

IMMIGRATION STARTS CHARGING FULL FEES > PAGE 3

DUMP FIRE



Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee

LANDFILL FIRE EXPOSES SYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE AS WASTE CRISIS DEEPENS

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The major landfill fire at Saphan Hin earlier this month exposed Phuket's deepening waste crisis, with officials confirming the blaze reached emergency severity and came dangerously close to triggering wider evacuations as toxic smoke spread across nearby communities.

Although the fire was finally brought under control, officials warn the danger is not over – and the conditions that caused it remain firmly in place.

The fire broke out at 3:17pm on Apr 11 at landfill plots 4 and 5 at the Phuket Provincial Integrated Waste Disposal Centre, fuelled by

high heat, accumulated waste and methane gas trapped beneath the surface.

It burned for more than 34 hours before being brought under control in the early hours of Apr 13, prompting Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn to declare the site a disaster relief zone as the situation escalated.

Phuket Town Mayor Suppachoke Laongphet classified the incident as a Level 2 disaster – serious, volatile and at risk of escalation due to underground heat and gas buildup.

“This was not a minor incident,” Mr Suppachoke said. “It had the potential to become much more severe.”

As of last Friday (Apr 17), the fight had shifted beneath the

surface. At 8:30am, Mr Suppachoke led a multi-agency inspection of landfill sites 4 and 5, where aerial drone scans conducted by the Royal Thai Navy Region 3 confirmed that hotspots are decreasing – but not eliminated.

Thermal imaging revealed fewer heat signatures buried within the waste, with colour-coded scans showing reduced red zones (heat) and increased moisture levels following sustained cooling efforts.

Officials from the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Centre Region 18 branch, the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office (DDPM Phuket) and Phuket City Municipality continued to pump water into the landfill core through a long-distance system stretching approxi-

mately three kilometres from a wastewater treatment plant.

The operation was aimed at suppressing deep-seated heat – the key driver of re-ignition in landfill fires.

Despite the improvement, extreme temperatures within the landfill – reaching up to 48°C – continued to pose a serious risk. “We are maintaining 24-hour surveillance and continuously reducing heat beneath the waste,” Mr Suppachoke said at the time.

“The fire is believed to have been caused by a combination of heat accumulation and methane gas buildup within the landfill – conditions driven by years of overcapacity and continuous waste dumping,” Mr Suppachoke said.

“Landfill fires are notoriously...

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‘Bad’ behaviour by tourists hits police’s radar



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Exploring local nature off the beaten track



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Phuket cricket sixes celebrates big landmark



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News



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Hidden hotspots raise fire alarm

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...difficult to extinguish because they burn under the surface, feeding on compressed waste and combustible materials such as batteries, chemicals and gas lighters," he added.

"Even after the main blaze was brought under control, at least 11 underground hotspots were detected, some continuing to emit smoke days later," he noted.

Officials have since deployed heavy machinery to dig through waste layers, create access routes and allow water to penetrate deep into the landfill.

Six-inch hoses carried water directly into the centre of the affected area, while temporary crossings were constructed to improve access for firefighting teams.

Drone-mounted thermal imaging played a critical role in identifying hidden heat sources. "These aerial images allow us to pinpoint where heat is still building up," Mr Suppachoke said. "If we cannot reach those points, the fire can return."

Mr Suppachoke credited a multi-agency response for preventing the situation from worsening. "Without the cooperation of all agencies, we would not have been able to control and extinguish the fire," he said. "Firefighters, municipal teams and military support

– including the Royal Thai Navy Region 3 – remained on site days later, continuing to cool the landfill and monitor for flare-ups," he added.

However, key operational details – including the number of firefighting units deployed and the volume of water used – were not disclosed by Mr Suppachoke, as monitoring operations remained ongoing.

EVACUATION

At the height of the incident, thick black smoke spread across Saphan Hin and surrounding communities, affecting at least 82 households and more than 200 residents. Some residents in high-risk areas were temporarily relocated, particularly by Wichit Municipality, as conditions worsened.

"The main impact was smoke," Mr Suppachoke said. "It affected people's daily lives, but we were able to control the situation."

He confirmed that shifting wind direction helped push smoke out to sea, allowing residents to return home.

No serious injuries or confirmed respiratory illnesses were officially reported, though emergency teams were deployed to monitor vulnerable residents. Face masks,

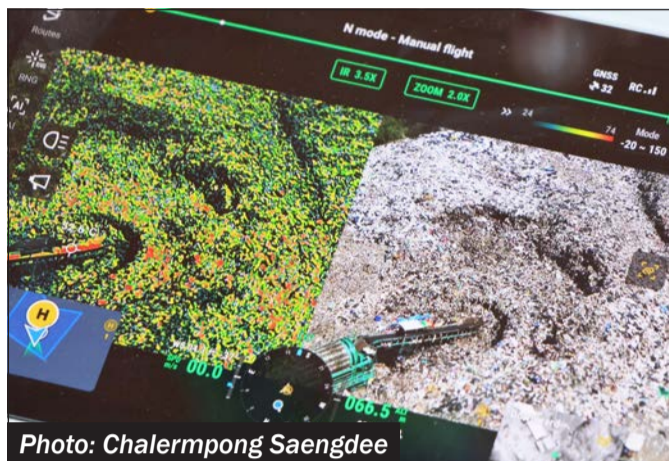


Photo: Chalermpong Saengdee

drinking water, eye wash and medical supplies were distributed, while ambulances and medical teams remained on standby.

People's Party MP Somchart Techathavorncharoen said the impact was broader than initially reported. "This affected 200 households in the Saphan Hin community and nearby areas," he said.

"The smoke disrupted daily life and created health concerns, especially among vulnerable residents."

He also called for improved emergency preparedness, including temporary shelters and faster deployment of support services.

OVERCAPACITY

At the core of the incident is a landfill operating far beyond its intended limits. Mr Suppachoke confirmed the Saphan Hin site was designed to hold 700,000 to 800,000 tonnes of waste,

but now contains nearly 1.3 million tonnes.

"That site is already far beyond its intended capacity," he said.

Daily waste intake continues to worsen the situation, with approximately 1,200 to 1,300 tonnes entering the site each day. This far exceeds Phuket's current incineration capacity of about 700 tonnes per day, leaving hundreds of tonnes to accumulate daily, Mr Suppachoke noted.

"The landfill is full," Mr Suppachoke said. "We now have to stack waste higher."

The result is increased pressure, heat buildup and methane generation – the exact conditions that led to the fire.

DELAYED

A second incinerator project is now underway at the Saphan Hin waste centre, but Mr Suppachoke admits it will not ease the immediate crisis.

He confirmed the B65 million project is being developed through private sector investment and operated by PJT Technology Co Ltd.

"Construction is currently about 30% complete," he said. "The new facility is expected to process around 500 tonnes of waste per day, with capacity potentially increasing to 600 tonnes with effective waste sorting."

"Completion is projected for next year, with full operational capacity expected by mid-2027," he added.

"This is a long-term solution," Mr Suppachoke said. "It will not solve the short-term problem."

The site was selected adjacent to the existing landfill to fast-track approvals and utilise existing infrastructure, he added.

Once operational, total incineration capacity on the island is expected to reach approximately 1,200 tonnes per day – roughly matching current daily waste generation, but leaving no room for future growth.

Plans for additional landfill sites, including a proposed location in Thepkrasattri near Bang Khanun Forest Reserve, remain under environmental study with no approval granted.

A potential third incinerator has also only reached the survey stage, with no confirmed budget,

timeline or construction start, Mr Suppachoke noted, but declined to give further details.

Mr Suppachoke cited environmental regulations, land-use constraints, environmental impact assessments and public hearings as key factors delaying progress.

"That process would take far too long to address the immediate problem," Mr Suppachoke said.

URGENT CHANGE

Following the incident, Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsithaworn called for a fundamental overhaul of waste management on the island.

"We should not be planning only how to put out fires – we must prevent them from happening in the first place," he said.

He warned that concentrating all waste at a single site is no longer viable. "In the future, Phuket should no longer bring all waste to one place at Saphan Hin," he said.

He also stressed the need for clear timelines and accountability in addressing the problem. "This kind of risk must not happen again," he said.

At the national level, Mr Somchart said he will submit an emergency motion in parliament seeking budget support, regulatory reform and improved disaster prevention systems.

Songkran leaves five dead, 29 injured in Phuket

FIVE PEOPLE WERE KILLED and 29 others injured in 32 road accidents across Phuket during the Songkran 'Seven Days of Danger' campaign from Apr 10-16, officials confirmed as provincial authorities closed the accident prevention centre and pledged stricter controls on risky behaviour among residents and tourists.

The figures were presented at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday (Apr 17) to formally conclude operations of the Road and Maritime Accident Prevention and Reduction Center for Songkran 2026. The meeting was chaired by Vice Governor Teeraphong Chuaychoo and attended by senior police, transport, marine and disaster prevention officials.

Data from the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office showed that Muang Phuket recorded the highest number of accidents with 17 incidents, followed by Kathu (9) and Thalang (6). Injuries totalled 29, with 16 reported in Muang Phuket, nine in Kathu and four in Thalang. Fatalities were highest in Muang Phuket with three deaths, followed by two in Thalang, while no deaths were reported in Kathu.

Officials noted that all five fatalities were Thai nationals, with no foreign deaths recorded during this year's Songkran period. Authorities attributed the improvement to proactive public awareness campaigns targeting foreign visitors. For the purposes of the campaign, only those

admitted to hospital were classified as injured.

Daily figures showed Apr 11 and Apr 13 were the most dangerous days, each recording seven accidents. The highest number of injuries was reported on Apr 15, with seven people hurt. No deaths were recorded on Apr 12, 14 or 15.

Motorcycles were involved in 93.76% of accidents, with cars and pickup trucks accounting for a much smaller share. Speeding was identified as the leading cause at 62.5%, followed by drunk driving (18.76%) and sudden lane cutting (12.5%).

Failure to wear helmets was the most common risky behaviour, contributing to 40.35% of cases, followed by speeding (33.33%) and drunk driving (14.04%). Most accidents occurred on straight

roads (65.63%), with the highest concentration between 3:01am and 6:00am.

Thai nationals made up 55.17% of those injured, followed by Myanmar nationals (20.70%) and Russian nationals (6.89%). Men accounted for 75.86% of casualties, with those aged 25–34 most affected.

Officials said the data highlighted that risky behaviour, particularly among domestic road users, remained the primary cause of accidents.

Authorities also raised concerns about some tourists ignoring traffic laws, speeding in residential areas and causing public disturbances. Officials warned such behaviour could increase accident risks and harm Phuket's tourism image.

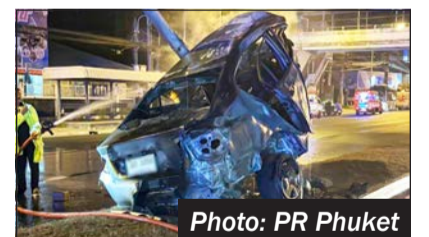


Photo: PR Phuket

Looking ahead, authorities said enforcement would be intensified in tourist zones and other high-risk areas, alongside greater use of technology to improve traffic management. A proposal to introduce AI-powered systems to monitor intersections and detect violations in real time is under consideration.

Officials added that multi-lingual awareness campaigns will be expanded, and cooperation sought from hotels, tour operators and car rental businesses to promote road safety and reduce accidents. *The Phuket News*

Police set sights on 'bad' tourists

The Phuket News

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Patong Police and local officials are ramping up enforcement and preventative measures targeting disruptive foreign tourists following a series of incidents during the Songkran holiday, with police confirming that most offenders have already been tracked down and prosecuted.

The stepped-up response follows an Apr 17 meeting of local agencies, where Kathu District Palad Thamrong Chuayakorn instructed officials to take stricter action against foreign tourists exhibiting inappropriate behaviour.

Patong Police Chief Pol Col Korakrit Khantakrue says officers have apprehended nearly all suspects involved in recent crimes in Patong, while stepping up preventative measures to curb repeat incidents.

"Regarding the various disturbances and many cases that have already occurred, we are pursuing the perpetrators. We've apprehended almost all of them now," Col Korakrit said.

The case comes amid multiple Songkran incidents. On Apr 12, police arrested seven French tourists on Prachanukhro Rd for blocking traffic and 'fiercely' splashing water at passers-by.



Photo: Patong Police

"The group was charged with causing a public nuisance, fined and warned," said a police report on Facebook.

In a separate case, two French nationals were arrested after assaulting a Thai man during Songkran celebrations, leaving him with facial injuries. Police confirmed both suspects were taken into custody and face legal proceedings for assault.

Patong Police have also taken action against dangerous driving, Pol Col Korakrit said.

Two foreign tourists, nationality not disclosed, were fined B24,000 and had their motorbike confiscated by court

order for reckless driving. More recent operations saw officers seize motorbikes from groups riding at speed with loud exhausts along Patong Hill routes, he added.

Col Korakrit explained that Patong Police have also tightened measures, with enforcement now paired with intensified prevention.

"Investigative and patrol units have been deployed to inspect accommodations, restaurants and motorbike rental shops frequented by foreign tourists, while gathering information on groups considered at risk of causing trouble," he said.

"This doesn't mean everyone

is a problem, or that every French tourist is a problem... but we [Patong Police] still keep to monitor the locations they frequent so that if incidents occur later, we can track them down," he added.

Police have also introduced roving checkpoints targeting groups driving recklessly or causing disturbances, Col Korakrit noted.

'CROSSING THE LINE'

Bhummikitti Ruktaengam, a long-standing figure in Phuket's tourism sector and now Vice President for Tourism Strategy at the Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT), said that while most tourists behave appropriately, a minority continue to "cross the line".

"Overall, I must say that most tourists didn't cause any problems [during Songkran]; their overall behaviour was generally orderly. However, there are some groups of tourists who may be boisterous or lack self-control, crossing the line, especially in cases we've seen on social media, such as splashing or shooting water at locals performing their duties, like van drivers, which can cause inconvenience or discomfort to others," he said.

"This reflects that even among Thais ourselves, we try not to

cross the line and not do things without the other party's consent. Therefore, tourists should also understand and respect this principle," he added.

Referring to the incidents that resulted in police charges, Mr Bhummikitti continued, "Of course, this type of behaviour is inappropriate, and it's not just during Songkran.

"Crossing the line occurs in many other cases, such as tourists renting motorbikes and driving them without experience or understanding traffic laws, causing accidents for themselves and others. This is something that the police need to closely monitor.

"I want to emphasise that when tourists come to our country, they need to respect our rules, just as when we travel abroad, we must abide by the laws and culture of that country," he noted.

"Regarding the relevant agencies, it is necessary to accelerate communication and education for tourists to ensure they understand that tourism is not about doing whatever they want, but must adhere to social rules.

"The important thing is discipline, respect for the rules and understanding local culture," Mr Bhummikitti concluded.

Phuket Immigration silent on increase in usual fees

PHUKET IMMIGRATION HAS DECLINED to explain why it is now charging B1,000 for an official letter confirming a foreigner's address – more than double the previous fee – as online criticism continues to grow.

The letter is commonly required for routine matters such as renewing a driver's licence. Foreigners renewing both car and motorbike licences must obtain two copies, bringing the total to B2,000 in immigration fees alone.

Asked to explain the increase, Phuket Immigration stated only that current charges comply with rates published by the Immigration Bureau under existing law.

Officials pointed to the fee schedule under the Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (1979), noting it is available via the Phuket Immigration website. The office declined to clarify whether any other fee increases are being applied.

The fee structure is set under Ministerial Regulation No. 27 (2003), in force since Aug 26, 2003. Routine services such as visa extensions and document endorsements are listed at B1,900, while other services vary depending on category.

However, following publication of the story, readers took to social media to question both the pricing and the consistency of the charges.

Several commenters claimed that different immigration offices in Phuket were applying different fees or offering varying processing times.



Photo: Immigration Bureau

One commenter wrote that they had been quoted B1,000 for a certificate at one office, but were able to obtain it for B500 – or even free – at another location depending on whether they were willing to wait.

Another claimed that requesting a receipt sometimes resulted in the fee being waived, suggesting discrepancies in how payments are handled.

Others alleged that so-called 'fast-track' services were being offered informally, with payments requested in cash.

Some commenters insisted that residence certificates had previously been issued free of charge if applicants were willing to wait several days, while others described the new B1,000 charge as excessive.

There were also calls for greater transparency, with some questioning whether the current practices align with official regulations and whether relevant authorities were aware of the situation.

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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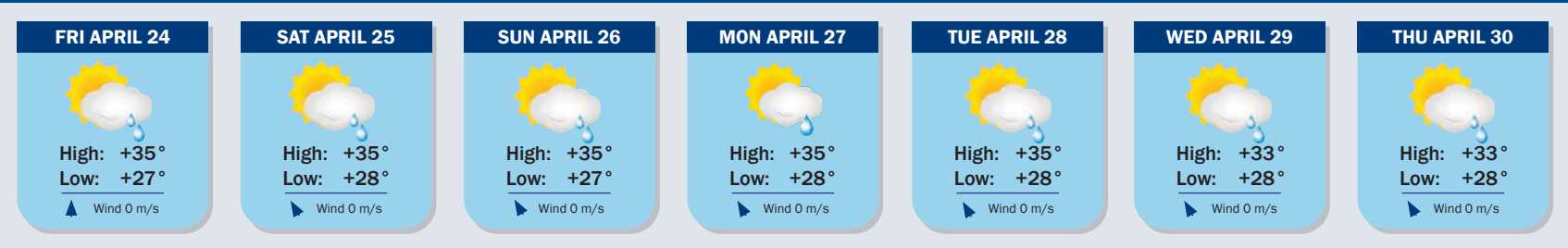


Photo: Chalong Police

Truck driver arrested after B1.3mn fuel theft

A FUEL TRUCK DRIVER has been arrested in Chalong after allegedly stealing and selling fuel worth more than B1.3 million from his employer, with police apprehending him as he returned home during Songkran.

Chalong Police said the case began on Mar 24, when Kolovsky Enterprise Co Ltd reported that an employee had driven a company fuel truck to Surat Thani and sold its contents, causing losses exceeding B1.3mn.

Investigators gathered evidence and obtained an arrest warrant from the Phuket Provincial Court for the suspect, identified only as 'Pakinai' (surname withheld), 39.

Police said the suspect fled Phuket after the

alleged theft, moving between provinces to avoid capture.

However, officers later discovered he had returned to his home in Chalong during the Songkran holidays. At the height of celebrations on Apr 14, police moved in and arrested him under a court warrant.

He faces charges of theft of an employer's property at night using a vehicle to facilitate the offence or transport stolen goods.

During questioning, Mr Pakinai confessed and admitted selling the stolen fuel, police said.

He has been handed over to investigators at Chalong Police Station for further legal proceedings.

Eakkapop Thongtub

B50k reward offered over dugong carnage

The Phuket News
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A B50,000 reward has been announced for information leading to the arrest of the person who beheaded a dugong found dead at Koh Yao Noi, east of Phuket, as officials warn of the fragile state of Thailand's marine life.

The reward was confirmed at a press conference at Sirinat National Park on Nai Yang Beach in Sakhu on Apr 12, where officials were ordered to urgently pursue the case.

The dugong's carcass was discovered in Tha Khao Bay, Phang Nga Province, with its head removed. A forensic examination found the animal was a mature male, about 233cm long and weighing 120kg. It had died from chronic enteritis and prolonged starvation, with no signs of being hunted or caught in fishing gear.

Officials confirmed the decapitation occurred after death. A clean cut to the throat, without bruising, indicated the use of a sharp tool by someone with anatomical knowledge.

Police in Koh Yao are investigating following a complaint by the Department of Marine and Coastal



Photo: PR Phuket

Resources (DMCR).

Authorities warned the offence falls under the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019), carrying penalties of up to five years in prison, a fine of up to B500,000, or both.

The case comes amid a sharp decline in Thailand's dugong population, now estimated at just 114-150,

down from about 248 in 2023.

Experts say dugongs are moving north due to seagrass loss, exposing them to greater risks from human activity.

Officials urged anyone with information to come forward, and asked the public to report stranded or injured dugongs via hotline 1362.

Restaurant owner chases off burglar with sword

A RESTAURANT OWNER in Wichit chased off a would-be burglar with a samurai sword after catching the suspect at his premises early last Friday (Apr 17).

CCTV from Wai Photchana restaurant on Narang-Borrae Rd showed the intruder entering about 3am and attempting to pry open a door. Owner Saiwai Chantharamuang, 46, confronted the suspect, who fled as he emerged carrying the sword.

Mr Saiwai gave chase and struck the suspect once with the blunt side, saying he only intended to stop the escape. The burglar suffered minor injuries



CCTV Image: Saiwai Junmuang / Facebook

and fled without stealing anything.

Mr Saiwai filed a complaint at Wichit Police Station later that day. Police are reviewing CCTV and working to identify the suspect.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Bus driver caught with meth

A BUS DRIVER HAS BEEN arrested after police seized more than 12 grammes of crystal meth (ya ice) hidden inside a vehicle at the island's main checkpoint.

Officers at the Tha Chatchai Police Station checkpoint intercepted the bus at 11am on Apr 16 as part of intensified inspections on the last day of the Songkran national road safety campaign.

The operation was conducted under the direction of Pol Col Khundech Na Nongkhai, Superintendent of Tha Chatchai Police Station, with a team led by Pol Lt Col Ratchaphas Buakaew, Deputy Superintendent, and Pol Lt Col Somkiat Wanate, Inspector, along with checkpoint officers.

During the inspection, officers discovered 12.185g of ya ice



Photos: Tha Chatchai Police

concealed inside the bus. The driver, a 45-year-old man, not named by police, was taken into custody at the scene.

Police confirmed the driver has been charged with possession of a Category 1 narcotic. He was informed of his rights before being handed over, along with the seized drugs, to investigators for further legal proceedings.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Hanuman sculptures installed at Racha

The Phuket News
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Divers have begun exploring the newly completed 'Hanuman' underwater sculpture installation in Siam Bay off Koh Racha Yai, with officials promoting the project as both a marine restoration effort and a new eco-tourism attraction.

The 'Hanuman Nimitkai' underwater sculpture project was completed on Apr 15 following several days of offshore installation work, with 73 structures placed on the seabed at depths of around 12 to 19 metres.

The installation includes 47 Hanuman-themed sculptures, alongside 15 3D-printed fence structures and 11 artificial coral reef units, all designed to encourage coral attachment and provide habitat for marine life.

The project was carried out through a collaboration between the Rotary Foundation, District 3330 (Thailand) and District 3600 (South Korea), with support from government agencies, private sector partners and the local community.

Transportation of the structures to the site took place between Apr 7-10, followed by underwater installation and positioning from Apr 11-15.

Officials said the structures are



Photo: Niran918 via PR Phuket

engineered to function as artificial reefs, helping to rehabilitate marine ecosystems by creating new surfaces for coral growth while also attracting fish and other marine species.

The site is also intended to ease pressure on natural reefs by providing an alternative destination for divers and snorkellers, reducing direct human impact on more fragile coral areas.

In addition to its environmental role, the installation is being positioned as a long-term learning resource to raise awareness about marine conservation among visitors and local communities.

Project organisers have also

outlined plans to expand the site into an "underwater art museum", with future sculptures depicting characters from the Ramayana epic, including Rama, Ravana and Suvarnamatcha.

Authorities say the development is part of a broader push to promote sustainable marine tourism in Phuket, balancing the island's popularity as a diving destination with the need to protect and restore its natural resources.

With the structures now in place, officials expect the site to gradually develop into a thriving artificial reef and a new landmark attraction for divers visiting Koh Racha Yai.

Dolphin rescued from stranding

A YOUNG DOLPHIN found stranded on a Phuket beach has been rescued and is now receiving round-the-clock care.

The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) reported that the animal was discovered on the beach in front of 'White Beach', south of Naithon, last Sunday (Apr 19).

The stranding was reported by Ms Pojana Makmai, prompting officials to respond and carry out an on-site assessment.

Marine officers identified the animal as a female spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*) that had not yet reached full maturity. The dolphin measured 175cm in length and weighed approximately 26.5kg.

Initial examinations found the dolphin in a weakened condition. It was underweight, with a body condition score of 2 out of 5, and was unable to swim normally. Abrasion wounds were also noted along its side, consistent with injuries sustained during stranding.

Veterinarians further



Photo: DMCR

determined that the dolphin was dehydrated and suffering from low blood sugar. An underlying infection was also suspected to be contributing to its condition.

The animal was stabilised at the scene before being transported for urgent veterinary care.

It is now under intensive treatment and observation at the Siritharn Rare Marine Animal Rescue Center, where staff are monitoring its condition 24 hours a day.

Officials have not yet confirmed the dolphin's prognosis, but said efforts are ongoing to rehabilitate the animal with the aim of eventually returning it to the wild.

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Transport operators register for fuel aid

MORE THAN 1,200 transport operators in Phuket registered for government fuel cost assistance within the first four days of the scheme, with applications remaining open until close of business today (Apr 24).



The Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) reported that a total of 1,254 operators signed up for the support programme between Apr 16-19, with 112 registrations recorded at the provincial office alone.

The scheme formed part of a nationwide effort by the Department of Land Transport (DLT) to ease the financial burden on transport operators affected by rising fuel prices.

Eligible applicants include operators of Category 2 and Category 3 regular passenger buses, non-regular passenger buses – including 30-, 31- and 36-seat vehicles – as well as non-regular hired trucks, taxis and public motorcycle taxi drivers. Both stand-based and app-based motorcycle taxi operators are able to apply.

PLTO officials urged all

eligible operators to complete registration before the Friday deadline. Applications were accepted at the PLTO office in Wichit during office hours, from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Nationally, the scheme has drawn strong interest. On the second day of registration in Bangkok, large crowds of operators gathered at the DLT headquarters, despite initial technical issues with the registration system.

While many drivers have welcomed the financial relief, some have raised concerns about the conditions attached to the payments. Operators noted that meeting minimum distance requirements could prove challenging amid declining passenger numbers, with some fearing they may need to operate without passengers simply to qualify.

The Phuket News

Tourism sector seeking clear policies for SMEs

Bangkok Post

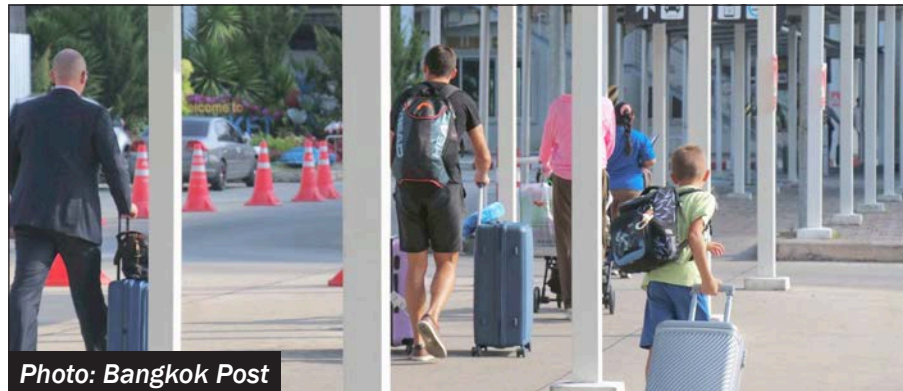
Tourism operators have criticised the government for lacking clear policies to address the debt burden and improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized operators.

Adith Chairattananon, honorary secretary-general of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, said that providing subsidies via the latest phase of the Khon La Khrueng Plus (half-half plus) co-payment scheme would also not be sufficient to sustain growth during the Middle East conflict, reports the *Bangkok Post*.

He said people can afford fewer goods, or smaller shopping baskets, with the same amount of money compared with last year, due to the energy crisis, which has driven up logistics, energy and product costs.

This could particularly affect small and medium-sized operators, which make up most businesses in Thailand. Many have become non-performing borrowers and are unable to expand, as they're now being hit by weak demand.

Mr Adith said the government should help ensure operator competitiveness through measures such as maintaining appropriate commodity prices, including petrol and electricity,



along with prioritising debt resolution.

Chai Arunanondchai, president of the Tourism Council of Thailand, said the current crisis mainly stems from external, uncontrollable factors, and businesses are willing to adjust their operations to reflect higher energy costs faced by consumers and travellers.

The government must help ease this burden on businesses by ensuring an adequate supply of commodities priced at appropriate and stable levels.

Mr Chai said it should also attract new foreign investment and upgrade operators' knowledge, particularly in emerging sectors such as green and wellness, along with addressing their capital shortages and debt issues.

Regarding tourism policies, Mr Adith said focusing on high-value tourism is a positive initiative, but it

must ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to distribute income fairly, generate positive social and environmental impacts, and support fair employment.

He said Thailand must further diversify towards short-haul markets, which are less affected by the Middle East conflict, through new charter flight programmes and roadshows. It should use this opportunity to resolve recurring issues, such as bottlenecks at airports and weak connectivity between main and second-tier cities.

Thailand should also maintain a strong presence in Middle Eastern and long-haul markets in order to attract visitors once the conflict eases.

In the meantime, it can position itself as a safe haven for foreign investors and long-stay tourists, Mr Chai added.

Phuket eyes Hyundai partnership to drive 'smart mobility' push

PHUKET IS STEPPING UP PLANS to develop an international-standard smart city, holding talks with South Korean automotive giant Hyundai on upgrading the island's transportation system through advanced technology and innovation.



Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn chaired an online meeting on Apr 16 with Hyundai's Smart City Innovation Group to exchange ideas and assess the feasibility of enhancing Phuket's smart mobility network.

The meeting brought together key provincial officials and stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, including the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation, the Phuket Provincial Transport Office and Phuket City Development Company Limited (PKCD).

Also in attendance were Phuket Provincial Office chief Narong On-in, Digital Economy Promotion Agency Southern Region Director Pracha Asawathira, and Phuket Chamber of Commerce President Kongsak Khoophongsakorn.

Officials reiterated that Phuket has already been advancing long-term plans to develop a smart city and modern mass transit system, with a focus on expanding electric vehicle (EV) bus services, improving route networks and raising service standards for both residents and tourists.

During the discussions, provincial authorities presented current development strategies and explored opportunities for future collaboration with Hyundai, particularly in applying cutting-edge technology to improve transport efficiency.

Key proposals included the introduction of cashless payment systems, real-time integration of travel data via digital platforms, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to better manage traffic flow and ease congestion across the island.

Phuket is also testing a 'Taxi Boat' project aimed at providing an alternative mode of transport by sea, helping to reduce pressure on the island's roads while supporting sustainable urban development goals.

Officials said the talks mark an important step in building on Phuket's existing smart city roadmap, with the goal of partnering with international private sector players to enhance transportation infrastructure and improve quality of life as the island continues to grow as a global tourism destination.

The Phuket News

Fuel crisis upends state's fiscal plans

THE ENERGY CRISIS may pose a challenge for the government in pursuing its fiscal plan, which aims to reduce the fiscal deficit to no more than 3% of GDP, increase revenue through a higher value-added tax (VAT), and keep public debt below 70% of GDP, according to the Finance Ministry.

A source from the Finance Ministry, who requested anonymity, said the ongoing energy crisis may force the government to revise its medium-term fiscal plan for 2027-2030, as higher energy prices are affecting economic forecasts.

At the same time, the government may face a higher public debt burden because the Finance Ministry may need to guarantee B150 billion in loans for the Oil Fuel Fund to help stabilise domestic retail oil prices under a managed floating mechanism in line with market forces.

As a result of the current energy crisis, this year's GDP growth may fail to meet the target projected by the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), which



had forecast expansion of 2%.

Meanwhile, the public debt burden arising from the loan guarantee for the Oil Fuel Fund is expected to raise public debt by about 1 percentage point of GDP if the fund fully utilises the B150bn guarantee facility.

Under the plan, the deficit will be reduced to 3.9% in fiscal year 2027, and from 2029 onwards the budget deficit is expected to fall below 3% of GDP,

declining to 2.7%. In the final year of the plan, 2030, the deficit will stand at 2.1%.

If the economy is still unable to recover, the government's revenue-raising plan through a VAT increase may become even more difficult to implement. Under the fiscal plan, VAT is scheduled to rise from 7% to 8.5% in 2028, and then to the full legal ceiling of 10% in 2030.

Bangkok Post

Anutin steps up PM2.5 fight

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has ordered agencies to step up enforcement of environmental laws to tackle worsening PM2.5 pollution, warning that inaction could erode public trust.

Speaking during a visit to Chiang Mai on Monday (Apr 20) to monitor forest fires and haze in the North, he said current efforts are not enough as the crisis remains severe.

He attributed the problem to a mix of domestic burning, cross-border fires, and weather conditions.

Local authorities, he said, must strictly control forest burning within Thailand, while cross-border pollution should be addressed through diplomatic channels, with officials making clear to their counterparts the impact of continued burning on bilateral relations.

He added that weather-related factors should be managed using technology, stressing that protecting public health is the top priority while calling for better coordination and data sharing among agencies to improve both mitigation and health-care responses.

He also urged agencies to align their work at both the policy and operational levels to ensure faster, more effective action.

Haze and wildfires have already hurt northern provinces, particularly



PM Anutin Charnvirakul leads a delegation in Chiang Mai on Monday (Apr 20) to monitor forest fire suppression operations. Photo: Royal Thai Government

tourism and local livelihoods, he said.

“We can’t let this continue. But the situation can still be managed – we focus on what we can control, and use technology to deal with what we can’t,” he said.

He also instructed agencies to prepare for floods and drought, drawing lessons from last year to reduce future economic and social damage.

LUNG INFLAMMATION

Anutin’s comments came after a Chiang Mai respiratory specialist warned that hazardous PM2.5 levels could trigger severe lung inflammation as extreme pollution grips northern provinces.

Air quality in Chiang Mai hit crisis levels last Saturday (Apr 18), with thick haze blanketing the city and severely reducing visibility. At Chiang Mai University in Muang

district, PM2.5 surged to 360 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), far exceeding the safety standard of $37.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The situation coincided with ongoing wildfires, with 27 hotspots still detected despite a slight decline.

Dr Atikun Limsukon, a respiratory and critical care specialist at the Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University, said PM2.5 particles are small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, triggering inflammation and exacerbating existing lung conditions.

He cited a recent case involving a 19-year-old foreign tourist with no underlying illness who developed severe lung inflammation after visiting Pai in the neighbouring Mae Hong Son province and Chiang Mai.

Chronic patients in the area have also deteriorated rapidly, Dr Atikun added.

New US visa rules draw opposition

BANGKOK

THE UNITED STATES Embassy in Thailand has announced new visa application rules requiring applicants to make their social media pages public for review of online activity.

The requirement is effective immediately and aims to enable screening to confirm applicants’ identity and legal admissibility, the embassy posted on its Facebook account.

The notice reads: “All individuals applying for an A-3, C-3 (if a domestic worker), G-5, H1-B, H-3, H-4 dependent of H-1B and H-3, F, M, J, K-1, K-2, K-3, Q, R-1, R-2, S, T, or U nonimmigrant visa must adjust the privacy setting on all social media accounts to public to facilitate vetting necessary to establish identity and admissibility to the United States under US law. Failure to comply



Photo: Bangkok Post

will delay processing.”

However, the announcement drew immediate backlash from netizens, with some raising concerns about applicants who were not active on social media.

Many saw the announcement as violating citizen rights and privacy, as the visa application process should remain private. Some criticised the White House for the requirement, targeting mainly President Donald Trump’s anti-immigrant policies.

A netizen called Myat Noe wrote: “You must surrender your liberty in order to visit the land of liberty. BTW, I am sure those with things to hide would not even post them on their social pages.”

Bangkok Post

Songkran road safety figures an improvement on last year

BANGKOK

OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED THE seven-day Songkran road safety campaign saw a total of 1,242 accidents, 1,200 injuries and 242 deaths nationwide, with 10 provinces reporting zero fatalities.

Overall figures for this year’s Songkran period showed marked improvement compared with the three-year average, Thiraphat Khatchamart, director-general of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, who chairs the Road Safety Directing Centre, said last Friday (Apr 17).

The statistics compiled by the centre for the seventh and final day of the campaign on Apr 16 recorded 123 accidents, resulting in 123 injuries and 17 fatalities.

Speeding was the leading cause of accidents, accounting for 40.65%, followed by cutting-in at close range at 25.20%.

Motorcycles were involved in the majority of incidents (64.55%). Most accidents occurred on straight roads (87.80%), particularly on highways (44.72%) and local roads under tambon administrative organisations and villages (27.64%).

By province, Chiang Rai recorded the highest number of accidents (eight),



A fatal accident in Phetchabun on Apr 11. Photo: Bangkok Post

Pattani the highest number of injuries (11), and Nakhon Pathom the highest number of fatalities (three) on the final day, said Mr Thiraphat.

Phrae topped the list for cumulative accidents (48 cases) and injuries (50 people), while Bangkok recorded the highest number of fatalities (21 deaths).

Ten provinces reported zero deaths – Nakhon Phanom, Bueng Kan, Pattani, Phang Nga, Rayong, Satun, Samut Songkhram, Sing Buri, Nong Bua Lamphu and Mae Hong Son.

Compared with the government’s target under the 2026 road safety action plan, which aims for at least a 5% reduction from the three-year Songkran average, the campaign exceeded expectations. Accidents fell by 35.59%, injuries by 37.53% and fatalities by 9.70%, said Mr Thiraphat.

Last year, the final figures for the Songkran campaign (Apr 11-17) recorded 1,538 accidents, 1,495 injuries and 253 deaths. Bangkok Post




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Photo: Simon Lomas



Exploring nature off the beaten track

Simon Lomas

Here in Phuket there are some great places to experience the natural world, some well known and others not so. Not only the national parks, mangroves and jungle areas, there are so many beaches, islands, coves and bays all teeming with life. Yes, we all know the main tourist locations that we see advertised everywhere, such as Maya Bay, James Bond Island, Pileh Lagoon and the Similan Islands, and yes, these are well known and part of the must-see, bucket-list places when in Phuket.

However, there are many other stunning experiences on offer in Phuket. There is some fantastic snorkelling to the south of the island at Racha Noi, for

example. Several speedboat tours go to the closer island of Racha Yai but the uninhabited Racha Noi offers great snorkeling and scuba diving with very few people. The great thing about Racha Noi is the fact it has well protected bays on both the east and west sides and so offers well protected diving and snorkelling all year round.

During the monsoon season of May through October the weather comes from the west, while during the high season (November through April) it comes from the east. Having several bays on both sides means the few boats there can spread themselves out – with a bit of luck sometimes there may be just one or two boats per bay in high season, while you could possibly find yourself as the only boat in low season.

Unknown locations

The warm shallow waters that are much less disturbed by mass crowds and boat traffic offer a huge variety of marine life for both divers and snorkelers. The great advantage of this trip is both divers and snorkelers can be on the same boat at the same time at the same locations. The calm aquarium like conditions are also a top location for those wanting to get a taste of scuba diving for the first time.

There is so much life to see in the shallows that makes it an ideal location for all. If you are really lucky between the months of November and April you have the chance to see the Manta Ray here as well as the odd whale that turns up too. This makes Racha Noi a much better experience as it gets you away from the crowds. Also, most of the boats that go there are dive boats which are much more comfortable than the small speedboats – with the added bonus of usually providing a full buffet breakfast and buffet lunch, meaning fresh pancakes with fruits and maple syrup on the way home! Furthermore you can relax on the sun deck between dives or snorkelling, while a nice shaded cabin area allows you to cool off, if needed. In my mind this makes for a very civilised day while allowing you to truly get the best of Phuket's island excursions.

My advice is to check with the main, established dive centres on the island that have their own boats for the best, most up to date information on the marine life situation at that particular time; operators such as Patong Dive Center or Love Diving will not only know the current conditions due to regularly venturing to these more unknown locations, but they also can offer advice on so much more other than diving.

'Pirate-style'

Another useful name to remember is the Khai islands. These are more a 'pirate-style' desert islands that can be crossed in a minute or so, with bamboo restaurant for snacks, cool drinks and ice creams. The good thing with the Khai Islands is they are close enough by speedboat for a half-day drip in either the morning or afternoon, meaning you can truly maximise every minute of your holiday. You can be snorkelling on a tiny tropical island in the morning before boarding the flight home in the afternoon. The tiny size of these islands means a natural limit to the numbers of people and related snorkeling. Sandy beach on all sides, they offer a real paradise location.

The good thing with the warm trop-



ical water off Phuket is the fact there is very little in the water that's harmful. No dangerous sharks and very few jellyfish, and even then it is very rare to actually see them. There is, however, an abundance of fantastic marine life there for all to see. From the masses of reef fish, including Clown fish, Angel fish, Banner fish and Parrot fish to Hawksbill Turtles and the possibility of the odd Manta Ray, it makes for some great experiences while avoiding the crowds.

The same can be said for the beaches too. There are so many beaches, bays and coves around Phuket that once you get away from the popular spots you can often find little corners of paradise that still exist around the island. The major advantage with these small, quiet beaches is a lesser number of people, meaning a distinct lack of tourist-related activity such as jet-skis and parasailing, which often results in being able to encounter more wildlife and marine life.

Even as Phuket has boomed in recent years, there are still some truly fantastic spots to encounter and marvel at natural beauty, while abundant wildlife on land, at sea and in the skies above is there to enjoy if you just step off the beaten track.

The June/July 2026

hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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

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Lots of fun to be had in the Super Mario Galaxy

David Griffiths

It may come as a big surprise – but it looks like the film that might divide audiences the most this year is none other than *The Super Mario Galaxy Movie*. If you have been following what has been said about the film during its opening week it seems like people either love it or hate it – there is not a lot of grey around this film.

Now, I will be the first to admit that I am not a massive gamer. I'll play the odd game every now and then and, of course, I have been exposed to Super Mario over the years. I played it a little as a kid and in recent times have always joined in when someone has thrown Mario Kart on at a party, but even as a non-gamer I have to say I kind of enjoyed this film. I'm not sure why so much hate has been thrown at the film – all I can think of is that some people may have forgotten that this is a film meant for kids.

Plot wise things here are pretty basic. Not a lot has happened since the last film. The legend of heroes Mario (voiced by Chris Pratt – *Guardians Of The Galaxy*) and Luigi (Charlie Day – *The Lego Movie*) has risen to the point where now even Princess Rosalina (Brie Larson – *Captain Marvel*) is reading about their adventures with Princess Peach (Anya Taylor-Joy – *The Witch*) in bedtime stories to her star subjects.

Mario and Luigi spend most of their time travelling around helping people – their latest quest has landed them a new friend, Yoshi (Donald Glover –



Photo: IMDb

Solo: A Star Wars Story), while they have also made sure that the evil Bowser (Jack Black – *School of Rock*) has stayed small and out of the way.

However soon Mario, Luigi, Yoshi, Peach and Toad (Keegan-Michael Key – *Wonka*) find themselves getting called into action when in a bid to fulfill his Father's legacy Bowser Jr. (Benny Safdie – *Good Time*) kidnaps Princess Rosalina.

Sleek

Now most of the people that have been criticising the film have been pretty quick to point out that the it has a pretty basic plot. But, seriously, this was never going to be a film as in-depth as Shakespeare and, to be honest, all kids really want to see here is a good versus evil storyline involving the characters that they have come to know and love. That this film delivers in spades – and I must say there should be a heap of praise placed on the heads of the team of directors and animators behind

the film because the animation here sure looks sleek.

The other major plus for this film is the way that it has been designed to please those who play the games. I saw this film in a room full of gamers and whenever a character appeared that excited them there was hooting and hollering that filled the cinema – it was pretty obvious by the reactions that this film was keeping the gamers very, very happy.

Staying on that subject, one of the great things about this film is how it keeps all generations of gamers happy. There are times during the film where the sleek animation disappears for a few seconds the film reverts back to the graphics of the original *Super Mario* film. Likewise, the team behind this film have dug deep to make sure that it contains some deep game references and characters and even cross-overs games with the introduction of characters like Fox McCloud (Glen Powell – *Top Gun: Maverick*) making an appear-

ance. It was moments like that that had the gamers very excited.

And while the plot itself is pretty basic there is more than enough going to keep audiences of all ages happy. Kids will love the fact that they can follow along with their hero's journey here while on reflection you can see that the film follows the basic structure of the games themselves. In order to reach Princess Rosalina the heroes at hand must get past all the obstacles and characters in every land that stand in their way. Perhaps that is the reason why this film seems to be enjoyed more by those who love gaming than those who prefer to sit down and watch a good film.

The way to approach *The Super Mario Galaxy Movie* is to just go into the cinema expecting a fun time. This was never going to be a deeply serious film or even a game changer in the genre. But I can guarantee that if you are a Super Mario lover or are simply looking for a fun film for the whole family then you will not be disappointed.

The Super Mario Galaxy Movie is currently screening in Phuket and is rated 'G'.
3/5 Stars.

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

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POP QUIZ

1. What Italian building material translates as 'baked earth'?
2. What is the world's most popular green vegetable?
3. Which group of animals are called a cete?
4. Whose yacht was called *Honey Fitz*?
5. Emerald is the birthstone for which month?

Answers below, centre

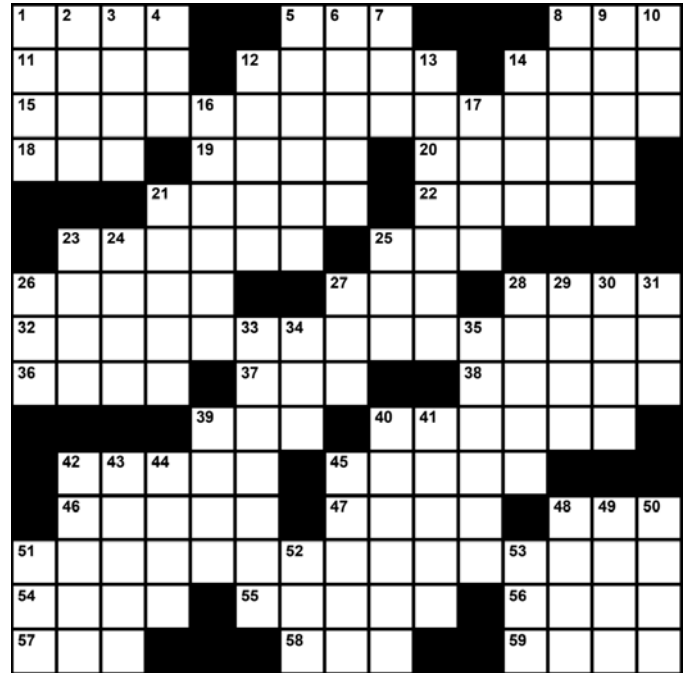
SUDOKU

Medium

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	1	6		4					
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7	2				9	3			
4								2	

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Credit or tarot follower
 5. Dash
 8. Bladder, e.g.
 11. Organic compound
 12. People person, briefly
 14. Fodder holder
 15. Takes his leave of a lady
 18. Nigerian language
 19. City in Italy
 20. Adult insect
 21. Big Bertha's birthplace
 22. Lhasa's land
 23. Raillery
 25. Best seller
 26. ___-cochere (carriage entrance)
 27. Krypton, e.g.
 28. Group of poems
 32. TV castaway
 36. ___ brat
 37. College in Ashland (abbr.)
 38. ___-made
 39. "Come again?"
 40. Rears
 42. Birthplace of Little Richard
 45. Tracks
 46. Caribbean cruise stop
 47. Units of work
 48. Protestant denom.
 51. Place to find pennies?
 54. European language
 55. Dead to the world
 56. Consequently
 57. Home improvement network
 58. Rather than
 59. Dated oath
- Down**
1. 27, to 3
 2. University in Pakistan
 3. Make over
 4. "___ Boot"
 5. More high-spirited
 6. Mischievous
 7. Sleep-disturbing legume?
 8. ___ of Vicksburg
 9. Apportion
 10. Mil. rank
 12. French commune
 13. ___ Columbia
 14. Q-Tip
 16. Urges onward
 17. Give off, as light
 21. Admittance
 23. 1922 Physics Nobel
 24. Jack-in-the-pulpit, e.g.
 25. Pilgrim's journey
 26. School org.
 27. African antelope
 28. Decorative jugs
 29. Hymn of praise: var.
 30. Cutlass, e.g.
 31. Arch
 33. Salt shaker?
 34. Joyful exclamation
 35. Threat ender
 39. Bindle bearer
 40. French existentialist
 41. Cheap
 42. Native New Zealander
 43. Dilettantish
 44. Adorable
 45. Allude
 48. Floater
 49. Chlorella, e.g.
 50. Slog
 51. Twin, e.g.
 52. Undivided
 53. ___ bit



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

- 1) Terracotta; 2) Spinach; 3) Badgers; 4) John Fitzgerald Kennedy; 5) May

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

solitary cracker that survived the sinking of the *Titanic* sold for nearly US\$23,000 in a 2015 auction.

18

percent of drivers fleeing the Los Angeles Police manage to escape arrest.

400

dollars was the littering fine the Western Australian government issued NASA in 1979 when pieces of Skylab fell on the region.

385,000

babies are born around the world each day, according to UN estimates.

3.7 billion

people under age 50 worldwide are infected with the herpes virus.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Early morning at the Lake Course at Blue Canyon Golf Club, Phuket. Photo by Joerg Al Reding

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

This week in history

Apr 24, 1183 BC
Traditional reckoning of the Fall of Troy marking the end of the legendary Trojan War.

Apr 25, 1859
British and French engineers break ground for the Suez Canal.

Apr 26, 1994
South Africa begins its first

multiracial election, which is won by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.

Apr 27, 1667
Blind and impoverished, John Milton sells *Paradise Lost* to a printer for £10, so that it could be entered into the Stationers' Register.



Nelson Mandela

Apr 28, 1923
Wembley Stadium is opened, named initially as

the Empire Stadium.

Apr 29, 1770
James Cook arrives in Australia at Botany Bay, which he names.

Apr 30, 1900
Hawaii becomes a territory of the United States, with Sanford B. Dole as governor. Source: *Wikipedia*

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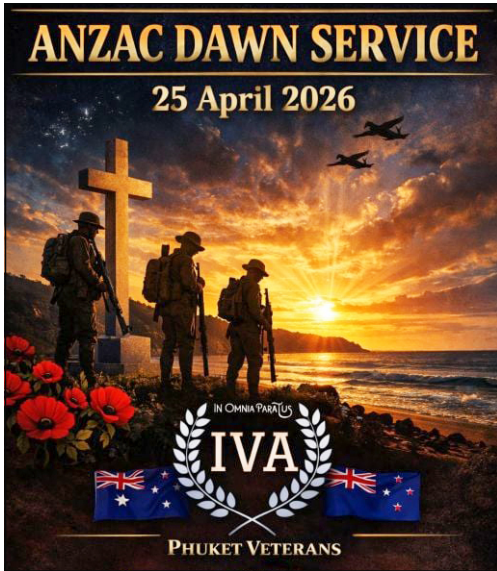
The map of PHUKET Карта Пхукета 普吉岛 地圖

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SAT 25 APR



ANZAC Dawn Service

Hosted and presented by the Phuket Veterans, all welcome. Please arrive by 5am. Meeting point - Kamala beach, near Kamala police station. ANZAC breakfast will be held at the Devils Bar Kamala after the service. More info - facebook.com/phuketveterans

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

THU 30 APR



Live Theatre - The See Saw Tree

A Must See! - Real theatre means no phones for an hour or so...just real people on a real stage, telling real stories about real impacts... now you can't get any more real than that! The play centers on a majestic, ancient oak tree that has stood for hundreds of years, providing a home and a delicate ecosystem for a diverse community of animals. The conflict arises when a local developer plans to cut down the tree to make way for a children's playground - ironically featuring a see-saw made of wood. It's a story with a plea for planetary preservation and a reminder that once a natural resource is destroyed, the "see-saw" of our ecosystem tips toward disaster. Produced in conjunction with The Litter Club, this story mirrors it's mission: protecting the existing beauty of Phuket from 'waste'. Show dates Apr 30, May 1, 3, 7, 8 & 10. 650.00THB - Adult 500.00THB - Students with ID Free - 3 years and under Groups of 10 or more enter Coupon Code GROUP10 for a 10% discount. Tickets available at www.thelitterclub.org/events See you at the show

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FRI 8 MAY



Grow Boating Phuket Evening - May 2026

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Bluu Asian Kitchen, Royal Phuket Marina from 5pm. We are delighted to announce that our drinks sponsor for the evening will be the Thailand International Boat Show 2027 which will take place at the award-winning Phuket Yacht Haven Marina between the 14th and the 17th of January 2027, with over 6,000 visitors and more than 100 exhibitors expected to attend. See www.thailandinternationalboatshow.com. There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Bluu Asian Kitchen, Royal Phuket Marina for all attendees and as always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket

SAT 9 MAY



Phuket White Collar Boxing

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

SAT 16 MAY



PHAB 8 - Infinity Ball

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

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Reimagining Phuket, United

FOOTBALL

Simon Causton

For too long, the Thai football landscape has relied on a fragile, almost feudal model: the benefactor owner. It is a system where a club rises quickly through localised spending and vanity, only to collapse into ignominy the moment the owner's enthusiasm, or political capital, fades. Across Asia, the pattern is wearily familiar: short bursts of success followed by a hollow, ringing silence.

Phuket United, however, is being built specifically as the antithesis to the vanity project. It is an attempt to create an institution that is woven into the daily life of the island, rather than one that hangs precariously on the whims of a single ego.

Phuket United enters the fray via the Thai Semi-Pro League (TSP), the fourth tier of the national pyramid that serves as a regional proving ground. But the club's competitive edge isn't just a local matter; it is deeply entwined with a global powerhouse. The project represents a movement for the island, anchored by a deep-rooted partnership with the Cruzeiro EC Academy Phuket.



MAIN PHOTO: The Phuket United kit. INSET: The club logo. Photos: Supplied

This isn't a fresh-off-the-plane sponsorship deal. The owner of Phuket United is the same visionary who brought Cruzeiro to these shores over 12 years ago, establishing and running the academies Asia-wide, an operation now widely considered the premier football academy system in Thailand. They have built one of Southeast Asia's strongest football cultures, powered by the DNA of the Brazilian giants, the same roots that produced legends like Ronaldo and Rivaldo.

This partnership is moving from the academy pitches to the professional stage. The coaching reins for this inaugural season have been handed to Eder Diniz, the Head Coach of Cruzeiro in

Phuket. By bringing the Brazilian coaching team to guide the first team, the club is injecting a specific mentality and technical level that has been missing from the island's senior game. It is a philosophy that prioritises the "mentality of the movement" over the transient results of the week. This isn't theory; it's a proven conveyor belt of real pathways.

LONG-TERM VISION

The most significant challenge facing Phuket football hasn't just been a lack of coaching – it has been the historical "brain drain". For years, the island's most prodigious talents have had to flee the nest to find a top-level professional game. Phuket United exists

to ensure these pathways lead back to the island as much as they lead away from it, for every boy and girl.

The club is launching an island-wide initiative to work with all international and local schools, integrating them into the Phuket United x Cruzeiro Academy network. The aim is simple: keep the island's best talent on the island and provide a higher level for everyone. When a child in Kathu wears the shirt because the striker once attended the same school, the loyalty becomes unbreakable.

While the club holds a long-term ambition to eventually field a team comprised exclusively of players with island

heritage, the current reality is one of transition. The squad is a living testament to this homegrown philosophy: 19 players are born-and-bred Phuketians. This includes the veteran leadership of 40-year-old goalkeeper Worawut Seetaput and 38-year-old centre-back Sophon "Tum" Patkor, alongside the raw potential of 16-year-old winger Kunanon "Kunkun" Sittikarn.

The remaining three players all herald from the surrounding Southern provinces, ensuring the team remains a regional fortress. Adding to this local surge, three of Cruzeiro's "BIP" (Brazilian Integration Program) kids, all under 17, are in the squad for the season.

While he inaugural season will be played at Surakul Stadium the long-term vision remains the development of the Cherng Talay Stadium – a venue inspired by the Tottenham Hotspur model, designed to host hospitality, retail, and co-working spaces every day of the year.

The mission begins at Surakul Stadium on Sunday (Apr 26) at 6pm, as Phuket United host SRU FC (Surat Thani Rajabhat University FC).

For more information about tickets and season tickets visit: <https://footballsiam.com/club/phuketunited/>.

Robot breaks half marathon record

MARATHON

A HUMANOID ROBOT competing against flesh-and-blood runners broke the world record at a Beijing half marathon last Sunday (Apr 19), showcasing the rapid technological advancement achieved by Chinese makers.

Spectators lined the roads in the capital's south to watch the machines and their human rivals race, each group in a separate lane to avoid accidents or collisions.

Some of the robots were highly agile, moving like famous runners such as Usain Bolt, while others had more basic capabilities.

The winning humanoid, equipped with an autonomous navigation system and running for Chinese smartphone maker Honor, completed the roughly 21-kilometre course in 50 minutes and 26 seconds, at an average speed of about 25 kilometres per hour.



The winning humanoid in action. Photo: AFP

That was far faster than the top human in the race, while also surpassing the current men's world record of 57:20 held by Ugandan runner Jacob Kiplimo.

The result represented spectacular progress from last year, when robot-runners fell repeatedly and the best took more than two hours and 40 minutes to finish.

The number of humanoid entries jumped from around 20 last year to more than 100, a sign of the sector's growing popularity.

The humanoid half marathon aims to encourage innovation and popularise the technologies used in creating and operating such machines, said organisers.

AFP

Phuket brokers make waves

SAILING

THERE WAS A STRONG AND highly visible contingent from Phuket's marine industry at this year's Malaysia Boat Show (MYBOS), held on Langkawi Island between Apr 2-6.

The second edition of MYBOS brought together yacht brands, brokers, marine businesses and industry professionals from across the region, with 25 vessels in the water and 12 exhibitors ashore.

Among the many exhibitors on display, it was the unmistakable presence of Phuket's leading yacht brokers that stood out on the water.

Lined neatly along the berths, the Phuket exhibitors arrived in force. Familiar names from Thailand's yachting scene – including Derani Yachts, Primus Marine, Boat Lagoon Yachting, and Simpson Marine Thailand – gave the show a distinctly regional flavour, reinforcing Phuket's growing reputation and support for Thailand and regional boat show.

The Phuket contingent's presence was more than symbolic. It reflected the increasing connection between Thailand and Malaysia within the wider ASEAN boating and yachting market. For visitors walking the docks, the line-up of yachts and brokerage brands sent a clear message: Phuket remains a



Photo: Supplied

major player in the regional industry, both as a cruising destination and as a centre for yacht sales, charter, and marine services.

While the yachts drew attention on the pontoons each afternoon, the mornings belonged to ideas, discussion and industry dialogue.

Running alongside the boat show was a Marine Conference, held in the grand surroundings of the St. Regis, a venue that added an unmistakable sense of occasion to the week's proceedings.

Beginning each day at 9am and continuing through to 5pm, the conference brought together speakers from across the marine and yachting sectors for a full programme of presentations, insight sessions and expert discussion across a range of industry topics.

As the conference sessions closed for the day, the energy

shifted back to the marina as visitors boarded yachts, met brokers, explored brands and took in the atmosphere of an event that is clearly finding its place on the regional calendar. The later opening hours gave the show a more relaxed, social rhythm, allowing business conversations to continue into the early evening against the backdrop of the waterfront.

For Phuket's exhibitors, MYBOS was more than just another show appearance. It was an opportunity to strengthen regional ties, meet prospective clients, and underline the island's importance within Asia's growing yachting landscape.

As the second edition of MYBOS came to a close, one thing was evident: Phuket did not just attend the show – it genuinely made its presence felt. Bob Mott

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Sport



Phuket's new football team debuts > p14



All the competing teams and officials gather at the ACG for a group photograph. Photo: Taran Persaud

CRICKET

Mark Burns

The 20th Phuket International Cricket Sixes concluded in spectacular fashion at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang recently, delivering a milestone edition of one of Asian cricket's most cherished cricket tournaments.

Fifteen teams from across the globe converged on the island from Apr 8-11 to contest four separate coveted trophies – the Cup, the Plate, the Bowl and the Shield – and producing some breathtaking action, fierce competition and memories of cricket inspired “fun in the sun” to last a lifetime at this ICC award winning tournament.

Organised by the Asian Cricket Sixes Tour (ACST) under the stewardship of its long-serving chairman Michael “Cat” Maher, the competing teams spanned five continents and

represented some of the most colourful club cricket communities anywhere on the planet.

The Debanggs of Singapore emerged as Shield champions after a hard-fought campaign, overcoming Chiang Mai's CBB SK in the semi-final before delivering a composed and determined performance against Kyalami Cavaliers from Perth, Australia in the final. Batting first, Debanggs put on a challenging 78/2, with Sambhav retiring on 32 not out. Kyalami fought hard in reply, with an impressive performance from Levi in particular, but the Perth outfit ended their run chase 8 short of their target, Sambhav also doing well with the ball going for a miserly 6 runs off his over.

In the Plate final the Montenegro Bokoneers stole the show. The Bokoneers, competing at the Phuket Sixes for the very first time, went all the way, defeating Dubai Wreckers in the final to claim silverware on their maiden

appearance. It was a deserved achievement as they defended their 56/2 score with good bowling and fielding against some aggressive Wreckers batting that included an amazing one handed catch on the boundary, to win the final by 4 runs.

In the Bowl final the Kolkata Knights triumphed over CBB SC of Australia by 3 wickets in an entertaining encounter. CBBs put on 57/1 in their innings but Kolkata chased it down on the last ball of the match to take the trophy. Kolkata had earlier defeated Blythswood in the semi-final, Blythswood notably having competed at the first Phuket Sixes way back in 2004.

The showpiece Cup Final featured some outstanding cricket skills, and saw Heritage Cricketers from Bangladesh topple defending champions and compatriots SixR. Heritage restricted the reigning champions to a modest 46/4 in their 5 overs before reaching their target one

wicket down in the 4th over to claim outright the Phuket Sixes Cup Champions title.

Earlier, an impressive Heritage side had also defeated former champions the Corner Tigers of Pakistan in the semi-final, with the latter making their much eagerly-awaited and welcome return to the tournament.

CAMARADERIE

Off the field, the Kyalami Cavaliers' Eddie Rimmington was honoured with the ‘Spirit of Cricket Award’, a richly deserved recognition of his sportsmanship, contribution, respect and camaraderie throughout the tournament.

At lunchtime on the final day of play all players and officials took time to honour and reflect on the life of CBB past president Ray “Lemon” Matti, who recently passed away, with a minute's silence held.

The Phuket International Cricket Sixes were first held in

2004, the brainchild of the ACST, an organisation that has been organising superb club cricket events at fantastic locations across Asia Pacific since it was founded in 2000.

What began as a modest gathering of teams seeking sun, sixes and camaraderie has grown into one of the most celebrated invitational cricket festivals in the Asian region – a tournament whose reputation stretches well beyond its tropical setting.

Reaching its 20th edition is a remarkable achievement and the Phuket International Cricket Sixes, played at a great venue on a wonderful tropical island in the Andaman sea, once again proved why it remains a highlight of the Asian social cricket calendar.

As trophies were raised and friendships celebrated, the message was clear: roll on the 21st edition of the Phuket International Cricket Sixes!

Phuket hosts youth rugby development courses

RUGBY

A NEW RUGBY INITIATIVE aimed at supporting the development of young players across Phuket launches tomorrow (Apr 25).

Phuket Rugby Pathways hosts its first junior rugby clinic at 10am tomorrow at Football Republic in Chalong, with a second clinic already scheduled for May 23 at the Alan Cooke Ground in Thalang.

The programme is designed for players between the ages of 14-18 and is open to all ability levels, including beginners looking to get involved in the sport.

Youth rugby in Phuket currently operates across a number of separate environments, with varying levels of progression for junior players. Phuket Rugby Pathways has been created to help strengthen development standards, encourage wider participation, and



provide a clearer pathway for young athletes to improve their skills and understanding of the game.

The coaching team of Nick, Cillian, Dan and Thomas is made up of

experienced, qualified Level 1 and Level 2 rugby union coaches who bring a strong mix of playing and coaching backgrounds.

Their combined experience spans rugby across the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Thailand, giving them a broad perspective on the game and its different styles.

“We want players to understand the game better, enjoy their rugby, and develop the necessary skills and confidence to take that

into senior rugby, wherever that may be,” said Nick of the course.

The clinics will focus on core rugby union skills, including catch and pass, breakdown work and game scenarios, including set-piece work, delivered in a structured but enjoyable setting. The format will consist of periodic sessions held at various locations across Phuket, with the aim of building consistency and long-term progression for players.

Phuket Rugby Pathways aims to support the wider growth of junior rugby on the island, and welcomes anyone interested in contributing to that development. Independent clubs, schools, and individuals looking to establish or grow junior rugby programmes are encouraged to reach out for support and collaboration.

For more details and to sign up visit the Phuket Rugby Pathways Facebook page. *The Phuket News*