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ONE PROBE



Photo: PACC

BANG TAO CONDO DEVELOPER DENIES CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS

The Phuket News
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One World One Home Condominium BangTao has vehemently denied any wrongdoing following news that the project will be investigated by the National Anti-Corruption Commission Phuket office (NACC Phuket).

The allegations, initially investigated by local politicians and the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) Region 8 branch, claim that the project had repeatedly breached environmental laws, and that corruption was involved in allowing the project to proceed.

In a statement to *The Phuket News*, One World One Home

Condominium BangTao said reports contained “multiple factual inaccuracies” that it said had damaged its legal standing and corporate reputation, and issued a series of clarifications.

The developer insisted the project was fully legal and compliant, saying it had secured Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval from relevant Thai authorities. It said a minor issue related to construction working hours had already been resolved, and that authorities had temporarily halted construction for three days before allowing work to resume following rectification and re-confirmation of compliance.

The company also stated that joint inspections by multiple

government departments found the project to be compliant, apart from what it described as minor administrative issues relating to a small number of foreign workers’ permits. It rejected allegations of corruption and “malicious whistleblowing”, saying these had been proven unfounded by official inspections.

The developer further claimed that images used in previous reports did not depict the One World One Home project, and defended its record of corporate social responsibility, citing community support and charitable activities.

The developer also highlighted that Alongkorn Ponlaboot, on Nov 18, and Lt Gen Boonsin Phadklang, on Dec 6, had both person-

ally visited the site “to show support” for the project.

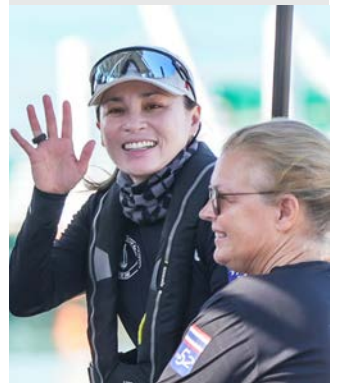
Mr Alongkorn is a former leader of the Democrat Party, and he was Deputy Minister of Commerce in 2011 under the government of Abhisit Vejjajiva. He is currently Chief Executive Officer of Alongkorn Farm & Resort in Pechaburi and Advisor to the Association of Credit Corporations of Thailand.

Lt Gen Boonsin, widely known as ‘Capt Goong’, is a former Commander of the 2nd Army Region and is currently Advisor to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army. The popular retired Army Commander visited Phuket in November to deliver his ‘Thai DNA’ speech, focusing on Thai patriotism...

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ACTION

NACC Phuket Director Suwat Saowaran confirmed directly to *The Phuket News* that his office has been formally requested to investigate the construction of the 'One World' condo project in Cherg Talay.

The request came amid allegations of corruption in the project having its EIA approved, and gaining other essential permits, as well as for alleged ongoing breaches that apparently breach its own EIA requirements, Mr Saowaran explained.

He added that the request came directly from Suphap Siri, Director of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) Region 8 branch.

Confirmation of the NACC Phuket investigation followed the PACC Thailand main branch in Bangkok posting a report online on Dec 4 explaining its review of complaints filed against the project – and a site inspection conducted on Dec 3.

The site inspection was carried out by a multi-agency team assigned by PACC Region 8 Director Mr Suphap. The team was led by Thamnoon Kongrat, Director of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Group, accompanied by Senior Justice Officers Wanlapa Busanukul and Amornrat Songkaew, and Justice Officer Wachirawit Thongrerk.



Photo: PACC

They were joined by representatives from Phuket Province, including Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), the Damrongtham Centre (Provincial Ombudsman's Office), the Phuket Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Office, the 15th Office of Environmental and Pollution Control, the Phuket Provincial Public Works and Town & Country Planning Office.

Also present were representatives from Cherg Talay Municipality, Cherg Talay OrBorTor, Cherg Talay Police, the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, the Phuket Provincial Community Organisation Council, and the Phuket Strong Mind Sufficiency Economy Anti-Corruption Club.

The visit formed part of the "People's PACC" Open House programme under the 2026 proactive corruption-surveillance initiative aimed at improving oversight of government agencies.

Officials met at the Cherg Talay Municipality office to review residents' complaints. The inspection confirmed that several condominium developments are currently under construction within areas governed by the municipality and the OrBorTor, and that contractors have failed to adhere strictly to environmental-impact prevention and mitigation measures, said the PACC report.

However, exactly which projects other than One World were under investigation was not reported.

The team concluded that responsible agencies had not enforced environmental monitoring requirements comprehensively, allowing construction impacts to worsen for nearby residents.

Phuket Province, through the Damrongtham Centre, will now coordinate with Cherg Talay Municipality and the Cherg Talay OrBorTor to summon the developers for urgent talks aimed

at agreeing immediate measures to ease the public impact.

PACC Region 8 has also recommended that all relevant agencies step up environmental-impact monitoring and enforcement. Formal recommendations will be issued in writing, along with follow-up to ensure the matter is resolved.

FIRST STEPS

The inspection on Dec 3 followed Thalung District officials stepping in to address mounting complaints from Bang Tao residents over the impacts of the One World One Home condominium project, where three seven-storey buildings with more than 200 units are under construction on Bang Tao Soi 4/2.

Thalung District Chief Siwat Rawangkun in August chaired a meeting that brought together key local representatives including Udomsak Samran, representing Phuket MP Thitikan Thitipruethikul.

Also present were Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) Member Nonthakan Kanchanasawat, the Director of the Engineering Division, environmental officers, Village Headman of Moo 5 Kittiwut Samran, and representatives of the developer.

Residents voiced frustration at the dust, noise and safety concerns caused by the ongoing work, calling for stronger

oversight of the project, reported the Thalung District Office.

Their demands included a temporary halt to construction to allow the developer and contractor to address impacts, and the immediate installation of walls to block dust and reduce noise and air pollution.

The residents also called for a review of the project's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), as residents questioned the transparency of the existing report and said photos had been used without their consent.

At that meeting Cherg Talay Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor), at that time headed by Chief Manoch Panchalard, was tasked with inspecting construction activities to ensure compliance with the EIA conditions.

Inspectors in August found that the developer had not yet established the required monitoring unit and admitted to failing to implement several key mitigation measures, including noise- and dust-reduction walls and road safety controls for heavy machinery.

"The community has made clear that development must not come at the expense of residents' health, safety or environment," said Thalung District Chief Siwat. "Our duty is to ensure transparency, accountability and fairness for all parties involved."

Buyers claim to be victims of B100mn pool-villa fraud

A GROUP OF PHUKET residents has sought legal intervention from the Campaigning to Reclaim Social Justice Foundation (CRSJ Foundation) after collectively losing more than B100 million in what they say is a major pool-villa development scam involving a network of Phuket property companies.

The victims travelled to the CRSJ Foundation headquarters in Nonthaburi on Dec 1 to file their complaint with foundation president lawyer Ronnarong Kaewpetch and vice-president Raphasit Phatthasirichaisin.

Carrying contracts, payment slips and other evidence, the group said

they had been left with unfinished homes despite paying millions of baht in deposits and, in some cases, the full sale price.

The buyers said they were persuaded to purchase villas priced between B15-20 million from a project initially presented by Baan Rim Bua Co Ltd.

The broker behind the sales, named by the victims as "Mr Chaiwat", was described as the owner of Alisha Grand Co Ltd and Alisha Property Co Ltd. They allege he disappeared when construction stalled and the date for land transfer arrived.

One complainant, Ms Sariya, who attended with her Canadian husband, said they paid a B3.3mn deposit for a villa they hoped to



Photo: Ronnarong Kaewpetch / CRSJ Foundation

move into with their young child. Now six months pregnant, she said she never expected "a fellow Thai" to deceive her (crying as she spoke), adding that her husband had always believed in the integrity of Thai people.

Another victim, 84-year-old 'Grandma Puangpen', said she had paid the full B20mn for a villa intended as a retire-

ment home to share with her daughter, who recently returned from the United States. Instead, she was left with little more than an incomplete structure "not even 50% finished". Her daughter continues to support her emotionally as she struggles with the shock of the loss.

A further buyer, Thongchai Thongcharoen, said dozens of victims had

so far come forward, with so far combined losses already exceeding B100mn. He said he later discovered that the 16 rai of land on which the villas were being built did not belong to the broker, but to a prominent Phuket mayor who serves as a canvasser for a well-known political party. He fears the case may face interference despite already filing a report with Thalung Police.

Foundation Vice President Raphasit noted that many victims were persuaded by marketing that featured a well-known foreign model as the project's presenter, adding that the promotions created a false sense of confidence in the development.

Mr Ronnarong said initial findings suggested

the case constituted "public fraud", with links between the sales companies and the children of a provincial mayor. He said further investigation was required to determine the extent of Mr Chaiwat's involvement, but preliminary document checks showed connections among the entities.

The foundation said it will take the victims to file formal complaints at Government House or with the Central Investigation Bureau, noting concerns that those who bought properties tied to politically connected individuals may face unfair treatment if the case proceeds only at the local level.

The Phuket News

Manoch runs for re-election

The Phuket News

editor@classactmedia.co.th

Manoch Panchalard, who has served as chief of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor) for the past four years has registered his intention to run for re-election.

The nationwide Or-BorTor elections will be held on Sunday, Jan 10. In Phuket, elections will be held in six subdistricts: Koh Kaew, Mai Khao, Thepkrasattri, Cherng Talay, Kamala and Sakhu.

Mr Manoch held office from Dec 24, 2021 through to last month, when local OrBorTor councils were dissolved by law to make way for fresh elections to be held.

He registered under the Pun (Sharing) party and was assigned No 1 on the ballot. He now faces a direct challenge from former Cherng Talay chief Samart Sake, who has returned to frontline politics under the New Gent party and was assigned No 2 on the ballot.

During his tenure, Mr Manoch oversaw major land recovery efforts, infrastructure upgrades, public safety improvements and environmental protection initiatives. His office has also been responsible for the explosion of construction throughout the Bang Tao area.

One of the most high-profile issues was the long-running dispute over



Manoch Panchalard (centre) stands with his supporters. Photo: Cherng Talay OrBorTor

178 rai of prime beachfront land at Layan–Leypang, valued at about B50 billion. Despite the Supreme Court handing down its ruling in 2017 finally re-confirming that the area was state land, local squatters on the land – namely popular restaurants serving tourists – still refused to vacate the area.

The debacle and flat inability of the local administration to evict the illegal encroachers led to Traiyarit Temhiwong, Director-General of the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) at the time, coming to Phuket in person in 2022 to handle the situation himself.

The DSI launched an investigation into local and provincial officials, which finally culminated into the multi-billion-baht beachfront site being reclaimed by the state.

Environmental protection has remained a core issue. Cherng Talay experienced one of the largest construction surges in its history during his term, driven by strong demand for luxury villas, condominiums, resorts and mixed-use developments. Dozens of large-scale projects have reshaped Bang Tao, Pasak, Boat Avenue, Soi Cherng Talay 14, Soi Pasak 8, Lagoon Road and Layan, placing heavy pressure on roads, utilities and public services.

With more than 10 condo, villa and hotel projects underway and repeated complaints from residents, Mr Manoch has called for stronger support from higher authorities to manage congestion, taxi issues and roadside construction impacts.

Even the heavy traffic jams in the area have been blamed on higher authorities, with Mr Manoch saying he is powerless to much about any of the key issues affecting residents in his area.

Regardless, Mr Manoch stands by his efforts to develop, and improve, his area. “My team has focused on strengthening core infrastructure, improving water systems, expanding emergency services, and supporting elderly, disabled and vulnerable groups,” he said.

“Education, cultural activities, waste management, low-carbon initiatives, community tourism and small-business development were also part of my policy,” Mr Manoch added.

THE RACE

Alongside the chief contest,

council races in Cherng Talay attracted multiple candidates across all six constituencies. The most competitive race was in Moo 5, which drew four candidates. Moo 2 and 6 recorded two candidates each, while the remaining zones recorded one candidate each.

In Kamala, the most competitive chief contest in Phuket emerged, with three candidates confirmed: Charoon Kobkoi of the Kamala Apiwat (Development) party; Witsanu Dumluck of the Kon Baan Rao (Our Home) party; and Teerawat Salika of the Kamala Creative party.

Seventeen candidates registered to contest Kamala council seats, spread across Moo 1 to Moo 4, making it the largest field in the province.

In Koh Kaew, three

candidates registered for OrBorTor chief and 15 candidates filed for council seats. Incumbent chief Keuakiat Jitkeua registered for re-election, contesting against former Moo 4 village head Darunee Sattaman, of the Chuan Chuan party.

In Mai Khao, the election for chief remains uncontested, with former chief Sarawut Srikukram registering as the sole candidate. Eight people entered the race for council positions.

In Thepkrasattri, only one chief candidate registered: Sitthichai Chanthawat of the Thepkrasattri Ruamjaipennueng (Unity) party. Fourteen candidates registered for council seats.

In Sakhu, an out-of-cycle election held in October already returned Trin ‘Noi’ Panyawai as chief, leaving only council seats in contention. Six candidates registered.

Phuket Election Commission director Oraphin Achiwasuk confirmed that registration ran from Dec 1-5 and that officers reported no irregularities. Polling station details will be announced after final verification of candidate lists.

A mandatory ban on the sale of alcohol will apply in all subdistricts holding polls, from 6pm on Saturday, Jan 10, until 6pm on Sunday, Jan 11, in accordance with national election law.

Aussie Ambassador spotlights tourists' safety, cannabis issues

AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR to Thailand Angela Macdonald paid a courtesy visit to Phuket Governor Nirat Phongsithaworn on Monday (Dec 8) to discuss strengthening cooperation on tourist safety, social issues and long-standing relations between Thailand and Australia.

The meeting took place in the Governor's Reception Room at Phuket Provincial Hall, where the governor welcomed the ambassador and her team, and highlighted the strong historical ties between the two countries, particularly through tourism.

Governor Nirat noted that Phuket remains one of the most popular destinations for Australian visitors, supported



Photo: PR Phuket

by numerous direct flights, natural attractions and the hospitality of local residents. He said Australian tourists consistently rank among the top nationalities visiting the island each year.

During the discussions, the

governor raised concerns about road safety, describing traffic accidents as one of Phuket's key challenges, said an official report of the meeting.

He stressed the importance of better education and preparation for tourists, especially those

planning to ride motorcycles or drive vehicles while in Phuket. Governor Nirat explained that the island's steep and winding roads, combined with visitors' unfamiliarity with local driving conditions, increased the risk of accidents.

Ambassador Macdonald said Australia has already introduced measures to better prepare travellers before they leave the country. These include providing safety guidance through official online platforms and promoting travel awareness in educational institutions. She thanked the Thai government and Phuket authorities for their ongoing support and care for Australian nationals visiting the island.

The Australian delegation also raised four key areas of concern:

road safety, cannabis use, drug-related issues and mental health. The ambassador expressed appreciation for the work of Region 8 Police, which she said has cooperated closely with Australian agencies to exchange information on transnational crime and enhance the safety of both Thai and foreign nationals.

Governor Nirat reaffirmed Phuket's commitment to international cooperation, stating that government agencies and private sector partners are working together to ensure Phuket remains a “safe city” for residents and visitors alike.

He said the province remains focused on maintaining high standards of security and care for all international tourists, the report concluded.

The Phuket News

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Wind 4 m/s

Norwegian woman arrested in luxury villa drug bust

A THAI MAN AND A Norwegian woman have been arrested at a luxury villa in the Laem Panwa area of Wichit after police uncovered heroin and methamphetamine in a late-night drug raid.

Wichit Police confirmed the arrests were made at a villa on Sakdidet Rd at 9:30pm last Sunday (Dec 7).

The suspects were identified only as 'Mr Kanok', 37, a resident of Moo 10, Chalong; and 'Ms Mette', 54, a Norwegian national.

Police seized from inside the villa 30.52 grammes of heroin packed in zip-lock bags; 2.26g of heroin (including packaging); 0.64g of crystal meth (ya ice) and 44 methamphetamine pills (ya bah) stamped "WY".

Offices also seized a digital scale, drug paraphernalia for ice use, a patterned zipper bag containing the drugs and B100,000 in cash.

Both suspects provided urine samples that tested positive for heroin and methamphetamine, police said.



Photo: Wichit Police

The two were taken to Wichit Police Station and charged with: joint possession of Category 1 narcotics (heroin) for sale; joint possession of Category 1 narcotics (ice and methamphetamine) without permission; illegal use of methamphetamine; and illegal use of heroin and methamphetamine.

Ms Mette was also charged with overstaying her permitted period of stay in Thailand.

Wichit Police Chief Pol Col Somsak Thongk-liang said officers were now expanding the investigation to determine ownership of the villa, whether it was rented, and whether additional suspects are linked to the operation.

He added that the case will be forwarded to prosecutors for further legal proceedings.

Eakkapop Thongtub

High season brings landfill waste surge

The Phuket News
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Governor Nirat Phongsittawom has called an urgent meeting of all 19 local administrative organisations as Phuket faces a sharp rise in waste volumes that is expected to overwhelm the island's central disposal facilities by the end of the year.

The move follows a briefing on Dec 4 at Phuket Provincial Hall, where Phuket City Mayor Supachok La-ongphet outlined the mounting pressures on the Phuket Solid Waste Disposal Centre at Saphan Hin.

The mayor warned that daily waste generation could reach 1,400-1,500 tonnes in the coming weeks, with organic waste accounting for much of the increase.

However, the centre's incinerator can process only 500 tonnes a day, forcing the remainder into landfills, which he said was becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Mayor Supachok added that despite repeated calls for cooperation on waste-reduction measures, many local



Photo: Phuket City Municipality

government bodies had yet to take meaningful action to reduce waste at the source.

Governor Nirat acknowledged the severity of the situation and the operational limits faced by Phuket City Municipality. He said he would personally chair the Phuket Provincial Waste and Garbage Management Committee and instructed officials to summon executives from all 19 local administrative organisations to a mid-December meeting.

The Governor stressed that only decision-makers would be required at the meeting to ensure concrete measures can be agreed upon quickly.

He also noted that more-

than 10 local administrations have still not signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Phuket City Municipality on updated waste-disposal fees, even though rates have not increased since 2009.

If an agreement cannot be reached, he warned that Phuket may need to consider requiring each local authority to manage its own waste to reduce pressure on the provincial disposal centre.

Governor Nirat reiterated that resolving Phuket's waste-management crisis will require full cooperation from all sectors to ensure efficient and sustainable long-term solutions for the province.

Police end mentally ill rampage

POLICE AND RESCUE workers intervened after a mentally ill man went on a late-night rampage in a residential estate in Wichit, smashing vehicles and frightening residents before being taken to hospital for treatment.

Wichit Police reported that shortly after midnight last Saturday night (Dec 6), neighbours at Phuket Villa 5 housing estate, off Chao Fa West Rd, alerted officers to a man who had become aggressive in Soi 4/4, allegedly attacking people with a wooden stick and damaging several parked cars. A resident recorded the incident on video and provided it to police as evidence.

Officers soon arrived to locate and secure the man.

The man's mother, with assistance from rescue workers from the Kusoldharm Phuket



Photo: Wichit Police

Foundation, transported him to Vachira Phuket Hospital for medical assessment and treatment.

Police said the man later appeared calm and showed no signs of violent behaviour while in medical care.

At last report, Wichit Police said they were reviewing the video footage and assessing damage to the vehicles involved, while urging the public to report any similar incidents immediately.

The Phuket News

Man killed in motorbike collision

A 25-YEAR-OLD MAN WAS killed and a woman seriously injured in a head-on motorbike collision in Patong last Sunday night (Dec 7).

Patong Police confirmed the incident occurred at about 9pm in Soi Cha Tan, off 50 Pi Rd. Police received the report at approximately 9:15pm.

Police identified the deceased as Chaikrit Pradongchan, 25, who died later at Patong Hospital.

The injured woman, Saha-sakorn Khamphawet, 39, sustained serious injuries and remains conscious but was unable to provide a statement. She is receiving treatment at Patong Hospital.

A third person, Sasutathip Bunson, 33, was not injured in the incident.

Police said the crash involved two motorbikes and a car. When officers and rescue workers arrived at the scene, they found a Honda Wave motorbike, registered in

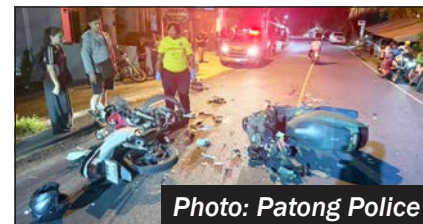


Photo: Patong Police

Nakhon Sri Thammarat, a Lambretta motorbike registered in Bangkok and a white Chevrolet Sonic registered in Phuket, which had been damaged.

The two motorbikes had sustained severe damage.

According to witness accounts and CCTV footage obtained from the area, the Lambretta motorbike had overtaken on the right and collided with the Honda Wave. The Honda Wave was then pushed into the Chevrolet.

Both injured riders were transported to Patong Hospital, where Mr Chaikrit later succumbed to his injuries.

Police said further legal action will follow once the investigation is completed. Eakkapop Thongtub

Regatta brings royal visit

The Phuket News
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Their Majesties the King and Queen arrived in Phuket last weekend to preside over and present awards at the 37th Phuket King's Cup Regatta 2025, as crowds of residents and tourists gathered across the island to welcome the royal visit.

At 6:30am last Saturday (Dec 6), Their Majesties arrived by royal aircraft at Phuket International Airport, where they were welcomed by Phuket Governor Nirat Phongsitthaworn, senior military and police commanders, judiciary representatives and provincial officials.

From the airport, the royal party travelled to Kata for the international sailing competition held for the Royal Trophy.

Her Majesty the Queen took part in the regatta on board 'Vayu' in the IRC Zero racing class, competing under sail number THA72.

Their Majesties arrived at the Beyond Kata Hotel, where they were welcomed by provincial officials, representatives of the Royal Thai Navy, the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage, the organising committee and athletes.



Photo: PR Phuket

Along the route, large numbers of Phuket residents and tourists gathered to greet the royal procession.

His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen proceeded to Kata Beach, where they boarded a royal barge and transferred to Vayu waiting offshore. His Majesty observed preparations on board before returning to shore, while Her Majesty continued to participate in the competition.

Her Majesty competed in the final race of the regatta, serving as navigator. The Vayu team's performance saw them win Race 8, finishing second overall in the IRC Zero series.

The 2025 regatta drew strong international participation, with around 120 boats and more than 365 sailors from countries

including Australia, Japan, Sweden, Belgium, China, Germany, Singapore, Malaysia and France.

That afternoon, Their Majesties granted an audience at Kanda Hall, where the President of the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage and senior Royal Thai Navy officers presented reports on the event. His Majesty then presented trophies to winners in various classes, while sponsors received commemorative plaques.

The Phuket King's Cup Regatta, first held in 1987 to mark the 60th birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, is organised by the Royal Varuna Yacht Club under Royal Patronage, the Royal Thai Navy, the Yacht Racing Association of

Thailand under Royal Patronage and Phuket Province. The annual event is recognised as one of Asia's leading international sailing competitions.

At 5pm, Their Majesties departed Phuket International Airport by royal aircraft, returning to Bangkok. Provincial officials, military commanders and airport authorities were present to see off the royal party, while large crowds of well-wishers gathered at key locations around Phuket, including Kata, Thalang and near the airport, to bid farewell.

HONOURING A PRINCESS

Meanwhile, Phuket officials and residents gathered at Wat Thepwararam (Wat Manik) in Thalang last Sunday (Dec 7) to hold a merit-making and blessing ceremony in honour of the birthday of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendira Debyavati.

The ceremony took place at 8am, led by Phuket Governor Nirat Phongsitthaworn and his wife Mrs Kusumal.

Also attending were Vice Governor Teeraphong Chuaychoo, senior provincial officials, representatives from government agencies, local administrative organisations and members of the public.

The event opened with the presiding officer paying respects to the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), followed by Buddhist chanting by monks.

Alms were then offered to monks and novices as part of the annual merit-making ceremony held to express loyalty and gratitude towards Her Royal Highness.

Vice Governors Adul Chuthong, Suwit Phansengiam and other provincial officials joined the ceremony, which is held each year on Dec 7 to mark the Princess's birthday and allow the public to take part in traditional activities.

Officials said the ceremony reflected respect for the institution of the monarchy and promoted unity among the people of Phuket, said an official report of the event.

Princess Bajrakitiyabha is the first grandchild of King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit, and the only one of the seven children of His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn born to his first wife Princess Soamsawali.

In December 2022, Princess Bajrakitiyabha collapsed as a result of a heart condition while out walking her dogs, and has remained in a coma since. Princess Bajrakitiyabha turned 47 years old last Sunday.

Phuket pays tribute to late King Bhumibol

PHUKET OFFICIALS, LOCAL LEADERS and residents gathered across the province on Dec 5 to honour the birthday anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, a day observed nationwide as Father's Day, National Day and World Soil Day.

At Phuket Provincial Hall, a ceremony was held at 7am, presided over by Phuket Governor Nirat Phongsitthaworn, who was accompanied by his wife Kusumal. Vice Governors Suwit Phansengiam and Teeraphong Chuaychoo, senior officials, private sector representatives and members of the public also attended.

The proceedings included Buddhist rites paying homage to the Triple Gem, chanting, the taking of precepts and alms-giving. Forty monks received offerings, with the governor presenting robes and dedicating merit to the late monarch. Floral 'phan phum' were later laid before the royal portrait by officials and members of the public.

Officials also highlighted King Bhumibol's contribution to environmental sustainability, recalling his 1983 royal address at Kasetsart University that laid out the principle of 'Environmental Thinking Leading to Sustainability'. His work on soil conservation was recognised internationally, with the United Nations designating Dec 5 as World Soil Day in 2013.

Tributes were also paid to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit the Queen Mother,



Photo: PR Phuket

with officials noting her role in founding the Sai Jai Thai Foundation to support war veterans and their families through vocational training and lifelong welfare assistance.

Later in the morning, a coastal restoration activity was held at the Phuket Coastal Aquaculture Research and Development Center in Thepkasatri, Thalang, at 11am. The event was presided over by Vice Governor Teeraphong, with Thalang District Chief Siwat Rawangkun, government officials, royal volunteers and local residents taking part.

Participants released aquatic animals into coastal waters as part of efforts to restore marine resources and honour the late King's legacy. Officials said the activities reflected the enduring respect held for King Bhumibol, who passed away on Oct 13, 2016, and his lifelong dedication to improving the lives of the Thai people. *The Phuket News*



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Domestic airfares continue to fall

Bangkok Post

Despite a dispute over expensive airfares to flood-stricken Hat Yai, average domestic ticket prices this year continued to decline, as low-cost carriers fled from underperforming Chinese routes to add domestic flights and avoid competition with state-backed Chinese airlines.

Locals cried foul over an airfare of almost B10,000 for Bangkok-Hat Yai flights, prompting the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) to investigate the case.

The regulator said the price ceiling for this route is capped at B7,266 for low-cost carriers and B10,049 for full-service flights.

Puttipong Prasarttong-Osoth, president of SET-listed Bangkok Airways, said the airline's average airfare in the third quarter decreased by 2.2% to B4,115.3 year-on-year, while over the first nine months of this year average fares fell 1.1% to B4,178.9.

Of those fares, domestic routes excluding Samui decreased due to heightened competition among local airlines, which discounted fares to entice purchases.

He said yields for domestic routes plunged due to enormous supply.



Photo: Bangkok Post

In the first nine months of 2025, Bangkok Airways posted a revenue dip of 0.1%, attributed to reduced fare income of B405 million, down 2.9%.

Thai AirAsia registered a drop of 12% for average airfares to B1,633 in the third quarter, due to weak demand from foreigners for both international and domestic trips.

Wutthiphum Jurangkool, former chief executive of Nok Air, said while the airline maintains its domestic market share at 25%, trailing Thai

AirAsia's 37%, revenue from ticket sales continued to drop as more low-cost carriers pivoted to domestic routes.

This trend aligns with the global market, which saw airfares drop by 5% this year. The average domestic airfare of Nok Air is B1,300 year-to-date.

Mr Wutthiphum, who stepped down as chief executive this week but remains a plan administrator for its rehabilitation, said many airlines struggled to secure a healthy load factor for Chinese routes. Several airlines

also increased capacity from new aircraft deliveries, which were planned before the downturn in tourism, he said. Those jets were redirected from foreign to domestic flights to enhance their existing fleet.

Even though Chinese travellers are expected to return to Thailand as a result of its recent rift with Japan, which saw hundreds of thousands of seats from China cancelled, Chinese airlines should benefit much more than Thai carriers, said Mr Wutthiphum.

As more than 50% of major airlines in China are state-owned businesses, local governments support them by offering subsidies to both airline operators and tour operators to increase traffic.

"Given a weak Chinese market and strong Chinese competitors, many low-cost carriers reduced or cut services to China, paving the way for stronger domestic routes," he said.

"This resulted in overwhelming supply and lower airfares in the third quarter."

Nok Air stopped all international flights, including to China, while it deals with a red flag concerning safety issued by the CAAT. Thai Lion Air slashed Chinese routes from 35 to 10.

LONG-HAUL GAINS

Mr Puttipong said the European market helped buoy international passengers during the first nine months of 2025, with the segment contributing 82% of total passenger revenue.

Passengers from Germany and the UK rose by 15% and 11%, respectively, while overall revenue from points of sale in Europe and the Middle East grew by 4%, accounting for 55% of international markets – a stark contrast to sales from Asia and Oceania that contracted by 22%.

He said robust demand remains for Samui, as Bangkok Airways' airport hub in Surat Thani comprised 66% of all passengers, up 4% year-on-year in the first nine months, and is expected to secure 2.8mn passengers this year.

However, the airline reported adjustments of some domestic and international routes in the third quarter to accommodate changing demand.

Direct flights to Phnom Penh in Cambodia were slashed from three to one daily flight, while Bangkok-Lampang flights were reduced and the Lampang-Mae Hong Song service was cancelled.

Bangkok Airways earned B19.9 billion during the first nine months of the year, gaining a net profit of B3.13bn from 3.24mn passengers.

Phuket upbeat on high season outlook

PHUKET TOURISM OPERATORS anticipate this high season running through the first quarter of 2026 will deliver the strongest performance in five years, driven by increased tourist spending, longer stays and the introduction of new long-haul flights to southern Thailand.

Krabi is also welcoming more foreign tourists, despite the slowdown of the domestic market due to the sluggish economy.

Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, president of the Phuket Tourist Association, said Phuket posted high growth for arrivals this year, particularly from long-haul markets, which generate enormous spending. Daily arrivals average 60,000-80,000, with 400 flights per day.

He said many European tourists booked their trips to Phuket much earlier than usual, particularly for this high season, driving the average room rate to grow by 30% from 2019, while occupancy is estimated at 90%.

Even with the Chinese market at only 30% of the 2019 level, foreigners' average spending was much higher as more of them were high-spending tourists.

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Phuket welcomed new direct flights from key markets such as Paris, Stockholm and Oslo during November and December.

Challenges remain regarding insufficient infrastructure, such as road



Photo: Bangkok Post

capacity, clean water and waste facilities, as well as slow development of Patong tunnel.

Regarding the new airport planned for the province, Mr Thaneth said the local administration should plan ahead on how to disperse the flow of tourists to less congested areas, such as encouraging combined holidays in Phang Nga and Ranong.

The association estimated Phuket will gain B550 billion in revenue this year, up from B480bn in 2024. The top three foreign source markets are expected to be Russia, India and China, while recording an impressive surge from the UK, Germany and Australia.

For 2026, he said Phuket tourism still has potential to grow by 10% as the island is scheduled to host six big events: Thailand Biennale Phuket, EDC Thailand, NewMa Asia Massage Championship, Global Sustainable Tourism Council conference, InterPride conference and Global Wellness Summit.

Bangkok Post

Class Act Media bags another award

IMAGE ASIA / CLASS ACT MEDIA HAS been voted 'Best Radio & Online News Media Company 2025 – Thailand' in the UK-based APAC Insider South East Asia Business Awards, marking another milestone for the media group.

The accolade was announced as APAC Insider Magazine revealed the full list of winners in its 2025 APAC Business Awards, which recognise standout businesses across the Asia-Pacific region.

Now in its tenth year, the programme celebrates companies demonstrating "dedication, excellence, and sheer innovation", organisers said.

Awards Co-ordinator Kaven Cooper said hosting the tenth edition of the programme was "an honour", adding: "I'm proud to be part of our winners' journeys and recognition. I wish you all the best as the year comes to a close and 2026 is on its way."

A total of 23 companies in Thailand were honoured this year, including several Phuket-based enterprises. Other Phuket winners include:

- Southeast Asia Pilot – Best Specialist Travel Guide 2025 – South East Asia
- JAND Group Co Ltd – Best Integrated Events & Exhibition Management Company 2025 – Thailand
- Australian Visas Thailand – Australian Visa Specialists of the Year 2025 – Thailand; Client Service Excellence Award 2025
- Kim White Yoga – Yoga Studio of the Year 2025 – Thailand
- 360INT Media Co Ltd – Best Immersive 3D Tours Provider 2025



Image: APAC Insider

"Deeply honoured to receive this recognition from the APAC Insider South East Asia Business Awards 2024," said Class Act Media & IMAGE asia General Manager Jason Beavan.

"It's a testament to the hard work and dedication from our wonderful teams, at *The Phuket News*, *Khao Phuket*, *Novosti Phuket* newspapers, Live 89.5 FM radio, *Phuket News TV*, *Window on Phuket* and *Where to Eat in Phuket* magazines, on keeping the people who visit and live here updated on all the good and interesting happenings in Phuket."

IMAGE asia / Class Act Media has built a strong history with the APAC Insider awards. In July last year, the group was named 'Best Regional Print & Radio News Media Enterprise 2024 – Thailand'.

Also in January last year, Class Act Media and IMAGE asia were bestowed the award 'Most Comprehensive Print & Online Regional New Media Company 2023 - Thailand' at the UK-based APAC Insider Business Awards 2023.

In 2022, Image asia/Class Act Media was also bestowed 'Most Outstanding News & Information Business - Phuket'.

The Phuket News

Cambodian border skirmish reignites, Thailand retaliates

BANGKOK

AFP

Thailand launched air strikes Monday (Dec 8) on its neighbour Cambodia, with both sides trading blame for renewed fighting on their disputed border that, at time of press, had killed six Cambodian civilians and a Thai soldier.

A Thai F-16 destroyed a casino used as a Cambodian drone control station across the border from Chong An Ma in Nam Yuen district of Ubon Ratchathani which had served as a rocket base command centre and posed serious risks to both military personnel and civilians, according to Royal Thai Army spokesman Maj Gen Winthai Suvaree.

Thailand had no choice but to defend itself following Cambodian attacks on Sunday, he said, adding that around 35,000 people in Thailand have been evacuated from border areas.

"The Thai air power is being used only against Cambodian military tar-



Evacuated Thai residents gather at a temporary shelter in Buriram following clashes along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Photo: AFP

gets," said Maj Gen Winthai. "The air strikes are highly precise and aimed solely at military objectives along the clash line, with no impact on civilians."

However, Cambodia's defence ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata said Thai forces had attacked Cambodian troops in the border provinces of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey early Monday, and accused Thailand of "firing multiple shots with tanks" near centuries-old temples.

She added Thailand's military had not ceased their attack and expanded the battle, maintaining Cam-

bodia had not retaliated.

Cambodia's information minister Neth Pheaktra said on Monday that at least six Cambodian civilians were killed and 10 injured by Thai shelling Monday, while the Thai army said one soldier was killed and 18 others were wounded since fresh fighting began on Sunday.

TRUCE

Five days of combat this summer between the two Southeast Asian nations killed 43 people and displaced around 300,000 on both sides of the border before a truce took effect.

But last month Thailand

paused a follow-on deal backed by US President Donald Trump to wind down hostilities, saying a landmine blast at the border had wounded several soldiers.

Asked about Trump's intervention and a call by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for restraint and diplomacy, Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters in Bangkok on Monday that no one should tell his country to stop.

"We're long past that point," he said. "If you want things to stop, tell the aggressor to stop."

The European Union called on the two countries Monday to "exercise maximum restraint" and dial down hostilities, remarks echoed by the United Nations.

Washington, through its embassy in Bangkok, urged Americans to avoid all travel within 50 kilometres of the Thai-Cambodia border "due to active hostilities and the unpredictable security situation."

Officials seize US\$300mn linked to cyberscamers

BANGKOK



Photo: Bangkok Post

THAILAND HAS SEIZED more than US\$300 million (B9.6 billion) in assets tied to criminal networks running multibillion-dollar scam centres in Southeast Asia, Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on Dec 4.

The announcement comes after authorities across Asia, Europe and the United States targeted Cambodia's Prince Holding Group and its global business network with asset seizures and freezes worth billions of dollars.

Thailand's Anti-Money Laundering Office confirmed it had seized around 100 items belonging to Prince's Chinese-born founder Chen Zhi worth B373mn, including land, cash, luxury goods and jewellery.

Authorities said they had also confiscated assets worth nearly \$15mn from Kok An, a Cambodian senator, businessman and ally of former Cambodian leader Hun Sen.

Approximately \$290mn in assets were seized from

two Thais with suspected links to scam operations.

In October, US authorities indicted Chen, accusing him of presiding over forced labour camps in Cambodia where trafficked workers conduct online scams.

The US Justice Department called Prince Group "one of Asia's largest transnational criminal organisations", and seized around \$15bn worth of bitcoin that US authorities alleged were criminal proceeds from the company's networks.

Prince this month denied that it or Chen had committed any crimes.

Cyber-scam operations have mushroomed across Southeast Asia in recent times, often operating from unassuming office blocks or warehouses where con artists target internet users living all over the globe.

Bangkok Post

Afternoon alcohol ban lifted

BANGKOK

REGISTERED OUTLETS can now sell alcoholic beverages during the previously banned period of 2pm to 5pm, with a one hour extension of time for customers in licensed premises at night to finish their drinks.

The new regulation took effect on Dec 3 after it was published in the Royal Gazette the previous day and signed by Public Health Minister Pattana Phrompat who said the changes are appropriate for the current situation.

The regulation extends the previously permitted hours for alcohol sales – 11am to 2pm and 5pm to midnight – removing the three-hour afternoon ban. The midnight close remains in effect, but customers on licensed premises are now allowed until 1am to finish their drinks.

The announcement allows for a trial period of 180 days. Alcohol control



Khao San Rd, Bangkok. Photo: Bangkok Post

committees in Bangkok and other provinces are required to assess the impact of the change for further consideration. Exceptions allowing sales outside the permitted times are made for international airports.

Thailand has banned most retail outlets and supermarkets from selling alcohol between the hours of 2pm and 5pm since 1972. That rule originated as a decree by a coup regime.

One reason given over the years was to prevent students buying alcohol after they finish school classes for the day.

The decision to end the ban was agreed to on Nov 13, aimed at stimulating tourism and economic

activity during peak tourism periods such as New Year and Songkran.

While Thailand is known for its tourism and nightlife, its alcohol laws are influenced by Buddhist teachings that see drinking as a moral issue.

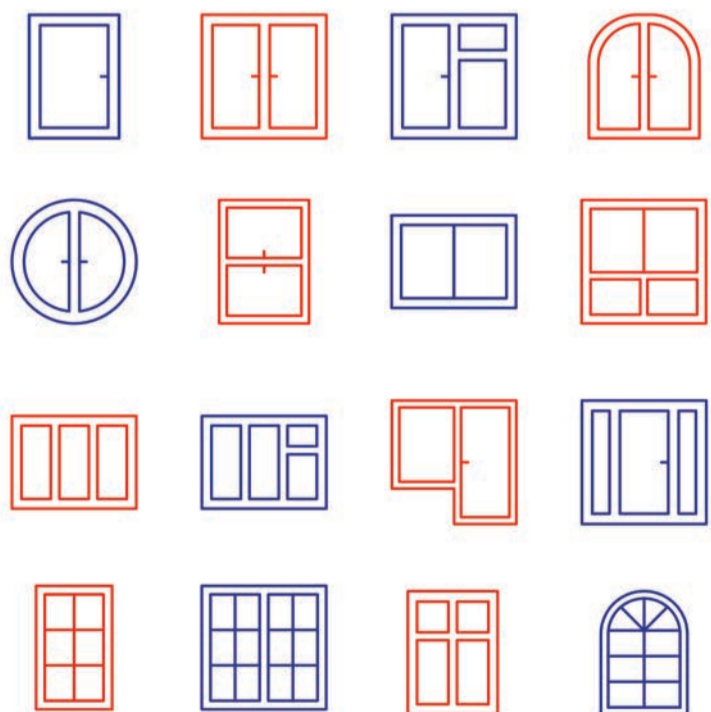
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Thailand has some of the highest alcohol consumption rates in Asia.

In 2021, Thailand was ranked 16th among nearly 200 countries for road traffic deaths per capita, according to WHO data.

From 2019 to 2023, nearly 33,000 people died in drunk driving incidents in Thailand, according to Public Health Ministry figures. Bangkok Post



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Black Crested Bulbul.



Coppersmith Barbet.



Scaly Breasted Munia.

The joy of spotting rare birds in Phuket

Simon Lomas

The island of Phuket is not only celebrated for its warm tropical sun and fresh breeze which make it an ideal tropical paradise for tourism but it is also a great stopping off point for many migrating birds.

Frequent offshore storms can push birds off course and subsequently Phuket is often the recipient of many odd visitors. More so, birds that use Thailand and Phuket specifically as a stop-off can attract other birds from the likes of Australia, India, Africa, Tibet and Siberia. That, coupled with natural migration routes, means Phuket can get a great variety of seasonal visitors. This year is no exception.

A rare visitor to Phuket this year was a bird called the Great Knot, a wading bird that forages on mud flats

and beaches, probing or picking up food by sight and mainly eating shellfish and insects. The species is endangered, both globally and within Thailand, listed as endangered by Birdlife International and the Thai National Parks organisation due to a rapid population decline caused by the loss of critical stopover and non-breeding grounds.

It migrates from Eastern Siberia, where its breeding grounds are right through Southeast Asia to Australia. One of its main stopping off areas was in South Korea. However, due to loss of habitat, the numbers plummeted and the large flocks had fewer places to go. One alternative location was the upper areas of the Gulf of Thailand, where they now stop off on their migration.

Still, situated on the other side of the country, this is a fair way from Phuket. With its numbers having dwindled significantly over time, spotting a Great Knot is a rare and in-

frequent sight in Thailand. To therefore have one turn up on Patong Beach recently was very odd. To then be joined by a second a week later was even stranger. Both birds joined a couple of Siberian Plovers, that are regulars in Phuket, for a week or two and then all went off together.

Tropical plains

Although not rare or endangered, a very colourful bird to have appeared this year was the Coppersmith Barbet. The name comes from the birds call, which is ment to sound like a copper-smith striking copper with a metal hammer. This bird is very colourful and makes its nests in small holes hollowed out in trees, much like a woodpecker. While its main diet is fruit, they also eat insects and it is possible for them to eat up to three times their own weight per day. They do not flock in large groups but tend to travel alone or in small groups.

Recently, I was fortunate enough to see a tree riddled with small holes before I spotted several small heads looking out. These were the young, looking for their parents to bring the food. Over the next couple of weeks, the 3-4 pairs that were there all left the nesting tree, leaving just one pair and their young for around another week. From what I gather from talking to local bird experts, although the Copper-smith Barbet is considered a common bird, to see them nesting on a busy beachfront is a rare sight. Makes one realise it is always good to sit back and have a look at what's about.

For those that actually travel out of the built up areas of the island and into more natural areas, you may see small flocks of small sparrow hiding in the long grass. These are called Munia. There are two types here on Phuket: The white breasted and scaly breasted Munia, both similar to sparrows but with a much larger bill. The Munia eats mainly grass seeds as well as berries and small insects. They are found in flocks and communicate with soft calls and whistles. The species is highly social and may sometimes roost with other species of Munias, typically found in tropical plains and grasslands. Breeding pairs construct dome-shaped nests using grass or bamboo leaves. They seem to not mind humans and allow you to get quite close before flying off, even to the extent of them being almost underfoot before shooting up and giving you a fright. The two are easy to tell apart as one has a white breast and the other has a spotty or scaly pattern.

Exotic

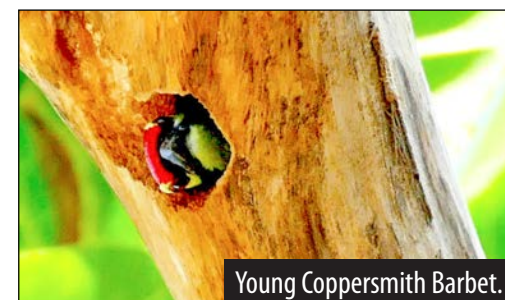
Next up is an attractive bird that has that exotic look: The Black-Crested Bulbul. I see these fairly often in lower tree



Common Kingfisher.



Coppersmith Barbet.



Young Coppersmith Barbet.

branches in mid to late afternoon after the heat of the sun has gone. Where there is one you often find more. Again, bright yellow with a black head and a very visible crest on top of the head, they are easy to spot. Typically between 18.5-19.5cm in length, it has black eyes with a yellow iris, and the bill and feet are black. Both the male and female are similar in plumage while younger birds are slightly duller. This is a bird that lives in the forest and dense scrub, building its nest in a bush, with two to four eggs a typical clutch. The Black-Crested Bulbul feeds on fruit and insects.

While most people, tourists and expats alike, spend most of their time in built up areas, there is so much to see, even just a few minutes from the town centers. You do not need to go out to wildlife sanctuaries or national parks to see lots of tropical birds and animals in Phuket. Yes, there is way more to see if you do go to the national parks, but to many everything is new and tropical anyway. For anyone into birds, butterflies, wildlife and photography, there is so much to see on our doorstep. All the photos I have taken for this column over the past 18 months have been on my walk to work from my home. When I decided to rise an hour earlier each day and walk to work as opposed to just hopping on my scooter, I found I saw so much more. There is so much activity in the natural world around us and it is somewhat refreshing to acknowledge and understand so much of what I had never really noticed before.



The January/February 2026
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'Wonderland' NYE gala at Angsana Laguna Phuket

ADVERTORIAL

Angsana Laguna Phuket is set to redefine New Year's Eve celebrations in Phuket with its inaugural "Celebration in Wonderland" gala, a 7-hour beachfront spectacle combining world-class entertainment, unlimited premium dining and direct ocean fireworks viewing.

Held on Dec 31 from 6:30pm to 1am, the event reflects the resort's commitment to delivering experiential hospitality grounded in its unique island-within-an-island setting along Bang Tao Beach.

Dual-Waterfront Setting

Angsana Laguna Phuket's topography of "an island" encircled by a man-made lagoon reclaimed from a former tin-mine positions the resort as one of Phuket's most visually distinctive venues.

This architectural feature provides guests with a rare dual-perspective experience during the midnight countdown: simultaneous views of fireworks reflected across the tranquil lagoon and directly over the Andaman Sea.

The beachfront location on Bang Tao Bay further ensures unobstructed sightlines to multiple coordinated fireworks displays across the northern coastline. The resort's integration of lush tropical landscapes, direct beach access and lagoon-side pathways creates multiple vantage points, allowing guests to experience the evening's entertainment from diverse settings.

Blending Spectacle with Intimate Performance

The gala's entertainment strategy centres on continuous programming rather than singular headliner moments. Guests encounter a layered experience featuring international DJ, world-class stage performers, roaming magicians, circus acts and walk-around performers maintaining momentum from arrival through the midnight countdown. This distributed entertainment model ensures engagement across the sprawling beachfront rather than audience concentration at a single stage.



Photo: Angsana Laguna Phuket

The "Wonderland" theme itself draws from circus and carnival aesthetics. The production incorporates elaborate staging, lighting design and thematic décor elements that transform the natural beachfront into a fantastical landscape that positions the event beyond conventional New Year's parties.

Culinary and Beverage Abundance and Quality

At the core of the celebration sits an international festive buffet complemented by local Phuket seafood offerings, featuring live carving stations, grilled specialties, premium desserts and a comprehensive raw bar on ice. This breadth addresses diverse dietary preferences whilst maintaining culinary calibre, essential for an event targeting mixed demographics including international visitors, expatriates residents and Thai nationals.

Free-flowing premium beverages accompany all packages, spanning soft drinks, fresh juices, mocktails and international drink selections reserved for midnight toast. For guests seeking elevated options, there is the Grand Diamond Package.

Thoughtfully Curated Celebration Options for Every Guest

Angsana Laguna Phuket presents three distinct ways to experience its New Year's Eve gala, ensuring every guest can find a setting that feels just right for the way they like to celebrate.

The Silver Experience invites guests to enjoy a vi-

brant garden setting with full access to the international festive and seafood buffet and free-flow beverages and steps away from the open playground and fun activities for young guests, ideal for families and groups who value atmosphere, connection and generous dining.

The Gold Experience moves the celebration to the beachfront, offering guests coveted seating by the ocean with direct views of the fireworks over Bang Tao Bay, complemented by an enhanced selection of vintage drinks and sparkling labels. It is a natural choice for couples and seasoned travellers seeking both spectacle and intimacy along the shoreline.

For those drawn to a more exclusive setting, the Grand Diamond Experience introduces a private lounge area positioned in front of the main stage beneath a clear canopy. Here, guests enjoy an elevated arrival menu, and personalised service that allows them to savour the evening at a more leisurely, bespoke pace.

These three experiences honour different celebration styles, whether guests are looking for gathering energy, beachfront drama or a more cocooned, concierge-led evening, each option is crafted to feel complete and considered in its own right.

How to Reserve Your Celebration

To secure your preferred experience for Celebration in Wonderland, contact Angsana Laguna Phuket directly via phone at 076 358 500 ext. 8852 or reach out via email at fbreservation-lagunaphuket@angsana.com. For detailed information about package inclusions, explore the complete offering at <https://l.lead.me/celebrationinwonderland>

Event Details:

Celebration in Wonderland: New Year's Eve Gala Dinner
Dec 31, 2025 | 6pm-1am
Angsana Beachfront, Angsana Laguna Phuket,
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Living in Phuket 2025

Living in Phuket 2025, an event to help make life easier for expats, is returning to the Marriott Courtyard Phuket Town. This annual free event focuses on introducing people to social and voluntary opportunities, lifestyle, travel and hospitality services, education, networking and more. From 10 till 6pm, Find out more at livinginphuket.org

TUE 16 DEC

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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

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WED 24 DEC



Christmas Beach Market

Celebrate Christmas Eve in tropical style at our Christmas Beach Market. Join us at XANA Beach Lawn on 24 December 2025 for an enchanting evening by Bang Tao Beach. Stroll beneath the stars and discover festive delicacies, tropical Thai favourites, artisanal gifts and sparkling drinks. Enjoy live music, DJ beats and timeless carols carried by the Andaman breeze. Share

the moment to your families with fun-filled activities including face painting, balloon artistry, wish-writing to Santa and a cozy Christmas movie corner. Capture joyful memories at the Santa meet-and-greet and take part in exciting lucky draws for luxurious prizes. Wednesday, 24 December 2025 | 18:00 - 00:00 hrs. At Xana Beach Lawn Free Entrance for all. A selection of free-flow food and drinks will also be available for your enjoyment.

CHRISTMAS EVE Dinner Buffet
 AT Infuse Restaurant, Diamond Resort Phuket
 Wednesday, 24th December 2025
 From 7:00 PM onwards

ROYAL CHRISTMAS EVE BUFFET

Christmas Eve at Infuse, from 7:00 PM. Celebrate the magic of Christmas Eve with a heartwarming family dinner at Infuse Restaurant by Diamond Resort. Enjoy a festive feast featuring a global selection of gourmet dishes — creating moments filled with warmth, laughter, and joy. Price - Diamond Resort Guests: 2,995 THB. Outside Guests (Early Bird): 2,995 THB (Pre-book and pay before 15 Dec). Regular Price: 3,295 THB. Children (3–11 years): 1,500 THB. Contact us: 062 245 5704 on WhatsApp, LINE and calls, email infuse@diamondresortphuket.com restaurantinfuse.com

THU 25 DEC



Italian Christmas Feast

Savour the spirit of Christmas at Azzurra, Phuket's authentic Italian beachfront restaurant. Enjoy an intimate Italian Christmas Feast where the warmth of Italy meets

the beauty of Bang Tao Beach. Delight in artisanal Vitello Tonnato, Gratinated Sea Scallop, Roasted Capon with Rosemary Potatoes, Pork Cotechino with Lentils, Stewed Salt Cod, Cep Mushroom Risotto and Pumpkin Ravioli with Brown Butter Sage Sauce, finishing with Panettone and Hazelnut Ice Cream. With live entertainment and Italian festive melodies, the evening unfolds as a symphony of flavours and togetherness, offering a truly unforgettable Christmas dinner in Phuket. Thursday, 25 December 2025 | 18:00 - 22:30 hrs. At Azzurra Restaurant THB 1,250++ per guest THB 2,400++ per couple Kids under 12 years charged at half price

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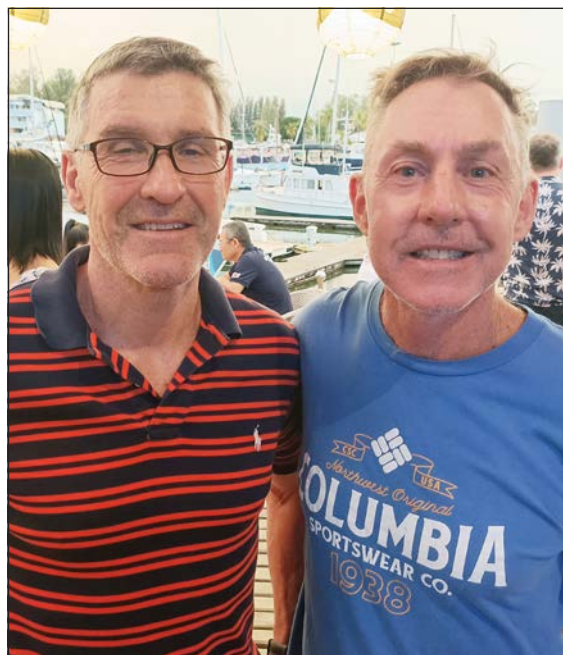
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GROW BOATING PHUKET EVENING - DEC 2025

Another great night of networking was held on December 5 at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon. Thanks to the drinks sponsor for the evening Paul Poole (South East Asia) Co., Ltd. an independent marketing consultancy based in Bangkok, Thailand specializing in commercial sponsorship. For more details see www.paulpoole.co.th There was a delicious selection of canapes served and sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees. Come and join in the fun, next month, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee Find out more - facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket



Norris lands F1 drivers title

FORMULA ONE

AFP

Lando Norris claimed his maiden drivers' championship last Sunday (Dec 7) to complete McLaren's first title double since 1998 with a perfectly-judged drive to finish third behind Red Bull's winner Max Verstappen and team-mate Oscar Piastri.

A tearful Norris won the title by two points ahead of Verstappen, who relinquished his crown after four consecutive years, in a tense and emotional season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix dominated by strategy and tactics.

"That's it mate, you are world champion, world champion!" Norris' team engineer told him after crossing the line.

"Thank you guys, you made a kid's dream come true," he replied.

"I haven't cried in a while, I didn't think I would cry but I did," Norris said on the podium in the desert night at the floodlit Yas Marina circuit.

"I want to thank my



Lando Norris celebrates his third place finish on the podium in Abu Dhabi which saw him win the F1 drivers' world championship title. Photo: AFP

mum, my dad, they've supported me since the beginning. It feels amazing, I know now what Max feels like a little bit. I want to congratulate both Max and Oscar, I've enjoyed it, it's been a long year!" he added.

McLaren, headed by team principal Andrea Stella and CEO Zak Brown, secured back-to-back constructors' titles in Singapore last month.

"That was exciting, a little too exciting, awe-

some," said Brown. "What an effort, Lando and Oscar, what a fantastic season!" added the American.

"I'm so proud of our drivers, we let them race to the end. It's been a dream with these two guys, as that Max guy is hard to beat so what an accomplishment."

Norris becomes Britain's first world champion since Lewis Hamilton in 2020 with this 13th drivers' crown for McLaren.

The 26-year-old's success comes over half a century after Emerson Fittipaldi claimed the British marque's first drivers' title in 1974.

A galaxy of F1 greats followed – James Hunt (1976), Niki Lauda (1984), Alain Prost (1985, 1986, 1989), Ayrton Senna (1988, 1990, 1991), Mika Hakkinen (1998, 1999) and Hamilton in 2008.

Assessing his path to glory Norris added: "As

we've seen many times, anything can happen. So I just kept pushing. I wanted to fight to the end. (Verstappen and Piastri) certainly did not make my life easy this year. But I am happy!

"It has been a long journey with McLaren, I've been with them for nine years. For me to bring something back to them, I feel like I did my part for the team this year so I'm proud of myself."

'NEVER GIVE UP'

Piastri, who had led the championship for much of the season before being overtaken by Norris in Mexico, finished third in the standings.

The season-closer was the first time the title was decided by a contest involving more than two drivers since a four-way scrap at the final race in Abu Dhabi in 2010.

Norris showed great discipline and patience as he executed his race under extreme pressure knowing that any error could gift the title to an unforgiving and relentless Verstappen or

Piastri, who led the championship for 15 Grands Prix this year.

"I'm definitely not disappointed," said Verstappen. "I am proud of everyone. We never give up."

It was Verstappen's fifth win in Abu Dhabi and extended the Yas Marina Circuit's record in producing 11 consecutive winners from pole position as he came home 12.594 seconds clear of Piastri with Norris third, 3.9 seconds further adrift.

Charles Leclerc, who was pressing Norris for much of the race, came fourth for a revitalised Ferrari, ahead of Mercedes' George Russell, Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin and Esteban Ocon of Haas.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton finished a solid eighth for Ferrari, after starting 16th, ahead of Oliver Bearman of Haas and Nico Hulkenberg, in his 250th Grand Prix, of Audi-bound Sauber.

It was Verstappen's eighth win of the year and the 71st of his career and one of his most controlled.

FEI eventing team gold for Thailand

EQUESTRIAN

THAILAND CELEBRATED A major victory on home soil as the host nation secured the eventing team gold medal at the FEI Asian Championships Pattaya 2025, held at B.Grimm Country Club (Thai Polo & Equestrian Club Pattaya) on Dec 3.

With a cumulative score of 117.6 penalties, Team Thailand claimed the gold medal in front of an enthusiastic home crowd.

India earned silver on 121.8 penalties, narrowly edging Hong Kong, China, who took bronze with 122.9.

Thailand's Korntawat Samran delivered top-class performances aboard B.Grimm Billy Elmy, securing both team gold and individual bronze, despite one rail in the final jumping phase.

"My horse was amazing today... I am very thankful to the owners, the groom, and everyone behind us," Samran said.

Weerapat Pitakanonda added a strong round with Billy Grimm Carnival March, finishing on 37.3 penalties.



Photo: Bangkok Post

India's Ashish Limaye produced a flawless clear round with Willy Be Dun to finish on 29.4 penalties, claiming individual gold.

Hong Kong's Patrick Lam and Jockey Club Highdown March delivered a fault-free ride to rise from fourth to take individual silver on 30.1 penalties.

This followed Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya leading a team of Thai equestrian athletes to the gold medal in dressage on the opening day of the tournament on Nov 25.

The Thai team earned a total score of 205.85 to claim the top prize ahead of India and Hong Kong.

Bangkok Post

Aussies crush England for 2-0 Ashes lead

CRICKET

AUSTRALIA CRUISED TO an emphatic eight-wicket win over England in the day-night second Ashes Test in Brisbane last Sunday (Dec 7) for an ominous 2-0 lead in the series.

Set a paltry target of 65 for victory, Australia captain Steve Smith pulled Gus Atkinson for a huge six over square leg to get the job done in style.

Although not as humiliating as the two-day loss in the first Test at Perth, England were comprehensively outplayed in every department.

Australia are now overwhelming favourites to retain the Ashes with matches in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney to follow.

For England it was more misery. Their batting, apart from Joe Root and Zak Crawley in the first innings and captain Ben Stokes and Will Jacks in the second, was just as rash as in Perth.

They also bowled poorly, pitching too short and wasting the new pink ball, in stark contrast to an Australian attack missing spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood.

To make matters worse England dropped five catches in the first innings, whereas Aus-



Australia's Alex Carey celebrates the wicket of England's Will Jacks on day four of the second Ashes Test. Photo: AFP

tralia's fielders caught everything that came their way.

Josh Inglis's brilliant run-out of Stokes in the first innings changed the course of the match.

England were behind the game once they let Australia's tail help the home side post 511 on Saturday, an overall lead of 177.

They then lost six second-innings wickets under lights to end the third day 134-6, still 43 runs behind the Australian total.

While many expected England to surrender meekly on Sunday, Stokes and all-rounder Jacks led a fighting rearguard action on a fiercely hot day to edge their way past the initial deficit target and ensure Australia had to bat a second time.

They scored just 28 runs in the first hour and passed the 43-run deficit 96 minutes into the

session, scoring only 59 runs in the two hours.

They continued to frustrate the Australians in the second session until just before the drinks break Jacks got an edge to Michael Naser and Smith snared a breath-taking catch at slip.

Naser struck again in the next over when Stokes nibbled at a ball outside the off-stump and got a fine edge to keeper Alex Carey to leave England 227-8, a lead of exactly 50.

Atkinson, Brydon Carse and Archer offered no real resistance as Naser recorded career-best figures of 5-42.

Sixty-five was never going to be enough and although Australia lost Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne in the chase, Smith and Jake Weatherald guided the home side to an easy win.

AFP

Gunners crash at Villa

FOOTBALL

AFP

Aston Villa ended Arsenal's 18-match unbeaten run to blow the Premier League title race wide open last Saturday (Dec 6) as Manchester City beat Sunderland 3-0 to close within two points of the leaders.

Emiliano Buendia's stoppage time strike secured a 2-1 victory for Villa and a ninth win in 10 league games since taking just three points from their opening five matches of the season.

Arsenal were without the injured Gabriel Magalhaes, William Saliba and Cristhian Mosquera in defence and the normally rock solid visitors struggled to cope with Villa's variety of attacking weapons as Matty Cash blasted Emery's men into a half-time lead.

Leandro Trossard equalised with his 50th Premier League goal in the second half before Buendia sealed the win late on.

City took full advantage of Arsenal's defeat to close the gap at the top with a routine 3-0 win over Sunderland, with centre-backs Ruben Dias and Josko Gvardiol on target before Phil Foden scored for the fifth time in three games to complete the win in the second half.

Chelsea's title challenge is fading fast after three games without a win



Buendia (right) fires in the winner for Villa. Photo: AFP

as they laboured to a 0-0 at Bournemouth, despite the return of Cole Palmer to the starting line-up for the first time since September. The Blues now sit eight points off the lead in fifth place.

Manchester United moved up to sixth place following a comprehensive 4-1 win at lowly Wolves on Monday, with captain Bruno Fernandes (2), Bryan Mbuemo and Mason Mount on target for Ruben Amorim's improving side. Wolves sit desperately cut adrift at the bottom on just two points, eight points behind 19th placed Burnley.

Tottenham eased the pressure on Thomas Frank with their first home league win since the opening day of the season, against his former club Brentford 2-0, while Newcastle defeated 10-man Burnley 2-1 to climb up to 12th and Sean Dyche's return to

Everton as Nottingham Forest boss ended in a 3-0 defeat.

Liverpool suffered another embarrassing capitulation to ramp up the pressure on manager Arne Slot as Leeds twice hit back to salvage a thrilling 3-3 draw.

The Reds led 2-0 and 3-2 thanks to Hugo Ekitike's quickfire double and Dominik Szoboszlai's strike but Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Anton Stach and Ao Tanaka struck back for the hosts.

Liverpool failed to win for the eighth time in their last 10 league games and are languishing in 10th place. Comments from star player Mohamed Salah, benched for the last three games, that his relationship with Slot was now non-existent will no doubt only further exacerbate the negative mood surrounding the club.

Olympic swim star Thorpe to race Sydney-Hobart

SAILING

OLYMPIC SWIMMING great Ian Thorpe has joined the crew of supermaxi Law-Connect in its bid to win a third consecutive Sydney-Hobart yacht race, with the Australian bracing for a mental and physical challenge.

The five-time Olympic gold medallist, considered one of the world's greatest swimmers, revealed he had been secretly preparing for the brutal bluewater classic.

"I've spent my life in and around water, but this is a completely different test, both mentally and physically," said the 43-year-old, who will be making his race debut.

"Joining the LawConnect team is an opportunity to push myself, learn something new, and be part of an incredible Australian sporting tradition."

More than 130 yachts are due to depart Sydney on Dec 26 for the event's 80th edition, heading down Australia's east coast before tackling the notorious Bass Strait towards the Tas-



Thorpe. Photo: AFP

manian state capital Hobart.

It can often be a wild 628-nautical-mile race, with two sailors last year dying in separate incidents as boats were pummeled by gale-force winds and big waves.

Thorpe will be on board one of five ultra-fast 100-foot supermaxis competing for line honours, with LawConnect targeting a third straight victory.

"Thorpie is one of Australia's greatest athletes," said LawConnect owner and skipper Christian Beck, who has a history of welcoming newer sailors on board.

"Having him join LawConnect not only brings an incredible story to this year's race but highlights our commitment to doing things differently."

AFP

Contenders plot path to 2026 World Cup glory

FOOTBALL

THE PATH TO GLORY at the 2026 World Cup has now been laid out after the contenders discovered their tournament fate at last Friday's (Dec 5) draw ceremony in Washington.

Lionel Messi's Argentina begin their defense of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 by facing Algeria, and will also play Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J.

Reigning European champions Spain will kick off their campaign against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

Thomas Tuchel's England, seeking to win a first World Cup since 1966, will be expected to top Group L ahead of 2018 finalists Croatia, Ghana and Panama.

Two-time winners France face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling

GROUP A MEXICO SOUTH AFRICA KOREA REPUBLIC TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF D	GROUP B CANADA TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF A QATAR SWITZERLAND	GROUP C BRAZIL MOROCCO HAITI SCOTLAND	GROUP D USA PARAGUAY AUSTRALIA TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF C
GROUP E GERMANY CURACAO COTE D'IVOIRE ECUADOR	GROUP F NETHERLANDS JAPAN TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF B TUNISIA	GROUP G BELGIUM EGYPT IRAN NEW ZEALAND	GROUP H SPAIN CAPE VERDE SAUDI ARABIA URUGUAY
GROUP I FRANCE SENEGAL TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF 2 NORWAY	GROUP J ARGENTINA ALGERIA AUSTRIA JORDAN	GROUP K PORTUGAL TIFIA WINNER PLAY-OFF 1 UZBEKISTAN COLOMBIA	GROUP L ENGLAND CROATIA GHANA

Image: AFP

Haaland's Norway in Group I, which will be completed by a play-off winner from either Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname.

Carlo Ancelotti's Brazil and surprise 2022 semi-finalists Morocco will meet in Group C, which also features Scotland and Haiti.

Germany's opponents in Group E will be Ivory Coast, Ecuador and Caribbean minnows Curacao, while Portugal face Uzbekistan, Colombia and a play-off winner.

The United States got a manageable draw, with Paraguay, Australia and a European play-off winner in Group D.

The top two teams in each group advance to the last 32, joined by the eight best third-placed teams.

The tournament will be held across the USA, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32 nations involved in 2022.

While the US will host most matches, including the final at the MetLife Stadium outside New York, three of the 16 venues will be in Mexico and two in Canada.

The opening game sees Mexico play South Africa at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. AFP

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Sport



Lando wins maiden F1 title > p14



Photo: Phuket King's Cup Regatta / Guy Nowell

SAILING

Scott Murray

Her Majesty Queen Suthida demonstrated her impressive sailing expertise as she competed in the 37th Phuket King's Cup Regatta last week, serving as navigator aboard the yacht *Vayu* ('THA 72') in the IRC Zero class.

Her Majesty the Queen took on the role of navigator and strategist of the vessel across three days of racing, applying her expertise in aviation to calculate shifting wind directions with precision – a critical factor in competitive sailing, where effective use of wind power determines speed and safety.

Queen Suthida helped *THA 72 Vayu* clinch first place in three races out of eight, securing equal highest overall score in the series on the final day (Dec 6).

However, even though *THA 72 Vayu* did win the eighth and final race in their series – both on corrected and elapsed time – and had the same number of points as *Team Hollywood*, Ray Roberts' boat took home the coveted IRC Zero class based on one more first-place finish.

Heading into the final day *Team Hollywood* and *THA 72 Vayu* were tied with eight points each, factoring in a drop race, as the class readied for two final windward-leeward races. The other yacht in the class, *Aftershock*, finished seven points

back when sailing wrapped up.

PRO Simon James gave IRC Zero and IRC 1 two windward-leewards, while giving everyone else just one. Rolf Heemskerck's *The Next Factor* had a great final day on the water and won the seven-boat IRC 1 class based on their second and first-place showings. Nick Burns' *Blitz* had two third-place finishes on the final day, helping them secure second overall, four points back of *The Next Factor*.

Craig Nicholls's *Alright* finished sixth in both races, but their strong performance early in the regatta enabled them to lock down third spot in the IRC 1 class. J. Masuda & S. Kida's *Grand Turtle (Char Chan)* won the first race on the final day and finished second in the other, enabling them to grab fourth overall in IRC 1.

UNFORTUNATE

The Premier class was decided ahead of the final day because of an unfortunate incident on the start line of the first race on Friday where Hans Rahmann's *Yasooda* bumped Thailand's Ithinai Yingsiri's *Pine Pacific*. Neither boat could race on the final day meaning the only other boat in the class, *Shahtoosh*, had no chance of winning they didn't race either. Final results had Thailand's *Pine Pacific* winning this class again with *Shahtoosh* in second and *Yasooda* in third.

The seven-boat IRC class 2 saw Sergei Muskhin's *Madame*

Butterfly edge Match Racing star Mati Sepp & his Estonian crew on *RTS-Baltic* by one point overall, even though *RTS-Baltic* won both races on the final day. Igor Puzanov's *Jolt* placed third in this class.

The four-boat Bareboat Charter A class saw Andrei Novikov's *Gloria* win the last three races in the series, defeating Feng Chen's *Isabella* and Aleksei Brunov's *Moonshine* by four points overall to win the title.

In the four-boat Bareboat Charter B class one point separated the top three finishers. Hideyuki Miyachi's *Amigo II* and Takashi Ito's *Team Miyakomuru (Sariya)* finished tied on points with *Amigo II*, claiming the title based on one more first-place finish, while Maximillian Soh's *Piccolo* was third, just one point back.

In the eight-boat monohull cruising class Igor Ginzberg's *Wind of Change* and Oleksly Borysov's *Ronin* finished tied on points but the tie-breaker went to the former who had one more second-place finish than *Ronin* with Philippe Dalle's *Swan II* third.

As the only boat competing in the multihull class Ryan Merrill's *Compass Rose* won all the places on the podium.

IMPRESSIVE

Eighty-one dinghy sailors battled it out early in the regatta, striving for honours in the eight titles up for grabs: Boy's and Girl's

Optimists, ILCA4 U18 (mixed), the ILCA 7 class, the ILCA6 Open Class, the International 420 class, the Open Skiff U18 class and the Inclusive S/V14 class.

Forty-one sailors competed in the boy's and girl's Optimist classes. Impressive YRAT's Surapa Muangngam won four of the eight races in the class and finished second three times, beating her closest competitor China's Youjia Xu by 17 points, while YRAT's Pakornkiat Chaiya-o-cha placed third.

In the ILCA 4 class, there were 14 sailors (8 male, 6 female) competing, and Samut Prakan Provincial Sports Authority's (SPPSA) Pinchanok Klaysomboon also had an outstanding regatta winning five of the eight races and finishing second twice to finish 12 points ahead of YRAT's Kitchakhun Somkhangnong, and 15 points ahead of Karit Phramanee.

The ILCA6 Open, ILCA7, and the 420s were scored together and, by winning four races, Voravong Rachtanank of the RTNA edged Gass Anton of Kazakhstan by two points to capture the class with fellow-Thai Thorfun Boonnak in third spot.

The nine-boat Open Skiff U-18 class saw another outstanding performance, this time by UWC's Punthita Werotjanakul as she has won six of the eight races to finish eight points ahead of UWC's Andries Kosuge and 14 points ahead of

UWC Owen Wong-Forhart. Congratulations to Seahorse Sailing School's Scott Duncanson and Garfield Meeyusamsen for the role they played in developing these sailors.

Disabled Sailing Thailand (DAT) finished on the east coast of the island, just off of Ao Po Grand Marina. After four days of racing, last year's winners' Suraphong Chitkhong (helm) & Mak Sarawat (crew), defended their title finishing two points ahead of Tanat Upatising (helm) & Tatiana Kaurova (crew), with the crew of Thitapa Saelime (helm) and Martin Holmes (crew) taking third, eight points back of Tanat/Tatiana. Garfield's father, Thammasak Meeyusamsen was the racing official, presiding over these races.

After racing was finished, the royal awards ceremony was held where His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida presided over the ceremony held at the Kanda Ballroom in the Beyond Kata hotel.

Her Majesty The Queen's participation in the regatta underscores her commitment to promoting sailing in Thailand and elevating the sport to international recognition. Sailing is a global discipline, and Her Majesty's involvement serves as a powerful motivation for young athletes to develop their skills and compete on the world stage.

– Additional reporting by Bangkok Post