

DEADLINES SET FOR BEACH DEMOLITIONS > PAGE 2

TARGET



Photo: TNA

BANGKOK MOVES TO SILENCE RUNGRUANG WITH CORRUPTION CHARGES

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Provincial Palad Rungruang Thimabut has been arrested by anti-corruption police over allegations that he acted as a middleman in a bribery scheme linked to local government recruitment examinations, just hours after returning to his post following a temporary transfer to Bangkok last week.

Mr Rungruang, who served as the Phuket Provincial Office's Chief Administration Officer, was taken into custody by officers from the Central Investigation Bureau's Anti-Corruption and Misconduct Suppression Division (ACMSD) late last Friday night (June 26) under an arrest warrant issued by

the Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Region 9.

At 2:40am last Saturday (June 27), Mr Rungruang was escorted from Phuket Provincial Police Station after spending the night in custody.

He was first taken to a second-floor conference room at the station before being placed in a police transport van with yellow registration plates. His wife accompanied him in the vehicle, which was escorted by a Highway Police patrol car.

The convoy then travelled to Phuket City Police Station, where officers recorded the transfer in the station's daily log before Mr Rungruang was transported to Songkhla Province to be handed over to the investigating officer

responsible for the case for further legal proceedings.

The arrest came on the same day Mr Rungruang resumed duties as Phuket Provincial Palad after completing a 30-day transfer to the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) in Bangkok while an unrelated investigation – into the extortion of Patong nightlife venues by corrupt officials – was conducted.

On Saturday (June 27), DOPA issued Order No. 1894/2569 suspending Mr Rungruang from duty pending the outcome of the criminal investigation.

The order, signed by Deputy Director-General and Acting Director-General Wit Sarinukool on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of

Interior, states that Mr Rungruang, whose substantive position is Phuket Provincial Permanent Secretary, has been charged with accepting or agreeing to accept bribes or other benefits in return for unlawfully influencing government officials. For some reason, DOPA Director-General Narucha Khosa-silvilai, himself facing a corruption investigation, did not sign the order.

According to the order, Mr Rungruang's continued service could undermine public confidence in the Ministry of Interior and damage the reputation of the government, making it appropriate to suspend him while legal proceedings continue. The ministry noted that the case is unlikely to conclude quickly...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NEWS PAGE 3

MP takes fire at entrenched corruption



LIFE PAGE 8

Local peninsula offers a haven of fine wildlife



SPORT PAGE 16

Surf's up at Patong junior surfing comp



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News



PRIDE takes centre stage in town > p5

Corruption scandals rock Phuket

Continued from page 1

Mr Rungruang has the right to appeal the suspension within 30 days.

EXAM SCANDAL

According to investigators, the case stems from allegations that Mr Rungruang promised to help applicants secure positions in local government by arranging illicit payments to officials connected with recruitment examinations – a national scandal that has now surfaced involving systemic corruption by officials amounting to billions of baht (see page 7).

Police allege three complainants, who had known Mr Rungruang since 2020 when he served as district chief of Sungai Padi District in Narathiwat, approached him after failing local government entrance examinations twice.

The complainants told investigators that they met Mr Rungruang in Songkhla in March this year, where he allegedly claimed he could ensure they passed the examinations in exchange for payments.

Police say each applicant paid B300,000, for a total of B900,000. When none of the applicants passed the examinations, they filed complaints with anti-corruption investigators.

Commander of the Anti-Corruption Division Pol Maj Gen Prasong Chalermphan said Mr Rungruang is accused of demanding, accepting or agreeing to accept benefits in exchange for unlawfully influencing state officials, offences carrying prison terms of more than three years.

Although prosecutors opposed bail, citing concerns about interference with witnesses, the court granted Mr Rungruang temporary release on a B100,000



Mr Rungruang has the charges explained to him. Photo: TNA

surety under strict conditions. The court warned that his bail would be revoked if he attempted to interfere with witnesses or evidence.

The arrest comes amid heightened scrutiny of Mr Rungruang following his involvement in another high-profile controversy.

He was one of five senior Interior Ministry officials transferred to Bangkok on May 25 while authorities investigated allegations that local officials had extorted payments from entertainment venue operators in Patong.

The transfer also followed the emergence of a leaked LINE chat message reading 'Help Namngern', which Mr Rungruang later publicly disclosed as part of complaints against senior officials.

His reassignment expired last Friday, allowing him to return to his duties in Phuket before his arrest later the same day.

Two district chiefs who had been transferred alongside Mr Rungruang were also allowed to resume their duties after investigators found no grounds for serious disciplinary action.

TARGETED

Mr Rungruang's arrest came just hours after he returned to duty following a 30-day transfer ordered by DOPA Director-General Narucha Khosasilvilai.

Regarding the transfers of the five officials over the Patong extortion allegations, DOPA said at the time that the transfers were administrative measures to facilitate a fact-finding investigation and stressed that no findings of wrongdoing had been made against any of the officials.

On June 24, DOPA informed Phuket Provincial Hall that its investigation had concluded and instructed that Mr Rungruang be allowed to resume his duties. He returned to work on Friday (June 26) before being arrested later that day in the unrelated recruitment examination bribery case.

Meanwhile, DOPA Chief Narucha has not publicly released any findings of its investigation into the Patong extortion allegations.

'SET UP'

Throughout the 30-day investigation, Mr Rungruang maintained that he had done nothing wrong

and claimed the complaints against him were retaliation for his role in high-profile enforcement operations against illegal occupation of public land at Freedom Beach and Bang Tao Beach.

He publicly described the transfer as "a setup by influential people" – an allegation widely supported – and alleged that he had refused requests to halt enforcement action against encroachers.

Mr Rungruang also travelled to Parliament to petition for an investigation into his transfer, arguing that political interference may have influenced DOPA's decision.

'HELP THE BLUE'

As part of his complaint, Mr Rungruang released screenshots of an alleged LINE conversation in which a message reading 'Help Namngern' ('Help the Blue') was purportedly sent by DOPA Director-General Narucha during the lead-up to the general election in February.

The phrase was widely interpreted as referring to the Bhumjaithai Party, whose political colour is blue, and whose party leader is Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

Anutin also continues to serve as Minister of Interior, a post he has held uninterrupted for eight years through four administrations. Of note, the Ministry of Interior directly oversees the operations of DOPA and DOLA.

Yet, Mr Narucha denied sending the message, said his LINE account was accessible from multiple devices and rejected allegations that he had interfered in the election or acted on behalf of any political party.

Despite the denial, Phuket

MP Chalermpong Saengdee and People's Party deputy leader Wiroj Lakkhanaadisorn subsequently lodged formal complaints with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and the Election Commission seeking investigations into the alleged messages and possible election interference.

GROUND FORCES

While the political controversy surrounding the leaked chat was escalating, DOPA launched a series of high-profile operations targeting allegedly unlicensed hotels in Phuket.

A special DOPA operations team was deployed from Bangkok to raid accommodation businesses in Phuket in what was called part of a nationwide campaign against illegal hotels – but seemed to be enforced only in Phuket.

The operations drew criticism from sections of Phuket's tourism industry, which have for years openly argued that many accommodation operators are unable to obtain hotel licences because existing planning and zoning laws make legal registration effectively impossible (see page 6).

Yet officials have allowed the hotels to operate, and now have come to raid and charge the business owners for illegally operating a hotel.

Critics questioned why Phuket became the focus of the enforcement campaign at the same time the DOPA Director-General Narucha is facing formal complaints over the 'Help the Blue' controversy.

Meanwhile, DOPA has yet to publicly disclose the outcome of, or any progress in, its investigation into the allegations of extortion of Patong nightlife venues by corrupt officials.

Deadlines set for beach demolitions

DEPUTY INTERIOR Minister Worasit Liengprasit has ordered authorities to press ahead with demolishing illegal structures at Freedom Beach and Nui Beach while expanding investigations into hundreds of suspected foreign nominee companies allegedly used to acquire land illegally in Phuket.

Speaking in Bangkok after inspecting alleged public land encroachment and foreign nominee land ownership on the island, Mr Worasit said authorities had

made significant progress in three key areas: Bang Tao Beach, Freedom Beach and Nui Beach.

Police have completed investigations into allegations involving influential figures and bribery linked to Bang Tao Beach, while the Anti-Corruption Division will report on the involvement of government officials. Investigations at Freedom Beach and Nui Beach, both within protected national park land, are continuing.

Mr Worasit said demo-

lition of illegal structures at Nui Beach is scheduled to begin in mid-July, with Freedom Beach demolitions to follow in August after legal appeal procedures are completed. He added that investigations into bribery allegations involving influential figures were "more than 99%" complete.

The announcement follows the Department of Forestry issuing demolition orders requiring the removal of 39 structures occupying more than 15 rai of protected forest at Nui

Beach by July 9, warning authorities will carry out the work if the order is ignored.

Mr Worasit also revealed that the Department of Lands and Department of Business Development have identified 317 high-risk companies holding 480 land plots suspected of being controlled through illegal foreign nominee arrangements.

"The government is preparing to enforce legal measures requiring the land to be sold within a specified period," he said. "If the



Photo: Ministry of Interior

owners fail to comply, the provincial governor will be authorised to take immediate action."

The companies are alleged to have been established with legal shareholding structures before ownership was later altered to

place effective control in foreign hands.

The Department of Lands will investigate all 317 companies before referring evidence to the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), he said.

The Phuket News

Phuket MP slams entrenched corruption

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun
reporter1@classactmedia.co.th

Allegations of deep-rooted corruption, extortion of local businesses, and politically influenced government official transfers have been levelled against powerful networks in Phuket, with local MP Chalermpong Saengdee claiming that even police officers have warned him to “be careful”.

Mr Chalermpong, MP for Phuket Constituency 2, from the People’s Party, said he had returned to his constituency and was told by a “respected police officer” to exercise caution, a warning he described as unusual and revealing of deeper power structures.

Speaking to *The Phuket News*, he claimed the remark reflected “power, politics and vested interests” involving influential figures allegedly operating in the province.

He further alleged that business owners and entrepreneurs were being extorted, describing what he said were “enormous sums of money” linked to high-ranking officials.

Mr Chalermpong said the situation in Phuket was not a new phenomenon but a long-standing structural issue involving influential networks embedded in local administration and law enforcement.



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee / Facebook

He claimed business operators had repeatedly raised complaints about ongoing demands for payments, adding that such practices were “eroding confidence” among investors and damaging honest businesses.

“The problem of bribery in Phuket is not just about under-the-table money,” he said. “It is destroying the province’s economy, undermining legitimate businesses, and affecting tourist confidence.”

He said that such practices followed a “cycle” and continued on a monthly basis.

MP Chalermpong also explained that he received a warning phone call from a police officer after returning to Phuket.

He described the message as brief but significant, saying it indicated the presence of powerful interests operating behind the scenes.

According to Mr Chalermpong, the officer implied that

these networks involved political and administrative figures benefiting from illicit payments extracted from local businesses.

SHOW PONIES

Mr Chalermpong also questioned recent visits by senior government figures to Phuket tourist areas, including Freedom Beach and Bang Tao Beach, suggesting they did not address underlying issues.

He said such visits risked becoming “window dressing”, arguing that they focused on public relations rather than structural reform.

He urged the government to compile detailed information on influential figures instead of relying on briefings or staged inspections.

“The Ministry of Interior already has population and administrative data,” he said. “They already know who is involved. The issue is not a lack of information, but a lack of action.”

He called for investigations into alleged networks of influence, saying enforcement should be carried out “regardless of who is involved”.

He urged the Prime Minister to provide transparency regarding the criteria used for transfers and appointments in Phuket and other provinces.

TRANSFERS

Mr Chalermpong also raised concerns over recent transfers of government officials in Phuket, claiming that officials previously under investigation had been reassigned or returned to positions in the province.

Two district chiefs who had been linked to earlier investigations were reinstated in their areas, including Mueang Phuket and Thalang, he noted.

He further suggested that upcoming appointments within the provincial administration could be linked to broader political arrangements, describing this as part of what he referred to as a “blue system” of influence.

Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, a party-list MP and leader of the People’s Party, also called for clarification from the government regarding recent civil service appointments and transfers.

He said public trust could be undermined if the reasoning behind such decisions was not clearly explained, and suggested that questions had arisen about whether political interference could be involved.

INVESTOR CONFIDENCE

Separately, Pukkamon Nunarnan, a party-list MP from the People’s Party, criticised the government’s handling of the situation, saying public explanations of civil service transfers were unclear and insufficient.

She argued that uncertainty surrounding appointments in Phuket was damaging investor confidence, claiming that businesses were increasingly concerned about hidden costs and unofficial payments.

She said investors were uncertain “who to approach” and feared operating in an environment where influence networks could affect business security and stability.

Ms Pukkamon also claimed that business operators had informed her that operating costs in Phuket could include unofficial payments, although these claims were not independently verified.

She urged the government to provide clearer explanations of recent administrative changes and to ensure transparency in decision-making.

Bhumjaithai tours Phuket

OVER ONE VERY BUSY weekend, Phuket last week hosted what may have been the island’s largest-ever parliamentary field trip, as no fewer than five House of Representatives committees descended on the province to inspect beaches, forests, hotels, pearls, rubbish, jet-skis, taxis, police stations and just about everything short of the weather.

The visits followed Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul’s recent inspection of Bang Tao Beach and featured an extensive lineup of Bhumjaithai MPs, who fanned out across the island in search of land encroachment, blocked beach access, illegal businesses, foreign nominee companies, traffic problems and environmental issues.

Committees toured Bang Tao, Freedom and Nui beaches, Sirinat National Park, Patong Beach, Phuket City Police Station, Chalong Pier, Phuket Old Town, Phuket Pearl and the island’s overflowing landfill, gathering evidence that will eventually become reports that may one day become recommendations.



Photo: PR Phuket

The anti-corruption committee examined land encroachment and foreign nominee companies, hearing that 6,682 Phuket businesses remain under investigation. Curiously absent from the official agenda was any discussion of the corruption scandals currently engulfing Phuket, despite the recent transfers of the former governor and senior police officers amid national investigations into alleged bribery networks.

At Nui Beach, MPs were reminded that 39 illegal structures are due for demolition by July 9 if owners fail to remove them first. Freedom Beach’s disputed land titles, Bang Tao’s public access and Sirinat National Park’s conservation issues also received close attention.

Elsewhere, MPs symp-

athised with hotel operators trapped in licensing bureaucracy, toured Amorn Phuket Pearl, learned that Phuket produces 1,400-1,600 tonnes of rubbish every day while processing only about half that amount, and heard fresh promises that Chalong Pier will finally become a ‘Smart Pier’ – an ambition now old enough to qualify for a driver’s licence.

Meanwhile, Deputy Transport Minister Sanpetch Bunyamanee inspected jet-skis, taxis and tour boats, although official reports somehow overlooked recent speedboat explosions, major fires and the controversial approval of hundreds of additional jet-ski licences.

The committees have now returned to Bangkok. Phuket awaits their return.

The Phuket News

New Phuket governor arrives

NEW PHUKET GOVERNOR Chotinrin Kerdsum officially began his duties on Monday (June 29), arriving at Phuket Provincial Hall to take up the province’s top administrative post.

Governor Chotinrin, accompanied by his wife Paveenrisa Kerdsum, who now becomes President of the Phuket Provincial branch of the Ministry of Interior’s Housewives Association, started his first day by paying respects to the Phra Phuttha Thamrong Ming Mueang Buddha image and the guardian spirit shrine at Phuket Provincial Hall.

On arrival, he was welcomed by heads of government departments and a host of other government officials.

Governor Chotinrin’s appointment was first approved by the Cabinet on June 16 but not formally published in the Royal Gazette until last Friday (June 26), clearing the way for him to assume office.

Born and raised in Pak Phanang district in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Governor Chotinrin becomes one of the few Phuket governors in recent years with deep roots in Southern Thailand.

The 58-year-old career bureaucrat brings extensive experience in southern provinces to the role, having previously served as Governor of Chumphon and later Songkhla before being appointed to Phuket.

Before his latest posting, Governor Chotinrin served as Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior.



Photo: PR Phuket

His career has included several key positions in the South, notably serving as head of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) office in Phuket, as well as vice governor posts in Prachuap Khiri Khan, Ranong and Phang Nga.

Governor Chotinrin began his civil service career as a policy and planning analyst at the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC).

He holds degrees in economics and public administration from Maejo University, a law degree from Ramkhamhaeng University and a PhD in Political Science from Ramkhamhaeng University.

Governor Chotinrin succeeds Nirat Phongsittithaworn, who had served as Phuket Governor since November last year before being transferred to a senior post at the Ministry of Interior amid a slew of corruption scandals that have rocked the island. *The Phuket News*

The Phuket News

CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

PURIYA BEAVAN
Editor**CHRIS HUSTED**
Executive Editor
084 307 7408
execeditor@classactmedia.co.th**BEN TIREBUCK**
News / Sport Editor
061 806 8132
editor3@classactmedia.co.th**CHUTHARAT 'UM' PLERIN**
Thai Editor
088 766 1615
thai@classactmedia.co.th**NATNAREE 'MILD' LIKIDWANASAKUN**
Reporter / Translator
082 295 3244
reporter1@classactmedia.co.th**JASON BEAVAN**
General Manager
086 479 7471
gm@classactmedia.co.th**SIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS**
Sales Support
086 479 7470
sales@classactmedia.co.th**NIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA**
Graphic designerf The Phuket News
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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Photo: ISOC Region 4

Chinese workers caught in Chalong

TWENTY-TWO FOREIGN workers were detained during a raid on a construction site in Chalong on June 23 as Phuket authorities intensified their crackdown on illegal labour and suspected nominee business operations.

The inspection, led by Phuket Vice Governor Pol Lt Col Khetarat Chansilp with ISOC, police and other agencies, found 22 foreign workers – 19 Chinese nationals and three Myanmar nationals – unable to produce work permits or identification documents. All were taken for identity verification and legal proceedings.

Vice Governor Khetarat said the investigation would extend beyond labour offences to examine company ownership, shareholders and funding

sources to determine whether businesses were operating through illegal nominee structures.

He said authorities were following the 'Phuket Model', targeting not only illegal workers but also the organisers and beneficiaries of unlawful business activities.

Labour Minister Chulaphan Amornvivat later reaffirmed the government's commitment to strict enforcement against illegal workers and employers. Department of Employment Director-General Somchai Morakotsriwan highlighted recent operations in Phuket, including the arrest of 68 foreign workers at a Cherng Talay construction site and province-wide inspections targeting suspected nominee networks.

The Phuket News

Plankton blamed for brown water

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Patong Municipality has blamed a phytoplankton bloom for the black water along the southern end of Patong Beach, insisting the phenomenon is not the result of wastewater being discharged directly into the sea.

The clarification was issued on June 24 after images of dark-coloured water circulating online sparked concern among residents and tourists.

According to Patong Municipality, water samples collected and analysed by the Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center found high concentrations of phytoplankton species *Chaetoceros* sp. and *Peridinium* sp., causing what is known as an 'algal bloom'.

Municipal officials stressed that the species identified are not toxic to humans and that the blackened water is a natural phenomenon, not evidence of untreated wastewater entering the sea.

However, authorities advised beachgoers to avoid swimming in affected areas while the discolouration remains, warning that contact with the water may cause skin irritation.

The municipality said the bloom is expected to



Photo: MCOT

dissipate naturally within three to seven days, depending on wave action and sea currents.

The explanation comes amid longstanding concerns over water quality and algae-related problems at Patong Beach.

In April, repeated accumulations of what officials described as "seaweed" washed ashore along the beach, prompting clean-up operations and investigations into possible causes.

During an inspection in February, Phuket Governor at the time Nirat Pongsitthaworn was told that high phosphate levels from wastewater could be one factor contributing to algae growth, alongside favour-

able environmental conditions such as sunlight and sea temperatures.

At the time, provincial officials also investigated whether cruise ships anchored offshore might be playing a role, although no direct link was established.

The fact that the Patong wastewater treatment plant empties into the canal at the southern end of Patong Beach was not publicly recognised as a possible contributing factor.

In its latest statement, Patong Municipality said it would continue random inspections of businesses to prevent illegal wastewater discharges and ensure wastewater treatment systems are functioning properly.

German man, 37, collapses, dies

A 37-YEAR-OLD GERMAN man died after reportedly collapsing and striking his head while showering at his home in Rawai last Sunday (June 28).

Chalong Police were notified at about 3pm after the man was pronounced dead at Chalong Hospital.

According to police, the man's girlfriend said he entered the bathroom at about noon. She heard a loud noise and found he had apparently collapsed, hitting his head against the bathroom wall. He was taken by ambulance to Chalong Hospital but could not be saved.



Photo: PR Phuket

Police and a doctor carried out a preliminary examination, and the body has been sent to Vachira Phuket Hospital for a post-mortem examination to determine the exact cause of death.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Man killed as car slams into parked truck

A 28-YEAR-OLD PHUKET man died after the car he was driving crashed into the rear of a parked truck in Thalang early last Saturday morning (June 27).

Thalang Police were notified of the fatal crash at about 5:30am after the accident occurred at about 2:50am on Thepkasattri Rd in Srisoonthorn.

According to the police report, the victim, identified as Than-yaboon Changthong, 28, of Tambon Thepkasattri, was driving a Phuket-registered car south-bound along Thepkasattri Rd when it struck the rear of a parked truck.

Police said the truck, registered in Saraburi province, had been



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

parked on the left side of the road while its driver, Charawut Rupkhao, was asleep inside the vehicle.

Rescue workers transported Mr Than-yaboon to Thalang Hospital, but he later died from his injuries. He was pronounced dead at 4:39am.

The incident remains under investigation, Thalang Police said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Pride rainbow shines in Phuket Old Town

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

More than 2,000 people filled the streets of Phuket Old Town last Saturday (June 27) as Phuket City Pride 2026 transformed the historic district into a sea of rainbow colours, celebrating diversity, equality and inclusion under the theme 'We Are One: United in Love'.

Centred on the Chartered Bank Intersection, the event attracted local residents, tourists, government officials and members of the LGBTQIAN+ community for one of the island's largest Pride celebrations to date.

Phuket Vice Governor Romdon Hayiauae officially opened the event, joined by Team Phuket Chairman Theerasak Phlongam, Phuket City Municipality Mayor Suppachoke Laongphet, representatives from government agencies, the private sector and community leaders.

Mayor Suppachoke said the event reflected cooperation across all sectors to promote Phuket as a city that embraces diversity, equality and respect for human dignity. He added that the celebration would also strengthen Phuket's reputation as an inclusive international tourism destination while helping prepare the



Photo: PR Phuket

province to host the InterPride conference later this year.

Festivities began well before the evening parade, with Phuket Old Town decorated in Pride flags and rainbow displays. Activities included the 'PRIDE PAINT: Art of Equality' competition, a dance challenge, concerts, the Miss Phuket Pride 2026 pageant and more than 40 stalls selling food, drinks and local products.

The highlight was the giant rainbow flag parade through Phuket Old Town, with more than 2,000 participants joined by entertainers, beauty queens and celebrities including Jennifer Kim, Hai Aphaphorn Nakhonsawan, Rasameekae Faikuealoon, Sinon Loresca and Kai

Warayuth. Actors from Channel 7 HD and contestants from Miss Universe Thailand, Miss Grand Thailand, Mister International Thailand and MGI All Star also took part.

One Russian tourist praised Phuket's welcoming atmosphere and visible support for LGBTQ+ rights, saying she was proud to see the community and wider society celebrating equality together.

Organisers said Phuket City Pride has become more than an annual celebration, serving as a platform to promote equality while reinforcing Phuket's image as an international destination that welcomes everyone regardless of nationality, culture or gender identity.



Photo: PR Phuket

Phuket OrSor get wet

MEMBERS OF PHUKET'S Volunteer Defence Corps (OrSor), best known for assisting police during security operations and manning checkpoints across the island, are now being trained in basic water rescue techniques to strengthen Phuket's disaster response capabilities.

The training is not intended to replace life-guards or professional rescue teams. Instead, it is designed to prepare OrSor volunteers to assist authorities during floods and other water-related emergencies under a national cooperation agreement between the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) and the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM).

The latest course was held on June 24, beginning at the Mai Khao OrSor offices before moving to Pak Phra Beach for practical exercises.

Volunteer Defence Corps members from OrSor companies across Phuket trained alongside DDPM Region 18 officers, with instructors from the Phang Nga Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office and the Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation.

The course covered internationally recognised basic water rescue principles, including the 'Shout, Throw, Reach' method, water safety assessment, and the correct use of life jackets, lifebuoys and rescue ropes. Participants also took part in simulated rescue exercises.

Officials said the programme is intended to provide additional trained manpower to support DDPM officers and rescue foundations during floods and other water-related disasters, improving emergency readiness while reducing injuries, loss of life and property damage. *The Phuket News*

First candidate registers for PPAO by-election on Aug 2

THE FIRST CANDIDATE HAS officially registered to contest the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) by-election for Constituency 4 in Thalang, with nominations now open ahead of the Aug 2 vote.

Andaman Kreuphanich was the only candidate to register on the opening day of nominations on June 22 and was assigned candidate number one.

The by-election is being held to fill a vacant seat on the PPAO council after former councillor Pongsakorn Panyawai resigned on June 8 to move to Bangkok to work for the Democrat Party.

Candidate registration was open until June 26 at the PPAO office in Phuket Town.

The election will be held on Sunday, Aug 2, with polling stations open from 8am to 5pm across Constituency 4.

PPAO Election Director Akkharawat Sirithanyathanakorn oversaw the opening of candidate registration, joined by the provincial election committee and Phuket Election Commission (ECT Phuket) Director Orapin Achivasuk.

Preparations for the by-election are continuing under the supervision of the PPAO election committee, chaired by Vice Governor Suwit Phansaengiam. Officials met on June 21 to review candidate qualification procedures, polling arrangements and designated



Photo: PPAO

campaign locations, stressing that the election must be conducted transparently and in accordance with election laws.

An alcohol sales ban will be enforced across the constituency from 6pm on Aug 1 until 6pm on election day.

ECT Phuket Director Orapin Achivasuk confirmed the ban will apply only within PPAO Constituency 4, which comprises Moo 5, 7, 8 and 9 of Thepkrasattri, Moo 4 and 6 of Srisoonthorn, and Moo 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Sakhu.

The ban covers the sale, distribution and serving of alcoholic beverages, with offenders liable to prosecution under election law.

Despite repeated requests from *The Phuket News*, election officials and Thalang Police have not provided a detailed map showing the exact boundaries of the constituency or the areas where the alcohol ban will apply.

The Phuket News



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Small hotels appeal to register

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Small and medium-sized hotel operators in Phuket have taken their long-running licensing dispute to Parliament, warning that a legal vacuum has left more than 5,600 hotels unable to apply for or renew hotel business licences despite years of attempts to comply with the law.

The appeal was made on June 25 when representatives of Phuket's hotel industry submitted a formal petition to the House of Representatives' Committee on Decentralisation, Local Administration, and Special Administrative Arrangements, calling for urgent intervention to end what they described as inconsistent enforcement of hotel licensing laws.

The petition was received by committee chairman Kongkrit Chatmalirat from Phuket Boutique Accommodation Association President Chinnawat Udomniyom and Tourism Council of Thailand Subcommittee for the Promotion of Small Hotels chairman Manosit Chaengjob. Senator Nipon Ekavanich, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Industry, also attended.



Photo: Thai Parliament

Mr Chinnawat said operators had spent years trying to resolve licensing problems and welcomed Ministerial Regulation No. 4 under the Hotel Act in 2023, which relaxed physical requirements and enabled an estimated 70% of small hotels nationwide to qualify for legal registration.

However, he said Phuket operators continued to face inconsistent interpretation of the rules. Following the expiry of the regulation, more than 5,600 hotels across the island have again been left unable to obtain or renew licences.

Although the Ministry of Interior has opened consultation clinics and licensing assistance centres, operators say there

are still no clear measures to help businesses caught in the transition. They warned the uncertainty is damaging businesses, reducing community income and hurting Phuket's economy.

The industry has called on the parliamentary committee to pursue immediate, medium and long-term solutions, including legislative amendments that would allow operators to comply with the law while supporting sustainable tourism.

Mr Kongkrit said the committee had received repeated complaints about the issue and would raise the proposals with relevant agencies to accelerate solutions and clarify enforcement.

The licensing dispute was also

discussed during a separate follow-up meeting between House committee members and Phuket officials, alongside hotel fee collection, investigations into alleged mafia influence and businesses suspected of using Thai nominee shareholders for foreign investors.

Provincial officials reported that the Ministry of Interior, through the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) and Phuket Province, has opened a Consultation and Complaint Centre and Permit Application Clinic to help hotel operators comply with the law. The service was operating daily from 8:30am to 4:30pm until yesterday (July 2) at the Royal Phuket City Hotel, with applications also accepted at the Mueang Phuket, Kathu and Thalang district offices.

Phuket Vice Governor and Ministry of Interior Security Adviser Pol Lt Col Khetarat Chansilp said authorities expected to complete data collection within two to three weeks and were acting on the Prime Minister's instructions to speed up solutions. He said he had also inspected beaches, vehicle rental businesses and other tourism operations.

Vice Governor Romdon Hayiauae said the province was compiling a comprehensive

database of hotels. More than 1,200 hotels are currently licensed, while others are seeking renewals as officials work to bring operators into compliance.

The committee praised Phuket officials for their efforts and pledged to continue supporting measures to resolve the long-running licensing impasse.

The petition comes as DOPA intensifies its crackdown on allegedly unlicensed hotels across Phuket while simultaneously encouraging operators to enter the legal licensing system through temporary consultation and application programmes.

The enforcement campaign has unfolded amid allegations of corruption, bribery and extortion within Phuket's hotel licensing system, alongside investigations into nominee businesses and organised criminal influence.

Industry groups maintain the root of the problem is years of restrictive licensing requirements that left thousands of mostly family-run accommodation businesses unable to qualify for licences despite repeated attempts to comply. Although temporary regulatory exemptions enabled about 1,000 hotels to become licensed, operators say the expiry of those measures has once again left thousands in legal limbo.

Customs Dept bans seizure rewards for its executives

THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT is abolishing reward payments for senior executives from seizures of smuggled goods and tariff violations in an effort to prevent conflicts of interest and strengthen public confidence.

Customs Director-General Phantong Loykulnanta said the Ministry of Finance has completed draft amendments to the reward regulations, which will take effect immediately after publication in the Royal Gazette.

The next step will be to phase out the century-old reward system for all customs officials, ensuring enforcement complies with principles of good governance and transparency, Mr Phantong said.

The changes follow recommendations from the government and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), which called for a review of reward systems across law enforcement agencies,



Photo: Bangkok Post

warning they could encourage corruption.

Thailand's customs bounty system dates back to 1926. Before 2017, customs officers and informants could receive up to 30% of the value of seized shipments.

While intended to encourage the detection of smuggling, the incentive system was criticised for slowing customs clearance, as officers spent more time searching for violations. The practice also created opportunities for importers to pay bribes to speed up the release of shipments.

Under the amended Customs Act BE 2560 (2017), officers and informants are entitled to 10-20% of proceeds from the sale of seized goods or

finances, or up to 10% of additional duties collected, with total rewards capped at B5 million per case.

The new regulations prohibit senior executives and decision-makers at C8/C9 level and above, including the director-general, from receiving any rewards.

Mr Phantong said ending the reward system is part of Thailand's legal and regulatory reforms as it seeks membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which places a strong emphasis on public governance and anti-corruption measures.

The department is also revising eligibility criteria, dividing recipients into three groups: officers who detect and seize smuggled goods, those who participate in seizures, and those who assist with arrests. Reward levels are also under review to better reflect individual performance. *Bangkok Post*

Flat domestic tourism projected

TOURISM OPERATORS expect Thailand's domestic tourism market to remain flat or decline this year unless the government quickly rolls out a stimulus scheme to boost low-season travel, as weakening household finances continue to weigh on spending.

Several institutions have reported that average household income declined last year, with many lower-income families relying on financial assistance, highlighting ongoing financial vulnerability.

Thai Hotels Association (THA) vice-president Udom Srimahachota said domestic tourism in Hua Hin has performed worse than last year, particularly among weekend visitors. Although the energy crisis and Middle East conflict have dampened consumer confidence, he expects conditions to gradually improve following the US-Iran ceasefire.

However, Mr Udom said Thai travellers remain cautious about spending, with many cutting back on trips due to sluggish economic conditions, weak property markets and rising



Photo: Bangkok Post

living costs. He believes this trend could continue for another two to three years without a significant economic recovery.

The government plans to launch a new phase of its domestic tourism co-payment scheme in the fourth quarter, allocating B3 billion to provide 1 million travel subsidies. The THA is urging the government to bring the programme forward to support travel during the low season and help offset weaker international arrivals.

Although July, August and October offer public holidays and school breaks that could encourage domestic travel, hotels typically have fewer rooms available for Thai tourists in the fourth quarter as foreign demand pushes prices higher.

Association of Domestic Travel adviser Surawat Akaraworamat said domestic tourism is likely to remain unchanged this year as consumers lack confidence in the economy. Thailand recorded 120 million domestic trips in the first five months of 2026, up 1.9% year-on-year, generating B488bn.

Mr Surawat said many travellers with larger budgets are choosing overseas holidays, attracted by competitive prices and new experiences. He added that Thailand needs to improve tourism products, better promote lesser-known destinations and expand initiatives such as rail tourism and military tourism. He also called for tour packages to be included in the government subsidy scheme. *Bangkok Post*

Probe into exam fraud widens

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Authorities have uncovered a huge bribery and results fraud network associated with the nationwide recruitment examination for local government officials at the Department of Local Administration (DOLA), which is estimated to have raked in more than B4 million.

The DOLA organised the examination late last year which saw more than 400,000 people compete for 6,669 local administration vacancies. The results were announced early this year but complaints led to the exposure of large-scale bribery as dishonest job seekers each allegedly paid B350,000-800,000 to corrupt officials for desired positions.

What began as complaints from disappointed candidates has expanded into a growing scandal involving local government recruitment examinations, allegations of organised criminal networks, digital manipulation, political denials, provincial brokers, tutoring businesses, and questions over the integrity of public-sector hiring itself.

The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB), anti-corruption agencies and sources close to the investigation say the operation was far more sophisticated than a conventional cheating scheme.

Rather than merely altering electronic scores, the network used a



CIB officers gather evidence and arrest 10 suspects during a raid in Nonthaburi on June 23. Photo: CIB

method that combined physical and digital tampering, says the CIB.

As police widen their investigation into the case the Crime Suppression Division (CSD) said on Monday (June 29) it is seeking key evidence from the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the Department of Local Administration (DOLA) and Srinakharinwirot University (SWU), which administered the exams.

The probe was expanded following an order from Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul to pursue all those involved.

Officials allegedly found evidence that computer software had been used to alter scores on copies of answer sheets to match officially announced results for recruitment to local government positions following a raid on June 23 at Sam Muang Charoen Rungruangkit Co in Bang Yai district of Nonthaburi.

The NACC seized copies of answer sheets, computer equipment and communication devices during the raid.

CSD investigators said the material is needed to establish offences under Section 188 of the Criminal Code and the Computer Crime Act. Police have requested digital evidence seized during the raid, including answer sheets, answer keys, lists of suspected cheaters, witness statements and statements from those present at the scene, as well as original answer sheets seized from Chanwanich Co Ltd.

Investigators have also asked the DOLA to provide examination regulations, lists of officials involved in organising the tests and all data files received from SWU. The university has been asked to submit exam papers, answer sheets and related materials.

As of Tuesday, none of the three agencies had responded.

Prison for mother who forced daughter into prostitution

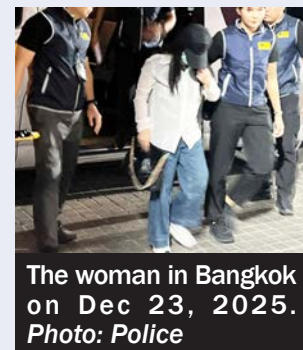
BANGKOK

THE CRIMINAL COURT on Monday (June 29) sentenced a 30-year-old woman to long term imprisonment after she forced her daughter into prostitution in Tokyo, Japan.

The woman was identified publicly only by her first name, Luckkana, from Phetchabun province.

The court initially sentenced the 30-year-old woman to 15 years on charges including coercing a child into providing sexual services and human trafficking. The sentences were commuted by half to seven years and six months because she confessed during the court proceedings.

The woman was convicted of forcing her daughter, then aged 12, into the sex trade between June and September last year by leaving her with a massage parlour owner in the Japanese capital.



The woman in Bangkok on Dec 23, 2025. Photo: Police

The girl sought help from the Tokyo Regional Immigration Services Bureau in mid-September and she is now under the care of the Pavena Hongsakul Foundation.

Her mother left Japan and travelled to Taiwan in September last year before being arrested in New Taipei City in November for overstaying. She was subsequently extradited to Thailand in December.

The court said the woman had never committed any criminal offences before she was arrested and her travel records showed she previously worked overseas as a masseuse.

Bangkok Post

Thai Airways hostess smuggling heroin into Australia nabbed

BANGKOK

THAI AIRWAYS International has pledged full cooperation with Australian authorities after a Thai air hostess was arrested and heroin seized from her bags at Melbourne airport last week.

The airline said in a Facebook on Monday (June 29) it would fully cooperate with Australian officials in their investigation.

The 26-year-old woman was arrested after a kilogramme of heroin was found concealed in her luggage after she arrived at Melbourne airport on June 25. She was carrying 12 tote bags and the heroin was in the lining.

The carrier said it is working with officials in Thailand and Australia in establishing the facts of the case.

The arrest was disclosed by Australian Federal Police on Monday but the agency did not



One of the tote bags used to conceal the heroin. Photo: Australian Federal Police

release the airline's name, the woman's name or job position other than Thai airline crew member.

THAI later posted online confirming the woman was an employee, a member of the flight cabin crew.

The airline said it has a strict prohibition on pilots or cabin crew possessing or trafficking in drugs or any other illegal items and regularly reminded them before they went on duty. Violators faced stern disciplinary action, in addition to any criminal action.

The Public Relations Department said the

incident involved flight TG465 and the arrest came after a sniffer dog checked her luggage. A search found the kilogramme of heroin in her possession.

Reports said it was hidden in the tote bag linings and had an estimated street value of AUD500,000 (B11.5 million).

Flight TG465 left Suvarnabhumi airport at 7:40pm on June 24 and landed at 7:04am Melbourne time the next day, according to the flight tracker Flight Aware.

Bangkok Post

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A wildlife haven on a small Phuket peninsula

Simon Lomas

Many of you will know that I have been wandering around with my cat Leo and my camera for some time now taking photos of various wildlife I see on my day to day commute to work or as I walk on the beach early mornings before the crowds and noise arrives.

One thing that has struck me over the years is the number of different birds I have encountered. I used to live in the UK right by Epping Forrest with a large garden and saw plenty of birds all year round but I was shocked to realise the number of different birds seems much higher in Phuket. So I started counting. Then I started looking online to see what was a normal high concentration of birds. It turns out that birders often use a '5 mile radius' (5MR, about about 8km) when setting challenges or targets and 100 different birds in that radius is considered high, 200 very high.

After counting and a quick look on Google Maps, it turned out that within about two kilometres of where I live there were over 100 species of birds that I had seen. It shocked me as most of what I see is just on my walk to work or to the beach or while having tea on my balcony. There is no jungle trekking or excursions to remote areas, no birds parks, no national parks. This prompted me to wonder how many species are really out there in the woodland and



Young Coppersmith Barbet. Photo: Simon Lomas

jungle areas that I do not frequent – how many different birds are there I have not seen?

If I then expand to the 8km radius near my home it takes in a huge area of jungle, cliffs, beaches, valleys, streams, ponds, woodlands and grasslands, all which will be home to many species I have not previously encountered. That area will stretch from Patong Beach to Paradise Beach, Freedom Beach, Merlin Beach, Tri Trang Beach and all the hills and forest on the way. I would hazard a guess that any effort made by more experienced birders and photographers covering the area would yield at least 200 different species of bird.

So where am I going with this? This small peninsula that juts out between Patong and Karon seems to be a haven for larger numbers of both resident and migratory birds. Set between two of the most commercial towns on the island in Karon and Patong, this small peninsula stretches 2.4km across and 3.2km in length. There are several roads and tracks, a few small villages, plenty of



Crimson sunbird. Photo: Simon Lomas

nice residential spots to rent and several small natural beaches, which in themselves are home to so much marine life. This peninsula has all the makings of the perfect natural park for both marine and land-based wildlife and is the perfect place for all wildlife lovers, bird watchers, photographers and natural beach lovers. A small oasis of natural beauty between two boisterous nightlife towns.

Havens of wildlife

That being said, how many other currently less populated areas are there still on the island? How many species of birds call Phuket home, either as residents or visitors? How many beaches, if kept natural on the many small peninsulas around the island, will become home to turtles and the rest of the vibrant wildlife that surrounds Phuket? As witnessed when the island becomes quiet, especially evident during COVID, the amount of wildlife that comes out is amazing. During low season these little havens of wildlife explode with bird

song, butterflies, flowers and insects – how good would it be to have this on a few little enclaves around the island?

Leo and I have easily spotted over 100 species of wildlife on our regular commutes in the past year within our '5MR', which is mainly in a suburban environment. Imagine what several experienced birdwatchers armed with professional equipment and time could achieve in the same location? I'm sure well over 200 different species could be identified. Multiply that over several similar locations around the island and Phuket could be considered as one of the great wildlife and bird photography hotspots in Thailand. The best bit is nothing needs to be done. Nothing built, no more roads, just a few restrictions to deter any further mass development and allowing nature to take its course.

Over the past few years many people have asked me where I go to view and capture pictures of this abundant wildlife. My answer is always the same: it's right here on my doorstep! An area near the Avista Hideaway Hotel with roughly a 2km radius, just out of Patong. From the cruise ship jetty at the south of Patong Beach to Tri Trang Beach and to Freedom Beach, a small peninsula that lies between Karon and Patong. I am positive there is way more up there that my limited schedule does not allow me to see and it would therefore be great to see more wildlife enthusiasts in the area. If we could collectively register 200 different species on that small peninsula it would be quite the achievement.

The August/September 2026 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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

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Finnway International School Phuket Celebrates Student Growth and Opens a New Chapter with the Launch of Secondary Education

ADVERTORIAL

There were smiles, proud tears, and heartfelt celebrations as Finnway International School Phuket hosted its Grade 6 Graduation Ceremony & Gala at Blue Elephant Phuket.

The event was honoured by the presence of distinguished guests, including Ms. Panna Promvichien, Provincial Education Officer, who presided over the ceremony; Ms. Warangkana Ananta, Deputy Phuket Provincial Education Officer; Ms. Prapaipan Yookong, Director of the Education Development Group, Phuket Provincial Education Office; and Mr. Chalam Attatham, Vice Mayor of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization and former Acting Secretary-General of the Office of the

Private Education Commission (OPEC).

Throughout the evening, students, teachers, and families shared memories, gratitude, and pride, reflecting the strong partnership between home and school that has supported every child's learning journey, as well as the warm sense of belonging that defines the Finnway community.

The celebration also marked another important milestone in the school's development with the official launch of its Secondary Programme for the 2026 academic year.

Today, Finnway International School Phuket provides education from PreK, Kindergarten, Primary, and Secondary, bringing together students from more than 27 nationalities and fostering a vibrant international learning community in Phuket. The school is committed to delivering high-quality international education, placing equal

importance on academic achievement, wellbeing, creativity, critical thinking, meaningful relationships, and student agency, enabling every learner to grow in knowledge, skills, character, and confidence.

Speaking at the event, Founder Kannokarn Wasiksiri said:

"Our greatest achievement is seeing young people discover their strengths, develop meaningful knowledge, care for others, believe in themselves, and become the very best version of who they can be."

The evening was not simply a celebration of completing primary school. It was a celebration of the friendships, memories, and values that students will carry with them wherever their future leads.

At Finnway, success is measured not only by what students know, but by who they become.

About Finnway International School Phuket

Finnway International School Phuket offers a distinctive international education rooted in the Finnish approach to education while embracing international best practices. The school provides a caring, values-driven learning environment where every child is known, valued, and supported to reach their full potential. By combining academic excellence with wellbeing and global citizenship, Finnway prepares students not only for future success, but for meaningful lives beyond the classroom.

Media Contact

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POP QUIZ

1. Which animal's name comes from the Sanskrit "to steal?"
2. Telephone poles are mostly made from which wood?
3. In Glendale Arizona it is illegal for a car to do what on a public road?
4. What was the Bikini originally called?
5. What colour are the Amazon river dolphins?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Gaugin subjects, often
6. Actor Gooding, Jr.
10. Indian dish ingredient
14. Dead to the world
15. Load
16. Odd, spelled oddly
17. Place on the field
20. Wilbur's home
21. This and that
22. Orient
23. Popeyed
24. Dizygotic ____
25. Unexpressed
32. Lap, as a wave
33. The Old Sod
34. Gloaming
35. "____ over!"
36. Surveyed
39. Body part
40. Known formerly as
41. Kind of shell
42. With the bow, in music
43. On the job
48. Made like
49. Panegyryze
50. Leader born in Georgia

53. Isles

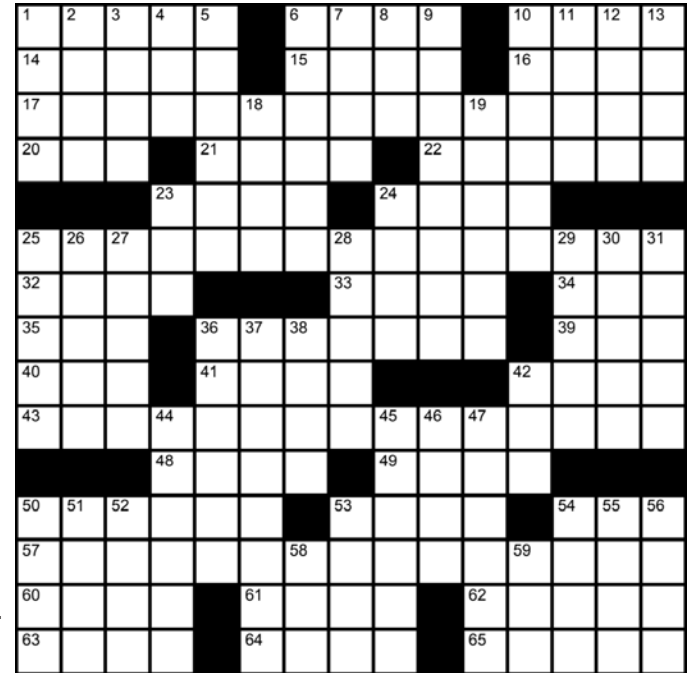
54. Daft
57. Last stop
60. God offended by Daphnis
61. Foreign pen pal
62. Oil holder
63. Refuses to
64. Soaks, as flax
65. Glower

Down

1. Lagerl f protagonist
2. Newton, e.g.
3. Controvert
4. Shortly before?
5. Larry, for one
6. Guarantee, in a way
7. Remarkably
8. Sticker
9. So to speak
10. Sign of summer
11. Patch up
12. Proof word
13. Appraiser
18. Arctic sight
19. Sent
23. Wow
24. Weak

25. Buckwheat

- pancakes
26. No longer on the plate
27. Tube
28. Part of a joint
29. Kind of jacket
30. Boot
31. ____ Rebellion
36. Enter
37. Schedule
38. Like gastric juice
42. Elaborate
44. Most sound
45. In groups
46. Word of honor
47. Friction matches
50. Hasenpfeffer, e.g.
51. National park acronym
52. Interminable time
53. Throw ____
54. Japanese soup
55. All over
56. Compaq competitor
58. Crater on Mars
59. Fond du ____, Wis.



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Mouse (Musha); 2) Chestnut; 3) Drive in reverse; 4) The Atom; 5) Pink

GOT YOUR NUMBER

5.57

out of 10 is how the average adult rated their happiness in 2025, according to the annual World Happiness Report.

95

percent of the time is how often the average person's car is parked.

5,531

is the most patents held by one person (prolific Japanese inventor Shunpei Yamazaki).

350,000

deaths per year in the US are caused by medical errors, the third leading cause of death in the country.

8.3 billion

is the current world population of humans on the planet.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Ladies fishing at Layan Beach. Photo by Cynthia Tomaszewski

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

This week in history

July 3, 1938

World speed record for a steam locomotive is set in England, by the Mallard, which reaches a speed of 125.88 miles per hour (202.58 km/h).

July 4, 1997

NASA's Pathfinder space probe lands on the surface of Mars.

July 5, 328

The official opening of

Constantine's Bridge built over the Danube between Sucidava (Corabia, Romania) and Oescus (Gigen, Bulgaria) by the Roman architect Theophilus Patricius.

July 6, 1885

Louis Pasteur successfully tests his vaccine against rabies on Joseph Meister, a boy who was bitten by a rabid dog.



Boris Becker

July 7, 1985

Boris Becker becomes the youngest male player ever to

win Wimbledon at age 17.

July 8, 1497

Vasco da Gama sets sail on the first direct European voyage to India.

July 9, 2006

Italy win their fourth World Cup title, defeating France 5-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw after extra time.

Source: Wikipedia

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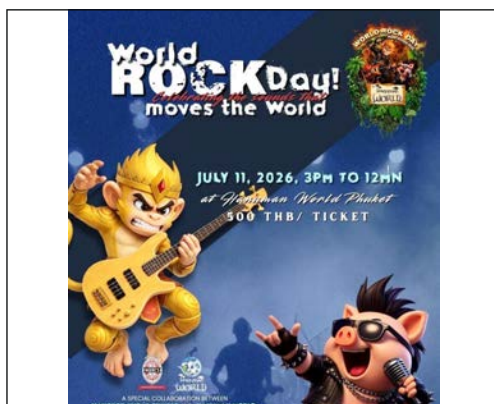
FRI 3 JULY



Grow Boating Phuket Evening - July 2026

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Phuket Evening at the Bluu Asian Kitchen & Bar at the Royal Phuket Marina from 5pm. We are delighted to announce that our joint drinks sponsor for the evening will be Blue Paradise and Aqua Thrill. Blue Paradise design unique itineraries to show you the secret corners of the Andaman Sea and Phang Nga Bay. Modern boats, top-notch crews, and personalized service will create unforgettable experiences for you. See www.blueparadisetravel.com Aqua Thrill offer a new way to explore the sea with you as the captain. Self-drive your own mini speedboat through the stunning Andaman waters. See aquathrill-thailand.com There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by Bluu Asian Kitchen & 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. If you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket](https://www.facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket)

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JULY



World Rock Day 2026 | Phuket's Ultimate Music Festival

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A NIGHT TO REMEMBER - AND A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

Last Wednesday, June 24, Finnway International School Phuket celebrated its Grade 6 Graduation Ceremony & Gala at Blue Elephant Phuket. Proud smiles, happy tears, and so much heart. These students leave primary school not just with knowledge, but with confidence, kindness, and resilience. That is the Finnway difference. The Founder Kanokkarn Wasiksiri shared: "Our greatest achievement is seeing young people become the very best version of who they can be." Interested in joining the Finnway family? Visit finnwayphuket.com



SKÅL PHUKET - JUNE DINNER

Emmanuel and his team from Tann Beach Club in Karon were the hosts of a casual chic evening on the beach. A light rain shower could not dampen the mood and members and guests enjoyed some of the best views on the island, along with an exciting fire show. Unlike usual seated dinners, this event embraced a relaxed cocktail-style format, encouraging members and guests to mingle freely, reconnect with friends, and build new business relationships. More info about next month's event can be found at facebook.com/SkalPhuket

Thailand, China expand cycling collaboration

CYCLING

THAILAND AND CHINA have pledged to take their cycling partnership “into all dimensions” after senior officials met in Beijing to map out joint training, event organisation and youth development programmes.

Gen Decha Hemkarsri, president of the Thai Cycling Association who is also the vice president of the Asian Cycling Confederation, led the Thai delegation to the Chinese Cycling Association (CCA) headquarters last week, where he was welcomed by CCA president Sun Weimin.

Both sides agreed to pursue joint training camps, exchange programmes for athletes and coaches, and collaboration in staging events to international standards. Knowledge and technology sharing will also be part of the package.

Sun highlighted the rapid growth of cycling in China, noting more



Sun (left) and Decha. Photo: Supplied

than 1,000 events are staged annually nationwide.

Decha thanked the Chinese Cycling Association for its support in facilitating training camps for Thailand's national track team in Tianjin. “We hope to continue receiving valuable support in training, knowledge exchange and cycling development,” he added.

Decha also explained that Thailand had proposed cooperation in promoting Balance Bike activities to build a strong foundation for youth cycling. “Both countries share a common vision to elevate cycling cooperation in a tangible manner,” he said.

Bangkok Post

Russell wins in Austrian Alps

FORMULA ONE

AFP

George Russell returned to winning ways after a series of disappointments last Sunday (June 28) when he claimed a measured victory for Mercedes ahead of Red Bull's four-time champion Max Verstappen in a thrilling Austrian Grand Prix.

The 28-year-old Briton, the pre-season favourite for the drivers' title and winner of the opening race, secured his second win of the year and the seventh of his career in a close race, declared to be a ‘heat hazard’ event, at the Red Bull Ring circuit.

Russell came home 1.611 seconds ahead of a charging Verstappen who in turn resisted championship leader Kimi Antonelli, in the second Mercedes, to finish 0.375s in front of him as they crossed the line as temperatures hit 37°C (air) and 62°C (track).

McLaren's Oscar Piastri was fourth, 20 seconds adrift, ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari, Isack Hadjar in the second Red Bull and world champion Lando Norris in the second McLaren.

Charles Leclerc was eighth in the second Ferrari ahead of the two Red Bulls of Liam Lawson and rookie Arvid Lindblad.

On an afternoon of searing heat in the Styrian Alps, Russell made a clean start from his 11th career pole to lead while, behind him, Hamilton passed



George Russell celebrates on the podium with the trophy after winning the Austrian Grand Prix. Photo: AFP

Leclerc for second and Antonelli, in pure exuberance, ran off twice on the opening lap.

He passed Leclerc on lap two, but had to give the place back, offering Verstappen a chance to sweep through for third.

Verstappen pitted on lap 19, returning two seconds behind Hamilton before Russell came in and gave Antonelli the lead on lap 20, as Verstappen snatched third with a bruising move on Hamilton.

Antonelli then pitted on lap 24, seconds before a brief Virtual Safety Car when Carlos Sainz stopped on the main straight. He rejoined fifth while Hamilton pitted again for used softs

for another spell of spicy racing.

All this left Russell leading ahead of Verstappen and Antonelli at half-distance with Hamilton chasing Piastri for fourth before both pitted on lap 43 followed by Russell.

Verstappen delighted his ‘orange army’ in the grandstands, with Antonelli 4.3s adrift and Russell third, but more stops loomed as a tactical race of shifting strategies and degrading tyres took shape.

The Dutchman pitted again on lap 50, handing the lead to Antonelli who in turn pitted once more to give the initiative to Russell. With 21 laps to complete, Russell resisted as Verstappen chased him home.

Thai girls claim silver at Junior Golf World Cup

GOLF

THAILAND PUT ON an impressive performance to finish joint second in the girls' team event at the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup 2026 at a rain-soaked Chukyo Golf Club in Toyota City, Aichi, Japan last Friday (June 26).

Prim Prachnakorn, Kritchanya Kaopattanakul and Suritpreeya Pruksanubal scored a four-day total of 25-under 551 to finish alongside Japan, six shots behind eventual champions South Korea.

Their runner-up finish continued a remarkable run by the Thai girls' team since their debut two years ago. In three editions of the Junior Golf World Cup, they've finished second, first and second, respectively.

In the boys' team event, Thailand's Parin Sarasmut, Teerawut



The girls team with their medals. Photo: Supplied

Boonsior and Settawut Kenanan scored eight-under-par on the final day to finish on 21-under 547, just one stroke off a three-way tie atop the leaderboard after 72 holes.

The team settled for a fourth-place finish at the event. Japan emerged as champions although they were pushed hard and had

to fend off challenges from Canada and the United States in a tense tiebreaker.

A total of 12 countries participated in the boys' event and nine in the girls' event in this year's competition, evidence that the event is continuing to grow, said organisers. *Bangkok Post*

PGA Tour announces radical overhaul with ‘two-tier’ system

GOLF

THE PGA TOUR HAS unveiled a dramatic overhaul of professional golf in the United States that will see the circuit divided into two distinct structures.

Under the new system, which will be launched in 2028, the tour will comprise a lucrative PGA Tour Championship Series of around 23-24 events which will include the majors and international events such as the Ryder Cup.

A second tier of at least 20 events – the PGA Tour Challenger Series – will run alongside the Championship Series, offering golfers the chance to secure a pathway to the elite circuit.

A system of player promotion and relegation between the two tiers will also be introduced.

The shake-up is the result of a working group from the PGA Tour's Future Competition Committee, chaired by Tiger Woods, which has been studying ways of revitalising golf.



PGA Tour CEO Brian Rolapp at the June 23 press conference. Photo: AFP

“From day one, the focus of the Future Competition Committee has been to build the best version of the PGA Tour, and to do so in a way that reflects the voice of our players and the expectations of our fans,” PGA Tour chief executive Brian Rolapp said at a June 23 press conference.

“The result is a new competitive model grounded in meritocracy, with clearer pathways, higher stakes and more consistency when the best players compete together.”

“This model positions the PGA Tour for the future, and our focus now shifts to finalizing the details and preparing for implementation in 2028.”

Each PGA Tour Championship Series event will boast a purse of at least \$20 million (B668mn) with

fields of 120 players, with a 36 hole cut to the top 65 and ties.

The series, which will run in a season stretching from February to August, will also feature a new-look postseason with the introduction of match play and a new-look Tour Championship played across a rotation of courses.

Leading players from the PGA Tour Championship Series will also be eligible for a limited series of “elevated international events” organised in conjunction with Europe's DP World Tour, the PGA Tour said.

Challenger Series events will feature minimum purses of \$4mn.

The PGA Tour said the top 90 finishers out of 130 players in the Championship Series will be exempt for the following season, while those finishing outside the top 90 could face relegation to the Challenger Series.

A minimum of 20 players from the Challenger Series will be promoted to the Championship Series the following season. *AFP*

It's a knockout at the World Cup

FOOTBALL

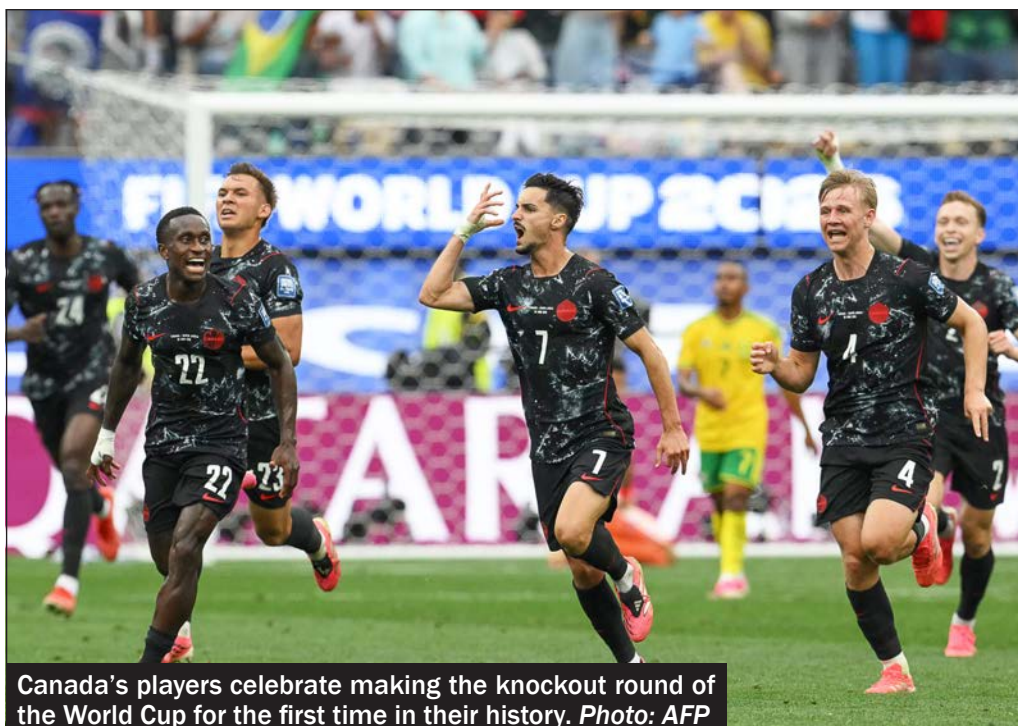
The Phuket News
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

The group stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup came to a conclusion last weekend, with the competition now entering the knockout round.

Co-hosts Canada were the first team to get the knockout games underway and they made history in Los Angeles last Sunday (June 28) as Stephen Eustaquio scored a dramatic winner in the second minute of injury time to defeat South Africa 1-0.

It sees Canada move into the last 16 of the World Cup for the first time where they will meet Morocco tomorrow (July 4) after the African nation defeated the Netherlands on Monday. The showdown in Monterrey had finished 1-1 after extra time before Morocco triumphed 3-2 in a penalty shootout.

Also on Monday Brazil needed an injury time goal from Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli to beat Japan 2-1 in their knockout match in



Canada's players celebrate making the knockout round of the World Cup for the first time in their history. Photo: AFP

Houston. Managed by Italian stalwart Carlo Ancelotti, the Seleção will next play the winners of the Norway and Ivory Coast match in the last 16.

Meanwhile, four time champions Germany were defeated 4-3 on penalties by Paraguay after the game ended 1-1 after extra time in Boston on Monday. The South Americans will play either two-time champions France or 1958 runners-up Sweden in the last 16 in

Philadelphia tomorrow.

Tournament favourites France progressed from their group with a 100% win record, as did holders Argentina and co-hosts Mexico. At time of press France were set to play Sweden on Wednesday (July 1) in New Jersey, while Mexico faced Ecuador on the same day in Mexico City.

Next up for Argentina is one of the most eye-catching teams and heart-warm-

ing stories in Cape Verde who finished unbeaten runners-up in Group H and became the first team to qualify with three draws since Chile in 1998.

Playing in their first ever World Cup Finals, the Blue Sharks now face a daunting test against the defending champions later today (July 3) in Miami. The South Americans are led by the mercurial Lionel Messi who has already scored 6 goals in only three

games at the competition, making him the highest ever scorer in World Cup history. While the minnows are playing with confidence, Messi will no doubt be looking to add to his impressive tally.

'INCOMPETENT'

England won their group but, other than the opening 4-2 win against Croatia, didn't look particularly impressive against Ghana (0-0) and Panama (a 2-0 win). Jude Bellingham has been England's outstanding driving force in all three games so far, while captain Harry Kane scored his 11th World Cup goal to surpass Gary Lineker and become the country's all time highest scorer in the competition. Thomas Tuchel's men were set to play DR Congo on Wednesday in Atlanta, the same day Erling Haaland's Norway take on the Ivory Coast in Dallas.

Co-hosts the United States were scheduled to play Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday (July 2) in Santa Clara, the same day Belgium play Senegal in Seattle, while European champions Spain face off

against Austria today in Los Angeles, and Portugal and Croatia face one another in Toronto.

Elsewhere, Switzerland take on Algeria in Vancouver later today, Colombia face Ghana in Kansas City tomorrow and Australia come up against Egypt in Dallas on the same day.

Of the teams who did not qualify from the group stages, Turkey were arguably the most disappointing, having come into the competition with high hopes of impressing.

Similarly, Scotland endured a miserable campaign that saw them knocked out after only one win, prompting manager Steve Clarke to resign his post on Monday.

However, things were even more downbeat in South Korea as the Republic's President Lee Jae Myung condemned the team's premature exit last Sunday, pointing the finger at "incompetent people" and apologising to the nation. Manager Hong Myung-bo promptly resigned following the team's exit.

FAT finally settles Siam Sport debt dispute

FOOTBALL

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION of Thailand (FAT) has finally drawn a line under a protracted financial dispute, settling a debt of B360 million owed to Siam Sport Syndicate through a trilateral agreement involving Cineplex Co Ltd, better known as True Group.

FAT president Nualphan Lamsam announced the breakthrough following an Executive Board Committee meeting on June 21, confirming that the association had paid B120mn directly to Siam Sport and agreed to assume responsibility for a further B240mn owed to True.

The arrangement, she said, was reached in cooperation with all parties and removes a long-standing threat to the organisation's financial stability.

The dispute dates back to 2016, when the previous FAT board cancelled Siam Sport's rights to manage sponsorship and live broadcasts. The company pursued litigation through three levels of the Thai courts, culminating in a Supreme



Nualphan Lamsam. Photo: Bangkok Post

Court ruling that left FAT liable for the full debt plus interest.

For nearly a decade the case hung over the association, until Nualphan's administration, elected in 2024, moved to negotiate a settlement and gradually pay down the liability.

Under the new agreement, FAT will clear the remaining B240mn in two instalments, combining direct payments with the granting of broadcast rights.

True Group will hold rights to Thai national team coverage across OTT, IPTV and Pay TV platforms for four years, from 2026 to 2029.

Nualphan said the deal

was vital to safeguarding FAT's future.

"This agreement eliminates the risk of asset seizure and allows us to focus on developing Thai football at every level," she noted.

Despite liquidity challenges, she pointed to recent progress: securing a four-year Thai League broadcast contract worth B2 billion with AIS-GULF-JAS, increasing financial support for clubs across all divisions, and expanding coverage of men's and women's competitions. Exclusive national team broadcasting rights have also been sold to Thai Rath TV and Cineplex.

Bangkok Post

War Elephants to rely on youth in bid for ASEAN glory: Hudson

FOOTBALL

THAILAND HEAD coach Anthony Hudson has signalled that the country's campaign at the ASEAN Championship Hyundai Cup 2026 may hinge on a new generation of players, with senior squad members likely to be unavailable due to club commitments.

The Football Association of Thailand (FAT) met on June 24 to discuss preparations for the regional tournament, which runs through July and August, followed by the FIFA ASEAN Cup in September and October.

With the competition falling outside official FIFA windows, Hudson admitted that securing first-choice players will be difficult as clubs focus on pre-season schedules.

"We have to accept that the tournament overlaps with club duties," Hudson said after the meeting. "Our aim is to



Anthony Hudson. Photo: Bangkok Post

select players who are ready and whose clubs have approved their release. Most of the squad will be young rising stars, supported by experienced players in certain positions."

A training camp is scheduled to begin on July 14, though Hudson stressed that negotiations with clubs will continue until then. His plan is to build a balanced side, but the emphasis will be on youth development.

"The main target is to give opportunities to younger players," he

explained. "We will look at the competition game by game, without putting pressure on them, and encourage everyone to bring their best performance."

Thailand's recent form has been uneven, a fact Hudson attributed to the absence of key personnel. He expects the upcoming tournaments to be a reset for the team.

Thailand, runners-up in the last edition, have been drawn in Group B alongside Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines and Myanmar.

Bangkok Post

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Sport



Knockout at FIFA World Cup > p15

THE DOJO SHOW

Young Phuket athletes continue to impress



The triumphant Dojo Phuket team in Jakarta at the International Judo Championship – Tiang Bendera Open 2026. Photo: Alexis Plantard

COMBAT SPORTS

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

The team from Dojo Phuket continue to impress and represent the province with pride after scooping more medals at international level competition last month.

The team from the Manik-based club competed at the International Judo Championship – Tiang Bendera Open 2026 on the weekend of June 12-14 in Jakarta, Indonesia, and came away with seven medals against very tough opposition.

Out of a field of 540 athletes representing eight countries, the Dojo Phuket team finished as best international team and were awarded the Best Foreign Team trophy as a reward.

Young student Gleb led the way, winning seven of his eight contests to earn a silver medal in the Under-16 division, despite being only 13 years old, and a gold medal in the 25-athlete mixed division (ages 11-14).

Team captain David once

again led by example to win gold in the cadet division, while teammate Sagit delivered a strong performance, winning bronze in the U-16 division at only 12 years old, and silver in the 25-athlete division, losing only to his teammate Gleb in the final.

Lea, the Dojo's most successful athlete over the past two years, competed in the U-10 division despite being only 7 years old. Undaunted, she defeated every opponent until the final, where she faced a skilled judoka and the age and size difference proved too much. However, Lea's tremendous courage against much older and bigger opponents was there for all to see.

Leo was in a similar situation. At only 7 years old, he won silver in the U-10 division, leading to Dojo Phuket coach Alexis Plantard to ring his praises. "It was an outstanding achievement and he is becoming stronger with every competition," he told *The Phuket News*. "The best is yet to come from Leo for sure."

Fellow students Kevin and Daniil both fought valiantly but

just missed out on a podium finish. "They both performed admirably and will come back stronger and wiser for their experiences," said Alexis.

UPBEAT

More recently, on June 21, Alexis competed in the Japan International Judo Open alongside 600 athletes at one of the toughest tournaments in the world.

Held at the birthplace of judo, the Saitama Budokan, just outside Tokyo, Alexis fought impressively, defeating Fujimori Makoto by ippon in the quarter-final to set up a final-four showdown against Omachi Yuichiro.

After almost three minutes of a very close and scoreless match, Alexis decided to take the initiative and attack. However, Omachi proved a more than capable opponent, utilising his speed and excellent technique to claim the win before going on to win the final itself.

Despite disappointment against very tough competition Alexis remained upbeat: "This was my third appearance at the Japan Open. I finished 5th in 2024,

3rd last year and 3rd again this year. I will keep working hard in training so as to improve in future."

PRICELESS

Meanwhile, student David Magomedov has been confirmed as an official member of the Russian Judo Cadet National Team.

David has been training with Alexis for the past six years, developing from a novice taking to the mats for the first ever time to competing at official international events organised by the International Judo Federation (IJF).

Furthermore, Alexis has been officially accredited as a coach for the Russian Cadet Team, enabling him to continue the mentorship of his student.

"It is a significant achievement for both of us and we are competing for world ranking points through Continental Cup events in different countries," Alexis explained.

At the end of May the duo competed in Uzbekistan, where there were more than 60 athletes

in David's division. He ultimately lost to one of the top Uzbek fighters but it provided an invaluable learning experience. Then in Kazakhstan in early June against a strong field of 35 competitors, David fell short to another Uzbek athlete, who eventually went on to finish on the podium.

"David is currently ranked 298th out of 459 athletes worldwide in the Cadet 50kg division," explained Alexis. "Even though we have not reached the podium yet, we are earning valuable ranking points at every event. Each competition also gives us the opportunity to participate in high-level training camps with national teams and local athletes. The experience he gains from these trips is priceless."

Later this month David will compete in the Asian Cup competitions in Hong Kong and Macau and Alexis sees a bright future for his student.

"David is fully committed to judo and high performance. He is dedicated, disciplined and hungry to succeed. The sky is the limit for him," commented the coach.

Patong comp hosts next generation of surfing champions

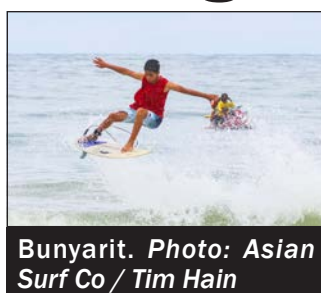
SURFING

THE TWO-DAY PEARL of the Andaman: Grom of the Sea 2026 junior surfing competition concluded last Sunday (June 28) with champions crowned across six divisions after a memorable weekend of competition at Patong Beach.

More than 40 young surfers from Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Germany and the UK gathered for the event, enjoying everything

from clean, playful surf on the opening day to far more challenging conditions during Sunday's finals. Despite the changing weather and inconsistent waves, the young competitors displayed determination, sportsmanship and impressive performances before celebrating together during the awards presentation.

The event also marked an important milestone for junior surfing in Thailand as it became the country's first



Bunyarit. Photo: Asian Surf Co / Tim Hain

Asian Surf Cooperative (ASC)-sanctioned junior competition to be included in the newly launched Asian Ranking System (ARS). Beyond competing for trophies and prizes, the

athletes were also earning valuable ranking points that will help establish a competitive pathway linking Thailand's junior surfers with all ASC events across Asia.

Taking home the biggest haul of the weekend was 14-year-old Bunyarit Khansiri from the small island of Koh Phayam, who completed a remarkable double by winning both the Under 14 Boys Shortboard Division and the U-18 Boys Longboard Division.

Having surfed for only six years, Bunyarit's talent and energy were on full display and he never let up despite competing in two finals.

"I'm so happy to win both shortboard and longboard today," he said with a smile. "The wave conditions were difficult today in the finals, but I like it here in Phuket so I had fun."

Another competitor pulling double duty throughout the event was Aonnarin

Engsrisawang, who reached the finals in both girls divisions. After narrowly finishing runner-up to Jirapat Chulasukontha in the U-14 Girls Shortboard final, she bounced back to reverse the result and capture the U-18 Girls Shortboard title later in the day.

"I'm really happy to get the win," said a delighted Engsrisawang.

"I just focused on doing my best, and today it was enough to win," she added.

Asian Surf Co