

PLTO PROTECTION OF LOCAL TAXIS CONTINUES > PAGE 2

# BIG LIST

## CRITICAL ISSUES, FOREIGN GANGS PLAGUING ISLAND'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn at the meeting in Phuket last Friday (Feb 17). Photo: PR Phuket

The Phuket News  
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Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn was in Phuket last week to hear firsthand of a slew of critical infrastructure issues facing the tourism industry on the island, including insufficient tap water, traffic and taxi operators and 'mafia figures' operating hotels on the island.

Joining Mr Phiphat at the Andaman Health Promotion Coordination Center Conference Room at the Prince of Songkhla University Phuket Campus last Friday (Feb 17) was Natee Ratchakitprakarn, Chairman of the Advisory Board to Deputy Prime

Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

"Currently, Phuket has entered the full tourist season. There are many tourists from many countries who have come to visit. As a result, Phuket faces fundamental problems in terms of infrastructure such as road congestion due to the increasing number of cars, roads that need to be made and expanded, water used leading to inadequate reserves, labour shortage and safety in life and property [of tourists]," noted a report of the meeting by the Phuket Info Center.

At the meeting, participants were given the opportunity to present their problems and express their opinions about tourism problems facing the

private sector, the report noted.

"Those who attended the meeting presented overall problems such as infrastructure in the province. Phuket is still unable to accommodate enough tourists. Public transport, logistics and road traffic congestion in the area, were other key concerns," the report added.

The problem of small hotels being unable to operate due to ministerial regulations regarding hotels and "foreign mafia problems to do business in the area by contributing benefits to the capital group and tourists in their own country, etc," was another problem specifically raised, the report said.

Regarding new roads being made

and existing roads being expanded, Mr Phiphat said a study group will look into having road projects being taken over by larger government departments which have larger government budgets, instead of having local authorities trying to build key roads needed.

"I have the intention and we will definitely fix it, because I understand that Phuket itself now encounters the problem of traffic jams," said Mr Phiphat, who frequently visits Phuket for periods of days.

Mr Phiphat said he would look into the issues of sufficient tap water, the regulation barriers preventing small hotels from legally operating and the issue of tourist safety...

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# News



Man sells  
crocs on  
TikTok > p5

## Tourism woes unloaded

Continued from page 1

“About the mafia in the area, at this point, we are coordinating with the Tourist Police and regular police in the area. We are encouraging the supervision of safety and will coordinate and provide instructions to the national agency of Royal Thai Police to oversee this matter as well,” he said.

“We must be reminded that in terms of taking care of the safety and security of tourists, including businesses operated by the use of nominees and various illegal behaviors that cause damage to tourism in the area, if anyone knows of them they must inform the relevant authorities, such as the Tourist Police, local police and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, among others,” Mr Phiphat said.

“Now tourism has begun to return to Phuket, we must join together as a good host so we will be able to create a good image for Phuket and Thailand to be a sustainable tourism destination,” he concluded.

### FOREIGN GANGS

The hospitality industry in Phuket is urging the government to specifically solve the issue of foreign mafia groups getting increasingly involved in business on the island, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

Industry executives are concerned that foreigners are exploiting laws to run their own businesses while also taking up jobs meant for local people.

At the meeting last Friday Kata Group Resorts



Tunyaratt Achariyachai (centre) details some of the issues to Minister Phiphat. Photo: MoTS

founder Pramookpisitt Achariyachai said some foreigners were breaching rules on jobs reserved for Thais.

Businesses currently run by groups of foreigners include taxi services and accommodation, with some foreigners renting villas and condo units abandoned during the COVID-19 pandemic and then renting them out again to their countrymen, said Mr Pramookpisitt. They were mostly Russians, he added.

In addition, local people in Phuket have objected to a foreign chopper riders' group.

Mr Pramookpisitt is concerned that foreign mafia groups may take control of the island, similar to what happened in Pattaya a couple of decades ago.

He urged Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn to deal with these concerns.

Mr Phiphat told participants that authorities would look into the matter.

“I’m certain most Thais will not tolerate it if foreigners are trying to steal their jobs,” he said. “Authorities from various agencies will look into the matter as the prime minister has also ordered the Royal Thai Police to crack down on it.”

## ‘Outsider’ taxis still targetted

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The campaign by the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) against legally registered ‘green plate’ taxis from outside Phuket operating on the island is continuing, despite the office holding talks with the drivers affected.

Officers from the PLTO, acting under instructions by PLTO Chief Adcha Buachan, staged yet another check at Phuket airport from 3pm to 6pm last Friday (Feb 17).

Present to provide support were officers from the Sakhu Police, located near the airport, and security personnel from the ISOC Region 4 branch. ISOC, the Internal Security Operations Command, is the administrative branch of the Thai military.

The officers stopped seven vehicles, with legal action to be taken against six of the drivers, the PLTO reported. One of the vehicles was a private car being used illegally as a taxi, the PLTO pointed out.

The six drivers will be fined and the PLTO will “consider” suspending the drivers’ licences, the PLTO said, consistent with previous reports of the PLTO suspending driver’s licences for up to six months.

The arrests last Friday followed previous checks and arrests throughout the week.

The PLTO last Tuesday at the Si Kor Intersection in Kathu stopped and checked vehicles suspected of being used illegally as taxis from 9am to midday.

The PLTO reported three vehicles found being used illegally as taxis. The PLTO gave special mention to a van issued blue-on-white’ licence plates, indicating that the van was a private vehicle with more than seven seats.

### SWEET TALK

The arrests last Tuesday came only days after PLTO chief Adcha Buachan held talks with ‘green plate’ taxi drivers over the PLTO’s current practice of targetting taxis legally registered in other provinces operating in Phuket.

The meeting was joined by Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Col Jirasak Siemsak.



Photos: PLTO

Mr Adcha later revealed that the talks, held at PLTO offices, focused on how ‘green plate’ cars registered outside Phuket may be able to operate in Phuket legally, adding that the aim was to find a satisfactory outcome for all involved.

He confirmed that the number of vehicles registered outside of Phuket but operating here was not especially high but that the PLTO would evaluate ways to allow them to operate here without contravening existing laws.

After the meeting Mr Adcha stated that any additional specific documents and evidence supporting the group’s claims would need to be submitted to the PLTO to assist the overall evaluation process within one month from the date of the meeting (Feb 9). The sooner these materials could be provided the better, he added.

However, despite Mr Adcha’s public comments after the meeting, the PLTO’s campaign to arrest and suspend driving licences of taxi drivers whose vehicles are legally registered elsewhere continued in the days following.

The ‘green plate’ drivers earlier this month openly challenged the PLTO’s legal right to seize legally registered taxis and suspend taxi driver’s licences.

At time of pree, weeks later, Mr Adcha and the PLTO still had yet to publicly explain the source of their legal empowerment to take such action.

### ‘YES YOU CAN, CANNOT’

The only response by the PLTO has been the PLTO posting on its official Facebook page mid-last week two ministerial regulations regarding taxis operating outside the province in which

the vehicle was registered.

One of the ministerial regulations was a revision issued in 1992 of a regulation originally issued in 1979. The regulation banned “all taxis, including three-wheeled vehicles” from operating outside the province they were registered in – with the exception of all taxis and three-wheelers in Khon Kaen, Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, Songkhla, Nakhon Ratchasima, which were allowed to “be used” in other provinces, including Bangkok.

However, the same regulation also made it plain that “all taxis, including three-wheeled vehicles” registered in Bangkok were allowed to “travel” to other provinces.

The regulation did not make it clear whether such taxis were allowed to pick up passengers in provinces outside Bangkok.

The other regulation, issued by Department of Land Transport Director-General Chirut Wisanchit on Dec 2, 2021, mandated that EV taxis must be white, and that non-EV taxis must be yellow in colour – with an exemption for non-EV taxis registered before that date.

The posts by the PLTO showed only the ministerial regulations, and gave no express explanation of what the PLTO’s understanding of the regulations were.

The PLTO campaign targetting ‘out of province’ taxi drivers was launched earlier this month within hours of taxi drivers from Phuket’s powerful taxi cooperatives and associations staging a protest at Provincial Hall on Feb 2.

The drivers complained that non-Phuket drivers were charging less than local Phuket drivers, and hence costing the local cartel drivers passengers and income.

## Candidates line up for Kathu mayoral election

THE PHUKET OFFICE of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) has announced just two candidates to contest the election as the new Kathu Mayor.

The election is to be held on Sunday, Mar 19.

The election was called after years-long incumbent was summarily dismissed from office by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew

following an investigation into allowing a private operator to pump water from a lagoon at the Tin Mine Museum in Kathu.

Candidates had until Feb 10 to register their intent to contest the election for Kathu Mayor, yet the two recognised candidates were not announced by the PEC until a week later, at 5pm last Friday (Feb 17).

Kathu Municipality confirmed the two candidates last Saturday.

The two candidates are Prasert Khaokitpaisarn of the Palang Kathu (‘Power of Kathu’) party and Wanyut Suthikul, representing the Rak Kathu (‘Love Kathu’) party.

Mr Prasert, who has already previously served as Kathu Mayor and a long-standing political opponent

to former mayor Mr Chai-anan, now dismissed, lost the mayoral election to Mr Chai-anan in 2021.

The PEC has confirmed there will be 25 polling stations open throughout Kathu on election day. The polls will be open from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

In accordance with election law, there will be a ban on the sale of alcohol in the Tambon



Wanyut Suthikul with supporters as he registers to contest the election for Kathu Mayor. Photo: Rak Kathu / Facebook

Kathu voting district (which does not include Patong) from 6pm the night before the elec-

tion through to 6pm on the day of the election (Mar 19).  
The Phuket News



# Bangla guards face probe after mob bashing video

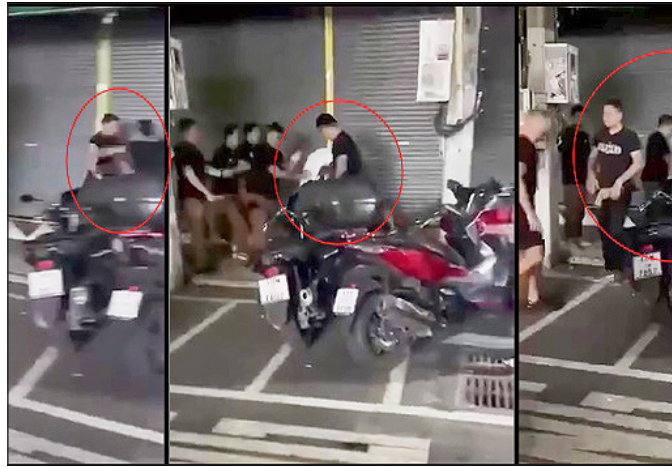
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Patong Police have launched an investigation after a video of a Bangla Rd brawl going viral on social media. The fight is believed to have started after a security guard interfered in an argument between a male and a female tourist. The incident allegedly had nothing to do with street racing and road rage which was a separate case to be investigated by Patong Police.

The video and pictures of a fight between around 10 Thai men and a foreign tourist were posted online last Wednesday evening (Feb 15). The publication was then commented on by many users who criticised what had happened in Phuket's main nightlife district.

The recording showed a foreigner trying to escape from a group of men in black shirts believed to be security guards from a local entertainment venue.

His attempt failed as he bumped into another similarly



The foreigner was knocked out with a single punch by an able-bodied Thai man in a black shirt. Image via Eakkapop Thongtub

dressed man who knocked him out with one straight punch in the face. The group then started stomping on the foreigner while he remained on the sidewalk, allegedly unconscious.

Many Facebook users appealed to Phuket Police and other officials to take measures following the incident and protect Phuket's tourism image from further deterioration.

At time of press, Patong Police, Phuket Provincial Police and other relevant government agencies had yet to go public and comment

on the incident which had happened at least two days earlier, judging by the time when the video was posted.

No comments from Patong entertainment business operators were published as all the venues were closed at that time.

Last Friday (Feb 17), a group of Phuket reporters went to the scene, where they believe the situation could have arisen from a quarrel between the foreigner from the video and his girlfriend. One of the security guards allegedly interfered which

resulted in a fight between the guard and the tourist. The brawl was then joined by other security guards and ended up as depicted in the video.

Earlier reports linked the situation to another brawl in Patong which started as a road rage incident and developed into a fight and a chase through Patong streets. Now it is believed to be a separate case.

Patong Police are still conducting their investigation and at time of press had yet to make any public statements about that incident.

Meanwhile, Phuket businessman Preechavude 'Prab' Keesin of the Pisona Group revealed via Facebook that on Feb 16 officials from Kathu District Office, Patong Police, Patong Municipality and other relevant agencies conducted a meeting with Patong security guards "to formulate policies and maintaining the image of [Patong/Phuket as] a world-class tourist city".

"Strict regulations on the safety of tourists have been put in place," Mr Preechavude assured.

## Jellyfish stings on the rise

SIGNS HAVE BEEN POSTED at beaches along Phuket's west coast warning visitors of jellyfish in the waters following a rising number of tourists being stung by the marine creatures.

Officers from the Phuket Marine Resources Conservation Center and local administration organisations have been bolstering lifeguard stations with extra bottles of vinegar and other medical supplies to help provide treatment for stings.

Officers from the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office have also been visiting lifeguards to ensure that correct first aid was being administered to sting victims.

The move follows increases in reported stings along the west coast, including at Patong.

Suchart Ratanaruangsri, Director of Phuket Marine Resource Conservation Center, last Thursday (Feb 16) visited the lifeguard station at Karon Beach, where Karon Municipality has now installed a sign warning visitors of jellyfish.

The sign, in Thai language only, explains what to do if tourists are stung by jellyfish while playing in the water.

Mr Suchart said his officers will visit more than 20 important beaches around



the island, including Patong Beach, Kata, Karon, Nai Yang, Surin Beach and Cape Panwa on Phuket's east coast.

"More than 30 people have recently been stung by jellyfish while playing in the water at the beach. Most of the people were not seriously harmed," Mr Suchart said.

"There are many species of jellyfish. For normal jellyfish stings, vinegar can be poured over the area continuously for at least 30 seconds to help, but never pour fresh water, drinking water or alcohol onto the sting," he said.

"Jellyfish are found in coastal areas of Phuket. Most of them are ordinary 'fire jellyfish'," Mr Suchart added.

"However, sometimes there is also the Portuguese man o' war, which delivers a much more violent sting and can even be life-threatening. So be prepared to protect yourself from jellyfish before swimming in the sea is important," Mr Suchart said.

*The Phuket News*

## Credit card thieves in Patong

POLICE ARE TRYING TO TRACK down a foreign man and his accomplices for stealing tourists' credit cards to buy valuable items including iPhones and gold jewellery.

Police have issued a photo of the man, with a description that he was of Asian appearance and usually wore a white cap and black sneakers, and carried a black shoulder bag.

The man had presented stolen credit cards to buy items, and usually presented a fake American passport as identification.

He had bought five iPhones and gold jewellery worth more than B120,000, police said.

Police believe the man is part of a gang working together.

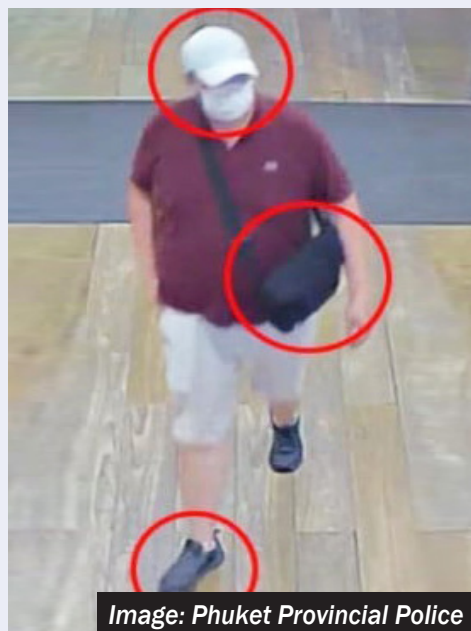
The man would often arrive at a store just before it is about to close for the day in order to take advantage of staff wanting to rush so they could leave work.

He would present a fake passport with the name and surname corresponding to the stolen credit card, police said.

Police issued a warning for all store owners, and especially department stores, to beware the man entering their store.

The warning came in a notice marked as issued by Phuket Provincial Police on Jan 29, but so far has only been issued publicly by Patong Police, alluding to where the man and his accomplices have been operating.

Police urged store owners to have their staff check the signature on the back of any credit cards presented and to make sure the name in the passport and credit card



presented match.

They also suggested having the customer remove their face mask in order to confirm the true appearance of the person presenting the credit card.

Police also suggested having the customer present other identification documents as well, such as a driver's licence, and for staff to take a photo or a photocopy of the extra identification documents.

Police also asked staff to have the person customer show the SMS sent to their phone confirming the transaction to be conducted.

Furthermore, police requested staff ask the customer where they were staying, so the staff could confirm by calling the accommodation venue. *The Phuket News*



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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 11 m/s

SAT FEBRUARY 25



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN FEBRUARY 26



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

MON FEBRUARY 27



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE FEBRUARY 28



High: +32°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

WED MARCH 1



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

THU MARCH 2



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Frenchman hunted for hit-and-run

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
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Police have tracked down and arrested a French national after he struck a pedestrian and fled the scene while he was riding a rental motorbike.

Naji Sami Bouakkz was charged on Feb 15 with reckless driving causing physical injury and failing to stop after being involved in an accident, Patong Police confirmed.

Patong Police were notified of the incident at about 7:50pm two days earlier (Feb 13) via the 191 national call centre, reporting that a woman had been injured in a hit-and-run while she was crossing a street near Sai Nam Yen Rd, police said.

Officers and rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Foundation soon arrived at the scene, and the woman, Maliwan Sararat, 45, originally from Roi Et Province, was rushed to Patong Hospital. Due to the nature of her injuries she was soon transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town.

Through CCTV police tracked the motorbike, ridden by a foreign man wearing a white shirt and a



Photo: Patong Police

black Helmet to the Triple L Hotel on 50 Pi Rd.

Bouakkz and the person riding pillion on the motorbike at the time of the hit and run, Chahine Yuce, walked out of the hotel around 7:58pm.

At about 8:53am, Bouakkz returned to the parked motorbike, a Yamaha TMAX, and rode away, police said.

Bouakkz then returned the Yamaha TMAX to the shop where he rented it, Nueng Motorbike on Prachanukhro Rd, at 12:40pm on Feb 14, police noted.

Officers arrived at the shop and questioned the owner, who said that the front of the motorbike showed signs of impact in a collision. At-

tempts to cover up the damage had been made, the owner confirmed.

The shop owner called Bouakkz to return to the shop, where police placed him under arrest at 7:33pm, officers reported.

Officers explained to Bouakkz that CCTV footage had confirmed he was riding the bike at the time of the hit-and-run.

Bouakkz and the TMAX motorbike were both taken to Patong Police Station.

Bouakkz was charged after his companion Yuce confirmed that Bouakkz was riding the motorbike at the time of the incident, police said.

Police noted that at the time the motorbike hit Ms Maliwan, Bouakkz

was riding too fast to be able to avoid hitting her.

Not stopping to help Ms Maliwan and immediately reporting the collision was a further offence under the law, officers said.

Police made no mention of whether Bouakkz had the correct licence to ride a motorbike in Thailand, despite Patong Police and Phuket transport officials claiming to crack down on the issue following a mass motorbike rally through the streets of Patong earlier this month by mostly French nationals.

Patong Police and Adcha Buachan, Chief of the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), have claimed to have taken action against rental shops for renting out vehicles to tourists without the correct licence to drive a vehicle in Thailand.

Patong Police and Phuket transport officials even met with the French honorary consul for Phuket to discuss the issue.

So far PLTO Chief Adcha has avoided plainly confirming whether the compulsory accident insurance required for a vehicle to be legally on a public road remains in effect if the driver does not have the correct driver's licence.

## Drug mule arrested at Phuket Check Point

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A MAN driving onto the island with more than 14,000 pills of methamphetamine (ya bah) as well as a semi-automatic handgun.

Officers stopped and searched a blue Honda Civic car with Bangkok license plates being driven onto the island at about 10pm last Friday (Feb 17), Capt Thanom Thongpaen of the Tha Chatchai Police explained.

The driver, Thanaphat 'Ball' Plodkham, 36, from Phattalung, was acting suspiciously, Capt Thanom said.

A search found inside the car a Glock 30 semi-automatic handgun with its serial number removed as well as 18 .45-calibre bullets with two magazines for the handgun.

Officers also found an airsoft rifle with a 13-inch barrel and four 4.622-calibre bullets.

In a large box were 13,930 ya bah pills, with more pills found in two plastic bags bringing the total number of ya bah pills seized to 14,247.

Officers also found 134.85 grams of crystal meth (ya ice), 0.327g of ketamine and 0.552g of ecstasy.

In placing Thanaphat under arrest, officers also seized two mobile phones and drug-taking equipment, Capt Thanom said.

According to police, Thanaphat confessed that he was hired to drive his own car from his home province of Phattalung to Phuket, where he was to deliver the car to a location in Thalang District.

He picked up the drugs beside the main southern highway in Tambon Bang Sawan, in Phra Saeng District, Surat Thani Province, police said.



Photo: Tha Chatchai Police

Thanaphat denied that he was involved in dealing drugs, and maintained that he was only delivering them to Phuket, Capt Thanom said.

Regardless, police pressed a slew of charges against Thanaphat, Capt Thanom confirmed.

Thanaphat faced charges of illegal possession of a Category 1 narcotic (methamphetamine) with intent to distribute, and illegal possession of a Category 1 narcotic (ecstasy) and illegal possession of a Category 2 narcotic (ketamine) for consumption.

He also faced charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition and carrying firearms in a public area without permission.

Thanaphat also faced a charge using a Category I drug (methamphetamine) and driving while under the influence of an addictive substance, Capt Thanom said.

Capt Thanom said that police were continuing their investigation into the drug network that supplied the drugs and noted that the origin of the Honda Civic car was also specifically under further investigation, as the Bangkok licence plates on the Honda Civic car were found to be fake.

Eakkapop Thongtub



Photo: Sakhu Police

## Russian man found in stolen pickup at Nai Thon Beach

A RUSSIAN MAN WAS taken to Thalang Hospital last week after he was found in a weakened condition in a pickup truck parked at Nai Thon Beach with the doors locked.

Officers found the man, named by police as Egor Andriesh, 27, in the locked pickup truck at about mid-day last Thursday (Feb 16).

Officers from the Sakhu Police started searching for the pickup after Russian man Viacheslav Rummyantsev, 44, reported it missing.

Mr Rummyantsev said he had parked his Ford Ranger pickup near the beach and returned later to see it being driven away by what

appeared to be another Russian man.

Sakhu Police assisted by an airport operations team found the pickup with Mr Andriesh still inside.

The officers were unable to open the vehicle as the doors were locked, prompting the officers to call for a locksmith to open the car door.

Officers found Mr Andriesh suffering from exhaustion. An ambulance arrived and he was rushed to Thalang Hospital.

Sakhu Police said they were continuing their investigation to determine what led to Mr Andriesh being found in that situation.

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Man caught for peddling baby crocs on TikTok

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Officers from the Phuket Provincial Fisheries Office have raided a home in Srisoonthorn where 22 baby freshwater crocodiles were being kept to be sold illegally via TikTok.

Officers arrived at the house, in Moo 8, Srisoonthorn, at 3pm last Thursday (Feb 16) to find the baby crocs in a contained rock pool area in front of the house.

The raid was led by Ekamai Mala, head of the PPFO's Fisheries Management Group together with Siripen Rattaniampongsa the Fisheries Administration Officer at the Thalang District Office.

The raid followed complaints filed about the crocodiles being advertised through TikTok as available for delivery anywhere throughout the country, said an official report of the raid.

At the home, officers arrested a man named in the report only as "Mr Theeradej" (family name withheld), 35.

According to the report, Theeradej explained that he



Photo: Phuket Fisheries Office

previously had a legally valid permit to trade wild animals obtained from breeding, but that the permit expired on Sept 9 last year.

He had not applied to renew the permit, but he confessed to continuing selling baby crocodiles through the internet, the report said.

Theeradej was charged with illegal possession of pro-

tected wildlife under Section 17 of the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act, B.E. 2562 (2019) and under Section 77 of the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries B.E. 2558, the report confirmed.

The amendments introduced in the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act, B.E. 2562 brought in harsher penalties for illegal trading in

protected wildlife.

Breach of Section 17 alone is punishable by a fine of up to B500,000 or up to five years in jail, or both.

The baby crocodiles have been taken into protective care by the Phuket Provincial Fisheries Office as it is the correct government office responsible for the regulation of crocodiles, the report concluded.



Photo: PR Phuket

## Artificial reef blocks installed at Maithon

A PROJECT SPEARHEADED by local Rotary clubs has seen 39 blocks of artificial corals installed at a reef off Koh Maithon to help the ailing reef to thrive.

The sculpted blocks of artificial corals were installed last Thursday (Feb 16) by a barge provided by the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO).

Present for the occasion were a host of leading officials involved in the project, including PPAO President Rewat Areerob; Wattanapong Suksai, Director of the Phuket office of Natural Resources and Environment; Paitoon Panchaiyaphum, Director of the Phuket Marine and Coastal Resources Conservation and Restoration Division; and Suchart Rattanaraeungsi, Director of Phuket Marine Resources Conservation Center.

Also present were Kongsak Koophongsakorn, Vice Presi-

dent of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, and Sasawat Limpanich, President of the Rotary Club of Mining for Phuket and fellow members.

Not mentioned in the official report of the event on Feb 16 was the Rotary Club of Patong Beach, which was also involved in the fundraising efforts for the project, under the banner 'Save Underwater World'.

PPAO President Rewat explained that the project aims to encourage the growth of natural coral larvae in the area as part of marine natural resources protection and development, which also helps to promote tourism to Phuket.

The PPAO funded B150,000 to cover the cost of installing the artificial reef blocks, he said.

In total, 30 blocks were installed in separate areas at the reef, he said.

The Phuket News

## Working group set to monitor local dust, air pollution levels

AUTHORITIES IN PHUKET have confirmed a working group has been established to actively monitor air quality and the threat of smog and fine particulate dust matter known as PM 2.5 across the island.

A meeting on Feb 15 at the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (PPDPM), on the third floor of Provincial Hall, was presided over by Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodbam, who was joined by the PPDPM's Udomporn Kan and other relevant officials to form a working group who discussed guidelines to prevent the spread of the dust matter.

The meeting revealed that last month saw an increase in the number of fires on the island, particularly in agricultural and forest areas which has created a series of "hotspots".

It was also revealed that the levels of PM 2.5 had exceeded standard levels for several days in a row, which posed a potential



Photo: PR Phuket

health hazard to people on the island.

The working group declared that they would continue to monitor the situation and focus on three specific areas, as per a 2021 national agenda aimed at minimising dust pollution.

The three areas of focus are: urban areas, factories and industrial sites with high pollution and engine maintenance on vehicles, including roadside checkpoints for those emitting hazardous black smoke from their exhausts.

Furthermore, it was dis-

closed that hotspots in forest areas had decreased by 20% in the past five years, which included a 10% decrease in general forest and agricultural burning and a specific 5% reduction in the burning of sugarcane.

The meeting concluded by stating, as summer had arrived earlier this year and temperatures were slightly higher than usual, the working group had been set up to monitor the situation and to ensure there are no escalations which could lead to a potential crisis.

The Phuket News



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# Tourist entry fees confirmed

Bangkok Post

The Cabinet has endorsed entry fees for international arrivals of B150 and B300 to start in June, except for one-day visitors

The endorsement came on Feb 14, said Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn. Mr Phiphat said the B300 rate would apply to visitors who arrive by air and the B150 fee was for those entering the country via water and land transport.

The fee was cheaper for those arriving by water and land because they were likely to stay in the country for only a few days, the minister said. Visitors who do not stay overnight would be exempted from the fee.

The government expects to collect about B3.9 billion in fees this year and part of the sum will be used to provide health and accident insurance coverage for tourists during their stay in the country.

"The entry fee will support care for tourists. From 2017 to 2019, foreign tourists used services at public hospitals and that cost the state as much as B300-400 million," Mr Phiphat said.

The entry fee, widely criticised by the local tourism industry, comes as the country is witnessing a rapid upturn in arrivals that has gained momentum with the abolition of pandemic-era curbs and China's move to end its zero-COVID policy.



A family walks through the international arrivals hall at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Photo: Somchai Poomlard / Bangkok Post

Foreign tourist arrivals may reach as high as 30mn this year, almost tripling from 11.2mn last year, according to some estimates. Arrivals in pre-pandemic 2019 were a record-high 40mn.

Authorities have long considered an entry fee for foreign travellers but its imposition was delayed by the pandemic. A part of the fee will also help fund the development of local tourist attractions, Mr Phiphat said.

The levy will be added to air ticket prices, while the method of collection from entry by land has yet to be determined, the government said last year.

Wuthichai Luangamornlert, managing director of Siam Park City, the operator of Siam Amazing Park in Bangkok, said he welcomed the move

but added that "the collection of the fees and strict control of its use must be ensured to avoid any problems that may arise in the future".

## CALLS FOR SCRUTINY

Tourism operators have expressed concern about the transparency of the Tourism Promotion Fund, which is estimated to have a budget of more than B13 billion from the B300 tourism fee collected from international visitors.

The Tourism and Sports Ministry is projected to collect B3.9bn this year and more than B10bn from 40 million visitors estimated for next year.

Sisdivachr Cheewarattanaporn, President of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, said fund manage-

ment must be transparent and use the principle of checks and balances to avoid accusations of corruption or ineffective spending.

He said the structure of the Tourism Promotion Fund's subcommittee responsible for approving tourism project proposals should be balanced between the government and the private sector to assure that budget allocation does not favour any interest groups or is used for improper purposes.

Mr Sisdivachr said another concern is fee collection from foreign arrivals at borders as those channels are the most susceptible to corruption.

The ministry needs to set up a prudent system that can prove the exact number of visitors and fee tally at each immigration point, he said.

"We have to closely monitor the structure of the fund's subcommittee that reviews all project proposals as well as approves regulations," said Mr Sisdivachr.

"Given the huge sum of money involved, the government should be able to assure the public about the transparency of the fund."

According to the Tourism and Sports Ministry, the method of fee collection for entry by land could be kiosks at checkpoints for visitors to pay before proceeding to immigration.

Operating the kiosks might be opened up for private sector bidding,

said the Tourism Ministry.

Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi, president of the Thai Hotels Association (THA), said the total receipts from the fee collection after deducting expenses of around B50 per head for insurance would be huge, with careful policies needed to regulate the fund.

"A critical obstacle the THA often encounters when dealing with state agencies is they don't understand the importance or urgency of projects, particularly regarding human resources development," she said.

Mrs Marisa said often such agencies are not directly involved with the tourism industry and they mostly refuse to offer budgets to the private sector.

"It would be more effective if the Tourism Promotion Fund members have an understanding of the industry and allow the private sector to share opinions as they have expertise and are familiar with the problems," she said.

"The tourism industry has a challenge in terms of uneven development as some big players are equipped with skilled human resources, while most small operators don't have such manpower.

"Projects supported by the fund could provide smaller operators with equal opportunities in skill development, which should be a priority for this fund."



Photo: Phuket Fisheries Office

## Norwegian envoy puts tuna on the agenda

NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR to Thailand Astrid Emilie Helle was in Phuket last week to discuss tourism and the return of longline tuna fishing hauls being brought ashore in Phuket.

Ambassador Helle on Feb 14 met with Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, along with Samerjit Limlikit, Head of the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Passport Office in Phuket, and Lertchai Wangtrakuldee, the new Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket office.

Among the discussions were transport links and ways to promote Norwegian tourism to Phuket, said an official report of the meeting.

Also discussed were environmental preservation measures relevant to "sustainable marine resources",

including tuna fishing, the report added.

Taiwanese longline tuna fishing boats have now returned to Phuket to be unloaded after a seven-year hiatus, the report noted.

Phuket provincial officials are preparing to push development of Phuket into a 'tuna hub' by making Phuket the center of tuna trading, the report explained.

Tuna fishing is under the 10-point provincial policy 'GEMMSSTTF' to help the island's economy recover.

Other issues discussed were the exchange of knowledge and experience in clean energy management, such as EV cars and using solar energy, as well as taking care of safety and facilitating Norwegian tourists who travel in Phuket, the report concluded. *The Phuket News*

## Governor touts 'Travel Link' Big Data tourism platform

PHUKET GOVERNOR Narong Woonciew is calling for all tourism-related business to make use of the 'Big Data' tourism statistics information centre called 'Travel Link' as a platform to use in forming business strategies to help the island's tourism industry not only recover, but also perform better and be more competitive in the years to come.

The pitch was made at an event to publicly reveal the 'Travel Link.go.th' platform held at the Royal Phuket City Hotel in Phuket Town on Feb 16.

Present for the occasion was Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, who proposed and championed the development of the platform during the height of the COVID-19 tourism shutdown while calling for Phuket to receive tourists through what later was called the 'Sandbox' policy.

A former President of the Phuket Tourist Association, Mr Bhumikitti now serves as advisory chairman of the association.

Also present was Assistant Professor Dr Chayanon Phucharoen, Deputy Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Faculty of Hospitality and



Photo: PR Phuket

Tourism, Prince of Songkla University (PSU) Phuket campus, who has already made use of the platform to reveal statistically supported changes to Phuket's tourism industry and the spending nature of tourists coming to Phuket.

Mr Bhumikitti has likewise used the information now made available through the Travel Link platform to make suggestions to policies affecting tourism at the national level.

"This system will provide

more clear information. It will help to push and drive tourism," Governor Narong said.

"The data management system is an integration between government agencies and the private sector. It is a simple system that provides data on the number of tourists, the number of rooms booked, and other statistics that will help serve the needs of tourists and operators," he added.

"This information can be linked across all departments, and we will be able

to see the income generated and make predictions of how it will spread throughout the island's economy," Governor Narong said.

"It is an obvious achievement that will result in widespread benefits, and it's a good thing that this system started in Phuket as the first province of Thailand. We will also develop data platforms to include to Krabi and Phang Nga, which will raise the level of tourism services in the area to the international standards in the future," he added.

Assoc Prof Dr Teeranee Ajalakul, Director of the Government Big Data Analysis and Management Institute (GBDI), noted that the platform, already comprehensive in the information provided, at this stage remains incomplete.

"The development of the system is almost finished. Only some more information remains to be added," Dr Teeranee said.

"In Phuket, there will be a working group from all sectors involved in order to bring this system to be used in further work, and we expect that this system will be an important basic system for use by all parties," he added.

*The Phuket News*



# Wild Boars team captain dies in UK-based accident

## UNITED KINGDOM

Bangkok Post

The captain of the young “Wild Boars” football team rescued from a flooded Tham Luang Cave in Chiang Rai in 2018 has passed away in the United Kingdom.

Duangphet “Dom” Phromthep, 17, was found unconscious in his dormitory in Leicestershire on Feb 12 and died in hospital two days later.

The cause of death was unclear, but unconfirmed reports in the British media said he sustained a head injury. He had signed up for the Brooke House College Football Academy in Leicester, England, last year.

Social media was inundated with messages of grief and sympathy after the news broke on Feb 15.

The Zico Foundation posted a message and a photo of Duangphet, who received a scholarship to the football academy from the foundation.

Phra Khru Prayut Jetiyanukarn, abbot of Wat Phra That Doi Wao in Chiang Rai, said



Duangphet had won a football scholarship in the UK. Photo: Bangkok Post

Duangphet’s mother phoned him around 6am on Feb 15 to say her son had died.

The abbot said initial reports were that Duangphet was injured in a fall. He was admitted to hospital and put on a ventilator but later died. The family is in touch with the Foreign Affairs Ministry and details will be announced

in due course.

Duangphet was the captain of the Wild Boars football team whose rescue from the flooded cave captured the attention of the world in 2018. He won the scholarship to study at the football academy in Leicestershire in August last year.

Duangphet posted a mes-

sage on his Instagram account after receiving the scholarship. “Today, my dream has come true because I will become a football student in England,” he said.

In June and July 2018, Thai and international rescue teams mounted an operation to rescue 12 local footballers aged between 11 and 16 and their 25-year-old coach from the flooded Luang cave in Chiang Rai’s Mae Sai district.

They became trapped after they went to explore the underground complex on June 23 after football practice.

They were unable to leave when a sudden storm flooded the cave and spent 17 days underground before being found by two British divers.

Duangphet was the boy who first shouted out to the rescuers for help. He was then 13. A complex and dangerous rescue followed. One Thai rescuer died in the operation.

Eakapol Jantawong, the Wild Boars’ ex-coach, took to Facebook to say Dom would live on in everyone’s memories. He also extended his condolences to the boy’s family.



Chaiwit. Photo: Bangkok Post

## Calls to turn nightlife bribes into tax gains

### BANGKOK

CHAIWUT THANAKAManusorn, deputy leader of the ruling Palang Pracharath Party, has proposed the state relax rules on entertainment places and alcohol sales to raise tax and get rid of bribes.

Mr Chaiwit who is also the Minister of Digital Economy and Society, said last Sunday (Feb 19) Palang Pracharath members had agreed that laws should be amended to “turn bribes into tax” for business activities that are legal in other countries but presently illegal in Thailand.

He cited the business of pubs and bars and the sales of alcoholic beverages that are free of operating time restrictions in other countries.

“The foreigners who invest in and visit Thailand and the foreigners who want to drink

after midnight must pay bribes to pave the way for such activities. This results in grey funds and illicit business,” Chaiwit said.

“We should amend laws for what we think we can accept and what are of international practices. If society accepts it, we can amend laws to turn bribes into tax. Legalise it to get rid of corruption.”

Meanwhile, authorities would enforce laws strictly to tackle what is unacceptable, such as human trafficking, he added.

“Laws can also be amended to impose harsher punishments on such crimes so that officials can take decisive legal action. This is an important policy of the Palang Pracharath Party to turn bribes into tax to solve corruption,” he said.

Chaiwit also advocated for the legalisation of electronic cigarettes. *Bangkok Post*

## Illegal Chinese associations targeted in nationwide drive

### BANGKOK

POLICE AND THE INTERIOR MINISTRY have confirmed they are hunting for illegal associations that are fronts for illicit Chinese businesses nationwide after a whistleblower’s complaints against them.

Withan Sukkan, an interrogative director of the Department of Provincial Administration, met Pol Gen Surachate Hakparn, deputy national police chief, on Monday (Feb 20) to file a complaint against unlicensed Chinese associations for their suspected vested interest.

The targeted associations included one in the name of Yu Xinqi, who was recently arrested for allegedly using his association and business school to illegally bring Chinese people into Thailand.

Mr Withan said the director-general of the Department of Provincial Administration assigned him to file the complaints, including one concerning Yu’s alleged operation of an unlicensed association and input of false information into a computer system.

Also, the permanent secretary of the Interior Ministry ordered provincial governors who were provincial association registrars to check local associations and take relevant action, Mr Withan said.

There were many fake associations nationwide like that of Yu and registrars could revoke them, he said.

Gen Surachate said Yu faced charges of



Chuvit Kamolvisit (right) with deputy national police chief Pol Gen Surachate Hakparn on Feb 20. Photo: Supplied

crimes related to computer systems, fundraising and illegal association operation. He was blacklisted and would be deported.

The deputy national police chief also said he received a lese majeste complaint against Yu from whistleblower Chuvit Kamolvisit and police were working together with the Interior Ministry to tackle unlicensed associations.

Meeting Gen Surachate at Nang Loeng police station on Monday, Mr Chuvit said Yu had referred to “the institution” to mislead Chinese people so he decided to ask police to take legal action related to the lese majeste law.

There were 500-600 associations in Kanchanaburi province alone, Mr Chuvit said, along with a proxy firm of Chinese lawyers on Rama IX Rd and a triad’s unlicensed association on Srivara Rd.

*Bangkok Post*



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# Sun Gods and Sun Worshipers



## GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

As readers familiar with this column will be aware, I often iterate the point, perhaps *ad nauseam*, that botanical names are worth mastering since they offer valuable clues to a plant's characteristics: maybe its place of origin (*Japonica*), its physical features (*odorata*) or even its cultural requirements. When such names begin with the letter 'H', many include the prefix 'heli' or 'helio', a label that indicates a link with the sun: after all, the god in Greek mythology who daily drove his fiery chariot across the sky was Helios. In some cases the connection is a double one: for example, the giant sunflower or *helianthus* not only resembles a sun with its massive, golden

orb of seeds and flame-like petals, but also needs a sunny location in which to reach its potential.

A rapid grower, it will bloom within months of being sown. Often sold by florists for arrangements, it was the first flower to become an important agricultural resource. Now cultivars are grown primarily for their oil-bearing seeds. The species began life as a fairly insignificant, hairy plant with blooms about six centimetres across. The hirsute stems are still there, but horticulturalists have since grown floral behemoths for both commercial and aesthetic reasons. All have a single huge and weighty head consisting of an outer circle of brilliant yellow petals with a golden brown central cushion of hundreds of seeds. They look especially effective when planted next to an outside wall. Contrary to popular myth, the blooms face east all day, so the petals are in fact back-lit by the afternoon sun. A gross feeder, its other requirement is rich, moist soil backed up by regular applications of fertiliser. Undisputed king of the annuals.

You could add *helianthemum*, *helichrysum*, *heliopsis*, *heliotropium* and *heliconia* to the tongue-twisting solar list. Most owe their kinship with Helios to their brilliant golden flowers, though not all of them need the full force of a tropic sun. Full sun in temperate climates (where they were mostly given their botanical names) may mean filtered shade in Phuket.

The *heliotrope* is a case in point. One variety, *H. argenteum*, native to somewhat cooler Hawaii where it grows wild as a ground cover plant, bears rosettes of succulent grey-green or silvery leaves that form a mat about six inches high (just over 15cm). Clusters of flowers – usually white – appear above the foliage. A tough cookie, the *heliotrope* does well in coastal gardens, where wind and saturating salt spray are a problem. And it tolerates drought – though it will only spread rapidly if given sufficient moisture. It goes without saying that it loves the sun – hence the name. Why not try it in Phuket's island environment?

The straw flower (*helichrysum*), like the *statice* or the Australian *helipterum*, is chiefly valued for its use in dried floral arrangements, though these days it has to compete with artificially cre-

ated displays. A so-called 'everlasting' flower, it belongs, like the sunflower, to the aster genus – hence its daisy-like blooms. Sometimes used in fresh displays of cut flowers, the *helichrysum* is much more likely to be found in these 'everlasting' arrangements, where its papery, prickly two-inch blooms look like pom poms, and will not only retain their colour and form, but will last for ages. *H. bracteatum* is the variety usually grown: a dual purpose plant, it comes in a range of colours from orange and gold to deep crimson and has strap-like leaves. It can be grown here as an annual or perennial. Give it moderate amounts of water and of course full sun. And enjoy its charms twice over...

The *helianthemum* or sunrose (rock rose or *cistus* in Europe) is another low growing plant with small leaves that may be grey on both surfaces or glossy green on top. It sports a display of single or semi-double flowers in bright or pastel shades – flame red, orange, yellow, salmon or white. Each blossom lasts a mere day, but new buds continue to open. Shear plants back after flowering to encourage repeat blooming. They are at their best tumbling over stones, rambling over rockeries or even over sandy shorelines. Plants will be hardier if the soil is not too rich and is kept on the dry side. One unusual variety called "Raspberry Ripple" has – you guessed it – deep pink flowers streaked with white.

The ox-eye sunflower, or *heliopsis*, completes our solar survey. More widely known as a wild flower than one that inhabits gardens, it is a smaller, less distinguished member of the clan. Yellow flowers, about three inches (about 7.6cm) in diameter, top substantial plants with rough-textured oval leaves. There are one or two cultivars such as the four-foot-high (about 120cm) 'Bressingham Double', which has semi-double flowers, and a smaller variety 'Summer Sun' (that word again) which has deep yellow flowers and dark green foliage.

Patrick Campbell's book 'The Tropic Gardener', described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, is available for B500 (half price) to personal callers from 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13 in Rawai (Tel: 076-61227 or 085-7827551).



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# Itameshi served in style

The Phuket News  
life@classactmedia.co.th

**F**eaturing Japanese floral décor and a well-crafted menu focusing on the best local ingredients and produce, dining at Semi Di Tsubu is a delight for the taste buds.

I had eaten dinner at Semi Di Tsubu before, so I was thrilled to get the chance to go for lunch and sample the new lunch menu. My dining partner and I arrived at the restaurant at 11:30am sharp with hungry tummies and high expectations.

The ambience of the restaurant is warm and welcoming. Featuring bold pink and green interiors and comfortable seating, we choose a table and, of course, take plenty of photos for our Instagram feeds before perusing the menu. Once seated, the wait staff serve us our drinks and we decide on the day's luncheon feast. We order Tomato, Thai Tajima Wagyu Tartar, Ravioli and the Miyazaki Don.

From the small bites menu, the Tomato dish is a salad of fermented cherry tomatoes, fresh tomato peel, EVOO and burrata. It's light and delicious and the burrata adds a creamy touch. I'd eaten the Thai Tajima Wagyu Tartar before, and it is a stellar dish of hand-cut Thai wagyu tenderloin with house made pickle egg, salted miso cream, spring onion and fresh truffle. Mixed together, it is



Photos: Semi Di Tsubu

gooey and delicious. Definitely one of the best beef tartar that I've ever had!

The Miyazaki Don is made with Miyazaki Grade 4 and it's a bowl of Japanese risotto rice, grilled shiitake mushrooms, teriyaki sauce, fresh wasabi and an onsen egg. This dish is rich and hearty, and loaded with the authentic flavours of Japan. Last, but definitely not least, we are served the Ravioli. For me, this is the stand-out dish of the entire lunch. The dish features Thai Tajima Wagyu, ricotta cheese, shio miso butter, aged Parmesan cheese, fermented wood ear mushroom, burnt

spring onion and nori. The flavours are heavenly, and the Ravioli is melt-in-your-mouth delicious. This is definitely my new favourite menu item that the restaurant offers.

As far as the Phuket dining scene goes, Semi Di Tsubu is one to watch. It's the only restaurant on the island serving Itameshi cuisine, and the food is simply outstanding and perfectly executed. Service here is excellent as well. The restaurant is a great place to gather with friends, and the perfect spot for a romantic evening.

– Amy Bensema



*Semi Di Tsubu is located on the main road to Surin Beach, 650 metres east of the beach. Parking is available out front. The restaurant is open daily from 6pm to midnight; and open for lunch from 11:30-3pm on Saturdays & Sundays. Advanced reservations are recommended. Reserve your table at [info@semiditsubu.com](mailto:info@semiditsubu.com) or call +66 (0) 93 650 1888.*

*This article was first featured in the comprehensive dining guide 'Where to Eat in Phuket'. [www.wheretoeat-phuket.com](http://www.wheretoeat-phuket.com)*



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# POP QUIZ

1. 'Area 51' of Edwards Air Force Base, central to much conjecture over UFOs, is in which US state?
2. Which scholar supposedly exclaimed 'Eureka!'?
3. By what name is singer Alecia Moore better known by?
4. Gymnophobia is the fear of what?
5. What was the name of Bruce Lee's final film?

Answers below, centre

## SUDOKU

Hard

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

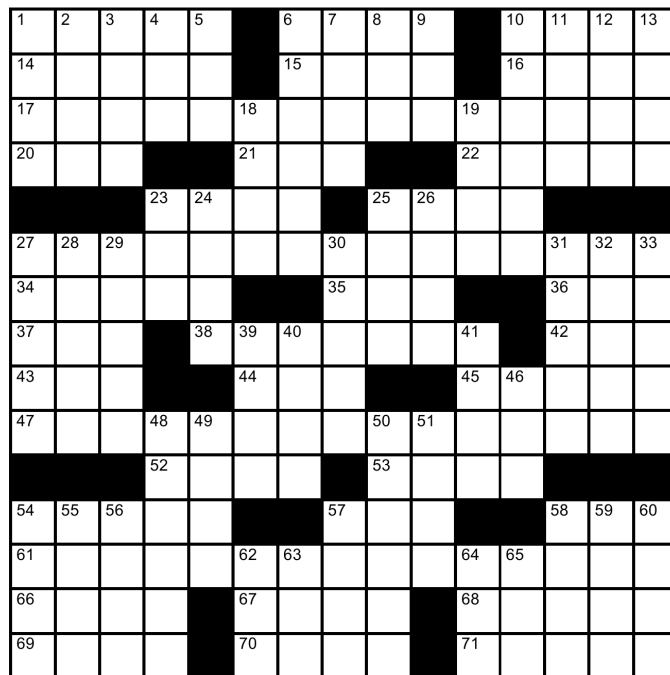
## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. A Ramsey
6. Bite
10. "Oh, \_\_\_\_!"
14. Relieve
15. Screen symbol
16. Jump on the ice
17. Dog breed
20. Sugar amt.
21. Make, in arithmetic
22. Like many a basement
23. Discomfit
25. Algonquian Indian
27. Develop a passion
34. Hip bone
35. Back muscle, familiarly
36. Maintained
37. KLM calculation
38. Dress material
42. Counter offer?
43. Bread served with korma
44. Ready for battle
45. Poker ploy
47. Heavy metal band
52. Australian prime minister
53. Not to be trusted
54. Auspices
57. One of a couple
58. Safari sight

Down

1. Snoop Dogg song
2. "The Sound of Music" backdrop
3. Camper's purchase
4. Go downhill fast?
5. Hunger
6. Like many wedding cakes
7. Small field
8. Discouraging words
9. Econ. yardstick
10. Noriega
11. x, y or z
12. Face up to
13. Comrade in arms
18. Where Samson died
19. Final word
23. Swine \_\_\_\_
24. Bullets, e.g.
25. Greenish blue
26. Big name in hotels
27. Evil one
28. Hitching post
29. Jungle vine
30. Guanaco's cousin
31. Circle
32. Ballroom dance
33. Submit
39. South African monetary unit
40. Amsler \_\_\_\_
41. Seed covering
46. "\_\_\_\_ calls?"
48. Hampers
49. Yorkshire river
50. Everyday
51. Cheeky
54. Fungal spore sacs
55. Continental coin
56. Govt. operative
57. Small amount
58. U.S. territory
59. "Scream" star
60. Computer operator
62. Light into
63. Pedi subject
64. Hidden means of support?
65. Muumuu go-with

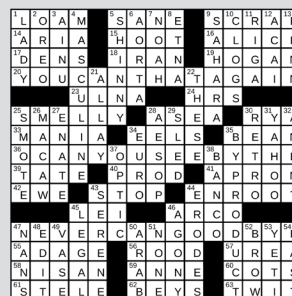


Visit: [www.ilovecrosswords.com](http://www.ilovecrosswords.com)

## Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Nevada; 2) Archimedes; 3) Pink; 4) Nudity; 5) Enter The Dragon

## Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

5.6

to one is the sheep-to-people ratio in New Zealand.

25

percent of all mattress sales in the US in 1987 were waterbeds.

48

years after the invention of canned food, the "can opener" was created.

29,525

feet above sea level is the highest altitude bees have been recorded as flying – higher than Mt Everest.

5

billion

people will be nearsighted by the year 2050, and up to one in 10 people may be at risk of blindness.

Source: *Uberfacts*

## ISLAND VIEW

LA ROTISSERIE

LOS POLLOS HERMANOS



'The Chicken Man' is serving Patong. Photo by Damien Evans

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

## This week in history

February 24, 1989

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issues a fatwa and offers a US\$3 million bounty for the death of Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*.

February 25, 1932

After seven years stateless, Adolf Hitler obtains German citizenship by naturalization, which allows him to run in the 1932 election for Reichspräsident.

February 26, 1993

A truck bomb parked under

the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City explodes, killing six people and injuring over 1,000.

February 27, 2015

Russian politician Boris Nemtsov, opposed to the government of Vladimir Putin, is gunned down dead on the Bolshoy Moskvoretsky Bridge in Moscow, hours after appealing to the public to support a march against Russia's war in Ukraine.



Boris Nemtsov.

February 28, 202 BC

Liu Bang is enthroned as the Emperor of China, beginning four centuries of rule

by the Han dynasty.

March 1, 1692

Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne and Tituba are brought before local magistrates in Salem Village, Massachusetts, beginning what would become known as the Salem witch trials.

March 2, 1962

In Burma (now named Myanmar), the army led by General Ne Win (b.1911-d.2002) seizes power in a coup d'état.

Source: *Wikipedia*



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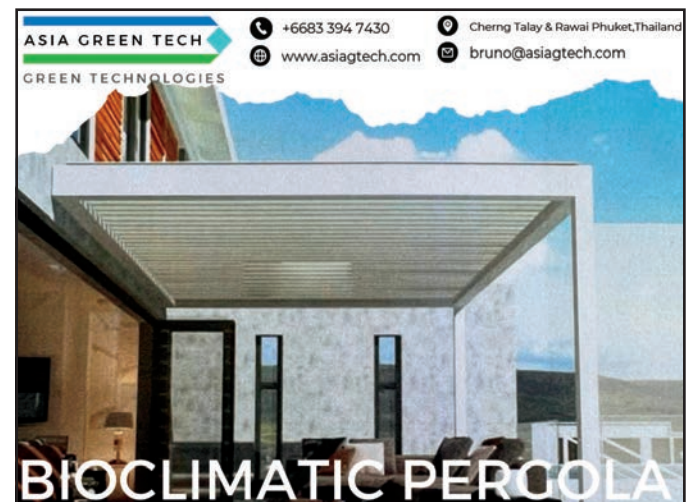
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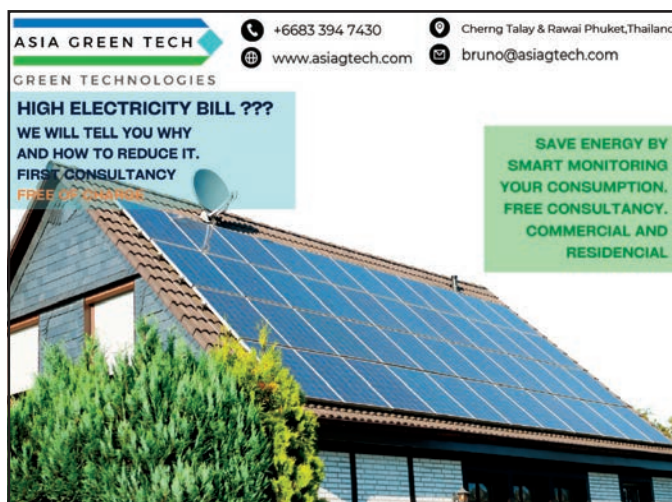
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## Phuket Dojo bags Manila medal haul

### JUDO

THE TEAM FROM DOJO at Blue Tree Phuket continued to demonstrate their excellent progression as they claimed a six-medal haul at last weekend's Philippines Invitational Judo Championships in Manila.

The tournament took place in the Philippine capital last Saturday (Feb 18), with seven students from the Phuket-based martial arts studio competing.

The Dojo students were from a variety of countries, including Japan, Lithuania, France, Russia and China.

Facing off against stiff local competition and some of the finest students from the Philippines, the Dojo students reached the podium in every single class they contested, winning three gold medals, two silver and one bronze.

Additionally, Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket head instructor Alexis Plantard won the 90kg adult classification to add further gloss to an outstanding



The Dojo team in Manila. Photo: Alexis Plantard

team effort.

"The whole tournament was a very good experience for all of us," a proud Alexis told *The Phuket News*.

"I am very proud of the entire team for a very strong performance. We gained a lot of confidence and we are now ready for the next tournament," he added.

That next tournament is in Sydney, Australia this weekend (Feb 24-26), followed by the Singapore Junior Judo Championships on March 11.

Alexis also competes in the Hong Kong International Open on March 5 and the World Cup of Wrestling in Tajikistan on March 11.

More information can be found at the Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket Facebook page.

Ben Tirebuck

## Ferrari unveils new F1 car

### FORMULA ONE

AFP

Ferrari unveiled their SF-23 car for the upcoming Formula One season at their Maranello headquarters on Feb 14, with the Scuderia gunning for Red Bull and world champion Max Verstappen.

The iconic Italian outfit finished second in the drivers and constructors championships last time out after an error-strewn campaign, way behind Red Bull whose top driver Verstappen comfortably retained his title.

A Ferrari driver hasn't won the championship since Kimi Raikkonen back in 2007 and the most recent constructors title came the following year, a long drought for F1's most successful team.

"The goal is to win, clearly," said driver Charles Leclerc, who took the SF-23 for a spin around the Maranello track in front of around 500 of the team's famously passionate supporters.

"The feeling of winning is what motivates me, motivates all the team too. I'm really looking forward to getting back in the car and trying to win the championship."



Ferrari's new single-seater SF-23. Photo: Ferrari press office / AFP

There is officially no pecking order between Leclerc and teammate Carlos Sainz, hence a coin toss which decided who would get first go on the new car at Maranello.

"If at one point of the championship a driver is clearly in the fight for winning... then I'm sure the team will do everything possible to put him in the best conditions," added Leclerc.

Sainz – who finished fifth last season with the high point his win in the British Grand Prix – said he was confident for the new season, which starts early next month with

the Bahrain Grand Prix.

"I've been working hard over the winter to arrive to this season prepared. Last year I had my bit of success, it was not an easy season but I don't know any easy season," said the Spaniard.

The coming season is the first for team principal Frederic Vasseur, who took charge in December following the resignation of Mattia Binotto the month before.

Vasseur gained a reputation for nurturing new talent, helping win the F2 series in 2005 and 2006 with future world champions Nico Rosberg and

Lewis Hamilton respectively. He has strong links from the junior categories with Leclerc.

The new car is designed with the aim of improving aerodynamics and the reliability of the engine, the latter being one of the key problems last season.

"Last year is not a secret, it was not the best aspect with the engine, we've done a good job and we're ready for the season," said Vasseur.

"The concept of the car is the same, the rules are the same. The priority is the reliability. Only Bahrain will tell us where we are."

## Snooker top guns to vie for 6-red title

### SNOOKER

THE GROUP STAGE OF NEXT month's B11 million Pathum Thani 6-red World Championship 2023 will feature a mouth-watering clash between current world No.1 Ronnie O'Sullivan and Thai snooker legend Wattana Pu-Ob-Orm.

The March 6-11 event, which is sanctioned by the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, will be staged at the 3,600-seat Convention Centre of Thammasat University's Rangsit campus.

A total of 32 players, including some of the top-ranked professionals and eight Thai stars, were divided into eight groups with the top two players in each group advancing to the knockout stage.

The draw for the popular tournament, which will offer the prestigious trophy graciously donated by His Majesty the King to the winner, was held on Feb 11.

The event also features defending champion Stephen Maguire of Scotland who won the tournament when it was last held in 2019, and reigning world women's snooker champion Nucharat Wongharuethai of Thailand.

Maguire and Nucharat, better known in Thailand as Mink Saraburi, are in Group A with Chinese duo Ding Junhui and Zhang Anda.

Wattana, better known to international snooker fans as James Wattana, faces a tough task in making it through to the last 16 round.

Placed in Group H, Wattana will take on reigning world snooker champion O'Sullivan



Ronnie O'Sullivan. Photo: AFP

as well as his English compatriots Jimmy Robertson and Stan Moody.

Former 6-red world champion Thepchaiya Un-nooh of Thailand has a relatively easier assignment in the first round in which he will meet Barry Hawkins (England), Luca Brecel (Belgium) and Jimmy White (England) in Group B.

Another Thai professional Noppon Saengkham was placed in Group G where he will play seasoned English campaigners Shaun Murphy and Stuart Bingham and Egypt's Mahmoud El-Hareedy.

Addressing the press conference ahead of the official draw, Pathum Thani governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said he hoped that the tournament will live up to the expectations of snooker fans around the world.

"All eyes will be on Thailand as the tournament will be televised live in some 200 countries," he said.

Billiard Sports Association of Thailand president Suntorn Jarumon said it was a historic tournament for Thai snooker.

"It will be the biggest ever snooker tournament to have been held in Thailand," he said. *Bangkok Post*

## Warriors take the bragging rights in Patong derby

### CRICKET

Continued from page 16

...with 7.2 overs to spare and cemented their place at the top of the table while proving that they really are a force to be reckoned with in the tournament.

Earlier in the day it was the return fixture of the Patong derby, with Warriors hoping to overturn Penguins only win in the competition so far.

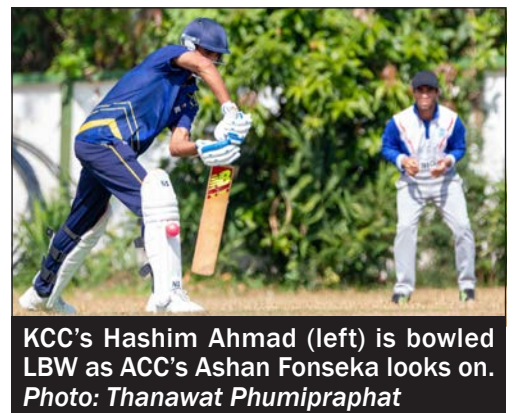
Penguins skipper, Curt Livermore opted to let Warriors set the pace after winning the toss, prompting his counterpart Ahsan Ali and opening partner Ahmad Mughal to hammer home the advantage of several dropped catches and as many teasing opportunities that narrowly evaded Penguins fielders.

It took until the 12<sup>th</sup> over for a Penguin breakthrough, when Andrew McMillan clean bowled Mughal (63) with the score on 125.

A colorful captain's innings from Ali (53 not out) helped Warriors stay within sight of their 10 per over run-rate, eventually posting 199 for 5 after 20 overs, while a humble 3 for 21 off 3 from Michael Flowers stood out from an otherwise mediocre Penguins bowling display.

The inning's turnaround invited to the crease Simon Wetherell and Mike Atkinson to attack the total, and an errant opening over from Saif Muhammad seemed to have put Penguins immediately into the driving seat before Wetherell holed out to Raja Shakiel on the bowler's 10<sup>th</sup> delivery.

Thumbing his nose to injury, Anthony Van Blerk bravely cameoed with 12 from 12, before Craig Morgan's introduction caused frenzied fielding changes amongst the many Warriors



KCC's Hashim Ahmad (left) is bowled LBW as ACC's Ashan Fonseka looks on. Photo: Thanawat Phumipraphat

decision makers, with Penguins total on 58.

A 60-run partnership between Atkinson and Morgan boosted Penguins to 118 in the 12<sup>th</sup> over – just a foreshadowing 7 runs adrift from Warriors total at the same inning's juncture – when Atkinson (62) was run out by a stump-menacing throw from Mughal.

Still 7 runs shy of the Warriors by the 16<sup>th</sup> over, Penguins looked to push their wickets-in-hand advantage only to have Morgan (52) caught on the boundary by Saif off Yasir's bowling.

A snappy 15 off 11 from Livermore ended with a caught and bowled by Saif, bringing McMillan and Flowers together, targeting 25 off 11 for victory.

Unable to punch through that ominous 7-run deficit, the Penguins pair ended their team's innings on 192-5 to rapturous celebrations from the Warriors. Bowling honours went to Saif for his 2 for 23 off 3, while Mughal claimed the player of the match award.

The action continues at the ACG on Sunday (Feb 26) as the Warriors take on KCC at 10:30am and the Penguins face ACC at 1:30pm. *Neil Quail / Michael Flowers*



# Gunners win thriller at Villa

FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal regained pole position in the Premier League title race last Saturday (Feb 18) as the Gunners fought back for a thrilling 4-2 victory at Aston Villa, while Manchester City were held to a damaging 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest.

Just three days after surrendering first place with a 3-1 defeat against City, Arsenal bounced back in impressive style to move two points clear of the champions.

With just minutes left at Villa Park, Mikel Arteta's side were in danger of slipping up again in their bid to win the title for the first time since 2004.

Arsenal twice trailed to goals from Ollie Watkins and Philippe Coutinho, only for Bukayo Saka and then Oleksandr Zinchenko to haul them level.

Deep into second half stoppage-time, Arsenal received a helping hand from their former keeper as Emiliano Martinez inadvertently deflected Jorginho's shot into his own net after it hit the bar. Gabriel Martinelli capped



Arsenal regained top spot in the Premier League after a thrilling 4-2 victory at Aston Villa. Photo: AFP

Arsenal's remarkable escape when he tapped into the empty net in the final seconds after Martinez was caught upfield at a Villa corner.

"We are back with more belief than before because you have to turn performances into results," Arteta said.

Arsenal's first victory in five games in all competitions will give them renewed belief they can pip City to the title.

The Gunners, who have a game in hand on the champions, were given a massive boost by their title rivals' stumble just hours later.

Bernardo Silva put Pep Guardiola's men ahead four

minutes before half-time before Chris Wood tapped in Morgan Gibbs-White's cross in the 84th minute to equalise.

Manchester United moved to just three points behind City with a comfortable 3-0 win over Leicester City on Sunday.

Marcus Rashford scored twice to reach 24 goals overall for the season so far, his best ever return. Jadon Sancho added United's third goal.

Liverpool got back into the hunt for a top four place after ending Newcastle's 17-game unbeaten league run with a 2-0 win at St James' Park, thanks to goals from Darwin Nunez and Cody Gakpo.

Everton moved out of the relegation zone with a valuable 1-0 win against fellow strugglers Leeds at Goodison Park courtesy of captain Seamus Coleman's strike, while Bournemouth recorded an invaluable 1-0 win at Wolves.

Bottom side Southampton shocked Chelsea with a 1-0 at at Stamford Bridge with James Ward-Prowse scoring his 17th Premier League free-kick, leaving him one behind David Beckham's record.

Tottenham beat West Ham 2-0, sixth-placed Fulham won 1-0 at Brighton, while Brentford and Crystal Palace drew 1-1.

## Great Dane Olesen cruises to Thailand Classic victory

GOLF

DENMARK'S THORBjorn Olesen fired six birdies on an unblemished scorecard to thunder to victory by four shots in the Thailand Classic last Sunday (Feb 19).

Olesen ended with a bogey-free 66 and finished the tournament at 24 under par.

The 33-year-old Dane went into the final round with a two-stroke lead after an impeccable 64 on Saturday.

The win at Chon Buri was his seventh DP World Tour title and first victory since claiming the British Masters in May last year, although his first win in Asia.

Olesen dug deep with fellow Dane Nicolai Hojgaard, 21, and Germany's Yannik Paul, 28, hot on his heels throughout the final round.

Birdies at the first, second and sixth holes helped him gain the upper hand early.

Then a hat-trick of bird-



Olesen with the trophy. Photo: Bangkok Post

ies from the 13th hole saw him move five shots clear with three holes to play.

Paul claimed second place on 20 under par after hitting a 68.

Hojgaard had been in joint second with Paul until a double bogey on the 16th cost him dearly.

He slipped down to fifth spot as Joost Luiten, 37, from the Netherlands and Germany's Alexander Knappe, 33, hit late birdies to tie in third place.

Another Dane, Oliver Hundeboll, 23, hit an ace on the 13th hole to win a BMW.

The tournament at Amata Spring Country Club offered US\$2 million (B69mn) in prize money. AFP

## World Cup heartbreak for Chaba Kaew

FOOTBALL

THAILAND'S DREAM of competing in their third consecutive Women's World Cup is over after the 'Chaba Kaew' fell 2-0 to Cameroon in a qualifying playoff last Saturday (Feb 18).

This year's World Cup, which will be played from July 20 to Aug 20 in New Zealand and Australia with the United States as defending champions, will be the first edition to feature 32 teams.

The Thai women competed in both the 2015 and 2019 tournaments but will miss this year's edition.

Cameroon, who reached the last 16 at the 2015 and 2019 tournaments, triumphed at Waikato Stadium in Hamilton following two late goals from substitute Gabrielle Onguene in a chaotic match that featured 24 minutes of added time.

In the most evenly matched of the four games in New Zealand thus far, Thailand began the brighter before Cameroon slowly began to take a grip on proceedings.



Thailand's Taneekarn Dangda (left) vies with Cameroon's Estelle Johnson. Photo: Bangkok Post

The Chaba Kaew struggled to break out of their own half as the match wore on but did have one near miss on the hour-mark when captain Nipawan Panyosuk found the side-netting with a free-kick from just outside the area.

Onguene finally opened the scoring in the 79th minute by connecting with a squared pass from Ajara Nchout before wrapping up the victory with another sublime strike three minutes later.

Cameroon were reduced to 10 players deep into stoppage time when goalkeeper Ange Bawou was sent off after a lengthy VAR check

for a foul on Jiraporn Mongkoldee.

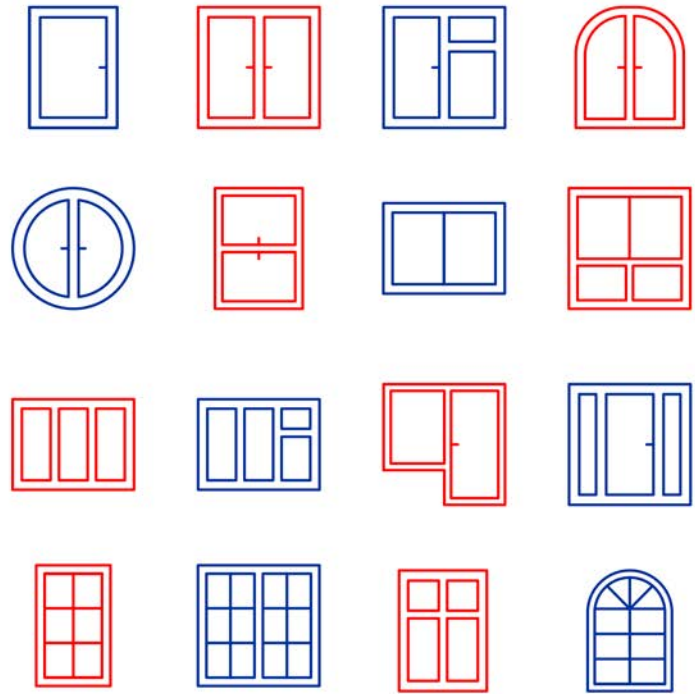
While the Chaba Kaew are out of the qualifying tournament, their time in New Zealand was not over as they were set to play a friendly against Senegal on Tuesday (Feb 21) in Hamilton, an invaluable opportunity to gain some more international experience.

Cameroon were due to face Portugal in Hamilton on Wednesday, with Haiti set to take on Chile in Auckland on the same day to secure two of the three remaining spots in the 2023 World Cup.

Bangkok Post

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# Sport



**Phuket Dojo claims more medals > p14**



The runners gather at the race start line last Sunday (Feb 19). Photo: PR Phuket

## FOOTBALL

The Phuket News  
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Hundreds of runners turned out at Bang Wad Dam in Kathu early last Sunday morning (Feb 19) to join a charity fun run to raise funds to help victims of the recent devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

The event, organised by the Phuket Tourist Association and titled "You Are Not Alone", was supported by more than 16 local private businesses and government agencies, to help support the ongoing efforts to provide relief aid to victims of the earthquake. At time of press the earthquake had killed more than 46,000 people in both countries.

Present to officiate the event was Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation

(PPAO), along with Phuket Tourist Association President Thanet Tantipiriyakit and Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, who serves as chairman of the advisory board of the association.

Other organisations that lent their support to the fun run, which got underway at 6:30am, included the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, Phuket Tourism Industry Council, Thai Hotels Association Southern chapter, the Phuket branch of the Federation of Industries, Phuket Real Estate Association, Kata-Karon Beach Hotel Operators Association, Patong Beach Hotels Association, Phuket City Development Co Ltd, the Phuket Health Spa Association, Phuket Boutique Accommodation Association, the Andaman Guide Association, the Private School Association Phuket and the Phuket Tour Operators Association.

Members of the organisation

as well as local residents, including foreigners, arrived in the hundreds for the one-lap run around the island's largest reservoir, which is approximately 6.3 kilometres.

Support for the cause was further realised by participants and spectators buying shirts and bibs, as well as food and drinks, to support the event.

In order to provide additional support for the fundraising efforts, the Phuket Tourist Association organised a free concert at the Dragon Statue area at Queen Sirikit Park in Phuket Town after the run on Sunday evening between 7pm and 10pm.

The 'Living in Harmony Charity Concert' featured Amsterdam, the Biggles Big Band and the Phuket Lookthung Band, all providing the entertainment for the many revellers in attendance, who also made further donations to help the relief efforts.

## DEVASTATING

The devastating 7.8-magnitude quake, regarded as the worst in a century, struck in the early hours of the morning on Feb 6 as many people were still sleeping in their homes.

Multi-storey apartment buildings full of residents were among the 5,606 structures reduced to rubble in Turkey, while Syria announced dozens of collapses, as well as damage to archaeological sites in Aleppo.

Relief efforts poured in almost immediately from dozens of countries and from the United Nation's humanitarian relief support team. However, the freezing weather proved challenging and hampered emergency rescue efforts in both countries.

Thailand was among the first countries to send support as a team of 42 members of the Urban Search and Rescue team (Usar) and two search-

and-rescue dogs arrived in Istanbul on Feb 10.

While there, the team provided aid to locals and helped recover 34 bodies.

They returned home to a heroes welcome last Sunday as Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha hosted a ceremony at Suvarnabhumi International Airport and praised the teams' efforts.

"This is also the first time that Thailand has worked with other countries in a search and rescue mission, which raises the country's reputation in terms of humanitarian assistance and strengthens ties with Turkey," he said.

Humanitarian supplies donated by Their Majesties the King and Queen were also sent to Turkey on Feb 16 aboard a Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) Airbus A340-500 that also brought Thai nationals in Turkey back home.

The supplies included

small-sized mobile generators, cold weather sleeping bags, large-sized tents, dried food, milk and drinking water.

A total of 36 people were evacuated from Turkey and repatriated via the RTAF Airbus last Saturday, with many expressing their grateful appreciation to His Majesty the King and the government of Thailand, adding the assistance offered was beyond their expectations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that one Thai woman lost her life as a result of the disaster.

Chamaiporn Homsantia, 28, who worked as a traditional masseuse in the Turkish town of Iskenderun was reportedly asleep when the quake struck.

Her body was returned to her home in Chaiyaphum province last Thursday (Feb 16).

*Additional reporting by the Bangkok Post*

## Dominant Andaman CC maintain top spot in style

### CRICKET

ANDAMAN CRICKET CLUB (ACC) consolidated their position as leaders of the 2023 Phuket T20 cricket league with a convincing win against the Kashmiri Cricket Club (KCC) at a sweltering Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) last Sunday (Feb 19), while the Warriors came out on top against the Penguins in the Patong derby.

Both games saw quality performances and generally more mature conduct on show, in rather stark contrast to the previous weekend's

less than savoury atmosphere.

Introducing a disciplinary card system as an 'incentive' for players to be more mindful of the rules and officials, any talking points were wisely dismissed to the bar instead of interrupting either game's momentum.

League leaders ACC, who were surprise last ball losers last week, faced off against KCC in the afternoon clash, with the latter fresh off a hard-fought victory against the Patong Penguins the previous week.

After winning the toss and electing to bat first, the highly regarded ACC opening bowling pair of Ashan Fonseka and Jagsir Brar took on the

experienced opening KCC pair of Zahoor Ahmad (18) and Mohammed Arif (17).

While Fonseka bowled fast and accurately from one end, Brar struggled to control a prodigious amount of swing with the pink ball from the other until one of his hooping inswingers cleaned up Ahmad in the 5<sup>th</sup> over with the score at 30-1.

KCC struggled to increase the tempo of the innings from that point on although Captain Imtiyaz Mushtaq (42) and the left-handed Hashim Ahmad (32) offered resistance and threatened to give significant impetus to the innings.

No other batsmen however reached 5 runs as KCC battled away to post an under-par total of 146/9 in the first innings. Fonseka was the stand out ACC bowler with the very economical figures of 1/17 from his 4 overs.

Chasing 147 to win, Fonseka came out with Rishi Sadarangani (1) and wasted little of the remaining afternoon sunlight as he blasted a six off the final ball of the innings to finish at 98 not out from just 46 balls, with 16 fours and 4 sixes in an innings which saw players at times having to avoid the ball as it scorched across the firm ACG outfield



Photo: Thanawat Phumipraphat

at unprecedented speed.

Manish Sadarangani (42) had provided ideal strike rotation with Fonseka during a 114-run partnership for the 2nd wicket before Gourav Kumar (0 not out) was denied a certain run as Fonseka surged towards what was very nearly a remarkable century.

ACC completed the 8-wicket win...

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