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## NOT FOR SALE

Koh Raet, or 'Rhino Island', between Ao Por and Naka Island, off the coast of Pa Khlok. Photo: NACC Phuket

## CORRUPT OFFICIALS NAMED IN 'PRIVATE ISLAND' LAND GRAB

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has called for corruption charges to be brought against eight Lands Department officials for illegally issuing land title documents for plots that were to be included in the Jumeirah Private Island project, which failed nearly 20 years ago.

Sittichai Promchat, an official formerly with the Phuket Provincial Land Office, and several associates including other officials, are under scrutiny for unlawfully issuing land title deeds on Koh Raet, off the coast of Pa Khlok, the NACC announced through a statement.

The NACC's investigation found that several land plots, totaling more than 67 rai, were issued with land title deeds despite the claims being supported by a lack of actual use. Moreover, discrepancies were noted between reported land usage and photographic evidence proving the land was not occupied and being used as claimed, the statement explained.

The investigation uncovered that during the period of 1967 to 1976, prior to a 1978 survey, the land in question remained largely unused, consisting of forest, secondary rainforest, natural fields, and cleared areas. Consequently, the issuance of land title deeds (NorSor 3 Gor) before the enactment of the Land Code was deemed illegal.

The NACC investigating committee unanimously passed a resolution identifying eight government officials accused of criminal offenses under the Criminal Code as: Sittichai Promchart, Udom Chaiyasalee, Phaisan Bunlom, Thongchai Suwanpahu, Charassathi 'Chu' Phak Na Nakhon, Pairat Phongaroon, Wiroj Chanthongpoon and Damrongsak Leesakul.

In response to the findings, the NACC unanimously passed a resolution calling for the eight officials to face prosecution under relevant sections of the Criminal Code and under the 'Act Supplementing the Constitution Relating to the Prevention and Suppression of Corruption, B.E. 2561 (2018)', simply better known as the 'Anti-Corruption Act'.

The NACC further advised the Lands Department to revoke the unlawfully issued land rights documents, specifically the land documents: No. 34111 (9-1-22.9 rai); No. 34112 (11-1-40.8 rai); No. 34149 (11-1-70.6 rai); No. 35264 (15-0-26.7 rai); and No. 37440 (21-2-99 rai).

While eight officials were found to have engaged in corrupt practices, accusations against some individuals following preliminary investigations, leading to calls for the dropping of charges against those people, the NACC said in its statement.

The NACC said the eight officials stood accused of violating Sections 151, 157 and 83 of the Criminal Code. Section 151, 'Wrongful Exercise...

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Taxi intimidation still in Kamala



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# News



**Rajabhat building fiasco under review > p5**

## NACC targets illegal land grabs

Continued from page 1

...of the Purchase or Management of State Property' incurs a fine of B2000 to B40,000 or from five to 20 years, or even life, in jail, or any combination of the penalty.

Section 157 of the Criminal Code stipulates: "Whoever, being an official, wrongfully exercises or does not exercise any of his functions to the injury of any person, or dishonestly exercises or omits to exercise any of his functions, shall be punished with imprisonment of one to 10 years or a fine of B2,000 to B20,000, or both."

Section 83 of the Criminal Code notes: "In case of any offence is accrued by commission of the person as from two persons upwards, such accomplices deemed to be principals shall be punished as provided by the law for such offence."

### PRIVATE ISLAND

In addition to corrupt officials facing prosecution, the NACC also named a slew of non-government persons, real and juristic, to be charged for their roles in the illegal land grab.



Niwatchai Kasemmongkol, Secretary-General of the NACC, in Phuket earlier this month. Photo: PR Phuket

Specifically named as implicated in the scam were: TGR Estate Co Ltd, TGR Property Co Ltd, TGR Beach Co Ltd, Miss Thidaratt Tangjitcharoen, Miss Raila 'Busaba' Tinkoyao, Miss Kornsiethorn Premkulnon 'Premwara' Na Nakhon and Mr Thanadej 'Dilokpol' Sundaravej. "These entities are accused of supporting government officials, with charges based on Sections 151 and 157 of the Criminal Code, coupled with Section 86," the NACC said.

The TGR group of companies, and specifically 'Dilokpol' Sundaravej, were specifically synonymous

with the 'Barama Bay' and 'Jumeirah Phuket Private Island Resort' to be built on Koh Raet, a small island located halfway between Ao Por Pier and Naka Yai Island, all located off the coast of Pa Khlok.

"Set over 56,000 square metres of private land, Jumeirah Phuket Private Island Resort will be an exclusive and luxurious island resort offering, spectacular views of the limestone karsts of Phang Nga Bay to the north, views of the beaches of Ao Po Bay to the west and kilometers of white sandy beaches with views of both Naka Yai and Naka

Noi," said the release promoting the mega-project in 2006.

Named as Partner and Managing Director for TGR Group – Asia, Mr Dilokpol Sundaravej, commented in the release, "It is with great pleasure that we appoint Jumeirah Group and we feel this partnership will provide our clients with a unique and exclusive luxury experience unparalleled by any other in the region."

The TGR Group led the design, construction, and authority permit submission of the Jumeirah Private Island Development on Koh Raet.

TGR Property Co Ltd, launched with a registered capital of B10 million in December 2005, is still listed as operating from offices on Chao Fa Rd.

TGR Estate Co Ltd, formed in February 2006 also with a registered capital of B10mn, is listed as still operating from offices near the airport in Mai Khao.

TGR Beach Co Ltd, formed in May 2006 also with B10mn in registered capital, is also listed as still operating from the same address as TGR Estate Co Ltd near the airport.

Mr Dilokpol currently lists on his LinkedIn page that he is 'VP of Construction' at a major property development firm based in Bangkok.

The NACC gave no explanation as to why it has taken so long to complete its investigation into the corrupt officials and the illegal issuance of land titles for the project.

A probe by the Justice Ministry in 2015 discovered the same – but despite promises to take legal action against those deemed to be responsible for the illegal issuance of the land titles, none was taken.

However, the announcement did coincide with a three-day NACC public promotion event held at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on May 1-3, led by Suwat Saowaran, Director of the NACC Phuket Office.

Niwatchai Kasemmongkol, Secretary-General of the NACC, was present for the occasion.

While in Phuket, Niwatchai later led officials and media on an inspection tour of Yamu Beach and Ley Phang Beach to highlight the issue of encroachment onto public land at Phuket beaches.

# HAND OVER THE KEYS, NOT BIG FEES

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## Governor to lead Senator selection

PHUKET GOVERNOR Sophon Suwannarat, a Bangkok-appointed official, will chair the selection committee for the so-called "election" of Phuket's next senator.

The Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT Phuket) confirmed the position through a formal notice posted on May 14.

Under the "electoral process" published in the Royal Gazette on May 13, members of the public claiming to represent any one of 20 "civil groups of society" may apply for selection as a senator.

ECT Phuket on May 15 through a slew of notices announced the times and locations in Phuket for submitting applications for the selection process. Oddly, much of the official announcements by ECT Phuket used the word "elected".

According to the official announcement, the timeline for the senatorial selection process is as follows:

May 11 - The Royal Decree on the Selection of Senators B.E. 2024 comes into effect

May 13 - Election Commission of Thailand announces application date and time, and selection days at the district, province, and country levels



Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat officiates the opening of the Phuket City Municipality Local Food Festival 2024 at Saphan Hin on May 11. Photo: PR Phuket

May 14 - District Selection Director announces application locations

May 20-24 - Applications accepted to be elected [sic] as senators

May 29 - The last day for announcing the list of candidates elected [sic] to the Senate.

June 9 - District-level senator election day [sic]

June 16 - Provincial-level senator election day [sic]

June 26 - National senator election day [sic]

July 2024 - Announcement of Senate selection results (date not specified)

In Phuket, the provincial selection committee will comprise Governor Sophon (Chairman) along with: Suwit Suriyawong, Mueang Phuket District Chief; Pol Maj Gen

Sinlert Sukhum, Phuket Provincial Police Commander; Wuttichai Bamrungrat, originally from Chiang Mai currently serving as Chief of the Phuket branch Department of Local Administration (DOLA); Wikrom Jaktee, Phuket Provincial Administrative Chief (Palad); Uthai Thabthong, chief of the Phuket branch of the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA); and Orapin Acheevasuk, Director of ECT Phuket.

### ALREADY CLOSED

Applications for candidates in Phuket were accepted this week (May 20-24).

Applications for candidates for Mueang Phuket District were accepted at the Mueang Phuket District Office. The Mueang Phuket district-level selection committee comprises: Mueang Phuket District Chief Mr Worasit Putjeeb (Chairman); Mrs Kanisorn Kaewthipnil; Mrs Monthira Jitwan; Mrs Pornthip Bualuang; Mr Thaweesak Sawatdivej; Mr Prasert Thongsomboon; and Mr Wichet Suyanun.

Likewise, applications at the Kathu District Office and the Thalang District Office also closed today (May 24).

The Phuket News



# Highways Office assures Sarasin Bridge will stay

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Highways Office Chief Yutthana Phitak has confirmed that there are plans afoot to build a new bridge connecting Phuket to the mainland, but has assured that the famed Sarasin Bridge will not be demolished.

The assurance came at a meeting held on May 13 to allay fears that the future of Phuket's iconic bridge would not be in jeopardy.

Built in 1951 under a budget of B28.77 million and officially opened on July 7, 1967, the Sarasin Bridge with its span of 660 metres was the first bridge linking Phuket and Phang Nga.

The bridge has found its way into the fabric of Phuket folklore with the tragic story of bus driver Ko Dam Sae Tan and local teacher Kiw Kanchana Sae Ngo. The star-crossed lovers, forbidden to be together by social mores at the time, took their lives together in a leap from the bridge in 1978.

For reasons unexplained,



Photo: PR Phuket

attending the meeting were Wongsakorn Chanakit and Wiwat Jindaphon. Both are former Phuket MP candidates for the Bhumjaithai Party who have failed to gain a seat in elections.

The Move Forward Party easily won all three Phuket MP seats in the election last year.

Of note, however, Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who also serves as the Minister of Interior, is the leader of the Bhumjaithai Party, which holds a strong minority role in the Pheu Thai-led coalition that is ruling the country.

Deputy Prime Minister Anutin was in Phuket only earlier this month.

Phuket Highways Chief Yutthana said that many people had taken to social media to express their concerns about the future of the Sarasin Bridge.

The concerns followed a visit to the island by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin last month. Official reports confirmed that PM Srettha was presented with plans to build a new bridge joining Phuket with the mainland – but no details of the plans were revealed to the public.

No details of the plans were revealed to the public.

Mr Yutthana said that some social media posts had claimed that the Sarasin Bridge was to be demolished to allow a greater clearance for large yachts and other vessels to pass safely underneath.

“The Highways Department has no intention of demolishing Sarasin Bridge now or in the future in order to carry out a transportation network project,” Mr Yutthana said.

“There must be a detailed study of that project. Including conducting a public hearing to listen to opinions from people in the area. and study environmental impacts before the budget proposal can be implemented,” he added, according to an official report of the meeting.

“The Highways Department does have a project to build a ‘new Sarasin Bridge’ to facilitate travel between Phuket and Phang Nga, but it is still in the concept stage and we have requested a budget to study the design details of the project,” Mr Yutthana said.



Photo: Patong Police

## Bangla stabbing suspects arrested

PATONG POLICE HAVE arrested three men for the stabbing of a British tourist on Bangla Rd early last Friday morning (May 18).

In a report posted online last Sunday (May 19), Patong Police confirmed that the three men – unnamed in the report – were taken into custody at 8pm last Friday night.

The quick arrests were credited to the instruction of Patong Police Chief Pol Col Chalermchai Hirsawat and the slew of investigative officers he assigned to quickly take action in the case.

British tourist Charlie Faulkner was stabbed once in his lower left side after an altercation with “four to five” Thai men in front of 7-Eleven near Soi Sea Dragon at 4:40am on Friday.

Mr Faulkner made his way into the 7-Eleven to seek assistance. He received immediate first aid from rescue workers who soon arrived at the scene, then taken to Patong Hospital for further care.

At last report, no motive for the stabbing, or the altercation, had been explained. *The Phuket News*

## Kamala taxi drivers repeat territory enforcement tactics

THE TAXI DRIVERS STATIONED IN front of Cafe del Mar in Kamala have yet again caused an incident that has negatively affected tourists' experience in Phuket.

A complaint was filed with Kamala Police after the incident on May 15.

Metered taxi driver Chalermphon Kwanyuen, 40, had received an order through the Bolt app to pick up passengers from in front of Cafe del Mar.

However, when he arrived at about 7:50pm, Manasmee Poksakul, a driver from the taxi queue in front of Cafe del Mar, approached him to “talk” about picking up passengers at that particular location.

Considering previous incidents involving taxi drivers in front of Cafe del Mar, Mr Chalermphon was brave enough to lower the window and unlock the door so they could talk.

Through a long one-way conversation from Manasmee, Mr Chalermphon was told to park in front of a hotel further down the road.

Manasmee spoke in a “dissatisfied manner”, Mr Chalermphon said, without giving details of the language used.

While Manasmee was “explaining” to Mr Chalermphon the conditions of picking up any passengers in front of Cafe del Mar, the two tourists in the back of the taxi became concerned about how the situation was unfolding and exited the vehicle.

While the tourists were walking away in the rain, Manasmee is seen shouting at them in a rude manner. The exact words used were not reported.

The incident was recorded on video by foreign tourists across the street. The video



Manasmee and another taxi driver from in front of Cafe del Mar approached the metered taxi on May 15. Screenshot: Supplied

was later posted on a popular local social media page, with many comments posted about how the taxi drivers in front of Cafe del Mar were tarnishing Phuket's tourism image.

While the situation unfolded, foreign tourists in front of Cafe del Mar looked on from a distance.

Manasmee was called to meet the investigating officer at Kamala Police Station, where he was told he was facing a charge of using threats or intimidation to cause fear or fright in others.

However, Kamala Police negotiated a settlement whereby Manasmee paid B500 and the matter was dropped.

Mr Chalermphon later told reporters that he was happy to settle the issue. He just wanted to feel safe and not make a big issue out of it, he said.

At tie of press, the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), still led by Chief Adcha Buachan, has yet to publicly recognise the incident. The PLTO is the government agency responsible for regulating all taxi drivers and taxi vehicles in Phuket. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

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The Phuket News

## CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

**PURIYA BEAVAN**  
Editor**CHRIS HUSTED**  
Executive Editor  
084 307 7408  
execeditor@classactmedia.co.th**BEN TIREBUCK**  
News / Sport Editor  
061 806 8132  
editor3@classactmedia.co.th**CHUTHARAT 'UM' PLERIN**  
Thai Editor  
088 766 1615  
thai@classactmedia.co.th**JASON BEAVAN**  
General Manager  
086 479 7471  
gm@classactmedia.co.th**SIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS**  
Sales Support  
086 479 7470  
sales@classactmedia.co.th**NIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA**  
**THANAPONG 'OAK' KHAO-AMPHAIPHAN**  
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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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SUN MAY 26

High: +35°  
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Wind 11 m/s

MON MAY 27

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Wind 4 m/s

TUE MAY 28

High: +35°  
Low: +28°  
Wind 4 m/s

WED MAY 29

High: +37°  
Low: +28°  
Wind 4 m/s

THU MAY 30

High: +36°  
Low: +27°  
Wind 4 m/s

# Swedish-Russian dual national arrested over B100k extortion

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A 25-year-old man who holds Swedish-Russian dual nationality has been arrested for his role in the extortion of more than B100,000 from a Russian woman after offering to provide the woman with currency exchange services.

Phuket Immigration Office had worked together with Chalong Police to make the arrest, the regular press conference at the Immigration Bureau headquarters in Bangkok was told on May 15.

The 25-year-old Swedish-Russian national was named only as 'Mr Oleksandr' (not his real name).

Phuket Immigration was informed of the incident by Chalong Police. The victim – a 23-year-old Russian woman named by Immigration only as 'Ms Diera' – had reported the incident at Chalong Police Station at 11pm on May 8.

Ms Diera explained that she had made an appointment through the Telegram app to meet Oleksandr at a villa in Chalong to exchange B25,000 in cash for US\$700 in cryptocurrency.

However, when she arrived, Oleksandr had a companion with him. A bag was put over her head, her arms and legs were tied and her phone was taken from her.

Ms Diera was slapped and threat-



Photo: Immigration Bureau

ened until she gave Oleksandr the number to access her online account. As there was no more money in the account, Oleksandr forced Ms Diera to contact a friend staying in a room nearby to bring cash from Ms Diera's room.

Oleksandr's accomplice, reported to be a Russian national, acted as the intermediary and received from Ms Diera's friend US\$2,000 in US banknotes and B6,000 in cash.

The total amount of the extortion was B104,546, the Immigration Bureau reported.

After Oleksandr was handed the cash, he released Ms Diera, who

promptly went to file a complaint at Chalong Police Station.

On being informed of the incident, Phuket Immigration added Oleksandr to the Immigration 'Watchlist'.

Immigration officers at Phuket International Airport were notified at 12:30pm on May 9. By 2:30pm that day they had had Oleksandr in custody.

He was caught by immigration officers while attempting to flee the country by boarding a flight to Kuala Lumpur.

Chalong Police were notified and officers arrived to take him back to Chalong Police Station.

Ms Diera identified Oleksandr and he was charged "for the crime of conspiring to rob others at night", said the Immigration Bureau in its report.

No mention was made of any charges for kidnap, deprivation of liberty, extortion or even assault.

Oleksandr's accomplice had already fled the country, the Immigration Bureau noted.

Investigating officers are continuing to gather evidence in order to request an arrest warrant from Phuket Provincial Court and are working on tracking down the accomplice in order to press charges.

## Israeli girl, 5, dies in fall from Patong tuk-tuk

A 5-YEAR-OLD ISRAELI girl has died after falling from a tuk-tuk on the Patong beach road.

Patong Police were informed of the incident at 10:40pm on May 16.

The girl, Nbaa Bahnasi, from Jerusalem, was riding in the back of the tuk-tuk with her family when the accident happened on Thawee-wong Rd (the beach road), Patong Police reported.

The tuk-tuk driver, Bunyang Kaewaksorn, 51, told police that he had to brake suddenly to avoid hitting a person crossing the road, which caused young Nbaa to fall from the back of tuk-tuk onto the road.

She was struck by a car



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

travelling behind.

Nbaa was rushed to Patong Hospital, but pronounced dead from her injuries.

Patong Police were continuing their investigation into the accident.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## More congestion at Heroines Monument as power poles moved

MOTORISTS HAVE BEEN WARNED about even heavier traffic congestion at the Heroines Monument on Thepkasatri Rd as workers started moving power lines south of the busy roundabout from Monday (May 20).

The Phuket Office of the Department of Public Relations (PR Phuket) explained in a notice last Friday (May 17) that the work will be conducted in two phases:

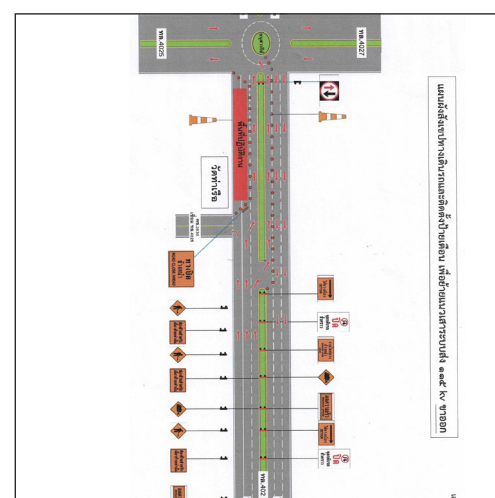
From May 20 through Jun 16, the power lines will be moved along the northbound side of the road.

From Jun 17 through Jun 30, the power lines will be moved along the southbound side of the road.

In both cases, approximately 1 km of Route 402 will be affected, with traffic partially moved to lanes normally leading in the opposite direction.

The Phuket office of the Department of Highways explained in an earlier notice that the work is being done in preparation for the Heroines Underpass project.

On Apr 19, Prime Minister Srettha



Power lines south of Heroines Monument will be moved in two phases, according to PR Phuket. Image: PR Phuket

Thavisin ordered all relevant authorities to expedite the implementation of projects aimed at alleviating traffic issues in Phuket, including the Heroines Underpass. The cost of this project is B2.38 billion, with a completion deadline set for 2026. *The Phuket News*



# Probe reviews Rajabhat B200mn building fiasco

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

During a visit to Phuket last week, Ruenwadee Suwanmongkol, Inspector-General of the Prime Minister's Office Government Inspection Area 6 office, stopped by to inspect firsthand the multipurpose building at Phuket Rajabhat University that remains incomplete despite more than B200 million spent on it.

Ms Ruenwadee was in Phuket to join a meeting on May 14 regarding the Phuket Provincial Governance Committee, said an official report of her visit.

Joining Ms Ruenwadee for the inspection were members of the Provincial Administrative Committee.

Official reports revealed no further details of the inspection.

However, one such report assured, "The Provincial Administrative Committee will take information from the field visit into consideration and discussion, to summarize and notify those responsible for the project... Ready to proceed with accuracy, transparency and to continue to carry out the project efficiently and to the greatest benefit to the people."

The inspection, and seeming investigation into the failed project, "focused on those responsible for the project", namely Phuket Rajabhat University,



Photo: PR Phuket

the official report said.

Several official reports of the inspection repeatedly marked that construction of the building was funded by a budget of B200mn, but made no further mention of any other funds spent on the building.

The B200mn figures stands in stark contrast to claims by the 'STRONG Anti-Corruption Thailand Club' that the B495mn was spent on the building, construction of which started more than 10 years ago.

Construction began in 2013, with B199.6mn paid during the "first round". More funds were dedicated to the project three more times, the anti-corruption group said.

In early 2016, B4.3mn was spent on hiring experts for a new design. At the

end of 2016, another budget of B229.7mn was contributed to the project.

In 2022, a further B61.4mn was allocated to completing the building, originally intended to provide a venue to hold teaching courses in hospitality. Yet, the building today remains abandoned, and due to its completion and lack of care is now falling into disrepair.

"After 10 years, there is still no sign that the construction has been completed. From investigation, it was found that in addition to the problem of changing the budget funds assigned along the way, there is still a problem with land boundaries. Who does not survey the area well before starting the project?" the anti-corruption network questioned when it highlighted the issue last year.



Photo: PR Phuket

## Rangers called on to help prevent deforestation

PHUKET VICE GOVERNOR Adul Chuthong has ordered all forest rangers on the island to ramp up efforts to prevent illegal encroachment and deforestation in their respective areas.

"There must be measures to protect and preserve forests that have tangible results," Vice Governor told a meeting at the Phuket Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Office on May 14.

V/Gov Adul cited encroachment at Freedom Beach and Nui Beach as two particular examples where officials were lax in taking preventative action.

At the meeting, of the Provincial Subcommittee on Prevention and Suppression of Deforestation, was Phuket MNRE Chief Watthanaphong Suksai.

Also present were officials representing the the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) and the Central

Investigation Bureau (CIB).

"There must be legal action and continuous monitoring of the area," V/Gov Adul said.

According to an official report of the meeting, a report was presented marking the performance of the relevant agencies in combating encroachment and deforestation, including following up on important and high-profile cases of each unit working in preventing and suppressing illegal acts in natural resources and environment areas, as well as descriptions of the problems and obstacles encountered, and solutions discovered.

Emphasis was placed on all officers involved to carry out their work seriously, the report said.

However, details of the MNRE Phuket's performance and ongoing campaigns against illegal encroachment and deforestation were not provided.

The Phuket News

## Pawnshop stumps up B170mn as new school term begins

IN RESPONSE TO THE increased financial needs of parents at the start of the school term, the Phuket City Municipality Pawnshop has announced the allocation of B170 million in floating reserves.

Kaewjai Sondee, manager of the Phuket City Municipality Pawnshop, located on Komarapat Rd in Phuket Town, reported a noticeable increase in the number of people coming to use the government pawnshop, with more than 200 people per day seeking assistance.

The increased activity coincides with the start of the new school term, a period typically marked by heightened financial pressure on families, Ms Kaewjai pointed out.

To further support the community, the pawnshop has implemented reduced interest rates from May 1 to June 30, she added.

For loans with a principal amount not exceeding B5,000, the interest rate has been lowered to 0.25% per

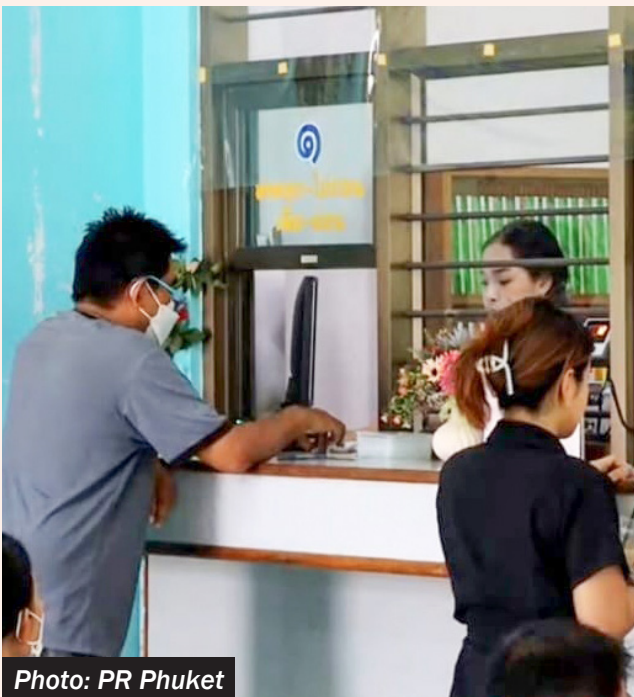


Photo: PR Phuket

month. For loans exceeding B5,000, the interest rate is set at 1% per month.

From July 1 to Dec 31, the rates will increase to 0.5% per month for loans up to B5,000, while the rate for higher amounts will remain at 1% per month, Ms Kaewjai noted.

"These measures represent the lowest interest rates

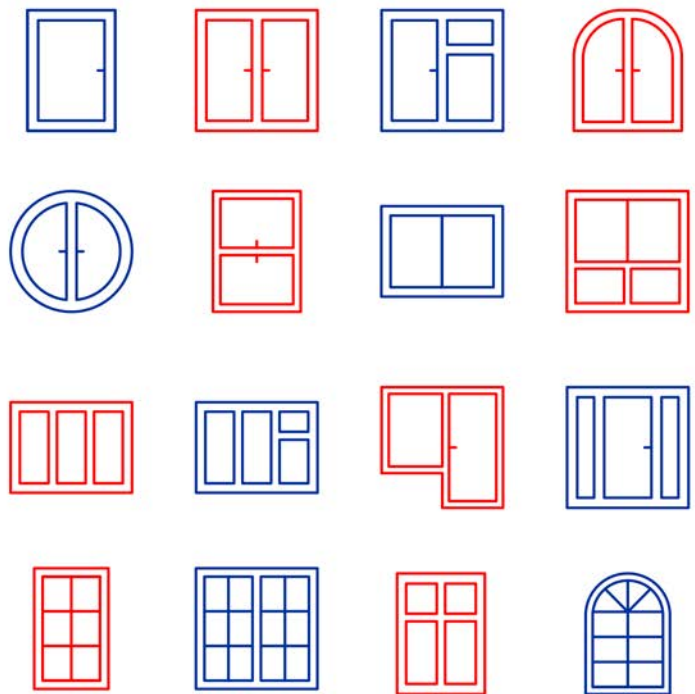
offered by the pawnshop to date, aimed at alleviating the financial burden on the public," Ms Kaewjai said.

Ms Kaewjai urged those in need of financial assistance to use the pawnshop's services. The Phuket City Municipality Pawnshop operates Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm. Tel: 076-211424.

The Phuket News



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## Cannabis traders petition to be keep weed legal

MEMBERS OF THE PHUKET Cannabis Association have submitted a formal request to not have cannabis reclassified as a narcotic.

Public Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin earlier this week revealed that the government would put cannabis back on the narcotics list by the end of this year (see facing page).

Mr Somsak said that the Public Health Ministry will issue a ministerial regulation governing the planting and storage of cannabis.

However, he will hold talks with operators of cannabis businesses and pro-cannabis groups to gather their feedback before the regulation is issued, he said.

Poonwarit 'Thames' Wangpatravanch, President of the Phuket Cannabis Association, submitted the formal request at the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) on May 16.

Present to receive the request was PPHO Chief Deputy Chief Somsuk Prathip.

Mr Somsuk spoke with members from the association. The primary concern highlighted in the request stemmed from recent announcements by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Health, which Mr Poonwrit said had sparked



Photo: PR Phuket

serious concerns among cannabis industry stakeholders.

The Phuket Cannabis Association, representing local business operators, is firmly against reclassifying marijuana as a Category 5 drug, Mr Poonwarit said.

The association's members argue that doing so would dismantle an emerging industry projected to be worth over a B100 billion within two years.

"This industry has the potential to create jobs, generate significant income and provide widespread opportunities for Thai citizens," Mr Poonwarit said.

Reverting marijuana to its previous drug status would lead to substantial economic losses, including increased unemployment and significant financial setbacks, he added.

"By advocating for a 'Marijuana Act', the association aims to secure the future of the cannabis industry and its contributions to Thailand's economy," he noted. *The Phuket News*

# Cabinet okays 10-year EEC visa for foreigners

Bangkok Post

The Cabinet has approved a special 10-year visa for executives and experts working in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) to support the development of targeted industries in the country.

Speaking after a mobile Cabinet meeting in Phetchaburi province on May 14, deputy government spokeswoman Rudklao Intawong Suwankiri said the Cabinet passed the proposal from the EEC Office for the EEC visa, aiming to attract specialists in various fields to work in the corridor.

The visa is valid for 10 years, allowing multiple entries and exits, but does not exceed the duration of the employment contract.

Initially the visa allows entry and stays in Thailand for up to five years.

There are four categories for the EEC visa: (1) specialists (EEC Visa "S"), (2) executives (EEC Visa "E"), (3) professionals (EEC visa "P"), and (4) spouses and dependents



Photo: Bangkok Post

(EEC visa "O").

In addition to this special visa, specialists residing and working in the EEC can benefit from a special personal income tax rate of 17%, compared with the current progressive income tax rate in Thailand, which has a maximum rate of 35%.

According to Mrs Rudklao, the EEC visa should promote the country's target industries and enhance national competitiveness.

In a separate development, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin on May 14 ordered the Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry to develop a

plan to improve agricultural infrastructure, aiming to elevate Thailand to a regional farming and food hub that can increase farmers' income by threefold.

Speaking after the Cabinet meeting, government spokesman Chai Wacharonke said the premier's directive aligns with Thailand's vision to become a hub for agriculture and food, contributing to global food security.

According to Mr Chai, the prime minister instructed various agencies to complete related project plans by the end of May, with the Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry

scheduled to provide detailed announcements by the end of this month and expedite actions by June.

The infrastructure improvement plan includes: developing Thailand into a global centre for plant genetics; increasing the efficiency of water retention, drainage and irrigated areas, while accelerating the development of water sources for agriculture; soil testing; and promoting appropriate fertiliser use in all areas.

Other issues include urgently addressing agricultural burning through satellite technology; proposing plans and accelerating the production of disease-resistant cassava, along with plans for disease management; and promoting the cultivation of coffee and cocoa, both high-income crops, to reduce burning on highland areas.

In addition, the Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding between Thailand and Saudi Arabia to promote agricultural co-operation between the two countries.

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# Jailed activist 'Boong' dies after hunger strike

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Relatives of Netiporn 'Boong' Sanesangkhom have finally been given a copy of the late activist's medical records by the Department of Corrections (DoC), the department said on Monday (May 20).

Ms Netiporn died from a heart attack at Thammasat University Hospital on May 14 after carrying out a hunger strike for 110 days while in detention to protest against political activists being detained.

While she started eating and drinking normally in early April, according to corrections officials, she was suffering from weakness and slightly swollen legs due to pre-existing anaemia and vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which worsened with her hunger strike. She continued to refuse to take supplements and medication to treat these conditions, the DoC said.

Known as a core leader of the Thalu Wang protest group,



Netiporn 'Boong' Sanesangkhom. Photo: Bangkok Post

Ms Netiporn had been imprisoned at the Central Women's Correctional Institution since Jan 26, after her bail was revoked in connection with a lese-majeste charge.

According to Weerada Kongthanakulroj, the lawyer representing the late activist's sister, the family had repeatedly pleaded to see the records, which contain details of Ms Netiporn's condition in the days leading up to her death.

Ms Weerada said that since the time the family first asked to see Ms Netiporn's medical records, the department had

delayed handing them over at least seven times.

According to a post on DoC's Facebook page, Ms Netiporn's medical records were given to her family's lawyer on Monday morning.

DoC officials also took members of the press on a tour of the Medical Correctional Hospital, where the late activist was treated before she died, the post said.

On May 15 Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin expressed his deep sorrow for Ms Netiporn's death and vowed to ensure transparency and justice.

Mr Srettha extended his condolences to the family of the 28-year-old activist and said he had ordered the Justice Ministry to investigate the circumstances surrounding her death.

Her passing raised questions about the treatment of detainees by the DoC in comparison with that of paroled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

It has also reignited calls for justice reform and drawn attention to two other political activists – Tantanwan 'Tawan' Tuatulanon and Nathanon 'Frank' Chaimahabud – who have also been staging a hunger strike for bail rights and the release of political detainees.

Ms Netiporn is the first activist to die in custody since the outbreak of youth-led protests in 2020 calling for reform of the monarchy.

She was among 272 people who have been charged with royal defamation under Section 112 of the Criminal Code since 2020, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR).

## Ministry to reclassify cannabis as a narcotic by end of year

### BANGKOK

THE GOVERNMENT will put cannabis back on the narcotics list by the end of this year, Public Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin has confirmed.

"[PM Srettha Thavisin] has given the ministry until the end of this year to reclassify cannabis as a narcotic. The sooner, the better," said Mr Somsak.

Asked whether he agreed with a Narcotics Control Board decision to decriminalise cannabis when he served as justice minister in the previous government, Mr Somsak said that he was part of the coalition government at the time and he had no sufficient information to oppose it.

Mr Somsak said that the Public Health Ministry will issue a ministerial regulation governing the planting and storage of cannabis. However, he will hold talks with operators of cannabis businesses and pro-cannabis groups to gather their feedback before the regulation



Photo: NNT

is issued, he said.

Pro-cannabis groups are threatening to rally at the Ministry of Public Health headquarters in Bangkok until the government can justify why cannabis deserves to be reclassified. Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on May 13 that the plan to reclassify cannabis as a narcotic will have to be studied and assessed by several health committees before any action can be taken.

Cannabis liberalisation was one of the key pledges made by Bhumjaithai Party ahead of the 2019 election.

Some doctors, academics and activists have issued an open letter to back the government's plan to reclassify cannabis as a narcotic, saying decriminalisation creates adverse impacts in the long term. *Bangkok Post*

## Five-day Pride event confirmed

### BANGKOK

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE confirmed a five-day Pride event in Bangkok from May 31 to Jun 4 to show Thailand's readiness to be Asia's 'rainbow' capital.

At a press conference announcing the event on Monday (May 20), the organisers said this year's Bangkok Pride Festival will be held under the theme 'Celebration of Love'.

Ann Chumaporn, founder and president of Bangkok Pride parade, said this year's festivities will include a parade, various concerts, public activities and the Bangkok Pride Forum.

"The reason we're hosting [the event] over five days is to showcase Thailand's ability to host bigger events, like the 2025 Inter Pride Conference and the 2030 World Pride parade," she said, adding the event will also celebrate Thailand's push to become the first country in Southeast Asia to legalise same-sex unions while raising awareness of other issues affecting LG-BTQ+ and other marginalised individuals and communities.

She said Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has confirmed his participation in this year's Pride parade, which will take place on Jun 1 from 3-6pm, starting at the National Stadium and ending at Ratchaprasong intersection.

At least 200,000 participants are expected to turn up at the event, compared with 100,000 last year, Ms Ann said.



Participants at Monday's (May 20) press conference to announce Pride month celebrations. Photo: Bangkok Post

This year, there will be pride events in 30+ cities across Thailand, including Chiang Mai and Koh Samui in Surat Thani.

Tourism and Sports Minister Sermak Pongpanich said at a recent seminar that LGBTQ rights are not only about amending laws and regulations, but also about improving accessibility to public resources and services.

He said that not only will the Pride celebration help the government meet its target of generating B3.5 trillion in tourism-related revenue in 2024, it will help further cement Thailand's international image as a fair, inclusive and progressive country.

"Our government sees that LGBTQ individuals not as a burden but as an important force that could help Thailand advance in all aspects of life," he said.

Mr Sermak also confirmed the ministry's officials will join the parade this year to show their support for the nation's LGBTQ+ communities. *Bangkok Post*

## WHITE RABBIT BEACH CLUB

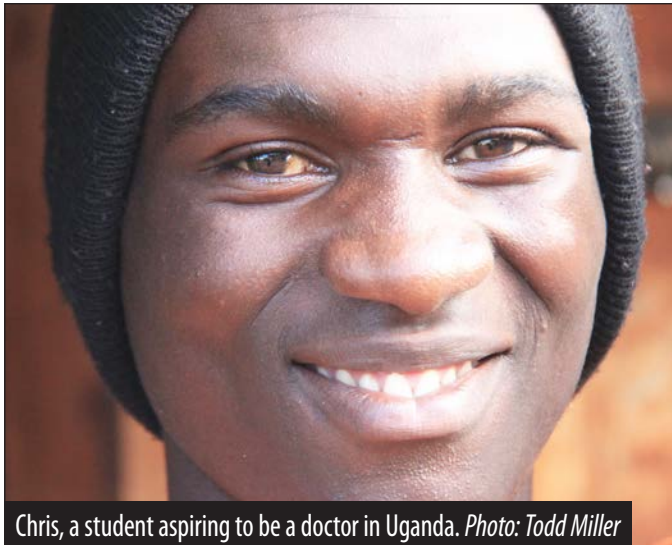
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Chris, a student aspiring to be a doctor in Uganda. Photo: Todd Miller



The Little Angels Orphanage in Ruhija, Uganda. Photo: Todd Miller



Unexploded ordinance recovered by Aki Ra. Photo: Todd Miller

# Does it make a difference?



## GLOBETROTTER

Todd Miller

Aki Ra, a Cambodian child soldier in the Khmer Rouge who was taken from his family at age 5, explained: "It was normal to me... It's what I knew."

While temple hopping around Angkor Wat, I happened upon the Cambodian Landmine Museum, the first such museum in Cambodia. There I met Ra, who laid thousands of mines during his time in the Khmer Rouge before he defected to the Vietnamese army.

Now he dedicates his life to undoing the damage. He started clearing landmines by hand around Angkor Wat in the early 1990s. Today he spends 25 days a month clearing landmines and unexploded ordinances, the legacy of three decades of war in Cambodia. I was fortunate to visit on a rare day when he was not in the field.

Landmines are a major problem in Cambodia, particularly in rural areas. They were placed across the country by various political factions in modern Cambodia's short but complicated history. The Vietnamese and American militaries also contributed to the problem. There are no records of where all the landmines were buried, and memories are fuzzy. It's dangerous, time-intensive work to purge the land.

"Will you ever finish?" I asked Ra, as he showed me his present-day tools for landmine clearance, which he no longer performs by hand. "Yes. By 2030," he confidently replied. "But it will take five more years after that to clear all the bombs."

Aki Ra is an inspiring example of someone who identified a need in the community and works to solve the problem, however treacherous or insurmountable. He was recognised as a CNN Hero in 2010.

### WHY TRAVEL?

There are many reasons why I travel, but on this journey, I was travelling with a pro-social purpose, sprinkled with some adventure. For years I've had a keen interest in Cambodia's development, and 14 years ago I cycled across North America in support of a Cambodian children's charity. I wanted to revisit the country, visit some NGOs doing important work, and confront a question that has nagged me for some time: Does this charitable activity make a difference, or even a dent?



The kitchen at Chumkriel Language School. Photo: Todd Miller

To thread this purposeful journey, I chose a Siem Reap-to-Saigon cycling trip organised by Social Cycles, which specialises in ethical, impact adventures and facilitates NGO meetings along the way.

In Cambodia we visited four children/youth organisations, not counting the charities I visited on my own. All the meetings echoed a constant funding struggle. COVID disrupted established fundraising channels, and many charities, including the ones we visited, haven't recovered their pre-pandemic momentum.

While funding has taken a hit, COVID caused an immediate and pronounced spike in social issues. These effects are still being felt, I learned from the emergency hotline counselors at Friends International in Phnom Penh. We spent a morning with Friends International, who offer a novel city tour that highlights the seven principles of their ChildSafe movement, which protects vulnerable children. It's the best way to see the Cambodian capital – and try to understand a complex socio-economic situation.

That day in Phnom Penh I was able to also catch up with visiting friends from the United States who have a long relationship with Cambodia. They updated me on the wonderful work of Education First Cambodia, the charity they founded nine years ago to provide some of Cambodia's brightest but poorest women with university educations. There are 70 graduates (and counting) of the program, many of whom now have master's degrees as well. "We felt there is a need for help with education in Cambodia," explains Annette Jensen, a co-founder. "We had fallen in love with Cambodia and its people."

In the southern city of Kompot, one morning we cycled to the salt fields on the outskirts of town. Working in

these fields is back-breaking hardship, often resulting in chronic health issues among the labourers. By the time a worker hits 40, he or she is usually unable to physically continue with the tasks. Young people are recruited to help out, sacrificing their education. It's a vicious cycle committing generations to poverty.

Waiting for us in the salt fields was Nget Sothy, who goes by the name Mr Thy. As we walked around the salt fields, Mr Thy explained how he was born into a rice farming family, one of nine children with little access to education. He realised the only way to break this poverty cycle is by getting an accessible education. So he created an on-site Salt Field School, and has also created the Chumkriel Language School nearby to supplement the government education provided to rural children. This includes English lessons, computer classes and other community initiatives. Mr Thy explained to me that his funding is month to month, underscoring the plight of many of these grassroots NGOs.

Although this Cambodian trip had a sharp NGO focus, I try to visit NGOs wherever I venture. While travelling in Uganda earlier this year I discovered the Little Angels Orphanage in Ruhija, a remote mountain town. There I met with the aptly named Directress, Happy Kyoheirwe. Like Aki Ra of the Landmine Museum, Annette Jensen of Education Firm Cambodia and Mr Thy of the Salt Field School, Happy observed a need in the community and did something about it. She started taking care of 20 orphans in 2008. That number quickly swelled. A couple years later her father deeded land and a formal orphanage was established. The land is on a steep mountainside, near the edge of an impenetrable forest.

Little Angels currently houses 127

kids, of ages 10 months to 16 years. These children sleep two and three to a bed and have neither running water nor electricity. It is a hand-to-mouth operation that receives zero government support and no assistance from international NGOs. The facilities are basic, comprising a couple small dormitories, a few classrooms, and a small kitchen/eating hall. The freshwater supply is a two-kilometre hike down the mountain. When I visited, many children were reportedly out fetching water. Another child, age 12, was cooking soup for everyone's dinner. Not all Little Angel's children are true orphans. Some come from untenable family situations. All are in need.

### DOES THIS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Travelling with a pro-social lens is an insightful way to see the world as it really is. But it can be heartbreaking and discouraging, for the needs are endless. So are the challenges.

Hence, back to my nagging question about whether charitable activity makes a difference or even a dent.

Another chance meeting while I was in Phnom Penh provides in-the-flesh proof to dispel my doubts about the impact of charitable efforts. While catching up with a Kiwi friend who also happened to be in town, she invited a special guest to join us. This surprise guest was a former student of the charity on whose behalf 14 years ago I cycled and raised tens of thousands of dollars. He and his sister were rescued from scavenging in a gigantic dump in Phnom Penh and provided with a first-rate education and a future. He was age 7 when he joined the program, and ultimately received a scholarship to attend university in Thailand.

Today he is articulate, confident and independent. He heads the marketing operation of a major Cambodian sports organisation. He's 23 years old.

One child at a time, these organisations are making much more than a dent in a systemic problem. They are making a long-term difference. And they could greatly benefit from your assistance.

*Adventurer and author Todd Miller has cycled across two continents and visited all seven. He authored the Amazon bestseller ENRICH: Create Wealth in Time, Money, and Meaning, lauded by Forbes, USA Today, Entrepreneur, and other global media. Todd has contributed to Fast Company, Newsweek, and dozens of podcasts on work-life topics, and resides at Natai Beach. [www.enrich101.com](http://www.enrich101.com)*



# Kata Rocks really does rock!

**Ben Tirebuck**

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

**K**ata Rocks has long had a reputation among locals and tourists alike as a top-class venue in Phuket for sipping cool cocktails while enjoying stunning panoramic views of the Andaman at sunset. While this is undoubtedly true, it is also about time the place started receiving fair recognition for its culinary capabilities too.

The view certainly does hit with that inimitable 'wow factor' as soon as my dining partner and I walk into the dining area at the Kata Rocks Clubhouse, although once seated it is all eyes on the menu and what is ahead food wise.

The menu is immediately impressive in how extensive it is, covering a wide range of tastes, while also specifically catering for gluten free and vegan diners. While there are several mouth-watering options on offer for starters, we select the Phuket Crab Cake and Andaman Ceviche, decisions we are very soon glad we made.

Two fantastically presented dishes, the crab cake, in particular, is decorated with edible beetroot powder to resemble the form of a crab when looked at from above. It is a clever and creative touch that is only amplified when Executive Chef Andrew Dickie explains the dish is designed to replicate Koh Poo, or Crab Island, which is nestled in the wa-



Photo: Kata Rocks Phuket

ters directly opposite the venue.

Presentation is hugely important, of course, but it is primarily taste that we judge on – and both these dishes are an absolute knock-out. The ceviche is incredible, a delicious fusion of soft seabass, cucumber, lime and sweet potato in a sweet and refreshing coconut sauce, while the crab cake carries subtle undertones of tom kha gai that leaves you wanting more.

Moving onto mains, I opt for the Scallops while my partner chooses the Tournedos Rossini, a Jacks Creek Australian Angus beef tenderloin served with pan-seared foie gras and black truffle jus. I only eat beef once in a blue moon nowadays, but sampling this makes me reconsider as it is melt-in-the-mouth perfect! Similarly, the scallops simply dazzle, cooked to

perfection and accompanied by a rich pumpkin purée, brown butter balsamic with toasted hazelnuts.

For dessert my partner selects Lemon, a customised creation by Andrew that involves confit candied lemon rind, lemon curd, French meringue, blueberry compote and Sable Breton – and which she happily declares a taste sensation! As a bona fide chocoholic, I have to plump for the Thai Chocolate Lava which, with its Kad Kokoa 70% chocolate from Chumphon, does exactly what it is supposed to do by leaving me more than satisfied.

We just about have room to sample the cheese trolley, a sensational range of mature cheeses by Les Freres Marchand, a famous cheesemonger company since 1849 that specialises in maturing cheeses from France and Europe. Defi-

nately recommended!

It is a divine way to conclude a genuinely fantastic dining experience, something that is made all the more enjoyable as chef Andrew visits us periodically to explain each dish. One thing I find especially endearing is a chef who clearly not only takes pride in what he presents but who clearly loves what he does with a passion, something Andrew has in spades. At the same time, his insistence on using goods sourced as locally as possible is admirable and, judging by how he utilises them, very wise. Special mention must also go to all the staff who are not only courteous and attentive but genuinely engaging and truly pleasurable to interact with.

Yes, Kata Rocks is a great venue with a knockout view, but it dawns on us both that we have not raised our eyes to take in the vista as much as we imagined, which is testament to the overall experience and sheer quality of the food on offer. As we depart genuinely satisfied, we both declare that chef Andrew and the staff at Kata Rocks really do rock – and it is only a matter of time before we repeat the experience!

*Kata Rocks 186/22, Kok Tanode Road, Karon. Open 7am-10pm. Price range: B800-1,200. Facilities: Best to book a table. Major credit cards accepted. Car park on site. Has smoking area. Reservations: 076-370777. Website: KataRocks.com. Facebook/Pinterest/Instagram: KataRocksPhuket*



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POP QUIZ

1. Which French resistance fighter was awarded the 1969 Nobel Prize in Literature?

2. Which famous actor has received the most 'Raspberry Awards' for poor acting?

3. Which Indian public holiday is also known as the 'Festival of Lights'?

4. Name the three main classes of rock.

5. Which Russian city was renamed Petrograd during World War I?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" writer

6. Shower or pond topping

10. Bowlers

14. Brunch serving

15. \_\_\_ sandwich

16. Passing mention?

17. Across the globe

20. Student overseer

21. Pelvic bones

22. Certain ridge

23. Complete halts

26. Insect genus

29. Depletes

33. Bad looks

34. Fraternity letters

37. Gasteyer of "Saturday Night Live"

38. Wartime prisons

42. Bearded antelope

43. Of long duration, in Scotland

44. Comet's path

45. Certain Asian

48. Ivory's partner in song

49. Direct popular votes

54. Enough! (Spanish)

Down

1. Litmus reddener

2. Marine flier

3. \_\_\_ good example

4. Start shooting

5. Price word

6. Play for time

7. Skin

8. Eastern Christian church member

9. \_\_\_ Zedong

10. Raspy

11. Equipped

12. Knight fight

13. Eye sore

18. Naught

19. Is off guard

24. Cold war initials

25. Give the heave-ho

26. Adjust, in a way

27. Tubular pasta

28. In a lather

30. Martial art

31. Remove a brooch

32. Hardly ruddy

34. Low-fat meat

35. Old addr. book entry

36. Conjunction

39. Artless one

40. Open to all

41. Medieval missile launcher

46. Angioplasty target

47. Cordelia's father

50. Clear the boards

51. Dinner sides

52. Continental money

53. Known formerly as

54. Tab

55. Small bovid

56. Style of poker

59. Copacati worshipper

60. Pairs

61. The third son of Adam

63. \_\_\_ de guerre

64. Anatomical duct

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15				16			
17					18				19			
20					21				22			
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62					63				64			
65					66				67			
68					69				70			

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

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

14

percent is how much travel times were reduced in Los Angeles in 2013 when it became the first city to install traffic lights that make automatic adjustments based on car flow.

72

percent of US police officers claim that their poorly performing colleagues were not held accountable, according to a Pew Research Center survey in 2018.

450

kilograms is how much the heart of an adult blue whale weighs. It's about the size of a VW Beetle car.

7,300

percent more than the cost of sending the equivalent amount of data is what phone companies charge for sending texts.

360,000

lives were saved by the horror-movie 'SAW' franchise as people were able to donate blood in exchange for a free movie ticket. More than 120,000 pints of blood were donated.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Friendship Beach at sunset. Photo by Chris Pahlman

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

May 24, 1992

The ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina begins when Serbian militia and police forces enter the town.

May 25, 1925

Scopes Trial: John T. Scopes is indicted for teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in Tennessee.

May 26, 1897

'Dracula', a novel by Irish author Bram Stoker, is published.

May 27, 1907

Bubonic plague breaks out in San Francisco.

May 28, 1588

The Spanish Armada, with 130 ships and 30,000 men, sets sail from Lisbon, Portugal, heading for the English Channel.

May 29, 1953

Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay become the first people to reach the sum-

mit of Mount Everest, on Tenzing Norgay's (adopted) 39<sup>th</sup> birthday.

May 30, AD 70

Siege of Jerusalem: Titus and his Roman legions breach the Second Wall of Jerusalem. Jewish defenders retreat to the First Wall. The Romans build a circumvallation, cutting down all trees within 15km.

Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

Source: Wikipedia

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### AustCham Thailand Members Briefing

Before Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners, join us for an insightful discussion at our AustCham Thailand Members Briefing on 'Prioritizing Skin Health in a Fast-Paced World for Business Professionals' from Bangkok Hospital Phuket & Siriroj on Friday 24 May 2024, 17.00 - 18.00 hrs at Angsana Laguna Phuket. Free for AustCham, partner Chambers' and Australian Alumni Members. Email - office@ austchamthailand.com

**MON 27 MAY**

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### Copa Tailandesa

A new U19 Football tournament "Copa Tailandesa" comes to Arena, Hua Hin aimed at encouraging new emerging talent to get noticed on the 16th to 18th June. The extravaganza is open to the public, it's free to attend the tournament games at Arena, Hua Hin and tickets are on sale now for the party on the 18th of June at admin@copatailandesa.com

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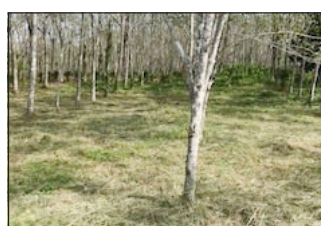
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## SKÅL INTERNATIONAL PHUKET DINNER - MAY

A little of the welcome rain did not stop around 40 Skalleagues and guests enjoying a memorable rendezvous at Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao. General manager Marie Berthe and her team put together an array of food and beverage treats that kept the conversations flowing. Follow Skål International Phuket on facebook.com/SkalPhuket so you don't miss out on the June dinner.



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## Thai shuttlers' double delight for home crowd

### BADMINTON

THAILAND'S SUPANIDA Katethong saw off tournament top seed Han Yue of China 21-16, 25-23 to win the women's singles finals at badminton's Thai Open last Sunday (May 19).

The win for the world number 16 came off the back of a three-game semi-final where she knocked out second-seed Wang Zhi Yi of China.

There was a home win in the women's doubles too as Thailand's Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai beat Indonesia's Febriana Dwipuji Kusuma and Amallia Cahaya Pratiwi 21-14, 21-14.

Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia stormed to victory over Angus Ng Ka Long in the men's singles final to take his second title at the event in three years.

World number 10 Lee took just 33 minutes to dispatch the Hong Konger 21-11, 21-10.

In the men's doubles Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty of India



Supanida Katethong.  
Photo: Bangkok Post

beat China's Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi 21-15, 21-15 in 36 minutes.

It was the second World Tour title for the pair this year after they won the French Open in March.

Last year they made history for India with their country's first ever badminton gold at the Asian Games.

"We are hoping that this victory will start another winning run for us," Rankireddy said after the win.

In the last tussle of the day China's Guo Xin Wa and Chen Fang Hui came from one game down to beat Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai. *AFP*

## Tight Verstappen win in Imola

### FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato

michael@boxofneutrals.com

**M**ax Verstappen held off a fast-finishing Lando Norris in a thrilling climax to win the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix last Sunday (May 19).

Verstappen started from pole and controlled the grand prix early, opening a crucial seven-second gap on second-place start Norris by the end of the first stint.

Norris and McLaren appeared resigned to lacking the pace to match the Dutchman, but the race came alive in the final 10 laps, when Verstappen's hard tyres began to degrade and lose temperature.

Suddenly the pursuing McLaren was on the attack, sometimes taking as much as a second a lap out of the lead.

On lap 57 of 63 Norris closed to within two seconds, but gains were becoming more difficult as he chewed through his own tyres.

It took until the penultimate lap for him to latch onto the back of the Red Bull Racing machine ahead, but a small snap exiting the Villeneuve chicane – a clear sign of just how hard the Briton was pursuing a second consecutive victory – cost him crucial momentum.

It left Norris without DRS on the final lap, which was just enough breathing space for Verstappen to grind out a 0.725-second victory.

"The whole race I had to push flat out to try and make a gap initially," he said.

"I think on the medium tyres we



Verstappen crosses the finish line at Imola. Photo: AFP

were quite strong; on the hard tyres it was just a bit more difficult to manage.

"The last 10 to 15 laps I had no grip anymore, I was really sliding a lot.

"I couldn't afford to make too many mistakes. Luckily we didn't, and I'm super happy to win here today."

Norris put his narrow defeat down to a slow opening stint but was pleased to show at a second consecutive race that McLaren has the pace to challenge Red Bull Racing.

"It hurts me to say, but one or two more laps and I think I would have had him," he said.

Charles Leclerc completed the podium in a slightly underwhelming result for

Ferrari after much hype over its own sizable upgrade package in Imola, with Oscar Piastri finishing in fourth and Carlos Sainz fifth.

Lewis Hamilton finished sixth ahead of Mercedes teammate George Russell, while Sergio Pérez recovered from 11<sup>th</sup> to eighth in the second Red Bull Racing car, the Mexican lacking the pace of his race-winning teammate all weekend.

Lance Stroll made similar gains from 13<sup>th</sup> on the grid to finish ninth and rescue two points on a difficult day for Aston Martin, as Yuki Tsunoda scored the final point of the race for 10<sup>th</sup>, the culmination of an excellent weekend by the Japanese RB driver.

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## Usyk beats Fury to take undisputed world heavyweight boxing title

### BOXING

OLEKSANDR USYK BEAT TYSON Fury by split decision to win the world's first undisputed heavyweight championship in 25 years last Sunday (May 18), an unprecedented feat in boxing's four-belt era.

Britain's Fury was the early aggressor but Usyk gradually took charge and the 'Gypsy King' was saved by the bell in the ninth round before slumping to his first career defeat.

Ukraine's Usyk, who remains undefeated, joins the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as undisputed heavyweight champion, the first since boxing recognised four major belts in the 2000s.

With the win, the former undisputed cruiserweight champion can legitimately claim to be the best of this heavyweight era, although a rematch expected in October could provide another twist.

"It is a big opportunity for me, for my family, for my country," said Usyk, 37, who briefly served as a soldier after the Russian invasion.

Fury called it a fantastic fight, before adding, "I believe I won that fight, I believe he won a few of the rounds, but I won the majority of them.

"You know his country is at war, so people are siding with the country at war but make no mistake, I won that fight in my opinion and I will be back."



Usyk (left) connects with Fury. Photo: AFP

Two judges scored it for Usyk by scores of 115-112 and 114-113 while the third gave it to Fury 114-113. The victory extended Usyk's professional record to 22-0. After his first loss, Fury stands at 34-1-1.

Usyk, who adds Fury's WBC belt to his IBF, WBA and WBO titles, looks set to go down as one of the greats after dominating at amateur, cruiserweight and now the top division.

Britain's Lennox Lewis was the last man to unify the heavyweight belts – three at the time – after beating Evander Holyfield in 1999.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, leading the war effort against Russia for more than two years, posted on social media: "Ukrainians hit hard! And in the end, all our opponents will be defeated." *AFP*



# Four-midable City win title

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester City created English football history last Sunday (May 19), overcoming West Ham 3-1 to win their fourth straight Premier League title and break Arsenal's hearts.

Phil Foden scored two early goals at an expectant Etihad Stadium to put his side on the brink of the title before Mohammed Kudus pulled one back with a spectacular overhead kick for the Hammers.

But Rodri struck just before the hour to restore City's two-goal cushion and the home side rarely looked troubled as they coasted to the win.

City, who have now won six titles in seven years, stand alone as the only English team to have won four straight top-flight titles, eclipsing the achievements of the great Liverpool and Manchester United teams of the past.

"It is so hard to put into words what we've done today," Foden said. "No team has ever done it [won four in a row]. We have put ourselves into the history books.

"You see what it means to the fans and to us players working all year for this moment. A special moment to share it with the fans."

Foden, 23, has enjoyed his most



The Manchester City squad celebrate with the Premier League trophy. Photo: AFP

impressive season yet for City, scoring 27 goals in all competitions, together with 11 assists.

The victory meant City manager Pep Guardiola has now won the Premier League title six times in his eight seasons at The Etihad Stadium and perhaps the only glimmer of hope for rival teams is that he may soon decide to step away.

"The reality is I am closer to leaving than staying," Guardiola said after the title was secured on

Sunday. "We have talked with the club – my feeling is that I want to stay now. I will stay next season and during the season we will talk. But eight or nine years – we'll see."

### EMOTIONAL SEND-OFF

Arsenal started the day two points behind their rivals and praying for a miracle to deny City their coronation, knowing that a win against Everton would not be enough if the champions won on home turf.

The Gunners, without a Premier League title since 2004, came from a goal down to beat the Toffees 2-1 but had to content themselves with second in the table for a second straight season.

Meanwhile, Jurgen Klopp was given an emotional send-off at Anfield after nine trophy-filled years as Liverpool beat Wolves 2-0 to secure third place.

"You welcome the new manager (Arne Slot) like you welcomed me,"

Klopp said to the crowd afterwards. "You go all in from the first day. You keep believing. You push the team. I'm one of you now. I love you to bits."

The 56-year-old German led the club to Champions League glory in 2019, the sixth time they had been crowned European champions.

The following season he secured his place as a Liverpool great by winning their first Premier League title for 30 years, the 19th time they had been crowned English champions.

Klopp also won the FA Cup and two League Cups.

Elsewhere, Luton's relegation was confirmed with a 4-2 loss at home to Fulham. They will join Burnley and Sheffield United in the Championship next season.

Tottenham beat relegated Sheffield United 3-0 to seal fifth spot and a place in next season's Europa League while Chelsea guaranteed a sixth-place finish with a 2-1 win against Bournemouth and Crystal Palace hammered Aston Villa 5-0.

Newcastle's 4-2 win at Brentford condemned Manchester United to an eighth-place finish – their lowest since 1989/1990.

Erik ten Hag's United beat Brighton 2-0 in Roberto De Zerbi's final game in charge of the south coast club but it was too little too late to save a disastrous league season for the Red Devils.

## Thai boxers eye more Olympic spots

### OLYMPICS

SIX THAI BOXERS have already secured their berths at the 2024 Olympic Games and there are six more slots to compete for at the 2nd Boxing Road to Paris World Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok.

The National Olympic Committee of Thailand and the Thailand Boxing Association will host the tournament from tomorrow (May 25) until June 2 at Indoor Stadium Hua Mark in the Thai capital.

Boxers from all over the world will compete for 51 remaining Olympic places, including 23 women and 28 men, across 13 weight categories (six for women and seven for men).

It is the last boxing qualification tournament for the Olympic Games, which will take place from July 26 to Aug 11.

The six Thai boxers who have already secured their Paris berths are (men) Thitsan Panmot (51kg), Bunjong Sinsiri (63.5kg); (women)



Chuthamat Raksat (left) at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou. Photo: Bangkok Post

Chuthamat Raksat (50kg), Thananya Somnuek (60kg), Janjaem Suwannapheng (66kg) and Jutamas Jitpong (54kg).

Bunjong missed out on an Olympic spot after losing to Chinzorig Baatarsukh in the Hangzhou Asian Games semi-finals in September last year, but the Mongolian, who won the Asiad gold medal, has recently given up his Olympic quota citing an injury. Baatarsukh also failed a dope test in October last year.

"It's an honour and incredibly exciting news that Thailand has been chosen to host the world boxing qualifiers for the 2024 Olympics at the end of this year," said Pichai Chunhavajira,

vice chairman of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand.

"Boxing is a sport where we have high hopes of winning medals to bring back home. Being the hosts means Thai people will have the chance to closely support and cheer for our athletes, providing them with immense motivation and encouragement.

"We have everything ready for over 1,450 athletes and officials from around the globe to ensure the best outcome. We already have six boxers who qualified for Paris 2024 and there are six more slots to compete for. Let's all come together to support our Thai boxing team." Bangkok Post

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# Sport



**Usyk beats Fury to make history > p14**

## THREE AT THE ACG



**Cricket action returns to Phuket**

Craig Morgan (No. 41) turns on the style with the bat. Photo: Supplied

### CRICKET

Michael Flowers

The recently renovated Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang welcomed competitive cricket back to Phuket as an exhilarating three-match series between a Rest of Phuket side and the Patong Penguins took place on Sunday, May 12.

The series consisted of two initial 20-over games before a tense 25-over decider. It also showcased a newly installed coconut mat pitch, expertly installed by Dixie Joy for the successful 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Asian Cricket Sixes Tournament (ACST) Cricket Sixes, held last month at the ground.

In the opening match of the series, Penguins captain Seemant Raju won the toss and chose to bowl first. The Rest of Phuket, led by Faraz Khan's composed 41 off 43 balls, posted a challenging total of 166/4. Despite the Penguins' bowlers showing early season rust and conceding numerous extras, Curt Livermore emerged as the standout bowler, applying some pressure on the batsmen picking up 2 wickets for 22 runs from his 4 overs.

In response however, the Penguins struggled to keep up with the pace as they were bowled out for 137 with eight balls to spare. Lenny Leerdam and Sameer Khan were exceptional for The Rest of Phuket, taking crucial wickets and maintaining tight lines, with Leerdam



The Penguins win as an errant ball hits a fielding helmet. Photo: Supplied

returning figures of 2 for 19 from his 4 overs and Khan an impressive 3 for 11 from just 2 overs. Sameer Khan was deservedly named Man of the Match.

### BOWLER-FRIENDLY

The Penguins returned with a vengeance in the second match, deciding again to bowl first after winning the toss.

Their decision paid off as they rolled The Rest of Phuket for just 104 in 15.1 overs, showcasing a much-improved performance in the field as Sajal Gaur starred with the ball, claiming 4 wickets for just 14 runs in his 4 overs, while Livermore and Paddy Ledeboer each took a couple of wickets.

Anthony Van Blerk, despite having just returned to the field after dislocating his finger behind the stumps, also made a remarkable boundary catch to dismiss the dangerous Faraz Khan.

Leerdam shone for The Rest of

Phuket with the ball, picking up 3 wickets for 33 runs from his 4 overs, demonstrating his danger and effectiveness on the new surface.

Despite Leerdam's performance, The Penguins, helped by Jagsir Brar's quick 27 off 14 and Livermore's unbeaten 24, secured a three-wicket victory with 23 balls to spare.

Sajal Gaur was named Man of the Match, highlighting the bowler-friendly nature of the new pitch – a welcome change after years of batting domination.

### DEPTH PERCEPTION

The result meant it was all to play for in the deciding match with The Rest of Phuket captain Mayur Deuskar winning the toss and opting to bat, setting the stage for a strong start.

Openers Lucky Manhas (28 from 19) and Mandeep Gulati (39 from 25) took an aggressive approach, particularly targeting Penguins' captain Seemant Raju in a notably

expensive over. By the 15-over drinks break, The Rest of Phuket had built a solid foundation at 119/3.

With Van Blerk now freed from wicket-keeping duties, he reportedly found inspiration for songwriting mid-match while fielding on the boundary, crafting a tune to the melody of 'My Girl', a lighthearted moment which made fun of him having lost depth perception with the "white ball on a cloudy day". The song, while humorous, did not prevent a catch avoidance fine from Waqar Aziz who had hopes of taking a career best "three-for".

Ali Khan adjusted his typically aggressive style to craft a patient 29 off 35 balls, while Sameer Khan anchored the innings with an unbeaten 39, helping his team reach a competitive total of 188/7.

Livermore, known for his 'highly caffeinated' bowling performances, lived up to his nickname in the decider, delivering an energetic spell of 2/35.

### FRIENDLY NATURE

The Penguins' chase got off to a tumultuous start, with Van Blerk and Seemant Raju being run out early, leaving them at a precarious 2/7. The clubhouse was abuzz with cheeky comments that Michael Flowers, involved in both runouts, might need to "leave the island" unless he made amends with a significant score of 50.

Man of the Match winner Craig Morgan and Flowers then took center stage, forming a crucial 130-run partnership.

Morgan, battling fatigue from his rugby endeavours the previous day, smashed an exhilarating 78 off 40 balls before eventually being caught by Leerdam off the bowling of Sami Pir.

The spirit of the match was brightened when Rest of Phuket captain Deuskar graciously agreed to an early drinks break due to the heat, illustrating the friendly nature of the series.

The game was clinched with some smart batting from Brar (26 from 20 balls) and Flowers (53 not out from 74 balls). However, the match finished with a whimper as penalty runs were awarded for an errant ball striking a fielding helmet, allowing the Penguins to secure the series with 2 overs to spare.

There were initially plans for the series to be extended to last Sunday (May 19) although recent heavy rainfall meant the game was unable to proceed.