

DISASTER CHIEF SILENT ON ROAD SAFETY > PAGE 2

INTO THE LIGHT



The dark looms ahead as motorists enter the Darasamut Underpass. Photo: Wichit Police

HIGHWAYS DEPT TO SPEND B50MN ON UNDERPASS LIGHTING

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun
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The Phuket Highways Office has confirmed it will install new lights to improve visibility in the Darasamut Underpass, which police have rated the most dangerous underpass for accidents on the island.

The tunnel sees an average of three to four accidents per month, according to Pol Lt Col Wutthiwat Liangboonjinda, Deputy Superintendent of Traffic at Wichit Police Station, which stands just one kilometre from the busy underpass.

“It’s a known trouble spot,” he said. “Almost all accidents that happen there are due to poor visibility, often made worse by

speeding drivers,” Pol Lt Col Wutthiwat told *The Phuket News*.

“In terms of underpass improvements, there may not be much we can do, as maintenance falls under the responsibility of the relevant agencies.

“As for the police, our duty is to enforce the law, and Wichit Police Station sets up a checkpoint at the entrances of the Darasamut Underpass every day. Before you enter the underpass, there’s a checkpoint and a sign reminding drivers to slow down,” Pol Lt Col Wutthiwat said.

“However, adjusting the lighting or improving the underpass structure for safety is the responsibility of the Phuket Highways Office or the relevant agencies. We have asked them to

make improvements many times before,” he added.

“Most of the accidents involve private cars, as visibility is often greatly deteriorated when driving through the underpass. Speeding may also be a contributing factor. Of course, driver behaviour also plays a role in causing accidents,” Pol Lt Col Wutthiwat noted.

“As for motorbikes, they are strictly prohibited from entering the underpass. We always enforce the law. If we see a motorcycle entering or exiting the underpass, we immediately issue a warning,” he said.

THE DODGE

Somkit Kittisopit, Chief of the Phuket Highways Office, was divided on his own recognition of

poor visibility being a major factor of rear-end accidents in the Darasamut Underpass – saying both it was a major contributing factor, but also not a main factor in causing accidents.

First, Mr Somkit admitted a main cause of accidents in the underpass is motorists entering the relative dark of the tunnel while drivers’ eyes are still accustomed to bright daylight outside.

Yet, he went on to say, “Now the lights are on and they are being replaced all the time. But I insist that we check often and see that it is still bright.

“Sometimes, accidents happen simply because of carelessness. We’ve put up warning signs to remind drivers to be cautious,” he added...

NEWS PAGE 3

MPs urge AMLO to audit funds for Big Buddha



LIFE PAGE 9

UK bicycling with a Phuket veteran and son



SPORT PAGE 16

Phuket hosts Muay Thai coach course



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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News



Cancer centre donations near complete > p5



CCTV image: Chalong Police

Woman killed after truck hits motorbike

A WOMAN RIDING pillion on a motorbike died after being hit by a six-wheeled truck on Wiset Rd in Rawai on July 17.

The fatal crash occurred around 1:45pm near the Go Wholesale Rawai branch. Chalong Police Station received the emergency report from its radio centre and dispatched officers to the scene.

Officers from the Chalong Police and rescue workers arrived to find the woman, Nantanapat Phengchit, 31, from Songkhla, lying unconscious in the middle of the road with serious injuries.

A black Honda PCX motorcycle registered in Surat Thani lay damaged beside her.

Despite the efforts of medical staff from Chalong Hospital, who performed CPR upon arrival, Ms Nantanapat was pronounced dead at the scene. Her body was later transported to Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The motorbike was

being driven by Rattanaporn Chaisongkhram, from Phang Nga, who suffered minor injuries. She was treated at the scene before being taken to Chalong Hospital for further medical examination.

The truck involved in the incident was a white six-wheel Hino, registered in Phuket, driven by Aree Hansuek, a resident of Thalung. He remained at the scene and cooperated with authorities.

Initial CCTV footage reviewed by investigators showed the motorcycle travelling in the left lane along Wiset Rd toward the Chalong Circle.

The footage showed the truck following and then attempting to overtake the motorcycle, resulting in a collision that caused both riders to fall, said police.

Police said they were continuing their investigation to determine the cause of the crash and would take any appropriate legal action.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Accidents in spotlight

Continued from page 1

He also dodged confirmation by police that poor visibility was a main factor causing accidents in the underpass: "The police can only say so much – it's still clearly visible," he insisted.

Yet, while saying that, Mr Somkit was very happy to break the news that his office will be spending B50 million on replacing all the lighting in all five underpasses on the island.

While breaking the news, Mr Somkit avoided any mention of poor visibility in the underpasses – and avoided any mention that this was a factor in spending B50mn on the lighting upgrade.

BLAMING THIEVES

"The danger is compounded by the ongoing deterioration of the lighting system, which has been repeatedly targeted by thieves," Mr Somkit said.

"The system was already in poor shape when I assumed the position as chief of the Phuket Highways Office six months ago," he continued. "Thieves had stolen most of the electrical wiring. By the time some were caught, the damage was already extensive, and the system had completely failed."

Mr Somkit said that repair crews have been "working non-stop" to replace the stolen cables and restore functionality.

The ageing infrastructure and lack of consistent



Police at the scene after a truck rear-ended another truck in the Darasamut Underpass. Photo: Wichit Police

maintenance over the years have made long-term fixes increasingly difficult, he admitted.

Or note, the Darasamut Underpass this year is only 10 years old.

"Our electricians have been on the ground continuously, trying to patch the system back together. But this approach isn't sustainable," Mr Somkit said. "That's why we're pushing for a complete overhaul. We're now in the process of finalising plans and expect to begin rebuilding soon. It won't be long."

The new initiative, he stressed, marks a turning point in Phuket's approach to public safety and infrastructure resilience, prioritising both technology and preventative design to reduce risks and restore public confidence.

THE PROJECT

The plan to upgrade the lighting in all five underpasses in Phuket includes

installing automatic lighting and CCTV systems, Mr Somkit explained.

Each underpass has been allocated a budget of B10mn, he added.

According to Mr Somkit, the new lighting system will feature energy-efficient, automated lights capable of adjusting brightness levels in real time to suit traffic and visibility conditions.

"The Phuket Highways Office has discussed with the Phuket Governor the plan to install more efficient, automatic lighting that can be adjusted," Mr Somkit said. "The contract is expected to be officially announced by next month."

In total, 191 modern lighting units will be installed, replacing older, deteriorated systems that have suffered repeated damage from both wear and vandalism.

"This project is building a safer, smarter, and more resilient Phuket," Mr Somkit emphasised.

"We expect work to begin by September 2025, with work at all five underpasses launched simultaneously. Coordination between the Phuket Highways Office's engineering team and the contractor will ensure efficient implementation," he added.

Mr Somkit declined to confirm the exact start date, saying only that an official announcement is expected next month. However, he noted that construction will begin as soon as possible after the contract is signed with the selected company.

"We plan to rebuild the system entirely – modern, efficient and durable," he said. "Due to repeated theft and technical breakdowns, the current setup has been damaged beyond repair. We're taking this opportunity to start fresh, using better technology."

A key feature of the new system is light adaptability – designed to prevent both excessive glare and inadequate brightness, which are common complaints from drivers.

"Too bright isn't good, too dark isn't either," Mr Somkit said. "We're looking into a system that adjusts intelligently based on real-time conditions."

"The Phuket Governor recently visited China and observed several smart systems that inspired new ideas for our province. We're working to bring those innovations here," he concluded

Disaster chief silent on 'lessons learned' on Phuket road safety

THE PHUKET PROVINCIAL Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM Phuket) has yet to reveal any "lessons learned" in its analysis of road accidents in Phuket despite the number of fatalities in Phuket road accidents this year falling greatly.

A total of 59 people were killed and more than 15,366 injured in road accidents across Phuket in the first six months of this year, DDPM Phuket Chief Wichit Sutthaso confirmed.

According to national road safety agency ThaiRSC, 96

people had died in road accidents during the same period last year.

"Although lower than those reported for the same period in 2024, the current death toll still raises serious concerns for authorities," DDPM Phuket Chief Mr Wichit told *The Phuket News*.

The latest statistics were presented during a road safety evaluation meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall on July 16.

Mr Wichit confirmed that during this year's Songkran festival, Phuket officials recorded no fatalities during the core 'seven days of danger' (Apr 11-17). A total of 45 accidents and



Image: ThaiRSC

45 injuries were recognised by Phuket officials, four fewer accidents than the 49 recorded during the same period last year.

In the lead-up to that period (Apr 4-10), there were 29 acci-

dents, resulting in 28 injuries and two deaths before Songkran day. After the main period of seven dangerous days (Apr 18-24), 25 accidents occurred, with 26 injuries and one death.

However, Mr Wichit noted that the "lessons learned" are not yet finalised and failed to provide specific details about the suggestions or recommendations made during the meeting.

Instead, he said, "We're still waiting on additional reports from each unit."

"Once we collect everything, a full summary will be submitted to the central government. We have

already assigned each agency to assess their work and highlight what can be improved," Mr Wichit added.

Key areas under review include human behaviour, road and environmental conditions, vehicle factors, law enforcement effectiveness, post-accident response and inter-agency co-ordination.

"The goal is to use the lessons from Songkran 2025 to improve year-round road safety and enhance legal enforcement where necessary," Mr Wichit noted, but would not comment any further.

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

Big Buddha finances under fire

The Phuket News

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Phuket MPs Chalermpong Saengdee and Thitikan Thitipruethikul have called on the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) to investigate the financial dealings of the private foundation that operates the Big Buddha viewpoint.

The two Members of Parliament representing Phuket, both of the People's Party, called for the probe into the Phraphutthamingsongkhon Sattha 45 Foundation, led by foundation president Suporn Vanichkul, at a press conference held at Parliament House in Bangkok last week.

The MPs accused the foundation of playing a central role in the unauthorised development that triggered the deadly landslide that killed 13 people in August last year.

The landslide, which struck Soi Patak 2 and Soi Patak 8, destroyed homes and claimed the lives of Thai nationals and foreign tourists, including families



Photo: Phra Phuttha Mingmongkol Srattha 45 Foundation

and honeymooners, MP Chalermpong said.

Many of the surviving victims are still without adequate compensation, with property owners unable to afford repairs and bereaved families receiving only minimal financial support, he added.

"The emotional and financial toll on the victims is immeasurable," Mr Chalermpong said. "It is

unacceptable that people who lost everything now have to find money to post bail in court just to sue the foundation responsible for this disaster."

He said the Phuket Provincial Lawyers Council is currently offering legal assistance free of charge to help affected residents pursue justice.

The MPs alleged that the foundation behind the Big

Buddha Viewpoint, illegally encroached on five rai of protected forest land, carrying out unauthorised construction that directly contributed to the landslide. Despite the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment confirming the encroachment, there has been no accountability from local police, prosecutors or the Phuket Governor, they said.

Mr Chalermpong condemned efforts to reopen the Big Buddha Viewpoint before any resolution or compensation is delivered, saying a high-ranking monk had asked the Religious Affairs Department to seek approval from the Forestry Department to resume operations.

"I do not agree with using Buddhism as a means of generating income while victims suffer without justice," he said. "There has been coercion of monks to sign approvals under Forestry Department measures, allegedly backed by senior clergy. This must stop."

He reiterated his call for AMLO to urgently probe the financial trail of the foundation and determine whether its activities were consistent with its stated religious and charitable purposes.

Meanwhile, Mr Thitikan criticised the failure of the Royal Forest Department to revoke the land-use permit. He noted that although the permit was initially granted to the temple, it was later used

by a private foundation – an action that violates forest conservation regulations.

"This matter has been raised repeatedly in the Land, Natural Resources and Environment Committee, but there has been no progress. Why has no agency stepped in to halt the unauthorised expansion that led to a deadly landslide?" he said.

He called for a full investigation into how the foundation was able to proceed with construction in a protected area and demanded that those responsible for the lack of oversight and enforcement be held accountable.

"Don't hide behind the name of Buddhism," he said. "Thirteen people are dead. There has been no justice, no compensation, no responsibility. Those in power must remember the lives that were lost."

Both MPs stressed that future tragedies can only be avoided through systemic reform and enforcement of the law – particularly when forest lands and public safety are at risk.

Frenchman faces charges for burying dog alive

A FRENCH NATIONAL LIVING in Rawai claims he believed his Siberian husky was already dead before burying it in his garden – only for the animal to be found alive, with its head still above ground.

The disturbing discovery was made by a neighbour on July 16, who quickly informed the authorities.

Officials and police soon arrived and rescued the dog, which was handed over to the Soi Dog Foundation for care. Two other dogs at the house, in Soi Suksan 1, were also taken into care by the Soi Dog Foundation.

Chalong Police Chief Pol Col Rungrit Rattanaphakdi confirmed to *The Phuket News* that the owner of the dogs now under investigation for the incident was Franck Bernard Marie Bayard, 61, a French passport holder.

Pol Col Rungrit also confirmed that Bayard is now facing charges under Thailand's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Provision of Welfare for Animals Act B.E. 2557.

Under the Act, those found guilty of abusing or neglecting animals can face up to two years in prison, a fine of up to B40,000, or both.

Pol Col Rungrit declined to confirm whether Bayard was still in police custody, but did confirm that officers had already questioned him.

"He believed his dog was dead, so he buried it. However, after



Photo: Rawai Municipality

questioning, he eventually admitted his guilt and was charged," was all Pol Col Rungrit would comment on the questioning of Bayard.

Pol Col Rungrit gave no explanation of why Bayard thought the dog was dead, or whether Bayard showed any visible signs of emotional distress.

Rawai Municipality Mayor Thames Kraitat, who was at the house on July 16, described the incident as deeply upsetting.

"As a dog lover, I felt very sad," he said. "However, I do not want to accuse him of doing it intentionally. He told me he believed the dog was already dead and wanted to bury it."

"His face looked quite sad. But whether that regret was real, or whether he truly believed the dog had died – I think only the police investigation will be able to clarify that," Mr Thames said.

Natnaree

Likidwatanasakun



Photo: Chalong Police

Chinese tourist killed by falling tree at Koh Hey

A CHINESE TOURIST was killed and her husband injured when a large tree collapsed onto a beach chair during a sudden storm on Koh Hey (Coral Island) last Sunday afternoon (July 20).

The incident occurred around 3:30pm as the couple were relaxing on the beach, despite the strong winds and heavy rain. The victim, identified as Wang Yang, 53, was crushed by the falling tree and died at the scene. Her husband, Dai Hong Jun, sustained minor injuries from a falling branch.

Police were alerted to the incident by Chalong Hospital at approximately 5:30pm.

Police confirmed Mrs

Wang had suffered fatal injuries consistent with being struck by a heavy object. Her body was brought back to Phuket and taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for a full forensic examination.

Officers said the couple had arrived on Koh Hey earlier in the day as part of a tour group.

At last report police were continuing to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. Local officials had not yet commented on whether tree maintenance or safety inspections had been carried out in the area before the storm.

Eakkapop Thongtub

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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FRI JULY 25

High: +36°
Low: +29°
Wind 11 m/s

SAT JULY 26

High: +36°
Low: +28°
Wind 11 m/s

SUN JULY 27

High: +35°
Low: +28°
Wind 11 m/s

MON JULY 28

High: +35°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

TUE JULY 29

High: +35°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

WED JULY 30

High: +37°
Low: +28°
Wind 4 m/s

THU JULY 31

High: +36°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

American arrested at Phuket Airport with 6.6kg of heroin

AN AMERICAN MAN has been arrested at Phuket International Airport attempting to smuggle more than six kilogrammes of heroin out of Thailand, following a joint investigation involving the Tourist Police, Customs officers and narcotics authorities.

The suspect, identified as Tyler Trong Luong, 60, was intercepted as he prepared to board a flight to Doha on July 16, with onward connections to Brussels and eventually France.

Authorities said he had concealed 6.6kg of heroin in 10 boxes of Coffee Mate brand creamer inside his checked luggage.

The arrest followed intelligence received from foreign law enforcement partners, which prompted Pol Lt Gen Saksira Pueakam, Commander of the Tourist Police, to order an urgent investigation, local police reported.

The case was handled by officers from Tourist Police Division 3 and Division 2, working in coordination with the Customs Suppression Unit and the Narcotics Suppression Bureau in Phuket.



Photo: Tourist Police

Officers tracked Luong's movements and identified his accommodation from July 14-16. He was kept under surveillance until he left for the airport.

While checking in at Phuket International Airport, Luong's luggage was X-rayed and officers said they noticed suspicious contents. On conducting a search, officers discovered the heroin carefully wrapped in yellow tape and hidden in creamer boxes.

Luong allegedly told officers that a French acquaintance had asked him to carry the bag to France, and he had agreed to help without knowing the full contents.

The authorities are now working to expand the investigation and trace other individuals potentially connected to the smuggling attempt.

Luong is expected to face multiple charges under Thailand's strict narcotics laws. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Officials raid illegal 'floating homestay'

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Officials from the Phuket Marine Office and Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Centre Region 3 (Thai-MECC 3) have uncovered what they called an illegally constructed homestay off the east coast of Phuket.

According to a statement issued by Capt Pichet Songtan, spokesperson for Thai MECC 3, officials found a homestay structure built on top of a cage used for raising aquatic animals off Koh Kala, in Mai Khao.

Koh Kala is a small island located about 1:14km offshore from Baan Mak Prok in Thalang, and about 1.76km from Laem Sai.

The structure, which included solid flooring and residential features, was constructed without permission and was deemed in violation of Section 117 of the Thai Navigation Act B.E. 2456 (1913), as amended, Capt Pichet said.

The law prohibits the construction of any structure that encroaches on public waterways without



Photo: Thai MECC 3

prior approval from the Phuket Regional Harbor Office. Offenders face criminal penalties under Section 118 of the same act, updated most recently under the Thai Navigation Act (No. 17) B.E. 2560 (2017).

In response, officials have issued a formal notice to the individual in possession of the structure, ordering an immediate suspension of construction activities, Capt Pichet explained.

The possessor has been instructed to clarify the circumstances of the encroachment and to submit all relevant documents, including an application for retroactive permission, within 15 days of receiving the official notice. Failure to

comply may result in legal action, he added.

Thai MECC 3 is urging the public – particularly those involved in aquaculture or operating facilities near the sea – to familiarise themselves with maritime regulations and seek the necessary approvals before building in or near waterways, Capt Pichet said.

“Those constructing or owning structures on waterways must understand and adhere to the law,” he added.

“Consult the Phuket Marine Office if unsure. We are committed to safeguarding the maritime interests of the Andaman region for the benefit of present and future generations,” Capt Pichet concluded.

Uzbek man tracked down, arrested for assaulting girlfriend, and theft

WICHIT POLICE HAVE arrested a 41-year-old Uzbek man on charges of theft, property damage and assault after an arrest warrant was issued against him for allegedly assaulting his girlfriend and stealing her belongings.

Officers tracked down and arrested the man, named as Artur Amirbekov, at a residence in Soi Na Suea, in Moo 4, Wichit, on July 15, reported Pol Lt Col Witthaya Kunnoi of the Wichit Police.

Pol Lt Col Witthaya explained that an arrest warrant for Amirbekov was issued by the Phuket Provincial Court.

The warrant authorised charges including theft at night, property damage and assault causing physical or mental harm.

In placing Amirbekov under

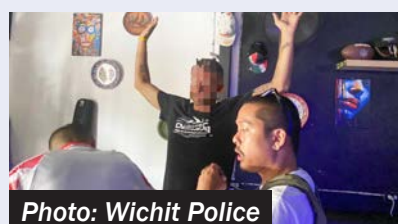


Photo: Wichit Police

arrest, officers at the scene seized as evidence a white Yamaha Filano motorbike.

The investigation began after Amirbekov's girlfriend reported that she was assaulted by him at a condominium in Wichit on July 13, said Pol Lt Col Witthaya.

Amirbekov also allegedly stole cash, a mobile phone and the motorbike before fleeing.

Amirbekov was taken to the Wichit Police Station to undergo legal proceedings, Pol Lt Col Witthaya confirmed.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Teens caught with homemade 'grenades'

TWO 15-YEAR-OLD BOYS have been arrested in Wichit after police found them in possession of four homemade 'grenades', which they allegedly planned to use in a revenge attack on rivals.

The arrests took place during a routine patrol led by Pol Lt Sunthon Phetsangk, Deputy Chief of Investigation at Wichit Police, on July 16.

Officers were carrying out crime suppression duties along Sakdidet Rd in Moo 1, Wichit, when they encountered the pair and discovered the explosives.

One of the suspects was identified as from Kantang, in Trang Province, and the other from Sai Khao Subdistrict, Khlong Thom District in Krabi Province.

Police found the pair carrying a shoulder bag containing four homemade 'grenades'. The youths were taken into custody and taken to Wichit Police Station for questioning.

During interrogation, one of the teenagers reportedly confessed that



Photo: Wichit Police

the explosives were intended for use in an attack against rivals. However, the plot was foiled before it could be carried out.

The suspects have been charged with illegal possession of explosives for which no licence can be issued under Thai law.

Wichit Police Chief Pol Col Somsak Thongkliang praised his team for their vigilance and revealed that police had recently intensified patrols in the area to prevent violence involving local and outside youth gangs.

He said officers had also been instructed to crack down on both small- and large-scale drug activity in the subdistrict. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Cancer centre donations hit B413mn

The Phuket News
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Vachira Phuket Hospital is short of just B8 million in funding needed to complete its long-awaited radiation therapy centre – a facility critical to cancer patients across the Andaman region who are currently forced to travel hundreds of kilometres for treatment.

The shortfall was highlighted during a high-level inspection visit by Minister of Public Health Somsak Thepsuthin, of the Pheu Thai Party, last Friday (July 18).

Despite securing B413mn through public donations, the hospital has signed a construction contract worth B421mn, said an official report of Mr Somsak's visit.

The donations, although more than B120mn more than the original B290mn initially sought by officials, still leave a funding gap that continues to delay full development of the cancer treatment facility, the report noted.

Hospital director Dr Weerasak Lorthongkam repeated his explanation that Vachira Hospital treats around 1,600 new cancer patients each year from Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi.

About half of these patients require radiation therapy – but without local capacity, they are



Photo: PR Phuket

referred to hospitals in Surat Thani, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Songkhla or Bangkok.

While the cost of treatment can be covered by national health funds, patients are left to shoulder travel, accommodation and food expenses themselves.

"For many families, the cost of getting to treatment is too high," he said. "That means they give up – not just on therapy, but on their chance to survive."

"B8mn is all that stands between patients and the treatment they need," said Dr Weerasak. "We're so close – but we need that final push."

In response, Minister Somsak confirmed that the Public Health Ministry has allocated B152mn in budget support to purchase two key machines for the hospital: a B120mn '4D high-energy particle accelerator' and a B32mn 'simulation and planning system'.

However, the hospital cannot receive the equipment until its specialised radiation building is completed as the facility must meet strict structural and safety standards, the official report explained.

Regardless, Minister Somsak made no mention that the central government would provide the

final B8mn needed to complete the building. His silence leaves private donations to fund the gap.

PREMIUM SERVICES

Regardless, Minister Somsak "endorsed his support" for Vachira Phuket Hospital to become one of the ministry's pilot hospitals for "Premium Services", set to launch next month.

The services are to include outpatient clinics in internal medicine, ophthalmology, surgery, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, dermatology and cosmetic medicine – all based in a "newly renovated space" separate from general patient areas.

The hospital also plans to roll out off-site care, allowing teams to provide medical services directly to patients in their homes, accommodation or hotels, the official report said.

In addition to clinical care, the hospital has been tapped to lead the country's first pilot of the "Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs) Sandbox", in partnership with Mediz Group.

The first phase includes research into skin rejuvenation, degenerative disc treatment and palliative-stage cancer therapy. The goal is to expand this into a full-scale Innovation Medical and Health Wellness programme.

'GLOBAL HEALTH TOURISM HUB'

During the minister's visit, Vachira officials presented an ambitious B1.4bn plan to transform Phuket into a "global centre for health tourism", the report announced.

The proposed project would be located on the 141 rai in Mai Khao that was previously touted to become home to Phuket's 'International Andaman Health Centre'. At last report the facility was to cost more than B5bn.

The facility is to include a Health and Wellness Centre, Rehabilitation Medicine Centre, Elderly Care Facility, Wellness Resort and Health Innovation Hub.

The project will be submitted for approval under a public-private partnership (PPP) framework.

Officials say it would not only raise the standard of healthcare in Phuket and Phang Nga but also serve as a model for generating income for government hospitals and boosting the province's high-value tourism economy.

"Health tourists spend roughly 35% more than average visitors," Minister Somsak said. "If we do this right, Phuket can lead Thailand's next phase of tourism growth."

Phuket targets child sex exploitation in tourist areas

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN PHUKET have launched a new campaign to strengthen child protection in the tourism sector, focusing on preventing child sexual exploitation in high-tourist areas.

A training workshop titled 'Strengthening the Protection Against Safe Tourism, Far from Child Sexual Exploitation' was held at the Seabed Grand Hotel in Phuket Town on July 16.

The event was jointly organised by the Phuket Provincial Office, the For Freedom International Foundation, the Anti-Human Trafficking Fund and the Office of Social Development and Human Security.

Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai presided over the opening of the workshop, which drew strong attendance from representatives of government agencies, hotel operators, tourism businesses and community organisations.

Chanwit Kittiwongsunthon, speaking on behalf of the For Freedom International Foundation, outlined the objectives of the initiative.

The workshop is aimed at raising awareness and building practical knowledge among tourism professionals – particularly those operating in Patong and surrounding areas, which attract large numbers of visitors each year, said an official report of the event.

Key topics included identifying signs of child sexual exploitation, appropriate intervention and the legal obligations of tourism businesses.



Photo: PR Phuket

Vice Governor Samawit stressed the importance of cross-sector cooperation, saying the protection of children requires active involvement from both public and private stakeholders.

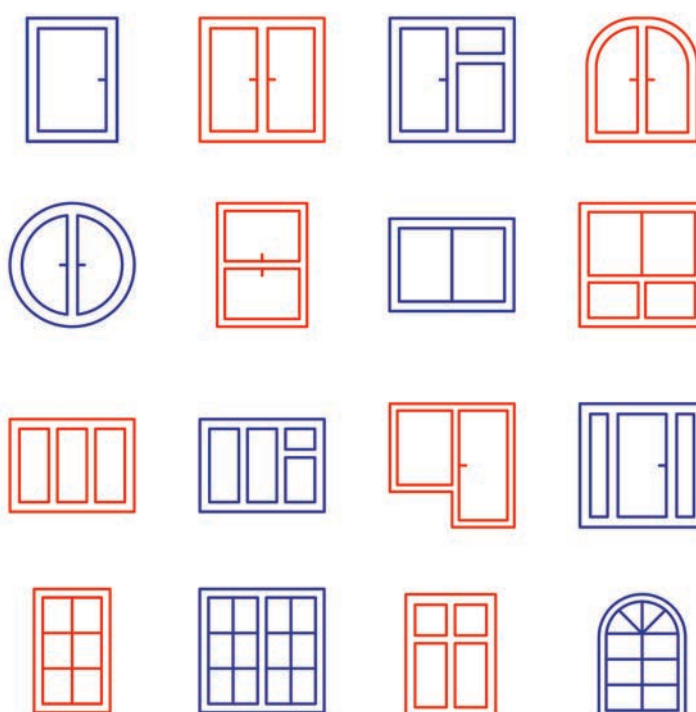
"Developing the capacity of frontline workers, such as hotel staff and tour operators, is crucial," he said. "They are in a position to observe suspicious behaviour and respond swiftly to protect victims. This project is a vital step in making Phuket a genuinely safe destination for children and youth."

He added that efforts to tackle exploitation not only protect vulnerable individuals but also contribute to Thailand's global image as a responsible and ethical tourism destination.

Organisers hope the training will serve as a model for other provinces, reinforcing long-term safeguards within Thailand's tourism infrastructure. *The Phuket News*



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Stimulus budget slammed as 'insulting'

The Phuket News
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Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee has blasted the government over its economic stimulus allocation, calling it “deeply unfair” and “a betrayal” of a province that contributes some of the highest tax revenues in the country but has been handed the lowest share of funding.

Despite repeated government promises to prioritise Phuket as a “pilot province” for economic recovery and innovation, new figures show that the island was ranked 75th out of 77 provinces in the latest budget distribution, receiving just B267.34 million – a mere 0.17% of the total B157 billion stimulus package approved by the Cabinet in June.

MP Chalermpong, who represents Constituency 2 under the People's Party (formerly the 'Move Forward Party'), did not hold back in his criticism.

“This is the province that sends some of the highest tax revenues to the central government year after year,” MP Chalermpong said. “But when it comes to allocating economic stimulus, Phuket is at the very bottom of the list. It's an insult – and it's unjustifiable.”

He pointed to data compiled by Rocket Media Lab that shows Nakhon Ratchasima received



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee / Facebook

more than B3.5bn, or 3% of the total package – nearly 13 times more than Phuket.

“Phuket is always mentioned in government speeches as a vital economic hub, but when the money is actually handed out, the reality tells a different story,” MP Chalermpong said.

He described the budget as a “political war chest disguised as economic stimulus”, adding: “It looks like gunpowder stockpiling for cronies ahead of the next election – not a serious strategy for economic recovery.”

GLARING DISPARITIES

According to Rocket Media Lab, once Bangkok and Nonthaburi are excluded, Phuket's share of the stimulus budget is the smallest in the country. In stark contrast, large

inland provinces like Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen and Chiang Mai received significantly higher allocations.

“It makes absolutely no sense,” Mr Chalermpong said. “Phuket is on the frontline of Thailand's economic recovery. We're one of the country's key international gateways. And yet we receive just crumbs.”

He acknowledged that some funding may be hidden in departmental budgets rather than allocated directly to provinces, but said that was no excuse for ignoring the region's urgent needs.

“There is no strategic thinking here – just the same old top-down mentality,” he said.

LEFT BEHIND

MP Chalermpong said Phuket had been repeatedly promoted by the

government – under both former Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and now-sidelined Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who still serves as the Pheu Thai leader – as a testbed for progressive policies, from visa exemptions to cannabis liberalisation.

“They come here and talk about Phuket being the gateway, the model, the future,” he said. “But when it's time to put real money into reviving the economy, we're forgotten.”

He warned that the consequences of poorly planned policies – including visa loopholes exploited by illegal tour operators and the reputational impact of unregulated cannabis use – have already begun to erode Phuket's appeal to quality international tourists.

“These are national-level issues affecting our local economy, and yet we're left to fend for ourselves with the smallest budget in the country,” he said.

POLITICAL PAYBACK?

MP Chalermpong suggested that politics may be playing a role in the budget snub, hinting that Phuket's representation by the opposition People's Party may have influenced the allocation.

“Is it because the MP from Phuket doesn't have the right surname?” he said. “Is it because

I'm not part of the ruling coalition, so the province gets punished?”

He added: “People are watching. This kind of behaviour – rewarding provinces that align politically and starving those that don't – is the exact opposite of what a fair and democratic government should be doing.”

Chalermpong said the latest budget controversy underscored the urgent need to decentralise fiscal power and give provinces more control over their own economic futures.

“If this is how the central government plans to allocate national funds, then we need to change the system,” he said. “Let each province develop its own economic stimulus plan. We understand our local economy far better than a ministry in Bangkok does.”

He argued that direct allocation of funds to the provinces – rather than through central ministries – would result in faster, more targeted development.

“Imagine if even a fraction of this 157-billion-baht budget had been entrusted directly to Phuket,” he said. “We could have launched real initiatives – supporting tourism operators, developing high-value products, expanding markets. That's how you stimulate an economy.”

Tour business registrations rise by 14%

THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND Sports has reported a 14% rise in tourism business registrations in the first half of 2025, saying the increase reflected an increase in confidence in the industry.

Between January and June, 3,436 tour businesses were registered, up from 3,013 in the same period last year, according to Deputy Government Spokesperson Sasikarn Wattanachan.

Most new operators are based in major cities and popular tourist destinations, she said.

“This rise in registrations is a clear indicator of tourism sector recovery,” Ms Sasikarn said in a national report, adding that new operators are appearing in both established and emerging destinations across the country.

However, she also raised concerns about the parallel rise of illegal tour operations, particularly via online platforms.

Unregistered businesses often promote group travel packages, accommodation, and restaurant services on social media channels, targeting both locals and foreign tourists. Such activity is strictly prohibited under Thai law, Ms Sasikarn warned.

Under the Tourism Business and Guide Act B.E. 2551, it is illegal to operate a tour business without a valid licence, Ms Sasikarn said.

Violators face up to two years' imprisonment, a fine of up to B500,000, or both, she added.



The Department of Tourism now has a 'License Check' feature on its home page. Image: DoT

Similarly, individuals acting as guides without the appropriate licence can be fined up to B100,000, imprisoned for up to one year, or both, Ms Sasikarn also noted.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is urging consumers to book travel services only through licensed operators to ensure safety, legal protection and access to insurance coverage in the event of accidents or other emergencies.

To verify whether a tour operator or guide is licensed, members of the public can:

- * Visit the Department of Tourism website at www.dot.go.th
- * Enter the operator's licence number or name
- * Check the current registration status through the online system

“Consumers should be cautious when booking through social media and always check credentials. Legal operators must clearly display their licence number, name, and location in any advertising, whether online or offline,” Ms Sasikarn noted. *The Phuket News*

Phuket enjoys off-season arrivals hike

PHUKET IS SEEING A big shift in tourism patterns as European travellers embrace off-season travel, with tourism revenue expected to grow by over B40 billion, or around 10%, this year, says the Phuket Tourist Association.

Tourists from the UK, Germany and France have shown rising interest in visiting Phuket during the green season, a period traditionally regarded as the off-peak months, said Thaneth Tantipiriyakit, president of the association, reports the Bangkok Post.

“This shift in travel behaviour is promising,” said Mr Thaneth. “Direct flights from Europe are increasing, particularly from France. The number of direct flights is one of the most important factors influencing tourist arrivals.”

He forecast tourism revenue in Phuket could grow by more than B40 billion in 2025, up from B498bn last year. This would represent a 10% increase in value, although total visitor numbers may rise at a slower rate.

Mr Thaneth noted a marked change in traveller



Visitors enjoy hanging out at Lard Yai Walking Street on Thalang Road. Photo: Bangkok Post

demographics, especially from Asia. While Chinese tourist arrivals dropped by roughly 50% during the last green season, visitors from India rose by a similar margin. “Chinese tourists have declined, but Indian tourists have increased by about 50%,” he said. “The two groups also behave differently.”

Indian tourists typically stay in Patong and favour Indian restaurants, often seeking vegetarian or non-meat dishes. Chinese travellers, especially those known as Chinese Free Independent Travellers (FITs), tend to spread out across the island and spend more on food and shopping.

“As a result, some local restaurants and shops that used to rely heavily on Chinese spending have seen lower sales, even if tourist

numbers overall haven't dropped dramatically,” Mr Thaneth added. Indian tourists generally shop less than their Chinese counterparts, meaning that even a small drop in Chinese arrivals can affect some businesses.

Looking ahead to the high season, Mr Thaneth said advance bookings are strong, especially among international hotel chains, several of which have already closed sales for certain dates.

Still, he urged caution, citing global economic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions. “If conditions remain stable, Phuket tourism should outperform last year. Private sector projections point to 10% growth in value,” he said.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat said attracting higher-quality tourists is essential. “The focus now should be on high-spending markets,” he said. “Tourists who don't eat or shop don't contribute much to the economy. Our roadshows should target high-potential markets such as Kazakhstan and China.”

Bangkok Post

Govt: Cambodia is 'laying mines'

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The government will submit a formal written protest to the President of the Ottawa Convention following a recent landmine explosion near the Thai-Cambodian border that left three Thai soldiers severely injured.

The incident, involving newly planted anti-personnel mines, has been condemned as a violation of international law and Thai sovereignty.

The army found two more new anti-personnel mines on Thai soil near the border with Cambodia on Sunday (July 20), where three Thai soldiers were injured by an exploding landmine the week previous. One of the soldiers lost a foot.

Rear Admiral Surasans Kongsri, Defence Ministry spokesman, and Maratee Nalita Andamo, deputy spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, jointly addressed the press following a Thai-Cambodian Border Situation Command Centre (TCBC) meeting at Government House on Monday (July 21).



Officers with the Suranaree Task Force and Humanitarian Mine Action Unit 3 in Chong Bok, Ubon Ratchathani, along the disputed border with Cambodia. Photo: Royal Thai Army

Rear Adm Surasans confirmed that PMN-2 mines were not part of Thailand's arsenal, and signs of recent digging suggest the discovered mines were placed after the May 28 border clash.

Thai authorities have concluded that the placement was deliberate, intended to kill personnel and in clear violation of the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention that Cambodia and Thailand both signed in 1997 and ratified in 1998.

In response, the Thai military has heightened its security protocols, issuing new directives to local patrol units and enhancing

readiness, he said.

The Defence Ministry will also brief military attachés and representatives from foreign armed forces to present the facts.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms Maratee said that the Foreign Affairs Ministry will formally protest to the Cambodian government in writing and report the incident to the President of the Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention – currently held by Japan – to seek accountability under the treaty framework.

Furthermore, Thailand will provide briefings to key international partners and

relevant organisations, especially countries with a stake in Cambodian demining efforts, such as Japan and Norway. These briefings will aim to raise awareness of the breach and reaffirm Thailand's position.

She said the Foreign Affairs Ministry on Sunday accused and condemned Cambodia for the use of anti-personnel mines in contravention of the Ottawa Convention banning their use.

"The Royal Thai Government condemns in the strongest terms the use of anti-personnel mines," the ministry statement said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Phumtham Wechayachai, acting as prime minister, said inspections have clearly confirmed that the landmines were newly manufactured and recently planted; therefore, Thailand views this as a violation of United Nations agreements.

Cambodia has denied laying new mines that injured the three soldiers. However, the ministry said it had clear evidence Thailand had never used the type of landmine that was found.

Heavy rain alert as tropical storm Wipha approaches Thailand

BANGKOK

THAILAND BRACED for heavy rain this week after tropical storm Wipha triggered the opening of an around-the-clock monitoring centre.

The Thai Meteorological Department's (TMD) 24-hour war room was launched to keep track of the storm on Monday (July 21) with wind speeds up to 83km/h and widespread downpours expected.

TMD director-general Sukanyanee Yawincharn stated that Wipha was moving west-southwest at 20km/h and, despite not making direct landfall in Thailand, was intensifying the southwest monsoon, leading to forecasts of heavy to very heavy rain across 50 provinces, while in Bangkok, thunderstorms were expected across 60-80% of the city.

Ms Sukanyanee said that Wipha would likely to cause flash floods, forest run-off and rough seas. The TMD were to maintain 24-hour surveillance and issue continuous updates.

Seree Supratid, director



Photo: Bangkok Post

of the Climate Change and Disaster Center at Rangsit University, posted on Facebook that Thailand's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation had convened an emergency meeting, led by director-general Phasakorn Boonyalak, to assess Wipha's potential impacts.

The meeting resolved that the National Disaster Warning Centre would inform 22 high-risk provinces via cell broadcast of the expected landfall on Tuesday.

The storm will likely weaken to a depression before crossing into northern Thailand, especially affecting Nan and Chiang Rai. Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai warned that flash floods are the main concern, and flood response equipment was deployed in key areas.

Bangkok Post

Police to make background checks on all monks nationwide

BANGKOK

POLICE WILL CHECK THE backgrounds of about 300,000 Buddhist monks nationwide in the wake of the scandal involving several senior monks and a woman known as "Sika Golf".

Police have asked the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) for the ID card numbers of all Buddhist monks in Thailand so they could make background checks for miscreants and felons, Pol Maj Gen Jaroonsiat Parnkaew, deputy commissioner of the Central Investigation Bureau, (CIB) said on July 16.

Police would also revive all the old cases against monks that the NOB previously dismissed, he added.

Ongoing action would not be lenient, he stressed, explaining that cooperation with the NOB had not been smooth in the past. "I don't want these problems to remain a cancer in the side of Buddhism," he said.

Police were determined to investigate monkly misbehaviour in the interests of protecting Buddhism, but disciplinary authority rested with the NOB, the deputy CIB chief said.

The current uptick in action against misbehaving monks started after the Royal Thai Police Office recently opened a centre dedicated to tackling the issue, Pol Maj Gen Jaroonsiat said.



CIB meeting on July 16. Photo: Bangkok Post

The centre was overwhelmed with misconduct complaints, including senior monks having sexual relations with women other than "Sika Golf".

Pol Maj Gen Jaroonsiat was referring to Wilawan "Golf" Emsawat, 35, who was arrested at her home in Nonthaburi province on July 15 for supporting a senior monk's embezzlement of temple funds, laundering money and receiving stolen goods.

She is suspected of having sexual relations with about 10 monks, some of them elderly and revered, and receiving and extorting huge sums of money from them.

Police said they have considerable evidence, including videos of Ms Golf involved in sexual activities with monks found stored in her mobile phones, and that they intend to lay more charges against her.

Sika is a traditional Thai term used to refer to a woman who is associated with a monk. Bangkok Post

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Finding Your Tribe



The Wellthwise Tribe Logo. Image: Libby Heath

Establishing a vibrant social circle via nourishing connections

WELLTHWISE

Libby Heath

Moving to a new country is one of life's greatest adventures. There is the thrill of discovery: the flavours, the landscapes, the rhythm of life in a culture not your own. But beneath the Instagrammable sunsets and bustling markets lies another truth – one that often surfaces in the quiet moments: Who do I belong with here?

Humans are wired for connection. Our biology knows it even when we do not. Study after study links strong, supportive social relationships to better health, sharper cognition, lower stress and even longer life. In fact, loneliness has been called the new smoking – a risk factor for premature aging and chronic disease. But not all relationships are created equal.

When you land in a new country, those first friendships often grow from proximity – neighbours, colleagues or fellow expats who are simply there when you need a friendly face. These connections are such a gift in the early

days, helping you find your footing and feel less alone in unfamiliar surroundings. Over time, though, there's something deeply fulfilling about seeking out people who share your values and aspirations – in my case, a healthy obsession with wellness-kindred spirits who inspire you to grow, support your vision of a vibrant, vital life and make you feel even more at home in yourself.

This is where finding your tribe comes in.

A tribe isn't just a social circle. It is a constellation of relationships that feed your well-being rather than deplete it. It's the people who "get it" when you talk about wanting to live healthier, age better, or rethink what thriving looks like. The ones who share your curiosity and inspire you to stick with the commitments you have made to yourself.

In a foreign country, building this tribe requires intentionality. You are stepping into a social ecosystem where the bonds of shared history and culture don't exist for you yet. That can feel daunting – but it is also liberating. You get to curate. You can let go of old patterns where relationships were maintained simply out of habit or proximity and instead ask: Who adds energy to my life? Who shares my values? Who makes me smile?

Everyone has a story. I love hearing them; the wild detours, the unexpected decisions, the dreams they are still carrying. Even the mundane are "new" to me, so I appreciate what others are willing to share. But as much as I value stories, I am careful about where I invest my own energy. Life is too short (and too precious) to spend hours in conversations that leave me feeling drained or disconnected. With limited free time, I choose to spend time with people who are curious, kind and committed to growing – people who expand my sense of possibility rather than shrink it. Those are my people.

How do you find your tribe? Try starting with these questions:

- What are my non-negotiables when it comes to friendships?
- Where do people who share my passions and lifestyle gather?
- Am I showing up as the kind of person I hope to attract?

Seek out spaces where people are aligned in their values – not just their location. Maybe it is a wellness workshop, a hiking group, a healthy cooking

class, a beach cleanup, or a book club focused on topics that inspire you. Say yes to invitations that align with your interests, and no to those that do not. Protect your time like the precious resource it is.

Building a tribe takes patience. It is not about collecting contacts; it is about cultivating connections. But once you find even a handful of kindred spirits, everything shifts. Suddenly, the challenges of living abroad feel lighter. The victories feel sweeter. And your vision of what life can look like – vibrant, healthy, deeply connected – feels not just possible but inevitable.

So go ahead: seek out your people. Not the ones who merely occupy space in your calendar, but the ones who spark joy, laughter and meaningful conversations. The ones who remind you that, no matter where you are in the world, you are never alone.

And if you are here in Phuket, I would love to make that easier for all of us. I have created a space for those of us who value vibrant health, engaging conversations, and living with intention: the Wellthwise Tribe.

Think of it as your curated community of kindred spirits – people who love to laugh, learn and grow while sipping kombucha instead of cocktails (or maybe both). We will start a monthly Healthy Happy Hour, on the 4th Friday every month. It will be a relaxed gathering where we can share ideas, swap stories and support each other by staying strong, sharp and vibrant.

The first one will be Aug 22, 2025, at the Solis Beach Club in Bang Tao (solis-phuket.com) starting at 4pm. After this one, let's explore and rotate around the island.

Follow @WellthwiseTribe on Instagram for HHH information and DM me if you would like to be part of the founding circle.

This is not about networking or surface-level small talk. It is about making connections that feel nourishing – like you have found your people.

Are you in?

Libby Heath recently became the first Mayo Clinic certified wellness coach in Asia. She shares her insights and advice through her column 'Wellthwise' here in The Phuket News. Please note that if you have a condition that requires medical treatment, consult your doctor. Contact Libby at: BeWellthwise@gmail.com.



The September/October 2025 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

Distributed in resorts/hotels lobbies, in a high number of restaurants and coffee shops, plus inserted in one issue of *The Phuket News* each month, it is a great way to Talk to Phuket about your F & B outlet

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Bicycling Bourton with Bill



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

My good friend, 83-year-old Bill Dobbs, first set eyes on Phuket some 73 years ago, in 1953, when he was a mere slip of an Irish lad of ten summers. Bill's father had spent his career in international shipping based in Singapore and Malaysia and had taken the family, including young Bill, for a holiday to an undeveloped and largely empty island called Phuket, about which he'd heard glowing reports.

"I remember Phuket as a quiet, empty paradise island, totally undeveloped and with just a couple of little shacks on what is now Patong Beach," Bill told me.

Bill was regaling me with all this as we cycled together through the incredibly beautiful Cotswold countryside in southwest England to a gruesomely-named village called Upper Slaughter for mid-morning coffees, near to Bourton-on-the-Water where Bill now lives in retirement. We were a long way from Phuket, where we'd first met some 15 years ago, yet the island featured prominently in our conversation as we had both spent many happy years living there.

"I was fortunate enough to retire to Phuket in 1998 and bought some land



From Phuket to the Cotswolds with Bill and Anan Dobbs. Photo: Supplied

overlooking Kata Beach on the hillside high above. I discovered an idyllic life-style after a much-travelled global career as a director of the famous Pilkington glass company. I built some villas on my land and lived in one of them and sold the others," he explained.

By now, Bill and I were seated on the stunning greensward lawn in front of the 'Lords of the Manor' luxury hotel, which dates back to 1649 and was formerly the House of the land-owning Slaughter family, after whom the village is named. The name 'Slaughter' makes it sound like the village has a dark history, but it's actually just a mispronunciation of the Old English word 'slothre', which simply means a muddy place and came about due to the River Eye which serenely flows through both Upper and Lower Slaughter villages.

We were surrounded by the most fabulous English country garden and

trees, a far cry from the abundant tropical verdancy which we had both come to love in Phuket. Our steaming coffees soon arrived, as did a bill for some B540 for the two cappuccinos, also a far cry from prices in Phuket!

"One amazing thing that happened during my Phuket retirement was that at the ripe old age of 62 I had a son with my Lao partner who we named Anan," Bill told me. "He grew up firstly in Phuket until the age of 12, but then I wanted a secondary education for him at one of the excellent private schools back in England, followed by a British university if he did well enough to get in. So, 10 years ago, in 2015, I moved back to the UK and found this lovely village of Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds and made it our home."

Clearly Bill's plan for his son worked out exceedingly well, as Anan is now a

charming and handsome young man of 21 who has just received his honours degree in architecture from the prestigious Oxford Brookes University.

Bourton-on-the-Water is without doubt one of the most beautiful and famous small towns in England, known as the 'Venice of the Cotswolds' for its numerous lovely little footbridges across the River Windrush which trickles its trout- and duck-laden way right through the middle of the town. The houses are built from a gorgeous golden-yellow limestone, unique to this part of this world and the surrounding countryside rolls verdantly to every horizon inviting hikers and cyclists to immerse themselves in its Sylvan bounty.

Bill's lovely home features a magnificent golden stone courtyard and garden where we ate outdoors once our day's bike ride had finished. We spent the long summer's evening enjoying the delicious local cuisine and even local English wines which have evolved to become pretty good in these times of accelerated sunshine and heat in today's globally-warmed English summers.

From Phuket to Bourton-on-the-Water may seem like a rather long leap of connectivity, but I like to think that this was yet another example of the magic which cycling friendships can weave!

'Bicycling' Baz Daniel has been penning his Blazing Saddles column, chronicling his cycling adventures in Phuket and beyond, since 2013.



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POP QUIZ

1. Who invented the television?

2. What do deciduous trees do?

3. What colour is vermilion a shade of?

4. In golf what name is given to the No 3 wood?

5. What was the name of inn in 'Treasure Island'?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

1. Monroe's successor

6. Yammers

10. "Hamlet" has five

14. Storyteller

15. Unsightly

16. Binary

17. High enders

20. Fifth-century scourge

21. Border monitors (abbr.)

22. Absorbed, as a cost

23. Caesar's meal starters?

26. Bach composition

28. ___-l'Eglise, France

31. E or G, e.g.

32. International language

33. ___-time low

34. "Seize ___!"

35. Arctic jacket

38. High enders

42. ___-proof

43. Caviar source

44. Afflict

45. Gathered dust

46. Black gold

47. Dutch pottery city

49. 1940s-60s world leader

51. Dorm room staple

53. "We ___ the World"
- Down

1. Eastern pooh-bah

2. "Dang!"

3. Common contraction

4. Fashionable

5. Funeral slabs

6. Pursue relentlessly

7. "Give it ___!"

8. Disheveled

9. Harmonize

10. Play title word

11. Relating to a steward

12. Spoonful, say

13. Cold shower?

18. Spicy stew

19. Corn dish

24. Like, with "to"

25. Mark for misconduct

27. Aroma
28. Truth

29. Scat queen, to friends

30. Hinged dredgers

34. "And I Love ___" (1964 tune)

35. Mature

36. "___ I care!"

37. Early European

39. Bandy words

40. Hoaxes

41. Lady Macbeth, e.g.

46. Fish hawk

47. Strip of potency

48. Crude stone artifact

49. Bigwig

50. Clear, as a disk

52. "Andy Capp" cartoonist

55. "Empedocles on ___" (Matthew Arnold poem)

57. City on the Yamuna River

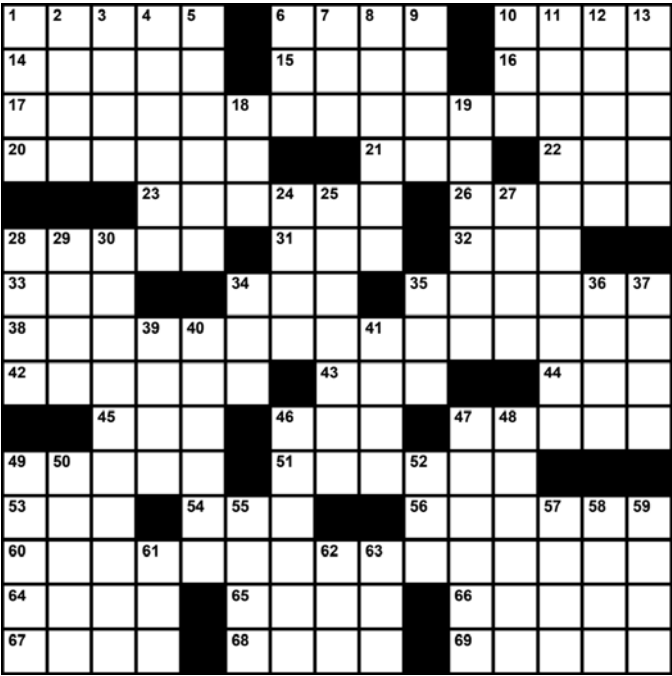
58. Dilute

59. Alone

61. Auction offering

62. ___ Today

63. Utmost



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

2

beats per minute is how slow an alligator can lower its heart rate while resting.

84

seconds into a conversation is how long it takes before questions arise asking for clarification, like "Who? What?"

450

people die falling out of beds in the United States each year.

1,000

bibles printed in 1631 left the "not" out of "Thou shall not commit adultery" – most were burned, but a handful still exist.

750,000

US dollars is how much Brazilian football star Ronaldinho lost in a deal with Coca-Cola because he took a sip from a Pepsi at a press conference in 2012.

61 million

paggers were in use globally in 1994.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Cherng Talay sunset. Photo by Peter Vivian

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

This week in history

July 25, 1965

Bob Dylan goes electric at the Newport Folk Festival, signaling a major change in folk and rock music.

Vincent van Gogh.

July 26, 1745

The first recorded women's cricket match takes place near Guildford, England.

July 27, 1890

Vincent van Gogh shoots himself and dies two days later.

July 28, 1965

U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson announces his order to increase the number of United States troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000.

July 29, 1981

A worldwide television audience of around 750 million people watch the wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral in London, England.

July 30, 762

Baghdad is founded in Iraq.

July 31, 1992

Thai Airways International Flight 311 crashes into a mountain north of Kathmandu, Nepal killing all 113 people on board.

Source: Wikipedia

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FRI25JULY



Friday Mussels Night

6 PM onwards: Belgian style mussels served with French Fries. All you can eat. Your choice, Your style: Marinere, Selected drinks, Provencale, Garlic & cream, Creamy curry, Blue cheese or Thai style. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 325 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

SUN27JULY



13th Anniversary - Phuket Drum Circle

WELCOME! The Phuket Drum Circle celebrates 13 years, and becomes a teenager! At a drum circle you can drum, dance, relax, meet others, contemplate, and enjoy the good vibes. Always free! The PDC is the only free/public drum circle in Asia with a year round schedule, a Facebook page, and a website. Are you ready to catch the vibe? Go deeper. Mark your calendar, book a plane ticket if you're abroad, and join us in this rhythm revolution! Naiharn Beach is waiting for you. The 13th anniversary is on Sunday, July 27 from 4:30 pm till after sunset, and beyond... - If you bring food or drinks, please bring a trash bag. - In case of rain the drum circle will be at Lakeside Bar, a lovely restaurant-bar-hotel across the lake, less than 1 km from our beach location. No outside drinks please.

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SUN27JULY



Sunday Roast

12PM – 9PM: All you can eat Sunday Roast Buffet Beef, Pork & Capon chicken – Cauliflower, Broccoli, Peas, Carrots, Fried mushrooms, Grilled Tomatoes – Yorkshire pudding – Roasted Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes – Gravy, Mushroom sauce, Horse raddish, Mint Sauce. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

MON28JULY



Monday BBQ Night

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

WED30JULY



Wednesday BBQ Night

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

FRI8AUGUST



Phuket Business Networking - Aug 2025

Make sure to bring lots of business cards, as getting to know each other is what PBN is all about. A small entry fee, THB 500 per person, that includes the first 3 drinks and pizza. Location - Oasis Bar, Koh Kaew, starting 5pm. Register your attendance here or call Jason - 086 479 7471.

SAT9AUGUST



Legend Michael Bisping to Host Exclusive Two-Day Event

Bangtao Muay Thai & MMA is proud to welcome UFC Hall of Famer and former Middleweight World Champion Michael "The Count" Bisping for an exclusive two-day seminar this August 9 & 10, 2025 - marking his first-ever appearance at our world-renowned facility. After winning The Ultimate Fighter Season 3, he made history by becoming the first British fighter to capture UFC gold! Bisping retired with 30 professional wins, including 20 victories in the UFC - solidifying his place among the sport's all-time greats.

Saturday, August 9 (Start 11:00am)

- Meet & Greet with Michael Bisping (with photo opportunities)
- Open Workout – Watch Bisping hit pads and share stories from inside the Octagon
- Merchandise Signing Session.

Sunday, August 10 (Start 11:00am)

- Technical Seminar: Learn from the former champion as he shares his signature approach that made him one of MMA's elite.
- PLUS PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AND MERCH SIGNING

For more info and bookings – bangtaomuaythai.com/legend-michael-bisping-to-host-exclusive-two-day-event-at-bangtao-muay-thai-mma

SUN10AUGUST



Phuket Eco Market

Dive into a day of Eco-Fun! Join us at the Phuket Eco Market from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM at Junkyard Theatre! This month, we're celebrating International Whale Shark Day! We're proud to partner with the Thai Whale Sharks Foundation to raise funds for the tagging of a whale shark right here in Thailand! We're excited to welcome everyone to Phuket's ONLY Eco Market! We humbly request a small donation for entry. Your contribution helps The Litter Club continue its essential clean-up efforts across Phuket. Come explore unique eco-friendly products, enjoy local treats, and support a cleaner, greener, healthier Phuket! See you there!

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Lost iraqi passport belonging to Bilal Hadi Abdullah Al Khafaji around Patong Beach, on 15/07/2025. If found, please contact 063 094 7510. A reward will be offered for its return. Thank you!

CHRISTOPHER DAVID BARTLEY WILLIAMS Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 (England and Wales) anyone having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of Village, No. 2 Thepkasattri Sub-district, Thalang District, Phuket Province, 83110, who died on 25 November 2024, must send written particulars to the address below by 05 September 2025, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests notified.

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100 LEGENDS SUMMER BALL 2025

The Phuket Veterans hosted their first-ever 100 Legends Summer Gala Ball on Saturday, July 19, held at The Courtyard by Marriott, Phuket Town. Guests enjoyed a fantastic array of food and beverages and great entertainment. Guests included Australian and British Consulates, Phuket-based police and military personnel, the Lions Club, Jungceylon and members of the Phuket Veterans Association. A huge shout-out to the amazing entertainers: Pinky, Apples Bite and DJ Elina, you truly made the night unforgettable. To find out more about the Phuket Veterans, visit facebook.com/phuketveterans



Thai mixed doubles miss out in Tokyo

BADMINTON

MIXED DOUBLES PAIR Dechapol Paavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran of Thailand missed out on a chance to win their sixth career World Tour title after losing in the final of the US\$950,000 (B31 million) BWF Japan Open in Tokyo last Sunday (July 20).

The fifth seeds went down to defending champions and second seeds Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Yaxin 19-21, 21-16, 15-21 as the Chinese pair won back-to-back Super 750 titles at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium.

China's former world No.1 Shi Yuqi won the men's singles title, beating French defending champion Alex Lanier 21-17, 21-15 in the final.

Shi was replaced at the top of the men's world rankings by Thai star Kunlavut Vitidsarn in June.

South Korea's An Se-Young continued her



The mixed doubles finalists. Photo: AFP

remarkable form as she downed China's Wang Zhiyi 21-12, 21-10 in the women's final to capture her sixth title this year.

Top-ranked An's only defeat this year came in the quarter-finals of the Singapore Open last month.

China also came out on top in women's doubles, with top seeds Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning beating Malaysia's third seeds Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan 21-15, 21-14.

South Korea's third seeds Kim Won-Ho and Seo Seung-Jae claimed the men's doubles after they defeated Malaysia's top seeds Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin 21-16, 21-17 in the title match.

Bangkok Post

Brilliant Scheffler wins British Open

GOLF

AFP

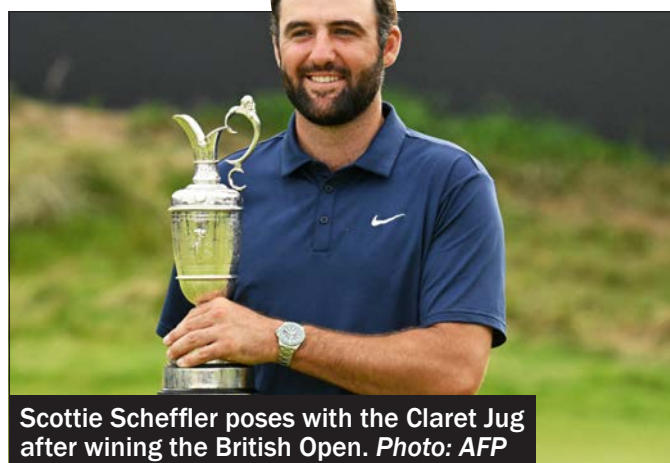
Scottie Scheffler romped to a magnificent four-shot victory to seal his first British Open title at Royal Portrush last Sunday (July 20), notching his fourth major success.

The world number one eased to a three-under par final round of 68, finishing on 17-under for the tournament after shooting in the 60s on all four days.

"It's a pretty special feeling. It was a tough week," said Scheffler, after becoming the first player in over 100 years to win his first four major titles by three strokes or more.

"I battled hard all weekend. It was a battle, but I played some really good golf and I'm fortunate to be standing here holding the trophy."

It was the 10th successive time Scheffler has converted a 54-hole lead into a win.



Scottie Scheffler poses with the Claret Jug after winning the British Open. Photo: AFP

His dominance over the past two years has been such that once he birdied the first hole, it seemed as though the chasing pack had already lost any belief of challenging.

Scheffler, who took a lead he would never relinquish with a seven-under 64 on the Friday, extended his run of successive top-10 finishes to 11 events.

That streak now features four wins, including the PGA Championship and British Open titles.

The American, who led

by four shots overnight, became only the second world number one to lift the Claret Jug after Tiger Woods, completing the third leg of a possible career Grand Slam.

Harris English finished in a distant second place, ending the tournament on 13-under courtesy of a closing round of 66 while Chris Gotterup carded a 67 to end a shot further behind in third.

Home favourite Rory McIlroy could not launch a serious charge, with his

challenge finally snuffed out by a double-bogey on the 10th hole.

He had to settle for a tie for seventh place on 10-under and a standing ovation from his thousands of fans surrounding the 18th green.

"None of us could live with what he (Scheffler) had this week, but for me to be in front of everyone here at home and to get that reception up the last, absolutely incredible," said Masters champion McIlroy.

Scheffler had raised eyebrows before the tournament when he suggested his pursuit of dominance on the course was an "unfulfilling life" that only provides fleeting moments of satisfaction.

However, he tapped in on the 18th green to tick off another achievement on his seemingly unstoppable path to golfing greatness, raising his arms in celebration before embracing his wife and young son.

Usyk becomes undisputed world heavyweight champion

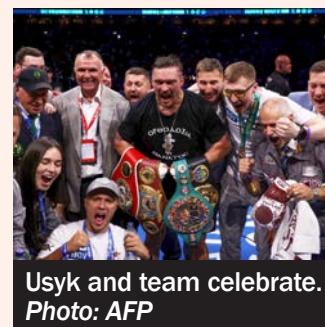
BOXING

OLEKSANDR USYK cemented his status as the outstanding heavyweight of his generation with an emphatic fifth-round knockout of Daniel Dubois in their undisputed world title bout at London's Wembley Stadium last Saturday (July 19).

Victory saw Ukraine's Usyk extend his unbeaten professional record to 24 fights as the WBA, WBC and WBO champion added his British opponent's IBF belt to his collection.

Usyk, now a two-time undisputed champion, dominated the opening four rounds and early in the fifth he dropped Dubois to the canvas.

Moments later he finished the fight in decisive fashion after a trademark left hook left his British rival unable to beat the count one minute and 52 seconds into the round.



Usyk and team celebrate. Photo: AFP

It was the second time Usyk, at 38 some 11 years older than his opponent, had defeated Dubois following a ninth-round stoppage success in Krakow, Poland, in 2023, where the Briton was ruled to have landed an illegal low blow in the fifth round.

Usyk was roared into the ring by a huge contingent of supporters, many of them waving Ukraine national flags in a 90,000 capacity crowd, and it soon became one-way traffic as their hero conducted a ruthless masterclass against local favourite Dubois.

Asked about his next opponent Usyk, who has already twice beaten former world heavyweight cham-

pion Tyson Fury said: "Listen, I cannot now say because I want to go back home."

Dubois insisted he would return to the ring, saying: "I have to commend him (Usyk) on the performance, I gave everything I had. Take no credit away from that man, I'll be back."

Usyk basked in the adulation following the latest dazzling victory of a career that has seen him emerge as a national hero in his war-torn homeland.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was among the first to congratulate Usyk on his victory.

"An undisputed champion. A legend. One of our own," Zelensky wrote on X.

"Thank you for the strength and inspiration you give to the whole country with every victory. Thank you for stepping into each fight with Ukraine in your heart." AFP

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**Undisputed
Usyk floors
Dubois > p14**



Phuket holds latest Muay Thai trainer course

The opening ceremony of the C-Level Muay Thai license course on July 16. Photo: PR Phuket

MUAY THAI

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

An intensive 10-day training course for selected students looking to qualify as fully-fledged coaches in the national Thai sport of Muay Thai concluded in Phuket today (July 25).

A total of 50 students attended the course in pursuit of their official C-Level Muay Thai license, undertaking a series of lectures as well as practical demonstrations.

The focus of the course was to develop the requisite skillset to enable the students to become qualified trainers of the sport themselves, therefore allowing them to teach others when back in their homeland.

This included general combat techniques involving punching, kicking and the correct use of knees and elbows as well as learning the science behind muscle relaxation, a key component in reducing fatigue, stiffness and injury.

The course was held at the Bhukitta Boutique Hotel in Phuket Town and was arranged and facilitated by the Sports Authority of Thailand, who elected to choose Phuket as the desired location due to its strong ties to the national sport.

PRIDE

The official course opening and welcome address was held at the hotel on July 16, overseen by Thammawat Wongcharoenyos,

President of the Sports Association of Phuket.

Notable guests joining Mr Thammawat included Wandee Isarangkun Na Ayutthaya, a senior level director from the Office of the Boxing Committee of the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT), and Thanawut Petchchara, Director of the Phuket Provincial Sports Authority Office. Additional SAT officials, lecturers and the 50 students sitting the course were also in attendance. It was not specified in reports, however, whether the students were Thai nationals or from overseas.

During his opening remarks, Mr Thammawat explained that the sport of Muay Thai is very much regarded as a national art form and key component of Thai culture. He furthermore expressed his pride at Phuket being selected from a number of national venues to host the course, citing the strong Muay Thai links and presence across the island as potential deciding factors.

Mr Thammawat thanked the SAT and those specifically involved in designing and delivering the course, explaining its importance in allowing participants to stay abreast of developments in the sport, including in areas such as sports science and understanding and implementing prohibited substance regulations. Adhering to ethical standards within the sport is of critical importance, he added.

In concluding his remarks, the Sports Association of Phuket

chief also strongly encouraged all participants to fully immerse themselves in the course in order to maximise the opportunity to learn from such qualified experts.

SOFT POWER

The course is another example of how the sport of Muay Thai is being used as a key component by government officials in their ongoing soft power drive to attract increased tourists numbers and revenue to Thailand, while simultaneously enhancing the country's image on the international stage.

The promotion of Thailand's national sport was high on the agenda under former Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, with then deputy chairperson of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, revealing an official push to have Muay Thai become an Olympic sport.

A range of initiatives, such as incorporating a ranking system similar to Taekwondo's belt system, developing more national level Muay Thai competitions and supporting teachers of the sport to enhance their professionalism were all pursued keenly under Ms Paetongtarn's watch in her previous role. Special 90-day visas were introduced in the second half of last year for overseas visitors wanting to visit Thailand and practice the sport.

In March 2024 Mr Thammawat and colleagues from the Sports Association of Phuket embarked on a trip to Beijing, China to meet with thousands of

Muay Thai students and gym owners. Approximately 100 of these students and gym owners then travelled to Phuket a month later to learn about the sport and receive official accreditation as part of a program known as "TY Training The Trainer @Phuket Thailand," held at T&Y Muay Thai gym on Soi ta-ia in Chalong.

Furthermore, Thailand sent eight Muay Thai experts to Saudi Arabia in April 2024 to train that country's military and national boxers, and a Muay Thai masterclass was conducted in England a month later where foreign students learned from internationally recognised Muay Thai masters, such as Rottang Jitmuangnon, Buakaw Banchamek and Superbon Singha Mawynn.

It is expected that such initiatives will continue to inspire foreigners to visit Thailand to further their studies, officials explained, which could significantly boost Thai tourism.

BEHEMOTH

Another key driver behind the sport's increasing popularity is combat sports promotion behemoth ONE Championship whose viewership in Thailand reportedly surpassed the 2024 Paris Olympics, as well as the combined figures for the Thai League and English Premier League.

According to a report commissioned by Nielsen last month, ONE Championship generates an estimated US\$470 million (B15.3 trillion) annually

in economic value for Thailand through its slate of combat sports events, including its primetime cards at Lumpinee Stadium in Bangkok.

"Without a doubt, ONE is the largest and most consistent driver of tourism, investment and awareness for Thailand on the global stage via our weekly broadcast to more than 190 countries and our rabid fan base of 500 million people around the world," ONE Championship chief executive Chatri Sityodtong said in May.

"Our live events, coupled with our superstar heroes and global content engine, continue to drive Thailand's economy forward and bring prestige, honour and glory to Thailand," he added.

Muay Thai has an extremely strong presence in Phuket, with 43 officially registered camps across the island, including the famous Tiger Muay Thai and Bangtao Muay Thai & MMA gyms. Phuket also boasts two top-class standard boxing stadiums in Patong Beach Boxing Stadium and Bangla Boxing Stadium.

A raft of local and international talent has either been based in Phuket or graced the various Muay Thai gyms here at some stage on their way to starring on the global stage through promotions such as the UFC and ONE Championship; Alexander Volkanovski, Anatoly Malykhin, Loma Lookboonmee, Rafael Fiziev, Petr Yan, Valentina Shevchenko, Celest Hansen and Israel Adesanya are just a handful of such examples.