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YELLOW ZONE



Another project in a Yellow Zone moves ahead in Cherng Talay. Photo: Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

TOWN PLANNER CHIEF PUSHES FOR BIGGER BUILDINGS IN 'LOW DENSITY' AREAS

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With green areas fast disappearing across Phuket, the chief of the Phuket office of the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning (DPT Phuket), Pakorn Waraphasakul, is aiming to allow more, even larger, buildings in the so-called 'Yellow Zones', the areas already designated for low-density residential housing.

Mr Pakorn is already overseeing draft new regulations in the hope of seeing his vision become reality. In such areas, hotels will be allowed, as they are now, he told *The Phuket News*.

"According to the Phuket Provincial Town Planning

Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2554, low-density residential ['Yellow Zone'] land can be used for tourism-related developments, including hotels," Mr Pakorn explained.

"However, while the regulation does not explicitly prohibit hotel construction, it lacks specific guidelines on the scale and type of buildings permitted. This ambiguity has led to conflicting interpretations and regulatory uncertainty," Mr Pakorn said.

There are other problems with the current regulation, according to Mr Pakorn. It does not specify the boundaries of the building to be built. It does not specify what type of building it must be. It only states that it is used to specify "low-density residential, commercial,

public utilities and public services", he added.

Despite the volume of new condo projects being built, especially in the Bang Tao and Cherng Talay area, Mr Pakorn wants to allow larger hotels and condo projects in the "low-density" area.

"The Yellow Zone rule states that a single building cannot exceed 2,000 square metres. I think that is not right... I do not agree because 2,000 is only enough for a Lotus's shopping centre. You cannot build a [large] condo or hotel," he said.

Mr Pakorn avoided any mention of the scale of the properties already under construction in Yellow Zone areas in Phuket, which are using the rule to

build several condo buildings on the same site as a 'complex'.

Instead, he pointed out, "The new draft is currently more of a vision than a reality, and it's unclear when it will be released. It requires extensive discussions and numerous meetings before it can move forward."

Yet Mr Pakorn is moving forward with his vision. He declined to provide a copy of the draft regulation, saying it was "only a draft".

However, Mr Pakorn assured that the draft, when 'finalised', will be presented at public hearings for feedback.

LOOPHOLES

Phuket MP Thitikan Thiti-pruethikul, who has been at the...

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News



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Burrows guilty of sex crimes

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Richard Burrows, who for decades lived in Phuket under the name 'Peter Smith', has been found guilty of 54 offences of sexual offences against young boys.

Burrows was handed down the verdicts at Chester Crown Court, in England, on Mar 17. The convictions included indecent assault of boys, buggery, attempted buggery and indecency with a child, reports Cheshire Police.

At an earlier hearing, the 80-year-old, incarcerated at His Majesty's prison Altcourse, had already pleaded guilty to 43 offences, including indecent assault of boys, making indecent images of children, possession of indecent images of children and four counts of possession of false identity documents with intent.

Burrows has been remanded in custody and will be sentenced on Apr 7 for a total of 97 offences, Cheshire Police said in a statement.

The court heard how between 1968 and 1995 Burrows systematically abused 24 young boys across the Cheshire, West

Midlands and West Mercia areas.

The offences in Cheshire occurred between 1969 and 1971 while he was working as a Housemaster, looking after vulnerable children at Danesford Children's Home in Congleton.

His victims in the West Midlands and West Mercia areas were also all young boys who were abused between 1968 and 1995, the majority through local Scout groups where Burrows worked as a leader, Cheshire Police said.

In each case, he befriended the victims by using his position of trust over them and their personal interests, such as radio communications or boating. After gaining their trust, and in many cases the trust of their families, Burrows then went on to sexually abuse the boys.

While some of his victims attempted to speak out at the time, many simply did not feel that they would be believed.

It was not until the 1990s, following revelations in relation to offences at other children's homes and institutions, that many of the victims had the confidence to come forward.

Following the allegations in relation to the



Richard Burrows, better known in Phuket as 'Peter Smith'. Photo: Cheshire Police

offences at Danesford Children's Home, a large-scale investigation was launched by detectives from Cheshire Police in 1994.

Burrows was initially arrested in April 1997 and was subsequently charged in May 1997 with two counts of buggery and 11 counts of indecent assault in relation to the offences in Cheshire and some in the West Midlands.

After his initial appearance in magistrates' courts, he was released on bail by the court and was due to attend a further

hearing at Chester Crown Court on Dec 8, 1997.

However, Burrows failed to attend and officers subsequently discovered that he had disappeared. Burrows arrived in Phuket 1997, where he stayed for the next 27 years.

"Over the past 27 years detectives from Cheshire Police have been carrying out multiple enquiries to locate him. This included several wanted appeals and four Crimewatch appeals on national television as well as following up numerous leads, none of which indicated Burrows had left the

country," Cheshire Police said.

"The investigation also included enquiries with various agencies and institutions within the UK as well as border and international checks, however there was no trace of him either within or outside of the UK," Cheshire Police added in their statement.

Yet, somehow during all his years in Phuket, Burrows went unidentified despite renewing his British passport several times – all without raising a red flag to British crimefighters and despite the advent of biometric passports.

Regardless, Cheshire Police said that Burrows remained on the Cheshire Police wanted list throughout the 27-year period and his case was regularly reviewed.

"Despite the officers' best efforts, there was no trace until April 2023 when detectives from the force's Serious and Organised Crime Unit used specialist software to search for any possible images of Burrows online," Cheshire Police explained.

"After searching through billions of images, the system came back with a match for a man using the name of Peter Smith who was living in Chalong.

"Peter' had an active interest in sailing and had previously been working at an advertising company in Phuket [his own company – Ed]. He had even featured in the local news in 2019 when he retired from his job," Cheshire Police added.

During their investigation, officers discovered that Burrows had stolen the name Peter Smith from an acquaintance who was terminally ill. This allowed him to fraudulently obtain a 'genuine' passport in 1997 and leave the UK without detection.

Following the verdict, Detective Inspector Eleanor Atkinson said, "Our determination to locate Burrows over the past 27 years has not faltered and I welcome the verdict reached by the jury.

"It is clear that he is a prolific sex offender. He systematically abused his victims, specifically targeting vulnerable boys in order to fulfil his own sexual gratification.

"Following his initial charges in 1997, Burrows knew he was guilty but rather than face the consequences of his actions, he acted like a coward and fled the country using a stolen identity taken from an unwell man."

Phuket's 'Yellow Zone' gets official support for construction boom

Continued from page 1

...forefront of the investigation into the Nebu hotel construction in Cherng Talay, says it is this building size restriction that developers are using to exploit 'loopholes in the law'.

"The Yellow Zone, and the words 'low density', mean that you cannot build just anything," he assured.

"However, the Yellow Zone has different 'levels', depending on which type of 'yellow' it is. If the usable area of the building does not exceed 2,000sqm, the regulations say it cannot be built... Or it may be built, but with conditions," he said.

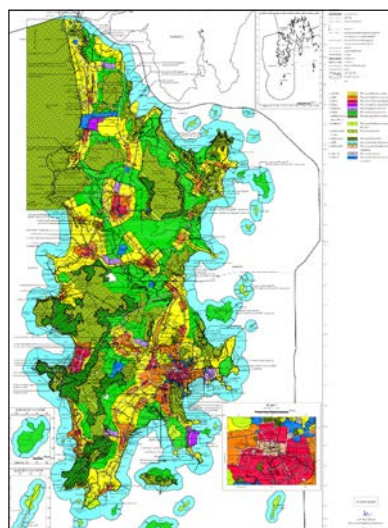
"For example, like with the Nebu hotel, the project covers 1,400sqm, which is within the legal limit... But approval from DPT is required if the building area is not more than not more than 30 metres from the road, and

approval is needed by an EIA. These regulations come with specific requirements, so not every project can be built in areas marked yellow," he said, noting the apparent complexity in current building regulations.

"I understand that there are a lot of construction projects in Cherng Talay, but there will be cases like this. Some projects are divided into small sections, such as building a condo with five buildings, or 400 units, all in the same project site.

"But with these the applicant does not request a single project. They file separate applications for each building, such as they did with Siamese Bangtao, which is technically separated into Siamese Bangtao 1 and 2, but all at the same project site," he explained.

"Breaking large projects into individual applications per build-



A map showing the 'Yellow Zone' areas in Phuket. Image: Thitikan Thitipruethikul

ing is using a loophole to avoid all the regulations required for larger projects, which are not allowed in Yellow Zones.

"It also avoids extra requirements under the EIA," he added.

Although laws do exist to regulate growth, Mr Thitikan argued that they must be updated to meet modern needs.

"For example, zoning laws should be clear, like in Bangkok. If an area is for residential purposes, large hotels should not be allowed," he said.

POOR GOVERNANCE

Poonsak Chanchampi, Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Land, Natural Resources, and Environment, was recently in Phuket to inspect several project sites and investigate issues with the construction boom in Phuket.

To Mr Poonsak, Phuket is suffering "major governance challenges".

"One key issue is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and public consultation. Often, approvals are granted

without sufficient community input. These conflicts will continue unless the process changes," he said.

He noted that when provinces control development approvals, there is a risk of vested interests influencing decisions.

"Many cases of unchecked development stem from a lack of structured, transparent decision-making," he said.

To address these issues, Mr Poonsak proposed a standardised zoning system across the province, similar to Bangkok, with clear public consultation.

"All construction projects should have thorough environmental assessments and public hearings. We need clear regulations and accountability in every project," he said.

"Phuket will be in chaos without proper control," he warned.

Education boss downplays raids

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The Chief of the Phuket Provincial Education Area Office, Panna Phromwichian, has downplayed the raids on the 'Good Shepherd Phuket Town' school and the BanYa Literacy Center in Srisoonthorn, saying the raids were part of a standard sweep of schools on the island.

Officials began investigating illegal schools before a viral video led to more reports, and around 20 unauthorised institutions were ordered to close in March, Ms Panna told *The Phuket News*.

The 'Good Shepherd Phuket Town' school in the Soi Kingkaew area on the east side of Phuket Town – the largest and densest community of people living in poverty on the island – was raided on Mar 17, and the BanYa Literacy Center in Srisoonthorn, also operated by the Good Shepherd Foundation, was raided on Mar 18.

Both schools provide free education to children of Myanmar workers living in impoverished conditions.

Both raids followed popular YouTuber 'Ride with Gabi' posting a video highlighting the Soi Kingkaew slum, whose residents are nearly all Myanmar migrant workers working for minimum wage in Phuket's commercial fishing fleet

Phuket officials have stayed clear from making any mention that the raids were in response to the video, which called the Soi Kingkaew area the largest slum on the island.

They have also avoided the word "slum", which by definition is "a squalid and overcrowded urban street or district inhabited by very poor people".

While avoiding any mention of the video, Phuket Vice Governor Adul Chuthong at a press conference on Mar 17 – specifically held to announce the 'Good Shepherd' raids – said Phuket authorities "have addressed concerns regarding reports of a foreign-run Myanmar community and a free school operating in the province".

Ms Panna maintains that the raids were part of a sweep of illegal schools operating on the island that was already underway.

"Before this went viral, we came down a long time ago, even before that. We have taken action on 55 private schools that had illegally opened," she said.

"This isn't just about the issue going viral or more schools being reported to officials, but illegal schools must follow the law... On Mar 5-7, more than 20 unauthorised learning institutions were ordered to shut down," she added.

"Even if these institutions claim to be learning centres rather than schools, they must still operate under



Phuket Education Area Chief Panna Phromwichian at the press conference on Mar 17. Photo: PR Phuket

the correct legal framework," Ms Panna said.

Ms Panna did not differentiate between illegally opened "language schools" whose paying customers were recently arrived long-stay visitors on the island from charity-run schools providing free basic education to children of the poorest families in Phuket.

However, she did admit that pressure to investigate increased after the video went viral.

Ms Panna stated that inspections have been carried out with support from the Immigration Police, Tourist Police, the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) and other local officials.

"We are not ignoring illegal schools like Baan Ya school, which we have investigated before. But the problem is that when we receive reports and inspect, the schools are often empty,

shut down or have already relocated.

"In the case of the BanYa school, we have conducted inspections two or three times, but every time we go, they close before we arrive. We only managed to catch them days ago," she said.

FREE EDUCATION FOR ALL

Ms Panna confirmed that under Thai law all children, regardless of nationality, have the right to free education in the country.

However, stunningly, and despite the very clear wording in the Constitution, Ms Panna gave her definition as conditional – saying that in order to access free education the parents of the child must have a valid work permit.

"According to the Ministry of Education, children can legally study in government schools if their parents

have a valid work permit," Ms Panna said.

That understanding flies in the face of Section 54 of the current Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (2017), which under 'Duties of the State' mandates: "The State shall ensure that every child receives quality education for twelve years from pre-school to the completion of compulsory education free of charge.

"The State shall ensure that young children receive care and development prior to education under paragraph one to develop their physical body, mind, discipline, emotion, social skills and intelligence in accordance with their age, by also promoting and supporting local administrative organisations and the private sector to participate in such undertaking," Section 54 continues.

Further challenging Ms Panna's understanding of providing free education in Thailand, Section 27 of the Constitution mandates: "All persons are equal before the law, and shall have rights and liberties and be protected equally under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights.

LANGUAGE BARRIER

Ms Panna seemed confused about education provided to foreign children, and included Myanmar children from impoverished families in the same category as children of foreign parents

attending expensive international schools.

For some reason, to Ms Panna, both were considered equal and the only common issue was the language barrier.

"Children can attend government schools or international schools based on their needs, with efforts being made to support non-Thai students who may face language barriers," Ms Panna said.

"Children already have access to education, whether or not they attend a learning centre. They can enroll in government schools across Phuket, ensuring they receive quality education close to home," she added.

"This opportunity is available to all children, regardless of nationality or ethnicity, including Myanmar and other international students," she said.

Ms Panna said that children living in underprivileged areas, such as the Soi Kingkaew slum, also have access to government schools.

However, Ms Panna failed to identify any government schools in the Soi Kingkaew area that the Myanmar children could attend.

She also failed to explain any assistance the schools operating within the Phuket Provincial Education Area Office's area of responsibility were providing to children from poor Myanmar families.

Four arrested in Phang Nga with AK-47s bound for Phuket

PHANG NGA POLICE ARRESTED four men in possession of AK-47 assault rifles and ammunition at a checkpoint along the Phang Nga-Thap Put Road last Saturday (Mar 22). The men said they were bringing the rifles to Phuket.

The arrests were made at the Wang Mo Kaeng checkpoint in Mueang Phang Nga District, by officers under Pol Capt Boonserm Phengkliang, reported Phang Nga Police.

Officers stopped two vehicles: a grey Mitsubishi Triton registered in Pattani and a Toyota Fortuner registered in Songkhla.

The Mitsubishi Triton had Abdulromae Awaedo, 49, from Pattani, as the driver and Faisal Waemalee, 28, from Yala, as the passenger; while the Toyota Fortuner was driven by Zul Affal Suemae, 28, from Narathiwat, with Saowarus Mama, 27, from Pattani, as his passenger.

Upon searching the Toyota Fortuner, officers discovered four AK-47 rifles and 54 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, concealed



Photo: Phang Nga Police

in a white sack behind the rear passenger seat.

The four were taken to Phang Nga City Police Station, where during questioning the suspects allegedly admitted they were transporting the weapons to Phuket, Phang Nga Police said.

The four faced charges for possession of illegal weapons while police continued to investigate the origins of the weapons and the suspects' intended purpose, the police report concluded. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Tour bus overturns in Kamala

A TOUR BUS CARRYING 38 Russian tourists overturned on a steep road in Kamala last Saturday (Mar 22) after its brakes reportedly failed.

The accident blocked traffic and left 41 people injured, said initial reports.

Police were called to the scene, at the Khao Khuan Yak curve on the Kamala-Patong Road, at 5:10pm.

Kamala Police soon arrived at the scene along with rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation to find the Anex Tour bus, registered in Phuket, overturned in the middle of the road.

Emergency responders transported the injured – comprising the Russian tourists on board and the driver and tour guide – to Patong Hospital. No fatalities were reported, said initial reports.

Phuket Tourist Police later confirmed that "all 35 Russian tourists" on the bus, including the children on board, were safe.

Local MP Chalermpong Saengdee confirmed that rescue teams, including



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

those from the Kamala Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor), assisted in transporting the injured.

The driver was taken to Patong Hospital for an alcohol test as part of the ongoing investigation, police reported.

The accident caused major traffic delays along the road until the bus was removed from the scene.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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Wind 4 m/s

TUE APRIL 1

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Wind 4 m/s

WED APRIL 2

High: +37°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU APRIL 3

High: +36°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

German, 24, investigated for high-speed accident

A 24-YEAR-OLD GERMAN man is under investigation after he crashed his BMW sedan into a parked pickup at speed in Rawai early last Saturday morning (Mar 22).

The BMW exited a sidestreet at high speed and crossed the main road. The car then hit the central reservation, which sent the BMW airborne.

The BMW, while still airborne, ploughed into a 'box on back' work pickup parked by the side of the road.

The force of the impact sent the parked pickup into heavy support poles for the shopfront awning.

Chalong Police were called to the scene, in front of Siamchai Shop, opposite Soi Suksan 1 on Wiset Rd, at about 4am. CCTV recorded the accident occurring at 3:22am.

CCTV also showed the speeding BMW missing a passing motorbike by just one second.

Officers arrived to find the Phuket-registered

CCTV image:
Chalong Police

BMW had crashed into a parked Isuzu DMAX pickup and another company-owned vehicle belonging to Siamchai Shop.

The awning and its support poles also sustained heavy damage.

The driver, identified as Moritz Harald Hick, 24, of German nationality, was unharmed.

However, his passenger, Anton Augsten, 24, also from Germany, sustained injuries and was taken to Chalong Hospital for treatment.

Police documented the scene, took photographs and recorded details for further investigation and compensation proceedings as officers continued their investigation.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Brit seriously injured, struck by motorbike

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A well-known Bristol restaurant owner is fighting for his life after being struck by a motorcycle while crossing a road in Saiyuan, Rawai.

Ricky Eury, 39, had been in Thailand since February for Thai boxing training, at Cookie Muay Thai gym. He was hit at high speed by a motorbike while walking across Saiyuan Rd at about 12:30pm on Saturday, Mar 15. He suffered severe injuries upon impact.

Mr Eury was rushed to Dibuk Hospital and later transferred to Bangkok Hospital Phuket, in Phuket Town, where he remains with multiple skull and rib fractures, a shattered nose and bleeding on the brain. His injuries have been described as "potentially life-threatening".

Two individuals riding an XMAX motorcycle were arrested at the scene.

Mr Eury's friend, Solomon Wilkinson, has launched a fundraising campaign to help cover mounting medical expenses. "He



Photo: Solomon Wilkinson / GoFundMe

is a fighter and has pulled through the first 36 hours, which are crucial with severe head injuries," Mr Wilkinson said.

The GoFundMe page aims to raise £45,000 to support Eury's recovery, stating, "The hospital is positive about his recovery, but it is likely to be a long and difficult road, as well as an expensive one."

Mr Wilkinson added that they are still trying to confirm Eury's insurance status, but medical costs are expected to reach tens of thousands of pounds.

"Times are tough for many people, but even a small contribution is powerful when we come together as a community, which is something that Ricky has

always been passionate about creating," he said.

Mr Eury's parents, George and Annette, his brother Joey, and his girlfriend Hannah Ryan flew out to Thailand as soon as they received the devastating news.

Mr Eury is known for running Gorilla Thai Kitchens in Bristol, which were nominated for Uber Eats Restaurant of the Year in 2024.

The fundraiser organiser, Mr Wilkinson, described Eury as "one of the kindest, most generous, and loyal friends we know".

He urged people to donate or share the fundraising appeal to help relieve the financial burden on the family.

Iranian subdued by force after stabbing hotel staff with syringe

POLICE WERE FORCED TO use a stun gun to subdue an Iranian tourist who stabbed hotel staff with a syringe in Kata last week.

Officers were called to the hotel, at the southern end of Kata, at 6:11pm on Mar 17 after receiving reports of a man attacking hotel employees.

Police identified the suspect as Reza Bahman Farshi, 44, an Iranian national. Officers from Karon Police attempted to de-escalate the situation, but negotiations with the suspect failed.

After nearly an hour, authorities requested additional support. Pol Lt Thirayut Suk-songwan and a police patrol unit tried once more to calm the man down, but when he refused to cooperate, officers deployed a stun gun, subduing him with a single shot.



Photo: Karon Police

The suspect sustained minor injuries and received first aid from Karon Municipality rescue workers before being taken into custody for further investigation.

Police are determining whether drugs or other substances played a role in the attack. The Iranian Embassy has been contacted for further action, police said.

At last report police had not yet disclosed the motive behind the attack or the condition of the injured hotel staff.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Dutch fined for public indecency on Bangla

PATONG POLICE HAVE FINED two Dutch tourists after they were caught dancing in a revealing manner in the middle of Bangla Rd last week.

The incident occurred around 10:20pm on Mar 18 near Soi Sea Dragon, Patong Police reported.

A video of the two women's actions was shared on the Line application, prompting police intervention.

Officers identified the tourists, both Dutch nationals. The video showed them dancing in a way that exposed their bodies, which authorities deemed inappropriate and "shameful in front of the public".

At about 11:30pm, Bangla patrol officers brought the two women in for questioning. They admitted to their actions, explaining that they had been creating content for social media.

Police charged them with "acting in a shameful manner in front of the village headman by exposing their bodies".



Screenshot: via Patong Police

Each woman was fined B2,000 in accordance with fine case numbers 256-257/2568.

The case was handled by Patong Police Station, with Pol. Col. Chalermchai Hirasawat overseeing the matter. Investigating officer Pol Lt Wisanu Chumi recorded the case details, noted the report of the incident.

Police reminded both tourists and local residents to respect local customs and laws regarding public behaviour – even on Bangla Rd – in order to avoid legal consequences.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Songkran street party stays in Phuket Town

The Phuket News
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Phuket officials are gearing up to celebrate Songkran again with a focus on safety and tradition as it hosts the 'Songkran No Alcohol Festival Phuket 2025'.

Organised for the 11th consecutive year, the event is a collaboration between the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), the Phuket Tourism Business Association and Limelight Phuket shopping mall.

The 'No L' ('No Alcohol') festival, to be held from 4pm 10pm on Sunday, Apr 13, on Dibuk Rd in front of Limelight Phuket and Queen Sirikit Park, will feature a range of cultural performances and entertainment while maintaining strict regulations to ensure a safe and family-friendly environment, Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai announced at a press conference last week.



Photo: PPAO

Joining Mr Samawit were PPAO President Rewat Areerob, Phuket Tourist Association President Thaneth Tanti-piriyakit and Siriwan Siharat, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket office.

Law enforcement and health advocacy representatives were also present to support the initiative.

This year's festival will feature traditional elements such as the bathing of the Buddha image for good fortune and the water-pouring ceremony for elders, along with performances by Siam Niramit.

Additionally, the event will be decorated with Kebaya patterns, a nod to the traditional women's attire from Southeast Asia, which has been recognised as UNESCO cultural heritage, Mr samawit said.

Music lovers can look forward to performances by popular bands, including Kebaya Octobye, 8115, Mood, Hungry Children, Single Band and guest act ANT Band from Bangkok, along with DJ sets from DJ Hut and MC TMO. The event will culminate in a grand performance by Off Pongsaak and his full band, he added.

The festival aims to raise

awareness about the dangers of alcohol consumption and reduce the number of alcohol-related road accidents during Songkran, Mr Samawit explained.

Participants at the event will be required to follow key regulations, including:

- No alcohol, kratom or intoxicated individuals.
- No weapons or fighting.
- No cigarettes, e-cigarettes or marijuana.
- No outside food, drinks, or drinking glasses.
- No flour or coloured powders.

Attendees are encouraged to wear Thai or local fabrics and immerse themselves in the vibrant, alcohol-free Songkran celebration. The festival promises a lively yet responsible way to enjoy Thailand's traditional New Year festivities in Phuket, Mr Samawit said.

"We hope that this year, Phuket will not be listed among the provinces with high accident and casualty rates," he added.

Governor honours Phuket Ramadan

PHUKET GOVERNOR Sophon Suwanarat led a delegation to Liwa-ul-Islam Mosque in Baan Bang Chi Liao in Ratsada last Sunday (Mar 23) to meet with the local Thai Muslim community and present dates and sweets in honour of the holy month of Ramadan.

Accompanying the governor were his wife, Ms Busadee, who also serves as President of the Phuket branch of the Red Cross Society of Thailand and the Phuket Provincial Interior Housewives Association, along with Phuket Provincial Palad (Chief Administration Office) Thiraphong Chuaychu and Mueang Phuket District Chief Pairoj Srilamul.

Also present were Puangphaka Chaowwai, Chief of the Phuket office of the Ministry of Culture, and Ratsada Mayor Nakarin Yosangrat. Several other officials also joined the visit.

The delegation was warmly received by Komon Dumlak, Chairman of the Islamic Committee of Phuket Province, and Imam



Photo: PR Phuket

Somdet Mankan, Vice Chairman of the Islamic Committee of Phuket Province.

The visit aimed to foster unity, encourage religious observance and support local Muslim traditions during Ramadan, said an official report of the visit.

Governor Sophon emphasised the significance of Ramadan as a time of spiritual reflection, self-discipline and good deeds. He encouraged the Muslim community to uphold religious principles and promote harmony within society. Religious leaders, he noted, play a crucial role in reinforcing moral values and fostering peace.

Ramadan, an important month for Muslims worldwide, is marked by fasting from dawn to sunset, prayers along with good deeds and acts of charity.

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Social Security Office calls for more awareness

THE PHUKET SOCIAL Security Office has called for increased awareness of its services and operations, emphasising the importance of financial protection for employees and insured persons.

The office hosted its '2025 Social Security Knowledge Sharing Meeting' at the Seabed Grand Hotel on Chao Fa Suan Luang Road in Wichit on Mar 20.

The event was presided over by Phuket Vice Governor Suwit Phansengiam, who arrived on the island only on Mar 17.

Also present at the meeting was Banteing Muedjan, Chief of the Phuket branch of the Social Security Office, along with officials from relevant agencies, business owners and representatives, totaling 80 participants.

The meeting aimed to educate business operators, employers and stakeholders on the benefits and operations of the Social Security Fund and Compensation Fund.

Key topics included employer and insured person registration, contribution submissions, the electronic social security system (e-filing and e-payment) and legal aspects related to savings and drug prevention.

In his address, Mr Suwit underscored the significance of social security as a crucial welfare system that provides financial protection for employees. He highlighted its role in improving quality of life, offering coverage for



Photo: PR Phuket

illness, disability, childbirth, unemployment, old age and death.

He stressed that social security plays a vital role in reducing inequality, strengthening workforce stability and enhancing the country's economic and social resilience.

Currently, Phuket Province has 8,451 registered establishments under the Phuket Provincial Social Security Office, with a total of 155,240 persons insured under Sections 33, 39 and 40.

The office is committed to improving its services by making them more efficient and accessible, particularly through digital platforms, Mr Suwit explained.

The conference was structured into two sessions, with a budget allocated to support 80 participants per session.

The first session saw strong engagement from business operators and other stakeholders.

During the event, Vice Governor Suwit provided guidance to attendees, reinforcing the importance of social security in protecting the workforce.

He encouraged participants to apply their newfound knowledge in their respective organisations to ensure maximum benefits for employees and insured persons.

The Phuket News

Sustainable tourism focus to launch at Phuket meet

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Prime Minister Paethongtarn Shinawatra will deliver a special presentation at the first 'Thailand Sustainable Tourism Conference 2025' (TSTC 2025), to be held at the Phuket Rajabhat University Conference Centre, starting today (Mar 28).

Prime Minister Paethongtarn's keynote address will be on the topic 'Soft Power: Mechanisms for Creating Sustainability for Thai Tourism', Phuket Vice Governor Samawit Suphanphai announced last week.

The two-day event, concluding tomorrow (Mar 29), aims to promote sustainable tourism development in Thailand, Mr Samawit said.

Joining the Vice Governor for the announcement were Chalam Attham, Deputy Chairman of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), and Phuket sustainability champion Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, Chairman of the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation and Vice Chairman of the Tourism Council of Thailand.

The event is to bring together government agencies, private sector representatives and tourism entrepreneurs to exchange knowledge, share best practices and foster cooperation in sustainable tourism, explained an official report of the press event.



Prime Minister Paethongtarn Shinawatra.
Photo: Ing Shinawatra / Facebook

Phuket's hosting of the TSTC 2025 follows its selection as the venue for the Global Sustainable Tourism Conference (GSTC) in 2026, an event organised with support from the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Later this year, Phuket representatives will travel to Fiji to receive the official flag as the next GSTC host.

The upcoming conference aims to raise awareness of sustainable tourism practices and support the balance between economic growth, social responsibility and environmental protection. A key focus will be on helping tourism businesses adopt eco-friendly practices, reduce their environmental footprint, and generate economic value for local

communities, Mr Bhumikitti explained.

With increasing pressure from international markets – particularly in Europe, North America, and Australia – on tourism businesses to comply with sustainability standards, the conference will provide insights into best practices, such as reducing carbon footprints, utilising renewable energy and implementing effective waste management systems, he said.

The event will also explore compliance with global sustainability regulations set by bodies like the United Nations, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and the European Union.

TSTC 2025 will feature three main components:

- Conference Sessions: Over 20 expert speakers will discuss key topics in

sustainable tourism.

- Exhibition and Business Matching: More than 30 entrepreneurs will showcase sustainable tourism innovations, with networking opportunities for over 200 industry participants.

- Workshops: Hands-on sessions on topics such as MICE sustainability, carbon credit tree planting, and waste-to-income initiatives. Attendees will receive certificates for their participation.

The event aims to:

- Foster knowledge-sharing on sustainable tourism practices.

- Create a collaborative network among tourism stakeholders.

- Support the development and implementation of sustainable tourism policies.

- Connect tourism entrepreneurs with sustainable business partners.

- Promote academic research on sustainable tourism.

Attendees will also benefit from exclusive discounts offered by exhibitors, said an official report of the launch.

The conference is backed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), TCEB, the PPAO and Phuket City Development Co Ltd.

For further details about TSTC 2025, interested participants can contact the Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation at Tel. 076-610365-6 or via email at phuketstdinfo@gmail.com

Hotels unfazed by move to reduce visa-free stays

PHUKET HOTELIERS do not expect to feel the pinch if the government reduces visa-free stays to 30 days, as data showed the average length of stay was two weeks, though they say remedies for illegal businesses might require more practical solutions.

European guests in Phuket typically spent two weeks at hotels, while those seeking long-stay trips mostly flocked to condominiums, said Suksit Suvunditkul, President of the southern chapter of the Thai Hotels Association (THA).

"If the government decides to limit visa-free stays to no more than 30 days, it would impact condo rentals more than hotels," said Mr Suksit.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is preparing to reduce visa-free stays from 60 days to 30 days for nationals of many countries as part of an effort to curb abuses of the scheme by people operating illegal businesses (see page 7).

Before the 60-day scheme took effect last year, Phuket had a limited number of long-stay guests and they opted for tourist visas to extend their trips to

two to three months, said Mr Suksit.

However, shortening the visa period may not address illicit activities conducted by foreigners, as other measures can help to screen tourists, said Mr Suksit.

Thaneth Tantipiriyakit, President of the Phuket Tourist Association, said its members applauded the latest move as they had consistently called for a reduction of the visa-free period to 30 days.

He said tourism operators are not concerned that the market would be affected as there are still other visa options for those who want to stay longer.

Based on Immigration Bureau data, the number of foreigners in Phuket seeking visa extensions remains at 10,000 per month on average, which has been stable since before COVID-19, said Mr Thaneth.

However, the government should enhance the upcoming digital TM6 arrival form to make it capable of helping screen tourists, which has been a problem over the past several months.

The online TM6 form, which will be compulsory for all foreign arrivals entering Thailand, is to take effect on May 1.



Passengers at Phuket Airport. Photo: Bangkok Post

"As the government will soon implement the digital TM6, we've already proposed to the Immigration Bureau and the minister integrating other systems, which could effectively detect suspicious behaviour of foreigners," said Mr Thaneth.

He said the tourism sector proposed linking the system with a web mapping platform, such as Google Maps, to verify the

addresses provided by arrivals.

It should also integrate the digital TM6 data with the TM30 information collected from accommodations under Section 38 of the Immigration Act, which requires landlords or hotel managers to notify the local immigration office about foreigners they host, he added.

Bangkok Post

Visa-free stay to be cut

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The period of visa-free stays in Thailand is set to be reduced from 60 days to 30 days as related authorities have agreed in principle to the move in an effort to curb the risk of illegal businesses exploiting the visa exemption scheme, according to the Tourism and Sports Ministry.

Tourism and Sports Minister Sorawong Thienthong said on Mar 17 the Foreign Ministry acknowledged the issue as it had been widely discussed among all related stakeholders in the past few weeks.

He said they all agreed in principle to reduce the period of stay from 60 days to 30 days for citizens from countries granted a visa exemption under the programme. However, additional details would be discussed before formally announcing the adjustment to the regulation.

Since July 2024, the government has allowed passport holders from 93 countries to enter Thailand for tourism purposes for a period not exceeding 60 days. This had earlier been granted to citizens of 57 countries.

However, tourism operators expressed concern over the extended period as long-haul tourists typically stayed for only 14-21 days on average, while short-haul travellers spent less than two weeks per trip or around



Foreign arrivals await the immigration process at Suvarnabhumi airport. Photo: Bangkok Post

seven days on average.

The Association of Thai Travel Agents earlier raised this concern with the ministry as there is a growing number of foreigners illegally working or conducting businesses in the country, while the Thai Hotels Association believed this was partly to blame for the increase in the number of condos being illegally rented out to guests on a daily basis.

Given the recent call by a former member of parliament in Phuket urging the government to crack down on foreign businesses using nominees and reduce the visa-free period to 30 days, Natthriya Thaweevong, the ministry's permanent secretary, said the ministry has instructed the Tourism Department to enforce the Tourism Business and Tourist Guide Act more seriously.

She said the special joint operational centre operated by six authorities, including the Tourism Department and Tourist Police, has consistently investigated illicit activities taking place in Phuket and five other popular tourism-related areas, namely Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Koh Samui and Bangkok.

She said the department revoked the licences of 40 companies in 2024 as they were found guilty of secretly changing the authorised directors and the proportion of directors and shareholders, resulting in their disqualification from operating a tourism business.

In Phuket, 15 tour companies' licences have been revoked. She said there was also the case of a Thai committee of a tour company also being registered under five different company names.

Digital healthcare push to cut hospital crowds

BANGKOK

THE MINISTRY OF Public Health is advancing efforts to modernise health-care delivery, with the goal of reducing outpatient congestion in public hospitals by at least 5% by September 2025.

The strategy combines telemedicine services, home delivery of medication and the use of digital medical certificates to provide faster and more accessible care while easing the strain on medical staff and facilities.

Data from the ministry shows telemedicine has already contributed to a steady decline in outpatient visits. Between 2022 and 2024, average daily visits dropped from over 23,000 to 13,000 in regional hospitals and from nearly 30,000 to under 19,000 in general hospitals.

To support this digital transition, the ministry issued the 2024 Telemedicine Service Standards, which require providers to meet strict conditions for professional qualifications, secure identity verification, system



Photo: NNT

integration and patient consent.

All services must be recorded with traceable documentation and data must be stored in compliance with national cybersecurity laws.

As part of the telehealth process, medication, and medical supplies are delivered directly to patients' homes. This integration reduces the need for in-person follow-ups and supports continuity of care.

Healthcare professionals also have access to electronic health records through regulated access protocols, ensuring treatment decisions are based on accurate medical histories.

The Ministry's Digital Health Platform, accessible through the "Mor Prom" app and Line Official Account, allows citizens to connect with services through their smartphones.

NNT

Thai massage industry set for a clean up

BANGKOK

THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MOPH) is stepping up efforts to elevate Thai massage services.

Kosit Suvinijit, adviser to the Minister of Public Health, on Mar 24 highlighted the rising number of health service businesses, including wellness spas, but warned of a shortage of around 50,000 qualified Thai massage practitioners in Thailand.

He cited concerns about inconsistent standards and improper practices that have tarnished the profession's image, often associating Thai massage with brothels.

The need for distinction between authentic Thai massage, or nuad Thai, and substandard services was further emphasised.

Nuad Thai was officially recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2019, he said, adding that businesses using the term "nuad Thai" must uphold the required standards.

Mr Kosit said mistakes in the past had resulted in Thai massage being mistakenly linked to massage parlours and warned the MOPH would take legal action against those misrepresenting the service.

"Thai massage practitioners deserve respect as a noble profession," he said.

The Ministry is also rolling out the "Skilled Local Massage Practitioner" project, with a pilot programme for 100 individuals, aimed at preserving the knowledge of local practitioners who have



Photo: Bangkok Post

learned their craft through family traditions or temple teachings.

The ministry will also categorise Thai massage practitioners based on the number of training hours, ranging from 60 hours for entry-level practitioners to 500-800 hours for advanced practitioners.

The system is designed to incentivise practitioners to upskill and learn new techniques, with higher certification levels linked to higher income potential.

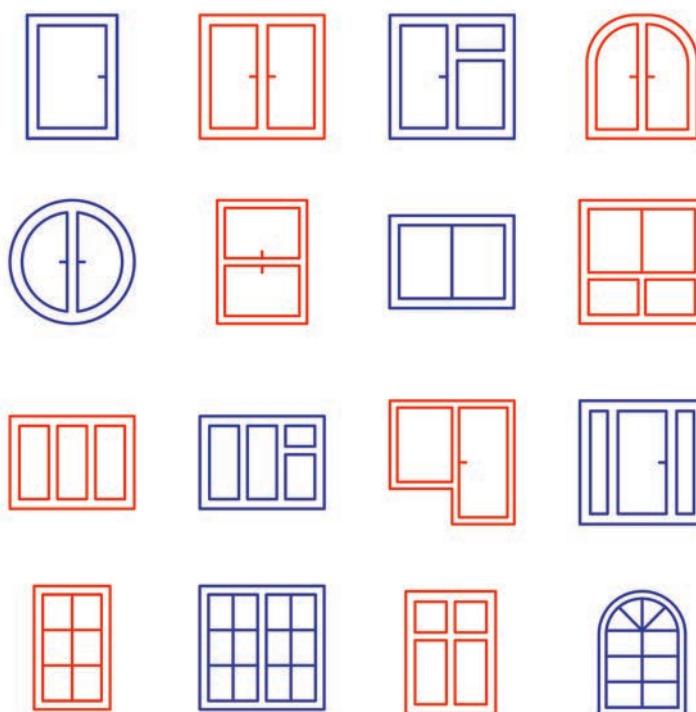
Mr Kosit said service providers will adjust pricing according to the practitioner's certification level, and a star-rating system will be introduced to help practitioners improve their qualifications and earn higher wages.

The ministry also plans to train an additional 20,000 professional Thai massage practitioners, with a focus on specialising in conditions such as muscle pain, frozen shoulder, and stroke recovery. The Ministry expects these efforts to address the ongoing shortage and to offer promising career opportunities.

Bangkok Post



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Cycling among tea estates in the home of Ceylon tea. Sri Lanka is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of tea.



The dramatic Sri Lanka coast, near Mirissa.

In Sri Lanka, a monkey of a surprise



GLOBETROTTER

Todd Miller

It is a short list of countries where you can surf, encounter diverse wildlife and visit spectacular archaeological sites. Peru, Mexico and Indonesia come to mind. If you also want to meander among tea estates, this shortlist narrows further.

Four hours south of Thailand on an Airbus lies the island nation where you can ride the waves, safari and channel your inner Indiana Jones. I had last visited Sri Lanka more than 30 years ago – preceding the 2004 tsunami, the

resolution of the civil war in 2008 and the economic upheaval that started in 2019. I wanted to see how the country has changed – or perhaps hasn't.

Sri Lanka often gets overlooked by its flashier neighbours, but there is much to like, see and do in this teardrop-shaped country that's full of unexpected encounters.

The Big Bang

It is surprising how much you can accomplish in a short time on this compact island roughly the size of southern Thailand.

In two weeks, our journey encompassed whale watching in Mirissa, where we didn't see the blue or sperm whales we sought, but were delighted by numerous pods of playful spinner

and Risso dolphins, some twirling in the air.

We safaried in two national parks – Udawalawe and Yala – where we witnessed Sri Lanka's Big Three up close: elephant, leopard and the sloth bear. Sudu, our Yala safari driver, counseled us that if we focus too much on the quest to see a particular animal, we miss everything else. Those wise words are a good parable for life. At Yala we lingered to observe elephants splashing in a lake and leopard cubs playing while their mother surveyed the scene.

At a coastal village north of the capital, we spent a morning among Karavas boats while fishermen repaired their nets, as I imagine they've done for centuries. We explored UNESCO-recognised archaeological sites including Galle Fort and the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. My favourite is the 1,700-year-old Jetavanaramaya stupa, which at the time was the world's third-tallest structure, after the Egyptian pyramids.

Did I forget to mention the cycling? Over nine exhilarating days, we pedaled 600 kilometres across Sri Lanka's breathtaking hill country. The landscape transformed as we cycled through lush tea plantations and fertile rice fields. Sri Lanka's hills proved to be a formidable test of endurance, but exploring the island on two wheels is a rewarding way to absorb the island's natural beauty and vibes. Sri Lanka oozes old charm, the kind of place where early morning print newspaper deliveries are still made by bicycle.

An Unwelcome Incident

Sri Lanka also surprises in how welcoming the country is to visitors. This friendliness is evident in the cities, but it is most conspicuous in the countryside. As we cycled across the undulating terrain, we were reliably greeted in a chorus of exuberant 'Hellos!' as we pedaled past small villages.

The welcoming nature of the Sinhalese has been noticed. Last year Conde Nast Traveler ranked Sri Lanka as one of the world's friendliest nations. While I was in the country, the search engine Booking.com crowned Sigirya as the world's most welcoming city.

Ironically, at Sigirya, or the Lion Rock – a fifth-century palace perched atop a towering 200-metre column of rock – I encountered an unwelcome incident. Our visit coincided with Sri Lanka's Independence Day. The climb to the top of Lion Rock was a shoulder-to-shoulder affair as we inched up the 1,300 stairs overflowing with humanity.



A close encounter with a pachyderm, Udawalawa National Park



Karavas fishing boats near Negombo, Sri Lanka.

When I reached the summit, I felt someone snatch a plastic bag from my back pocket. The culprit scurried away. I had been pickpocketed by a monkey, who now had my iPhone!

The thief with a tail perched on a steep cliff, very aware of an audience of hundreds of raptured onlookers. Like a seasoned striptease performer who knows how to prolong a reveal, this mischievous monkey carefully opened the opaque bag and removed my phone. Discarding the plastic over the side of the cliff – an inevitable fate for my phone, too, I was certain – the monkey proceeded to inspect my phone.

After concluding there is zero utility in the device (or perhaps realising I don't have the latest model), he dropped the phone and buggered off. My iPhone rested on the edge of the cliff as Eranga, a driver in our group, instinctively sprang into action and went out on a limb to save the day.

The Monkey Incident encapsulates Sri Lanka: wild, surprising – with the welcoming Sinhalese making an enduring impression.

Adventurer and author Todd Miller has explored more than 115 countries. He authored the Amazon bestseller *ENRICH: Create Wealth in Time, Money, and Meaning*. His writing has featured in *CNBC*, *Fast Company*, and *Newsweek*. www.enrich101.com

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The Battle of the Bulge



Photo: Supplied

WELLTHWISE

Libby Heath

The tussle with weight loss is perhaps one of the most common predicaments that drive individuals to seek health coaching. The refrain “I simply cannot shed these kilos?” is all too familiar. The internet is inundated with “the best” ways to lose weight that range from expensive and painful to the ridiculous.

Eating is essential for survival. While our ancestors faced food scarcity, we are overwhelmed by abundance. Since 1990, global adult obesity has more than doubled and adolescent obesity has quadrupled. The impacts are physical, mental and financial.

What can be done? As autonomous adults, we are responsible for our actions. Owning this responsibility is key to improving your relationship with food. Believing you have control over your food choices is essential. If not, reflect and address the issue. Previous Wellthwise articles highlighted the importance of listening to our inner voice. We often know the best choice but fail to make it.

If weight loss is a goal, specify the potential benefits of achieving it. How would your life be different? Conjure a vision of your leaner self and what you would be capable of. There is no definitive answer, and the benefits vary widely. Document them in writing or share them verbally with a supportive person, whatever makes them tangible and accessible. Determine what makes this goal important to YOU, not to anyone else, and use that internal motivation as your willpower.

HONESTY

Next, understand the science and your current metabolic needs. In the simplest terms, weight loss occurs when there is a calorie deficit. How do you know what the right amount is? First, consider your routine intake. Keep a food journal for a couple of weeks so that weekends and weekdays are all considered. Whether you use an app or a pen and paper, honesty is the key. We often delude ourselves; and yes, standing over the sink to eat or topping off the glass of wine counts.

Second, ascertain your Total Daily

Energy Expenditure (TDEE), which is made up of four main components:

- Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR- 60-75% of total caloric need) is the energy your body uses at rest for vital functions like breathing, circulation and cell production. Age, gender and genetics all play a role.
- Physical Activity Energy Expenditure (PAEE- 15-30%) are the calories burned through movement, including exercise and daily activities.
- Thermic Effect of Food (TEF - 10%) is the energy required to digest, absorb and metabolise food; with protein having the highest TEF of the three macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fats).

- Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT -% varies) includes calories burned from non-exercise movements like standing, fidgeting and general activity; significantly impacting total energy expenditure for active individuals.

There are formulas available to help calculate TDEE, but they are estimates at best. Fortunately, technology is available to obtain more precise data. The most accurate are indirect calorimetry devices that measure oxygen consumption (VO₂) and carbon dioxide production (VCO₂) to determine actual calorie burn. Brand names include COSMED FitMate and KORR Metabolic Analyzer.

Next are smart scales and body composition scanners that can estimate BMR, which can be used to calculate TDEE. Brands include Styku, InBody and Tanita. Wearable fitness trackers and smartwatches estimate calories burned based on heart rate, movement and personal data. They are less accurate but still useful for daily tracking. Apple Watch, Fitbit and Oura rings are examples.

‘HANGRY’

After estimating your caloric needs, gradually reduce your intake. Aiming for a weight loss of 0.5 to 1 kilo per week is recommended. Weight gained gradually should not be lost rapidly. Rapid weight loss is often a result of water weight loss, which can affect hydration and electrolyte balances, or worse, loss of muscle mass; your body’s high-grade tissue that is sacrificed for fuel in lieu of body fat if the body experiences extreme deprivation. It may also lead to loose skin, provoked hormone imbalances, weakened immune systems and mental health effects. We all know “hangry” people.

Remember, slow and steady wins the race.

As individuals lose weight, their TDEE decreases because a lighter body requires less energy. The concept of yo-yo dieting is often misunderstood; weight regain usually occurs when individuals disregard their reduced caloric needs and revert to previous high calorie eating patterns.

Additionally, not all calories have the same effect on the body. For example, 500 calories from M&Ms will affect the body differently than 500 calories from wild-caught salmon. This variation is due to the macronutrient

composition of foods, which will be covered in next month’s column.

Losing weight is a lot like assembling IKEA furniture – time-consuming, frustrating and occasionally makes you question your life choices. But if you slow down, and read the directions, it all comes together and you realise it was worth it.

Libby Heath 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

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POP QUIZ

1. What was the name of the first computer virus?

2. What is the primary ingredient in the alcoholic beverage absinthe?

3. How many ghosts chase Pac-Man at the start of each game?

4. What do you call it when a bowler makes three strikes in a row?

5. What country features a shipwreck on its national flag?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Young salmon

6. Kisser

10. Droops

14. Lowest point

15. ___ believer

16. Small gull

17. 1952 novel, with The

20. Split

21. Rowboat adjunct

22. Not too brainy

25. ___ Rebellion of 1857-59

26. Twisted

30. Hoodlum

32. Fuse

35. Sniff out

41. Author of 17 and 63

Down

1. Prig

2. French Sudan, today

3. Betting data

4. Beer garnish

5. ___ housing

6. "Harper Valley ___"

7. Ashes holder

8. Logic game

9. "La Scala di ___" (Rossini opera)

10. Inscribed stone

11. Greek moralist

12. Artist, with El

13. Sinuous

18. ___ degree

19. "48___"

23. Yen

24. Sang like a canary

26. Scores high

27. Do the trick

28. Doctor Who villainess, with The

29. Big bang matter

31. Beam

33. Sixth sense

34. Peeper problem

36. "Walking on Thin Ice" singer

37. Shrek, e.g.

38. Holiday opener

39. Weak

40. Young falcon

42. Lots

46. Napa Valley area

48. Sting

49. Certain inmate

50. Empty

51. Kind of pool

52. "Give It To You" rapper

54. Illuminated

55. Muzzle

57. Blown away

59. Hombre's home

60. "Iliad" warrior

61. Blue books?

62. See

64. Go horizontal

65. Directed

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Creeper; 2) Grande wormwood; 3) Four; 4) Four; 5) Bermuda

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20								21						
					22		23	24			25			
26	27	28	29			30			31					
32					33	34			35	36	37	38	39	40
41								42						
43								44						
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48	49	50	51	52		53			54	55				
56					57				58		59	60	61	62
63								64	65					
66					67					68				
69					70						71			

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

31 octillion atoms make up the human body

10 hours per night is reportedly how long Albert Einstein slept

34 per cent of adults sleep with a stuffed animal or other sentimental object

50 per cent of pilots polled admitted to falling asleep mid-flight

5 million US dollars (roughly 8mn today) is the amount per episode Jerry Seinfeld turned down to create a 10th series of 'Seinfeld'

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



A tight squeeze. Photo by Gus Chesterton

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

This week in history

Mar 28, 1990
United States President George H. W. Bush posthumously awards Jesse Owens the Congressional Gold Medal.

Mar 29, 1968
The funeral of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, starts in Moscow, with thousands of people in attendance.


Mar 30, 1856
The Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the Crimean War.


Mar 31, 1521
Ferdinand Magellan and 50 of his men came ashore to present-day Limasawa to participate in the first Catholic mass in the Philippines.

Apr 1, 2004
Google launches its Email service Gmail.

Apr 2, 1800
Ludwig van Beethoven leads the premiere of his First Symphony in Vienna.

Apr 3, 1968
Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech; he was assassinated the next day. Source: Wikipedia



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ANZAC Day Memorial Service – Phuket

Phuket Veterans invite you to join us in honouring the sacrifices of Australian and New Zealand service members at our ANZAC Day Memorial Service. Time: 5:30 AM. Location: Kamala Beach (Meeting point: Kamala Police Station). Following the service, all attendees are invited to a Gunfire Breakfast at Devils Bar, Kamala. Dress Code: Smart Casual / Uniform. We look forward to commemorating this important day with you. For more info - facebook. [com/phuketveterans](https://facebook.com/phuketveterans)

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YOUNG JUDOKAS MAKE THEIR MARK IN BANGKOK

This past weekend, six dedicated judokas traveled to Bangkok to participate in the official judo belt promotion organised by the Judo Association of Thailand. This event was a major milestone, highlighting their hard work, discipline and love for the sport. Congratulations to Gabin, Timur, Tomo, Sota, Kiichi and Leo. All six boys successfully passed their evaluations and were awarded their green belts, a testament to their skill and commitment. In judo, a belt promotion is not just a formality or a reward for winning in championships — it signifies real progress earned through dedication, discipline and perseverance on the tatami. Their journey continues, and we can't wait to see them reach new heights. Visit the Instagram and Facebook pages for more details - [supalai_judo_club_phuket](#)

Thai Albon excited by possible home F1 race

FORMULA ONE

THAI F1 ACE ALEX Albon has declared he is excited at the possibility of a future grand prix in his home country and would do everything he could to help make it a reality.

Thailand's only Formula One driver said he had been keeping up with developments after F1 chief Stefano Domenicali met Thai prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in Bangkok on Mar 18.

The Italian ex-Ferrari boss, who has just extended his contract to lead the sport until 2029, is keen to examine new markets as the sport soars in popularity.

"It's very exciting, clearly for myself and I think for all of Formula One as well," Albon said in Shanghai on Mar 20 ahead of the Chinese grand prix.

"Thailand's an amazing country. And I'm sure people who have actually



Albon. Photo: AFP

been to Thailand will all vouch for that," he added.

"I'll be excited to hopefully one day show my colleagues the culture of Thailand and the food."

Formula One currently stages one race in Southeast Asia, in Singapore, which is regarded as the toughest race of the season because of the intense heat and humidity.

A race around the streets of the Thai capital Bangkok would be equally attritional.

"It will be interesting, the heat, that's one area which we might become a Singapore 2.0," said Albon.

"On my side I'm just doing everything I can to make that happen. Let's see what happens." AFP

MCLAREN ONE-TWO IN CHINA

FORMULA ONE

AFP

Oscar Piastri hailed his "mega" McLaren after winning a Chinese Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 23) later overshadowed by the disqualifications of Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc for technical infringements.

Alpine's Pierre Gasly was also kicked out after Piastri led a McLaren one-two from pole position with Lando Norris second.

Mercedes' George Russell completed the podium with defending world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull Racing fourth.

Almost three hours after the chequered flag, stewards ruled that Leclerc and Gasly had cars that weighed less than the 800 kilogramme minimum, while Hamilton was found to have excessive plank wear underneath his car.

Leclerc had finished fifth and Hamilton sixth. Their points have been stripped with all the drivers below them gaining places.

Gasly finished 11th so was already out of the points.

It means that Esteban Ocon moved up to fifth, Kimi Antonelli to sixth, Alex Albon to seventh and Oliver Bearman to eighth.

Lance Stroll and Carlos Sainz were promoted to score points for ninth and 10th respectively



Norris (left) and Piastri on the podium. Photo: AFP

COOL HEAD

Piastri kept a cool head to bounce back from the disappointment of his spin in the closing laps of the season-opener in Melbourne a week previous.

From the moment he fended off Russell at the first bend, Piastri was in total control for all 56 laps around the 5.451-kilometre Shanghai International Circuit as he took his third grand prix win.

Norris darted past from third on the grid at the same turn and the two McLarens then sped away, leaving Russell to take his second third-place finish of the season.

It was McLaren's 50th one-two finish in their long history.

"It's been an incredible weekend, the car has been pretty mega," said Piastri, 23, after McLaren made a one-stop strategy work to perfection.

"Very, very happy. The hard was a much better tyre than everyone expected so to go all the way to the end was a bit of a surprise, but a happy surprise."

However, it was a disastrous end to a weekend that had started so brilliantly for Ferrari when Hamilton took his maiden win for his new team in Saturday's sprint.

The plank assembly is a skid plate which is designed to wear away when the floor strikes against bumps on the track or kerbs.

If it is too worn it can improve performance as cars can run closer to track, increasing "ground effect" down force.

Ferrari said later they had "no intention to gain any advantage".

The third round of the season is the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka on Apr 4-6.

Boxing receives IOC approval for Los Angeles 2028 Games

BOXING

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) members voted unanimously on Mar 20 for the inclusion of boxing at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

It ends years of divisions over the way the sport – which has featured at every Olympic Games since 1904, except Stockholm in 1912 as it was barred under a Swedish law – is run.

The IOC stepped in to organise the boxing tournaments at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and the Paris Olympics last year after breaking with the Russian-led International Boxing Association over financial, governance and ethical concerns.

Former IOC president Thomas Bach had warned that boxing's national federations needed to find a new and



Photo: AFP

"reliable" international partner if it wanted to be included at the 2028 Games.

Last month, the IOC Executive Board provisionally recognised World Boxing as the body to oversee the sport at future Olympics.

"World Boxing is very grateful to the IOC for the faith they have placed in our organisation by restoring boxing to the programme for LA2028," World Boxing president Boris van der Vorst said.

"I can reassure them that we will do everything in our power to ensure that we operate to the highest standards of governance and transparency and deliver sporting integrity."

It was one of the last votes to be conducted under Bach, whose 12-year tenure came to a close when Kirsty Coventry was named as his successor on Mar 20 (see p15). AFP

RIP heavyweight boxing great Foreman

BOXING

FORMER HEAVYWEIGHT champion George Foreman, who lost to Muhammad Ali in boxing's iconic 1974 "Rumble in the Jungle" before reclaiming the title two decades later, died last Friday (Mar 21) aged 76.

Fondly known as Big George, Foreman dropped out of school and went on to become an Olympic gold medalist, two-time world champion and legend of boxing.

He fought 81 times as a professional, winning 76, 68 of those by knockout.

As well as boxing he put his name to the "George Foreman Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine," appearing smiling and friendly in the TV ads, becoming a celebrity outside the sport.

Born in Texas on Jan 10, 1949, Foreman grew up in Houston. The man who raised him was frequently absent and often drunk and Foreman only found out that J. D. Foreman was not his biological father after he won the world heavyweight title when his real father, a



Photo: AFP

decorated World War II veteran, got in touch.

By the age of 13 Foreman already stood 6-foot-2 and weighed 200 pounds. As an adolescent he flirted with crime and left school at 16 before taking up boxing.

"I tried boxing just to show my friends that I wasn't afraid," he said later. "Well, 25 fights and one year later, I was an Olympic gold medalist."

At the Mexico Games in 1968, the 19-year-old Foreman bludgeoned his way to the super-heavyweight gold.

KNOCKOUT

At 6-foot-4 (1.93m), "Big George" was larger and stronger than the other leading heavyweights of the time.

He was light on his feet, but slugged his way through the professional ranks to

earn a heavyweight title shot against champion Joe Frazier, demolishing the champion in two rounds.

By the time he fought his third title defence over 15 rounds against Ali in October 1974 in Kinshasa, Foreman was unbeaten in 40 professional bouts before Ali's "rope-a-dope" tactics exhausted the big man, who lost in eight rounds.

His campaign for another title shot ended when he lost on points to another contender, Jimmy Young, in March 1977 on a hot night in Puerto Rico.

Foreman fell ill after the fight and said he sensed God telling him to change his life. He retired aged 28 and became an ordained minister.

However, he announced his comeback 10 years later and over the next three years fought 21 times, mostly against mediocre opponents, winning every bout, 20 of them inside the distance.

In 1994, aged 45 years and 299 days, he defeated Michael Moorer in a 10th round knockout to become the oldest heavyweight world champion. AFP

Coventry named IOC chief

OLYMPICS

AFP

Zimbabwean Kirsty Coventry became the first woman and African to be elected president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Mar 20, declaring it to be an “extraordinary moment”.

At 41, the two-time Olympic swimming champion is also the youngest ever elected to be the most powerful person in sports governance, succeeding Thomas Bach, who steps down after 12 years.

“This is an extraordinary moment. As a nine-year-old girl I never thought that I would standing up here one day, getting to give back to this incredible movement of ours,” Coventry said.

“This is not just a huge honour but it is a reminder to every single one of you that I will lead this organisation with so much pride, with the values at the core and I will make all of you very, very proud and, I hope, extremely confident in the decision you’ve taken today.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Coventry was thought to be in a tight run race with IOC veteran Juan Antonio Samaranch Junior and World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe.

However, to general surprise the race was over after the first round of voting a majority of the 100-plus IOC



Kirsty Coventry at the Mar 20 IOC vote. Photo: AFP

members placing their faith in her to meet the serious challenges that lie ahead.

Coventry, who had the Olympic rings tattooed on a leg after her first Games in 2000, is a two-time Olympic gold medallist, contributing seven of Zimbabwe’s overall medals tally of eight.

She has proved to be an effective networker since becoming an IOC member in 2013 and is head of the 2032 Brisbane Games Co-ordination Commission – a sign of the confidence the hierarchy has in her administrative and organisational abilities.

Like Coe and international cycling federation president David Lappartient, she has accrued domestic political experience, though hers is on another level as she has been Zimbabwe’s Minister for Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation since 2019.

Away from the controversies

Coventry has shown her mettle in dealing with Zimbabwean football chiefs and FIFA, backing the government body Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC) when it suspended the Zimbabwean Football Association (ZIFA) over allegations of fraud and sexual harassment of referees.

FIFA takes a zero tolerance policy of political interference in its associations and barred Zimbabwe from international football in February 2022.

However, by September the same year they were back in the fold. A ZIFA official was later banned for five years for sexually harassing three female referees.

Coventry said in 2023 that the process had been “hard, but it was worth it, to have a way forward that’s going to benefit us as a country – 110% it was worth it.”

Phuket to host international badminton tournament

BADMINTON



OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED that an international badminton tournament is to be staged in Phuket next month.

The “Toyota Phuket International Series 2025” badminton tournament will take place between Apr 1-6 and welcome more than 25 international players to compete.

The competition will be held at the 4,000-seat sports gymnasium at Saphan Hin with a total prize money pot of US\$5,000 (approximately B170,000) up for grabs.

The tournament will provide opportunity for all players involved to collect points and increase their BWF world ranking to improve their chances of qualifying for the world tour. It is also considered an ideal opportunity for Thai players to compete against world class athletes and improve their standards.

Two-time world championship bronze medalists and 2012 Asian champions Kim Ki-joong and Kim Sarang from South

Korea will be involved, as will compatriot Aom Hye-won, a former world championship silver medalist and a bronze medalist in mixed doubles.

Fellow competitors will be from the USA, Canada, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar and India.

The leading Thai players include: Lalinrat ‘Jiew’ Chaiyawan; Pichchamon ‘Pink’ Ophasnipat; Tanongsak ‘Song’ Saensomboonsuk; Thamolwan ‘Minnie’ Nithi-itthikrai; Yatawimin ‘Ruangkao’ Ketkhang; Pharanu ‘Phim’ Khaosam-ang; Thanadol ‘Pun’ Panpanich; Rachapol ‘Mix’ Maksasithorn; and Natthamon ‘Wahwa’ Laisuan.

The event is free to attend and everyone is welcome to come along to watch the action and support the players.

The Phuket News

Dechapol, Kittinupong strike gold in Basel

BADMINTON

DECHAPOL PUAVARANUKROH and Kittinupong Kedren claimed the men’s doubles title at the US\$250,000 (B8.5 million) BWF Swiss Open in Basel last Sunday (Mar 23).

The Thai sixth seeds battled back to beat Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Daniel Marthin of Indonesia in a 21-15, 18-21, 21-14 thriller in 64 minutes to claim the World Tour Super 300 crown.

They avenged their semi-final loss against the Indonesian pair at the Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters in February.

It was their first World Tour title as a pair and Kittinupong’s first career success as well, with the pair pocketing the winner’s cheque of \$19,750 (approximately B671,500).

Dechapol and Kittinupong played together during their junior years and won the World junior title in 2014.

They also won the men’s doubles gold medal at the 2017 SEA Games before Dechapol opted to focus on



Kittinupong Kedren (left) and Dechapol Puavaranukroh pose with their awards. Photo: Bangkok Post

playing mixed doubles with Sapsiree Taerattanachai.

They were back playing together in the men’s doubles in October last year and reached the semi-finals at the 2024 Arctic Open, the 2025 Indonesia Masters and the 2025 Thailand Masters.

Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, president of the Badminton Association of Thailand and a member of the International Olympic Committee, praised both players for their victory.

“I would like to congratulate Dechapol and Kittinupong for winning the Swiss Open 2025, which is their first-ever World Tour

title,” she said.

“It was a great effort from both players. They have set a great example for other players with their dedication to train hard until they finally won their first World Tour title,” said Khunying Patama.

With the victory, Dechapol and Kittinupong jumped 10 spots to number 25 in the world ranking, the latest edition of which was released on Tuesday (Mar 25).

Next up for Dechapol and Kittinupong is the Asia Championships in Ningbo, China, which takes place from Apr 8-13. Bangkok Post

Lobsters stare relegation in the face

FOOTBALL

PHUKET ANDAMAN FC’S season is limping towards its inevitable conclusion, something the 300 souls who braved the Phang Nga Provincial Stadium last Sunday (Mar 23) to witness a 4-1 drubbing at the hands of PSU Surat Thani know full well.

While the Lobsters are not yet mathematically relegated, the writing is on the wall. Their final game, a daunting encounter against playoff-chasing FC Yala tomorrow (Mar 29), who need a win to secure their passage to the Thai League 2 promotion playoffs, feels like a formality.

Last Sunday saw some baffling decisions in the Phuket lineup that demand scrutiny, hinting at the deeper malaise plaguing the club.

The absence of goalkeeper Bee, despite his unenviable record as the custodian with the league’s worst goals-conceded tally, was keenly felt. His understudy, Thanagorn, proved a far less assured presence between the posts.

In midfield, the absence of Min, usually a rare beacon of quality and composure, left a gaping hole. Up front, the selection of striker Bank raised eyebrows. Despite being Phuket’s top scorer, he had not trained all week and his notorious reluctance to pass to teammates in better positions often renders him a liability rather than an asset.



Photo: Supplied

Worryingly, as the game wore on, Bank repeatedly refused Coach M’s attempts to substitute him, despite being visibly unfit and struggling to move.

In a now familiar pattern, PAFC started brightly, showing fleeting glimpses of attacking intent. However, they failed to capitalise on these early opportunities, exhibiting a lack of urgency and a tendency to dwell on the ball, taking unnecessary touches that a more cohesive and well-drilled team would have eliminated.

The visitors punished this profligacy in the 19th minute and extended their lead with further goals in the second half before Bank scored a late consolation.

The owners and dwindling band of PAFC fans will be hoping for a miracle this coming Saturday to somehow save their team from the inevitable. However, it seems the dream is over and relegation looms large. Simon Causton

Sport

editor3@classactmedia.co.th



McLaren on top at Chinese F1 GP > p14

A BORN WINNER

Top rank Frank wins Phuket Open

Open winner Frank Born (right) and fellow finalist Paul McIlreavy. Photo: Robert Knight



BOWLS

Robert Knight

One of the most prestigious majors of the season took place at Kamala Bowls Club recently, when players took to the green to contest the Phuket Open 2025.

With reigning champion Carl 'The Mesh' Mesham, also winner of the last two major tournaments held at the club, away on vacation and a number of veteran players not involved, it meant there would more likely than not be a new name on the honours board once play had concluded.

And that is exactly what

transpired as Frank Born superbly bowled his way to final success and wrote his name into the Kamala Bowls Club history books.

A total of 15 players registered for the Mar 17 competition, with the preliminary rounds played across four groups, meaning everyone played each other.

With high temperatures in the low 30s and a possible 44 ends of bowls required for victory, it was going to be an arduous task for whoever wanted to take the title.

As play got underway on the freshly mown lawn there was once again saw some very high-class bowling on display, with the

preliminary round played over 8 ends witnessing some very close matches.

First place in each group qualified for the semi-final, with runners-up entering the plate semi-final – and what a truly international flavoured line-up it proved to be!

Thai lady bowler Sireeton 'Wan' Sirimuangjan, the only previous winner of a major, finished ahead of Britain's Mark Swaffield in Group A, while Frank Born of Germany edged out Canadian Doug 'The Coach' Reid in Group B.

Group C saw Irishman Paul McIlreavy reaping the luck of the occasion being held on St Patrick's Day to finish ahead of Brit Dean

Simmonds, while American Joe topped Group D in front of Aussie Ray 'The Rocket' Austin. Unfortunately Ray had to subsequently retire, with his place being taken by Brit Rose Swaffield in the second plate semi-final.

EXCEPTIONAL BOWLS

In the first semi-final of the main competition Wan faced Frank, with the latter ultimately edging the contest by the slimmest of margins, 8-7 on the final end, while Paul defeated Joe 11-7 in the second semi-final.

The plate semi-finals saw Mark triumph against Doug and Rose lose out to Dean, meaning no family

affair showdown of husband versus wife with Mark and Rose in the final.

The Open final between Frank and Paul was once again played at a very high level. With neither player having lost a previous match in the competition so far, there were some exceptional bowls on display as each man strived to outdo his opponent in challenging conditions.

After a series of hard fought and tightly contested ends, Frank managed to prevail by a score of 10-4 to deservedly be crowned Phuket Open Champion 2025.

In the plate final it was Mark who came out on top,

ultimately winning by a score of 13-3 against a visibly tiring Dean.

It was a fine day of bowls competition and a thoroughly enjoyable occasion overall for everyone involved. A big congratulations goes not only to the winners but to all players, organisers and spectators for making it such a memorable occasion.

Kamala Lawn Bowls Club is open six days a week and all equipment is provided. Group bookings available for private tournaments, company or social events. For further information contact the club on 094 898 7476.

Phuket Dojo students on the medal trail in Beijing

JUDO

THE STUDENTS FROM Phuket Dojo were on the medal trail again recently, capturing an impressive haul at the Beijing International Judo Open in China on Mar 15.

Five-year-old Lea was the first student to pick up a medal when she struck gold in the 5-7 age group. Demonstrating strong technique, good grip and seemingly worry free in her demeanour throughout, lead instructor Alexis Plantard is certain it is only a matter of time before

Lea secures her blue belt classification.

Her teammate Max, 10, also secured gold, demonstrating sound technique that reminded Alexis of Georgian Olympic silver medalist Varlam Liparteliani. Max also secured his orange belt with his win.

Alexis himself completed the hat-trick of golds, which he said gave him huge confidence going into upcoming competitions.

David earned a silver medal, showing a smart and strategic style which saw him attack in a variety of ways, something his opponents found difficult to manage.

Aleksandr performed admirably to win a bronze medal although he was hampered by a series of harsh penalties from the official, while Mikhail also scored a bronze and is showing improvements in every tournament he participated in.

While they did not secure medals, students Dima and Timur both fought well to secure 5th and 7th finishes respectively. It was Timur's first event and to win four of his contests was a great achievement and no doubt a sign of things to come.

The tournament in the Chinese capital came a week after

the team participated at the Hong Kong National Judo Championship on Mar 9.

While the team performed well, they were only able to secure one medal, a gold that went to Alexis who won all three of his contests in the 90kg weight class.

However, the young students had been purposefully entered by their tutor into higher age groups at the competition and thus against older and stronger opponents, although in the same weight class.

While it did not pay off medal wise on the day, it is a strategic



In Beijing. Photo: Supplied

move that Alexis believes will bear fruit in the long run.

"I want my students to develop and the only way to do this is to test themselves against older and stronger opponents," he explained.

"It is a move that I made when I was a junior athlete. Going out of your comfort zone is the only way to build champions. They are ready for the challenge and I believe in them fully." Ben Tirebuck