

**MOTORBIKE RENTALS COME UNDER SCRUTINY > PAGE 3**

# WINNERS



Photos: Supplied

## PEOPLE'S PARTY HOLDS TWO SEATS AS KLA THAM CLAIMS THIRD

**Natnaree Likidwatanasakun**  
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Phuket's newly elected Members of Parliament have pledged to push ahead with self-governance reforms, major infrastructure projects and stronger local control over revenue after the People's Party retained two of the island's three seats in the national election last Sunday (Feb 8), while the KLa Tham Party captured Phuket Constituency 3.

Unofficial tallies released late last Sunday night showed Chalermpong 'Coach Sam' Saengdee and Somchart Techathaworncharoen winning re-election for the People's Party in Constituencies 2 and 1 respectively, while KLa Tham candidate Orathai Kerdsap

unseated People's Party incumbent Thitikan Thitiphrutikul in Constituency 3.

Provincial officials noted that advance votes were not yet included in the counts, but declared winners in all three constituencies based on polling-day results received. The figures remain subject to verification and formal certification by the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT).

In Constituency 1, Mr Somchart narrowly edged out Bhumjaithai candidate Ploytalay Laksmisangchan, 16,919 votes to 16,821, in one of the closest races of the night. The KLa Tham Party's Thiwat Sidokbuab placed third on 15,205 votes.

In Constituency 2, Mr Chalermpong won comfortably with 24,355

votes, ahead of Bhumjaithai's Sanakorn Keesin on 20,530.

In Constituency 3, Ms Orathai secured a clear victory with 30,029 votes, defeating incumbent Thitikan Thitiphrutikul, who polled 17,421.

Neither Bhumjaithai nor Pheu Thai secured any of Phuket's three constituency seats.

**'ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN SERVE'**

Thanking voters after his re-election in Constituency 2, Mr Chalermpong said the result showed that "ordinary people" can serve in parliament if backed by public confidence.

"This victory is not just mine, it is the beginning of change that the people will build together," he

said, pledging to stand with residents and address long-standing problems.

He said he would continue to push his 'Sam Takes Action' platform, arguing that Phuket's development has too often been stalled by politicians who "talk big but never take action".

Mr Chalermpong listed priorities including promoting Phuket self-governance, reviving the long-delayed Patong Tunnel project, improving public transport, regulating rental car businesses, supporting modern entertainment venue laws, upgrading tourism from volume to quality, improving residents' quality of life and maintaining opposition to cannabis legalisation.

"I don't wait. I act, push forward..."

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**NEWS** PAGE 3

**Cargo sinking spurs rescue, recovery efforts**



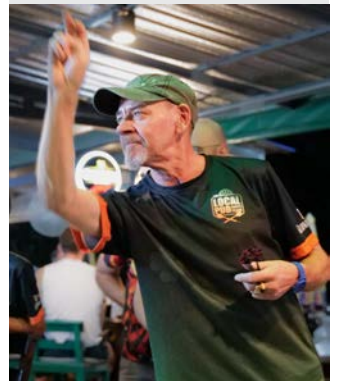
**LIFE** PAGE 8

**Compost Bank tackles local food waste**



**SPORT** PAGE 16

**Doo Duck Inn win Phuket Darts League**



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# News



Motive shrouded for slaying of Iraqi tourist > p4

## Phuket approves charter rewrite

Continued from page 1

...and keep fighting so real change happens," he said.

### PUSH FOR AUTONOMY

Re-elected Constituency 1 MP Mr Somchart said the election reflected growing political engagement among voters, citing strong turnout and fierce competition between parties.

Although the People's Party secured only two of Phuket's three seats, he said the result was significant for the upper southern region and showed the party could maintain its political base in the South.

Once formally certified by the ECT, Mr Somchart said his first move would be to re-submit the draft Phuket Metropolis Act to the House of Representatives, in line with the People's Party's policy of promoting self-governing provinces and the election of provincial governors.

He also pledged to push legislation to improve transparency of business income data in Phuket and to seek a fairer share of tax revenue for the province, including reintroducing amendments to the Provincial Administrative Organisation Act.

This time, he said, he would invite the two other Phuket MPs, regardless of party affiliation, to co-sponsor the proposals.

"Even if we are from different parties, when it comes to Phuket's



Photo: PR Phuket

agenda, we must work together to ensure that revenue generated by Phuket is used efficiently in the province," he said.

Mr Somchart thanked voters in Talad Nuea, Talad Yai, Ratsada and Koh Kaew, and said he would serve all residents equally, including those who did not vote for him.

### KLA THAM VICTORY

In Constituency 3, KLa Tham Party candidate Ms Orathai said she was "extremely happy" that years of grassroots work had paid off after her unsuccessful 2023 bid.

She said her initial focus would be on economic and business-related problems in her constituency, starting with a

review of existing development plans and identifying issues that could be addressed quickly.

Her policy work, she said, would align with KLa Tham Party priorities, particularly water management to address both flooding and drought, beginning with studies in Thalang District before expanding province-wide.

Ms Orathai also said she would examine land title issues under the Agricultural Land Reform Act, including the possibility of upgrading certain land documents from 'green Garuda' status (NorSor 3 Kor certificates of use) to 'red Garuda' status (NorSor 4 Jor or Chanote) for farmers, subject to legal and policy considerations.

Thanking voters for trusting

her work as a grassroots social development worker, she said she would continue working closely with communities.

"I want to work hand in hand with the people of Phuket for the better every day," she said, adding that she had continued community work even outside political office, including supporting hospitals, promoting small businesses and organising markets and events to help local vendors.

### RESULTS STILL UNOFFICIAL

Provincial authorities stressed that all results released so far remain unofficial and subject to verification by the ECT. The Phuket office of the ECT said constituency and party-list results must undergo legal checks before formal certification, which is expected within 60 days of polling day if the election is deemed free and fair.

Officials urged the public to rely on official ECT announcements as counting and verification continue.

### REFERENDUM BACKS CONSTITUTION REWRITE

Voters across Phuket also backed the first step towards rewriting Thailand's 2017 Constitution, with majorities in all three constituencies voting in favour of beginning the charter rewrite process.

The referendum asked only whether voters approved starting the process of drafting a new constitution to replace the current charter. It did not seek approval of any specific changes.

According to ECT figures, 57.7% of voters in Constituency 1 supported beginning the process, compared with 42.3% against. In Constituency 2, 55.3% voted in favour and 44.7% against. In Constituency 3, 55.2% supported the move, while 44.8% voted against.

The vote follows a Constitutional Court ruling on Sept 10 last year confirming that the House of Representatives has the authority to begin drafting a new constitution, but only after public approval through a referendum.

The court also ruled that three referendums are required before a new constitution can come into force. The first, held on Sunday, sought approval in principle to begin drafting. A second referendum would seek public input on the framework and method of drafting, and a third would ask voters to approve or reject the completed draft charter.

Election officials said Sunday's vote marked only the first stage of what is expected to be a lengthy constitutional reform process, with further public participation required before any new constitution can be adopted.

## Kamala construction faces more investigation

KATHU DISTRICT officials have confirmed that land excavation on Kamala Hill is taking place on privately owned land and is supported by documents issued by Kamala Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor), following public concern raised on social media.

The clarification followed a site inspection on Jan 30 after reports circulated online alleging unauthorised excavation on Kamala Hill in Moo 6. The inspection was ordered by Kathu District Chief Akkarapol Sutthirak Jitsupap and carried out by deputy district chiefs Sikharin Anilbol and Anurak Poolsak.

Officials confirmed the

land is privately owned under NorSor 4 Jor land title deed No. 11588, issued on June 27, 2008, covering 32 rai 2 ngan 91.6 square wah.

Deputy District Chief Sikharin said the area is being prepared for residential construction, but declined to disclose the project or company involved.

He explained that OrBorTor Kamala issued a notification permitting soil excavation and land filling under the Land Excavation and Filling Act B.E. 2543, allowing work to "an average depth of two metres" across 51,425 square metres.

However, photos of officials at the site posted online by the Kathu District



Photo: Kathu District Office

Office showed excavation in areas of up to about four metres at the site. The report by the Kathu District Office made no mention of the deeper excavation conducted.

OrBorTor Kamala also issued a construction permit (Form A.1) on Jan 29 for eight single-storey reinforced concrete houses and a 400-metre retaining wall,

the Kathu District Office reported.

However, while Kathu officials noted that while the excavation activities are supported by these documents, they also pointed out that the legality of the issuance of the land title deed itself has been raised with provincial authorities due to public and media interest.

The legality of the NorSor 4 was previously referenced in correspondence from the Phuket Provincial Forestry Office dated Aug 22 last year and discussed at a Provincial Forestry Committee meeting, which instructed the Provincial Damrongtham Centre to request relevant agencies to examine the land title documents, Kathu District Office explained in its report.

As a result, deputy district chiefs, village officials, OrBorTor Kamala and other agencies were assigned to collect preliminary facts on the ground. The district office also formally referred the matter to the Phuket Provincial Land Office for further examination, Kathu Dis-

trict Office noted.

However, the Phuket Provincial Land Office has not released any clarification or findings regarding the issuance of the land title.

Separately, excavation at the same site was temporarily suspended last year and the landowner "was notified to submit a proper application for permission" under threat of one year in jail or a fine of up to B50,000 after an inspection by officials following other complaints posted on social media. The work suspension and inspection resulted in the unnamed landowner being charged.

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

# Cargo ship sinks off Phuket

The Phuket News

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Thai authorities on Monday (Feb 9) were continuing a multi-agency response after the Panama-flagged cargo ship SEALLOYD ARC sank south of Laem Phromthep last weekend, triggering a minor diesel oil slick and scattering containers, including hazardous cargo.

The general cargo vessel began taking on water and listing about three nautical miles south of Laem Phromthep last Saturday. Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Centre Region 3 (Thai-MECC 3) received the distress report in the afternoon and ordered an emergency response, with priority given to rescuing the 16 crew members on board.

Eight crew were initially rescued by a fishing boat in the area, with the remaining eight, including the captain, evacuated by Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation vessel HTMS Andaman 5. Patrol Boat T.272 and other naval and



Photo: Murray King

maritime enforcement vessels were dispatched to assist. All 16 crew members were brought safely ashore at Chalong Pier, with no injuries reported.

Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn said the 4,339-ton vessel had been en route from Malaysia to Bangladesh when it began listing and taking on water before sinking later that evening. Officials were alerted just before 6pm and immediately activated pollution-prevention measures. Although the foreign-flagged ship was not bound for Thailand, authorities moved quickly to mitigate any environ-

mental and navigational risks to Phuket waters.

Aerial surveys conducted by helicopter last Sunday identified an oil slick stretching about 4.5 nautical miles (8.3km) long and roughly one nautical mile wide. The slick was drifting westward, away from Phuket's coastline. Follow-up aerial monitoring found the diesel sheen gradually dissipating over four to five nautical miles due to sunlight and weather conditions, with no impact on the coastline observed so far.

Thai-MECC 3 established an incident command centre in Phuket, chaired by

Vice Admiral Veerudhom Muangchin as Incident Commander, to coordinate the response. Naval vessels, aircraft, helicopters and drones have been deployed to monitor the slick, track debris and manage risks to navigation. The Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Centre Region 18 Phuket office, local administrative organisations and private-sector partners have also been mobilised.

On Monday, authorities confirmed the wreck had been located on the seabed. Royal Thai Navy vessel HTMS Nong Sarai reported that the SEALLOYD ARC lies at latitude 07°43.88'N,

longitude 098°16.62'E, at a depth of 61 metres on sandy-mud seabed.

The vessel is slightly tilted, with the aft superstructure 14 metres below the surface and oriented on a 284.5-degree bearing. With the ship fully submerged, officials said surface-level containment of any remaining leaks is no longer feasible, and operations have shifted to monitoring and recovery.

The ship was carrying about 290 containers, including 14 containing hazardous materials such as chemicals and batteries that could pose risks if exposed to seawater.

While some containers are believed to have sunk with the vessel, others broke free and drifted. At time of press, 19 floating containers have been recovered, and warning buoys and signals have been installed on others to alert passing vessels.

Container search and recovery operations are being led by HTMS Hua Hin, supported by HTMS Punyee, Marine Police, a drone team and Marine

Department vessel 801. Tugboats from Phuket Deep Sea Port have been tasked to assist in towing recovered containers to barges. Authorities believe about 218 containers remain secured inside the wreck, with roughly 79 still at risk of drifting and requiring continued search and recovery.

Thai-MECC 3 spokesperson Capt Pichet Songtan said preliminary findings suggest the ship suffered a hull leak that led to progressive flooding and listing after departing Malaysia. The vessel had originally been bound for Sri Lanka but altered course toward Phuket in an attempt to seek shelter before sinking.

The Phuket Regional Marine Office has issued navigation warnings to vessels operating in the area south of Laem Phromthep due to the risk posed by drifting or submerged containers. Mariners have been urged to exercise caution and avoid affected routes where possible while recovery operations continue.

## Phuket tightens controls on motorbike rental businesses

AUTHORITIES ARE MOVING TO tighten controls on motorcycle rental businesses and step up enforcement against unlicensed and reckless riding by foreign tourists, following a high-level multi-agency meeting aimed at reducing road accidents while protecting Phuket's tourism image.

The meeting was held at Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday (Feb 6), chaired by Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn, with representatives from the Public Prosecutor's Office, Phuket Provincial Police, the Department of Land Transport, the Revenue Department and other agencies attending.

The governor said the objective was to introduce concrete measures to prevent rental shops from providing motorcycles to tourists without valid licences, alongside stricter enforcement against riders who break traffic laws. The goal is to reduce accidents and systematically address problems linked to unregulated rentals.

Officials said there are currently 288 registered legal entities operating motorcycle rental businesses in Phuket. Police reported that in 2025, 2,745 Thais and 20,901 foreign nationals were arrested for riding rental motorcycles without licences. Enforcement against rental operators resulted in 4,437 arrests, 3,727 fines and 1,737 motorcycles seized.

The Phuket Land Transport Office briefed the meeting on a draft amendment to the Motor Vehicle Act covering motor-



Photo: PR Phuket

cycle rental services, expected to come into force in 2026. Proposals include defining "motorcycle rental" in law, requiring rental bikes to be registered specifically as rental vehicles, allowing designated licensing zones, and imposing penalties of B10,000 to B100,000 for operating without a licence.

Officials also discussed integrated measures to target shops renting to unlicensed riders, including tax enforcement by the Revenue Office, insurance requirements overseen by the Office of Insurance Commission and business regulation by the Provincial Commerce Office.

The measures will be supported by strict enforcement against offending riders by police, transport officials and prosecutors, with assistance from Immigration Police and Tourist Police.

Governor Nirat said agencies must clearly define responsibilities, share data and report obstacles to enable coordinated action, supported by stricter enforcement and public awareness campaigns targeting both operators and tourists.

The Phuket News

## Suicide rate 'below target'

PHUKET'S SUICIDE rate remains below the national target threshold, with access to services for people who have attempted suicide and for at-risk psychiatric patients assessed as satisfactory, provincial officials have explained.

The update was presented at the first meeting of the Phuket Provincial Mental Health Subcommittee for 2026, held at Phuket Provincial Public Health Office last Friday (Feb 6).

Banphot Pankleub, Deputy Provincial Public Health Officer, chaired the meeting, with Dr Phaskorn Khumsiri, Head of Mental Health at the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office, and representatives from relevant agencies in attendance.

Data covering the period from October 2024 to May 2025 was presented to the meeting, alongside an overview of the mental health and drug addiction situation in Phuket Province.



Photo: PR Phuket

The subcommittee approved the minutes of the previous meeting and reviewed progress on key initiatives, including expansion of the 'Satir Model' and motivational interviewing (MI) in counselling services, youth drug prevention programmes integrated with the To Be Number One project, the use of mental health screening systems in schools, and follow-up care for high-risk psychiatric patients, particularly young people with complex mental health problems.

Officials noted that voluntary treatment remains the primary approach for drug users and people with substance addiction issues, supported by continued com-

munity participation, although challenges remain in post-treatment follow-up and long-term rehabilitation.

The meeting also reviewed child and youth mental health screening results using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which identified a number of students at risk of mental health problems.

Reports from Vachira Phuket Hospital, Chalong Hospital, Patong Hospital and Thalang Hospital provided further data on psychiatric and substance abuse patients, trends in service access, and ongoing staffing and resource constraints.

Provincial officials said the meeting served as a platform to strengthen coordination between agencies, develop joint strategies and improve surveillance and support systems for at-risk groups, with the aim of improving mental health services and drug prevention efforts in Phuket.

The Phuket News

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Low: +26°

Wind 4 m/s

SAT FEBRUARY 14

High: +34°  
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

SUN FEBRUARY 15

High: +33°  
Low: +26°

Wind 4 m/s

MON FEBRUARY 16

High: +32°  
Low: +26°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE FEBRUARY 17

High: +32°  
Low: +25°

Wind 4 m/s

WED FEBRUARY 18

High: +32°  
Low: +26°

Wind 7 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 19

High: +32°  
Low: +26°

Wind 4 m/s



Photo: Sakhu Police

## Frenchman arrested at airport with cocaine

A 46-YEAR-OLD FRENCH national has been arrested at Phuket International Airport after being caught with cocaine at a domestic departures security checkpoint, with further searches uncovering more illegal drugs at his apartment in Wichit.

Sakhu Police said the arrest took place at 3:10pm on Feb 5 at the baggage inspection area on the second floor of the domestic terminal at Phuket International Airport in Mai Khao. Officers were alerted by security staff after several small bags of cocaine were seen on the floor beside the suspect. CCTV footage later confirmed the man dropped the drugs from his trouser pocket while passing through the checkpoint.

The suspect, identified as Najib Aftat, was found with 10 resealable plastic bags of cocaine, a Category 2 narcotic, weighing a combined 7.55 grams.

Pol Lt Col Chamnan Inthanon of Sakhu Police led the arrest. During questioning, the suspect admitted the cocaine belonged to him and told officers he had more drugs in his rented room at an apartment complex on Kwang Rd in Wichit.

Police then escorted him to the room, where they seized 13 small bags of pink powder believed to be ecstasy, a Category 1 narcotic, weighing 6.79 grams, along with nine bags of methamphetamine tablets containing 44 tablets.

Sakhu Police Chief Pol Col Salan Santisanakul said the suspect faces charges of possession of cocaine with intent to sell, possession of Category 1 narcotics with intent to sell, and illegal consumption of a Category 1 narcotic.

At last report, he remained in custody as the investigation continued.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Colombian arrested for slaying Iraqi tourist

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Police have arrested a Colombian national accused of fatally shooting an Iraqi tourist in a brazen daylight attack in Patong, ending an overnight manhunt that stretched from Patong to the area near Phuket International Airport.

The victim, Amir Munder Mahmoud Mahmoud, 24, was shot multiple times just before 6pm last Saturday (Feb 7) while wiping down his motorcycle outside the C&N Hotel on Sirirat Rd in Patong. He was rushed to Patong Hospital with serious injuries but later died.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum said the gunman arrived on a motorcycle, pulled up beside the victim and opened fire before fleeing. No property was reported stolen. Police recovered spent bullet casings and reviewed CCTV footage from nearby businesses and hotels to trace the suspect's movements.

Investigators identified a prime suspect, a foreign man who had been staying at a hotel near the scene and who checked out shortly after the shooting. Police searched his room and seized a motorcycle, helmet,



Photo: Phuket Police

clothing and a firearm believed to have been used in the killing. The items were sent for forensic examination.

The suspect was later identified as Fernando Estaid Guevara Sanchez, 39, a Colombian national who entered Phuket on Jan 19 and was due to depart Thailand last Sunday (Feb 8). Immigration authorities were alerted and officers were deployed to Phuket International Airport and surrounding areas to prevent him from fleeing.

At about 2:40am last Sunday, officers traced Sanchez to the KT Airport

Hotel, where he was arrested on a court warrant.

Sanchez has been charged with premeditated murder, possession of firearms and ammunition without a permit, and carrying a firearm in a public place without reasonable cause. He was handed over to Patong Police for further legal proceedings.

At last report, police said investigators were coordinating with an interpreter before formally questioning the suspect, while continuing to interview witnesses and examine evidence to establish a motive.

## Filipino woman arrested while applying for 'visa extension'

A FILIPINO WOMAN WAS arrested at Phuket Immigration in Phuket Town on Feb 4 after officers found she was wanted on an arrest warrant for theft and document forgery while she was applying to extend her stay.

Officers detained the woman at about 4pm after her details were flagged in the immigration screening system. Phuket Immigration said her identity was confirmed with the help of an interpreter, and she admitted she was the person named in Phuket Criminal Court arrest warrant No. 144/2569, issued on Feb 3.



Photo: Phuket Immigration

She is wanted on charges of stealing her employer's property, forgery and using forged documents.

The woman was transferred to Chalong Police Station for further legal proceedings.

The Phuket News

## Three injured in Patong restaurant gas explosion

THREE RESTAURANT WORKERS were injured in a gas explosion at an Indian restaurant in Patong early on Feb 3 while staff were closing and cleaning the premises.

Patong Police said the blast occurred at about 4:30am at Indian Oriental Kitchen on Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, damaging the front of the restaurant and shattering glass.

Rescue workers took the injured staff to Patong Hospital before officers arrived. They were later identified as Paveen Negi, Umed Kumar and Ram Chandar.

Police said a gas leak was heard moments before the explosion. Officers inspected the scene and visited the injured at hospital.



Photo: Patong Police

At last report, the Forensic Science Division was called in to investigate the exact cause of the explosion. Eakkapop Thongtub

# Algae returns to Patong Beach

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Patong Municipality was again forced to clear algae washed ashore along Patong Beach last week, while national pollution officials have moved to reassure tourists and the public that seawater quality in Patong Bay remains safe for swimming.

Municipal sanitation teams from the Public Health and Environment Division were deployed on Feb 5 to remove algae that had accumulated along sections of the beachfront. Patong Municipality said in an online post that the algae was a natural occurrence, posed no risk to humans, and was removed to maintain cleanliness and prevent unpleasant odours.

The Pollution Control Department (PCD) followed up with field inspections in Patong Bay last Friday (Feb 6) after reports of green and red algae washing ashore.

PCD Director-General Surin Worakitthamrong said water samples taken about 10 metres from shore at three locations showed seawater quality remained within national standards for Category 4 coastal waters, which are suitable for recreation.



Photo: Patong Municipality

He said pH levels measured between 8.11 and 8.17, while dissolved oxygen levels ranged from 7.48 to 7.62 milligrams per litre, well above the minimum standard of 4.0mg/L. Total dissolved solids were recorded at about 47.6-48.1g/L.

"These results indicate that Patong Bay's coastal water quality remains suitable for recreational activities, including swimming," Mr Surin said.

PCD officials observed the largest amount of algae in the water and on the sand at the southern end of Patong Beach, with smaller amounts in the central and northern sections. No algae was found on the sand in

the northern area.

While assuring the public that the water is safe, Mr Surin acknowledged that algae washing ashore could affect the beach's appearance and cause unpleasant odours, impacting Patong's tourism image.

PCD data from 2025 recorded Patong Bay's Marine Water Quality Index (MWQI) score at 65, categorised as "fair".

The PCD is coordinating with Patong Municipality, whose staff are collecting algae from the beach each morning, and is working with local agencies on both short-term mitigation and longer-term prevention measures.

Former Patong Mayor

Chalerm Sak Maneesri, now an adviser to current Patong Mayor Lalita Maneesri, said the recurring algae accumulation is closely linked to tour boats anchoring close to shore, particularly vessels using multi-jet stabilisation systems.

"Many boats use four jet engines to maintain buoyancy while anchoring. When they stay close to the shore, the continuous water movement churns algae from the seabed, which is then pushed onto the beach," Mr Chalerm Sak said.

He said he observes the situation almost daily and noted that algae tends to reappear shortly after boats leave the area.

"When boats anchor further offshore or near the mouth of the bay, the amount of algae decreases noticeably," he said, adding that similar improvements were previously seen when the Phuket Marine Office instructed operators to anchor further from the shoreline.

Mr Chalerm Sak said the problem has resurfaced following a change in leadership at the Phuket Marine Office, with boats again anchoring closer to Patong Beach. He said he has raised the issue with Phuket Governor Nirat Phongsithaworn and called for renewed cooperation between

port authorities and tour boat operators.

PCD officials said recurring algae blooms are typically driven by elevated nitrate-nitrogen and phosphate-phosphorus levels, which provide nutrients for algae growth. However, no specific source of the nutrients contributing to the current bloom was identified.

Past algae events at Patong Beach have also raised broader environmental concerns. In late 2023, slow water circulation in the concave Patong Bay combined with runoff from Pak Bang Canal, nutrient-rich water and strong sunlight were cited as factors creating conditions favourable for abnormal algae growth.

Mr Chalerm Sak said Patong Municipality currently treats about 20,000 cubic metres of wastewater per day, below the system's capacity of 30,000 cubic metres, and maintained that wastewater treatment capacity remains sufficient.

Officials have urged the public and tourists to remain confident that Patong Beach waters are safe for recreation, while clean-up operations continue and agencies work to address the longer-term environmental and operational factors behind the recurring algae problem.

## Phuket governor hosts Russian Consul-General

PHUKET GOVERNOR NIRAT PONGSITHAWORN has met with Russian Consul-General Egor Ivanov to discuss strengthening cooperation between Phuket and Russia's Vladivostok region, with a focus on tourism, cultural exchange and economic ties.

The meeting, held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Feb 4, was also attended by Vladivostok representative Kirill Solgalov, Phuket Provincial Office head Narong On-in, Tourism Authority of Thailand (Phuket) Director Siriwan Singharaj, Phuket Provincial Culture Officer Puangpaka Chaowai and Phuket Provincial Education Officer Panna Phromwichien.

Mr Ivanov said Phuket remains one of the most popular destinations for Russian travellers, noting that more than one million Russians have visited the island. He said visitors were impressed by Phuket's hospitality and opportunities to experience Thai culture.

The Russian delegation said an exhibition focusing on tourism and culture is planned to be held in Phuket to promote cultural exchange and strengthen tourism, cultural and economic links between Russia and Phuket. They also expressed readiness to support cooperation between public and private sectors on both sides, viewing public-private partnerships as a positive driver of development.

With the high season bringing large numbers of Russian visitors to Phuket, Russian officials proposed increasing flight



Photo: PR Phuket

connections between Thailand and Vladivostok to improve travel access.

Governor Nirat welcomed the proposals, saying the talks would help Thais learn more about Vladivostok and further strengthen ties between Phuket and the Russian Far East city. The Russian delegation thanked Phuket authorities for the care provided to Russian nationals on the island and said Russia was ready to continue supporting cooperation in tourism, culture and economic development.

Mr Ivanov, 50, has served as Consul-General of the Russian Federation in Phuket since May 7, 2024. He joined the Russian diplomatic service in 1997 after graduating from Udmurt State University. Fluent in English, German and French, he has served in various posts with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and overseas, including as consul at the Russian Consulate General in New York from 2011 to 2016 and as an advisor in the ministry's personnel department from 2016 to 2024.

The Russian Consulate General in Phuket is located at Royal Phuket Marina. (Tel: 095-2598081. Email: phuketconsul@yandex.ru) *The Phuket News*

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# TAT targets Chinese New Year surge

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has ramped up promotions to capture a Chinese New Year travel surge while deepening its push into India, aiming to generate more than B93 billion in tourism revenue in 2026.

TAT is rolling out the 'Zhongtai Yi Jia Xin' campaign from January to March across five offices in China, partnering with major online travel agencies and airlines to sell discounted air-and-hotel packages to Thailand.

The campaign is designed to sustain demand beyond Chinese New Year into other peak holiday periods, including Qingming, Labour Day, summer holidays, Mid-Autumn Festival and China's National Day, with targeted offers for families, Gen Z travellers and corporate groups, reported the TAT.

Deputy TAT Governor for Asia and South Pacific markets Phatranong Na Chiangmai said the authority is working with platforms including Qunar, Tongcheng, Fliggy, Klook and Tuniu, as well as Thai Airways and King Power, to bundle travel deals and retail incentives to stimulate bookings during the long holiday period.



Photo: TAT

The push comes as Chinese arrivals show a strong rebound. Between Jan 1 and Feb 5, 2026, Thailand welcomed 498,725 visitors from China. TAT forecasts around 241,000 Chinese tourists during the Feb 13-22 Chinese New Year period, with daily arrivals rising by about 20,000 as the holiday approaches.

To anchor demand on the ground, TAT is co-organising Chinese New Year events nationwide, including light installations along Yaowarat Road in Bangkok (Feb 7-Mar 1), the Thailand Chinese New Year Festival at Siam Paragon (Feb 14-18), and regional celebrations in Hat Yai, Nakhon Sawan and Suphan Buri. The events are

aimed at boosting length of stay and spend in key urban and regional destinations.

## INDIA TRADE PUSH

At the same time, TAT is accelerating market penetration in India, which it describes as one of Thailand's fastest-growing and most strategically important source markets. TAT Governor Thapanee Kiatpaiboon led a delegation of 36 Thai tourism operators to the Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) 2026 in Mumbai on Feb 5-7, a major B2B trade fair for South Asia and western India.

The Thai delegation comprised 17 hotels and accommodation providers, 11 tour companies,

seven attractions and one airline, with the aim of securing new distribution partners, expanding product visibility and driving bookings for leisure travel, weddings and celebrations, wellness, luxury and sports tourism. TAT said the three-day event is expected to generate at least 5,000 business meetings and around B366 million in direct and indirect revenue.

India's momentum is already evident. From Jan 1 to Feb 4, 256,782 Indian tourists visited Thailand, ranking India fourth among source markets. TAT expects more than 2.55 million Indian arrivals in 2026, contributing over B93 billion in revenue. The market is supported by dense

air connectivity – more than 10 airlines operate direct routes to Thailand, with over 3.8mn seats annually – and by Thailand's visa-exemption policy allowing Indian nationals to stay up to 60 days.

Indian travellers are increasingly diverse, with strong demand from millennials and Gen Z, destination weddings, wellness retreats, multi-generational trips and workation travellers. Average spending is estimated at B38,340 per trip with an average stay of just over seven nights, making the segment attractive for hotels, attractions and airlines.

## REVENUE FOCUS

TAT said its 2026 strategy centres on deepening partnerships with airlines and tour operators, broadening demand to secondary Indian cities such as Pune, Ahmedabad, Amritsar and Lucknow, and promoting higher-value segments. The authority is also aligning campaigns with sustainability goals to lift value per visitor.

With Chinese New Year expected to deliver a near-term boost and India positioned as a year-round growth engine, TAT is betting that a dual-market strategy will underpin Thailand's tourism recovery and push revenues past the B93bn mark in 2026.



Photo: Bhumjaithai

## Thai stocks skyrocket after clear Bhumjaithai victory

THE STOCK EXCHANGE of Thailand Index jumped more than 3% on Monday (Feb 9) after election results showed the Bhumjaithai Party was in command in forming a new coalition government.

The SEC Index had risen 40.74 points, or 3.01%, at 10.13am in trade worth almost B30 billion.

Airports of Thailand Plc led the pack, up B5.75 (+10.85%) to B58.75, followed by Delta Electronics Plc, which gained B13 (+6.28%) to B220, and Gulf Development Plc, increasing B3.25 (+6.38%) to B53.

Rounding up the top five early winners after the market opened was Krungthai Bank Plc, PTT Plc and Cpl Plc.

The Thai index closed at 1,354.01 on Friday (Feb 6).

Kavee Chukitkasem, head of Research and Content at Pi Securities, said in the company's YouTube channel on Friday he expected the SET Index to rise after all political uncertainties were clear after the election last Sunday (Feb 8).

Some analysts and strategists told Bloomberg the stock market would be one of the sectors to benefit from the decisive victory of Bhumjaithai.

Kaseedit Choonawat, an analyst at Citigroup said the Thai bourse could rise to 1,450 by year-end, it added.

Bhumjaithai is expected to win close to 200 out of the 500-member parliament. It has already won at least 174 House constituency MPs, according to the Election Commission. *Bangkok Post*

## TikTok affirms B270bn outlay in Thailand

TIKTOK HAS REAFFIRMED ITS long-term investment plan in Thailand and worth more than B270 billion, caretaker Finance Minister Ekniti Nitithanprapas said.

Mr Ekniti, who led Thailand's delegation to the World Economic Forum in Davos from Jan 19-22, said he and Board of Investment (BoI) Secretary-General Chanida Klaiphon met TikTok Thailand public policy head Chanida Klaiphon to follow up on the company's operations, digital infrastructure investment plans and its expanding role in supporting the digital economy and Thai entrepreneurs.

TikTok confirmed its commitment to invest more than B270bn in Thailand and discussed using the platform to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping them reach wider markets and generate more income. The company also proposed positioning Thailand as a regional base for content development and related activities.

Developed by China's ByteDance, TikTok has more than two billion users worldwide, including 368 million in Southeast Asia, and over 15mn business users.

TikTok set up TikTok Technologies Co as its Thai entity and regional operating office in 2021 after receiving BoI investment promotion for international business centre operations. In 2025, the BoI approved TikTok's data-hosting business, with



Caretaker finance minister Ekniti Nitithanprapas examines a TikTok display at Davos. Photo: Bangkok Post

B127bn committed to provide server-based data storage services, mainly for TikTok Pte Ltd in Singapore.

The talks also covered policy cooperation to enhance consumer protection, strengthen financial literacy and combat online scams. TikTok said it already works with relevant stakeholders and is ready to expand cooperation, particularly ahead of the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings 2026, which Thailand will host.

Long-term investment support, including energy readiness and infrastructure development, was also discussed, with the government accelerating preparations to support continued high-technology investment.

TikTok has partnered with six educational institutions to pilot a Digital Citizenship and Digital Media Literacy curriculum, reaching more than 2,500 students. It has also trained over 10,000 SME operators and more than 2,000 One Tambon, One Product entrepreneurs, and promoted the #ThaisAware campaign, which has generated more than 17bn views.

"TikTok reaffirming its investment reflects global investors' confidence in Thailand's digital economy," Mr Ekniti said, adding the government is accelerating infrastructure, workforce skills and innovation to support digital and AI industries while helping SMEs access global markets.

*Bangkok Post*

# BJT claim big election win

**BANGKOK**

AFP

The Bhumjaithai Party (BJT), led by caretaker prime minister Anutin Charnvirakul, surged to a stunning election victory on a wave of nationalism last Sunday (Feb 8).

The pro-military and pro-monarchy party had its best electoral performance ever in polls that took place after two rounds of deadly border clashes with Cambodia last year.

Voters appeared to turn their backs on the reformist People's Party, as well as Pheu Thai, the political organisation of jailed former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The two parties' vote shares plummeted compared to the last poll in 2023, according to preliminary results from the election commission.

Despite the strong victory, BJT was still expected to fall short of an outright majority in the lower house, meaning Anutin would need to strike a coalition deal with another party to govern.

Anutin, the scion of a construction dynasty, will also need to tackle anaemic economic growth and manage fallout over



BJT leader Anutin at party HQ on Sunday. Photo: AFP

multibillion-dollar cyberscam networks operating from the region.

"Thailand will move like it moved in the past three months. We will see nationalism, a strong position on Cambodia and economic policies. Nothing changes," said Virot Ali, politics lecturer at Thammasat University.

At time of press BJT was on course to win almost 200 seats, according to preliminary results released by the election commission after 90% of votes had been tallied.

That would give it the largest share, but less than half of the seats in the 500-member lower house.

**ALLIES**

People's Party was expected to win around 115 seats and Pheu Thai was set to come in third, according to the preliminary results.

Pheu Thai is seen as a potential coalition partner for Anutin, as they were allies until Bhumjaithai pulled out over a Cambodia border dispute scandal.

Anutin, who took office in September, declined to be drawn Monday on potential coalition talks.

"Everything is still under consideration and in progress. Whatever the case, I have to bring this matter to the party meeting first. There are still procedures to follow," he said.

Pheu Thai had its worst showing since Thaksin founded his political dynasty, after his daughter Paetongtarn was felled as prime minister over her handling of the Cambodia border dispute.

Paul Chambers, an associate senior fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said that BJT achieved victory by

"emphasizing its commitment to nationalism and the king".

The conservatives also benefitted from the "continuing unpopularity of Pheu Thai" following a leaked phone call in which Paetongtarn referred to Cambodia's former leader Hun Sen as "uncle" and described a Thai military commander as her "opponent".

The leak sparked public and political backlash, and she was later dismissed from office by the constitutional court on an ethics complaint.

Political analyst Napon Jatusripitak expected BJT to "move quickly" to form a government in which its interests would prevail.

The conflict with Cambodia, which killed scores of people and displaced around a million on both sides, was top of mind for voters.

"I want the border areas to be peaceful first. Then the government can move on to solve other issues," said Prae Sangmanee, a 46-year-old seamstress near a Bangkok shopping mall.

"If the borders are secure, the economy should be able to move forward."

**REFORM PROCESS**

Soon after becoming premier

following Paetongtarn's removal, Anutin authorised the armed forces to take whatever action they saw fit on the border.

Thailand's military took control of several disputed areas in the latest fighting in December, and a fragile ceasefire remains in place.

Thailand's political history is replete with military coups, bloody street protests and judicial intervention.

Its constitution, drafted under military rule following the last coup in 2014, gives significant power to institutions appointed by the senate, which is not directly elected.

Around 60% of voters were projected to have backed constitutional reform in principle in a referendum on Sunday, albeit with no specific measures on the table.

But BJT will now be in a position to guide the reform process, and its conservative instincts make radical change less likely.

Thailand's stock exchange on Monday responded positively to the election result, jumping more than 3%, with the baht also strengthening, after the clear victory by BJT signaled a greater likelihood of policy stability.



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# The Compost Bank: Tackling Phuket's food waste

The Compost Bank is designed to serve as the missing link in Phuket's waste system. Photo: Bangkok Post

Rae Ann Collier / Tom Gosslund

**T**he Compost Bank is a sustainable waste management initiative focused on redirecting organic waste away from landfills and transforming it into valuable resources for Phuket. While the island faces a growing waste challenge driven by high volumes and mixed waste streams, the main barrier to effective waste management is not awareness, but infrastructure – specifically, the lack of systems to properly process organic waste.

We are a small team of experts experienced in sustainable waste management and renewable energy.

The idea for The Compost Bank emerged from observing Phuket's existing waste ecosystem and looking beyond the most visible issues – such as plastic – to identify organic waste as the system's largest unresolved challenge. The island already benefits from recycling networks and informal waste workers who play a critical role in diverting plastics, metals, glass and cardboard from landfill. The question was not whether solutions existed, but which material was still overwhelming the system. The answer was clear: organic waste, particularly food waste, is drowning the landfill.

Today, food waste largely ends up in landfill, where it rots, produces methane, contaminates land and water and

creates health risks. It is the presence of organic waste that makes mixed trash wet, heavy, smelly and unstable. When organic waste is removed, a bag of residual waste becomes relatively inert – largely dry, low-odor, and far easier to handle, transport, and process. In other words, organics are what turn waste into a problem. While additional incineration capacity is being developed, incineration is not an effective solution for wet organic waste. Incinerators require significant energy to operate and food waste actively reduces their efficiency – much like trying to keep a fire burning while constantly adding water.

## Missing link

At the same time, organic waste is one of our most valuable resources. The food that nourishes us can be broken down and returned to the soil, replenishing nutrients and supporting future food production. This natural cycle is largely lost when organic waste is treated as something to be disposed of rather than recovered.

The Compost Bank is designed to serve as the missing link in Phuket's waste system. The project aims to develop organic waste processing facilities where organic waste can be redirected away from landfill and properly processed into valuable resources such as compost, with biogas production planned for later stages. These recovered resources will then be redistributed locally – to farmers, public parks, landscapers, golf courses, hotel gardens and other spaces where healthy soil is needed.

While Phuket already has excellent initiatives focused on reducing food waste at the source and redistributing edible food, and while some hotels successfully compost on-site, there is currently no coordinated island-wide solution for non-edible organic waste, particularly for businesses that lack the space, capacity or expertise to manage composting themselves. The Compost Bank is designed to fill this gap.

At its core, the project is community-driven. The most important action – and the main takeaway – is simple: separate organic waste from dry waste at the source. This single step dramatically improves recycling rates, reduces contamination and enables organic waste to be processed efficiently. No complex behaviour change is required – only clear systems and reliable infrastructure.

The Compost Bank will initially partner with hotels, where food waste

volumes are high and staff training systems support consistency and accountability. Through the Community Investment Program, participating hotels will receive staff training, sorting equipment, collection services, organic waste processing and access to compost redistribution. Hotels may choose to receive compost back for landscaping or sponsor its donation to local farmers, public spaces and community projects.

## Zero-waste

For new developments, the Bio-Generator Program will work with projects at early design stages to integrate organic waste systems from the outset. By embedding waste solutions early, developments can reduce long-term operational costs, move toward near zero-waste operations, and avoid adding further pressure to already strained infrastructure.

The Compost Bank will scale in phases, expanding in response to demand. The long-term vision is an island-wide network of organic waste processing facilities distributed across districts, ensuring local impact, shared responsibility and resilient systems. The Compost Bank is not intended to replace public waste services, but to act as a collaborative partner that fills a critical gap. Solving Phuket's waste challenges will require cooperation between businesses, communities, private operators and public institutions, supported by effective regulation.

What The Compost Bank needs now is engagement from hotels and developers who recognise that organic waste management is becoming a standard operational requirement and want to be part of an island-wide solution. At this stage, the requirement is simple: reach out and express interest. The Compost Bank is building a network of partners to inform infrastructure development and ensure systems are designed around real operational needs. Hotels that engage early will be prioritised as the system is rolled out and scaled.

Developers are encouraged to get in touch to explore how organic waste systems can be designed into new projects from the outset, supporting long-term efficiency and avoiding future retrofit costs. Early engagement ensures solutions are built to scale, with practicality and long-term value at their core.

For more information contact: [raeann@thecompostbank.com](mailto:raeann@thecompostbank.com) or [tom@thecompostbank.com](mailto:tom@thecompostbank.com).

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# Taking in Phuket's natural splendour

Simon Lomas

**A**s we recently entered a New Year I thought I would go back and reflect on the very reason I started to do these articles in the first place: my interest in the natural world.

I have been interested in this since I was a child as my parents taught me the names of plants, butterflies, fish, birds and trees as I was growing up. To then see, years later, that so many people were completely unaware as to so many common things around them shocked me. Phuket has so much to offer anyone who enjoys the natural world. Just walk around slowly with your eyes open – even in the busiest of cities there is plenty to see.

I arrived in Phuket back in 2005 for a holiday and, like so many others, I loved it. The following year I visited for four months, then five months the year after. When you are here for longer periods you have time to start to explore and discover the sights away from the main tourist trails. Finally, in 2011, I made the permanent move to call Phuket home.

What puzzled me was the fact that I could take photos of areas in and around Patong yet people who lived there had no idea where the photos were from. This showed me not only how little people walked about but generally how unobservant they actually were when doing so. Some people may



Rhinoceros hornbill. Photo: Simon Lomas

have encountered various birds, insects, lizards, snakes and plants yet few seemed to know their names and many had not even seen them at all.

### Reassuring

I always walk everywhere, mostly with a camera, and so I often snapped photos of new things I encountered. After the COVID era I decided to start to learn more about the birds and butterflies I saw, as well as snakes, gekkos and other things I saw as I ventured around the island. After posting these discoveries on my social media for a while I was asked to do likewise on various Phuket-specific tourist pages. I was then asked whether I would share photos for the Island View feature in the Life section of *The Phuket News*. I was happy to do so as it was reassuring to know there were others here that liked the natural beauty of Phuket. One thing led to an-



White crested laughing thrush. Photo: Simon Lomas

other and shortly after I was asked to contribute a monthly article on the natural world in Phuket for the island's leading newspaper. So I did.

I am not a bird expert, snake specialist, lepidopterist, botanist or marine biologist. I am just a bloke walking around with a camera and my cat Leo who enjoys the natural world. I am not rewriting any natural world encyclopedia. I take photos and try to find out more about what I see. My articles and photos aim to make a nice change from the ubiquitous beach, bar and general tourism scenes that tend to flood the media. My contributions were just to show there is so much more to Phuket if people care to slow down and take a look around them.

### Bird song

As the seasons change so does the wildlife. Birds migrate, plants and trees

bloom when the rains come and the island becomes really green. Grassy areas are laden with butterflies and the air full with bird song. The trees and plants bloom with flowers that attract insects for the birds to feed on and then the flowers bear fruit. Phuket has different seasons other than just wet and hot or dry and hot. I started to record the different seasons and what you saw during them to share so others can see it too.

The idea was to get people out of the tourist traps and discover more than the beach bars, to venture into dense jungle areas, grasslands, hills, cliffs, farmlands, beaches, lagoons, mangroves, all of which are packed with wildlife. Yes, you can go to various national parks and wildlife parks which offer a great day out as a break from the beach, but there are also many areas just a short walk from the busy resorts too. Here in Phuket we are also lucky to have fantastic marine life that is in easy reach of everyone. Sure, there are the super popular tours that we all know about but similarly fantastic beaches and bays to explore both snorkeling and scuba diving that have frequently stayed under the radar.

This year I aim to cover much more variation than just birds, as that was the plan all along. I want to show all the natural beauty that Phuket has to offer on land, in the air and in the water. Hopefully it might encourage some people to just slow down and take a look at the stunning world around them. Watch this space!

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**SAT** 14 FEB



**Azzurra Amore al Mare**  
 This Valentine's Day, let love unfold by the sea at Azzurra Amore al Mare, a romantic beachfront Italian dinner on Bang Tao Beach. Azzurra Restaurant invites couples to an intimate evening where refined Italian cuisine, live music and the ocean breeze create a memorable celebration of love. Begin the evening with two glasses of chilled bubbly per couple on arrival, followed by a premium three-course Italian set menu thoughtfully curated to ignite the senses. Throughout the night, enjoy live Opera performances followed by soulful Jazz and timeless love songs, setting the perfect rhythm for romance. The evening concludes with a signature after-dinner booster, a warm Italian-style farewell to end the night. THB 3,800++ per couple Includes a premium 3-course Italian set menu, two glasses of bubbly on arrival and an after-dinner booster. Saturday, 14 February 2026 18:00 – 22:00 hrs Azzurra Restaurant, Bang Tao Beach, Phuket Limited seating available. Advance reservations are recommended. Azzurra Restaurant 10 Moo 4, Srisoonthorn Road, Cherng Talay, Amphur Thalang, Phuket 83110 Tel. 076 358 500, marketing-lagunaphuket@angsana.com

**MON** 16 FEB



**Feast of Fortune: Chinese New Year All-You-Can-Eat**  
 Celebrate Chinese New Year by the sea with Feast of Fortune at Seafood Market Restaurant, Bang Tao Beach. This festive all-you-can-eat dinner brings together authentic Thai-Chinese flavours, cultural performances and a rare live whole suckling pig carving ceremony in an intimate beachfront setting. Guests can enjoy unlimited highlights including whole crispy roasted suckling pig carved tableside, classic Peking duck with bao, Thai pomelo salad with shrimp, live seafood stations featuring prawns and daily catch, rotating regional specialties and mango sticky rice with desserts. Dine freely and revisit the buffet at your own pace throughout the evening. The celebration is elevated with vibrant Chinese New Year Lion Dance performances, symbolising good fortune, prosperity and auspicious beginnings for the year ahead. THB 1,290++ per guest Children 6–12 years enjoy 50% off Children 0–6 years dine free with a paying adult | 18:00 – 22:00 hrs Seafood Market Restaurant, Bang Tao Beach Book now: <https://www.taste.angsana.com/book-seafood-market-feast-of-fortune> Limited seating available. Advance reservations are recommended. Seafood Market Restaurant, 10 Moo 4, Srisoonthorn Road, Cherng Talay, Amphur Thalang, Phuket 83110 Tel. 076 358 500, marketing-lagunaphuket@angsana.com

**TUE** 17 FEB



**Rotary Club of Patong Beach**  
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**SUN** 22 MAR



**Charity Dinner at Restaurant Jampa**  
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**THU** 26 FEB



**Skål Phuket - February Dinner**  
 Our host of the month of February, Vincent Delsol, extends a warm invitation to all Skalleagues and friends of Skål for a great evening at Phuket Pullman Panwa Beach Resort. The night starts at 6pm with networking drinks at the Junction Bar, overlooking the breathtaking Panwa Bay, followed by a 'Street food Style' dinner at Aqua Restaurant. Members B1,300 - Non-Members B1,700. Bookings - [contact@skalphuket.org](mailto:contact@skalphuket.org), more info at [facebook.com/SkalPhuket](http://facebook.com/SkalPhuket)

**FRI** 6 MAR



**Grow Boating Phuket Evening - Mar 2026**  
 We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Bluu Asian Kitchen & Bar at the Royal Phuket Marina from 5pm. Sponsorship for drinks is available and includes a generous promotional package from our media sponsors The Phuket News and Phuket Live Radio - Live 89.5. Send us an email [growboatingphuket@gmail.com](mailto:growboatingphuket@gmail.com) for more details. 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. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket>



**International Women's Day Lunch 2026**  
 Join us for the 2026 International Women's Day Lunch at the Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town. Come together to celebrate women's achievements and hear from inspirational speakers exploring this year's theme: Give to Gain. Give to Gain reflects the belief that when we support women, we strengthen communities, grow better leaders, and accelerate progress toward a more gender-equal world. Giving takes many forms, from fundraising to volunteering, mentorship and helping raise visibility. Women and men are warmly invited to attend by donation of 2,000 Baht per person. To book contact: [Tina@phukethasbeengoodtous.org](mailto:Tina@phukethasbeengoodtous.org) With special thanks to the Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town and the Australian Consulate-General. We look forward to celebrating with you.

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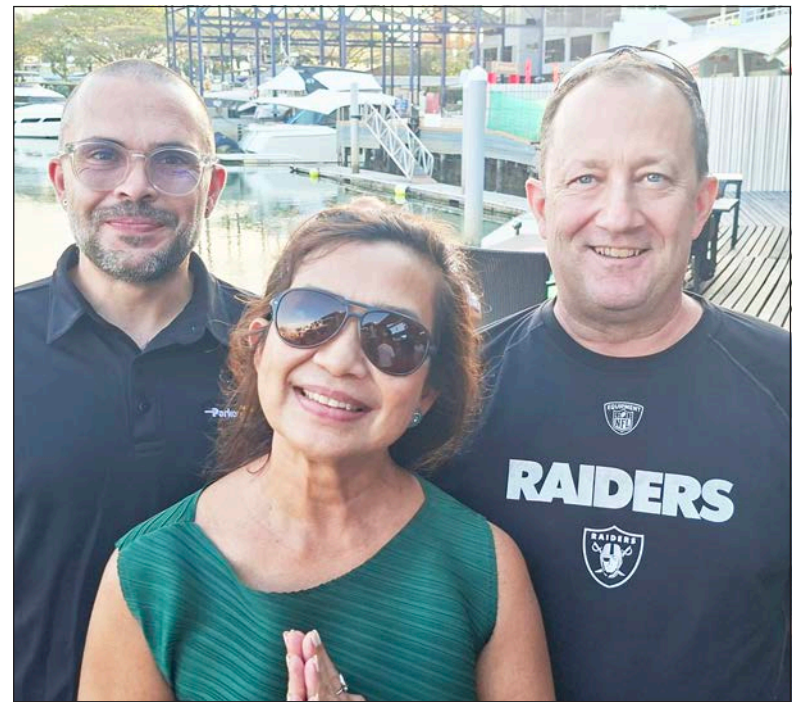
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### GROW BOATING PHUKET EVENING - FEB 2026

Wonderful turnout and a great Grow Boating Evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at Phuket Boat Lagoon on Friday, February 6. Thanks to the sponsor for both the drinks and burgers - Malaysia International Boat Show (MYBOS) 2026. Building on the tremendous success of MYBOS 2025, the Malaysia International Boat Show 2026 will once again be held at the prestigious Royal Langkawi Yacht Club to celebrate Malaysia's growing prominence in the global yachting and marine industry. See [mybos.my](http://mybos.my) for more details. There was also a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees. Come and join in the fun the first Friday of each month, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. Find out more on Facebook at [facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket](https://facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket)



## Cho shows class in breakthrough victory

### GOLF

TWO YEARS AFTER being part of the Korean team that famously claimed the gold medal at the Asian Games, Cho Woo-Young became a winner on the Asian Tour for the first time after triumphing at the Philippine Golf Championship last Sunday (Feb 8).

He registered a hard-fought victory following stiff resistance from Pavit Tangkamolprasert, beating the Thai by four shots on the unforgiving East Course at Wack Wack Golf & Country Club in Manila.

Cho, two behind overnight leader Karandeep Kochhar from India at the start of the day, fired a final round five-under-par 67, for a four-round total of 11-under 277 in the opening event of the season on the Asian Tour.

He and Pavit played together in the second from last group and made



Photo: Asian Tour

it a two-horse race for much of the day.

The 24-year-old Korean dropped his only shot of the day on the opening hole but took the lead with birdies on two and three. He was never caught but Pavit made him work hard until the very end.

"It feels very amazing," said Cho, who turned professional immediately after winning Asian Games gold.

Cho earned a cheque for US\$90,000 (B2.8 million) plus another \$10,000 for carding the lowest round of the day. His previous best finish on the Asian Tour was second place at the Bharath Classic toward the end of last year.

Asian Tour

## Strong lineup for Thai LPGA

### GOLF

Bangkok Post

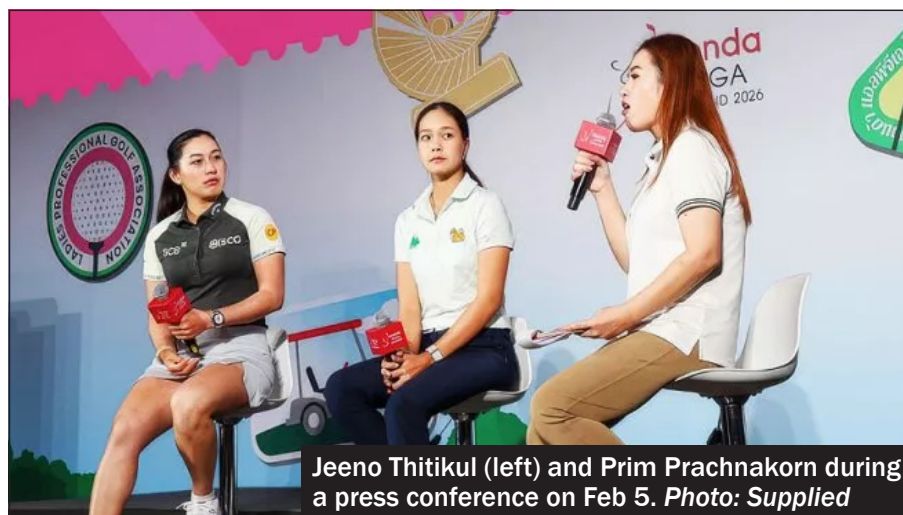
Excitement is building ahead of the return of Honda LPGA Thailand 2026, set to take place from Feb 19-22 at Siam Country Club Old Course in Pattaya, as one of the strongest fields in the tournament's history prepares to compete.

This year's edition will mark a historic milestone, with Jeeno Thitikul competing on home soil as the world No.1 for the first time in the event's 19-year history. The Thai star will be joined by former top-ranked Lydia Ko, alongside a world-class lineup of 72 LPGA Tour players vying for a total prize purse of US\$1.8 million (approximately B60mn).

Jeeno's standout 2025 season included three LPGA Tour victories, the Americas Open, LPGA Shanghai, and the Tour Championship, the latter marking her second consecutive title.

She was named Rolex Player of the Year 2025 and captured the Vare Trophy with a record-breaking scoring average of 68.681, surpassing the previous mark set by Annika Sorenstam in 2002. Jeeno said returning to compete in front of Thai fans feels "special", adding that winning her first LPGA title at home would be especially meaningful.

Among the Thai players set to add excitement this year are Ariya Jutanugarn, former world No.1 and



Jeeno Thitikul (left) and Prim Prachnakorn during a press conference on Feb 5. Photo: Supplied

champion of the 2021 edition, currently ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the world; Pajaree Anannarukarn, ranked 54<sup>th</sup> and runner-up at the 2025 Tour Championship; Chanettee Wannasaen, currently 55<sup>th</sup> in the world; SEA Games gold medallist Prim Prachnakorn, and Chanoknan Angurasanee, winner of the Honda LPGA Thailand 2026 National Qualifiers, who has earned her place in the field.

The international lineup is led by American defending champion and world No.13 Angel Yin. She will be joined by Ko (New Zealand, world No.6), Yin Ruoning (China, world No.7), Lottie Woad (England, world No.8), Kim Hyo-Joo (Korea, world No.9), Maja Stark (Sweden, world No.15), Hannah Green (Australia, world No.19), and Celine Boutier (France, world No.21).

Japanese players, who delivered standout performances last season, will also be closely watched, led by Miyu Yamashita (world No.4), LPGA Rookie of the Year and Women's Open major champion, alongside Mao Saigo (world No.11, Chevron Championship winner), Rio Takeda (world No.14), and Akie Iwai (world No.25), a runner-up last year.

"Honda LPGA Thailand is more than a world-class sporting event – it is a platform that connects sport with communities and helps drive the economy, tourism, and the country's international image," Asian Honda Motor Co, Ltd president and CEO Toshio Kuwahara said on Feb 5.

"For this year's tournament, the opportunity for Thai golf fans to cheer on the world's No.1 women's golfer competing on home soil represents a truly memorable moment," he added.

## ONE Championship introduces changes to broadcast structure

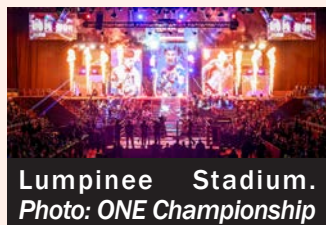
### MMA

ONE CHAMPIONSHIP has rolled out a revised broadcast structure for its weekly Friday Fights series show as the promotion expands its use of in-house digital platforms alongside existing broadcast partners.

The updated model sees a tiered viewing approach with early fights distributed through ONE's own streaming service in select markets before the broadcast transitions to its usual global channels later in the evening.

The promotion has also expanded its regional broadcast footprint, confirming that ONE Friday Fights will now air exclusively on beIN Sports in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, further strengthening the series' television reach across Southeast Asia.

Under the new



Lumpinee Stadium. Photo: ONE Championship

structure, bouts one to three of each weekly Lumpinee card, scheduled between 6:30pm and 7:30pm, will be available in Thailand via live.onefc.com and in Japan via U-NEXT. Those bouts will not be carried on ONE's free-to-air social platforms.

From 7:30pm to 8:30pm, bouts four and five will be shown in Thailand on ONE's streaming platform, while viewers elsewhere will continue to access the card through ONE's international broadcast partners, as well as ONE's YouTube and Facebook, subject to regional availability, with certain geo-blocks in place.

From bout six onward, the event will follow ONE's established global distribution model across broadcasters and digital platforms.

To support the new format, ONE has introduced a subscription option on its in-house platform, priced at B160 per month, or B390 for a three-month package, offering access to the opening portion of each weekly card in Thailand.

The move follows ONE Championship's broader push to develop its digital ecosystem after multiple pay-per-view events last year, including ONE 170, ONE 172 and ONE 173. Unlike those premium, one-off broadcasts, the Friday Fights rollout represents a lower-cost, recurring subscription model.

ONE Friday Fights has grown into a key platform for emerging fighters at Lumpinee Stadium, regularly serving as a pathway to full-time ONE Championship contracts while maintaining strong domestic and international interest.

Bangkok Post

## Seahawks soar to win Super Bowl

### NFL

THE SEATTLE SEAHAWKS relied on a relentless defence to beat New England 29-13 in Super Bowl LX last Sunday (Feb 8), denying the Patriots an NFL-record seventh championship and avenging a heartbreaking loss to the same opponent in the title game 11 years ago.

The win also saw Seahawks Sam Darnold seal his journey from flop quarterback to conqueror of the NFL's biggest prize.

Brushing off a reputation for wilting in big games, journeyman quarterback Darnold threw for a touchdown and some 200 yards on the grandest stage of all to give the Seahawks their second-ever Lombardi Trophy.

The victory was buoyed by a dominant defensive display, and kicker Jason Myers' five field goals – the most ever by one player in a Super Bowl.

But it was a night to forget for Darnold's counterpart Drake Maye, who was sacked six times and threw two interceptions, failing in his bid to become



Uchenna Nwosu scores for Seattle. Photo: AFP

the youngest starting quarterback to win a Super Bowl at 23.

An initially cagey game featured no touchdowns for either side in the first three quarters, with the Patriots stifled and the Seahawks largely playing it safe, relying on their kicker, and Kenneth Walker who managed 135 rushing yards and was named the game's Most Valuable Player.

The contest sprang to life in the final quarter, with four touchdowns. Darnold's 16-yard pass found tight end AJ Barner in the deep right corner of the endzone before Maye found Mack

Hollins with a stunning 35-yard sling.

It proved in vain, however, as Maye was strip-sacked, allowing linebacker Uchenna Nwosu to race into the end zone for a touchdown.

It was sweet vindication for the humble Darnold, 28, once a highly drafted youth who played for four NFL franchises before his stunning debut season in Seattle ended in the ultimate victory.

The win also saw Mike Macdonald, 38, become the third-youngest Super Bowl-winning head coach, in just his second year in the role.

AFP

# Arsenal title chase on track

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal maintained their lead at the top of the Premier League with a 3-0 victory against Sunderland last Saturday (Feb 7).

Goals from Martin Zubimendi and a Viktor Gyokeres second half double kept Mikel Arteta's side on track for their first league title in 22 years.

After three successive runners-up finishes in the Premier League, including blowing significant leads at the top in 2023 and 2024, the north Londoners finally look set to end their title drought.

Arsenal also beat Chelsea in midweek to book a League Cup final date with Manchester City at Wembley on Mar 22.

At time of press the Gunners' lead remains six points after Erling Haaland's stoppage-time penalty earned Manchester City a dramatic 2-1 win at Liverpool last Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's City were heading for defeat at Anfield with six minutes to go before Bernardo Silva cancelled out Dominik Szoboszlai's stunning free-kick to spark an incredible finale.

Haaland put City in front from the spot before the visitors had another goal ruled out and Szoboszlai was sent off in the same incident after a VAR review for a foul on Haaland.

Meanwhile, third-placed Aston Villa drew 1-1 at Bournemouth, effectively ending any title aspirations,



Gyokeres scores for Arsenal. Photo: AFP

with Morgan Rogers on target for the visitors before Brazilian teenager Rayan equalised with his first top-flight goal in the 55th minute.

Manchester United profited from Tottenham captain Cristian Romero's reckless first half red card to stretch their perfect start under Michael Carrick to four games, leaving beleaguered Spurs boss Thomas Frank under mounting scrutiny.

Bryan Mbeumo swept United ahead from a clever corner routine in the 38th minute before Bruno Fernandes' close-range finish in the 81st minute ended an eight-game winless run against Tottenham for United, who cemented their hold on fourth place in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Cole Palmer scored a first-half hat-trick as fifth-placed Chelsea won 3-1 at bottom of the table Wolves,

while West Ham improved their hopes of avoiding relegation and pushed Burnley closer to the drop with a 2-0 win at Turf Moor.

Nuno Espirito Santo's third-bottom side are three points behind fourth-bottom Nottingham Forest, who lost 3-1 at Leeds United, while second-bottom Burnley are 11 points from safety after 16 games without a win.

Brentford dealt a huge blow to Newcastle's hopes of qualifying for Europe with an impressive 3-2 win at St James' Park.

Dango Ouattara's 85th minute winner consigned Newcastle to a fourth defeat in their last five games in all competitions, leaving them languishing in 12th place.

Everton won 2-1 at Fulham thanks to an own goal from Cottagers keeper Bernd Leno in the 83rd minute, while Crystal Palace won 1-0 at Brighton.



Photo: PR

## Thais crash out of AFC Futsal Cup

### FUTSAL

THAILAND'S HOPES of claiming continental glory in five-a-side football were dashed as they fell 4-2 to Iraq in the quarter-finals of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup in Jakarta, Indonesia on Feb 3.

Thailand had won their group and progressed to the quarter-final after defeating Lebanon 2-0, Kuwait 6-1 and Vietnam 1-0.

Iraq seized the initiative in the seventh minute when Mustafa Ihsan's toe-poked finish beat Thai goalkeeper Nuttapon Yeemarep, only for Muhammad Osaman-musa to level two minutes later.

Ihsan calmly slotted a low shot into the bottom corner to restore the lead early in the second half before Thailand responded by pushing hard for an equaliser. Panut Kittipanu-

wong went close twice in quick succession, but goalkeeper Ibrahim Ahmed proved equal to the challenge.

Even when the goalkeeper was beaten in the 33rd minute, the woodwork intervened, as Krit Aransanyalak's angled strike cannoned off the post.

Iraq punished that miss almost immediately, Salim Kadhim combining neatly with Ihsan before driving home their third goal. Ihsan scored a fourth in the 37th minute to effectively settle the contest, with Chaowala Sriarwut's late strike a mere consolation.

The quarter-final win meant Iraq made the last four for the first time since 2018. However, they lost to bitter rivals Iran in the semi-final, who went on to claim the trophy after a 5-4 penalty shoot out win against hosts Indonesia last Saturday (Feb 7). *Bangkok Post*

# Six Nations underway



## THE GLOBAL RUGBY COACH

THE 2026 SIX NATIONS RUGBY Championship got underway last weekend and the contribution by Wales and Scotland can rightly be described as uninspiring, unimaginative, unintelligent and at times downright useless.

Italy beat feable Scotland 18-15 on Saturday (Feb 7) with the latter's strategy seemingly focused on one-out passes to a forward running into defenders. Late in the game, they had opportunities to move the ball wide to create an overlap, with three British Lions in the back line, but didn't. Quite simply it was pathetic and begs the question, what were they doing in preparation during the week?

I must say though, I have long been an admirer of Italian rugby and have watched many Sunday-morning junior rugby sessions at various clubs. I love the natural flair and running ability. Those young players are now filtering through into senior clubs, while the Italian forward coach is the best in Europe.

Wales, meanwhile, resembled a pub team who didn't look fit as England cruised to an easy 48-7 win. Ill-disciplined throughout, a ticket refund to Welsh fans would not be out of order.

An England A team would have beaten Wales. England has depth, and



Wales fall to England. Photo: AFP

that is a huge weapon in tough competitions and injury periods.

France demonstrated an exciting and invigorating style in their 36-14 win against a rudderless Ireland, emphasising fine support play and keeping the ball alive with passes put into space so teammates could accelerate onto the ball.

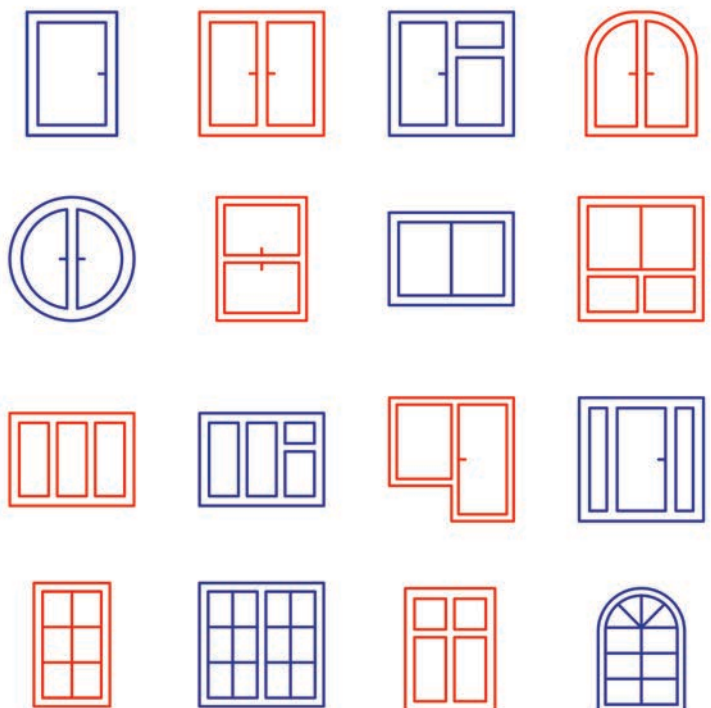
The pressure is mounting on Irish coach Andy Farrell. When an Irish crowd boos, the sword of Damocles is not far away. As an aside, Ireland's A team lost at home to England 52-14.

Redemption lies ahead this weekend as Ireland plays Italy in Dublin, Scotland face England at Murrayfield and Wales take on France in Cardiff.

Three home wins are essential, but I'm going for a draw in Dublin and away wins in Cardiff and Edinburgh.



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# Sport



Seattle soars to Super Bowl victory > p14



Ian, Rick, Talita, Richard and Jimbo from the victorious Doo Duck Inn. Photo: Supplied

## DARTS

Carl Webb

The increasingly-popular Phuket Darts League reached its conclusion last month as Kamala-based Doo Duck Inn took the title with a game still to play.

A competitive draw in their penultimate match against Bang Tao's Orange Corner Bar saw the Doo Duck Inn team hold off the challenge from last season's winner The Kindee Flames and their brother team the Kindee Bulls on Jan 20.

Doo Duck Inn players Richard, Carl, Tony, Rick and Aussie Jimmy 'Jimbo' Chave combined with Chalong's Talita Lomthong to deliver what was required on the night and subsequently ensure they won the league for only the second time. Gracious in defeat, The Kindee Flames were the first to

congratulate the team from Kamala, praise indeed from the Cherng Talay-based team that had demonstrated such class and consistency in winning the title in the previous three seasons.

Despite leading the standings for most of the season the pressure was on the Doo Duck Inn team with both Kindee teams chasing hard as the campaign neared its end. Doo Duck Inn team captain and chief league organiser Ian Luckett said he was delighted by the win, stating his team showed their quality and stayed competitive despite having been without a key player for the second half of the season.

### PRAISE

Doo Duck Inn may have ultimately won the league but it was the team from Bang Tao's Local Bar who won much of the praise for their valiant efforts throughout the campaign. Despite playing well in their earlier

matches, the Bang Tao Local Bar ultimately lost them all. It was therefore mightily impressive to see Derek Lynch's Irish-themed bar turn the situation around to finish strongly, with consecutive wins over reigning champions Kindee Flames and title-chasing Kindee Bulls.

Whether it was an injection of class from new player Tony or something magical in the local drinks, the team's efforts demonstrated how competitive the league is and how there is very little between the top and the bottom teams.

The competitiveness of the league was further highlighted when Bang Tao's Ozone 8 bar finished the season with a resounding 14-4 win over newly crowned champions Doo Duck Inn. With all three teams within 300 metres of each other, Orange Corner Bar, O Zone 8 Bar and the Local Bar suggest the Bang Tao area is arguably the best place on

the island for a darts bar crawl, where players are always guaranteed a warm welcome and a great night on the oches.

### FRIENDLY

The Phuket Darts League is a friendly league for those that love the sport and enjoy the social side. In addition to the Tuesday night Phuket league, friendly darts competitions are played across the island each week. Monday evening sees Devils Bar in Kamala take centre stage, with Kindee Bistro running its weekly competition each Thursday. For those in Patong, Friday evening is the time to visit Phuket's longest running darts competition at Star Fish Bar, which now boasts the island's only dedicated multi-board darts lounge.

The south of the island is now getting into the act too with Happy Days Bar and Tank and Throttle Bar both combining pool and darts for the full pub sport

experience in Chalong. Gozar in Rawai also offers both pool and darts, while Little Mermaid Guesthouse and Restaurant in Kata has a dual board darts area. All these bars are now recruiting for players to begin a friendly darts league in southern Phuket. Whether you are an experienced player or a total novice, all the islands' darts venues offer a friendly welcome. Contact them direct or simply drop by for a drink and 'have a chuck'.

As one season closes we look ahead to the next, which starts early March and promises to be the best yet. There is to be much more in the darts pipeline so stayed tuned to *The Phuket News* and remember to hit what you throw at!

*If you are interested in joining a team or entering a new team in the league please contact the Phuket Darts League on Facebook for more details.*

## BISP hosts PISAC football, cross country tournaments

### FOOTBALL / ATHLETICS

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL School, Phuket (BISP) was proud to host the Phuket Island Small School Activities Conference (PISAC) Football and Cross Country Championships last month, welcoming schools from across the island for two major sporting events that showcased teamwork, resilience and high standards of competition.

Despite weather-related challenges and reschedul-

ing, both championships were successfully completed, highlighting the commitment of students, staff and schools to PISAC sport.

The PISAC Football Championships, hosted at the BISP campus on Jan 10, were a fantastic success, bringing together schools from across the island for a full day of competitive and high-quality football. Originally scheduled for Term 1, the event was rescheduled but carried out successfully on the new date.

Students from Under-9



Photo: BISP

through U13 proudly represented their PISAC schools, demonstrating skill, determination and excellent sportsmanship throughout the tournament. The competition provided valuable opportunities for players across all age groups to perform in a structured and competitive environment, with many

closely contested matches reflecting the strong standard of play on display.

The results were as follows:

**U9 Boys:** BCIS (1); BISP (2); KIS (3). **U11 Girls:** BISP (1); HeadStart City (2); UWC (3). **U11 Boys:** BISP (1); BCIS (2); HeadStart City (3). **U13 Girls:** HeadStart City (1); BISP (2); KIS (3). **U13 Boys:** BISP (1); BCIS (2); KIS (3).

The championships concluded with the presentation of awards recognising team achievements and outstanding performances

across each age group.

Shortly after the football tournament, the PISAC Cross Country Championships was hosted at BISP and transpired to also be a tremendous success. Across two competition days, more than 200 runners took part, bringing energy, determination and strong team spirit to the campus. Students from U9 to U18 represented their PISAC schools with pride, completing one, two or three laps of the course depending on their age group.

The Primary Championships took place as sched-

uled on Oct 28 last year. However, due to heavy rain, the Secondary Championships required several postponements, with the U13, U15 and U18 races eventually completed on Jan 12.

Each race demonstrated impressive effort and perseverance, with medals awarded to the top three finishers in every age group. The championships concluded with the recognition of individual age-group winners and an overall champion, providing a fitting end to an excellent event. *BISP*