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TURF SHARE



PLTO officers stand at the taxi rank at Central Festival Phuket, with local taxi drivers in the background. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

LOCAL TAXI CO-OPS FORCED TO CONCEDE NON-PHUKET TAXIS CONFIRMED LEGAL

**Eakkapop Thongtub
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A local taxi cooperative attempting to maintain exclusive rights to serve passengers at Central Festival Phuket has been told that any taxi legally operating in Phuket may pick up and drop off passengers at the popular shopping mall.

The latest skirmish in Phuket's ongoing taxi territory saga occurred at Central Festival last Friday (Mar 24) when taxi co-op drivers waiting at the taxi area in front of the mall

stopped a Bangkok-registered taxi that had just picked up passengers and told him that he was not allowed to.

Phuket Provincial Police Chief Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong ordered an investigation into the incident after a video of the occurrence was posted online under the title, "Expose the Phuket taxi mafia".

Somphon Nuklai, head of the Andaman Phuket Car Taxi Service Cooperative Limited, later explained that he and several of his colleagues had approached the taxi to 'ask' why it had stopped in 'their' designated area and why it was picking up pas-

sengers from the site.

The video shows the co-op drivers opening the taxi's passenger door several times, seemingly to ask the passengers inside to alight the vehicle, which they did not. The co-op drivers were loud in bringing attention to the incident, which was witnessed by tourists and other patrons at the mall waiting for taxis.

They repeatedly told the driver of the Bangkok taxi that vehicles registered outside of the Phuket were not permitted to operate on the island, to which the driver, later identified as 40-year-old Wisanu Prasertsap,

acknowledged and apologised for.

The co-op drivers then told Mr Wisanu to "Go!". Mr Wisanu obliged, with all his passengers inside.

Mr Wisanu was called to present himself at Wichit Police Station, where he explained that he had travelled from Bangkok and was staying at his wife's house in Phuket Town.

Mr Wisanu further explained that he had picked up a group of Romanian passengers outside Central Festival, who he dropped off in Patong.

An unnamed representative from the Andaman Phuket Car Taxi Service Cooperative also joined Mr Wisanu and...

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News



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nets 100kg of
trash > p5**

Taxi co-ops start losing turf war

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...police to discuss the situation in the hope of clarifying and reaching a “negotiation”.

The co-op representative confirmed that Mr Somporn and five colleagues had approached Mr Wisanu to discuss what was suddenly called a “misunderstanding”.

The five colleagues were confirmed as Phakdee Thippakdee and Teerasuwat Kraitat, who both opened the door on Mr Wisanu’s taxi; along with Thanuthong Paya and Burupon Khaikaew, as well as Ruechakorn Kraiplong, who filmed the incident on his mobile phone.

The co-op representative explained that their understanding was no vehicles registered outside of Phuket were permitted to pick up passengers in the province, which is why they approached Mr Wisanu to challenge him.

In response Mr Wisanu said that neither he nor his passengers felt intimidated or threatened in any way, and as such he did not feel it necessary to lodge any form of formal complaint. Though saying that he did not feel intimidated, Mr Wisanu also said that he fully understood the co-op drivers’ grievance and would take note in future.

Police agreed that the actions of the members of the co-op did not pose any threat and therefore no criminal offence had occurred, adding that if there was a repeat incident in future that it should be reported to the local police immediately.

In this instance, however, both parties had aired their grievances and understood the others’ point of view and, as such, the incident could be laid to rest, police said.

PLTO CAVES

On Monday, PLTO Chief Adcha



Members of the local taxi cooperative operating at Central Festival Phuket had to concede that other fully legal taxis may serve passengers at the mall. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Buachan told *The Phuket News* that in investigating the incident, PLTO officers had visited the taxi drivers stationed at Central Festival to explain that legally registered taxis from Bangkok were fully permitted by law to pick up passengers in Phuket and in other provinces.

“This is the information that the taxis at Central [Phuket] misunderstood, but we have already visited them and clarified the law to them,” he said.

Mr Adcha made no mention of any action against the co-op drivers for interfering in what appeared to be a fully legal taxi driver freely conducting business, as empowered by law. The lack of remedial action follows the PLTO itself for two months issuing fines and suspending the driver’s licence of non-Phuket taxi drivers deemed to be ‘illegal’.

Oddly, four days after the Central Festival incident and after his own officers had intervened in the matter, Mr Adcha on Monday said he was still unsure whether Mr Wisanu was working using an illegal application.

Regardless, he was adamant his officers were to pursue the matter. “The PLTO and Wichit Police will call both parties to investigate whether the Bangkok taxi used a taxi application or not,” Mr Adcha said.

“He [the Bangkok taxi driver] said that he does not work in Phuket, but he had driven to Phuket to stay at his wife’s house and he had some spare time so he accepted customers here,” Mr Adcha said.

What relevance the Bangkok taxi driver’s reason for coming to Phuket had on whether or not he is legally allowed to operate on the island was not explained.

“We have not seized anyone’s driver’s licence over the incident yet. However, we are gathering information and if anyone is found guilty, they will be punished,” Mr Adcha added.

BOLT, INDRIVER STILL ILLEGAL

By coincidence, the Phuket Info Center (PIC) on Monday reminded island residents that the popular

ride-sharing apps Bolt and InDriver were still illegal in Thailand.

Of note, Bolt launched in Thailand in 2020, while InDriver launched in 2021

PIC, operated under the Phuket office of the Ministry of Interior, issued the reminder via a notice listing the ride-sharing apps approved by the Department of Land Transport.

The notice listed Hello Phuket, Grab, Robinhood, bonku, CABB and the AirAsia Super App all as “Applications Certificated by Department of Land Transport”.

Bolt and InDriver, both popular in Phuket, were the only apps listed under “Applications Uncertificated by Department of Land Transport”.

At time of press, the PLTO had yet to post the notice through its own web platforms.

Since the PLTO launched its crackdown on ‘illegal taxis’ on Feb 3, following a protest by ‘green licence plate’ Phuket taxi drivers, the agency has not mentioned specifically which ‘taxi apps’ were legal or illegal.

The PLTO’s repeated vague mantra throughout the campaign has been to crackdown on “illegal taxi drivers”, no matter what the illegality may be. Initially, that included taxis not registered in Phuket, though by Feb 14 the PLTO itself admitted – only by posting the actual laws – that taxis from Bangkok, Songkhla and other selected areas were allowed to operate as taxis outside their province of registration.

CENTRAL RESPONSE

At time of press management at Central Festival had yet to issue a public statement about the taxi driver incident last Friday, but *The Phuket News* was told that the operators of the mall were taking the issue seriously.

“The taxi operators stationed at

Central Festival do not rent the space for their business. Central lets them stay there for free under the condition that they will take care of the tourists. It is what Central wanted to do for the community.

“However, after the incident, Central has already given them a warning and told them that if they behave this way, they cannot stay on Central’s premises,” said one representative.

Asked specifically whether any legal taxis were allowed to pick up passengers from Central Festival, the representative said, “Yes, as long as the taxi is legal and matches Phuket regulations. Central has already emphasised this to the taxis in our areas about this.”

APP-TAXIS NOW ‘BLACK’

PLTO officers will be deployed to what Mr Adcha called ‘risk areas’ to monitor what he called ‘black taxis’ – a derisive moniker used for years by legally registered Phuket taxi drivers to describe people using private cars to work illegally as taxi drivers.

“The inspectors will make an understanding with the local taxis about the law that metered taxis can pick up customers in the local area,” Mr Adcha said.

For the app-based taxis – which Mr Adcha today called ‘black plate taxis’, regardless of whether the taxi drivers were working legally or illegally – he said that the PLTO now had a large stock of new stickers to attach to app-based taxis “to show that they are legally registered taxis operating via applications”.

“The PLTO already had some stickers made, but we made bigger ones to make it clearer to see and we have already called the app-based taxi drivers to change to the new stickers,” he said.

More warnings amid fires in Pa Khlok

PA KHLOK MUNICIPALITY has issued a warning and published a set of guidelines on fire safety and fire extinguishing protocols at garbage dumping grounds amid continuing fires in the area.

The warning was posted after a fire at a landfill which was then followed by two wildfires and one residential fire within two days.

According to a series of reports posted on Pa Khlok Municipality Facebook page, the subdistrict

on Phuket’s eastern coast had witnessed at least four fires during the nine days from Mar 15-23.

In the first case, emergency workers had to respond to a fire at a small landfill, while other incidents were a residential fire and two forest fires.

The timeline of recorded incidents is as follows:

Mar 15. Nighttime fire at a landfill adjacent to a warehouse near Baan Pa Khlok School. Possible cause of the fire was not specified. No injuries were reported.

Mar 22. Daytime fire at a house in Promphan Village in Baan Phak. Electrical fault the suspected cause. No injuries reported.

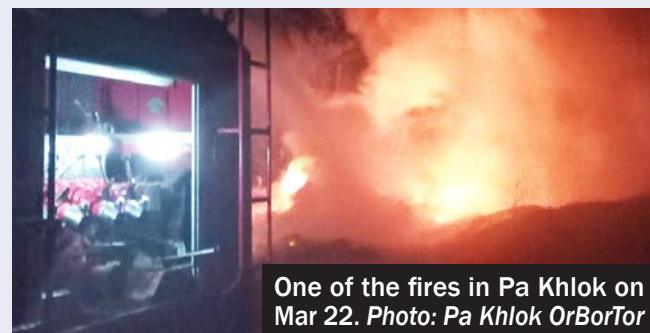
Mar 22. Daytime fire at Soi Papa Baan Yamu. Pictures from the scene showed burned vegetation at a water truck filling station allowing to classify the incident as a forest fire. Only damage to property was reported.

Mar 23. Daytime forest fire by the side of Sai Laem Sai Rd in Baan Para. No injuries reported.

In all four cases firefighters succeeded in preventing the fire from spreading uncontrollably, though Pa Khlok Municipality did not report the size of the areas affected.

Following the first fire, which took place at a garbage dumping site, the municipality posted on its Facebook page three notices regarding landfill fires, all marked as originally issued by the Pollution Control Department (PCD).

The first notice contained guidelines on “fundamentals of extinguishing fires” at



One of the fires in Pa Khlok on Mar 22. Photo: Pa Khlok OrBorTor

garbage dumping sites. The second one was about “risk factors which can cause a fire at a waste disposal site”. The third notice was even more field-specific and devoted to the management of refuse-derived fuel (RDF) storage facilities.

No guidelines for wildfire prevention have been published so far. Yet Pa Khlok Municipality remains the only local administration in Phuket to post at least some warnings amid the continuing dry season.

The Phuket News

Consuls engaged in tourist issues

The Phuket News
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Phuket has welcomed 2.4 million tourists in the past two months, which has led to issues related to tourists involved in crime and safety, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew told a meeting of Consul-Generals and honorary consuls on the island last week.

The meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 23, saw representatives from 14 countries attend, including consuls for South Korea, Germany, France, Estonia, United Kingdom, Czechia, Chile, China, Australia, Russia, Mexico, Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands, Norway, Nepal and Spain.

Phuket Immigration Chief Col Thanet Sukchai pointed out that currently an average of 9,000-14,000 tourists arrive at Phuket International Airport each day.

According to official records there are currently 33,068 foreigners living in Phuket, with the top 5 being Russian, British, French, Chinese and German citizens, respectively, he said.

“Overall, there are more than 32,000 foreigners living in Phuket, of which about 8,000 are Russians and 1,000 are Ukrainians,” he noted.

Most of them extend their stay, giving study at private educational institutions, for tourism, for business



Photo: PR Phuket

and retirement as the main reasons for wanting to stay. The expats were living in areas across the island, but high concentrations were in Rawai and Patong, he said.

The consuls were also briefed on the official statistics on the number of tourists now coming to the island. Among the slides shown, one presented that Chinese tourists climbed to the No 2 ranking for February, with 30,493 Chinese nationals arriving in Phuket. The slide pointed out that the number of Chinese arrivals amounted to “only 16.02% recovery rate” compared with 2019.

CRIME

Phuket Provincial Police Chief Pol

Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong said that ensuring the safety of tourists was successful due to the implementation of the White Accommodation Project (also called the ‘Phuket Crime - Free’ campaign). The ‘success’ was in no small part the result of police working with ‘many sectors’, including Phuket Immigration and hotels, in robbery and theft cases, especially involving Russian perpetrators and Russian victims, he said.

Col Thanet noted that since the start of the year, 181 foreigners had been deemed suspects in criminal cases, with the top 5 being foreign nationals from Russia, France, England and foreign workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. Most

offenders were in the Patong area. The most serious offenses are drunk driving, overstaying visas and working illegally.

The Phuket Immigration Chief also clarified the statistics of foreigners committing crimes and the issuance of yellow and red cards. From March 1-15, two foreigners (one Swedish, the other French) had been issued ‘red cards’ and deported, namely for being wanted on Interpol ‘Red Notices’. Two French, one Ukrainian and one Swedish citizen had been issued ‘yellow cards’.

Five foreigners and four homeowners had been charged for not notifying their residences under Section 38 of the Immigration Act,

Col Thanet noted.

Wuttisak Dawan, of the Phuket Provincial Prosecutor’s Office, said that of 15-20 cases of drunk driving heard in court each day, two to three involved foreigners.

He urged consuls to inform nationals from their countries of the legal process in Thailand. “Some foreigners have been arrested while trying to leave the country because they thought their case was over,” he said.

“You can give advice to your people to know the consequences of the case and penalties. It can save a lot of money and time spent in Thailand,” he added.

SAFETY

Governor Narong said, “The province does not want to see people doing wrong things, but the facts are impossible to deny. For example, when renting a motorcycle, some people don’t know how to drive and learn to drive in front of a car rental shop.”

The Chinese consulate had expressed concern specifically over the issue of accidents, he said. “The province will have measures for renting motorcycles, for both the rental shop operator and the person renting the vehicle, which the Phuket Provincial Police has publicized so that everyone can have the same understanding, including knowing the traffic laws,” Governor Narong said.

Tour bus slams power pole on Patong Hill

BRAKE FAILURE HAS been blamed for a tour bus slamming into a power pole while descending the hill into Patong last week

Patong Police were informed of the accident, on the final curve heading into Patong on Phra Baramee Rd, at about 5am on Mar 23.

Police and rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Foundation arrived at the scene to find the red Phuket-registered tour bus, with ‘Phiphairat Tour’ emblazoned on the side, stopped beside a roadside concrete wall, well known among passers-by for being heavily tagged with graffiti.

The bus had suffered heavy damage to its front right, with the driver’s door sheared off by the impact. The bus had felled the power pole before narrowly missing the wall. The impact also disabled a government CCTV camera.

The driver, 37-year-old Prayoon Nayao, had suffered serious injuries to his leg, with bone protruding from the wound.

Mr Prayoon was administered emergency first aid at the scene then rushed to Patong Hospital, where Mr Prayoon was driving to anyway.

The bus was one of three



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

buses chartered to pick up nurses and other staff at Patong Hospital and take them to Khao Lak, explained “Mr Pan”, one of the drivers of the other buses.

The bus had travelled from Ao Makham, on the east coast of Phuket, he said.

Mr Pan attributed the accident to failure of the air brake system while the bus was descending the hill. The bus had been involved in accidents before, he said.

It was lucky that the bus was empty and that the only person injured was the driver, Mr Pan added. The other

buses had already picked up their load of Patong Hospital officials and nursing staff, he said.

Maj Phacharathon Chan-iaid of the Patong Police said that officers were continuing their investigation into the accident, as the accident had resulted in damage to government property.

So far officials have made no mention of resuming safety checks specifically on buses travelling over Patong Hill, as has been common practice after other accidents involving tour buses on Patong Hill in the past. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

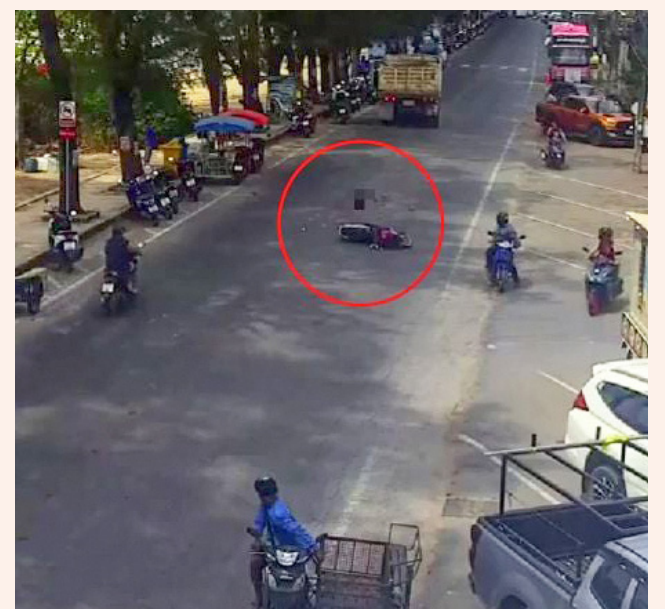
Motorcyclist crushed by truck in Rawai

A MAN DRIVING HIS motorbike along the Rawai beach road died on Mar 23 after his head was crushed under a truck. Relevant officials have yet to report what caused the man to fall under the truck’s wheels. The accident was recorded by at least one CCTV camera and most likely witnessed by people in the area.

Phuket Info Center confirmed the accident at about 1pm. “At 10:39am today (Mar 23), there was an accident involving a motorcyclist who lost control [of his bike] and fell under the rear wheels of a truck. He was run over by the truck’s wheels and died. The incident took place on the road running along Rawai Beach in Rawai Subdistrict, Mueang District, Phuket,” the centre reported.

The webpage, linked to the Phuket Governor’s office, shared a CCTV video of the accident bearing a logo similar to the Rawai Municipality’s official emblem.

The video, posted by Phuket Info Center, showed the motorcyclist, later identified only as “Mr Choeng-



A Thai motorcyclist died in a road accident in Rawai on Thursday (Mar 23) morning. Image: Phuket Info Center / CCTV

chai” (family name withheld), 61, from Songkhla, moving along the Rawai beach road closely following a black pickup and then falling under a truck coming in the opposite direction. At the time of the fall, the motorcycle is obscured by the pickup truck but it is clearly seen being close to the median lane as if trying to overtake.

According to Ruamjai Foundation rescue worker

Pongpan Nakwanit, the motorcyclist’s head was completely crushed by the truck’s wheels causing immediate death. The body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital, Mr Pongpan said in a publication on his personal Facebook page. The post was then publicly shared by Ruamjai Phuket Foundation.

Pictures from the scene show that the Mr Choeng-chai man was not wearing a helmet. *The Phuket News*

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Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

WED APRIL 5



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

THU APRIL 6



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s



Image: Phuket Info Center

Foreign workers wanted over Patong street brawl

THREE FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN called in for engaging in a street brawl in Soi Sansabai early last Monday morning (Mar 27).

A video showing the brawl was posted on social media within hours of the incident. The video showed three foreign men attacking three tourists, with one of the foreign workers using what appeared to be an aluminium bar, reported the government operated Phuket Info Center.

Police were called to the scene, the Atlas street-side restaurant in Soi Sansabai, located off the inland end of Bangla Rd, at 12:50am, said the report by police.

When the officers arrived only three people involved in the brawl were still there: Jordanian national Mohammad Jihad Mohammad Alomari and Egyptian national Abdelrahman Mohamed Ahmed Elfawal, both 25 years old; and Mr Wai Lu Soe (nationality and age not given).

All three men worked for the Atlas restaurant, where the fight started.

The report said that five foreign tourists who were drunk had ordered food at the restaurant, and told the staff to hurry up. The staff told the group they had to wait their turn.

Unhappy with the response, one of the drunken group reportedly threw a bottle of water into the restaurant's serving area, sparking a heavy-handed response from the staff.

At last report, police had located the tourists involved and called them to present themselves to police in order to give a statement recording their version of events. *The Phuket News*

Bars operators called to help combat child sex trafficking

The Phuket News
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Weerawit Kreuasombat, President of the Patong Entertainment Business Association (PEBA), has called on bar and nightlife venue operators in Patong to actively keep an eye out for and to report any suspected activities that might indicate child sex trafficking in the area.

The plea came at a meeting of bar and other entertainment venue business operators following the raid of the 'Velvet bar' in Soi Sea Dragon, off Bangla Rd, earlier this month that uncovered a child sex trafficking network.

Mr Weerawit said that the incident affects the image of all entertainment venues on Bangla Rd, and throughout the whole of Patong.

Mr Weerawit claimed that "99% of [entertainment venue] operators" uphold the law on the prohibition of children under 18 years old from working in or entering entertainment venues, the prohibition of drugs, physical abuse of tourists and the possession of weapons.

"The group [PEBA members] have continued to follow the law, especially ones of such importance," he said.

Mr Weerawit asked for co-operation from PEBA members to look out for illegal activities



Tourists walk along Bangla Rd, Patong. Photo: PR Phuket

in all entertainment avenues in the area, "because the majority of operators as well as officers may not know about it".

"If anyone finds any suspected illegal activity, they should immediately inform the association," he said.

Mr Weerawit explained that the operator of the Velvet bar was known to be involved in the operation of four other bars.

"I'm not sure if they also operate the same way, but I know that officers have already ordered them to close down," he said.

The PEBA has singled out the operators of the related bars to be banned from opening new venues, he added.

"We will ask the landlord to not rent out the space, because if they are allowed to operate again, we are afraid that they will use children for sex trafficking again," he said.

Mr Weerawit said Patong was not known for child sex trafficking. "This may be the first case in 18 years," he said.

"After the raid, there was an order commanding the venues to close by 1am, which has affected the whole area, especially innocent people [entertainment venue operators].

"This case has caused damage to the Patong economy of at least B100 million over the past seven days and resulted in damage to the local economy," he said.

Mr Weerawit argued against bars and nightlife venues in Patong being forced to close at 1am.

"When the bars close early, tourists gather at the beach. This has created alcohol trade on the beach. Some of the vendors even bring chairs to put on the beach, he said.

"And this may cause crime as well," Mr Weerawit concluded.

FARANG AFFAIRS

By Stephff

https://farangaffairs.com

YOU FEEL THAT THAI POLICE ARE NOT VERY FAIR.



Crazed Thai man hospitalised after frantic hotel room episode

A NAKHON SRI THAM-marat native was taken to Patong Hospital on Mar 23 after he became frantic in a hotel on Ratchapathanusorn Rd.

Patong Police were informed at about 9.30am that a man had gone "crazy" in a room at the hotel, not named in police reports, and was possibly presenting danger to himself and other people.

The man, later identified as Kittikhun Boonchuwong, locked himself inside room 504. Officers in the corridor said they could hear "loud noises" from inside the room.

Police failed to persuade Mr Kittikhun to unlock the door and leave the room. Luckily, the man's wife, named in the report as Anna Srinakoon,



The man was taken to Patong Hospital after going frantic in a hotel room. Photo: Patong Police

arrived at the scene and managed to convince the man to surrender.

Mr Kittikhun was taken to Patong Hospital for treatment. At time of press no reports confirmed what could have caused Mr Kittikhun's condition or if he ever behaved strangely before.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Mai Khao beach cleanup nets over 100kg of trash

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Over 100kg of marine debris and trash was recovered from Mai Khao and Sai Kaew beaches in a series of beach cleanups organised by Sustainable Mai Khao Foundation from Mar 15-19. The participants, including representatives of both private and public sectors, targeted the shores of northern Phuket, the only remaining part of the island which sea turtles find suitable for nesting.

The blitz started on Mar 15 at the site of the projected Andaman Health Center on the northern tip of Phuket. The location is also suggested as home for the Phuket Expo 2028 if the province is granted the right to host the prestigious international event. Now it is mostly used as a parking area for taxis and drivers inevitably leave garbage after themselves, Sustainable Mai Khao explained in a report posted on Facebook on Mar 22.

The cleanup was supported by the Mai Khao Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor). Participants included the said taxi drivers as well as Tha Chatchai Police officers and local residents. Over 52kg of garbage was collected, including 12kg of glass bottles, 3kg of plastic bottles and even a "Paan Wai Kru" ritual bowl among other items.

"Our part is to help with awareness,



Mai Khao cleanup on Mar 19. Photo: Sustainable Mai Khao Foundation

rubbish separation and ensuring the separated recyclables get to the right places to be reused or recycled," Sustainable Mai Khao explained.

The blitz continued with a cleanup on Mai Khao Beach on Mar 18. The event was joined by a "construction team" from Radisson Phuket Mai Khao Beach. Over 36kg of rubbish was collected and sorted, including 13kg of glass bottles, nearly 3kg of plastic bottles and over 5kg of fishing nets and ropes.

The blitz concluded on Mar 19 when Sustainable Mai Khao welcomed some 50 associates of Bangkok Bank from branches in Phuket, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Surat Thani and Songkhla. Together with local volunteers they headed to Sai Kaew beach north of

Phuket Check Point, a popular picnic area location in the area.

"Many people stop at this beach to picnic or buy takeaway food from the vendors when leaving Phuket. The result: large amounts of picnic rubbish left under trees and along the shady grass area," Sustainable Mai Khao said in a report on Mar 23.

The cleanup on Sai Kaew Beach netted 59kg of garbage, including 11kg of glass bottles, nearly 4kg of plastic bottles, over 6kg of hard and foamed plastic and 0.6kg(!) of plastic straws.

"The next monthly cleanup will take place in April, date to be confirmed. Let us know if you would like to attend," Sustainable Mai Khao said, inviting people of all walks of life to join them.



Photo: PR Phuket

Gov talks NZ education personnel exchange

A POTENTIAL EXCHANGE programme that would see educational personnel from New Zealand teach English-language skills in Phuket has been mooted, authorities said last week.

New Zealand Ambassador to Thailand Jonathan King paid a courtesy visit to Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew last Friday (Mar 24).

Gov Narong explained his objective of every child in Phuket being able to speak English proficiently and therefore the language skills of children in schools across the island needed to improve considerably. Learning English to a high standard would, he explained, enhance the career prospects of children in later life, especially with

Phuket's exposure to and reliance on the tourism industry.

Mr King agreed the opportunity could well be there for students from his homeland to visit Phuket and undertake internships in schools to help with the standards of teaching English as a foreign language to both pupils and teachers alike, particularly in schools that lack sufficient teacher personnel.

Following the fruitful initial discussions, Gov Narong confirmed that further talks would be held with the necessary local educational agencies such as the Phuket Private Education Association, whose president would become engaged with talks in due course. *The Phuket News*

Songkran festivities set to make a return splash in Phuket Town

THE FUN IS COMING BACK TO SONGKRAN, organisers have promised, as the first large scale celebration of the occasion in three years is set to take place at Limelight Avenue Mall next month.

The official event is set to make a splash on Dibuk Rd, in front of Limelight Avenue Mall in Phuket Town, on Apr 13 with traditional festivities, live performances from musical artists and lots of water splashing

At a press conference on Mar 24 to announce the event organisers confirmed that the musical artist Kao Jirayu and the groups Retrospect and SDF will all be performing live, supported by local DJ Ong Khemrat.

Phuket Vice Governor Danai Sunantarod oversaw the press conference on and was joined by representatives from the official organisations sponsoring the event, including Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization (PPAO), Phuket City Municipality, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office, the Phuket off of the Tourism and Sports Authority, Muang Phuket Police Station, Naval Area 3, Phuket Provincial Cultural Office, Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth), Non-Alcoholic Organization Network (SorKhor).

Additionally, representatives from the private sector included Advice IT Infinite Public Company Limited, Haad Thip Public Company Limited, Marketplace and Limelight Avenue Phuket.

It was confirmed the event on April 13 will take place in front of the Limelight Avenue Mall from 5pm until 10pm, with organisers stating they expect a significant crowd of both local residents and tourists alike to attend.



Photo: PR Phuket

"This event has been suspended for the last three years due to health and safety concerns and regulations relating to the COVID-19 pandemic," commented Mr Danai.

"The last time this event was staged, in 2019, we welcomed approximately 26,000 people. This year we expect over 30,000 people to attend," he added.

The event, which is free to attend, will also see a strict approach to the ban of alcohol and also the refusal of admittance to those deemed in a toxicated state. Likewise, no cigarettes, vapes, kratom or cannabis related products will be permitted at the event. Attendees must wear a shirt at all times and paint, play dough, ice, foam, coloured water or high-pressure water guns will not be allowed.

A spokesperson for TAT said the event is part of their "365 Colourful Days in Phuket" tourism campaign that aims to promote the image of the island as a friendly destination. The occasion also allowed a younger generation to become more accustomed with Thai traditions associated with the event which celebrates the uniqueness of being Thai.

For more information relating to the event people are encouraged to call 089-4745253.

The Phuket News

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Phuket condo supply falls short

Nattha Thepbamrung
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Demand for condos in Phuket has outstripped supply as more Chinese and Russian investors look to entire projects instead of individual units, Phattanan Pisutwimol, President of Phuket Real Estate Association (P-REA), has told The Phuket News.

“Currently, we do not have enough. I talked to Chinese agents, and they said they do not have anything to sell. Chinese agents usually look for a whole project to invest in, and many projects in Phuket have been paused or are still being built,” he said.

Russian property investors are following the same trend, he added. “However, Russians that invest as individuals are still trading in second-hand condominiums,” Mr Phattanan noted.

“There are a lot of pool villas that are not finished yet and these investors [Chinese and Russians] are looking for complete projects, so it will take time to see the volume of investment increase,” he explained.

RIISING COSTS

Much of the supply shortage stems from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Phattanan said. “During COVID, people went back to their hometowns, and construction of projects was frozen. Now, as we start to recover, the number of construction workers available is not enough.

“It takes time to fill the manpower gap. This has affected construction costs, which increased 20% on average from last year. These are negative factors that are increasing the cost for developers,” he said.

“I think the price of buildings and condominiums have risen higher this year. It is also about location. If it is Patong, I think the price is already about 10-20% higher than pre-COVID.



Condo projects in Patong have slowed due to rising costs and construction laws, such as each condo project being required to have one parking space per two units. Photo: Patong Development Foundation

“It is also about the law. In Patong, unlike in other areas in Phuket, a condominium project must provide one parking space per two rooms, as opposed to one parking per four rooms [elsewhere on the island]. The owners or developers [in Patong] must prepare more investment [funding to be available], which results in higher costs,” Mr Phattanan said.

CONFIDENCE

Mr Phattanan is confident that Phuket will remain an investment destination and the number of investments this year will continue. “We will see the sharp rise in real estate investment in Phuket,” he said.

“We can see that this year, there are more condominium projects that target foreigners in the market. The number of registered condominiums may not increase much because there are a lot of condominium projects in Phuket that are only 80-90% complete and have not been registered yet. But I estimate that there will be about 3,000-4,000 units [being registered in the coming year], mostly targeting foreigners, mainly Chinese and Russians,” Mr Phattanan.

Citing Phuket Provincial Land Office statistics of registered and transferred properties from 2012 until 2022, Mr Phattanan pointed out a spike in demand at the end of 2022.

“It is hard to say that there are more foreigners in the recent transfer numbers, but I can say that the tendency is that foreigners who are interested to invest in Phuket real estate will be higher than pre-COVID times,” he said.

“You can see that in 2019, before COVID, the two lines [registration and transfer] almost met, and then during COVID the projects that had been built could only register as available but could not be transferred because there was no investors; that’s where the lines on the graph separate again,” he explained.

“According to the stats, the total amount of land with buildings transferred in 2019 was 4,398 units. Last year, while [the economy] just started recovering, there were 4,163 units, which is very close to the amount before COVID, and this year the trend is increasing,” he said.

“I estimate that the building transfers could grow 10-15% from last

year, up to 4,500 units, which is even more than 2019. For condominium transfers, in 2019 there were 2,163 units, while last year 1,966 units were transferred. The numbers are pretty close,” he added.

CHINA VS RUSSIA

Mr Phattanan said he expected a surge in investment from China this year. “The current number of Chinese investors interested in Phuket may seem lower than the number of Russians. This is because China has just reopened this year, but there will be more and very high demand from Chinese investors. I believe this year there will be high demand from China,” he said.

“For the Chinese, the demand for investment should exceed that of Russians, but transferring money is still the main issue, for which the operators or owners have to look for a solution,” Mr Phattanan said.

“The obstacle for Chinese investors is the money transfer between the countries because their government is quite strict and this may have affected the transfer number in condos last year.

“But I believe that this year the condominiums [that are waiting to be registered] will be registered then transferred. There will be about 3,000 units more in the supply. This number will be combined with the condominiums that are currently being built,” he explained.

“I think we will see a lot of new condominium projects, especially from Bangkok operators, such as Sansiri and The Origin. There will be thousands of new units in Phuket this year,” he added.

Meanwhile, demand from Russians continues to lead the demand, Mr Phattanan confirmed.

“Russians usually invest in both condominiums and villas. The main reason that brought them here is the war and the instability of their currency, so they want to bring their money to invest in something

stable, such as real estate. They target completed projects because they want to immediately spend their money,” he said.

“There are also a lot of long-stay Russians in Phuket. Since last year, there have been in total [both short-term and long-term stays] more than 400,000 of them,” he added.

FILLING THE GAP

In addition to more than 3,000 units becoming available this year, which Mr Phattanan says will be provided mainly by Bangkok-based developers, local investors are also preparing to roll out more developments.

“More than 50 developers in the association [P-REA] are excited and are preparing to develop more projects. We will also see collaboration between local developers and Bangkok developers as well as foreign developers. This will be even more interesting,” he said.

“Big developers from Bangkok may be more ready with higher investment power and lower costs, giving them more opportunities, but local investors have the advantage of knowing the needs of people staying in Phuket better,” he added.

Unable to compete directly with large-scale Bangkok developers in mass condo unit projects, local developers instead turn to serving alternative markets. “Targeting more luxury real estate investment instead of mass projects is something local developers can do better. This will push the local developers to keep improving with better quality,” he said.

“The situation now is not normal because of the war [in Ukraine]. The overwhelming demand will remain during this year and possibly next year, but will eventually slow down and get back to normal. In the long term, we will have to see how it goes. In the short term, say if the war [in Ukraine] stops next year, there may not be the same level of demand, so a drop to normal could be expected,” Mr Phattanan said.

Songkran arrivals to jump, Airbnb searches jump 310% y-o-y

THE GOVERNMENT expects an increasing number of international flight arrivals during the Songkran period as Bangkok, among other big cities, has been listed as one of Airbnb’s top destinations for 2023, said government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri.

The list, compiled from the agency’s data based on reservation numbers from their website, placed Bangkok in fifth spot on its list of top trending global travel spots in 2023’s first quarter.

The list also showed the capital had welcomed large visitors from the United



Tourists enjoy the Songkran festival on Khao San Rd, Bangkok, in April last year. Photo: Varuth Hirunyatheb / Bangkok Post

Kingdom, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, including South Korea, Australia, and China.

He said the government was glad to learn that Bang-

kok was also the most-booked Airbnb destination in Thailand during this period. The list was followed by Phuket, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and Koh Samui.

He said the Tourism and

Sports Ministry also recorded an increasing number of tourists. The information showed the kingdom welcomed 2,144,948 foreigners in January.

This figure is significantly higher than the 133,828 foreign visitors who visited Thailand in January last year.

The Airbnb survey also showed the number of Thailand’s inbound tourists will likely increase during Songkran, which falls on Apr 13-15.

The results showed guest searches for the festive period on Airbnb have increased more than 310% year-on-year, with Bangkok being the most-searched destination amongst

international guests.

Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Krabi, and Phuket are also on the list.

Based on the information, Australia ranks as the top country for international arrivals during the Songkran period, followed by those from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, and China.

According to the data, 20% of Chinese visitors look for Thailand stays during their spring break, which takes place in April and May.

Following the publication of the information, Mr Anucha said Prime Minister Prayut

Chan-o-cha was extremely pleased with the outcome.

The results show the visitors have been attracted by Thailand’s beautiful natural resources as well as its cultural elements and tourism services, Mr Anucha said.

He added this list showed the result of the tourism industry’s recovery, which was made possible through the cooperation of various sectors.

The government also expects the Songkran period will attract more international tourists and thus help boost the local economy.

Bangkok Post

Industry profits as homes hit by power bill increase

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The government is catering to the interests of industry by lowering electricity bills for them while hiking the rate for households, according to Korn Chatikavanij, leader of the Chartpatanakla Party.

The party called in the media in Bangkok last Saturday (Mar 25) to lambast the state's latest revision of electricity pricing which it said will reduce the bills for various industries but raise those of households.

Mr Korn said the higher power cost, set to be reflected in the May-August billing period, was coming at a bad time as electricity consumption peaks during the summer months.

The government chose to push up bills during this period, which aggravates the people's plight, he said.

Mr Korn, a former finance minister, said the Chartpattanakla Party was baffled by the announcement of the electricity price hike imposed by the



The government's increased costs for household electricity consumption will coincide with peak summer months. Photo: Bangkok Post

Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) under the Energy Policy and Planning Office chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The ERC has decided to increase power bills for households from B4.72 per kilowatt-hour (unit) to B4.77. However, industry will see a drop in power costs from B5.33 per unit to B4.77.

The main driver of higher bills for households is the rise in the fuel tariff (Ft) by 5% during the May-August period. At the same time, the

Ft associated with power use by industry is expected to dip by 30% during the period.

"This goes to show the government couldn't care less about people's grievances, while coming out on the side of industry."

"We fail to see the rationale or the necessity to revise up power bills in this way," Mr Korn said.

In fact, the main cost of producing electricity is liquefied natural gas (LNG), the price of which has come down steadily. In addition, LNG is

imported at favourable rates thanks to the stronger baht, he said.

Looking at it from the point of view of both the cost and exchange rate, there was no reason for raising power bills.

"Now is not the time to weigh people down with a bigger burden by charging them more when they can't escape the need to use lots of electricity," he added.

The method of calculating energy costs must be revamped, Mr Korn said, adding that before each round of price increase, the government should listen to what people have to say.

Mr Korn's comments came after the Meteorological Department confirmed the temperature will be 1°C higher on average this summer than last year.

Department director-general Chomparee Chompurat said most areas in upper Thailand would experience average daily temperatures of 35.5°C during summer months, with a peak of 40 to 43°C predicted in Sukhothai, Tak, Lampang and Mae Hong Son.



Photo: NNT

Media alliance set to report election results

BANGKOK

THAI MEDIA OUTLETS have formed an alliance to cover unofficial results from polling stations during the May 14 general election in response to the Election Commission's (EC) decision to use a non-real-time official reporting format.

The Association of Digital Television Broadcasting announced on Mar 27 that it will cooperate as part of a campaign involving 50 media agencies.

The association's president, Suphab Kleekachai, said the campaign aims to report the final, unofficial results from all polling stations across the country by 9:00pm, which is earlier than the target of 11:00pm set by the EC.

Adisak Limparungpatanakij, campaign director and advisor to the association,

added that the tallies for party-list MPs should be reported by 7:00pm, while the leading candidate at each constituent should be reported by 9:00pm on the same evening.

The campaign will deploy 100,000 volunteers to report on unofficial results from all polling stations. They are currently recruiting additional volunteers, including observers from political parties and civic volunteers, to join the mission.

Data from 95,000 polling stations submitted by the volunteers will be processed at the campaign headquarters at Sripatum University in Bangkok and transmitted to TV stations and online news outlets.

The campaign is raising funds on the website D-Vote.com/TheWatcher and hopes to raise B12 million to cover operations at all polling stations nationwide. NNT

Thais advised to exercise more

BANGKOK

A NEW STUDY HIGHLIGHTS the need for Thais to exercise more to ensure good health, with 76% spending seven hours or more sitting down each day, Health Department director-general Suwanchai Wattanayingcharoenchai said on Monday (Mar 27).

Dr Suwanchai said the study was jointly conducted in 2021 by the Public Health Ministry's Department of Health and the office of International Health Policy Programme (IHPP) and that the report was now complete.

The study considered health information gathered from 78,717 people in 77 provinces.

The report concluded that Thai people had become largely sedentary, with 76% of them sitting down for seven hours or more every day. However, about 72% spent about 150 minutes or more per week on physical activities – a sufficient amount of time according to the World Health Organisation standard.



Exercise is key to reducing the risk of illness from non-communicable diseases. Photo: Bangkok Post

One reason Thais had become less active was the change in working conditions, with the workforce moving from the agricultural or industrial sector to being in an office. The risk of early death or falling ill with a non-communicable disease had increased because of their low rate of burning energy.

The study found that Thais did exercise or engage in recreational activities to offset their sedentary office life-style, but not all of them. People in urban areas were able to spend more time on physical activities than those in rural areas because the facilities were more accessible, with infrastructure such as walkways and a

public transport system.

This was enough for them to reduce the risk of being sick with non-communicable diseases, Dr Suwanchai said.

Dr Rapeepong Supanchaimat, director of the office of IHPP, said the study also revealed that more women had a higher rate physical activity than men.

The report came after a Department of Health study on Mar 5 that revealed almost 10% of Thai children are clinically obese.

The study warned the situation is expected to get worse if parents and teachers fail to improve nutritional awareness among the young.

Bangkok Post

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Photo: Supplied

Stepping up for the long run

Nattha Thepbamrung
life@classactmedia.co.th

Kerati Charoenwattanachai, 43, is well known for his Kitti Duck Noodle shop in Sam-kong, the authentic recipe that he brought to Phuket from his family in Bangkok. However, his patrons are fast learning that not only does he have a talent for making tasty noodles, but he is also an athlete who has conquered many road and trail runs, and even ultra marathons.

Earlier this month Kerati completed the 'Phuket 100K', a 100-kilometre road run that took place in Mai Khao. He was a solo finisher with a time of 14 hours 6 minutes. He placed 46th in the Men's category and 57th overall from a

field of 147 ultra athletes.

Kerati was born and raised in Bangkok in a caring Thai-Chinese family. He was born with Erb's palsy, which left his right arm paralysed. He shared that he was a big newborn, weighing in at 4.7 kilogrammes.

His condition dominated his early years, and Kerati graduated carrying more than 100kg in body weight. Yet, that was all about to change. Kerati shed the weight and today is an athlete.

He started his running journey in 2012 and has now completed some 50 races in and out of Thailand.

How was your latest race?

This one was part of a series. Four runs including Khao Yai (Nakhon Ratchasima), Chiang Mai, Nakhon Pathom and Phuket. It was the first time this race

was held in Phuket.

I am a solo finisher (not running as part of a team) with 14 hours and 6 minutes. There were about 300 people taking part in the run (which also had a 60km race).

The cutoff time depended on each category and the 100km cutoff was 18 hours. This race was a good one. The day after the run, I was not injured at all. I could still work normally. Good practice before the race helped me with this.

Actually, I was aiming to complete the race in 12 hours because I wanted to challenge myself, and from my training I estimated that 12 hours was possible.

Because of the COVID pandemic, I had not raced in an ultra-run at all for three years. This is the first race in a while.

The first 50km is the easiest, with everything under control, but after that anything can happen, such as the Phuket heat taking its toll. However, the route was very well designed. Each lap [of 20km] was designed around Splash Jungle. If I were jogging, I would take about three to four hours per lap. So it was a real run.

Another good thing about the race circuit was at the centre there was food, drinks and friends to cheer us on. Each time we passed the centre, we could recheck our body and what was not right during the run. In my case, I could change my shoes, which were not comfortable, and take care of physical issues that arose during my run.

How did you train for the race?

Before the run, I practised online with Coach Nini. She is a top triathlete in the country and graduated in medicine in Leicester (in the UK). She was an athlete for a while before returning to her career during COVID.

She gave me a training program that I followed, and I sent the results back to her. Her schedule was challenging but flexible. For ultra-running, we usually do just basic training. We focus on endurance, not speed. I usually train at Bang Maruan (in Srisoonthorn). One lap is less than one kilometre, and I just keep running without counting the laps. I start with a slow run and keep increasing my speed to train my muscles for endurance.

Thanks to my trail run experience as well as other runs, I realised that this type of run [100km ultra road marathon] is all about endurance, it requires consistency while avoiding injuries.

What do you like best about running?
I really like trail running. I am from

Bangkok and I have been surrounded with concrete buildings and pollution, so I enjoy trail running amid nature, especially runs through the night to early morning when I can smell the dew and smoke from local people in the area starting to cook breakfast.

I recently did a run that passed Ton Sai Waterfall [near Thalang Hospital]. I could smell the wood burning from villagers, hear the gibbons, and see mist on the mountain after a rainy night.

Is your disability an obstacle to your trail runs?

I have had a disabled right arm since I was born, so my perception is that I have had only one usable arm all my life, but yes, it does create a problem, especially with imbalance. This causes issues not just when running, but also at the gym. When I want to do a 'plank', I can do it but my right arm cannot stay in place as long as my left. For weight training, I also have to balance my training by lifting the same weight for both arms, which means I cannot lift weights that are too heavy for my right arm. Some stretching is also difficult when the right arm is needed in the action.

Which trail run has been the most impressive race for you?

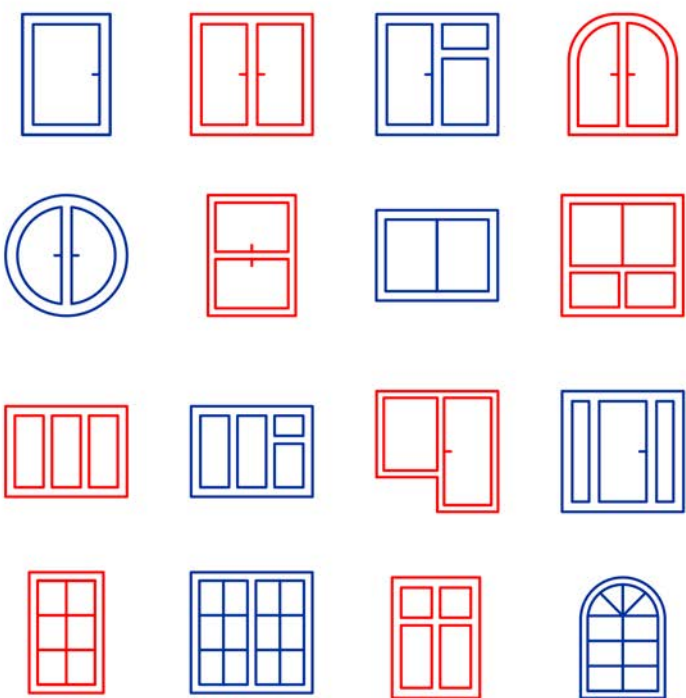
I like them all because they all have their own attractions. However, I would say I like Pong Yaeng Trail 'zero edition' in Chiang Mai (first time at that location) the most because it was the first-ever ultra trail I ran in my life. It was only 66km, not too long. The facilities, management, food and drinks were great. The trail was on lateritic soil, so it was soft for running. Also, there were not a lot of runners. If I remember right, there were 63 runners, and most of the runners were friends.

What do you like most about running?

For me, there are many moments I like about it. When I am running and I see other people stop, I can cheer them on. When I run out of energy, other people cheer me on. It may seem boring to some people, but I can be all by myself and be very focused. Along the trail runs, I have to be focused on the path and on every step to avoid falling. It is like meditation. It is also like the Buddha teaching about the Middle Way. If I am too extreme with the run, I will be injured; and if I am too slow I will not finish the run in time. When running in the middle, not too fast and not too slow, while listening to my own breathing, my brain is clear and I am very concentrated. My legs move all by themselves.



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The stunning 'Sea in the Sky'

Amy Bensema

Located at The Sea Galleri by Katathani, Sea in the Sky is an al fresco restaurant with unbeatable views of the Andaman Sea. Perched on a jungle-clad hillside in between Kata and Kata Noi beaches, the restaurant is cosy and romantic and ideal for groups of friends, couples or a special occasion.

The first thing my dining partner and I notice as we step out of the elevator is just how stunning the setting is at Sea in the Sky. While the seating is modern and contemporary, it is the views that will make your jaw drop. The Andaman Sea stretches as far as the eye can see, and it is a prime location to watch the sunset. Plus, for an additional wow factor, there are cute Instagrammable spots scattered around the restaurant.

The service staff are cheerful and talkative, bring the menus straight away and list off recommended dishes and drinks. We decide on Tacos Trio, Burratina Confit Tomatoes and for the main course, the Sizzling Beef set to share. We sip on adult beverages and take a lot of photos as we wait for the food to arrive, and when it does, the dishes do not disappoint.

The Tacos Trio consists of crispy tacos with slow cooked beef & chili con carne, grilled spicy marinated chicken & lemon lime shrimp comple-



mented with a side of sour cream and Mexican-inspired salsa. The tacos are fresh and full of flavour; definitely a moreish treat. Next up is the Burratina Confit Tomatoes, a dish that is almost too pretty to eat! It is made of imported Italian Burratina served with slow cooked succulent confit tomatoes with a tomato-oregano emulsion and Taggiasaca olives. The Burratina is absolutely perfect – so rich and creamy while the confit tomatoes and olives add nice texture.

The Sizzling Beef set is nicely pre-

sented. It's a grilled beef tenderloin served with a mixed salad, grilled vegetables, fried rice, gravy and a spicy Thai dipping sauce. The beef tenderloin is incredibly tender and would taste fine alone, but I add the rich gravy for good measure. The portion of this set is massive, so I do recommend sharing.

We are too full for dessert, but next time I go back, I definitely want to try the Molten Chocolate Lava, a classic chocolate lava cake infused with Anglaise sauce & candied orange ice cream.



For those looking for a nice restaurant for a romantic date night, Sea in the Sky is well worth adding to a must visit dining list.

Tagged as a Lifestyle Bar & Supper Club, Sea in the Sky is open daily from 5:30pm-11:30pm (last order 10.30pm). Reservations are encouraged, and there is parking on-site.

Sea in the Sky. Reservations:

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POP QUIZ

1. Who wrote the play 'Titus Andronicus'?
2. How many 'stomachs' does a cow have?
3. Can rats eat through wood, brick and cement?
4. What is the standard formula for determining the area of a circle?
5. Famed actor Pedro Pascale is originally from which country?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across

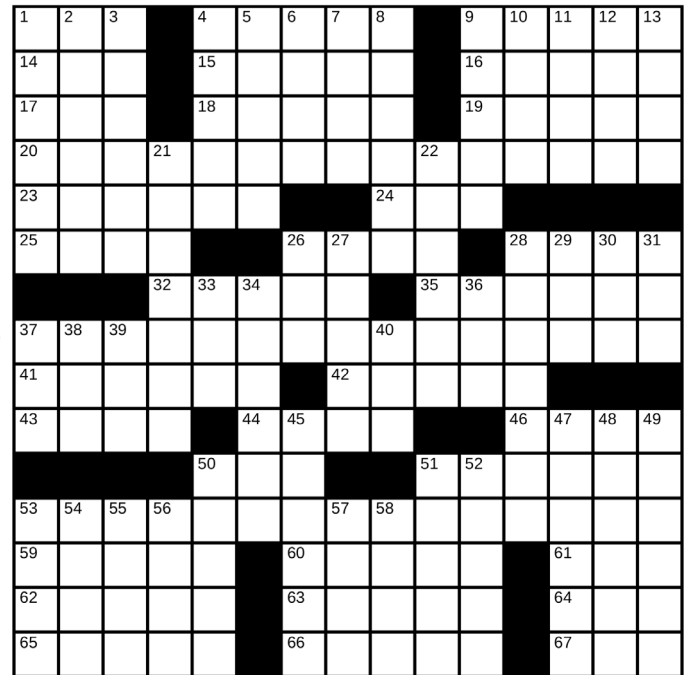
 1. Self starter?
 4. Behind
 9. Diarist Samuel
 14. Can you dig it?
 15. Fine thread
 16. Of an eye part
 17. Morsel for Fido
 18. Take for a while
 19. Land
 20. Judgment times
 23. Enters data
 24. Lady lobster
 25. Fall locale
 26. Name for a Dalmatian
 28. "Not only that..."
 32. Anabranch
 35. Clumsy
 37. Will Smith flick
 41. Iraqi money
 42. Inexperienced
 43. Kind of dance
 44. Bean used to make miso
 46. Place that allows "eggs-tradition"?
 50. Done, to Donne
 51. Fishing vessel
 53. Turkey time
 59. Rarin' to go
 60. Like krypton
- Down

 1. Sweatshirt type
 2. Fool's ____
 3. Create a new document
 4. Appropriate
 5. Duchies
 6. Winter Palace resident
 7. It may follow something
 8. Come back again
 9. Jest
 10. Composed
 11. Persian spirit
 12. Ball material
 13. Smelting waste
 21. Appliance maker
 22. Carbon compound
 26. Sequel title
- starter

 27. Betty Boop's puppy
 28. Old Essen coin
 29. Jack-in-the-box part
 30. Olympics chant
 31. Short
 33. 30-day mo.
 34. Consent indicators
 36. Duffer's dream
 37. Tags
 38. Goose egg
 39. Chain letters?
 40. Christian ____
 45. Wild parties
 47. Ingratiate
 48. "____ on a Wet Afternoon," 1964 film
 49. Assignations
 50. Gumbo vegetables
 51. Kind of call
 52. Way in
 53. Kind of support
 54. Healthy
 55. Biology lab supply
 56. Techie
 57. Research facility: Abbr.
 58. Literally, "I forbid"

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(3) Yes (also aluminium, but not steel!); (4) A = πr^2 ; (5) Chile
1) William Shakespeare; (2) Four;



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

12

years old is the age Morgan Freeman first started acting, when he was forced into a drama competition as a 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.

2,400

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



Aerial view of Laem Singh. Photo by Istvan Gal

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

This week in history

March 31, 1913

Members of the Vienna Concert Society riot during a performance of modernist music by Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Alexander von Zemlin-sky, and Anton von Webern, causing a premature end to the concert due to violence; the concert becomes known as the Skandalkonzert.

April 1, 1976

Apple Inc. is formed by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne in Cu-

pertino, California.

April 2, 1992

New York mafia boss John 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.

April 5, 1992

Peace protesters Suada Dilberovic and Olga Sučić are killed on the Vrbanja Bridge in Sarajevo, the first casualties of the Bosnian War.

April 6, 1896

The opening of the first modern Olympic Games is celebrated at the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, 1,500 years after the original games were banned by Roman emperor Theodosius I.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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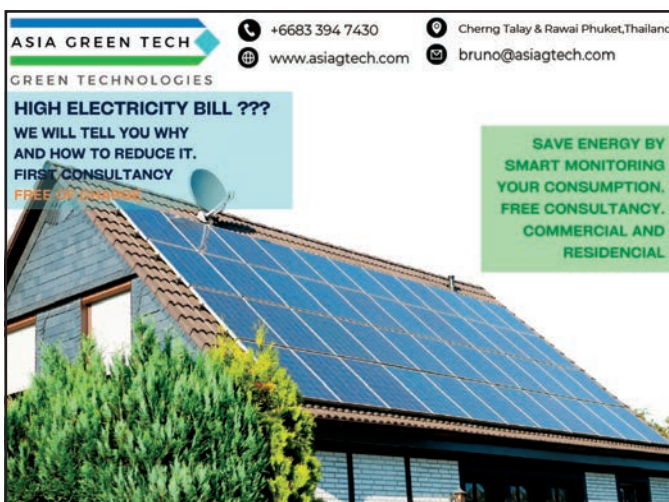
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Grow Boating Evening

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm on Friday the 7th of April. We are delighted to announce that our drinks sponsor for the evening will be Simpson Yacht Charter who specialize in bareboat, luxury crewed yacht and superyacht charter across Asia. See www.simpsonyachtcharter.com There will be a delicious finger food buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro & Bar for all attendees and if you are still hungry then there will be burgers for just 100 baht. As always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along. A special thanks to our Media Partners The Phuket News and Live 89.5 Radio. growboatingphuket@gmail.com

Friday Mussels Night

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

Monday BBQ Night

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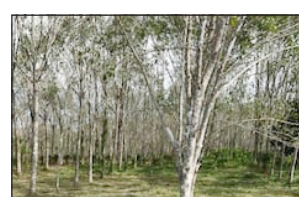
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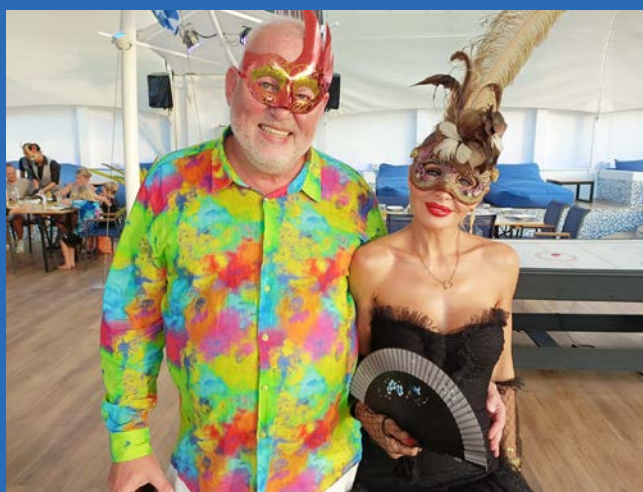
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EDEN GRILL ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to Eden Grill on their 1 year anniversary last Saturday (Mar 25), which saw a wonderful evening of great food and beverages enjoyed by over 150 people. The evening started with drinks lakeside followed by a spectacular dinner. Live music by Malika and her band, supported by the Eden Grill resident DJ - DJayB, had everyone up on their feet having a great time.





Pornpawee. Photo: AFP

Pornpawee captures 2nd World Tour title in Basel

BADMINTON

SIXTH SEED PORNPAWEE Chochuwong claimed the women's singles title at the US\$210,000 (B7.2 million) BWF Swiss Open in Basel last Sunday (Mar 26).

The Thai sixth seed defeated Mia Blichfeldt of Denmark 21-16, 21-18 in the 47-minute title match of the World Tour Super 300 event at St Jakobshalle in Basel.

World number 11 Pornpawee beat Gregoria Tunjung 18-21, 21-13, 21-17 while the 23rd ranked Blichfeldt edged Zhang Beiwen of the United States 19-21, 21-19, 21-18 in the semi-finals on Saturday.

It was the 25-year-old Pornpawee's second World Tour title, with her first

coming at the 2020 Spain Masters, also a Super 300 event.

Earlier, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty of India defeated Ren Xiangyu and Tan Qiang of China 21-19, 24-22 in the men's doubles final.

Rena Miyaura and Ayako Sakuramoto won the women's doubles after defeating Japanese compatriots Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota.

Koki Watanabe of Japan defeated Malaysia's Chou Tien-chen 22-20, 18-21, 21-12 in the men's singles final while China's Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin beat Malaysian pair Goh Soon Huat and Shevon Jemie Lai 21-17, 19-21, 21-17 in the mixed doubles final.

Bangkok Post

Athletics bans trans women

ATHLETICS

AFP

Transgender women will no longer be allowed to compete in female track and field events regardless of their levels of testosterone, World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said on Mar 23, citing fairness over inclusion.

Coe said no female transgender athlete who had gone through male puberty would be permitted to compete in female world ranking competitions from today (Mar 31).

Coe said World Athletics had consulted with stakeholders including 40 national federations, the International Olympic Committee and trans groups about the issue of transgender athletes.

"The majority of those consulted stated that transgender athletes should not be competing in the female category," he said.

"Many believe there is insufficient evidence that trans women do not retain advantage over biological women and want more evidence that any physical advantages have been ameliorated before they are willing to consider an option for inclusion into the female category.

"The judgement we took... was, I believe, in the best interests of our sport."

Coe said a working group headed by a transgender person would be created to further monitor scientific developments.

"We're not saying 'no' forever," he explained.

"Decisions are always difficult when they involve conflicting needs and rights



The most high-profile DSD athlete is double Olympic 800 metre champion Caster Semenya of South Africa. Photo: AFP

between different groups, but we continue to take the view that we must maintain fairness for female athletes above all other considerations.

"We will be guided in this by the science around physical performance and male advantage which will inevitably develop over the coming years. As more evidence becomes available, we will review our position, but we believe the integrity of the female category in athletics is paramount."

In a statement, World Athletics said it became apparent that there "little support within the sport" for an option that was presented to stakeholders, which required transgender athletes to maintain their testosterone levels below 2.5nmol/L (nanomoles per litre of blood) for 24 months to be eligible to compete internationally in the female category.

World Athletics also amended regulations covering athletes classified as DSD, in other words having "differences of sexual development".

The most high-profile DSD athlete is double Olympic 800 metre champion Caster Semenya of South Africa.

Under the new regulations, in order to compete in the female category, DSD athletes will have to reduce their amount of blood testosterone to below 2.5 nanomoles per litre, down from the current level of five, and remain below this threshold for two years, rather than just one, as is the case now.

World Athletics also removed the principle of restricted events for DSD athletes, meaning regulations now cover all events rather than the previously monitored ones, which were from 400m to one mile.

Nelson Piquet cops heavy fine for racist blast at Hamilton

FORMULA ONE

THREE-TIME FORMULA 1 champion Nelson Piquet was fined US\$945,000 (B32 million) last Saturday (Mar 25) for racist remarks made against British driver Lewis Hamilton, who he called "neguinho" ("little black") in an interview.

A court in Brasilia ruled that these "intolerable" remarks constituted a "serious offence to the fundamental values of society".

Piquet, 70, was fined for "collective moral damages" with the money being donated to groups fighting against discrimination.

World champion in 1981, 1983 and 1987, Piquet used the word "neguinho" in an interview in 2021 when he criticised Hamilton's role in a clash with Max Verstappen, his daughter Kelly's boyfriend, at the British Grand Prix the same year.

Hamilton, a seven-time world champion, denounced "archaic attitudes" which



Nelson Piquet. Photo: AFP

"had to change".

"These are more than words," said Hamilton.

Piquet later issued a "wholehearted" apology.

"What I said was wrong and I'm not going to defend myself but I want to clarify that this term has often been used in Brazilian

Portuguese to describe 'guy' or 'person' and that it was never intended to offend," he insisted.

However, the court was not convinced, ruling that "the absence of intention could not justify discriminatory behaviour towards minorities". AFP

Bagnaia wins MotoGP opener

MOTO GP

WORLD CHAMPION Francesco Bagnaia won the season-opening Portuguese MotoGP last Sunday (Mar 26) after a costly mistake by pole-sitter Marc Marquez.

Ducati star Bagnaia coasted across the line ahead of Aprilia's Maverick Vinales in the Algarve sunshine to follow up his win in MotoGP's inaugural sprint 24 hours earlier.

Marquez crashed and wiped out home favourite Miguel Oliveira on lap three to leave the way clear for Bagnaia to get his championship defence off to a perfect start.

Bagnaia, whose teammate Enea Bastianini missed the race after injury in the sprint, leaves Portimao with a maximum 37 points from the first of the 21-race season.

"That's the start me and my team wanted," the Italian told motogp.com. "We have to keep going like this."

Bagnaia's compatriot Marco Bezzecchi, riding Ducati's VR46 bike, came in third to complete the podium.

If it was reasonably plain sailing for the world champion it was anything but for



Bagnaia (left) avoids the crash that wiped out Marquez and Oliveira. Photo: AFP

Marquez as a rare moment of madness from the Spaniard provided the main drama of the afternoon.

The pole sitter clipped Jorge Martin and then his out-of-control Honda slammed into the back of Oliveira's KTM, wiping out the Portuguese rider who had high hopes of a podium finish in front of his home fans.

Marquez received a hostile reception from some of the fans on his return to the pits where he quickly made his way to Oliveira's garage to offer his apologies.

The six-time former world champion suffered a suspected

hand fracture as well as a time-penalty, the last thing the 30-year-old needed after his last three seasons plagued by injury.

"I apologise... This accident was my fault, I deserved to be penalised for it," said Marquez who has undergone four surgeries since crashing at the Spanish Grand Prix in 2020.

MotoGP heads to Argentina this weekend for the second race of a season that features two new venues on the calendar in India and Kazakhstan and the new sprint format on every race weekend. AFP

Crunch time in Premier League

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Following the recent international break the Premier League returns to action this weekend with every team in the division still having something to play for as the season enters the final straight.

The action kicks off with a blockbuster as second-placed Manchester City host Liverpool on April Fool's Day tomorrow (Apr 1), knowing that nothing less than three points is required to keep the pressure on current leaders Arsenal.

Many observers consider Pep Guardiola's team to possess a distinct advantage, having won the title in four of the past five seasons – indeed the only time they faltered was in 2019/20 when tomorrow's opponents powered to the title.

The Citizens therefore have the crucial experience of handling the pressure when things get white hot at the top, as they certainly will with just 10 games of the season remaining.

They proved they are hitting form at just the right time after scoring an incredible 13 goals in their last two games: a 7-0 drubbing of RB Leipzig in the Champions League on Mar 14 and a 6-0 demolition of Burnley in the FA Cup four days later.

Arsenal are eight points clear of City, having played a game more, and also suggested their form is ripe with a comprehensive 4-1 win over Crystal Palace in their final game before the break.



Title-chasers Arsenal and Manchester City meet on Apr 27. Photo: AFP

Mikel Arteta's side may be young and relatively inexperienced, with this season's title charge unexpected to most, but they play with such a freedom and exuberance that surely only an implosion of confidence of the highest order will stop the club from securing its first title since 2003/4. They resume action with a home game against struggling Leeds United tomorrow.

Manchester United, Liverpool, Newcastle, Brighton, Brentford and Tottenham, who parted ways with manager Antonio Conte on Mar 26, are all contesting the European places, with only eight points separating third from eighth. Chelsea, Fulham and Aston Villa are close behind and also in contention.

The relegation battle is truly captivating with just four points separating bottom-placed Southampton and 11th

placed Crystal Palace, with the latter appointing former boss Roy Hodgson during the break in the hopes of steadying the ship.

Expect the teams within that nine position cluster to frequently swap and change from now until season's end, with only a brave pundit speculating which three will ultimately end up marooned in the dreaded relegation spots come May 28.

April Fool's Day or not, none of the nine teams involved in that relegation scrap will be joking around. The Palace versus Leicester City and Nottingham Forest against Wolves fixtures tomorrow will be especially nervy affairs that will no doubt set the tone for the weeks ahead while offering a hint at their potential chances of top-flight survival.

Let play recommence...



Thailand in action against Bahrain. Photo: AFC.com

Thais make AFC Beach Soccer history before bowing out

BEACH SOCCER

DESPITE EXITING AT the knock-out stage of this year's AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Pattaya, Thailand had much to celebrate after they made history by managing to progress from the group qualification stage for the first ever time.

The Thais defeated Bahrain 2-0 in a thrilling match held on Jomtien Beach in Pattaya on Mar 20 to ensure they topped Group A and advanced to the second round of the Cup.

Despite losing their opening match to Saudi Arabia 2-3 on Mar 16, Thailand fought back with a thrilling 5-4 win against Afghanistan two days later before securing their place

in the second round with its victory over Bahrain, the former 2006 Asian Cup champion.

The team scored a total of 7 points, making them the top team in Group A and securing their place in the second round.

In recognition of their success, the board of the Thai beach soccer team announced an injection of B800,000 as a reward for the players.

However, their joy was shortlived as they were defeated by the United Arab Emirates 4-2 in their quarter-final on Mar 22 to end their tournament aspirations.

Iran defeated Japan 6-0 in the final held last Sunday (Mar 26).

Additional reporting by NNT

Southgate hails Kane's 'strength' after breaking England goal record

FOOTBALL

ENGLAND MANAGER Gareth Southgate praised Harry Kane's mental strength after he broke the country's all-time goal record with the crucial strike the 2-1 Euro 2024 qualifier win over Italy on Mar 23.

Captain Kane stroked home his 54th international goal from the penalty spot to move ahead of Wayne Rooney and help England to a Group C win in Naples over the European champions.

The 29-year-old had been level with Rooney after missing a penalty in England's quarter-final defeat by France at the World Cup in December.

"To break the record in the manner he did given the recent history was an indication of his strength of character. I couldn't be happier for him," Southgate said.

"To do it as quick as he has as well, he still has a lot of his career to go, is an incredible achievement.

"The players gave him



England captain Harry Kane now has a record 55 international goals for his country. Photo: AFP

a brilliant reception afterwards and I think that was a response to the record and what he's had to recover from," added Southgate.

Kane then added to his total by netting the opener in the 2-0 win against Ukraine last Sunday (Mar 26), which leaves England leading the Group on six points. Arsenal's Bukayo Saka scored England's second.

Elsewhere, Kylian Mbappe marked his first game as France captain with a brace in a 4-0 demolition of the Netherlands last Friday (Mar 24), while Romelu Lukaku scored a hat-trick as Belgium secured a 3-0 victory in Sweden.

"We didn't want to disappoint our fans. This was our first game back here after the World Cup and we really wanted to pick up where we left off there, except for the final," said Mbappe, who now has 38 goals in 67 appearances for his country.

Cristiano Ronaldo marked his record-breaking 197th international appearance on Mar 23 with two goals against Liechtenstein and he repeated the trick as Portugal thumped Luxembourg 6-0 on Sunday.

It meant the 38-year-old superstar has now scored 11 goals against Luxembourg in his career. AFP



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GO NAMO!

Young Phuket golfer continues her ascent

Namo with the Top Amateur trophy at the recent SAT-NSDF Thai LPGA Classic. Photo: BISP



GOLF

Muchanga Zebron, BISP

Young Phuket golfer Namo Luangnitikul took a huge step forward in her development with a fantastic display at the recent SAT-NSDF Thai LPGA Classic, where her impressive form saw her secure the position of Top Amateur Winner.

The 14-year-old student from British International School, Phuket (BISP) scored an overall 73, 73, 69 at the Royal Hill Golf Resort in Nakhon Nayok from Mar 8-10, finishing with a total score of -1 on the par 72, 6,385 yard course.

The SAT-NSDF Thai LPGA Classic is a major golf tournament in Thailand that attracts professional and amateur golfers from all over the country. The tournament format was stroke play over 54 holes, with the first round played on Wednesday, Mar 8 and the final round played on

Friday, Mar 10. After 36 holes, the top 50 players and ties moved on to the final round.

The tournament was open to 120 players, with the top 50 professional golfers and ties exempt from qualifying. Namo's victory is a remarkable achievement, especially considering the high level of competition in the tournament. She demonstrated excellent skills and determination throughout, exemplified by finishing the tournament with a birdie on the 18th hole.

"It's great to see Namo progressing and competing at the Pro level," commented BISP's Golf Academy Coach Oliver Bates. "With Namo's strong work ethic in both golf and academics, she is inspiring so many young golfers at BISP. Congratulations to Namo and I'm sure there will be more great results in the future."

The SAT-NSDF Thai LPGA Classic is a crucial event for Thai golfers, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their skills and compete

against the best in the country. The victory therefore marks a significant milestone in Namo's golfing career and reflects her hard work, dedication, and showcases her potential as a talented golfer with an undoubted bright future in the sport.

'GREAT ACHIEVEMENT'

Namo's victory is the latest achievement in a journey that has seen her excel in recent years. Most recently she finished runner up at the Blue Canyon Asian Junior Masters 2023, held in Phuket from March 3-5, following on from a fourth place finish at the 13th Singha Thailand Junior World Championships at Royal Hua Hin Golf Course on Oct 27-30 last year.

She secured a fourth place finish in the Singha Amateur Ladies Open in August 2022, a result which qualified her for the Thai national team, then travelled to Rajaprabha Golf Club in Surat Thani on Sept 3-4 to win the TGA Junior Ranking South

event with an impressive score of -3 after two rounds.

Prior to this, Namo won the girl's 12-14 age division at the Notah Begay Jr. Golf National Championship, presented by Trust Golf Suwanabumi Golf Club in Bangkok on June 4-5.

She also finished as runner up at the LLD International Amateur Championship at Laguna National Golf Resort in Singapore (May 30 - June 1) and secured second place at the TGA Southern #1 at Southern Hills Golf Club in Hatyai, Songkhla (May 14-15).

Prior to this, Namo finished as overall champion in the girls division at the Asian Junior Masters 2022, held at Blue Canyon Golf Club in Phuket between April 29 and May 1.

Namo first secured her official world amateur golf ranking in October 2021 at the age of 12 after a string of strong performances at various tournaments endorsed by the R&A (the world ranking governing body). Most prominently was the

TJDT-Invitation Phuket Sand Box Swing at Blue Canyon Country Club in October 2021 where she won the overall girls division, which subsequently secured her official rank of 3,144 in the world.

"Achieving an official ranking at 12-years-old is a great achievement for Namo and I'm certain she will continue her rise up the world rankings," a proud Oliver Bates said at the time. "She has proved herself as one of the top players in Thailand and continues to impress us at BISP with her attitude and commitment to both sports and academics. Congratulations and well done, Namo."

Of course things have only gone from strength-to-strength for Namo since then and she currently sits at rank 457 – a considerable rise in a relatively short period of time for a young lady who we will no doubt be hearing much more of in future as she continues to shine.

*Additional reporting by
The Phuket News*

Supermom Allycia defends ONE Atomweight Muay Thai title

MUAY THAI

SHE MAY HAVE BEEN OUT OF the ring for a considerable period of time but that did not stop Phuket-based Allycia Hellen Rodrigues from proving her class by defeating Janet Todd to unify the ONE Atomweight Muay Thai world title last Friday (Mar 24).

Brazilian born Allycia, who trains out of Phuket Fight Club gym in Chalong, made headlines back in August 2020 when she defeated Stamp Fairfax in her debut fight for ONE Championship to win the Atomweight Muay Thai World Title.

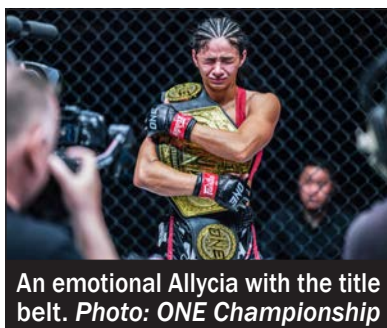
However, 24-year-old Allycia had

not fought to defend her title since that incredible win against the Thai superstar due to a combination of COVID-19 related restrictions and the fact she became a mother after giving birth to her first child.

During that period of inactivity an interim belt was established, which Todd won when she defeated Lara Fernandez at ONE 159 in July last year.

With Allycia announcing she was heading back to the ring to defend her title, the showdown was thus set as the second main fight on the card at the ONE Fight Night 8: Superlek vs. Williams event at the Singapore Indoor Arena on Friday.

Allycia started slowly as 37-year-old American Todd displayed an



An emotional Allycia with the title belt. Photo: ONE Championship

accomplished and fierce opening two rounds, delivering a series of kicks to the body and legs of the Brazilian to slow her down.

However, Allycia came out determined in the third round and showed her intent immediately as a series of jabs and follow-up elbow

strikes saw her open up a gash just above Todd's eye.

Allycia maintained her form into the fourth round when she planted a perfectly placed kick to Todd's head before following up with a three-punch combo and a left hook that left the American reeling.

The fifth and final round was a cagey affair, with a series of tentative exchanges before Allycia executed a clinch to pin her opponent as the clock ran down.

It was time to celebrate for the Phuket resident when the judges announced their unanimous decision, meaning Allycia had unified the belts and become the undisputed champion of the division, moving

her record to 32-6.

Visibly overcome with emotion, Allycia openly wept with joy when handed the belt in the ring by ONE Championship CEO Chatri Sityodtong.

Speaking to ONE Championship's Mitch Chilson after the win, Allycia was keen to champion all the "super-moms" out there, adding she hoped her comeback performance after so long away from the ring could help inspire others.

"Of course, my son gave me motivation. But I'm [also] doing this for all the women who have the same situation as me. It shows that you can come back, you can bounce back, and still become a champion," she said.

The Phuket News