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Photo: Dept of Internal Trade

## TOURISM SECTOR BRACES AS FUEL PRICE SHOCK RIPPLES GROW

**Natnaree Likidwatanasakun**  
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High energy prices are already pushing hotel costs up by as much as 25% and transportation by nearly 40%, warned Phuket Tourist Association President Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, as tourism leaders called on the government to urgently roll out relief measures to ease mounting pressure on the island's tourism sector.

Mr Thaneth said the surge in fuel prices is already feeding directly into operating costs across hotels, transport providers and tour operators, with the impact expected to intensify in the coming months.

"These costs will inevitably be passed on," he said, cautioning that tourists are likely to face higher room rates, more expensive tour packages and increased transport fares if the situation persists.

**CALL FOR SUPPORT**

In response, tourism and industry leaders are proposing a package of short-term interventions aimed at cushioning the immediate impact, alongside longer-term reforms to reduce reliance on volatile fuel markets.

Among the key measures being urged is a freeze on diesel prices for tourism operators through support from the Oil Fund, as well as the introduction of a special

"tourism fuel rate" for transport providers, including hotel shuttles, tour buses and tourist boats.

Operators are also calling for temporary reductions in fuel excise taxes for a period of six to 12 months, in addition to energy tax credits that would allow businesses to offset rising fuel and electricity costs.

Further proposals include soft loans, debt relief and targeted tax reductions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which make up a significant portion of Phuket's tourism sector.

"Larger operators may be able to absorb some of the increases, but SMEs have limited financial flexibility," Mr Thaneth said. "If

costs continue to rise, they will have little choice but to adjust prices."

To help maintain demand, industry leaders are also pushing for an expansion of domestic tourism stimulus programmes, aimed at supporting visitor numbers without forcing businesses to significantly increase prices.

Airlines have also been identified as a critical pressure point, with proposals for reduced jet fuel taxes, lower airport fees and incentives to maintain international routes to Phuket.

**PRICE SURGE**

Fuel prices across Phuket surged...

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# News



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## Fuel shock hits tourism

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...on Mar 26, with increases of up to B6 per litre taking effect from 5am, following the government's decision to end subsidies that had kept domestic prices artificially low.

The move comes amid rising global oil prices driven by ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East.

Although prices have eased slightly from their immediate post-hike peak, the adjustment remains significant. Diesel is now retailing at B38.94 per litre, while premium diesel has reached as much as B57.43 per litre.

Petrol prices have also edged higher. Gasohol 95 now stands at B42.19 per litre, up from B41.05, while Gasohol E20 remains the cheapest widely available option at B36.05 per litre.

Officials have noted that prices may vary slightly between stations due to differences in operating costs and logistics, and operators have been instructed to clearly display pricing amid concerns over profiteering.

### RIPPLE EFFECT

According to Mr Thaneth, rising fuel prices are affecting all major components of Phuket's tourism economy, from accommodation and land transport to marine services.

The current "marketing margin" – the difference



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

between wholesale and retail fuel prices – has reached about B6 per litre, further compounding cost pressures throughout the supply chain.

Research from Prince of Songkla University highlights the scale of the issue, pointing to a deeply interconnected cost structure within the tourism sector.

A study led by Assoc Prof Dr Chayanon Phucharoen found that transportation accounts for 39-48% of energy costs in tourism-related activities, while hotels account for around 24%, making both sectors highly vulnerable to fuel price fluctuations.

Although restaurants have lower direct energy exposure, they are still indirectly affected through rising logistics and raw material costs, which ultimately push up menu

prices and overall tourist spending.

Simulation data suggests that even moderate increases in energy prices can have measurable effects. A 10% rise in energy costs would increase hotel expenses by around 5% and transportation costs by more than 7%.

Under a more severe scenario, a 50% surge in energy prices could raise hotel costs by as much as 25.7% and transportation costs by up to 38.5%, reflecting what industry leaders describe as a system-wide ripple effect.

### PRESSURES BUILD

Assoc Prof Dr Chayanon warned that rising oil prices are likely to push up the overall cost of living in Phuket, where expenses are already higher than in many other provinces.

He explained that oil is a key input across nearly all

economic activities, meaning price increases will ripple through transportation, goods and services, contributing to inflationary pressures.

He also cautioned that tourism demand itself could be affected, particularly in long-haul markets such as the Middle East, where higher travel costs and ongoing regional tensions may dampen outbound travel.

If the situation persists, Phuket could face a difficult low season, with declining tourist numbers coinciding with rising operating costs.

"In the longer term, if prices continue to rise while incomes weaken, consumer spending may decline, forcing market adjustments," he said.

Phuket Chamber of Commerce President Kongsak Khoophongsakorn said the broader economic

impact of rising fuel prices is likely unavoidable.

He warned that the recent B6-per-litre increase may not represent the peak, with further rises possible depending on global market conditions.

"Higher energy costs are expected to drive up electricity, production and logistics expenses, potentially pushing consumer prices up by 10-20% in the coming months," he added.

### CONCERNS REMAIN

Rattakorn Klinchan, Chief of the Phuket Energy Office, described the recent increase as "sharp and rapid", acknowledging that it has caught many sectors off guard.

"The rise will inevitably have an impact, especially on tourism, where energy is a major cost component," he said.

He explained that Thailand remains heavily reliant on imported oil, particularly from the Middle East, making domestic prices highly sensitive to global market conditions.

"The government is trying to stabilise prices, but the real cost is much higher," he said. "This adjustment is unavoidable. Without it, the stability of the Oil Fund would be at risk."

Despite concerns, Mr Rattakorn confirmed that Phuket is not facing any fuel shortages, with overall supply remaining sufficient.

However, he noted a

shift in consumption patterns, particularly for diesel, as more heavy vehicles choose to refuel in Phuket amid concerns about shortages elsewhere.

To manage supply, some service stations have introduced limits on fuel purchases per vehicle to ensure broader distribution.

"Without proper management, we could run out within half a day," he warned.

### LONG-TERM CHANGE

Beyond immediate relief, industry leaders are also advocating for structural changes aimed at reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Proposals include government co-investment in solar energy installations for tourism businesses, particularly hotels, as well as the development of electric vehicle infrastructure across key destinations.

Such measures are seen as essential not only for stabilising long-term costs but also for aligning Phuket with global trends toward sustainable tourism.

In the meantime, authorities are urging both businesses and the public to adopt energy-saving measures, including reducing fuel consumption and considering alternative fuels such as Gasohol E20.

"Ultimately, we all need to work together to conserve energy and use it as efficiently as possible," Mr Rattakorn said.

## Phuket panic spurred 75% surge in fuel buying

FUEL CONSUMPTION IN Phuket briefly surged by up to 75% as public anxiety over the Middle East conflict triggered panic buying, provincial officials have confirmed.

At a meeting last Friday (Mar 27), Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn told central government leaders that queues formed at petrol stations for one to two days as residents rushed to stock up on fuel.

Daily fuel usage jumped from a normal average of about 400,000 litres to as high as 700,000 litres during the spike. However, the situation has since eased, with consumption returning to typical levels of

around 400,000-500,000 litres per day after authorities moved to calm public fears.

The meeting, held via video conference and chaired by Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, brought together provincial leaders and key agencies to address the impact of rising global oil prices linked to the Middle East conflict.

Governor Nirat said Phuket officials had stepped up public communication efforts to discourage panic buying and reassure residents about supply stability. He also ordered closer daily monitoring of the energy situation by relevant agencies, including the Provincial Energy Office and the

Provincial Commerce Office, as well as district and local administrations.

At the national level, PM Anutin said Thailand's typical oil demand of around 67 million litres per day had surged to approximately 87mn litres due to hoarding, temporarily exceeding the country's refining capacity of about 77mn litres per day.

He said the government had allowed oil prices to adjust in line with market mechanisms to prevent shortages and ensure adequate distribution nationwide.

Anutin also instructed all provinces to clamp down on opportunistic practices, including hoarding, price gouging and

illegal fuel sales, particularly in border areas. Authorities were told to strictly enforce the law while improving public communication to reduce panic.

A nationwide campaign promoting fuel conservation has also been launched, alongside orders for provincial governors to establish local "war rooms" to coordinate responses and report developments to the central government.

Special attention is being given to the upcoming Songkran festival, when travel demand is expected to surge.

The Interior Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Arsit Sampanrat, stressed that governors



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

must act swiftly to stabilise the situation, prevent hoarding and maintain public confidence through accurate information.

Closing the meeting, PM Anutin also ordered intensified road safety measures for the 2026 Songkran period, particularly during the "Seven Dangerous Days", with stricter enforcement against drink-driving, more checkpoints and increased use of safety equipment aimed at reducing accidents nationwide.

The Phuket News

# MNRE urged action over Freedom

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

Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee has called on the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) to take urgent action to protect the country's natural resources, following the discovery of encroachment by influential investors on protected forest land at Freedom Beach.

Mr Chalermpong made the appeal during a press conference at the Parliament building in Bangkok on Mar 25, after joining a mass raid at the site on Mar 24.

He said the inspection, carried out with Phuket Provincial Palad (Chief Administrative Officer) Rungruang Thimabutr, found that groups of wealthy investors and influential figures were attempting to encroach on the protected area, including land near Freedom Beach, which he noted is ranked among the world's most beautiful beaches.

Mr Chalermpong said he reported the findings to the Director-General of the Department of Forestry,



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee / Facebook

who subsequently ordered officials to seize structures built on the land, believed to be luxury resort developments, and return the area to state ownership.

He added that encroachment in the Freedom Beach area has been ongoing, with repeated attempts to occupy and develop forest land.

Mr Chalermpong warned that forest encroachment across Phuket, particularly in watershed areas, has reached critical levels, contributing to severe water shortages during the dry season.

"Phuket is an island and a major tourist destination, but it is now facing en-

vironmental problems, water scarcity and the loss of its natural beauty," he said.

"Forests are being cleared to build luxury homes and holiday residences for influential individuals and investors."

He also questioned the performance of forestry authorities, raising concerns over whether the issue stems from negligence, insufficient personnel or pressure from powerful capital groups affecting enforcement.

During the inspection, authorities made arrests and initiated legal proceedings against individuals found

occupying the land and structures, he said. Some suspects were found to be using land title documents that are now under investigation, amid suspicions they may have been improperly issued or certified by officials.

Mr Chalermpong said he would pursue a thorough investigation to prevent further encroachment and called on the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and all relevant agencies to take the issue seriously.

"I urge all authorities to protect Thailand's natural resources, which are national assets," he said.

## RAID AFTER RAID

The latest findings follow a major multi-agency raid on Mar 24, when more than 100 officials inspected the hills behind Freedom Beach within the Nakkerd Hills National Forest Reserve after complaints from local residents.

The operation, led by Phuket Provincial Palad Mr Rungruang under orders from Governor Nirat Pongsithaworn, uncovered widespread encroachment, including land clearing, road construction and the building of homes and shops within protected forest land.

Five people were arrested at the scene for violations of the Forest Act, including one suspect found in illegal possession of a firearm. All were handed over to Karon Police for legal action.

Officials also discovered four elephants chained in the forest, believed to have been used for logging, along with illegal utility cabling and evidence of land being divided and offered for sale despite its protected status.

Residents reported being

intimidated and blocked from accessing their homes, prompting calls for urgent enforcement action to restore order and protect local rights.

Earlier, complaints had also been lodged over the alleged sale of plots within the Freedom Beach area, with multiple buyers claiming they were misled into purchasing land later found to lie within a national forest reserve.

Affected buyers submitted formal complaints to provincial authorities on Mar 19-20, calling for an investigation into land titles and those involved in the transactions. Some also petitioned the National Anti-Corruption Commission to examine whether any officials had facilitated the sales.

Authorities have since confirmed that the land in question is suspected to fall within protected forest boundaries, where private ownership is restricted, and have pledged a full investigation, including verification of land documents and legal action against those responsible.

# Immigration denies B200 'airport special lane' claims

IMMIGRATION DIVISION 2 HAS attributed long queues at Phuket International Airport over the weekend to a temporary system malfunction, firmly denying reports that passengers were charged to access special lanes.

Speaking at a press conference held at Suvarnabhumi Airport last Sunday (Mar 29), Pol Col Pongthorn Pongrachatanan, Deputy Commander and spokesperson for Immigration Division 2, said an investigation found the disruption was caused by delays in the immigration information system during a peak departure period.

The issue occurred on Saturday (Mar 28) between 8:55am and 1:40pm, forcing officers to switch to offline processing in line with standard operating procedures. Measures were introduced to streamline checks and maintain passenger flow under close supervision, Pol Col Pongthorn said.

During the disruption, 52 departing flights carrying around 8,500 passengers passed through the airport, far exceeding the immigration hall's capacity of about 600 people. This led to severe congestion, with queues extending outside the terminal, he admitted.

Pol Col Pongthorn stressed the situation was due to system limitations and high passenger volume, not officer negligence.

Phuket Airport Immigration Superintendent Pol Col Rasarin Thiraphatthanakun deployed all available staff, with all 18 inspection lanes fully operational. Despite some equipment undergoing maintenance,



Photo: Khao Phuket

officers continued processing passengers, with waiting times reported at up to 33 minutes, Pol Col Pongthorn noted

Normal operations resumed at 2pm once the system was restored, he said.

Pol Col Pongthorn said that Immigration Division 2 also rejected claims that officials opened special lanes in exchange for fees of B200, stating all procedures were conducted in accordance with regulations. Passengers witnessing any misconduct are urged to report it.

Contingency plans are in place for system failures and confirmed that automated border control (ABC) lanes are being installed to improve processing times in the near future, Pol Col Pongthorn said.

Pol Col Pongthorn apologised for the inconvenience and said the incident would be used to improve system coordination and service efficiency. *The Phuket News*

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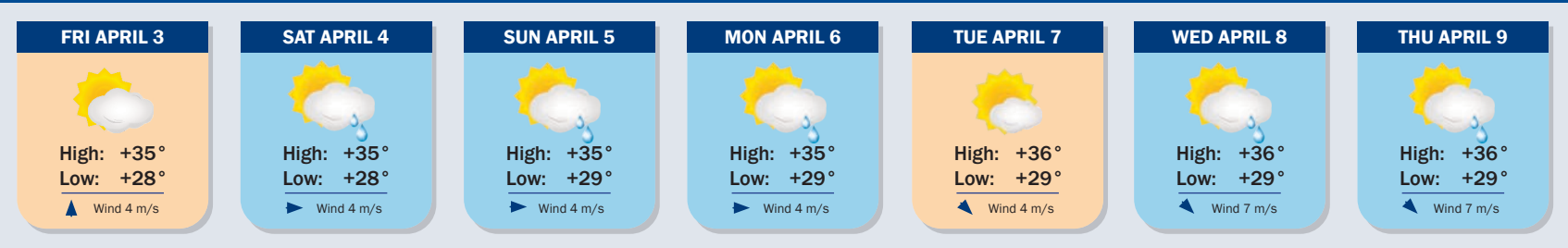
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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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## American dies after fall from Patong Tower

AN AMERICAN TOURIST was found dead after reportedly falling from a building in Patong early on Mar 26.

Officers from Patong Police were notified of the incident at 6:57am, after a report was received that a foreign tourist had jumped from a building near Patong Tower on Thaweewong Rd.

Police and rescue workers arrived at the scene to find the body of a man later identified as a 75-year-old United States national Peter Colket Rakestraw, from Pennsylvania, lying on the ground beside the building. He was wearing a yellow short-sleeved shirt and black shorts.

Initial examination revealed multiple injuries, including trauma to the hip, fractured ribs and a severely deformed right ankle, consistent with a fall from height.

According to police, a hotel security guard, Sukri Maetae, told officers that he was patrolling the area at about 6:30am when he heard a loud noise. Upon checking, he discovered the man lying unresponsive and alerted hotel staff.

A receptionist, Ekachai Maisri, told police that Mr Rakestraw had been staying in the building for around two years, periodically travelling back to the United States. He added that



Photo: Patong Police

the man had been due to return to the US on Mar 26 and had previously spoken about suffering from a chronic illness, expressing concerns that he might not have much time left.

In the man's room, officers found several handwritten notes and letters detailing his cancellation of his return flight to the US, along with instructions of what to do with his belongings.

A forensic doctor from Vachira Phuket Hospital, Dr Tulwich Wannasri, conducted a preliminary examination at the scene. The body has since been transferred for a post-mortem, recorded under case number 21/2569.

Police confirmed that there were no immediate signs of foul play or theft. Investigators are reviewing CCTV footage and continuing inquiries as part of standard procedure.

Patong Police have also begun coordinating with relevant authorities to notify Mr Rakestraw's relatives and contact the US Embassy to facilitate further arrangements.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Gun 'play' leaves man shot in neck

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A 20-year-old man remains in hospital after being shot in the neck when a friend allegedly fired an unregistered gun while playing with it at a house in Srisoonthorn on Mar 26.

The incident occurred at about 6:15pm at a residence in Moo 2, Srisoonthorn, with the injured man later identified by police as Thanawat Thiwplod.

Thalang Police reported that officers were notified of the shooting via the station radio centre and proceeded to Thalang Hospital, where the victim was receiving treatment. Despite the gunshot wound to the right side of his neck, Mr Thanawat was conscious and able to speak with officers.

He told police that a friend, identified as Jiraphat Liponpol, had accidentally discharged the firearm and then rushed him to hospital.

Police investigations found that the three men were friends and had been spending time together at the house prior to the incident. The firearm's owner, Kantaphon Watjang, had reportedly left the weapon at the house when he went home to shower.

During his absence, Mr Jiraphat allegedly picked up



Photo: Thalang Police

the gun to play with it, causing it to discharge and strike Mr Thanawat in the neck.

At about 10pm the same night, Mr Kantaphon and Mr Jiraphat presented themselves at Thalang Police Station to provide statements to investigators. Mr Kantaphon admitted ownership of the firearm, which he said he had purchased in Phatthalung.

A background check confirmed that the weapon was a 'Thai-made' firearm ('Thai Pradit') and was not registered. Police also

confirmed that Mr Kantaphon did not hold a valid firearms licence.

However, officers reported that Mr Kantaphon has no prior criminal record.

Police are continuing their investigation and have yet to press charges, pending further evidence gathering. Officers are expected to conduct gunpowder residue tests and additional questioning as part of legal proceedings.

Mr Thanawat remains under medical care at Thalang Hospital.

## Pool cleaner caught for villa theft

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a Myanmar man who stole more than B3 million in valuables from a foreigner's rented villa while working as a pool cleaner, with all items recovered.

Chalong Police confirmed the arrest after the victim filed a complaint on Mar 21, returning from overseas to find the villa ransacked.

Stolen items included three Rolex watches worth about B2.7mn, B100,000 in cash, and electronics such as an iPad, iPhone, DJI drone, GoPro and PlayStation.

Investigators identified the suspect, a 27-year-old named



Photo: Chalong Police

only as 'Mr Wai', who had access to clean the pool and entered through unlocked doors.

Arrested on Mar 26, he confessed. Police recovered the items and returned them. He now faces theft charges.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Serial 'attack groper' arrested

A 30-YEAR-OLD MAN HAS been arrested in Chalong after allegedly carrying out a series of indecent assaults against women, with four victims – both Thai and foreign nationals – reporting attacks throughout March.

Chalong Police confirmed the suspect, identified only as 'Boy', was apprehended on Mar 25 after officers gathered evidence linking him to all four cases. The arrest was made under the direction of Pol Col Surasak Jaidee.

Police said the suspect, who rode a black Honda Click 125 motorcycle, used a similar method in each attack, approaching victims before using force to commit indecent acts. The assaults oc-



Image: Chalong Police

curred in both public and private areas, leaving victims with minor injuries and significant distress.

Investigators secured four arrest warrants from the Phuket Provincial Court before the arrest. The suspect has since confessed, police said.

He faces charges of committing indecent acts by force and has been handed over for legal proceedings. Police also noted a prior drug-related offence in 2023. *The Phuket News*

# Officials assure sufficient water supply for dry season

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

Phuket officials have assured that the island has sufficient water reserves to meet demand through the peak dry season, as authorities intensify monitoring and long-term planning to safeguard supplies.

Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn chaired a meeting on Mar 23 at the Provincial Waterworks Authority Phuket Branch in Kathu to review water levels and coordinate management strategies.

Officials reported that the island's three main reservoirs currently hold about 12 million cubic metres of water, or 52% of total capacity. At current consumption rates, this is enough for around 100 days, covering demand until the end of June if no rainfall occurs.

Despite geographic limitations as a mountainous island, authorities said the situation remains under control. Rapid runoff during the rainy season and limited natural storage often lead to shortages in drier months, compounded by rising demand from tourism and construction.

Water supply is being stabilised through multiple channels. The Provincial Waterworks Authority is producing about 126,720 cubic metres



Photo: PR Phuket

per day across eight treatment plants, supplemented by around 100,000 cubic metres daily from the Royal Irrigation Department, as well as additional supplies from private sources.

Forecasts indicate seasonal rainfall is expected to begin around Apr 20, or by May 1 at the latest, which should help replenish reservoirs.

To strengthen oversight, the governor has ordered the creation of an integrated water management database for real-time monitoring across agencies. Local administrative

bodies have also been tasked with surveying production capacity and identifying potential private-sector sources.

Meanwhile, contingency plans have identified more than 2,600 reserve water sources, including groundwater and wells, for emergency use.

Officials also reviewed infrastructure projects to boost long-term water security, including expansion of the Phang Nga-Phuket supply system and studies into sourcing water from Ratchaphra Dam.

# Teacher bequeaths estate to students

A PHUKET TEACHER has left behind a legacy of generosity, with her final will directing all her assets to support students and charitable causes.

Details of the will of Juriphan Poolsri, 50, were revealed at a press briefing at Wat Wichit Sangkharam on Mar 28, following her death from a chronic illness.

Her lawyer, Jatuporn Mintrawech, and Satree Phuket School director Panya Hatthi confirmed the will, prepared on Mar 21, set out her wish to donate all assets for public benefit, with a strong focus on education.

Funds from sources including the Government Pension Fund, funeral assistance and provident fund contributions will be transferred to the school. Mr Panya has been appointed executor, responsible for ensuring the assets are used as intended.

The funds will primarily support scholarships for underprivileged but high-achieving students. Each scholarship will provide B3,000, with three



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

awarded annually until the funds are exhausted.

Part of the estate will also fund a hot and cold water system in the teachers' lounge of the school's International Programme department, where Ms Juriphan worked.

Additional funds have been allocated for staff welfare, funeral support and wider community assistance.

Mr Panya said he was honoured to carry out her wishes with transparency and integrity.

Colleagues and relatives paid tribute to Ms Juriphan – known as 'Teacher Ju' – for her dedication, with her final act widely praised as an example of selfless giving.

Eakkapop Thongtub

# Phuket officials turn to food waste tech

PHUKET GOVERNOR NIRAT Pongsitthawon has overseen the installation of a food waste disposal system from Oklin (Thailand) Co Ltd at Phuket Provincial Hall, marking a step forward in the province's push towards a Zero Waste future.

Officials said the initiative focuses on managing waste at its source, particularly improving the sorting and treatment of organic waste. The system is expected to reduce the volume of waste entering Phuket's main disposal stream while limiting long-term environmental impacts.

The Oklin machine can break down food waste within 24 hours, converting it into usable by-products such as soil conditioners or organic fertiliser. The process also helps reduce foul odours, insect infestations and the build-up of harmful bacteria commonly linked to untreated waste.

Environmental benefits include lower methane emissions – a potent greenhouse gas – and a reduced carbon footprint from waste disposal.

Governor Nirat said implementing such practices in government offices would set an example for wider adoption.

"Starting waste management at the source in government agencies is an important step that can be expanded to society as a whole, in line with sustainable development principles," he said.

According to Oklin, its composting systems can collectively process more



Photo: PR Phuket

than 16 million kilogrammes of food waste annually, potentially reducing methane emissions by over 4.5mn kg per year and cutting carbon emissions by more than 7.4mn kg of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.

The company offers models suited to various scales, from small facilities handling 125kg of waste per day to larger systems processing up to 500kg daily, suitable for restaurants, hotels, schools and hospitals.

Food waste accounts for an estimated 40–60% of total waste and produces methane when sent to landfills. By contrast, Oklin's technology uses controlled microbial processes to safely convert waste into reusable material.

Officials said the initiative is a key milestone in Phuket's transition towards a sustainable, low-waste society.

The Phuket News



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# Developers push for single EIA rule

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Property developers in Phuket are calling for a major overhaul of environmental assessment requirements, urging authorities to allow a single Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) per development project instead of requiring separate reports for each building.

The proposal emerged last week alongside ongoing public consultations on the draft announcement of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (No. 2), which seeks to revise environmental protection measures across the island.

The draft, led by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), aims to address long-standing enforcement challenges, unclear legal wording and inconsistencies that have complicated development approvals in Phuket.

According to the MNRE Phuket report, developers argue that the current requirement to submit multiple EIAs within a single project creates unnecessary delays, higher costs and administrative burdens, particularly for large-scale developments comprising multiple buildings.



Photo: PR Phuket

“They are advocating for a unified EIA submission covering entire developments, saying this would better reflect how projects are planned and constructed in reality, while improving efficiency in approvals,” the report said.

However, concerns remain that easing EIA requirements could weaken environmental oversight if not accompanied by stricter monitoring mechanisms.

According to ONEP, the revised draft focuses on correcting urgent issues identified through continuous feedback from government agencies, private sector stakeholders and the public.

Key problems highlighted include unclear interpretation of several provisions – particularly Sections 6, 7, 8 and 13 – as well as “inconsistencies in enforcement”.

Practical issues cited include:

- No standard method for calculating permeable land and sustainable green space
- Lack of clear rules for hillside construction
- Uncertainty over modifying existing buildings in previously approved zones
- Conflicts in building height measurement under overlapping laws, including Ministerial Regulation No. 20 under the Building Control Act

There are also unresolved questions over land use rights, particularly involving state land such as SorPorKor agricultural reform land and royal property, as well as whether ownership changes after 2017 affect development rights.

## NEW DRAFT

The draft introduces clearer environmental requirements,

mandating that projects meeting defined criteria must complete either an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) or full EIA before construction or modification.

Revised thresholds would require EIAs for hotels, condominiums and residential buildings with 80 rooms or more, or total usable space exceeding 4,000 square metres, located at least 50 metres from the coastline.

While intended to reduce ambiguity and align with existing laws, stakeholders raised concerns that developers may attempt to bypass requirements by subdividing projects into smaller components.

Questions were also raised about whether the 50-metre coastal setback is sufficient in erosion-prone areas.

At a public seminar held on Mar 26 at Royal Phuket City Hotel, Vice Governor Adul Chuthong said Phuket’s rapid growth, particularly in tourism and land development, has increased pressure on natural resources.

He stressed that revising the measures is critical to improving clarity, reducing disputes in interpretation and ensuring balanced development.

Sujitra Yuthong, representative from ONEP noted that environ-

mental protection measures remain a key legal tool to control and mitigate impacts from development, but acknowledged past enforcement has been hindered by unclear provisions.

Despite efforts to improve clarity, the draft has sparked debate over several sensitive issues, including: expanded use of state land in high-altitude areas above 80 metres; removal of restrictions tied to land ownership before 2017; and potential increase in development in environmentally sensitive zones.

She warned that without stricter safeguards, these changes could accelerate development in vulnerable areas.

“At the same time, new requirements for EIAs and IEEs may increase compliance costs and delays, particularly for smaller operators,” she added.

Following the public consultation process, ONEP will compile feedback, revise the draft and proceed through legal procedures before any changes are enacted.

Mr Adul said in the seminar, “The goal is to create a regulatory framework that better reflects Phuket’s current development realities while maintaining long-term environmental sustainability – though key questions over enforcement and oversight remain unresolved.”

## Airlines slash Songkran fares

AIRFARE DISCOUNTS of up to 30% will be offered on nearly 30,000 seats across 191 domestic flights during the upcoming Songkran holiday, as aviation authorities move to ease travel costs amid soaring demand.

Air Chief Marshal Manat Chuwanaprayoon, Director of the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), said the agency has been monitoring ticket prices during peak periods and coordinating with airlines to keep fares “appropriate and fair”.

The measures will apply from Apr 10-15, covering the peak Songkran travel window, when domestic demand surges nationwide.

CAAT has worked with six airlines – Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Thai AirAsia, Nok Air, Thai Lion Air and Thai Vietjet – to cut ticket prices by 15-30% on 11 key routes. These include Bangkok to Chiang Mai, Phuket, Hat Yai, Samui, Nakhon Sri Thammarat,



Photo: Thai AirAsia

Surat Thani, Krabi, Trang, Narathiwat and Khon Kaen.

Airlines have also expanded capacity. Bangkok Airways added 24 extra Samui flights, providing 1,680 additional seats, while Thai Airways upgraded some services to wide-body aircraft, adding a further 1,428 seats.

Despite the intervention, CAAT noted that external pressures remain. Ongoing conflict in the Middle East has pushed jet fuel prices up by more than 100% compared with February, typically driving fares higher.

Nevertheless, discounted fares will remain in place throughout the

holiday period, ACM Manat confirmed.

CAAT said the cheapest tickets have largely sold out due to strong demand, with prices expected to ease later in April once travel subsides.

Checks on Mar 25 showed Bangkok-Phuket fares elevated before Songkran before dropping afterwards, with similar trends across most carriers.

CAAT said the measures reflect sector-wide cooperation to ensure passengers can travel conveniently, safely and at reasonable cost during one of Thailand’s busiest holidays.

The Phuket News

## Commodity prices hold steady

CONSUMER PRICES across Phuket have remained largely stable despite rising energy costs linked to tensions in the Middle East, with officials stepping up monitoring and expanding subsidised goods programmes to ease living expenses.

Phuket Provincial Commerce Office Chief Waranit Apiratjirawong said her office is closely regulating prices in line with the law, focusing on goods affected by fuel and transport costs. Businesses are required to clearly display prices, while officials are regularly deployed to inspect pricing, particularly for energy-linked items.

Some products have begun to edge upward. Agricultural goods such as limes and spring onions have seen slight increases, while egg prices have risen by about 20-30 satang per egg due to reduced output during the hot season. Farm-gate prices for pork and chicken have also increased, with chicken supply affected by disease surveillance measures.

Despite these pressures, most retail prices have



Photo: Phuket Provincial Commerce Office

remained unchanged, with many businesses absorbing higher transport costs. However, Ms Waranit warned that adjustments may be necessary if cost pressures persist. Imported goods, particularly plastics, are also expected to rise due to shipment delays, while only some medicines have recorded increases so far.

The latest daily price report for Mar 27 confirmed overall stability. Fresh pork averaged B139.50/kg, while whole chickens averaged B76/kg. Egg prices held at about B4.30 each. Vegetable prices were mixed, with kale and coriander slightly down, Chinese cabbage up, and chillies steady.

Staples also showed little change, with jasmine

rice averaging B184 per 5kg, palm oil B49 per litre, and soybean oil B52. Seafood prices remained steady across key items.

To support households, the office continues its ‘Blue Flag Affordable Price’ initiative, offering essential goods below market rates.

Fuel station inspections on Mar 26 found prices in line with official rates and supply sufficient, despite temporary shortages at some stations. No hoarding was detected.

Officials warned that violations of price control laws carry penalties of up to seven years’ imprisonment, fines of up to B140,000, or both, and urged the public to report concerns.

The Phuket News

# Songkran fuel price cap fears

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Uncertainty has emerged over whether fuel prices can be capped during the upcoming Songkran holiday as the Oil Fuel Fund has fallen into a B42 billion deficit.

During a daily briefing by the Centre for Monitoring the Situation in the Middle East at Government House on Monday (Mar 30), Veerapat Kiatfuengfoo, deputy permanent secretary of the Energy Ministry, alluded to the Oil Fuel Fund deficit when asked by reporters if the government would sustain a ceiling on fuel prices through the Songkran festival.

He explained that B1.3bn needs to be paid in to the Oil Fuel Fund daily to maintain government subsidies on fuel prices before indicating the financial burden is expected to intensify in the near future.

Mr Veerapat did not answer if price caps would continue until the Songkran Thai New Year. He said the government might adjust the excise tax on oil to manage fuel prices and minimise impact on the public, especially during the Songkran festival when fuel consumption normally increases.

Supply constraints are continuing to exert pressure on prices, with Dubai crude exceeding US\$120 (approximately B4,000) per barrel on Mar 27, an



The price list at a gas station in Nonthaburi on Mar 26. Photo: Pattarapong Chatpattarasill

increase of roughly 72% from pre-Middle East war levels. At times, the price has even surged above \$200, reaching peaks near \$240 per barrel, Mr Veerapat said.

On Monday, the retail diesel price was held at B38.94 per litre while gasohol 95 stood at B41.05 per litre.

The deputy permanent secretary said Thailand's strategic oil reserves remain adequate at around 106 days. He noted however, that the estimation is based on purchased crude oil, fuel in transit and oil already in the nation's fuel supply system.

He added that global oil markets remain highly volatile amid the conflict in the Middle East and although there are other crude sources, high competition among countries is

driving up prices.

It came as energy experts raised concerns over the recent sharp fuel price increase, warning that it could worsen hardship and open the door to profiteering, before urging the government to implement reforms.

Assoc Prof Anusorn Tamajai, a People's Party MP and former Bangchak board member, said a gradual adjustment in line with global oil prices would have been more appropriate.

He said the sudden retail petrol and diesel price hike, announced at 9pm on Mar 25, would not effectively curb fuel smuggling to neighbouring countries because price gaps – driven by subsidies from the Oil Fuel Fund – remain wide.

# Chiang Mai world's most polluted city

## CHIANG MAI

IQAIR, A SWISS FIRM tracking pollutants, ranked Chiang Mai as the worst among polluted major global cities on Monday (Mar 30), as the northern province continues to be battered by forest and man-made fires.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) in the northern city was recorded at 263 as of 10am on Monday, a level marked "very unhealthy". The level of PM2.5 pollutants was measured at 188.0 microgrammes per cubic metre.

The situation in Chiang Mai was far worse than the second most-polluted city, Delhi, whose AQI was only 198 and PM2.5 was 122.0.

Chiang Mai also led the nation in the number of hot spots, at 480 on Sunday, almost doubling from 247 spots in neighbouring Mae Hong Son, according to the Department of National



Photo: Bangkok Post

Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation. Hot spots are due to natural bushfires in the dry season, burning-off by farmers and the activities of firebugs.

The hot-spots situation remains despite repeated legal warnings from authorities against burning-off and otherwise setting fires. Department Director-General Atthaphon Charoenchansa last Sunday admitted the number of hot spots in the country was worrying.

He warned that starting a fire in a state-protected area could result in a fine of B400,000 to B2 million and/or four to 20 years in prison.

Bangkok Post

# Traffic crackdown starts as warning phase ends

## BANGKOK

FULL LEGAL ENFORCEMENT FOR traffic offences came into effect on Wednesday (Apr 1) after the final day of the "warning-before-fines" period ended on Tuesday.

The stepped-up measures are part of a broader effort to strengthen road safety and reduce fatalities during periods of heavy travel, a government spokeswoman said on Monday.

Deputy government spokeswoman Aiyarin Phanrit explained that the government continues to treat road safety as a top national priority, particularly during holiday seasons when accident risks rise sharply.

Ms Aiyarin said authorities aim to lower the road fatality rate to 12 per 100,000 people by 2027, a target to be achieved through integrated and proactive measures.

These efforts include stricter enforcement of traffic laws, reducing risk factors related to road and vehicle conditions, and expanding public education campaigns to improve driving discipline, she explained.

Ms Aiyarin said the Royal Thai Police (RTP) have been implementing accident-reduction measures in three



Photo: Bangkok Post

phases, combining law enforcement with stronger public awareness.

The most recent phase, which ended on Tuesday, focused on outreach and warnings, she said, adding that since January more than 196,000 warnings have been issued through the Police Ticket Management system.

As of Wednesday, the RTP was set to shift to the second phase, which will specifically see the strict enforcement of 10 key traffic offences commonly linked to serious accidents.

Statistics from the Road Safety Directing Center show that during the 'Seven Dangerous Days' of the 2026 New Year holiday (Dec 30, 2025 to Jan 6, 2026), there were 1,511 accidents, 1,464 injuries and 272 deaths nationwide.

Speeding, drink-driving and abrupt lane-cutting were identified as the main causes. Bangkok Post

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# Project Hail Mary goes deep and hits its target

Ryan Gosling in Project Hail Mary. Photo: IMDb



David Griffiths

It sounds like one of the weirdest match-ups that Hollywood could ever imagine. Take the guys responsible for films such as *22 Jump Street* and *The Lego Movie* and put them in charge of bringing a novel written by Andy Weir – a man who writes science fact novels such as *The Martian*.

That idea becomes even wilder when you realise that Phil Lord and Christopher Miller also found themselves removed as the directors of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* due to the fact that Lucas-Film felt they couldn't handle the tone of it.

Yet here we are with *Project Hail Mary* – once again a science fiction film cemented in Weir's deeply scientific style of writing. So the big question is do they do the film justice? And the answer is simple – yes, they go above and beyond with this film.

Helped out by a screenplay by Drew Goddard (*The Martian*) the team tell the story of Ryland Grace (Ryan Gosling – *Blue Valentine*), an elementary school science teacher who one day wakes up alone on a space shuttle called the 'Hail Mary'. How he got there – at first he can't remember.

He then starts to piece the jigsaw puzzle together and remembers that he had been recruited by Eva Stratt

(Sandra Huller – *The Zone Of Interest*) who has been tasked with assembling a team to solve an outer space abnormality that could lead to the end of human existence within 30 years.

Somewhere along the journey though Ryland's role has changed. He has gone from the man who made a remarkable scientific discovery in a laboratory to now being the sole survivor on a ship sent to outer space to find the answers that will save humanity.

Adding to the mystery of what is happening is the fact that Ryland soon discovers that it is not only Earth that is danger and because of that he finds himself having to team up with a faceless rock alien whom he names Rocky (James Ortiz – *The Woodsman*) in order to find those answers.

### Deeply serious

When you read the plot of *Project Hail Mary* you could be forgiven for thinking that it sounds like a huge *Guardians of the Galaxy* style adventure – but nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, this becomes a deeply serious movie about a man who is forced to face some of humanity's biggest fears and all while also facing his own mortality. And, despite some comedic moments throughout the film, for much of the journey the audience find themselves deeply embedded in a storyline that takes some dark turns along the way.

Of course, films about space survival with a tinge of realism certainly aren't new. There have been the more serious films like *Sunshine* and *Gravity* and then of course the big blockbusters like *Armageddon*, but of those films really only *Sunshine* is the one that can hold its head high. *Armageddon* was purely designed for entertainment while *Gravity* really suffered from the fact that it went for style over substance.

In fact *Gravity*'s biggest weakness was the fact that it was very difficult to emotionally connect with the characters which of course led to a big problem when the audience was called upon to care what happened to them. That isn't the case with *Project Hail Mary*. Despite his reluctance to help in the beginning Ryland is still a likable guy and even Rocky is written in a way where the audience quickly warms to him.

Even the friendship between Ryland and Rocky is believable. We aren't led to believe that this is an easy thing to happen. They don't always understand each other and at times perhaps they

do accidentally hurt each other but that is the same for any friendship which makes it extremely relatable to the audience. And I dare anyone in the cinema not to feel some tears well up when the two begin to realise some of the darker things that are about to happen.

Some might feel that *Project Hail Mary* needs more big action set pieces but I am not convinced of that. To send Ryland on too many space walks I feel would take the movie into some very unbelievable territory. Ryland isn't an action hero he is a scientist – he's not trained to do many of the things you would expect a hero like character to do and the dangerous things that he does here are done out of necessity. The fact that he isn't trained to do them made me feel that the suspense was raised even further at those times because there was more of an element of danger for what he was doing. The fact that the directors had the skill to make those scenes feel realistic only added even more to that suspense.

Credit must also be paid to Gosling for his performance. He carries this movie and is virtually in every scene. He never over-acts or over does the comedy and it is that balanced performance that helps make Ryland a character that the audience cares about. Likewise, Huller is amazing as the stoic and gruff Eva. You can see that her character wants to get close to her crew but can't and that inner battle is told on Huller's face throughout the film.

Any doubt that Lord and Miller were not up to the task with *Project Hail Mary* is quickly eradicated as the film goes on. There is just the right mix of drama, comedy and suspense throughout the film while Gosling's performance and the creative presence around Rocky makes this a film that is going to be loved by generations to come.

*Project Hail Mary* is currently screening in Phuket and is rated 13+. 4/5 Stars

David Griffiths has been working as a film journalist for over 25 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. He currently hosts a film podcast called *The Popcorn Conspiracy*. He is also a Rotten Tomatoes accredited reviewer and is an alternate judge for the Golden Globes Awards. You can follow him at Facebook: [SubcultureEntertainmentAus](https://www.facebook.com/SubcultureEntertainmentAus).

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# Philippine Embassy Consular outreach mission receives praise

Maria Foz

Filipinos living in Phuket and nearby provinces expressed their deep gratitude to the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok for successfully conducting a Consular and Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) outreach mission recently.

Held on the weekend of Mar 14-15, the outreach mission served a large number of Filipinos residing not only in Phuket but also in surrounding provinces such as Phang Nga, Krabi, Trang, and Surat Thani, including Koh Samui. For many members of the Filipino community, the activity provided much-needed access to essential government services without the need to travel long distances to Bangkok, saving both time and money.

The two-day mission was led by Consul Susan Phoebe Sabado, who headed the consular outreach team in delivering vital services to Filipinos in southern Thailand. The team worked efficiently to ensure that applicants were assisted promptly and that all services were delivered smoothly despite the large number of attendees.

During the outreach mission, the consular team provided key services including passport application and renewal, solemnisation of marriage,



Photo: Supplied

notarisation, and overseas voter registration. These services enabled many Filipinos to update their legal documents, fulfill civil requirements, and register for their right to vote in upcoming Philippine elections.

The mission was conducted in close coordination with several Philippine government agencies. Among them were the Migrant Workers Office (MWO) Bangkok and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), which provided essential labor-related services. These included contract verification, issuance of Overseas Employment Certificates (OEC), processing of OWWA membership, and assistance with OWWA E-Cards.

seas Employment Certificates (OEC), processing of OWWA membership, and assistance with OWWA E-Cards.

### Responsive

Also present during the outreach were representatives from the Social Security System (SSS), who assisted members with their contributions, records, and benefit inquiries, as well as the Pag-IBIG Fund or Home Development Mutual Fund. The Pag-IBIG team offered on-site services for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and members, helping them update their membership

information, access savings programs, and learn more about available housing and loan benefits.

The participation of Pag-IBIG Fund aimed to ensure that members maintain accurate records and remain informed about programs and digital platforms that support Filipinos working abroad. This initiative reflects the government's continued commitment to making its services more accessible and responsive to the needs of overseas Filipinos.

Many members of the Filipino community expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the outreach mission. They highlighted how such initiatives bring government services closer to Filipinos living outside the capital, making it easier for them to comply with requirements and access assistance.

Beyond providing services, the outreach mission also strengthened the connection between the Philippine government and its citizens abroad, fostering a sense of unity and support within the community.

Filipinos in Phuket and neighbouring provinces look forward to the continuation of similar outreach programs in the future, as these efforts provide vital support, promote welfare, and reinforce the government's presence among overseas Filipino communities.

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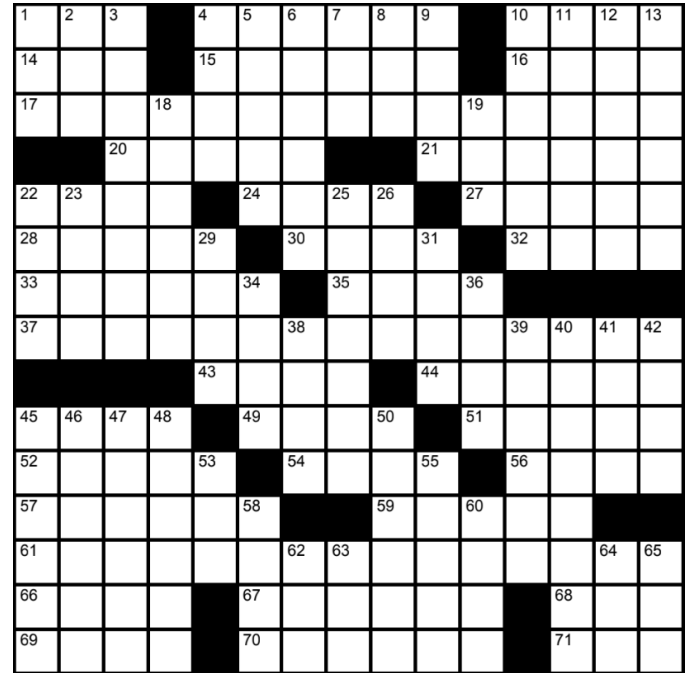
# POP QUIZ

1. Of what material was the hairspring made in early watches?
2. Who was the first black entertainer to win an Emmy award?
3. How many U.S. states share a border with Canada?
4. What is a Hummum?
5. In which sport are left-handed people banned from playing?

Answers below, centre

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. \_\_\_ Four
  4. Earl of Gloucester's son, in "King Lear"
  10. Sandwich filler
  14. Fertility clinic stock
  15. Marketplace
  16. "The Last of the Mohicans" girl
  17. Cheating, in a way
  20. Chimera
  21. It contains rods and cones
  22. Isaac's eldest
  24. Smoother
  27. Suitable for a certain noble
  28. Chair crosspieces
  30. Immaculate
  32. City in Arizona
  33. Ornamental Chinese tree
  35. Resting on
  37. Remained knowledgeable
  43. Prefix with scope or meter
  44. Cassandra, e.g.
  45. Water collector
  49. Exude
  51. \_\_\_ Sam
  52. In any way
- Down**
1. Watch chain
  2. Fifth, e.g.: abbr.
  3. Kerchief
  4. Keystone State port
  5. Void
  6. Molten rocks
  7. Last: abbr.
  8. Maximum
  9. No layabout
  10. Small constellation
  11. "\_\_\_ Academy"
  12. Combat zones
  13. Garam \_\_\_ (Indian spice mixture)
  18. Addict
  19. Sunburned
  22. Work units
  23. Something to follow
  25. Sporting dog
  26. Big East team
  29. Wicker basket
  31. Small salmon
  34. Keatsian works
  36. Lima's land
  38. Chafes
  39. Covered carriage
  40. Took place
  41. Pot over a fire
  42. Rind
  45. Tubular food
  46. Jazz fan, most likely
  47. Hotshots
  48. Flexible
  50. Iranian language
  53. Hallucinogen
  55. Cart part
  58. King of the road
  60. Neutral shade
  62. Part of FWIW
  63. Topper
  64. Johnson or Morrison
  65. Prohibition \_\_\_



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

## SUDOKU

Very Easy

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

### Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) Pigs Hair; (2) Harry Bellefonte; (3) 13; (4) Turkish bath; (5) Polo

### Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

6

-pack rings created by Saltwater Brewery in Florida are edible and feed, rather than kill, marine life if the rings end up in the ocean.

80

percent of Major League Baseball players over the past 25 years have fallen into the overweight or obese category.

95

percent of the world's population has health problems, with more than a third having more than five ailments.

5 million

hairs the average human has on his or her body.

86 billion

neurons the average human brain contains, which can form trillions of synapses, which is why a computer is so much slower.

Source: *Uberfacts*

## ISLAND VIEW



Heavy clouds descend on a near-deserted Mai Khao Beach. Photo by Gus Chesterton

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket? Email it to [editor3@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:editor3@classactmedia.co.th)

## This week in history

**Apr 3, 1851**  
Rama IV is crowned King of Thailand after the death of his half-brother, Rama III.

**Apr 4, 1968**  
Martin Luther King Jr is assassinated by James Earl Ray at a motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

**Apr 5, 1614**  
In Virginia, Native American Pocahontas marries English colonist John Rolfe.

**Apr 6, 1974**  
ABBA wins the Eurovision Song Contest with *Waterloo*, the first of a joint-record seven Swedish wins.



**Apr 7, 1906**  
Mount Vesuvius erupts and devastates Naples.

**Apr 8, 2014**  
Windows XP reaches its standard End Of Life and is no longer supported

**Apr 9, 1860**  
On his phonograph machine, Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville makes the first known recording of an audible human voice. Source: *Wikipedia*

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We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm. Sponsorship for drinks is available for just 12,000 baht and includes a generous promotional package from our media sponsors The Phuket News, Live 89.5 FM and Phuket News TV. Send us a message or email [growboatingphuket@gmail.com](mailto:growboatingphuket@gmail.com) for more details. There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees and 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. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket](https://facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket)

**SUN 5 APR**



**Angsana's Easter Glow Safari**

The eggs are glowing. The hunt is on. When dusk falls over Bang Tao Beach, the adventure is only just beginning. This Easter, we invite your little ones to Easter Glow Safari – a twilight celebration of colour, creativity and pure childhood joy on our Angsana Beach

Lawn. \* Art & Craft under the open sky \* Neon Egg Painting at dusk \* Easter Fun Games on the beach \* The Glowing Easter Egg Hunt – when night falls, the magic begins Plus Easter cookies, Easter fries and soft drinks for every little safari explorer. THB 599 per child (under 12 years) Sunday, 5 April 2026 17:00 – 20:00 hrs. Angsana Beach Lawn, Angsana Laguna Phuket Open to hotel guests and families across Bang Tao. Spots are limited, reserve yours today. <https://www.taste.angsana.com/book-easterglow-safari>



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Phuket's summer is calling - and Easter Sunday is your moment to answer. Join us by the sea at Bang Tao Beach for a sun-soaked afternoon of flavours, music and family moments. Live Fire. Live Pasta. Live Cooking. Explore six live stations, from Burrata Bar and tableside Tonnarelli Carbonara in a Parmigiano wheel, to truffle risotto, wood-fired pizzas and carving highlights including Whole Hog Porchetta and Black Angus Prime Rib. End on a sweet note with Easter Chocolate Delights, Nitro-Campari & Orange Sherbet and Azzurra's signature tiramisu. Music & Family Fun Live tunes by Eka Soundz set the mood, while little ones enjoy egg hunts and creative play by the beach. Because Easter is best shared by the sea. Sunday, 5 April 2026 12:00 – 16:00 hrs. At Azzurra Restaurant THB 2,390++ per person 50% off for children 6–12 years Complimentary for children under 6 (1 adult per 1 child). [www.angsana.com/thailand/laguna-phuket/azzurra-easter-sunday-brunch](http://www.angsana.com/thailand/laguna-phuket/azzurra-easter-sunday-brunch)

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**TUE 7 APR**



**Rotary Club of Patong Beach**

The only English-speaking Rotary Club in Phuket, we welcome Rotarians from around the world! With members from 18 nationalities, we are a diverse, dynamic, and well-known club in Thailand. 1st Tue each month - Fellowship dinner at different locations in Phuket, 3rd Tue each month - dinner meeting at Four Points by Sheraton Phuket Patong. Join us! if you are passionate about making a difference. More info - [www.facebook.com/RCoPB](https://www.facebook.com/RCoPB)

**SAT 9 MAY**



**Phuket White Collar Boxing**

Phuket is set for an exciting new addition to its social calendar as the first-ever Phuket White Collar Boxing. This glamorous black tie charity event will welcome over 400 guests for an unforgettable evening of live boxing, entertainment, great food and an after party at RAVA Beach Club. All proceeds go to the Laguna Children's Fund, helping to fund a brand new mobile library supporting orphanages across Phuket. 20 local participants, many of whom you may recognise, have taken on the challenge of stepping into the ring after 12 weeks of training, all to raise funds for the community. Tickets are now available at: [www.PhuketBoxing.com](http://www.PhuketBoxing.com) Whether you're coming for the boxing, the atmosphere or the cause, this is an event not to miss. Tables of 10 are available for the full experience.

**SAT 16 MAY**

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**PHAB 8 - Infinity Ball**

TICKETS ON SALE NOW! The Annual PHAB Gala Dinner is back – always an unforgettable night – and this year marks our 8th fundraising event with a very special theme: PHAB ∞ (Infinity). Infinity represents the endless impact that scholarship support has on our community. Every baht raised helps shape the future of young hospitality professionals, strengthens Phuket's tourism industry and creates opportunities that last a lifetime. Join us for an inspiring evening of great food, music and dancing, while helping us raise vital funds to change lives and build a more resilient future through education. We hope you can celebrate with us and be part of PHA. More info [phab.phukethotelsassociation.com](http://phab.phukethotelsassociation.com)

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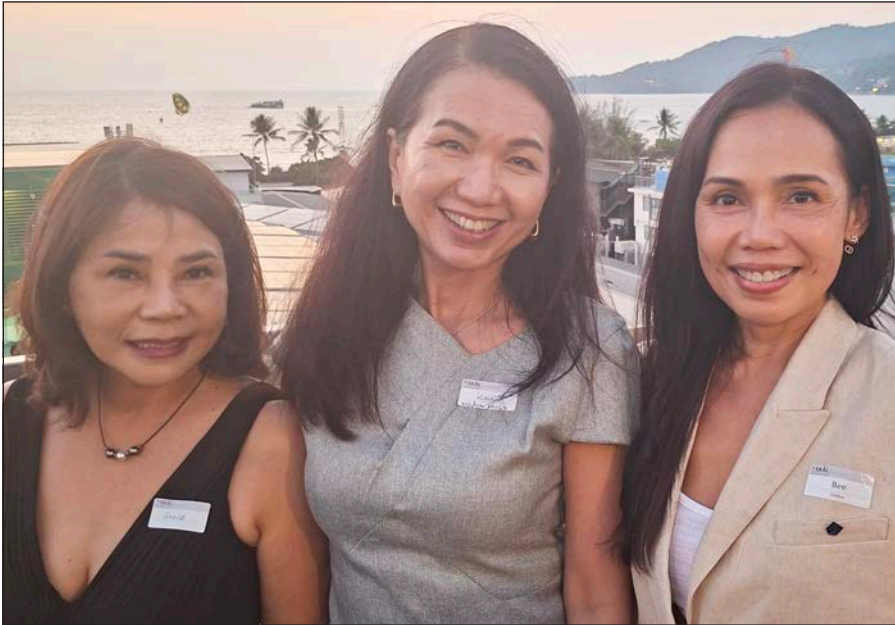
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### SKÅL PHUKET - MARCH DINNER

This month's Skål Phuket dinner was held on March 26 on the rooftop at the Kee Sky Lounge at The Kee Resort and Spa, Patong. The host of the month of March, Doeke Bonga, and his team welcomed members and guests for a great evening of 'Networking under the Stars'. The night started with networking drinks at Sky Bar, overlooking Patong Bay, followed by al fresco dinner at The Kee Sky Lounge rooftop. More info at [facebook.com/SkaIPhuket](https://facebook.com/SkaIPhuket)



### SAFFAS PHUKET MIXER

The first SAFFAS Social Networking & Phuket Sundowners was hosted by the South African–Thai Chamber of Commerce (SATCC) on Saturday, March 26, at Nora Beach Club on Bang Tao Beach. It was a great evening connecting with entrepreneurs and fellow South Africans in Phuket on the beach while taking in a glorious sunset. To find out more about the next event visit - [facebook.com/SATChamberofCommerce](https://facebook.com/SATChamberofCommerce)

## Phuket hosts annual fishing tournament

### FISHING

THE 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL Phuket Provincial Fishing Sports Tournament wrapped up on Mar 22 after three days of competitive fishing action.

The ever popular event, held at the lake at King Rama X Commemoration Park in Saphan Hin and organised by the Phuket Fishing and Sports Club, saw more than 150 participants compete for over B175,000 in prizes.

There were a total of 32 teams competing in three separate categories: speed boats, motor boats and long-tail boats.

The fishing gear permitted was standard duck rod and unlimited reel – hand line was not permitted – and the standard rules of the international fishing association were enforced during competition, which was open to amateurs and professionals alike.



Photo: PR Phuket

The game fish permitted included organic fish or wahoo fish, barracuda, monk fish, snakehead fish, rainbow fish, snapper fish, tuna, grouper and all kinds of sea bass.

Additionally there were three types of special prize fish: Char Grouper, Golden Fish and Amber Jack.

Much of the fish caught was brought ashore before going to auction, with a portion of the proceeds going to support charitable activities through the Phuket Care Center Foundation.

The annual event aims to promote marine tourism while stimulating the local economy, with Supachok La-ongphet, Phuket Town Mayor, overseeing the award presentation.

The Phuket News

## Magic Max downs the Rocket

### SNOOKER

Bangkok Post

Thepchaiya Un-Nooh produced one of the most astonishing performances ever seen on a snooker stage, dismantling Ronnie O'Sullivan 10-7 in the final of the World Open on Mar 22 in a showdown that will be remembered for years.

The Thai star, famed for his lightning pace around the table, conjured three consecutive centuries in the final three frames, including an unbelievable 147 maximum break that sent the crowd into raptures in Yushan, China.

It was the kind of snooker feast for the ages that fans dream of but rarely witness – a player in full flow against the sport's greatest champion, delivering perfection when it mattered most.

For Thepchaiya, 40, this was more than just a victory. It was his second ranking title, but by far the most significant. His first came at the Shoot Out in 2019, a format tailor-made for his quickfire style.

This triumph, however, was on the grand stage of a full-length ranking event, making him only the second Thai player to achieve such a feat after James Wattana's trailblazing win in 1995 at the Thailand Open.

The rewards were immediate: a career-best payday of £175,000 (B7.6 million), a leap up the world rankings from 39<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, and a coveted place in



Thepchaiya celebrates with the trophy. Photo: Bangkok Post

the Tour Championship in Manchester.

However, the numbers tell only part of the story.

What mattered most was the manner of victory – against O'Sullivan, the seven-time world champion, in a final that swung wildly before Thepchaiya seized control with a spellbinding burst, including a 77 clearance, a majestic 132, and then the maximum 147.

"I can't believe it," Thepchaiya admitted afterwards. "I'm still stunned by my performance. How did I do that? Sometimes snooker is one-way traffic. To make a 147 in a final against Ronnie O'Sullivan – it is a great honour.

"This was my dream final, and now it feels like a double dream. I will never forget this moment."

O'Sullivan, gracious in defeat, acknowledged the scale of the achievement.

"It has been a positive week, but I have to say Thepchaiya was unbelievable," said O'Sullivan. "He deserved his victory. He played much better than me today. I couldn't go with that. It was far too good for me."

The Rocket still had his own highlight of the week – a record-breaking 153 break in the quarter-finals, the highest ever compiled in professional snooker.

## Pronskiy wins Tour of Thailand

### CYCLING

KAZAKHSTAN'S VADIM PRONSKIY was crowned champion of the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Cup Tour of Thailand 2026 in Nong Khai last Sunday (Mar 29).

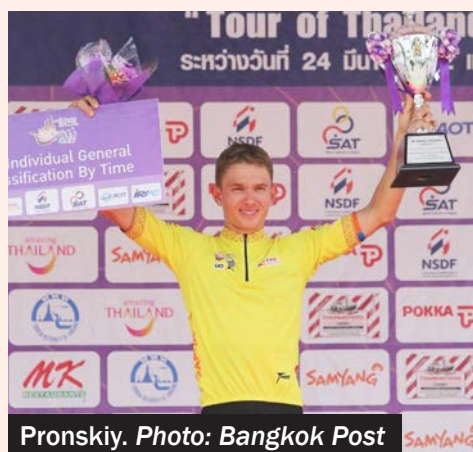
The Terengganu Cycling Team rider finished in 18<sup>th</sup> place in the 125.50km sixth and final stage, starting from HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary Plaza and finishing at Nong Khai Main Stadium.

Pronskiy, whose only stage win came on Thursday, finished on top of the overall standings with a time of 17:36.10 hours. Li-Ning Star's Argentine Eduardo Sepulveda (+0.03) and British rider Daniel Whitehouse (+0.09) of St George Continental Cycling Team came second and third respectively.

Athit Poulard of Roojai Insurance Winspace was the best Thai rider, finishing eighth overall in 17:36.48 hours, 38 seconds behind winner Pronskiy.

Poulard also picked up the Best ASEAN Rider award. Fellow Thai, Sarawut Sirironnachai, of the Thailand national team took second place in 17:37.20 and the Philippines rider Marvin Mandac of Go For Gold Philippines was third in 17:37.48.

Li-Ning Star won the overall team general classification with a total time of 52:49.01 hours. The second place was



Pronskiy. Photo: Bangkok Post

taken by Terengganu Cycling Team in 52:49.48 and China Anta-Mentech Cycling Team took third place in 52:51.50 hours.

Go For Gold Philippines won the Best ASEAN Team award. The Thailand national team took second place and Nusantara Cycling Team from Indonesia was third.

Li-Ning Star's Danish rider Alexander Salby claimed his second straight stage win, topping the timesheet in 2:35.41 hours. Terengganu Cycling Team's French rider Pierre Barbier, winner of the first two stages, was second and Malaysian Mohamad Izzat Hilmi from Malaysia Pro Cycling Team came third.

Sarawut Sirironnachai from the Thailand national team was the best home performer for the day, finishing in 13<sup>th</sup> place. Bangkok Post

## Teenager Kimi sets F1 record

### FORMULA ONE

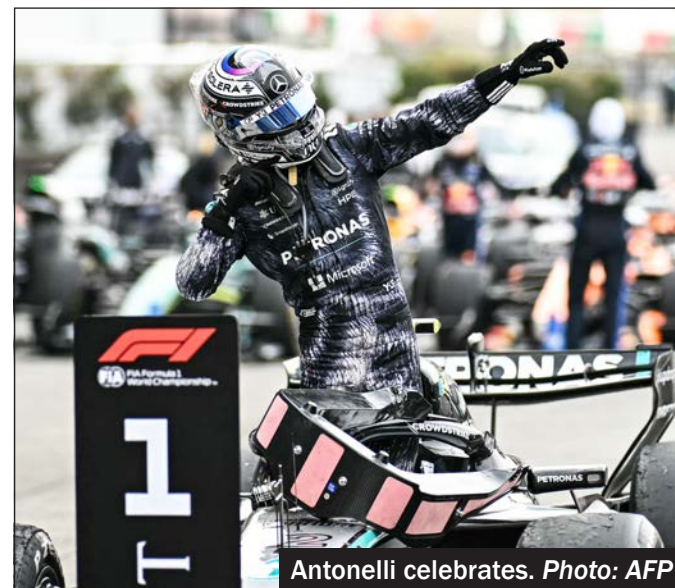
MERCEDES' KIMI Antonelli won the Japanese Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 29) for his second straight victory, as the 19-year-old Italian became the youngest driver in Formula One history to lead the world championship standings.

Antonelli took advantage of a mid-race safety car to leapfrog into the lead after a dreadful start from pole position and led home McLaren's Oscar Piastri by 13.722 seconds with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc a further 1.548sec back in third.

Antonelli moved up to 72 points and leads the championship by nine points after three races, building on the first grand prix win of his career two weeks previous in China.

His Mercedes teammate George Russell finished fourth to drop to second in the championship standings on 63 points. Leclerc is third on 49.

Russell battled Piastri for the lead over the first half of the race but pitted



Antonelli celebrates. Photo: AFP

just before the safety car following Oliver Bearman's crash, which dropped him out of contention for the win.

Piastri secured second in his first grand prix start of the season, after crashing on his way to the grid in the opener in Australia and missing the race in China because of a technical problem.

Piastri led for the first half of the race before the safety car gave Antonelli his chance.

McLaren's world champion Lando Norris was fifth ahead of Ferrari's

Lewis Hamilton and Alpine's Pierre Gasly.

Red Bull's four-time world champion Max Verstappen, the winner in Japan for the past four years, was eighth after starting from 11<sup>th</sup> on the grid.

Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson and Esteban Ocon of Haas rounded off the top ten finishers.

F1 now takes an extended break until the Miami Grand Prix on May 3.

The Bahrain and Saudi Arabia races scheduled for April have been cancelled because of the war in the Middle East. AFP

# Salah to leave Liverpool

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Mohamed Salah announced on Mar 24 that he would be leaving Liverpool at the end of the season after a glittering nine-year spell at the club.

An emotional Salah, 33, expressed his love for Liverpool, where he stands alongside the all-time greats.

“Liverpool is not just a football club. It’s a passion, it’s a history, it’s a spirit. I can’t explain in words to anyone not part of this club,” he said in a video posted on social media.

Salah, who arrived from Roma in 2017, has scored 255 goals for the Reds, putting him third on their list of leading goalscorers, behind only Ian Rush and Roger Hunt.

He has won two Premier League titles along with a Champions League and other silverware and piled up a remarkable number of personal awards.

But beyond his numbers, Salah was the poster boy of Jurgen Klopp’s Liverpool revolution at Anfield, helping fire the German’s team back to the summit of English and European football alongside the now departed Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino.

Salah was again the main man last season under new boss Arne Slot, scoring 29 goals to collect the Premier League Golden Boot award for a record-equalling fourth time as the club romped to a 20<sup>th</sup> English title.



Mohamed Salah will bid farewell to Liverpool at the end of the season. Photo: AFP

### GOODWILL

The winger signed a new two-year deal in April, riding a wave of goodwill, after months of speculation over whether he would stay or go.

But serious cracks emerged earlier this season when he said he had been “thrown under the bus” by Liverpool and that his relationship with head coach Slot had broken down after a dramatic dip in form that meant the Egyptian was repeatedly benched.

Soon afterwards he left for the Africa Cup of Nations but he returned to the Liverpool fold in January, becoming a regular starter again.

Slot tried to draw a line under the incident but Salah did not publicly apologise and speculation over his future never entirely went away.

Salah’s own future is uncertain – he has previously been linked with a switch to Saudi Arabia, while other options include Major League Soccer in the United States or a return Italy’s Serie A.

But before his departure comes a lengthy and emotional farewell.

It also means Liverpool are braced for another expensive summer transfer window as they seek to return to the top.

# New FIFA ruling a boost for women coaches

## FOOTBALL

ALL TEAMS PARTICIPATING in a women’s tournament organised by FIFA will be required to have a female head coach or assistant after football’s governing body passed groundbreaking regulations at its council meeting on Mar 19.

The change applies to all youth and senior tournaments, national team competitions and club competitions, and will debut at the Under-20 women’s World Cup in Poland in September.

It will also be in use at the second edition of the women’s Champions Cup, the 2027 World Cup in Brazil and the inaugural women’s Club World Cup in two years’ time.

FIFA said the initiative is part of its broader strategy “to ensure that the rapid growth of the women’s game is matched by an increased representation of women in technical and leadership roles”.

In spite of the growth of the women’s game, coaching positions are still occu-



England coach Sarina Wiegman. Photo: AFP

ried largely by men: at the 2023 women’s World Cup just 12 of the 32 head coaches were female.

“The new FIFA regulations, combined with targeted development programmes, mark an important investment in both the current and future generation of female coaches,” said Jill Ellis, FIFA’s chief football officer and former US national team head coach.

The new rules will also mandate at least two female staff on the bench, which can include the mandatory coach, and one woman on their medical staff. AFP

# Disgruntled Premier League fans back call to scrap VAR

## FOOTBALL

MORE THAN THREE-quarters of Premier League fans would like to see VAR scrapped and even more believe it has a detrimental impact on the matchday experience, according to a survey by the Football Supporters’ Association (FSA).

The poll of nearly 8,000 supporters, just over half of whom attend more than 15 home games a season, showed how unpopular the current system has become despite the Premier League insisting it has resulted in more correct decisions.

Asked if they support the use of VAR, 76% said they do not, with more than 70% disagreeing that it has improved the overall accuracy of refereeing decisions.

The consensus that VAR has made football less enjoyable was nearly unanimous at 97%, while over 90% disagreed it has made the matchday experience better.

“It does take away from what football is meant to be



Photo: AFP

and what those special moments are about,” said Thomas Concannon, the FSA’s Premier League network manager.

First introduced into the Premier League seven years ago, one of the common complaints about the technology is it is made for the television watching audience rather than those in the stadium, who are often unaware of the reason for delays in the game.

However, the survey found even 94% disagreed that VAR makes watching football on TV more enjoyable. AFP

In response, the Premier League said in a statement that their research “indicates fans are largely in favour of keeping VAR, but improving the way it is used.”

The prospect of any immediate changes to the rules appear unlikely.

In 2024, 19 out of 20 Premier League clubs decided to keep VAR.

In order for VAR to be scrapped, 14 out of the 20 Premier League clubs would have to vote against it following a new proposal for abolition by one of the teams in the English top-flight. AFP

# ONE releases four fighters from roster

## MMA

ONE CHAMPIONSHIP has released four fighters from its roster, with former MMA world champions Adriano Moraes and Zebastian Kadestam among the departures.

Heavyweight Mauro Cerilli and featherweight Ilya Freymanov are also included in the latest round of roster cuts.

All four competed in MMA during their time in ONE. Two are former world champions. All exit the promotion having lost their most recent fight.

Moraes is the most high-profile name of the group. The 37-year-old Brazilian leaves as a former two-time ONE flyweight MMA champion and one of the most significant fighters in the division’s history.

He shocked the sport in April 2021 when he knocked out Demetrious Johnson in the second round, handing the legendary American one of the most memorable de-



Moraes (left) and Kadestam. Photo: Bangkok Post

feats of his career.

Kadestam also departs as a former titleholder. The 35-year-old Swede won the ONE welterweight MMA title with a stoppage victory over Tyler McGuire in November 2018.

He lost the title by decision to Kiamrian Abbasov in October 2019 and was never quite able to force his way back to the top of the division, despite flashes of the danger that made him champion in the first place.

Russian fighter Freymanov, 30, looked like one of the promotion’s more dangerous featherweight prospects when

he entered the picture in 2022, stopping Martin Nguyen and then Shinechagtga Zoltsetseg inside the first round.

But that momentum vanished almost instantly when he lost to Thanh Le after just 62 seconds of their interim featherweight title bout in October 2023.

Italian Cerilli, 43, last fought in February 2025, when he suffered a leg injury during a first-round TKO loss to Kirill Grishenko.

It is understood all four were informed they could be welcomed back in future should they rebuild momentum elsewhere outside the organisation.

Bangkok Post

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

# Sport



Antonelli goes big in Japan at F1 GP > p14

## PENGUIN POWER



### Patong Penguins eye Phuket cricket title

The victorious Patong Penguins' line-up in front of the ACG stand on Mar 16. Photo: Nitt Wetherell

#### CRICKET

Neil Quail

Patong Penguins issued a strong statement towards claiming the Phuket Cricket League title in their victory over Cherg Talay Cricket Club (CCC) at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalung recently.

Undoubtedly, CCC has proven their worth with early successes and the introduction of formidable players that strike concern into established sides here on the island.

However, the league's fourth outing on Sunday, Mar 15, proved that commitment to providing not only formidable players, but a full strength team, is fundamental to long term hopes of a title challenge.

Starting with only nine players

due to several late drop outs, glaring gaps in the CCC field would inevitably lead to boundaries being found, where normally they would not, or potential catches not being picked up, where they possibly could.

CCC's frustration became manifest immediately, with the opening two overs from Camdon Dicks and captain Andrew McMillan going for 33 runs – 18 and 15, respectively, including six boundaries.

The following five overs saw the bleed stemmed somewhat before another scoring outburst leading to the 10<sup>th</sup> over drinks' break boosted Penguins to a 94-run total from openers Simon Wetherell and Pelham Myburgh.

#### ATHLETIC

The game's second session certainly swung in CCC's favour,

with skipper McMillan leading a tremendous three-over resuscitation almost immediately after drinks.

The threat of Myburgh (39) – a former Namibia international – was first to be removed with an athletic caught and bowled by McMillan in the 11<sup>th</sup> over, before Eric Roberts claimed the wicket of Wetherell (43), caught by McMillan at mid-on in the 12<sup>th</sup>.

A second wicket (and wicket-maiden) for McMillan in the very next over ended Sunny Bowry's explosive 10-run cameo, finding a distinct, audible edge direct into the gloves of keeper Jacob King.

A solid spell from Ashton Dicks paid dividends in the last over before the 20-over drinks' break, pegging the rooted back foot of Ajay Sampige for a clear-cut LBW decision and the

score now on a slightly more digestible 157 for 4, for CCC.

The partnership between Craig Morgan and Jagsir Brar for most of the third session, however, would have CCC reaching for indigestion tablets, with the pair adding over 60 runs to the score in just five overs. Both Morgan (47) and Brar (48) fell agonisingly short of their half-centuries near the close of their innings, with Roberts catching Morgan of the bowling of Peter Burges and Brar falling victim to a stumping.

#### GALLANT CHASE

Going into lunch, Penguins were sitting on a very challenging total of 242, while CCC knew basting the full 28 overs would essential if this mammoth total were to be achieved.

While it was a gallant chase, especially from McMillan and

Ashton Dicks, the run-rate was always just out of reach throughout the game.

CCC too came painfully close to a couple of landmark scores, with McMillan needing just one more run for his century ending on 99 not out off 89 deliveries, while Dicks saw his stumps rattled by Sajal Gaur one short of his 50. Brother Camdon weighed in with the third best score of 24 before running out of overs on a score of 195.

Man-of-the-match was awarded to Andrew McMillan for his 99 not out and his bowling figures of 2 for 38 off 5. Ashton Dicks claimed second spot with his 49 and 2 for 40 off 6.

All teams now have secured a win and a loss in the Phuket Cricket League, with Penguins taking on KCC in the next encounter.

## Children's Summer Activity Project underway

#### ALL SPORTS

AN ANNUAL PROJECT to encourage children in Phuket to engage in a variety of sporting and academic activities kicked off on Mar 26.

The project is based at Saphan Hin Sports Center and sees over 600 local school children engaging in 18 different sporting and academic activities across a

two-week timeframe, with the project concluding on Apr 9.

Thammawat Wongcharoenyos, Sports Authority of Thailand Committee Member and President of the Phuket Provincial Sports Association, oversaw the official opening ceremony at Phuket City Municipality Sports Complex.

Joining Mr Thammawat were: Warin Khaothong, Secretary to the President of

the Phuket Sports Association; Supachok La-ongphet, Phuket Town Mayor; Kittiwong Chansatthatham, Advisor to Mr Supachok; Thachanon Angkhanapilas, President of the Phuket City Municipal Council; and selected heads associated government agencies, lecturers, coaches, parents and the participating youngsters.

Mr Supachok explained that the summer activity

project is held annually during school breaks to encourage children to use their free time productively, to avoid vices such as drugs and crime, and to develop and strengthen character among the island's youth. This can help them become valuable members of society while developing their sporting and academic prowess across a number of disciplines, he added.

The children were

allowed to select which sporting and academic pursuits they wished to participate in during the course, with the following activities available, including the number of children taking part in each:

Balance Bike (15 students); Swimming (74); Football (45); Futsal (49); Badminton (48); Taekwondo (23); Karate (31); Table Tennis (21); Beach Volleyball (15); Art



Photo: Sports Association of Phuket

Education (51); Mental Arithmetic (30); Chess/Checkers (30); Indoor Volleyball (30); Petanque (28); Muay Thai (26); Basketball (35); Computer Studies (25); and Bridge (25). *The Phuket News*