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CRIME DRIVE



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

POLICE TARGET CAR, MOTORBIKE RENTALS OPERATED BY FOREIGNERS

The Phuket News
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Police have launched a campaign targeting car and motorbike rental businesses in Phuket that are operated by foreigners and suspected of using nominee shareholders.

Marking the launch of the campaign, Region 8 Police Commander Pol Lt Gen Surapong Thanomjit raided a car and motorbike business in Moo 7, Srisoonthorn, on Mar 19.

More than 100 vehicles were seized in the raid, joined by Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, senior police officers and a Special Operations and Tactics Unit.

Lt Gen Surapong said that there were five such car and motorbike rental businesses under investigation, involving more than 1,000 vehicles.

The businesses are suspected of using nominee shareholders in setting up the companies to operate the businesses, he said.

One report shared by Region 8 Police marked that the foreigners involved in the rental businesses even had family members and friends arrive in Phuket to take part in operating the businesses.

Police gave no indication which nationalities were involved.

The foreign offenders entered Phuket as tourists then had companies set up with assistance from people “knowledgeable in the law”. The

companies are set up with the correct proportion of foreign ownership, then shares are transferred to make the foreigners the majority shareholders, but not in the correct proportion as allowed by law, the report said.

Speaking at a meeting held before the raid, Lt Gen Surapong said that 614 foreigners had been arrested in the past six months, of whom 98 had been deported for committing crimes.

Lt Gen Surapong assured that police were taking action against foreigners engaged in illegal activities in Phuket.

PM CONCERN

Prime Minister Settha Thavasin has expressed his concern about the tourism sector in Phuket due to the

volume of tourists arriving that are involved in criminal behaviour.

The PM’s concern was relayed by Pol Lt Gen Achayon Kraithong, Spokesman of the Royal Thai Police, after a meeting with Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat and other high-ranking officials on Mar 19, the same day that Region 8 Police launched its campaign against foreigners illegally operating car and motorbike businesses on the island.

The PM’s concern was “because there are a lot of tourists coming in, some of whom may have behavior that violates the law”, Lt Gen Achayon said.

“Region 8 Police and Phuket Provincial Police forces have mobilised to crack down on crimes. The work...

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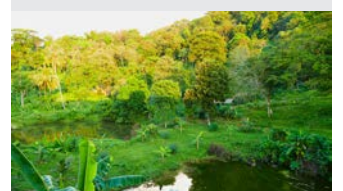
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News



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Police nab fugitive gunman at mall

OFFICERS FROM THE Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) together with officers from the Phuket Provincial Police have arrested a man in Phuket wanted for slaying a casino boss in Surat Thani in 2022, and wanted for involvement in shooting dead a young woman just 200 metres from Don Sak Police Station in Surat Thani last Friday night (Mar 22).

The suspect, named by the CIB as Thanya 'Bom' Wichaidit, 32, was placed under arrest at a shopping centre in Wichit last Sunday (Mar 24), the CIB reported.

The report did not specify at which shopping centre Thanya was taken into custody.

Thanya was wanted on an arrest warrant issued by Surat Thani Provincial Court last Saturday (Mar 23), the CIB noted.

He had fled while on bail. He is accused of working together with Niwat Saksomphong, with Thanya the alleged hired gunman



Photo: CIB

who had shot and killed Ja Ying, a former casino boss in Surat Thani in 2022, the CIB report said.

Thanya also became wanted for the shooting death of a young woman who was shot dead in the middle of the road near Don Sak Police Station on Friday night. Police believe that murder was the result of a conflict over drugs.

When being placed under arrest in Phuket, Thanya denied the charges against him, the CIB report noted.

Regardless, Thanya was taken to be handed over to investigating officers at Don Sak Police Station in Surat Thani "to proceed according to the law", the report concluded.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Workers brawl in Patong

The Phuket News
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Patong Police have confirmed taking legal action against construction workers involved in a brawl with weapons at Loma Circle, at the northern end of Patong, last week.

Patong Police were informed of the incident at about 7:30pm on Mar 19, and officers soon arrived at the scene.

About 10 people in total were involved in the incident. One man was rushed to Patong Hospital with a serious head injury, Patong Police noted in their report.

Both groups involved in the brawl worked for the same employer. However, there had been ongoing arguments over injuries at work.

The two groups were both travelling towards the roundabout in separate vehicles, shouting at each other. By the time they reached the roundabout, tempers had boiled over and one vehicle collided with the other.

At that point, members of both groups exited their vehicles and the brawl ensued, with some of the workers using weapons to physically attack each other, police said.

In one video of the incident posted online, a man can be seen walking away from the brawl carrying a tyre iron.

All 10 were taken to Patong Police Station where they were to face legal action, Patong Police reported.

No names of those charged were reported by police, and the specific



Screenshot: Supplied

charges levied by police were also not mentioned in the police report.

TAXI RAGE

With tempers running high, an Egyptian tourist was taken into protective custody at hospital after he smashed the windows of a taxi in an episode of rage in Bang Tao last Friday night (Mar 22).

Pol Lt Col Kajonkiat Khamwichairat, Deputy Chief of Cherg Talay Police, was informed of the incident at 10:30pm.

Patrol officers arrived to find the damaged taxi and its driver, Suriya Plodmai, 53, and the Egyptian man, identified as Basem Aly Ismail, 31, still at the scene.

Mr Suriya told police that he picked up Mr Basem from the Patong area and was dropping him off in Bang Tao for the agreed price of B450.

After arriving at the scene, Mr Basem asked to borrow Mr Suriya's mobile phone so he could call a friend, but after

using it, Mr Basem refused to return the mobile phone, Mr Suriya said.

Mr Basem slammed the phone down onto another mobile phone that Mr Suriya was holding, causing both phones, a Xiaomi 12 and a Samsung A54, to be broken.

After that, Mr Basem went into a fit of rage and used an iron rod to smash the car, Mr Suriya told police.

The car suffered a broken windshield, several broken windows and a broken rear windshield, with damage to the surrounding areas.

Rescue workers from Cherg Talay Municipality took Mr Basem, who was described as still in a "fit of frenzy", to Thalang Hospital. From there, Mr Basem was transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town.

Police said they were continuing their investigation with the intent of pressing charges against Mr Basem.

PM expresses concern over foreigners engaged in illegal activities

Continued from page 1

...performance so far is considered satisfactory, with 98 arrests and tourist visas revoked in the past six months, since October 2023. Such measures will inspire tourists who come to travel [to Phuket] to have confidence, have peace of mind, and be safe," he said.

"The Prime Minister and the National Police Commissioner has placed emphasis on law enforcement in national tourist cities, like Phuket province," Lt Gen Achayon said.

"It was found that there were a large number of foreigners committing crimes. Including the entry into business with Thai people as nominees.

"We must mobilise to clean this up, and to receive complaints about such activities. We must suppress those involved in illegal acts," he added.

"There is also concern about the safety of officials in the work that brings forces to stop various incidents. That requires practice and training in the use of arrest tactics and the use of language that may be problematic.

"However, legal action and law enforcement will be taken against offenders. It will make Phuket a safe tourist city, so those who travel to

Phuket are confident and choose to travel back again next time. This affects the tourism industry of Phuket Province to become stable," Lt Gen Achayon concluded.

TOURIST POLICE

Following the PM's expression of concern, national Commander-in-Chief of the Tourist Police, Pol Lt Gen Saksira Phueakum, was in Phuket on Mar 20 to lead a meeting with consuls on the island.

The aim of the meeting was to call on consuls to help share the message for foreigners to abide by the law while in Phuket, as tourists or otherwise.

In total, consuls representing 10 countries were present, namely the People's Republic of China, Austria, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Switzerland and Spain.

At the meeting, held at Phuket Tourist Police headquarters in Phuket Town, Pol Lt Gen Saksira emphasised the importance of working with consuls.

"The goal is for the consuls of each country to be informed of the policies and security measures of



Lt Gen Achayon.

the Tourist Police in order to build confidence in the security provided by the Tourist Police and the Royal Thai Police," Pol Lt Gen Saksira said.

The meeting was also held to solicit feedback and suggestions from the consuls, Pol Lt Gen Saksira added.

"In 2024, there will be more than a million foreigners traveling into Phuket. Pol Gen Torsak Sukwimon, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Police, has therefore emphasised and instructed all police units to work together to prevent, suppress and eliminate foreigners who come to commit illegal acts in Thailand," he said.

"Together we can raise the level of security and convenience to build confidence among tourists," he said.

ARRESTS

At the meeting, officers confirmed

the slew of arrests being carried out in the campaign to crack down on foreigners engaged in illegal behaviour in Phuket.

Phuket Provincial Police on Mar 19 posted a flurry of arrest announcements, no less than 24 in total, including the arrest of a 68-year-old American man for procuring a minor for sex.

Wichit Police in its report on Mar 19 marked the arrest of US citizen American Mark Carey Urdang for what they called "sexual offenses".

Although the date and location of his arrest were not reported, Wichit Police explained that he was taken into custody at about 11:30pm on Mar 18 under Criminal Court arrest warrant No. 352/2567, which was issued on Jan 24.

The warrant marked Urdang was wanted for committing the crime "taking a person over fifteen years of age but not yet over eighteen years of age to engage in indecent acts, even if that person consents; taking a minor over fifteen years of age but not more than eighteen years away from parents and induce, encourage or allow children to perform or commit obscene acts."

The charge is listed under Section 283 of the Criminal Code.

The other arrests reported included foreigners caught drunk driving, driving with a licence, riding a motorbike without a helmet, overstaying their permits to stay and performing work not listed in their work permit drunk driving,

Among those was the arrest of Chinese national Tian Kai, 38, by Thalang Police at a villa at The Bay at Cape Yamu luxury residential estate in Moo 7, Pa Khlok, on Mar 19.

Officers took Mr Tian into custody in front of his villa at about 11:30am. He was wanted for 653 days overstay. He last entered the country on Jan 17, 2020.

An interpreter was provided for Mr Tian to understand the charges, and he was taken to Thalang Police Station "for further legal action", police reported.

Added to that was the arrest of Wong Tsz Kin, 31, from Hong Kong, for illegally working as a tour guide. Wong was arrested while illegally conducting a tour at the Big Buddha viewpoint.

Additional reporting by Eakkapop Thongtub

Health Minister pushes safety

The Phuket News
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Health Minister Cholnan Srikaew was treated to a safety response extravaganza at Patong Beach last Sunday (Mar 24) before officially launching the “Phuket Island Safety Sandbox” scheme in the hope of assuring tourists that Phuket is a safe place to holiday.

At Patong Beach, Dr Cholnan watched a surf life saving demonstration, replicating the rescue of a tourist from the water and the tourist being revived on the sand.

He was also treated to a demonstration of an appropriate medical response to a tourist being injured in a fall from a parasail ride, unlike the experience a Chinese tourist suffered at Karon Beach just last month. Among the key concerns to the Chinese woman's treatment was that she was told she would have to wait two hours for an ambulance to arrive due to traffic.

After the beach response demonstrations, Dr Cholnan spoke with lifeguards at Patong Beach, and met with local health workers.

Dr Cholnan also spoke



Phuket: NBT Phuket

with several parasail and jet-ski operators at the beach, and watched a demonstration of a woman being vaccinated against influenza, held as a way of promoting the Ministry of Health campaign in Phuket to offer free vaccinations for four strains of influenza to people working in the tourism industry.

Following the Patong safety promotion event, Dr Cholnan moved to Dragon Plaza at Queen Sirikit Park, where he officially launched the “Phuket Island Safety Sandbox” campaign.

Joining Dr Cholnan for his visit to Phuket and the launch were a host of senior officials,

including, Ministry of Public Health Permanent Secretary Opas Karikawinpong and Department of Disease Control Director General Thongchai Keeratihathayakorn.

Leading the representatives for Phuket at the launch were Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat and Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO), joined by scores of other officials and health ministry workers.

Also joining the officialdom extravaganza were Niti Hetanurak, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Disease Control; Darinda Rosa, Acting Director of

the Disease Prevention and Control Region 11 Office in Nakhon Sri Thammarat; and Phuket Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Kusak Kukiatikoon.

Phuket was the first province to launch the ‘Safety Sandbox’ initiative, Dr Cholnan explained, adding that Phuket was “to be piloted as a disease and health hazard-free tourist city to build confidence among tourists”.

“[Phuket] is a pilot province for tourist areas to be free from disease and health hazards; the first of its kind in Thailand in 31 provinces nationwide,” Dr Cholnan said. “Phuket is moving forward

with the safe tourist policy, holding the ‘Phuket Island Safety Sandbox’ activity to enhance tourism potential, to stimulate the economy, create the well-being of the people in the country,” said an official report of the event.

“The tourism sector is considered a strong point that can generate a large amount of income into the country. In 2023, there will be income from both Thai and foreign tourists of more than B2.1 trillion,” Dr Cholnan said.

“In 2023, Phuket generated income of about B388 billion, ranking the province second in the country after Bangkok,” he added.

“The government under the leadership of Mr Settha Thavisin, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, therefore has a policy to push for generating income from tourism, which the Ministry of Public Health has established as a policy of ‘Tourists are safe’,” Dr Cholnan noted.

The campaign includes ensuring that hotels comply with “GREEN” health, hygiene and safety standards, and somehow for tap water at hotels to be safe to drink, Dr Cholnan said, according

to the official report.

The Ministry of Health policy apparently also includes ensuring that local community hospitals are upgraded in order to provide a higher level of treatment and services, and for a “One Region One Sky Doctor (OROS)” service to be available.

Another aim is for every District Office to ensure food outlets in their area are all inspected and comply with Ministry of Public Health food hygiene regulations.

At the event at Queen Sirikit Park, Dr Chonnan presented certificates to officials from 18 local government organisations and three District Offices for working together to make Phuket the first rabies-free province in the country.

An exhibition on display promoted the work done by officials in achieving the goal, including the Phuket Livestock Office, and marked special efforts by Phuket's renowned Soi Dog Foundation.

After the official proceedings had concluded, Dr Cholnan and his entourage enjoyed a walk along the Lard Yai Walking Street market in the Phuket Old Town area.

Four killed in accidents in one day

TWO FOREIGN MEN AND A THAI woman were killed in a motorbike collision on Wiset Rd, Rawai, early last Sunday morning (Mar 24).

According to CCTV footage from the area, the accident occurred at about 2:48am. Pol Lt Col Somkiat Sarasit of the Chalong Police was informed of the accident soon after.

Police arrived at the scene, in front of Pan's Kitchen restaurant opposite Soi Salika, to find a Phuket-registered Honda Click motorbike and a blue Yamaha YZF-R1, a 998cc sports motorcycle, both with heavy damage.

Three people were already dead at the scene: a 36-year-old Russian man named by police only as “Kristofer Joseph”; a 52-year-old Swedish man named by police as Magnus Stefan Anderson; and a 44-year-old Thai woman identified as Kanokkan Taphao, registered as a resident of Rawai.

An 18-year-old Thai woman at the scene, identified as Phattharawarin Phontham from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, was injured and rushed to hospital.

Police said they were still investigating the accident.

According to the preliminary investigation, the Russian man “Mr Kristofer” and 18-year-old Ms Phattharawarin were riding the Honda Click motorbike while Mr Anderson and Ms Kanokkan were riding Yamaha R1, registered in Bangkok, when the motorbikes collided.

Two motorbikes parked by the side of the road were also damaged in the accident.

By 10pm last Sunday night, Thalung Police were informed of an accident in front of a house in Baan Don, Tambon Thepkasattri, that killed a 25-year-old Russian man.

Pol Lt Col Niwat Thimket of the Thalung



Photo: Chalong Police

Police was informed of the accident, and officers soon arrived at the scene to find the motorbike, a Phuket registered Yamaha NMAX, still upright, wedged between a power pole and the front gate to the house.

The body of the man, identified as Evgenii Viktorovich, was on the driveway in front of the gate.

From their preliminary investigation, police reported that the man was driving towards Cherng Talay when he lost control of the motorbike on a curve and slammed into the wall.

Rescue workers at the scene, from both the Thepkasattri Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) and the Phuket Kusoldharm Foundation, transported Mr Viktorovich's body to Thalung Hospital. His motorbike was taken to Thalung Police Station as evidence while police continue their investigation.

According to the police report at the time, police had yet to inform Russian consular officials of the man's death.

According to national road safety agency Thai RSC, as of Monday (Mar 25), 52 people had died in accidents on Phuket's roads since the beginning of the year, with another 6,701 people injured. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

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Lost B750k Cartier gold bracelet returned

A 45-YEAR-OLD CHINESE man has thanked police for finding and returning a Cartier gold bracelet worth about B750,000 that the man reported as lost on Thalang Rd in Phuket Town.

Chinese national Wang Lei reported to Phuket City Police at 12:50am last Friday (Mar 22) that he had lost the bracelet after parking opposite the Old Town Boutique Guesthouse Hotel on Thalang Rd at about 11pm that night.

Mr Wang reported the bracelet as lost and asked to check CCTV footage from the area.

The bracelet was worth about 150,000 yuan, or about B750,000, and was of significant sentimental value as it was a wedding gift, Mr Wang said.

At about about 9:30am last Friday officers from Phuket City Police together with Phuket Tourist Police joined Mr Wang to the location where he believed he lost the bracelet, and together checked CCTV footage from the area.

A young woman from Myanmar who is a salesperson in the area was seen



Photo: Phuket City Police

as finding the bracelet, and police managed to track her down to recover it, police explained.

About 2:30pm last Friday Mr Wang returned to Phuket City Police Station to receive his bracelet, with Phuket City Police Chief Pol Col Prathuang Phonmana present for the occasion.

Mr Wang thanked the police and "good citizens" who were able to find the bracelet.

He also said he admired the Thai police "who work quickly", and that he loved Thailand.

Of note, official reports did not specifically clarify whether or not Mr Wang was a tourist.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Beach bag theft spurs Kamala CCTV splurge

The Phuket News
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Kamala Police and local officials are looking to expand CCTV coverage along the Kamala Beach area in the hope of preventing thefts and other incidents affecting tourists at the beach.

The announcement followed Phuket officials announcing on Mar 21 that a former FBI agent from Kazakhstan had praised Kamala Police for recovering and returning his daughter's shoulder bag and iPhone 15 Pro within 24 hours of the items being stolen at Kamala Beach.

Kazakh tourist Ms Aizhan Zhassanova came to Phuket on holiday with her family and stayed in the Kamala area, said an official report of the incident.

She filed a report with the police, with Kamala Police Chief Pol Col Somsak Thongkliang taking the lead on the case.

Police checked CCTV in the area and were able to track down and arrest the thief on Mar 18, within 24 hours after being informed of the incident, said the report.

Ms Zhassanova and both



Photo: PR Phuket

her parents came to Kamala Police Station in Mar 21 to thank police and have Ms Zhassanova's belongings returned.

The father, unnamed in the official report, was described as a former FBI agent from Kazakhstan.

The father thanked Kamala Police for their efforts, with special thanks to Pol Col Somsak for his involvement.

The father said that it was his and his family's first visit to Phuket, and he was "very impressed" with the work by Kamala Police. He said he would share the good news with fellow Kazakhstan nationals.

Pol Col Somsak praised the CCTV cameras in the area for the ability to track down and arrest the thief.

A formal request had been submitted to have 40 additional CCTV cameras installed throughout the entire Kamala area to increase coverage in order to help police carry out their duties, Pol Col Somsak said.

Hotels and other businesses have also been asked to join the local CCTV network in the name of increased security for tourists, he added.

"This will increase confidence among tourists in the area and deter any further incidents in the area," he said.

Man arrested for slaying gardener

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a 55-year-old man for killing a gardener in Wichit last week.

Wichit Police announced the arrest of Issara Khunphochai, 55, last Friday (Mar 22), after tracking him down to a hut in the hills behind 50 Pi Rd in Patong.

Issara was wanted for slaying fellow gardener Bunkhamphan 'Pan' Bunchu, 48, from Sisaket, in front of a shanty worker's abode on Soi Thep Anusorn 4, in Moo 2, Wichit, on the night of Mar 19.

Mr Bunkhamphan had suffered a fatal stab wound to the neck, and another stab wound to the left shoulder.

After his arrest, Issara confessed to the fatal stabbing and was brought back to the scene to re-enact the crime for police on Mar 21.

Issara told police that he had been drinking alcohol with Mr



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Bunkhamphan, but they had an argument. and a fight ensued.

Issara explained that he had grabbed a 'lao khao' bottle and struck Mr Bunkhamphan on the head twice, then picked up a broken piece of the bottle and stabbed him.

After completing the re-enactment, Issara was taken to Wichit Police Station and charged with murder.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Russians, Ukrainian in poker raid

FOUR RUSSIAN NATIONALS and one Ukrainian were arrested in a gambling raid in Ratsada, north of Phuket Town, last week.

Acting on a tip-off, officers from the Phuket Provincial Police and Phuket City Police entered the venue, described by police as located on Thepkasattri Rd in Moo 6, Ratsada, in the SuperCheap main branch area, at about 1:45am on Mar 20.

Officers found Ukrainian national Oleksandr Shpetnyi acting as the dealer and three Russian nationals, named as Evgenii Vylegzhanin, Rodion Elonov and Ruslan Kolontyrskii, playing poker.

Russian national Ekaterina Morozova was involved as exchanging betting chips for cash, police reported.

Betting chips marked to the value of B647,525 were seized in the raid, police noted.

Also seized was one professional poker table, three decks of cards, a Samsung computer, an Apple MacBook Air and a ledger marking the



Photo: Phuket City Police

bets that were placed and paid,

Police said the venue was known as a regular venue for illegal gambling.

Gamblers used chips instead of cash, or used cryptocurrencies to place bets in order to hide the money used and to avoid it being confiscated by the authorities, police noted in their report.

All five suspects were taken to the Phuket City Police Station. Vlegzhanin, Elonov and Kolontyrskii all admitted to the charge with illegal gambling, police reported.

Shpetny and Morozova were charged with organising illegal gambling, but Morozova denied the charge, police added. Eakkapop Thongtub

Wastewater woes get top-level attention

The Phuket News
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The House of Representatives Committee on Land, Natural Resources and Environment arrived in Phuket on a study tour last week, apparently to follow up on land disputes and wastewater problems on the island.

Committee chairman Apichart Sirisunthon, who also serves as the secretary-general of Move Forward Party, arrived with his delegation and joined a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 19 presided over by Phuket Governor Suwan Suwannarat.

The visit and study tour were prompted by complaints received by the committee, said an official report of the meeting.

Present for the meeting were a slew of leading Phuket officials, and members of the public to provide feedback and suggestions.

The meeting included a briefing on land rights in Thalang District and wastewater problems in Mueang Phuket District and Kathu District, said the official report.

However, Phuket MP Chalermpong Sangdee, also of the Move Forward Party, later noted in a post online that the key areas of concern for wastewater were Kamala, Karon and Patong.

"Every year during the tourist season



Black wastewater flows across Bang Tao Beach just last month.
Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

there is more wastewater than normal, and [it] flows into the sea," MP Chlaermpong wrote.

According to the official report, the committee aims to follow up on solving issues related to people living and using the Bang Khanun National Protected Forest area.

Regarding the issue of wastewater, Mr Apichart received a presentation by the Phuket Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Office and the Environment and Pollution Control Office 15, based in Phuket, said the official report.

However, details of the presentation were not published.

The visit by Mr Apichart follows black wastewater flowing across beaches and into the sea where tourists swim at Patong, Karon, Kamala and Bang Tao.

During an inspection tour of Phuket last year, Dr Surasee Kittimonthon, Secretary-General of the Office of National Water Resources (ONWR), revealed that Phuket is already unable to treat nearly 55,000 cubic metres of wastewater each day, leaving the wastewater to be disposed of untreated.

Senators support special admin call

GEN LERTRAT RATANANICH, Chair of the Senate Local Government Committee, has pledged his support for Phuket to become designated as a Special Administration Area.

The confirmation of Gen Lertrat's support for Phuket's transformation into a Special Administration Area came through an official report of his study visit to Phuket last Friday (Mar 22).

"The Senate Local Government Committee visited Phuket Province and agreed that Phuket Province is a special form of government," said the report.

Gen Lertrat and his delegation of committee members attended a meeting joined by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat and other members of the Phuket Provincial Office Executive Committee.

Also joining the briefing was Kreetha Chotiwiwitpipat, Mayor of Wichit, who presented an explanation of the problems that local officials were hindered in addressing due to current bureaucratic obstacles.

In short, Mayor Kreetha proposed that the Senate com-



Photo: PR Phuket

mittee drive Phuket to have a special form of government.

"Like Bangkok and Pattaya, Phuket is a world-class tourist city. Each year, many tourists come to Phuket, which generates a huge income, but when the budget was withheld, it is not enough for development," he said.

"The most pressing problem in Phuket is traffic, along with garbage disposal problems, water management problems, mass transit system problems... This in turn affects building confidence and safety in tourism, and soon," Mayor Jreetha said.

"If Phuket province is governed in a special administrative form, it will be able to solve various problems leading to sustainable tourism," he said plainly.

The Phuket News

TURNKEY, PROFITABLE AND ESTABLISHED BUSINESS FOR SALE



SAFEWAY ASIA was established in 2001, its main activities being the manufacture and rent/sell of mobile buildings such as site/sales offices, container conversions and all types of pre-fab construction. The company also provides a number of storage options for both companies and private individuals.

Safeway also supplies surrounding provinces such as Phang Nga, Krabi and Surat Thani with potential for expanding a much needed branch in Krabi.

POTENTIAL: Safeway has sent two export shipments to Australia in pre-fab form with enormous potential for further exports as both Australia and New Zealand have a dramatic shortage of low cost housing for first home buyers.

Due to health issues, the 78-year-old owner and founder is motivated to sell the business, which includes in excess of 100 rental units, a 2-ton and a 7-ton forklift, vehicles, tools and machinery for 18 million Baht.

The freehold 'Chanote title' property includes a fully fenced 3540 M2 of main road frontage land, a 3-bedroom home, office and approximately 600M2 of fixed storage buildings, approximate value 23MB (twenty three million Baht). The owner is prepared to sell the business and the freehold property together for 38MB (thirty eight million Baht).

www.safewayasia.com

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gmsafeway@phuketemail.com



Phuket expects a busy Songkran

PHUKET IS EXPECTED to receive about 264,350 visitors during the Songkran holiday this year, generating at least B7 billion in revenue, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

The island is expected to experience high levels of congestion during the Thai New Year holiday from Apr 12-16, Phuket TAT office Director Lertchai Wangtrakuldee, said on Mar 19

Hotel bookings have already reached almost 80% capacity despite being in its low tourism season, Mr Lertchai said.

According to the office's survey of 2,069 hotel samples, the occupancy rate stands at 78.56% of a total of 111,427 rooms, with each visitor staying an average of five nights.

The projected 264,350 visitors to Phuket during Songkran are expected to spend an average of B6,625 per day, generating B7.04bn for the popular tourist destination, Mr Lertchai said.

Among international arrivals, Russian tourists are the largest group, with at least 5,000 visitors a day, followed by Chinese visitors as the sec-



Bangla Rd has been treated with a non-slip surface ahead of Songkran. Photo: Patong Municipality

ond largest group, with about 2,000 visitors daily.

There has also been an increase in visitors from the European market, especially Germany, England and Kazakhstan, he said.

However, the number of Indian visitors has dropped slightly as some opted for nearby destinations such as Krabi, he added.

The TAT anticipates growth in Middle Eastern arrivals and a higher volume of domestic visitors during Songkran due to reduced travel costs in April.

Regarding Songkran activities in Phuket, Mr Lertchai said ceremonies and events will be held at many locations such as Saphan Hin Bridge, Phuket Old Town and Patong Beach. *Bangkok Post*

Business chiefs launch 'Phuket Privilege Card'

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Some prominent members of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce (PCC) have joined together to launch a new range of services through 'Phuket Privilege Card' to facilitate investment into the province by assisting members when interacting with government agencies in order to set up fully legal operations on the island.

The Phuket Privilege Card (PPC) aims to be a model for other areas to follow, by providing a host of integrated services for members as a 'One Stop Service', explained Phuket Chamber of Commerce Chairman Kongsak Khoopongsakorn.

"Through the Phuket Privilege Card, we can provide advice and facilitate foreign businessmen conducting trade and investing in Phuket in accordance with legal regulations," Mr Kongsak said.

Both Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat and Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum



Photo: PR Phuket

were present at the launch of the Phuket Privilege Card at the Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Chao Fah Hotel in Wichit on Mar 21 as a show of support of the initiative.

"Phuket is a province that has factors in economic growth and tourism that increase every year," noted former PCC Chairman Thanusak Phungdet, now Chairman of the Board of Directors of Phuket Privilege Card Co Ltd.

"There is complete development in every dimension. These things affect the investment potential which can attract many Thai and foreign

businessmen around the world. But in the past, there was no 'One Stop Service Center' for the private sector to provide convenience quickly and correctly," he added.

"Therefore, Thai business leaders who are members of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce joined together to establish Phuket Privilege Card Co Ltd, or PPC, to be a centre for foreign investors who wish to come to trade and invest in Phuket," he said.

At the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in March last year, the signatories to the MoU were

10 private sector organisations, including the Phuket branch of the Federation of Thai Industries; the Thai Hotel Association Southern chapter, of which Mr Kongsak was formerly the president; the Phuket Tourist Association and the Phuket Real Estate Business Association.

Among the 'privileges' extended to members through the service are advice on trade, investment, legal counsel, coordination with government agencies, state enterprises and local government administrative organisations, Mr Thanusak said.

"The Phuket Privilege Card provides a balancing act for the private sector, by building confidence among foreign investors who want to invest in Phuket legally, that they will be treated equally and fairly by the government, with PPC [Phuket Privilege Card service] helping to facilitate," he said.

"When these images are good, it will encourage investment in the area. And we hope to be a model for 'One Stop Service' that other provinces can develop and build upon."


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Srettha blames failings on delayed budget

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin defended his government's performance after senators claimed in a general debate on Monday (Mar 25) that the Pheu Thai-led coalition has not made significant progress in realising their campaign promises over the past seven months.

Mr Srettha, who is also finance minister, admitted that the delay in approving the 2024 budget meant the government has had to delay the implementation of some of its core policies – especially those relating to economic stimulus packages, which require a lot of funding.

"The [budget] bill was only passed last week, and it will take about another month before the budget is disbursed," he said.

Mr Srettha went on to admit that he was not entirely satisfied with his performance, as well as the performance of the Cabinet, saying there is always room for improvement.

Responding to criticism of his frequent overseas travel, Mr Srettha said he believed it was customary for a new prime minister to pay a courtesy visit to other countries after assuming office.

He said the trips were not a waste of time and money as they have resulted in



PM Srettha said he is not entirely satisfied with his or the Cabinet's performance, saying there is always room for improvement. Photo: Bangkok Post

significant investments for the country, explaining that foreign investors have committed to investing over B100 billion in Thailand over the past several months.

At time of press, Mr Srettha said the details were set to be made public by the Thailand Trade Representative and the Board of Investment on Tuesday (Mar 26).

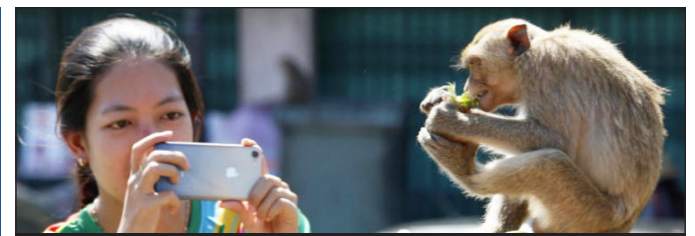
During the debate, Senator Seree Suwanpanont criticised Mr Srettha for positioning himself as a salesman searching for new trade and investment opportunities for the country, saying the prime minister should be acting as the country's CEO, not a salesman.

The only achievement the govern-

ment has made so far is helping a convict avoid serving his jail term, said Mr Seree, in an apparent reference to the privileges accorded to former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Senator Somchai Sawangkarn, meanwhile, said a petition will soon be lodged with the Constitutional Court to ask it to rule on whether Mr Srettha had violated the constitution by helping Thaksin secure parole in an unfair manner.

The Administrative Court will also be asked to rule on whether permission to stay at the Police General Hospital for more than 120 days that was granted to Thaksin following his sentencing was illegitimate, said the senator.



A tourist with a macaque in Lopburi. Photo: Bangkok Post

Compensation set for wildlife attacks

LOPBURI

THE MINISTER FOR natural resources and the environment has approved regulations on compensation for people attacked by wild animals including monkeys, a growing problem in Lopburi province.

The Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation said Pol Gen Patcharawat Wongsuwon, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, approved the new regulations, which took effect last Saturday (Mar 23).

The compensation was set at B100,000 for each case of death, paralysis or loss of both eyes, arms or legs. It was set at B50,000 for a loss of one eye, arm or leg.

Compensation for other injuries will be paid in accordance with actual injuries, but is capped at B30,000.

Those injured will also re-

ceive daily compensation of up to B300 for a period of up to 180 days pending their recovery.

The compensation is available for people attacked by monkeys, elephants, gaurs and bears.

The new regulations came amid a recent spate of injuries caused by macaques attacking people to steal food in Lopburi province, where many of the wild monkeys live among communities.

One woman who was hurt when she was attacked by macaques registered a complaint with police on Mar 8 in a move to cover the cost of her medical treatment.

Officials said aggressive monkeys would be moved from urban areas of Lopburi to cages in the same province and in Nakhon Nayok, adding monkeys could become particularly aggressive when they lack food during the hot season. Bangkok Post

Commander of 'misfiring' ship removed

CHONBURI

THE COMMANDER OF HTMS Chonburi has been transferred to an inactive post at the Royal Thai Fleet pending an investigation, following an incident where the ship accidentally fired a shell at HTMS Khirirat in Chonburi's Sattahip district on Mar 13.

The ship's commander, L/Cdr Theeranai Laosing, was handed a transfer order to show responsibility for the event while awaiting the investigation, R/Adm Chalermchai Suankaew, commander of the Royal Thai Navy's Patrol Squadron, said on Mar 19.

The incident occurred around noon on Mar 13 while both frigates were docked at Laem Thian Pier of Sattahip Naval Base.

HTMS Chonburi had earlier conducted a firing drill at sea. During the exercise, the 76mm gun malfunctioned twice, resulting in the 15th and 21st shots getting stuck.

The gun was fixed until the 37th shot was ready to fire, but the shooting range was considered unsafe so the mission was aborted, R/Adm Chalermchai said.

The frigate returned to the naval base. Officials tried to take out the remaining five shots but they could only remove two. The remaining three were stuck in the loading system.

The ship's personnel could not remove the shells, so they asked for help from the Naval Ordnance Department. However, a problem occurred while removing the bearings. The safety system malfunctioned



The damaged HTMS Khirirat at Sattahip naval base on Mar 13. Photo: Bangkok Post

due to its lifespan of more than 40 years, R/Adm Chalermchai said.

He said while officials tried to work on the safety system, the gun was turned at a level of five degrees, causing a shell to enter the chamber before it was accidentally fired at HTMS Khirirat which was docking in front of it.

The 76mm bullet destroyed four rooms, resulting in 14 people injured.

Royal Thai Fleet chief Adm Chatchai Thongsard said the nine crew who sustained minor injuries have since been discharged from Somdech Phra Nangchao Sirikit Hospital in Sattahip district.

The other five sailors who were initially in serious condition have been transferred from the intensive care unit to a special care facility as their conditions have improved.

The navy will provide compensation to all those injured in the incident, said Adm Chatchai.

Bangkok Post

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SwapShop gets set for Easter

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket SwapShop is gearing up for an Easter celebration filled with family-friendly activities and the spirit of giving, set to take place at the Seeds of Change Vocational Learning Centre from 11am to 3pm tomorrow (Mar 30).

The event holds a special emphasis on raising awareness and fostering community connections for the inspiring charity based on Koh Siray. Additionally, it aims to raise vital funds for the dedicated cause of Rawai Animal Lovers. The compassionate rescue centre is currently grappling with steep veterinary bills for the care of sick cats and dogs, placing immense strain on its resources and personnel.

“Rawai Animal Lovers is facing a critical situation due to the overwhelming number of sick and rescued animals in need of urgent veterinary care. Without additional support, the impact will be severe,” explains Sarha Robinson, co-founder of Phuket Swap Exchange. Operating primarily on the efforts of founder Simone and the occasional volunteer, they rely heavily on community assistance to sustain their operations.

Each SwapShop event not only benefits numerous local individuals but also extends support to the charities it represents. While the event rotates venues across the island, its debut at the



Photos: Phuket SwapShop

Seeds of Change Vocational Learning Centre is particularly fitting. Known for their commitment to sustainability, the centre crafts all its products from recycled materials. By purchasing these unique, high-quality items, attendees not only contribute to a worthy cause but also demonstrate environmental responsibility.

Every product from the centre is meticulously crafted by skilled women

who have participated in its various programmes, aimed at empowering them with essential skills for self-employment. These programs cater to individuals from diverse backgrounds, including returning mothers, economically disadvantaged youths and seniors who have missed out on such opportunities.

Trained seamstresses Gift and Noi have been operating the Phuket SwapShop mending station at the clothes exchange event for over a year. Armed with sewing machines and boundless creativity, they mend tears, rips, buttons and zips on-site, often transforming items into unique pieces. Their dedication has now extended to teaching other students at the vocational centre on Koh Siray, embodying the centre’s mission of skill empowerment and community support.

Phuket SwapShop invites the entire community to contribute to Seeds of Change and Rawai Animal Lover by participating in the ‘Phuket SwapShop & Easter Egg Hunt’ event. Involvement and support can take various forms.

“Our SwapShop gatherings encourage a free market ethos, advocating ‘SWAP, Don’t Shop’, an abundance for everyone,” elaborates Sarha. “Participants bring their pre-loved treasures, which our volunteers arrange on tables for all to peruse and select from. There’s no restriction on what you offer or take home! We simply request consideration, particularly for the charities.

“After each event, we invariably have numerous items left, destined for the Good Shepherd to be distributed to Phuket’s less privileged areas of Phuket. Beyond swapping and donating goods, donation boxes will be on hand for those unable to contribute items or wishing to provide additional support. We recognise that challenges exist even in paradise” Sarha adds.

“What’s beautiful about SwapShop is the ability to give what you can. We suggest B200 is a kind gesture, but we appreciate any donation, whether a B10 coin or more. It mirrors our community – individuals collectively forming a compassionate and impactful group.”

A highlight of the day will be a visit from the Sunshine Village Orphanage



Kids, engaging in the story led Easter Egg Hunt by the unique and talented Abstract Kids Drama team.

Amid the scenic college surroundings all children can join the Easter Egg Hunt at 1pm. A raffle boasting enticing prizes will benefit Rawai Animal Lovers.

“If you believe it ends there, you haven’t experienced a SwapShop before,” beams Sarha. “Expect live music, craft workshops, bag painting, elephant stuffing, a UK DJ, a special menu, a ‘Head Dunk Challenge’ and an Artisan market. And there’s even an after-party thrown in for good measure.”

The Artisan market will exhibit creations from 10 local artists, showcasing beautifully Crafted, and reasonably priced, handmade products, including macramé, home décor, gifts, essential oils and other delightful items.

“Phuket SwapShop embodies charity, community backing, and sustainability,” notes Sarha. “As members of ANRFC [Andaman Natural Resource and Conservation Foundation] for Southern Thailand, we’re grateful to connect with like-minded individuals on the island who share our passion for sustainability.

“For instance, The Tree House Play Café, which champions sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, will offer a children upcycling craft station featuring nature egg painting and cardboard box decorating. Karla, who oversees this play centre, crafts much of the café’s furniture and activities from reclaimed natural materials, making invaluable contributions to Phuket. It is yet another testament to the interconnectedness and generosity within our community.”

Phuket SwapShop is experiencing exponential growth, and it’s the consistent support from returning attendees that is fueling its momentum.

“The response has been incredible, almost unstoppable, like a locomotive in motion. More and more individuals are expressing interest in joining our Swap Family,” Sarha shares. “By uniting people and shining a spotlight on overlooked causes, we can make a significant difference in the community. There’s a genuine need for fostering sharing and creating opportunities for individuals to connect with each other naturally.”

Would you like to be part of the Phuket SwapShop team? Sarha and her colleagues are always looking for supporters to lend a hand at events. Local businesses can contribute to a good cause by donating special prizes for the raffle; proceeds will go to the Rawai Animal Lovers. Contact Phuket SwapShop through their official Facebook page or by email to phuketswapshop@gmail.com

WANT TO TALK TO PHUKET?

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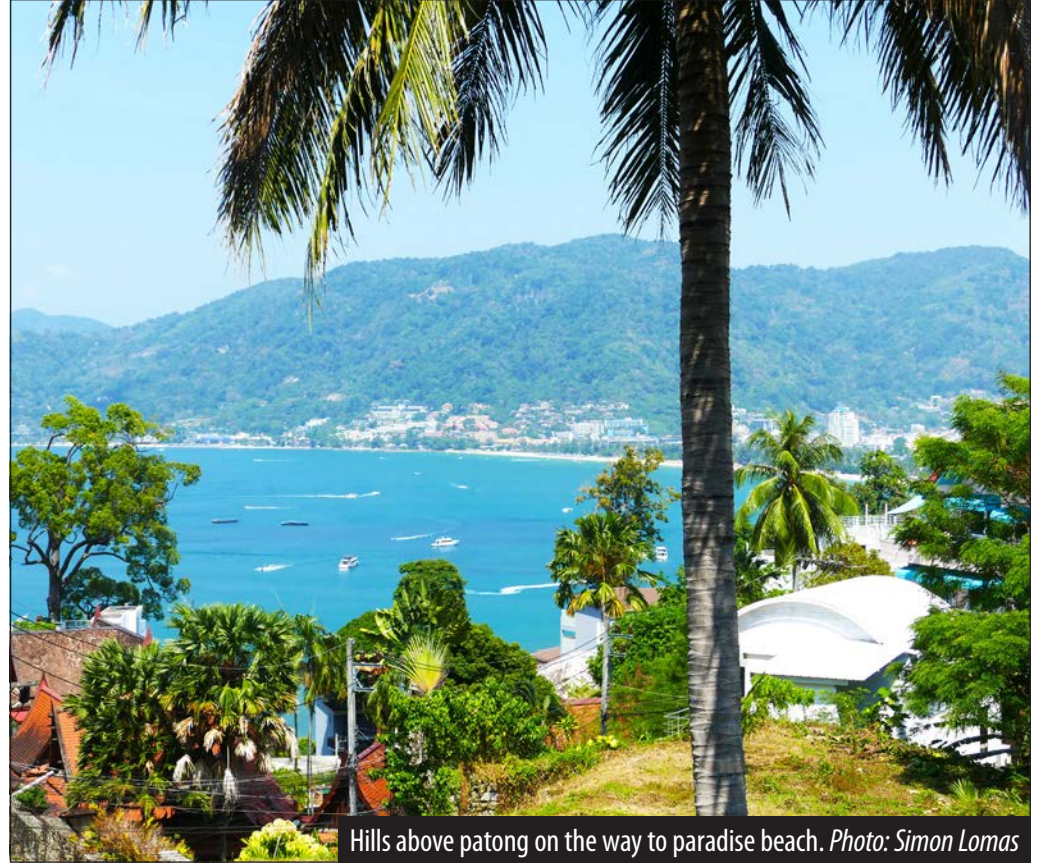
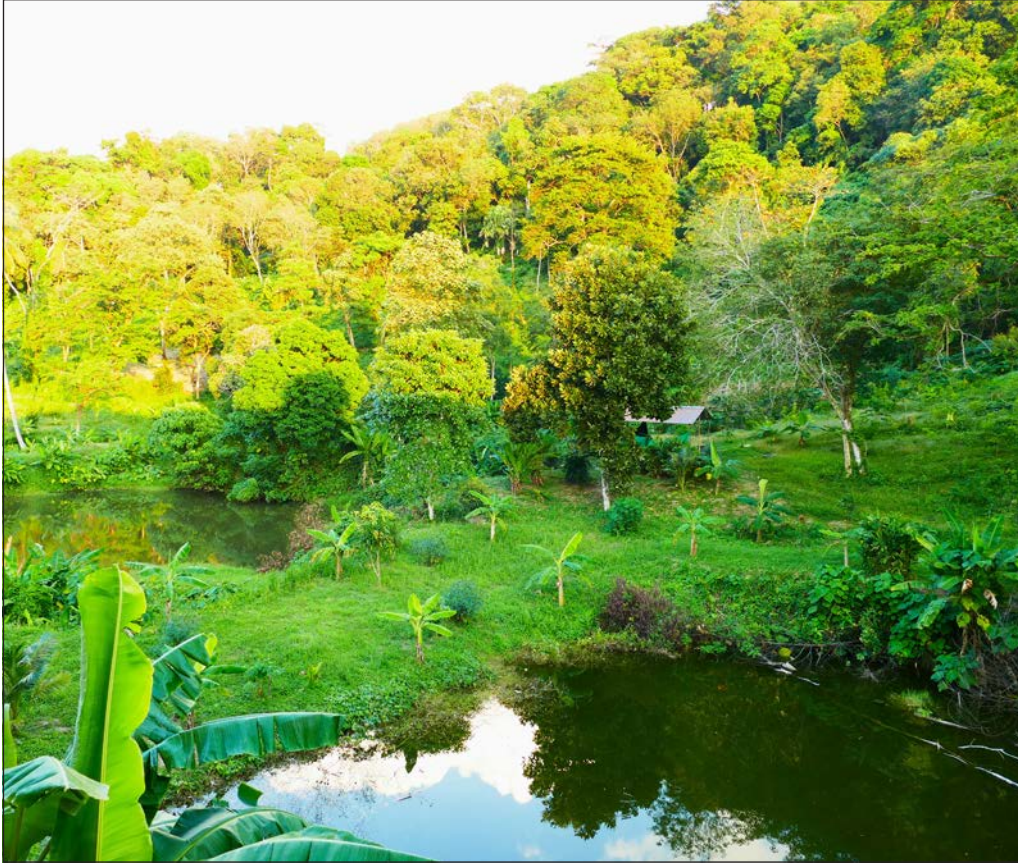
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Hills above patong on the way to paradise beach. Photo: Simon Lomas

Still living in 'Natural Phuket'

Simon Lomas

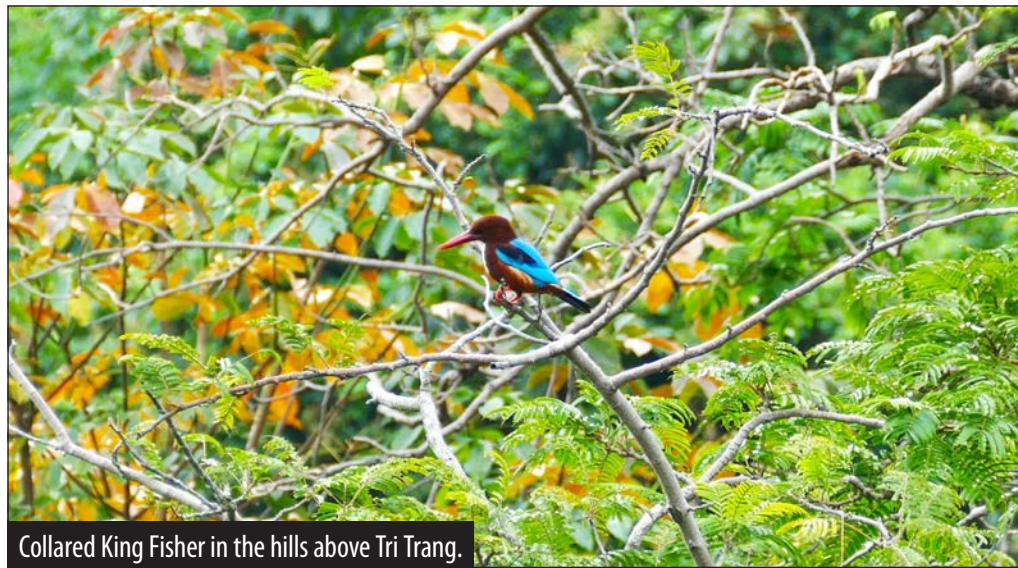
So many people when deciding on where to go for their holidays look at the photos in a brochure or on the internet. What do they have to go on? Well, they have the reviews written by others who have been there. They have the photos from the tourism department of that country or destination, the word of mouth from others who have been there, or stories from people who know someone who has been there.

Phuket is no different. But just like when buying anything, what they use most are their eyes. They see photos of empty white sandy beaches, calm flat blue seas, nice green trees, traditional villages, low rolling hills, streams and beautifully selected photos. They see tours going to various places all depicting beautiful coral reefs, stunning fish, idyllic national parks stuffed with exotic birds and animals. They pick a hotel using the same methods, take out a credit card and book the "perfect holiday".

But on arrival, they do the same as everyone else: check in, go to the beach, go to the bars and restaurants, go to the markets, shopping centres, book a few of the main 'cattle car' tours that everyone else is doing. They all visit the same beaches, gather around the same pools, visit the same restaurants and bars at night. They generally have a great time and get back on the plane home.

But did they see the perfect unspoilt coral reefs? The stunning birds, butterflies, fish, flowers, rolling hills of the national parks? No, of course not. They jumped in minibuses and crowded speedboats for the tours, taxis for the rest and walked a few streets to the markets, shopping, restaurants and bars.

I can say exactly the same thing about those who have chosen to live in a great place like Phuket. They come because of the warm weather and the neon lights that attract so many to holiday destinations around the world. All



Collared King Fisher in the hills above Tri Trang.

the new 'resident' foreigners in Phuket know all the bars, restaurants, coffee shops and have been on the same three or four cattle car tours a few times, and think they know everything and have seen everything.

I was the same. Then after the COVID-19 pandemic I said "NO!" when it came to getting a new motorbike. I said I will stop being lazy. I will walk to 7-Eleven. Walk along the beach to work in the mornings. I will not ride along the narrow streets filled with the crazy tuk-tuks and minivans that think they are in the Dakar Rally.

I keep well away from the tourists that hire scooters on holiday that don't ride bikes in their country and I started to walk. I moved out of the town and into the hills above Patong Bay. Best move I ever did. Clean air, cool breeze and great views. Got me fitter as well into the bargain. But best of all it opened my eyes. I am one of the few people that can honestly say that having a longer travel time to work is a good thing. That's after 12 years of living here and many four- and five-month stays; before that I had seen so little.

Now I recommend a walk along the south end of Patong Beach at 7am or first light till around 9am. Check the tides first and as long as it's not high tide, you will see so many sea birds. There are so many different types, all feeding on the shellfish, hermit crabs and small fish on the shoreline.

Once it gets to 8:30 or 9am, once all the beachgoers, jet-skis and parasailing boats arrive, the birds all vanish. But that's fine as it starts to get warm by then anyway and the birds have already had their fill. From Great Egrets, Pacific Reef Herons, Little Egrets, Cormorants, Sand Plovers and different types of Kingfisher, to name but a few.

Nice deep blue skies with the low early morning sun and the perfect white egrets gliding effortlessly just a few metres above the water or outlined against the blue sky makes for stunning photos. For photographers, the mornings on Patong beach are perfect as the sun is behind you as you look out to sea so blue from the reflection of the sky. All the seabirds are well lit and you are not looking into the sun.

The best place to be is south of the jetty that the cruise ships use. Go all the way to the south end where the small canal empties into the sea. There is a nice little bay where the trees reach the shore. The brightly painted longtail fishing boats go in and out from the fishing village just a couple of hundred metres upstream. Yes there is a fishing village in Patong that even many Thais do not know is there.

If you are lucky, as I have been a few times, you can have a large section of beach to yourself with only the odd person walking past. And in low season I have been there for hours and not seen a soul.

I'd like to think that I genuinely wish more people would walk around just outside the edges to the main town – or maybe I don't as I don't want lots of people to turn up! Joking aside, I do wish more people will have a look at just how much nature is still left in Phuket despite the huge development projects tearing up the jungle areas. If people can start to see the natural Phuket rather than the concrete jungle then people will realise that they don't need to travel from Phuket to see the beautiful wildlife as it's all here. You just need to go and see it.

Then just maybe, rather than building multi-story complexes, people will build small bungalows, and leave the trees and plants. People will come to relax, to be woken up by bird song, have butterflies flutter past during breakfast. When there are plenty of trees about, it's cooler too, rather than concrete reverberating with heat everywhere. Since moving out of Patong I have not had to use the aircon once.

I think there is still enough natural beauty and wildlife left even on the outskirts of places like Patong and Karon to attract photographers, bird watchers and other nature lovers to this beautiful island. Yes, the towns have the shopping and the nightlife, but the rest of the island has so much potential too. People around the world have busy stressful lives and are desperate for quiet, peaceful, beautiful places to come on holidays to relax.

I hope in the coming weeks to be able to highlight all the great wildlife we have here on Phuket. What you can see, where you can see it, what you should be wary of and what you should stay well away from. When and where to go for great photos without having to travel from one end of the island to the other.

But most of all I aim to introduce the awesome variety of wildlife to the millions who visit Phuket and live on Phuket. Who to be fair mostly walk (or ride) without seeing anything. This is a fantastic island with so much to offer and see. We all need to take care of and just let people know its there on the doorstep if we just look.

POP QUIZ

- Who wrote the 2023 book 'Spare'?
- Which 3D puzzle was invented in 1974 by a Hungarian professor of architecture?
- Where was Hollywood actor Henry Cavill born?
- What is the formula for the area of a circle?
- Where was Vladimir Putin born?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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8	7			6			
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4		1	9			7	

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
- Robin Cook thriller
 - Makes simpler
 - Exchange
 - Crown
 - Sag
 - Mythical craft
 - Edward R. Murrow and Paul Harvey
 - Visionary
 - Some alloys
 - Flat
 - British author of historical novels and ballads
 - Piece of pipe
 - Freudian topic
 - Biblical prophet
 - Great time
 - Exceed
 - Paula Zahn was one
 - Ordeal
 - Degree in karate
 - MJ's sweetheart, in film
 - Spicy Indian dishes
 - Photo ____
 - Smooths
 - Boots
 - Wilbur and Orville
- Down
- Funny guys
 - Eyeball bender
 - Euripides drama
 - Kind of skeleton
 - Big WW II moment
 - Mantel piece
 - Back-to-work time: abbr.
 - Child's bruise
 - Gushes
 - Bursae
 - Usurp
 - Be in harmony
 - Group of pals, slangily
 - Foreshadow
 - Land
 - Steady
24. Lobster look-alike
27. Dusk, to Donne
28. Use a straw
29. Take effect
30. Scratch
31. Samurai's sash
32. Generous slice of the pie
35. It's definite
36. Family head
37. Leftover
39. Biblical prophet
40. Lacking
41. Black cuckoo
46. Drum sound
47. Boot part
48. "Brave New World" drug
49. Had
50. Jabber
51. Sticky sweetener: var. sp.
54. Shoe part
55. Crack
56. Attribute
57. Kind of manual
59. Stick-to-itiveness
60. Questionable
62. Bird of myth
63. "Sweet!"

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:
1) Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex; 2) Rubik's Cube; 3) Saint Helier, Jersey (in the Channel Islands); 4) $A = \pi r^2$; 5) Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg)

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58				59						60				
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67						68							69	

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

S	H	E	D	P	U	C	K	B	A	T	I	K
P	U	L	E	O	L	I	O	A	I	S	L	E
A	G	A	I	N	S	T	H	E	G	R	A	I
N	O	N	F	A	T	E	L	M	R	A	T	
C	A	T	C	H	E	R	I	N	T	H	E	R
O	V	A	N	O	N	E	I	C	E	U	P	
L	I	N	D	A	W	E	I	S	O	C	L	E
D	A	K	A	R	E	R	G	S	T	E	E	
S	N	A	K	E	I	N	T	H	E	G	R	A
U	P	S	A	D	S	A	D	S	T	O	E	
S	O	W	D	N	E	S	W	I	L	D	O	A
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6	8	3	5	9	4	2	7	1
1	3	7	9	4	5	8	2	6
2	5	4	8	6	3	7	1	9
8	6	9	1	2	7	5	3	4

GOT YOUR NUMBER

12

years old was the age Morgan Freeman was when he first started acting, after he was forced into a drama competition as punishment for teasing a girl in his class.

80

cigarettes a day, chicken soup and coffee was the diet that 16-year-old Judy Garland was put on while filming 'The Wizard of Oz'.

427

is the most one-handed claps in one minute, achieved by Abhinabha Tangerman of the Netherlands in Potsdam, Germany, in 2016.

2004

was the year that a man named Malcom Myatt suffered a stroke that left him unable to feel sad.

35 million

people worldwide are direct descendants of the Mayflower Pilgrims.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Rawai Beach sunrise. Photo by Chris Pählman (phone camera set to portrait mode)

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

This week in history

Mar 29, 1973

Vietnam War: The last United States combat soldiers leave South Vietnam.

Mar 30, 1842

Ether anesthesia is used for the first time, in an operation by American surgeon Dr Crawford Long.

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.

April 1, 1976

Apple Inc. is formed by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne in Cupertino, California. Apple Inc in 2018 reported net sales of US\$265.595 billion.

April 2, 1992

New York mafia boss John



John Gotti. Photo: FBI

Gotti, head of the Gambino family, is convicted of murder and racketeering and later sentenced to life in prison.

April 3, 1888

Jack the Ripper – The first of 11 unsolved brutal murders of women committed in or near the impoverished Whitechapel district in the East End of London, occurs.

April 4, 1976

Prince Norodom Sihanouk resigns as leader of Cambodia and is placed under house arrest.

Source: Wikipedia

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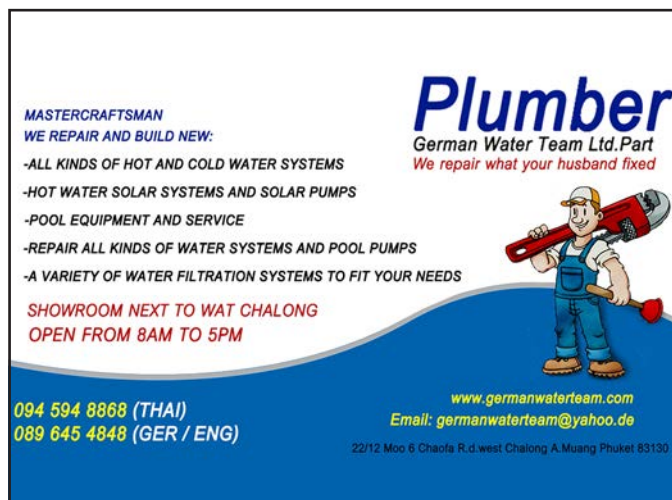
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Help the Children Charity Gala

Help the Children Charity Gala on 5 April 2024, 7:00 pm, at the Junkyard Theatre. This gala is supporting the Rotary Club of Patong Beach charity efforts. Delicious Food, Extraordinary Music, Great Fun. The music will feature the vocals of Pjæ and Rannze. Tickets are 5,550 THB each or a table of 6 for 33,000 THB. The dress code is colourful. Tickets are available by contacting us at rotaryhelpthechildren@gmail.com rotaryhelpthechildren@gmail.com



Grow Boating Evening

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Experience "Your Heart, Our Care", our inaugural event in the Empowering Expat Series. Join us for High Tea Networking as we delve into heart-healthy living and Bangkok Hospital Phuket's support for expats. Let's empower together! Date: Friday, April 5, 2024. Time: 1-4 pm Location: Laguna Lifestyle Hub Phuket, Canal Village Expatriate Marketing and CRM, Thanasikan.Ki@bsi.bdms.co.th, 076-361888 ext 3555

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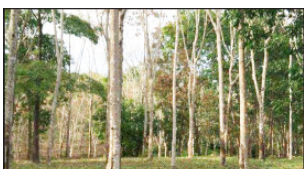


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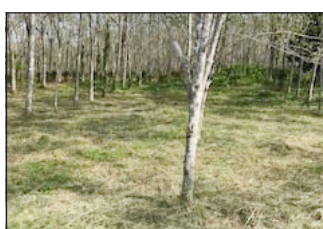
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AGENTS WELCOME

Martin dominates to win Portuguese MotoGP

MOTOGP

JORGE MARTIN HIT the front in the first lap and never relinquished his lead to win the Portuguese MotoGP last Sunday (Mar 24), in the second race of the season.

Enea Bastianini was second and teenage rookie Pedro Acosta third.

Martin took top spot in the standings from champion Francesco Bagnaia who crashed out after a collision with Marc Marquez in the wild final stages.

Bastianini, on a factory Ducati, started on pole but Martin, third at lights out, quickly took the lead on his Pramac Ducati going into turn one and dominated the race.

Martin, runner-up to Bagnaia in the championship last season, suffered a horror crash at Portimao in 2021 from which he needed several surgeries to recover.

"Today I had no problems and I felt great... winning again is fantastic and I feel very competitive," Martin said.



Martin in Portugal.
Photo: AFP

The exciting 19-year-old Acosta, on a Gasgas-Tech3, seventh in qualifying, overtook Brad Binder's KTM and then six-time MotoGP world champion Marquez on a Gresini Ducati, to move into fifth.

Italian defending double world champion Bagnaia kept Acosta at bay for a while, but the young Spaniard passed and gained a maiden podium after Maverick Vinales crashed out.

The final laps were chaotic, with Bagnaia and Marquez colliding at turn five and Vinales also crashing.

With the Argentine MotoGP cancelled, the next race is in Austin, Texas, on Apr 12-14.

Martin leads the standings on 60 points from Binder with 42 and Bastianini on 39. *AFP*

Sainz on top down under

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Carlos Sainz won the Australian Grand Prix ahead of Ferrari teammate Charles Leclerc last Sunday (Mar 24) after championship leader Max Verstappen retired with exploding brakes.

Sainz underwent an appendectomy only two weeks ago and was unsure whether he would be able to compete in Melbourne, but the Spaniard powered to second on the grid and passed Verstappen on the second lap to stamp his authority on Albert Park.

The duel with the Dutchman did not last long. Verstappen reported a sticking right-rear brake, and on the third lap it erupted into flames as he limped back to pit lane and ending his run of 43 consecutive finishes.

Suddenly the race for victory was alive, with Sainz leading Lando Norris, Leclerc and Oscar Piastri in a four-lap duel.

Sainz, who in qualifying on Saturday said he was still adjusting to the feeling of his internal organs moving around in the space vacated by his extracted appendix, reeled off a series of fastest laps to create a buffer to his pursuers that would keep him safe until the final laps of the race.

Tyre wear was unusually high at Albert Park, and McLaren rolled the dice by bringing Piastri in for an early pit stop on lap 9 in an attempt to undercut



Carlos Sainz crosses the finish line to win the Australian Grand Prix on Mar 24. Photo: AFP

Leclerc for third place.

Ferrari, however, was wise to the move, and Leclerc got into the lane before him, ensuring the drivers re-joined in order.

But it had the side-effect of getting both drivers past Norris when he stopped five laps later, albeit the Briton was gifted a substantial tyre advantage.

With fresher rubber Norris rapidly closed in on his teammate, who was ordered to let the faster McLaren past. By lap 33 he was sizing up Leclerc when Ferrari pulled in the Monegasque early for a second time.

It proved the decisive call of the race, ensuring Leclerc stayed ahead when Norris and Piastri made their second stops on laps 30 and 39 respectively.

A lock-up from Piastri shortly before his second stop dropped the Australian out of podium contention, but Norris remained in pursuit of the Ferrari driver to the finish.

Leclerc, however, was happier on his second set of tyres and with a lighter fuel load managed to secure second.

Sergio Pérez finished fifth in the sole remaining Red Bull Racing machine. The Mexican started sixth after receiving a penalty in qualifying, and debris slowed his progress in the race.

Lance Stroll and the excellent Yuki Tsunoda were promoted to sixth and seventh ahead of a penalised Fernando Alonso in eighth, while Haas teammate Nico Hülkenberg and Kevin Magnussen completed the point-scoring positions.

Olympics opening ceremony ban for Russian, Belarusian athletes

OLYMPICS

OLYMPIC CHIEFS HAVE ANNOUNCED that Russian and Belarusian athletes competing in this summer's Paris Games under a neutral flag will not be able to take part in the opening ceremony.

Individual Neutral Athletes (AINs) from either country will be on site but not included as passengers on the boat parade on the River Seine on July 26, IOC director James Macleod said after an executive board meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne on Mar 19.

Macleod said the scenario mirrored that at the 1992 Barcelona Games for "Independent Olympic Participants" from former Yugoslavia.

Athletes from both Russia and Belarus had already been banned from attending the opening ceremony of the Paralympics, starting in Paris on Aug 28, a little more than two weeks after the Olympics finish.

The IOC in December suspended Russia from the 2024 Games, but gave the green light for Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete as neutrals as long as they do not actively support the war on Ukraine.

Macleod added that there are currently 12 AINs with a Russian passport and seven AINs with a Belarusian passport who have qualified for Paris 2024, out of the 6,000 quota places that have already been awarded.



Photo: AFP

It is currently projected that under the most likely scenario, 36 AINs with a Russian passport and 22 AINs with a Belarusian passport will qualify for the Olympic Games.

The maximum number, which Macleod said was unlikely to be reached, would be 55 and 28 respectively.

Some 330 Russian athletes and 104 from Belarus took part in the COVID-delayed Tokyo Games.

The IOC said that AINs would have their own flag and a lyric-less anthem and medals won will not be displayed in the overall medal table.

"No flag, anthem, colours or any other identifications whatsoever of Russia or Belarus will be displayed at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 in any official venue or any official function," the IOC said.

"No Russian or Belarusian government or state officials will be invited to or accredited for the Olympic Games Paris 2024." *AFP*

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New regulator exposes rift

FOOTBALL

AFP

Divisions between Premier League clubs and the lower leagues of English football were exposed on Mar 19 after the UK government introduced a bill to enshrine an independent regulator into law.

The regulator will have a raft of powers to ensure clubs are sustainably run and include the ability to block teams from joining breakaway competitions such as the European Super League.

Premier League clubs, who benefit from the most lucrative television rights deals in the sport, have been at loggerheads with the English Football League (EFL) over a new funding deal for the pyramid.

A deal worth around £900 million (B41 billion) over six years for the lower leagues, and tied to future TV revenues, has been held up for months due to disagreements between Premier League clubs.

Top-flight teams were warned by the government last month that failure to reach a funding deal would mean one being imposed on them.

Among the regulator's powers is the option to intervene and ensure a settlement is agreed by studying proposals from both sides and imposing one as a binding arrangement.

West Ham chairman David Sullivan expressed the fears among Premier League clubs that their privileged posi-



Manchester City fans make their feelings known at a recent Premier League game. Photo: AFP

tion in world football could be hampered by the regulator.

"The Premier League is the top league in the world," Sullivan told the BBC.

"It is a big export – other countries want to buy it off us and we do very well in Europe generally.

"Anything to water down our income will make us less competitive. We may cease to be the top league so they may ruin an asset that we have."

However, those claims were dismissed by EFL chairman Rick Parry.

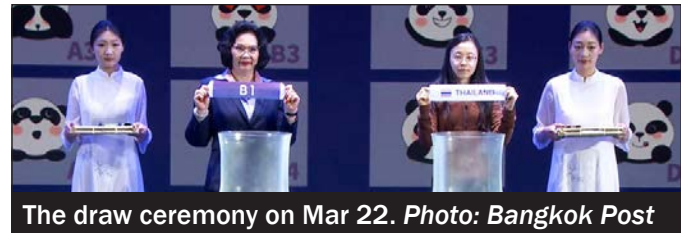
"The gap is just getting bigger and bigger between the Premier League and the rest (of Europe), so the idea that the Premier League is going to be unduly constrained or no longer competitive, I just don't even see how that argument gets to first base," said Parry.

The government committed to bringing in a regulator following a fan-led review into football in 2022, led by former sports minister Tracey Crouch.

"Good financial sustainability in football clubs is not going to impact competitiveness negatively, I think it's going to help them thrive," said Crouch.

"One of the things we were very careful about in the actual review was making sure that we had assessed the impact of any of our recommendations on domestic competitiveness, and the ability to attract talent, and we've come to the conclusion that none of this impacts on that.

"Because actually, if you think about it, what we're doing is putting better regulation and governance into football, which ultimately would mean that it would thrive rather than anything else."



The draw ceremony on Mar 22. Photo: Bangkok Post

Thailand men handed a tough draw in Thomas Cup

BADMINTON

THAILAND'S MEN'S THOMAS Cup team have been handed a tough draw after being grouped with defending champions India, Indonesia and England for the 2024 championships.

The biennial international badminton championship will take place from Apr 28 to May 5 in Chengdu, People's Republic of China.

Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and president of the Badminton Association of Thailand, was part of the draw for the Total Energies BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2024 in China last Friday (Mar 22).

In the team badminton competition contending for this event, the final round will feature 16 men's teams and 16 women's teams. The men's teams include Thailand, China,

Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, India, Taiwan, South Korea, France, Canada, Hong Kong, Germany, England, Algeria and Australia.

The Thai women's Uber Cup team are in Group C with Taiwan, Malaysia and Australia.

"The men's Thomas Cup team are in a tough group which features both Indonesia and champions India," said Ms Khunyinga Leeswadtrakul following the draw.

"For the women's team, we should be able to come out of Group B as winners and qualify for the quarter-finals."

The women's Uber Cup includes Thailand, China, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan, India, Denmark, United States, Malaysia, Canada, Spain, France, Australia, Scotland and South Africa.

Thailand's Uber Cup team had their best result in 2018 when they finished runners-up.

Bangkok Post

War Elephants gain praise

FOOTBALL

THE THAILAND MEN'S football team received extensive praise after they deservedly earned a 1-1 draw with Group C favourites South Korea on Mar 21 in the second round of Asia qualifying matches for the 2026 World Cup.

The War Elephants, ranked 101st in the world, earned the point against 22nd ranked South Korea in Seoul when substitute Suphanat Mueanta scored a second-half equaliser after South Korea captain Son Heung-min had put the hosts ahead just before the break.

The match grabbed national attention, with many messages on social media praising the well-disciplined performances of the players under Japanese coach Masatada Ishii.

"Thank you for the valuable one point that brings happiness to Thais," Football Association of Thailand (FAT) president Nualphan Lamsam posted on her Facebook account.

"All Korean players are



Thai players celebrate their goal in the 1-1 draw against South Korea in Seoul on Mar 21. Photo: AFP

top class. Ishii has led Thailand's football to another level," one commenter wrote on the FAT Facebook page.

"It's up to the next match whether we can keep this momentum. Another point from South Korea in Thailand would give the Thai team a chance to move to the next round," another commented.

The draw left Thailand second in Group C on goal difference from China, who squandered a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Singapore, also on Mar 19.

The top two finishers in each of the nine groups advance to the next phase of qualifying, where Asia's eight guaranteed qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup

finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico will be determined.

War Elephants coach Ishii credited his players' belief and confidence after the 1-1 draw in Seoul and ahead of the return leg on Mar 26.

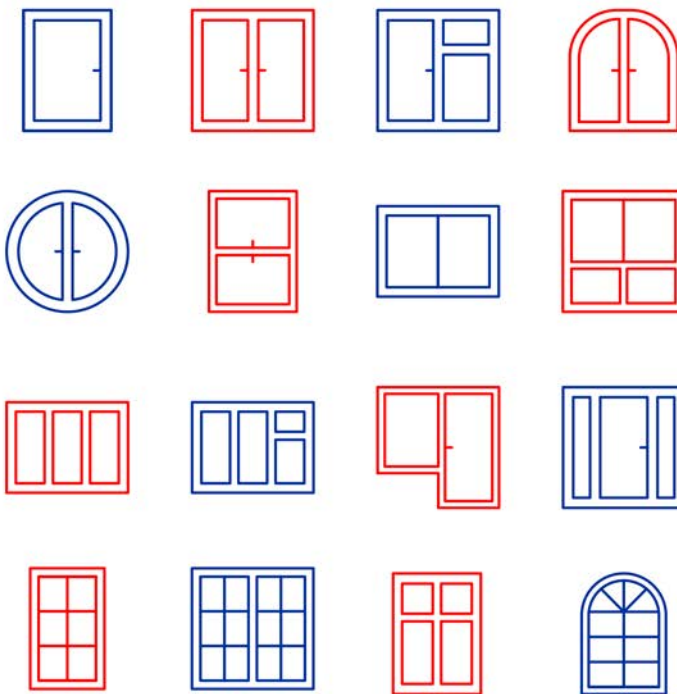
"The players had the belief. We had the strength and capability to succeed in this match," he commented after the match.

"We have the next game against South Korea coming up, so our focus is on preparing the team for that match."

At time of press, the return leg was scheduled for Tuesday (Mar 26) at Rajamangala National Stadium, Bangkok. Bangkok Post



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Sport

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Ferrari clean up at Aussie F1 GP > p14

KICKING OFF

Promoter promises new era in combat sports

Marie De Lys Heinz (left) will be taking on Judy Humber in the WMO Female World Featherweight Title Fight on Sunday (Mar 31). Photo: Supplied

MMA

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

This Sunday (Mar 31) will see the renowned Sinbi Boxing Stadium in Rawai host M2MMA 1, an extraordinary event that merges the worlds of combat sports, entertainment and community.

Organised by fight promoter M2MMA, the occasion will feature eight exhilarating fights evenly split between MMA and Muay Thai that showcase fighters' physical prowess and heralds a new era where sports meet science for the betterment of athletes and the sport itself.

Sanctioned by the World Muaythai Organization (WMO), 11 of the 16 fighters on the card for M2MMA 1 reside locally in Phuket and have honed their skills in some of island's most prestigious gyms, including Tiger Muay Thai, Bangtao Muay Thai & MMA, Southside MMA Thailand and Phuket Fight Club.

The international spectacle will bring together athletes from 12 different nationalities, offering a rich diversity of fighting styles and techniques in the ring. Between the high-octane fights, two live performances will electrify the atmosphere, adding an extra layer of excitement to the festivities.

At the top of the fight card

is the highly anticipated WMO Female World Featherweight Title Fight between Phuket-based Scot Judy Humber, who trains at Sinbi Boxing Stadium, and Marie Des Lys Heinz from Luxembourg.

Another bout sees James Clarke from Canada square off against former US Marine Colton Kielbasa, with the fact both fighters are now Phuket residents adding a further layer of intrigue and excitement to the bout.

M2MMA stands out not merely as an organiser of combat sports events but as an innovative biotechnology company, with a vision extending beyond the ring with an aim to revolutionise how athletes train, compete and recover.

The integration of biotechnological research and advancements in technology with the raw intensity of MMA and Muay Thai fighting offers a glimpse into a future where the health and longevity of athletes are paramount. M2MMA is at the forefront of this movement, and clinical studies are being planned to develop treatments that reduce chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and inflammation and will enhance overall athlete longevity.

In addition to health-focused initiatives, M2MMA is pioneering the use of technology to enhance the viewer experience. Future events will feature real-time metrics displayed on-screen, providing fans with deep insights into the

athletes' physiological states, making every punch, kick and grapple even more engaging.

M2MMA is also dedicated to integrating into local communities, telling the athletes' backstories and connecting fans to their local heroes meaningfully. These stories are about the victories in the ring and the fighters' lives outside of it – their cultures, families, struggles, and dreams. M2MMA's approach enriches the viewer experience and strengthens the bond between athletes and their supporters, making every fight more than a contest.

M2MMA 1 is just the beginning of this year's exciting journey, with further events in South Africa and the UAE

planned. M2MMA is dedicated to giving local rising stars the support they need and offering the top athletes the chance to compete on the international stages, giving them invaluable experience and global exposure.

M2MMA 1 promises to be a new chapter in combat sports, where the thrill of the fight meets the forefront of innovation. M2MMA is not just hosting an event but pioneering a movement towards a future where athletes' health, safety and well-being are as paramount as their achievements in the ring.

The action takes place between 7 and 11pm on Sunday (Mar 31). For more information visit: www.m2mma.com.

Talent shines at the 2024 BISP Sea Eagles Swim Invite

SWIMMING

TEAMS FROM SEVERAL regional countries gathered at the British International School, Phuket BISP Sea Eagles Swim Invite on Mar 8-10, an event that showcased exceptional athleticism in the pool.

This year's competition was particularly thrilling, with 471 swimmers from 12 teams representing four different countries: China, South Korea, Myanmar and Thailand.

Host team the BISP Sea Eagles soared to victory, claiming the top spot with an impressive

performance that more than doubled the points of the second-placed team, LJ Swimming Club from Beijing.

Several standout swimmers from BISP also made their mark by finishing in the high point standings for their respective age groups. Among them were Jake in the boys 8 and under age category, Siera in the girls 11-12 category, Anton in the 11-12 boys category, Valeriia, Josephine and Zina in the 13-14 girls category, and Enkhmend and Jaidee in the 13-14 boys category.

Additionally, Duana, Soumaya and Elsa excelled in the girls' 15 and over category, while Zac and Chuan showcased their talent in the same age category for the boys.



Photo: BISP

The excitement didn't stop there, as the competition saw an astonishing 20 new meet records being set. BISP swimmers were particularly dominant in this respect, with Anton breaking records in the 200 metre backstroke and 200m butterfly, Enkhmend in the 200m breaststroke and 50m breaststroke, Soumaya in

the 200m freestyle, and Duana in the 400m freestyle.

Notably, BISP relay teams also made their mark by breaking meet records in various categories. The 15 and over girls' 200m medley relay team consisting of Elsa, Duana, Hanan and Soumaya, along with the 13-14 boys' 200m medley relay team comprising Enkhmend, Jaidee, Reilly and Gleb, showcased exceptional teamwork and skill.

Furthermore, the 15 and over girls' 200m freestyle relay team and the 13-14 boys' 200m freestyle relay team comprising Enkhmend, Jaidee, Andrei and Gleb, set new records, highlighting the depth of talent and dedication within the

BISP Sea Eagles Swim Team.

The 2024 BISP Sea Eagles Swim Invite was also a widely accessible event, thanks to its live-streaming feature. Sponsored by Brumrangrad Hospital and facilitated by the Z-Coaching Foundation, the competition reached a global audience, allowing supporters to witness the excitement from anywhere. The races were meticulously overseen by officials from the Thailand Swim Association, ensuring fairness and adherence to standards, while timing precision was supported by CNX Swimming.

Next year's BISP Sea Eagles Swim Invite is set for Mar 7-9, 2025. *The Phuket News*