full-scale emergency plan exercise at least once every two years.

The Phuket News

B3bn road megaprojects get public-sector corruption check

THE PUBLIC SECTOR ANTI-CORRUPTION Commission (PACC) Region 8 team visited Phuket last week to assess corruption risks in two major highway projects managed by the Department of Highways, with a combined budget exceeding B3 billion.

Led by Nattaporn Sittichai, Director of PACC Region 8, the delegation on Aug 15 included representatives from the Phuket Provincial Governance Committee, the Phuket Chamber of Commerce and the Phuket Provincial Community Organisation Network. The inspection team convened at the Phuket Highways Office before inspecting the two significant construction sites.

The projects under scrutiny include the construction of Route 4027, Tha Ruea - Muang Mai (Baan Para - Baan Muang Mai section), which has a budget of B650 million, and the construction of an elevated intersection at the junction of Route 402 (Thepkasattri Rd) and Route 4027 (Tha Ruea Intersection), which includes an underpass beneath the Heroines Monument, with a budget of B2.38bn.

This site visit aligns with the PACC's corruption risk assessment measures for large-scale projects, an initiative aimed at preventing policy corruption in significant government projects, said PACC Region 8 Director Ms Nattaporn.

According to Cabinet resolutions, any project requesting a budget allocation of B500mn or more must undergo a corruption risk assessment, with findings submitted to the Budget Bureau to inform budget decisions.

During the visit, Thaweesak Ruchicharoen-



Photo: PR Phuket

wattana, Director of the Bridge Construction Office, and Somkit Kittisopit of the Phuket Highways Office, provided detailed updates on the projects.

The underpass construction beneath the Heroines Monument is still in the preliminary stages, with the Terms of Reference (TOR) being drafted. This project is expected to take three years to complete, said an official report of the inspection.

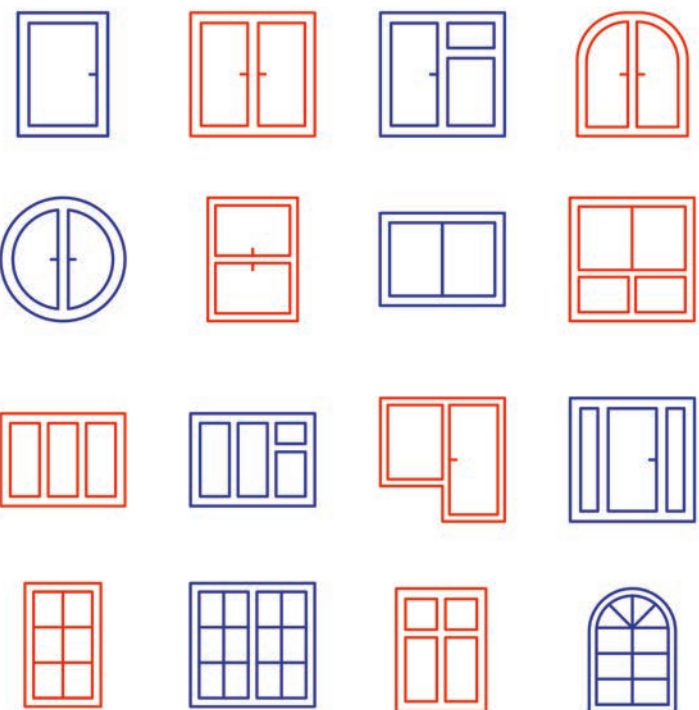
Meanwhile, the Route 4027 construction project has already completed its electronic bidding (e-bidding) process, and a contractor has been selected. The project, which will take approximately two years to complete, is now awaiting final approval, the report noted.

The inspection team emphasised the importance of adhering to laws, regulations and Cabinet resolutions throughout the project's execution.

They also made recommendations to mitigate risks, including facilitating access for disabled individuals to the Heroines Monument during construction and ensuring minimal disruption to public travel, particularly for those using the route to Phuket International Airport. *The Phuket News*



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Wind 11 m/s

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TUE AUGUST 27

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Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

WED AUGUST 28

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Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

THU AUGUST 29

High: +36°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

Photo: Phuket City Police

Man arrested after sex assault at dental clinic

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a 35-year-old man after he invaded a dental clinic in Ratsada and sexually assaulted a female customer last Friday night (Aug 16).

The incident was captured on CCTV and widely shared on social media. The footage shows the man entering the clinic, located in the Baan Kuku area, wearing a black shirt and long pants.

After speaking briefly with two female staff behind the counter, the man suddenly turned and attacked one of the two women sitting waiting for treatment.

The man pinned the woman against the wall and began molesting her., while the female staff and other woman patient waiting for treatment fled for safety.

The disturbing incident lasted less than a minute before a roti vendor from outside ran into the clinic to intervene, causing the assailant to flee.

The CCTV footage, along with a message calling for the immediate apprehension of the suspect, quickly went viral, prompting public outcry. Many netizens expressed their concerns, sharing similar encounters and praising the roti seller for his brave actions.

Officers from the Phuket City Police successfully apprehended the suspect, identified as Phongsak Mad-sakul, within hours.

Phongsak was taken into custody and is now facing charges of committing an obscene act, police confirmed. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Myanmar girl, 15, killed in Kathu street shooting

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A 15-year-old girl was killed in a street shooting near the Si Kor Intersection in Kathu early last Sunday morning (Aug 18).

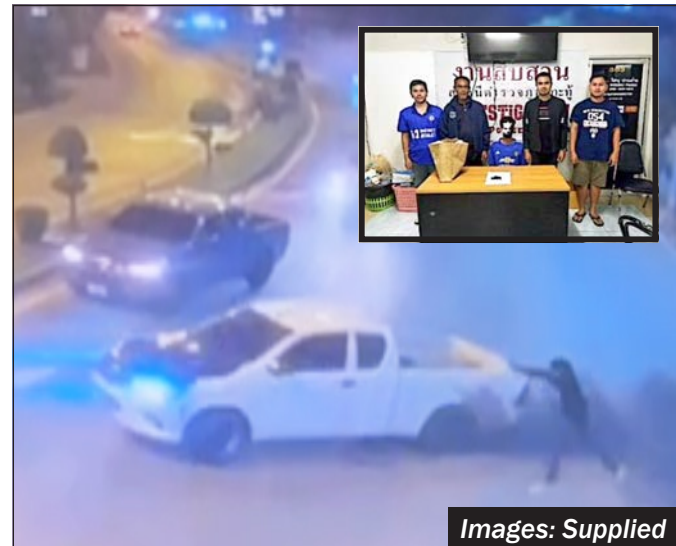
Police were informed of the death by Patong Hospital at 1:30am, where officers arrived to be told that Namphung Peerapap Phusawai, a 15-year-old Myanmar national, had died from gunshot wounds to the head.

An investigation by police reviewed CCTV footage showing the incident occurring just after 1am, with Ms Namphung shot while riding in a white Toyota pickup truck driven by Kittipong Chantawong, 27.

Ms Namphung was sitting on the lap of Nattawut Hemra, 21, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, when she was shot.

The three were driving from Patong towards Phuket Town, police said.

CCTV footage showed that when they reached about 50 metres before the intersection, the pickup truck braked abruptly, and started reversing to engage with a group of



Images: Supplied

youths following behind on motorbikes.

Two of the motorbikes turned off to flee the scene, while another motorbike made its way past the pickup and continued on.

The fourth motorbike, however, saw the pillion passenger jump off the back of the bike only to be struck down by the reversing pickup.

As the pickup truck began pulling away, the youth stood up and pulled out a firearm, and shot at the cab of the pickup.

The shots struck Ms Namphung in the left side of the face and head. She was pro-

nounced dead on arrival at Patong Hospital.

Police reported they had confirmed the identities of the two youths on the motorbike involved in the shooting. The driver was named only as 'Mr A' (a pseudonym) as he is 17 years old, while the shooter was identified as 19-year-old Danusorn Kraithong.

Police reported the firearm used as a short-barreled weapon made to fire shotgun cartridges.

Police later reported that the two teenagers had been taken into custody and were facing charges for murder along with various miscellaneous gun charges.

Two arrested for brutal assault on Kuwaiti tourist in Patong

PATONG POLICE HAVE ARRESTED two men for the assault of a 32-year-old Kuwaiti tourist near Bangla Rd early on Aug 13.

The tourist, Naeaf Al Otajbi, was attacked at the north end of Bangla Rd at 7:18am.

The incident was recorded on CCTV, which showed Mr Otajbi walking along the road when two men suddenly approached and assaulted him.

Mr Otajbi was hit on the head several times before falling to the road only for the assailants to continue the attack by kicking him in the head and on his body.

The video showed one man, wearing a blue vest similar to those worn by motorbike taxi drivers, also stomping on his head.

Patong Police posted a report on Friday (Aug 16) confirming that officers had arrested two men for the attack.

The report did not name the two attackers and included photos that obscured their faces.



Photo: Patong Police

However, the report did confirm that the attackers were motorbike taxi drivers.

According to the report, the men told police that Mr Otajbi was drunk and had somehow offended them, prompting their attack.

Police said they were reaching out to Mr Otajbi to ask him to come to Patong Police Station to file a formal complaint, so that legal action could be taken against the two motorbike taxi drivers.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Locals move to support Russian in need of help

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A Phuket resident has taken to social media to make an impassioned plea for help for a Russian man who is looking to make a fresh start for him and his son after going through a challenging time recently.

Taking to Facebook, Ekawit Suratwadi posted a 1 minute 14 second video clip explaining that his friend, 57-year-old Oleg Magdeev, is desperately looking for work to pay his rent and send his son to school after his Thai wife recently broke up with him.

Mr Ekawit explained that Mr Magdeev had been living in Phuket for several years and had been employed driving a 60-foot boat for four years before the COVID pandemic hit, work dried up and he was forced to sell his house and move to Chainat Province with his wife.

There they built a house on land his wife owned, while also purchasing a car that was registered in his wife's name. The car was on a finance agreement, however his wife



Photo: Screenshot / Supplied to find a job

had not been making the regular payments and the vehicle was consequently confiscated.

After separating from his wife, Mr Magdeev moved back to Phuket with his 5-year-old son although money is a major concern as Mr Magdeev currently has no employment.

He is renting a house in Thalang but has not paid rent since June. Pitying Mr Magdeev's situation, his landlord Khun Kanda had originally reduced the B7,000 per month rent to B4,000 per month but now funds have completely run out. The kind-

hearted landlord has been allowing Mr Magdeev and his son to remain in the property free of charge although Mr Magdeev acknowledges that the situation cannot continue indefinitely.

"I explained to my landlord that I had to rent a motorbike so as to take my son to school which has made paying rent very difficult," Mr Magdeev explained in the video.

"My landlord has been very understanding and kind but the situation is not good and I need work to make money to pay rent and care

for my son."

Mr Ekawit stated in the same video that Mr Magdeev has multiple skills that could be put to effective use for anyone in need. His skill set includes being able to operate and repair boats no greater than 60 feet, although it was disclosed that his licence has currently expired.

Additionally, Mr Magdeev is able to repair electrical appliances such as rice cookers, fans, refrigerators, water pumps and electrical systems.

Mr Ekawit explained he just felt very sorry for the Russian man and his predicament, which is why he wanted to help by making the request for help via the published video.

Initial feedback on Facebook has been positive, with netizens blasting the behaviour and conduct of the child's mother in abandoning her son, while praising Mr Magdeev's attempts to get himself on track so as to take care of the boy.

Anyone looking to help Mr Magdeev can contact him on 090-4858422 or contact his landlord Khun Kanda at 086-4780898.



Photo: PR Phuket

Por Tor festival underway

THE ANNUAL POR TOR Festival, famed for paying homage to the Chinese god Por Tor Kong with traditional red turtle-shaped cakes, got underway with a ceremony held at the Phuket Thai Hua Museum on Krabi Rd in Phuket Town last Friday (Aug 16).

Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas at the event emphasised the importance of the festival in preserving local culture and traditions. He invited residents and tourists alike to take part in the annual cultural celebrations, which this year held through to Sept 2.

"Phuket City Municipality warmly invites everyone to join the Po Tor festival, pay homage to Ong Por Tor Kong, and enjoy the traditional red turtle snacks for good fortune. The event not only celebrates

local culture but also contributes to the enduring legacy of Phuket's rich traditions," Mayor Saroj said.

The festival aims to promote local traditions and stimulate the grassroots economy, offering a unique opportunity to experience the rich heritage of the area, Mayor Saroj said.

He noted that the Por Tor tradition, which involves acts of merit for the spirits of ancestors, is a meaningful way for the community to express gratitude and care. A hallmark of the event are the traditional red turtle-shaped cakes, which are believed to bring good fortune.

This year's festivities will take place at various shrines and communities in and around Phuket Town, and will include parades along the streets of Phuket Town.

The Phuket News

Governor welcomes new Russian Consul General in Phuket

RECENTLY APPOINTED Russian Consul General for Phuket Egor Ivanov made a courtesy call to Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat last week to formally introduce himself on the occasion of assuming his new position after his credentials were accepted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to an official report of the meeting, held on Aug 14, Mr Ivanov thanked Governor Sophon and his team for their work in taking good care of Russian tourists.

Mr Ivanov also made it clear that he was ready to support the work of the Phuket Provincial Office and cooperate with various agencies, said the report.

Present at the meeting were Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum and Pol Lt Col Ekkachai Siri, who heads the Tourist Police regional division responsible for Phuket.

Also present were representatives from Phuket Immigration and the Phuket branch of the Tourism Authority of



Photo: PR Phuket

Thailand (TAT), and other government agencies.

Born in 1975, Mr Ivanov graduated from the Udmurt State University in 1997. He is fluent in English, German and French, notes the Russian Consulate General in Phuket, located at Phuket Boat Lagoon.

He has the diplomatic rank of Advisor, 1st class. After joining the Russian diplomatic service in 1997, he has held various positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and abroad, including serving as Consul at the Consulate General of Russia in New York from 2011-2016.

Mr Ivanov formally took up his post as Consul General of the Russian Federation in Phuket on May 7 this year.

Mr Ivanov replaces Vladimir Sosnov, who served

as Russian Consul General to Phuket for four years, from April 1, 2020 through to April this year.

The Russian Consulate General in Phuket has an area of operations spanning 13 provinces of South Thailand: Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, Ranong, Chumphon, Phatthalung, Satun, Songkhla, Trang, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala.

The Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Phuket can be contacted as follows:

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The Phuket News

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Bank touts B2bn loan campaign

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Islamic Bank of Thailand, also known as iBank, officially opened its new branch in Phuket last week, coinciding with the launch of its new 'SME Business Center for Andaman Region' and B2 billion in funds being made available as loans to local business operators.

The Aug 13 opening of the new iBank branch, on Wirat Hongyok Rd, was presided over by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat, who was joined by Dr Thaweelap Rittapirom, President of the Islamic Bank of Thailand, as well as numerous bank executives, employees, and representatives from both the public and private sectors.

The new branch not only offers banking services but also hosts a newly launched SME Business Center, aimed at providing maximum benefits to the people and entrepreneurs in the Andaman region.

Dr Thaweelap announced that the opening of the new Phuket branch and the launch of the SME Business Center are part of the government's



Photo: PR Phuket

efforts to advance the IGNITE THAILAND strategy.

The initiative aims to provide maximum benefits to the public and entrepreneurs in the Andaman coast region, aligning with the government's vision of transforming Thailand into a global industrial hub.

"This vision, as outlined in the 'IGNITE THAILAND, Unite Hearts, Thailand Must Be One' statement, focuses on driving Thailand's economy towards a sustainable future in sectors such as tourism, healthcare, food, aviation,

transportation, automotive manufacturing, technology, and finance," he said.

iBank is committed to supporting this vision with a target of B2bn in loans under the IGNITE HALAL Credit Program, he added.

"iBank is committed to supporting this strategy by targeting three key industry groups: tourism, medical and health, and agriculture and food hubs. The bank plans to provide financial support totaling B2 billion under this initiative, with B1bn allo-

cated to the Andaman coast and B1bn to the 14 southern provinces combined," Dr Thaweelap explained.

"iBank has allocated over B4.3bn to support SME businesses in Phuket and the 14 southern provinces. The Phuket branch alone has total deposits of B1.524bn and total loans of B1.227bn, with Muslim customers making up 40% of the client base and general customers accounting for 60%," he added.

"Phuket has a significant Muslim population of 95,239,

representing 27.60% of the total [registered resident] population. Approximately 90% of the Muslim community is involved in tourism-related professions, directly or indirectly.

"The service and tourism sector in Phuket has seen continuous growth from January to June 2024... This growth has led to an increase in job opportunities, especially in the hotel industry, and has also driven expansion in the trade and investment sectors," Dr Thaweelap noted.

The government is actively promoting the tourism industry, particularly targeting the global Muslim tourist market, which is known for its high spending power, he said.

"The Department of Tourism has developed the 'Muslim Friendly & Gastronomy Tourism Routes' guide to attract Muslim tourists to Thailand, offering them new travel experiences and stimulating the local economy. This initiative, along with the planned establishment of the Andaman International Health Center in Phuket, is expected to boost tourism and generate income for the region," Dr Thaweelap said.

The IGNITE HALAL credit project is a financing initiative aimed at supporting SMEs in three key business sectors: tourism, food, and medical and health.

The project is designed for Muslim entrepreneurs or businesses with at least 20% Muslim ownership, as well as businesses offering Halal-certified products and services or those operating within the Shariah-compliant framework in the five southern border provinces.

The loans, ranging from B1mn to B5mn, are intended to help businesses expand their operations and improve liquidity.

The financing terms include a maximum repayment period of seven years, with no collateral required, Dr Thaweelap explained.

The Bank of Thailand provides special guarantee coverage for these loans, with the government covering the guarantee fee for up to three years.

Additionally, businesses in the five southern border provinces are eligible for a 50% reduction in instalment payments for the first three months, he concluded.

AirAsia launches Bali-Phuket flights

THE TOURISM AUTHORITY of Thailand (TAT) hosted a special ceremony at Phuket International Airport on Aug 10 to welcome AirAsia's inaugural flight from Denpasar (Bali).

Flight QZ 246 was welcomed with a water cannon salute as it taxied to its gate where arriving passengers were then greeted by officials and representatives from the TAT, Phuket International Airport and the Phuket Tourist Association.

Lertchai Wangtrakuldee, Director of TAT Phuket Office, said, "We are delighted to welcome AirAsia's new direct flight between Bali and Phuket. This reflects the strong demand for outbound travel among Indonesians, thanks to Indonesia's robust economy.

"Their favourite Thai destinations include Phuket with popular activities being Thai food, cultural activities and shopping," he added.

The new service by AirAsia will operate the Denpasar (Bali) – Phuket route with three flights per week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.



Photo: AoT Phuket

The service will be operated with an Airbus A320 aircraft offering 180 seats. The inaugural flight recorded a strong load factor of 88.88%, totalling 160 passengers, reported TAT.

The airline already operates 38 flights per week to Bangkok from Jakarta, Medan and Denpasar (Bali).

These are in addition to 52 flights per week to the Thai capital from the three Indonesian cities operated by Garuda Indonesia, Thai Airways International, Thai Lion Air and Batik Air.

The latest air connection between Bali and Phuket adds to the 78,836 air-seat capacity between Thailand and Indonesia in 2024, representing an 81% rebound compared over the pre-pandemic year of 2019, noted a report by TAT.

From Jan 1 to Aug 9, Thailand recorded 536,720 arrivals from Indonesia. By year-end, the number is expected to reach 800,000 travellers, generating at least B21.46 billion, the report by TAT said.

The Phuket News

Thousands join 'Debt Resolution Fair'

MORE THAN 2,000 DEBTORS seeking mediation attended the '55th Debt Relief Fair', at The Pago Hotel in Ratsada, north of Phuket Town, last week.

The event, titled 'Creating a Path of Fairness', was held by the Ministry of Justice's Department of Rights and Liberties Protection and the Legal Execution Department, in collaboration with the Phuket Provincial Justice Office and various network partners, on Aug 14.

The fair, presided over by Dr Ratchada Chaikupt, Advisor to the Minister of Justice, focused on helping individuals manage various types of debt, including student loans, car hire purchases, government debts, credit card debts, and personal loans.

The mediation process aimed to prevent legal action against those unable to meet payment criteria or adhere to existing instalment plans, Dr Ratchada explained.

In total, 2,834 people attended the event, with 2,214 requesting assistance, Dr Ratchada confirmed.

The total debts under consideration amounted to B370,281,704, she said after the event.



Photo: PR Phuket

Mediation was successful in 2,212 cases, accounting for 99.1% of the total cases heard, she added.

Participants benefited from debt settlement discounts, interest rate reductions, extended repayment periods, and legal or financial advice from experts. The event also emphasised the importance of financial planning and discipline to prevent household debt problems.

Many organisations, including the Student Loan Fund (SLF), Government Savings Bank, Government Housing Bank, Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, Krung Thai Bank, Srisawat Corporation Company Limited and the Provincial Electricity

Authority of Phuket, took part in the mediation efforts.

Legal advice and financial planning awareness were also promoted through public relations exhibitions and advisory services.

At the event, dispute mediation centre signs were handed over to be posted at several police stations across Phuket, including at Cherng Talay, Sakhu, Kamala, Karon, Chalong, Tha Chatchai, Patong, Kathu and Phuket City Police Stations.

Phuket currently has 69 government debt mediators, 71 public sector debt mediators, one government dispute mediation centre and 17 public sector mediation centres, Dr Ratchada noted. The Phuket News

Paetongtarn appointed as new prime minister

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The House of Representatives last Friday (Aug 16) elected Pheu Thai Party leader Paetongtarn 'Ung Ing' Shinawatra as the 31st prime minister of Thailand.

Sorawong Thienthong, the Pheu Thai secretary-general, nominated Ms Paetongtarn as the sole prime ministerial candidate when Parliament President Wan Muhamad Noor Matha began the House meeting at 10am.

A total of 489 of the 493 elected MPs were present with Ms Paetongtarn needing a simple majority of 248 votes. She received 319 votes, while 145 voted against and 27 abstained. Only votes from MPs – not senators – were required to elect the prime minister.

The 37-year-old daughter of former premier and Pheu Thai patriarch Thaksin Shinawatra becomes the youngest prime minister in the country's history. She was formally appointed by His Majesty the



Paetongtarn 'Ung Ing' Shinawatra becomes the youngest prime minister in Thailand's history. Photo: AFP

King on Sunday (Aug 18).

She succeeded Srettha Thavisin, who was dismissed on Aug 14 by the Constitutional Court for an ethical violation for appointing ex-convict Pichit Chuenban as a Cabinet minister. Mr Srettha was in office for less than one year.

Ms Paetongtarn is the third member of the Shinawatra family to hold the position of prime minister after Thaksin and her aunt Yingluck. Thaksin's brother-in-law Somchai Wongsawat also served briefly in the role in 2008. Thaksin and his younger sister Yingluck both fled into exile after military coups against their

government.

Thaksin returned to Thailand in August last year and was sentenced to eight years in prison – later reduced to one year on a royal pardon – for abuse of authority and conflict of interest while in office from 2001-06. He did not spend a single night behind bars and was granted parole after staying for six months at the Police General Hospital.

He was then included in a royal pardon for prisoners when his parole ended last Sunday, two days after his daughter became the country's prime minister.

On Monday, Ms Paetongtarn confirmed that thorough

background checks will be conducted on candidates for Cabinet posts to ensure they meet requirements stipulated by law and avoid any legal wrangling that could land the new government in trouble.

"The qualifications of those who will become Cabinet ministers must be inspected carefully to avoid any mistakes," she said, referring to what happened to her predecessor. Ms Paetongtarn said the Council of State, the government's legal arm, will be asked to check the qualifications of ministerial candidates, but coalition allies should also screen candidates first before submitting the lists of individuals chosen for Cabinet posts.

Ms Paetongtarn said she expected the leaders of the ruling alliance, comprising the Pheu Thai Party and 10 others, to reach an agreement this week on forming the new Cabinet.

According to Thai media reports, she has not promised to retain all Cabinet members appointed by the Srettha government.

End of the line for 'Big Joke'

BANGKOK

ANY HOPE POL GEN Surachate Hakparn might have had of becoming national police chief this year has evaporated with the official announcement in the Royal Gazette of his dismissal from the force.

The high-profile officer known as 'Big Joke' was removed from his position due to a pending investigation of a serious breach of discipline, an order retroactive to Apr 18, the announcement explained.

The dismissal, under Sections 140 and 179 of the Royal Thai Police Act BE 2565, disqualifies Pol Gen Surachate from being considered as a candidate for national police chief.

The current chief, Pol Gen Torsak Sukvimol, will retire on Sept 30.

The dismissal order stems from allegations that Pol Gen Surachate was involved in an online gambling network, into which investigations are continuing. The Police Commission voted 12:0 in June to affirm the order.

Pol Gen Surachate later



Photo: Bangkok Post

filed an appeal with the Police Officers' Merit System Protection Commission. However, the commission on Aug 5 reached a consensus that the order was appropriate and legitimate.

Pol Gen Surachate has one more legal card to play. He has filed a complaint against the order with the Supreme Court, according to Pol Gen Ek Aungsananon, a member of the Police Commission.

If the court rules in Pol Gen Surachate's favour, the dismissal order would be revoked, allowing him to be reinstated as deputy national police chief, said Pol Gen Ek. It is not known when or if the Supreme Court will consider the case.

Bangkok Post

Gold card healthcare at risk of collapse

BANGKOK

HEALTH EXPERTS SAY THE UNIVERSAL healthcare policy, aka the B30 gold card scheme, is unlikely to provide adequate security to every citizen, suggesting the scheme be reformed for financial sustainability in the future.

The populist policy, initiated by the Pheu Thai Party in 2002, aims to provide equality in medical treatment for Thais, especially the poor, without financial concerns with the requirement of a B30 co-payment per visit.

However, that was removed a few years later, allowing cardholders the right to access medical treatment free of charge.

According to a network of hospitals and medical staff, the scheme has caused problems for state-owned hospitals who are now facing increased patient visits, staff shortages and financial deficits.

The group has called on the Ministry of Public Health to take action, saying the universal healthcare scheme is under threat of collapsing.

It highlighted a rise in the costs of medical treatments, an increasing number of patients with more complicated diseases, an increasing number of senior citizens and a declining number of taxpayers in the country.

Academics and medical experts agree this is the right time to reform the scheme to put it on a more financially sustainable footing.

Dr Somsak Tiankao of Khon Kaen



Photo: Bangkok Post

University's Srinagarind Hospital said the hospital runs up about B100 million in losses every year due to a daily overload of patients.

He said the number of patients has increased by 400%, especially after the launch of the scheme's "cancer everywhere" policy.

The annual number of cancer patients at the hospital, which increased from 6,000 to 25,000 in a matter of years, has made it difficult for medical staff to provide proper service to every patient, he said, while many patients reported not receiving treatment in time due to long queues.

He added that many state-owned hospitals are working hard to earn extra money to offset their financial losses, such as establishing special medical clinics for out-patients and opening for public donations.

The Thailand Development Research Institute said recently that Thailand's healthcare expenditure will reach B2.2 trillion by 2032 if there is no plan to promote healthy lifestyles among its people.

Bangkok Post



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Alto hits a high note

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Nestled within The Pavilions Phuket, Alto Italian Restaurant & Cocktail Bar offers a glamorous and authentic Italian dining experience that combines elegance with contemporary touches throughout.

We started our journey at the striking Cocktail Bar, with dramatic lighting and an eclectic mix of dark wood and red elements creating a captivating setting for us to enjoy an expertly prepared pre-dinner beverage, complete with stunning sunset views.

As we transitioned to the restaurant, we were immediately met with a refined ambience. We found the panoramic views of the Andaman Sea and lush tropical mountains absolutely breathtaking, and these were heightened by the open floor-to-ceiling windows surrounding the dining area. The addition of soft background elegant jazz and Italian music further enhanced the traditional yet modern feeling, setting the stage for our evening.

Staff were attentive and knowledgeable, going above and beyond by guiding us through the menu, highlighting traditional dishes and presenting some cherished favourites. Head Chef Pietro, originally from Rome, brings his



expertise to the forefront by adding a personal touch expertly describing his signature dishes to us with passion and authenticity.

After taking on board some recommendations, we began our journey with three appetisers to share. The Carpaccio di Manzo was a true work of art, with thin, tender slices of Wagyu beef topped with Parmigiano Reggiano, wild rocket and meticulously scattered with beautiful edible flowers. This artful presentation was consistent throughout the entire meal and made for an evening of visually stunning and vibrant dishes.

Chef Pietro's recommended Spigola Ripiena alla Siciliana was a delicate

stuffed sea bass with a burst of textures from pine nuts and raisins, accompanied by a refreshing fennel and orange salad. Finally, the Bruschetta Burrata Pomodoro Alici was equally delicious, featuring tidy toasted bruschetta, confit tomatoes and anchovies, all complementing the delicate burrata and served with an artistic balsamic glaze.

For my main course, I opted for the Linguine alla Aragosta, which proved to be a standout dish; presented with homemade linguine pasta and lobster bisque bursting with rich flavours. The Pancia di Maiale Nero, thoughtfully plated pork belly on mashed potatoes with mushrooms and a Chiang Mai

honey sauce, showcased interesting and balanced flavours, once again.

After such a delectable meal we just about had space for something sweet – and thank goodness we did! The desserts were a perfect conclusion and not to be missed. With Chef Pietro's signature Tiramisu offering a modern twist with charming little hidden crunches of chocolate inside; the Profiteroles were yet another edible masterpiece, featuring fluffy choux pastry filled with cream and finished with a light white chocolate sauce.

Our entire evening at Alto Italian Restaurant & Cocktail Bar delivered an exceptional fine dining experience. The combination of exquisite food, the attention of knowledgeable and friendly staff and Chef Pietro's authenticity and passion all resulted in an elegant and memorable evening. Whether for a romantic dinner, a gathering with family or friends, or simply a desire for authentic Italian cuisine, Alto really is an outstanding culinary gem in Phuket.

Alto Italian Restaurant & Cocktail Bar. Open daily 6pm-10pm. Price range: More than B1,200. Best to book a table. Major credit cards accepted. Car park on site. Has smoking area. No entertainment. Free WiFi hotspot. Reservations: 076-317600. Website: AltoPhuket.com. Facebook/Instagram: Alto Italian Restaurant & Cocktail Bar



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From Sceptic to Fan: An odyssey at the Paris Olympics



GLOBETROTTER

Todd Miller

When I first obtained the coveted tickets to the 2024 Paris Olympics, I'll admit I was sceptical. As someone who is allergic to large crowds and mass tourism, the prospect of attending the world's most celebrated sporting spectacle created apprehension. With millions of people converging on a city that has a love-hate reputation with visitors, how could this possibly be fun?

Turns out, at the Olympics, more is merrier. I found unexpected joy in large numbers. I found *bonhomie*, as the French express cheerful friendliness. Bonhomie best describes the spectator experience during this Olympiad. Though the crowds were indeed massive, a sense of togetherness and civility permeated Paris. It was a special mix of Olympic spirit fused with Parisian pixie dust.

The atmosphere was festive, the vibes *superbe*. Inside the arenas, the energy, the passion, and national pride were palpable. Athletes had dedicated their lives to being there. Many spectators were just as appreciative of the privilege to watch the world's best athletes do their thing. Everyone wanted to be right there at that moment, and the resultant spirit was sensational and unforgettable.

There was never a dull moment at the Games, and that's by design. The Paris organisers hired hundreds of 'motivators' to amp up the energy, initiate Mexican waves, raise the decibel levels and keep the party going. Music added to the ambience. The song choices were witty and deft, such as when the Rolling Stone's 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' played after an unsuccessful challenge by Japan in their men's volleyball match against the United States.

I discovered that, whatever the sport, raw world-class talent is a joy to observe. The athleticism on display in Paris inspired admiration and sometimes awe. We witnessed four different disciplines, and chose playoff matches to ensure the highest level of competition. When we bought the tickets, we had zero visibility on who we would see play but were thrilled by the luck of the draw. We witnessed my national team – Team USA – and my partner's team – Taiwan – as well as the home team in action.

Event 1: Men's Singles Tennis Quarterfinals

What could be more sublime than watching the most awarded and accomplished player in tennis history fiercely pursue the one accolade – Olympic gold – he had not yet clinched? Novak Djokovic's backhand battle with Stefanos Tsitsipas, the Greek ranked eighth in the world, took place in the Roland Garros arena, home of the French Open. The crowd was *electric*. So was the tennis.

Event 2: United States vs Japan Men's Volleyball

Volleyball is like synchronised chaos. The athletes leap, spike, and occasionally collide mid-air. It's a fun sport to watch. Especially when thousands of people are screaming for the underdogs (in this event, Japan) to outwit the Americans, who won. We had third-row seats, and the proximity to the entertaining action was worth every Euro.

Event 3: Men's Table Tennis Team Quarterfinals

I've wanted to watch Olympic table tennis since first seeing that ping pong scene in *Forest Gump*. Table tennis, that blend of finesse and caffeinated reflexes, is played like rapid-fire tango. This match between Japan and Taiwan – or 'Chinese Taipei', to be politically accurate in Olympic-speak – consisted of both singles and doubles play. The rallies didn't disappoint as partisan spectators shouted "Jia Yu!" (Go!) in Mandarin. We were fortunate with seats: first row, centre line.

Event 4: Men's Basketball Semifinals

Basketball is France's second-most-popular sport, and the passion of French fans was on full display inside Bercy arena. In the France vs Germany contest, the stakes were high in this intense rivalry between neighbours who share too much history. France played catch-up in the first quarter; tied in the second; and edged ahead in the third. The crowd was boisterous, and I texted a Parisian friend at the time that there would be riots if France didn't win. In the end, the home team prevailed.

The Perk of Paris

Then there's the perk of Paris, whose core city centre was pedestrian friendly during the 19-days of competition. This city of bistros and boulevards seemingly embraced its role as host *extraordinaire*. The Eiffel Tower sported the Olympic rings and the Olympic cauldron took flight each night above the Tuileries Garden.

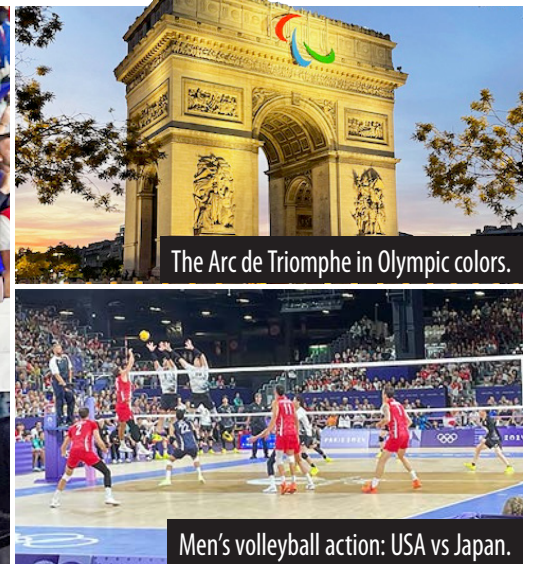
Although I've visited the City of Light on many occasions, it was enjoyable to do the touristy stuff all over again – along with thousands of others who were thinking the same. We saw a cabaret show in Montmartre. marvelled at Monet's Water Lilies. Walked along the Seine. Climbed the Sacre Coeur Basilica. And enjoyed plenty of foie gras and crème brûlée, buoyed by the calories and eternal wisdom from a French friend: *life is short, so eat the éclair*.

Each day it was a treat to be able to enjoy elite athletics, world-class food and drink, and top-tier culture. Which is why I'm looking forward to Los Angeles in 2028.

How we obtained tickets: Tickets to Olympic events are made available in tranches in the months leading up to the competition. It's important to register your interest early by enrolling in the mailing list and "lottery". The



French passion at the mens basketball semifinal against Germany.



The Arc de Triomphe in Olympic colors.



Men's volleyball action: USA vs Japan.

lottery is the right to purchase tickets at face value in advance of the public. We entered the lottery about 18 months before the Olympiad began and received notification of our successful application three months later.

Once notified of the successful lottery outcome, we had 72 hours to purchase tickets, with the requirement to buy tickets in at least three different events. Unfortunately, in our case, the 72-hour window coincided with a safari in South Africa where we had limited internet connectivity. Despite the technical challenge we managed to purchase tickets for the above four events. We selected these games based on several factors, including scheduling, personal interest, the availability of good seats, and pricing. Ticket costs vary by game and seat category. On average we paid about €300 for each ticket.

Essential information: Thai Airways offers a one-connection service to Paris-CDG from Phuket. In Paris the games

took place at various venues that were easily accessed by public transport. The organisers advised arriving at least 90 minutes in advance, but that wasn't necessary except for the basketball game.

Tickets were distributed and accessed through a dedicated app, and the technology (surprisingly!) worked. The French security presence was highly visible across the city. The security checks to enter the arenas were efficient and courteous, and I found entering museums such as l'Orangerie to be generally stricter than entering the competition venues.

Adventurer and author Todd Miller has explored more than 100 countries on all continents. His Amazon bestseller 'ENRICH: Create Wealth in Time, Money, and Meaning', was lauded by Forbes, USA Today, Entrepreneur, and other global media. He resides at Natai Beach. Visit www.enrich101.com



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

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POP QUIZ

1. Who currently holds football's highest individual prize, the Ballon d'Or?

2. What is a single strand of spaghetti is called?

3. Which UK city earned its famous nickname 'Auld Reekie', for smoke emitted by coal and wood burnt in the city?

4. Which two countries joined the European Union in 1985?

5. In 1975, Japan's Junko Tabei became the first woman to achieve what?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Gangster's blade

5. Choir part

9. Investment

14. Topological shapes

15. Certain vendor

17. Rivers

19. Craving

20. Underside

21. Piles

22. Whimsical

23. Go (for)

25. Get sidetracked

28. Bombast

31. Wedding helper

35. Unwrinkle

36. Equivocate

38. Latish lunchtime

39. Rivers

42. Secreted

43. Soldier's knapsack

44. Corner

45. Incline

47. Chart maker

48. Dawns

49. Difficulty

51. Tonic's partner

52. Commendation

55. Get

59. Certain refrigerant

62. Rivers

65. Determines one's

relative position

66. Public assemblies

67. Eggs on

68. Like Santa's cheeks

69. Big tournament

Down

1. "Don't move!"

2. Web page

3. Neighbor of Pakistan

4. Namely

5. Bother

6. Extended

7. Blockhead

8. 1952 Olympics site

9. D.C. politico, for short

10. Corrupts

11. Pond organism

12. Hoard

13. Blows it

16. Expo presentation

18. Do as directed

22. Phyllis Diller's "husband"

24. Feline vibrato?

25. Suspires

26. Follow

27. Sonata section

28. Country's Brooks

29. It might be airtight

30. Brown ermine

32. Accept

33. ____ a high note

34. Stinks

36. Last Greek consonant

37. Bloke

40. Squeezed

41. By and by

46. Analyzed

48. Subcompact

50. Brewer's equipment

51. Itinerant

52. E.P.A. concern

53. Novice: var.

54. Three oceans touch it

56. Defunct ruler

57. Former Yugoslav leader

58. Lummoxes

59. Clip

60. Charge

61. Extended family

63. Powers that be

64. Blinking light, maybe

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15				16					
17					18									
19					20					21				
				22					23	24				
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				49		50				51				
52	53	54			55	56	57	58				59	60	61
62				63							64			
65											66			
67						68					69			

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

McDonald's hamburger can contain meat from 100 different cows.

18

percent, nearly one in five, of mothers in the UK regret the name she picked for her child, according to a UK survey.

1,200

times deadlier than cyanide is the poison found in pufferfish, which is served as the popular Japanese cuisine Fugu.

12,800

pounds is the estimated maximum bite force of a Tyrannosaurus rex. Humans have a bite force of about 200 pounds.

24,140

kilometres is how far Marco Polo travelled by land and sea over his 24 years of journeying.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Palai Pier sunrise. Photo by Sutharat Khaodee

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

This week in history

Aug 23, 1382

The Golden Horde led by Tokhtamysh lays siege to the capital of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Prince Dmitry Donskoy abandons his capital and flees north. The city falls.

Aug 24, 2023

Japan officially begins discharging treated radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the Pacific Ocean, sparking international concerns

Aug 25, 1823

American fur trapper Hugh Glass is mauled by a grizzly bear while on an expedition in South Dakota, inspiring many tales of his survival, including major films such as 'The Revenant'.

Aug 26, 1942

The Holocaust in Ukraine: At Chortkiv, the Ukrainian police and German Schutz-

Aug 27, 1883

Four enormous explosions destroy the island of Krakatoa and cause years of climate change.

Aug 28, 1898

American pharmacist Caleb Bradham's beverage 'Brad's Drink' is renamed 'Pepsi-Cola'.

Aug 29, 1997

Netflix is launched as an internet DVD rental service.



Bradham's Pharmacy.

polizei deport 2,000 Jews to Belzec extermination camp. Five hundred of the sick and children are murdered on the spot. This continued until the next day.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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FRI 23 AUG

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18:00 - 21:00 hrs.
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BDO THB for AustCham members, Corporate members, and Australian Alumni Members. 1,200 THB for non-members.

AustCham Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners

AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, AMCHAM, BCCT, Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber, CanCham Thailand, FTCC, GTCC, NTCC, Phuket Chamber of Commerce, TICC and Thai-Swedish Chamber, Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners. This event is scheduled to take place on Friday 23 August 2024, 18.00 - 21.00 hrs., at nH Boat Lagoon Phuket Resort. Get to know and learn from our corporate sponsor BDO in Thailand, an accounting advisory firm that provides comprehensive audit and assurance, advisory, tax and legal, and business services and outsourcing to small and large companies in Thailand and beyond. THB 650 members, THB 1,200 non members. office@austchamthailand.com

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FRI 6 SEP



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Wednesday BBQ Night

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Sausages, Fish, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet and veggies, Choice of potatoes, cold and hot sauces, bread, buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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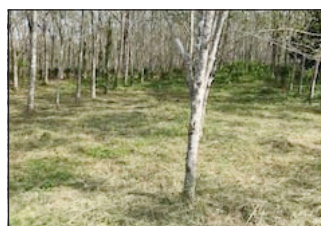
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AUGUST SKAL INTERNATIONAL PHUKET DINNER AT INFUSE RESTAURANT

The host of the Aug 15 dinner, Jo De Hondt and the team of Diamond Resort Phuket in Bang Tao, extended a warm welcome to all Skalleagues for a wonderful event at the Infuse Restaurant that was filled with camaraderie and culinary delights. Infuse Restaurant opened its doors in 2018 under the leadership of Executive Chef Rieno Huyghebaert, a Belgian native. Chef Rieno has since crafted a comfort food style cuisine with distinct Belgian influences. For more information on Skal International Phuket visit facebook.com/SkalPhuket





Photo: Bangkok Post

Olympic stars on parade

OLYMPICS

FANS CHEERED FOR Thailand's Olympic heroes during a celebratory parade along Bangkok's streets last Friday (Aug 16) following their impressive campaign at the recent Games in Paris.

The Thai contingent brought home six medals: gold for Panipak Wongpatanakit in taekwondo; silver for Kunlavut Vitidsarn in badminton and Theerapong Silachai and Weeraphon Wichuma in weightlifting; and bronze for Surodchana Khambao in weightlifting and Janjaem Suwannapheng in boxing.

The parade, organised by the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) and the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), saw the six athletes and their coaches travel through Bangkok's main areas on an open-top bus before heading to Government House.

With their medals hanging

proudly around their necks, the six athletes flashed wide smiles to the adoring crowd, who waved national flags along the streets and took photos of their heroes with their mobile phones and cameras.

Their successful Paris campaign earned the six athletes a total of B65.9 million in cash bonuses from the NSDF and the SAT.

They also earned cash and gift pledges from private companies.

An Olympic gold medallist is entitled to receive B12mn from the NSDF, a silver medallist B7.2mn and a bronze medallist B4.8mn.

They also receive a monthly salary of B12,000, B10,000 and B8,000 respectively for a total of 20 years.

The 33rd Olympic Games in Paris were held from July 26 to Aug 11. Thailand had 51 athletes participating in the competition, and finished 44th out of 206 participating countries. *Bangkok Post*

Thailand loses major event

ALL SPORTS

Bangkok Post

The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) confirmed on Monday (Aug 19) that the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games (AIMAG), scheduled to be held in Bangkok and Chonburi from Nov 21-30, have been cancelled.

Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) Governor Dr Gongsak Yodman told the media that the government's sport controlling arm had received an "urgent" email from the OCA stating that the multisport event had been scrapped.

The OCA cited the non-availability of funds to stage the Games and the shortage of time before the start of the tournament as the reasons for the cancellation of the event.

"That's how things are at the moment, but the OCA has left the door open for Thailand to stage the same event in the future," added Gongsak.

The OCA email arrived at a time when the SAT was a having meeting to discuss the budget for the Games at its headquarters in Hua Mark on Monday evening.

A report published on the OCA website on Monday said that the Games "organising committee was unable to satisfy the criteria requested in the Host City Contract by the latest deadline of Monday, August 19, 2024 17:00 [hours] Bangkok time".

The report added that decision was



Performers take part in the opening ceremony of the Asian Martial Arts Games in Bangkok in 2009. Photo: Bangkok Post

taken following the progress report presented to the 43rd OCA General Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 11, 2024 by the AIMAG Organising Committee, which promised that all Games requirements will be ready by July 2024.

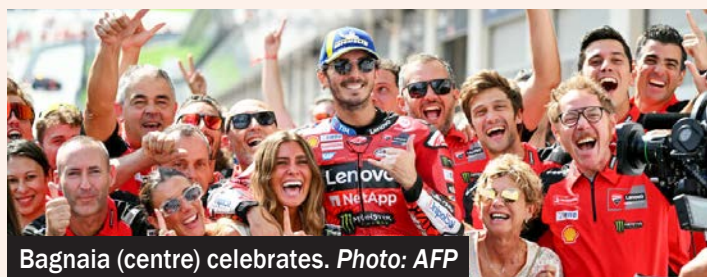
It was unanimously agreed during an OCA executive board emergency meeting on Aug 15 to cancel the event unless the organisers satisfied nine conditions needed to guarantee the hosting of the Games by Monday evening (Thai time). "The OCA had no choice but to cancel the event," the report said.

The OCA Executive Board also unanimously agreed that if Thailand wished to host the tournament after the

next edition in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2026, it could apply as per normal procedure to the OCA.

The sixth edition of the Games was re-scheduled to Nov 21-30 after being postponed several times due to the COVID pandemic and then a change of government in Thailand.

Claims the government was short of funds to host the AIMAG were first made by Chaiyapak Siriwat, a vice-president of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand in his capacity as the head of the AIMAG organising committee, last week. He had also claimed that the Thai decision to chop 14 sports three months before the Games had caused a stir in the Asian sports fraternity.



Bagnaia (centre) celebrates. Photo: AFP

Bagnaia takes overall lead after Austria win

MOTO GP

DOUBLE WORLD CHAMPION Francesco Bagnaia won a third successive Austrian MotoGP to complete a dream sprint-race weekend double and take the outright lead in the world championship last Sunday (Aug 18).

Jorge Martin, who went into the weekend atop the riders' standings, had to settle for second with Enea Bastianini completing the podium at the Red Bull Ring circuit.

This was the Turin-born Bagnaia's seventh race success of the season to match his tally from last season with still nine races remaining.

That is a sobering thought for Martin who has a better sprint record than Bagnaia but when it comes to the main event it is Bagnaia who invariably

comes out on top.

"Our pace was incredible," said the race winner.

"I knew over the last laps anything could happen so I'm very happy to win three times here," he added, referring to the circuit that is KTM's home but Ducati's back yard with the Italian team winning here in eight of the past nine years.

Martin said: "I would have preferred a better start, but we were super close. Second was not what I expected."

Martin will be left scratching his head as to just what he needs to do to foil Bagnaia getting his hands on a third straight world title come the final race of the season in Valencia in November.

Next up though is the Aragon MotoGP in Spain in a week's time which returns to the MotoGP calendar after a one-year absence. *AFP*

All Blacks silence doubters with Pumas win



THE GLOBAL RUGBY COACH

NEW ZEALAND HAVE NOW gone a staggering 50 consecutive at Eden Park in Auckland without a loss.

Last Saturday's (Aug 17) emphatic 42-10 win against Argentina showcased the full range of the All Blacks' attacking and defensive skills, with team mobility ensuring support numbers in attack and defence. Former All Black John Kirwin described the performance as a blend of improved attitude and accuracy.

Quite simply, Los Pumas could not cope with sustained All Black pressure and a high skill level, as the basics deserted them and they self-destructed. Despite many of the Argentinians currently plying their trade at Top 14 clubs in France, their coach Felipe Contepomi must have been pulling his hair out at the way in which his team capitulated.

Elsewhere, the woeful Wallabies continue to frustrate and annoy supporters following their 12-30 loss to South Africa in Brisbane. In over 160 minutes of rugby against the Springboks they have scored only one try. Once a creative team boasting varied attacking skills, the Wallabies have sunk to a level where supporters cannot name the team and poor basic skills permeate every performance.

Even a pre-match monsoon couldn't help. Is there any light at the end of



The Springboks came out on top again against Australia last Saturday (Aug 17). Photo: AFP

the tunnel for Australia? Jorgensen and Lynagh will no doubt be the back line stars of the future but question marks against some selections, such as White at scrum half, seemingly defy logic! His lack of discipline has always been an issue, evident last Saturday when it contributed to one of the Springboks' tries.

The Wallabies and the All Blacks will be further tested when they travel to Argentina and South Africa respectively for back-to-back series next month. Australia needs to win both games to establish a degree of respect. Then there is the two-match Bledisloe Cup series against the All Blacks on Sept 21 and 28.

Closer to home, rugby is thriving in Thailand. In Chiang Mai there is a blossoming league that sees a full program of matches each Saturday, with the Lanna rugby club launching

their first youth rugby program for the under-12 to under-16 age groups last weekend. It will be no surprise to see local senior side The Cobras launch a youth competition to run alongside the hugely successful 11s tournament based there soon. Chiang Mai is a great place to take your junior teams on a short tour, and is still waiting for the first girls team to visit.

For more information about both the youth league and the 11s tournament, please contact Pat Cotter at pat@11srugby.com.

The Global Rugby Coach, Mike Penistone, is a globally renowned professional rugby coach based in Phuket who is also an ambassador for the Asia Center Foundation, a charity for disadvantaged children. For more information visit: www.rugbycoachingconsultancy.com.

Big guns make statements of intent

FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester City picked up where they left off last season with a 2-0 win at Chelsea to begin their title defence, with Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United also off to winning starts as the Premier League returned to action last weekend.

Liverpool fans spent much of the summer mourning the departure of manager Jurgen Klopp, but there was a familiar sight for the Reds as Mohamed Salah struck in a 2-0 win at Ipswich on Saturday (Aug 17), his ninth goal on the opening weekend of the season setting a Premier League record.

Salah also teed up the visitors' opener for Diogo Jota to bring up 300 goal involvements (212 goals, 88 assists) in 350 Liverpool games.

As Liverpool adjust to life under new boss Arne Slot, the 31-year-old's consistency could be key during a period of transition.

However, questions remain though over what Salah's future holds with less than a year left to run on his current contract.



Mohamed Salah set a new Premier League record by scoring his ninth goal on the opening weekend of the season in Liverpool's 2-0 win at Ipswich Town last Saturday (Aug 17). Photo: AFP

GRUELLING CAMPAIGN

At The Emirates, Bukayo Saka shone for Arsenal as he made one goal for Kai Havertz and then blasted in a superb second to get the Gunners' title challenge off to a winning start against Wolves.

Mikel Arteta's team selection suggested a statement of his desperation to dethrone City after finishing second in

each of the past two seasons.

Along with Saka, Declan Rice, William Saliba and Havertz all started despite a lack of pre-season minutes due to their involvement in the latter stages of the Euros.

By contrast, Man City boss Pep Guardiola gave all of his players at least four weeks off to prepare for a gruelling campaign ahead.

That extra rest could prove critical come the spring, but Arteta knows Arsenal need a fast start with a difficult run of fixtures to come.

City began their title defence with a 2-0 win at Chelsea on Sunday thanks to goals from Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic.

Among the over 50 players on Chelsea's books are seven

goalkeepers, with an eighth set to join in Belgian teenager Mike Penders before the end of the month.

Yet, the Blues still lack an outstanding number one, highlighted when Kovacic's long range strike slipped through the grasp of Robert Sanchez to seal the victory at Stamford Bridge.

Maintaining harmony among such a bloated squad will no doubt prove a challenge for new manager Enzo Maresca, something exposed by Raheem Sterling's camp issuing a public statement questioning his future after the England international was left out on Sunday.

INSTANT HERO

Manchester United got off to a winning start in the season's opening game last Friday (Aug 16) with £36 million (£1.6 billion) debutant Joshua Zirkzee becoming an instant Old Trafford hero as he scored an 87th minute winner against Fulham.

Elsewhere, Aston Villa won 2-1 at West Ham thanks to goals from another debutant Amadou Onana and a late Jhon Duran strike, while Joelinton's strike was enough to secure Newcastle a 1-0 win against Southampton despite

the Magpies playing with 10 men for two thirds of the match after Fabian Schar was sent off.

Brighton's 31-year-old manager Fabian Hurzeler started his Premier League career with an hugely impressive 3-0 win at Everton, with Danny Welbeck, Kaoru Mitoma and Simon Adingra on the scoresheet, in what is the Toffees' last season at Goodison Park.

In the weekend's other games Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth shared a 1-1 draw, while Brentford defeated Crystal Palace 2-1.

On Monday, the evergreen Jamie Vardy celebrated his and Leicester City's return to the top-flight with a 57th minute equaliser to secure a 1-1 draw against Tottenham Hotspur.

Spurs had taken a first-half lead through Pedro Porro but struggled against the pace and energy of the Foxes before 37-year-old Vardy deservedly scored the leveller.

Vardy scored 136 goals in 307 appearances during his first spell in the Premier League with Leicester and stayed with club following relegation to help them bounce back to the top-flight at the first time of asking.

Team Phuket head to National Games regional qualifiers

ALL SPORTS

PHUKET'S ATHLETES, COACHES AND officials were given a rousing send off last week ahead of the regional National Games and National Disabled Games qualifiers.

Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, President of the Sports Association of Phuket joined Damrong Chaisena, Director of the Phuket office of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), and Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) at an official ceremony at Baan Talad Nuea PPAO School on Aug 13 to address the athletes ahead of the competition.

The Region 4 section of the 49th National Games and 39th National Disabled Games are taking place in Trang province from Aug 17-27 and Aug 24-29, respectively.

A total of 428 people from team Phuket will be involved in the National Games event, made up of 198 male athletes, 144 female athletes and 86 coaches and officials.

There will be 30 sports contested, including fencing, wushu, men's indoor volleyball, sailing, athletics, futsal, karate-do, indoor handball, beach volleyball, rugby, table tennis, Go, bridge, gymnastics, extreme tennis, e-sports, swimming, jiu-jitsu, golf, basketball, cycling, badminton, football, petanque, amateur Thai boxing, snooker, Taekwondo and amateur boxing.



Photo: The Sports Association of Phuket

For the National Disabled Games, Phuket is sending a team of 49 people in total, consisting of 19 male athletes, 14 female athletes and 10 coaches and officials. There was no mention of the sports being contested at the National Disabled Games.

The events serve as southern region qualifiers for the 49th National Games (Dec 9-19, 2024) and the National Disabled Games (Jan 15-21, 2025), both to be held in Chanthaburi Province.

The Sports Association of Phuket received a budget of B935,7000 from the SAT's National Sports Development Fund, Sports Authority of Thailand to support the athletes and their teams at both events, Mr Thammarat confirmed at the Aug 13 ceremony.

Mr Rewat delivered a speech wishing all the very best of luck to all athletes and their supporting teams, hoping that they would do themselves and Phuket proud by performing to the best of their ability while adhering to the highest standards of sporting professionalism and fair play at all times. *The Phuket News*



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Sport



Return of the Premier League > p15

PACKING A PUNCH



Phuket's Muay Thai gyms praised

Members and staff at the Sinbee Muay Thai Phuket Camp during the visit of national sports advisor Paitoon Chutimakornkul on Aug 10. Photo: Sports Association of Phuket.

MUAY THAI

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket's Muay Thai boxing camps have been lauded for showcasing Thailand's internationally-recognised soft power, attracting long stays by visitors and distributing income.

Former Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin delivered praise after his national sports advisor was afforded an up-close-and-personal tour of one of the island's most renowned Muay Thai gyms.

Paitoon Chutimakornkul serves as direct advisor to the PM and the national subcommittee on the development of the sports industry in Thailand and was in Phuket as part of the delegation joining Mr Srettha's visit to the province on Aug 8.

The national sport of Muay Thai is considered a fundamental aspect

of the soft power strategy the current government has adopted to promote Thailand to the world as part of ongoing efforts to increase the tourism industry.

Mr Paitoon was given a tour of the Sinbee Muay Thai Phuket Camp in Rawai by the gym's executive manager Somchai Bilmad on Aug 10.

Joining Mr Paitoon on the tour was Thammarat Wongcharoenyos, President of the Sports Association of Phuket and Damrong Chaisena, Director of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) Phuket office.

Located in Soi Saiyuan 9, Rawai, the Simbee Muay Thai gym has been operating for 18 years and is fully certified by the National Boxing Commission, the SAT and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

The gym holds extra special regard due to the fact its boxing instructors specialise in teaching 100% authentic Muay Thai methods.

There are currently approximately 200 local and foreign students learn-

ing the sport at the gym every day and fights are held every Saturday morning on site.

Mr Somchai explained to Mr Paitoon that most foreign students spend about B10,000 per month at the gym to learn the sport, a figure which excludes accommodation and food expenses. This supports the fact that the teaching of Muay Thai in Phuket can be a very lucrative venture that contributes significantly to the local economy, he added.

Mr Paitoon said that there are plans to organise a range of Muay Thai themed events in Phuket in the near future which can further drive the local economy and generate for local gyms and businesses, an approach which is very much aligned with the national government's police on using the sport as a soft power strategy.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Following Mr Paitoon's visit, Mr Srettha took to his Facebook ac-

count on Aug 11 to detail that there were about 300 Muay Thai camps of various sizes in Phuket, specifically mentioning "Muay Thai Village" on Soi Ta-ia Road in tambon Chalong in Muang district, home to dozens of Muay Thai boxing schools.

The biggest training camp on Soi Ta-ia is Tiger Muay Thai with more than 100 trainers and more than 80,000 people registered for its courses over the past year, Mr Srettha wrote.

"There are 12 arenas for competition. How many economic activities can this one boxing camp generate?"

According to Mr Srettha, the camps welcome Muay Thai enthusiasts and foreign families, including young children, who enjoy learning the martial art with their parents. As courses last from 15 days to several months, trainees spend long periods in Phuket, and such visits fulfill the government's goal of generating revenue from tourism in return for its infrastructure investments.

"Soi Ta-ia used to be a road of rubber plantations. Locals have turned them into hotels, eateries, shops and laundries and the grassroots businesses distribute income in communities," Mr Srettha said.

Students bought Muay Thai-related products and posted their training activities and bouts on social media, which encouraged others to learn Muay Thai, he said.

Former Muay Thai champions were earning B2,000 per hour from their training services at such camps and it proved the careers of professional Muay Thai boxers extended beyond their fighting time, Mr Srettha said.

On Aug 14 the Constitutional Court dismissed Mr Srettha as Prime Minister after less than a year in office for a gross violation of ethics for appointing ex-convict Pichit Chuenban as a Cabinet minister (see page 7).

- Additional reporting by Bangkok Post

Child Protection Foundation Mini Marathon and Fun Run date confirmed

MARATHON

THE DATE FOR THIS year's charity Mini Marathon and Fun Run event to help raise funds for the Phuket Children's Protection Foundation has been confirmed by organisers.

Now in its 21st year, the Protect Children Mini Marathon will take place on Sunday Nov 10 at Prince of Songkla

University, Phuket Campus, with a 5am start, it was announced last Friday (Aug 16).

Participants have the choice of entering the 3.5 kilometre Fun Run or the 10km Mini Marathon, with an entry fee of B350 for each race. At B1,000 there is also a VIP category for either race where all participants receive a special commemorative certificate and medal.

The Fun Run has four



Image: Phuket Child Protection Foundation

separate categories: under 15 years of age male and female competitors and an open age

male and female category. Additionally there is the option for participants to join the fancy dress or the family group categories, where teams must be two or more people in total and there are no age limits.

The top five finishers in all of the four Fun Run categories will receive a trophy and special commemorative gift.

The Mini Marathon is divided into age-specific categories as follows: under 15

years male and female; 30-39 years male and female; 40-49 years male and female; 50 years and above female; 50-59 years male; and 60 years and above male.

Trophies and commemorative prizes will be distributed to the top five finishers in each age specific category in the Mini Marathon. There will also be cash prizes of offer.

The annual event generates income to directly help vulner-

able children and families in Phuket while raising awareness of the admirable work done by the Phuket Children's Protection Foundation, specifically in promoting the Child Rights Act to families and children.

Those interested in applying for the event can do so via Line ID: 0817195690 or by visiting the Protect the Children Mini Marathon Facebook page.

The Phuket News