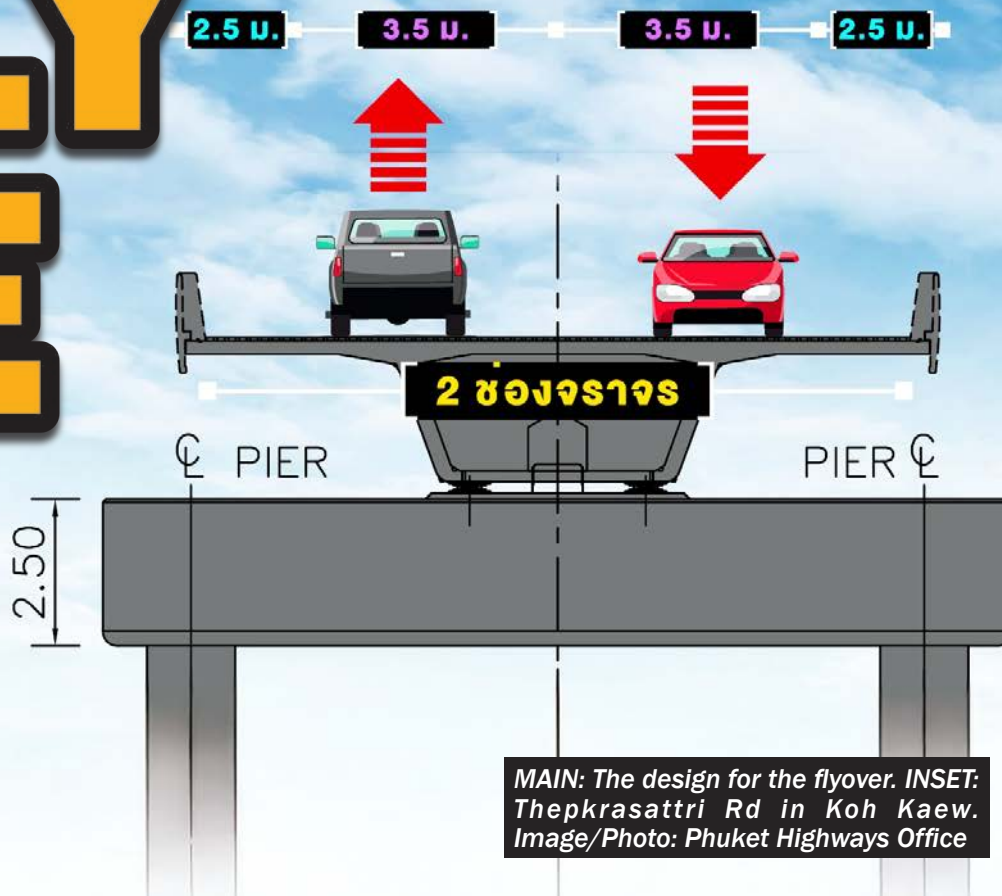
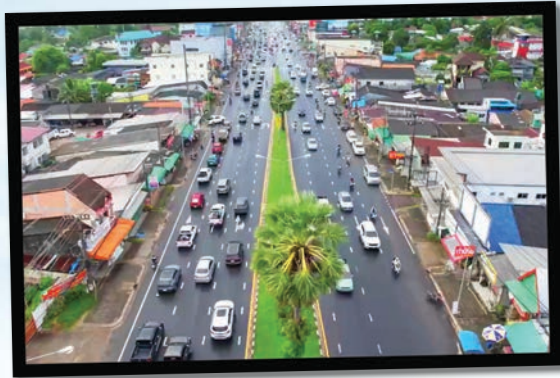


ALCOHOL BAN FOR ADVANCE VOTING, CANDIDATE BARRED > PAGE 3

ONLY ONE



MAIN: The design for the flyover. INSET: Thepkrasattri Rd in Koh Kaew. Image/Photo: Phuket Highways Office

KOH KAEW CONFIRMED TO HOST PHUKET'S ONLY FLYOVER

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun
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The Koh Kaew flyover will be the only flyover project to go ahead on the island, with no alternative flyover routes planned for any other traffic hotspots, Phuket Highways Chief Winai Kumuang has confirmed.

“There are no plans for flyovers in any other areas. The Koh Kaew-Pa Khlok flyover [sic] is the only feasible option,” Mr Winai told *The Phuket News*.

Mr Winai explained that the project is designed to divert through-traffic away from “some of Phuket’s most congested sections of Thepkrasattri Rd”, particularly around Tha Ruea, Koh Kaew and most importantly the Heroines Monument.

The project involves construction of a new two-lane road of approximately 10 kilometres linking Pa Khlok to Kathu. The total investment value is estimated at B5.5 billion, with about B4.5bn allocated for land expropriation

and B989 million for construction, Mr Winai explained.

The feasibility study has already been completed and the project has been listed under the 2026 Budget Act, with preparations under way to seek funding in the 2027 budget for detailed design work and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

However, as with previous years, Phuket’s first flyover might yet be put on the backburner, again, Mr Winai warned.

“Final approval will depend on

the policies of the next government following the general election, meaning construction is not expected to begin in the near term,” he noted.

The next government is hoped to be resolved by the Feb 8 general election. However, Thailand in recent years has experienced unusually rapid leadership changes, resulting in major government projects being repeatedly delayed and revised.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra served as prime minister for just one year,...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NEWS PAGE 3

Airport officials boost checks for Nipah virus



LIFE PAGE 8

The rewards of ignoring travel warnings



SPORT PAGE 16

Dojo Phuket start new year with intent



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News



Officials target out of province taxis > p5

Sole flyover to serve new route

Continued from page 1
...as did her predecessor Srettha Thavisin. Anutin Charnvirakul took up the post of PM on Sept 7 last year and as of Dec 12, when the Feb 8, 2026 general election was called, his administration had been unable to approve any major projects.

Of note, Anutin served as Deputy Prime Minister all the way from July 2019 through to June 2025, essentially since the Prayut Chan-o-cha administration, but still across all those years major Phuket infrastructure projects have yet to come to light, despite many repeated promises.

พื้นที่ศึกษาของโครงการ

ครอบคลุมพื้นที่
4 ตำบล ในอำเภอเมืองภูเก็ต อำเภอกะทู้ จังหวัดภูเก็ต

จังหวัด	อำเภอ	ตำบล
ภูเก็ต	กลาง	ป่าคลอก
	เมืองภูเก็ต	ศรีสุนทร
1 จังหวัด	3 อำเภอ	4 ตำบล

Photo: PR Phuket



route into Phuket Town, with Route 4027 intended only as an alternative, Mr Sorasak said.

However, both roads still converge at the Heroines Monument, which also links to Route 4025 (Srisoonthorn Rd, heading to Cherng Talay), creating major traffic bottlenecks as standard.

A key feature of the proposed Koh Kaew flyover is a two-lane elevated flyover, approximately 13 metres wide, crossing Thepkrasattri Rd near the Supalai Bella housing estate in Koh Kaew.

The proposed route begins near the PTT gas station on Route 4027 in Pa Khlok and joins Phra Phuket Kaew Rd in Kathu next to the Bangchak petrol station near Kathu Intersection. In total, the full route passes through Pa Khlok, Srisoonthorn and Kathu, as well as four subdistricts.

Mr Sorasak said he plainly understood the appeal of using flyovers. "By allowing through-traffic to bypass ground-level intersections and traffic signals, the Koh Kaew flyover is expected to reduce conflicts with local traffic, U-turns and access points, which are among the main causes of congestion during peak hours," he said.

However, he repeated, "But there will be only one. Building a flyover at any other location is just not feasible," he said.

NO PLANS

While many Phuket expats have repeatedly called for flyovers to alleviate traffic bottlenecks, Mr Winai was adamant no other flyover projects are even on the drawing board.

The Phuket News pressed whether flyovers were being considered to ease traffic tailbacks in areas such as at Chalong Circle, in Rawai, Kathu, Patong or any other areas, even on alternative routes suffering from heavy congestion.

To that, Sorasak Thasakan, Head of Civil Engineering Planning and Operations, speaking on behalf of the Phuket Highways chief, said physical and safety constraints made flyover

construction impractical in most other locations.

"In Chalong, the roads are too narrow and have limited lanes, while Rawai faces similar constraints due to dense residential development," Mr Sorasak said.

"As for Kathu and Patong, the Expressway Authority of Thailand [EXAT] is already planning a tunnel project, which the Highways Department cannot replace or interfere with," he added.

Mr Sorasak said high population density in these areas would also result in costly land expropriation. "As a result, the Koh Kaew-Pa Khlok route remains the only viable option at this time," he said.

OUT OF BOUNDS

As for the Heroines Monument, easily the busiest intersection on the island, Mr Sorasak said construction of a flyover directly over the Heroines Monument is not permitted, citing strong opposition from Srisoonthorn Municipality and local residents.

Srisoonthorn Mayor Chalernpol Kerdsup said cultural and community concerns led authorities to favour an underground tunnel rather than an overpass at the monument, noting the site's historical and symbolic importance.

However, the Department of Highways cancelled the 'Heroines Underpass' project last year, leaving the Koh

Kaew flyover as the only major traffic relief project currently moving forward.

ONLY ONE

Mr Sorasak said the chosen design for the Koh Kaew flyover was identified as the most suitable – among three options considered – because it maximises the use of land beneath high-voltage transmission lines, minimises impacts on communities, and reduces land acquisition.

The design includes a flyover over Thepkrasattri Rd, at-grade junctions and roundabouts, and direct connections to Rural Road Route 3030 (the inland road joining Koh Kaew to Kathu) and the planned

Muang Mai-Koh Kaew-Kathu Expressway.

Mr Sorasak said the project's original objective, outlined by former Phuket Highway chief Somkit Kittisopit, was based on the assessment that traffic congestion at the Heroines Monument would remain despite upgrades to Route 4027, as Phuket's road capacity has been overtaken by growth in tourism and investment.

Route 4027 is the 'ring road' which joins the Heroines Monument, travels through the eastern edge of Pa Khlok and rejoins Thepkrasattri Rd further north at Muang Mai.

Thepkrasattri Rd continues to serve as the main

Tour boat puts safety first, aids rival at sea

A TOUR BOAT OPERated by 5 Star Marine diverted its journey to the Phi Phi Islands on Jan 22 to assist another vessel from a different operator that encountered difficulties at sea.

The incident occurred while the 5 Star Marine vessel was en route with guests when its guide, identified as Yaya, and her crew spotted the distressed boat and stopped to provide assistance.

The company said the decision was made immediately and was in

line with its internal safety policy requiring crews to assist any vessel in distress when it is safe to do so, regardless of commercial considerations.

"Our priority is, and always will be, human life," said Shaun Stenning, Managing Director of 5 Star Marine. "On land we may compete, but at sea we cooperate. No boat is our competitor when safety is involved."

The company noted that assisting vessels in distress is a long-established maritime obligation recognised

internationally, including under the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Mr Stenning, who is also Owner and CEO of the company, said the principle is fundamental to professional maritime operations.

"If another vessel is in trouble and you are in a position to help safely, then you help," he said. "It doesn't matter who they are or what company they work for. At sea, those labels simply don't exist."

He added that failure to assist a vessel in distress, when it can be done safely, is widely regarded within the maritime industry as unethical and, in some jurisdictions, legally negligent.

"At sea there are no brands and no competitors," Shaun said. "There are only people, boats and lives."

5 Star Marine said the actions of Guide Yaya and her crew reflected training and expectations applied across the company, describing assistance to vessels in distress as a profes-



Photo: 5 Star Marine

sional responsibility rather than a marketing exercise.

No injuries were reported in the incident, and

no further details were released regarding the condition of the assisted vessel. The Phuket News

Airport steps up Nipah screening

The Phuket News
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Phuket International Airport has intensified health screening and disease-control measures for passengers arriving from high-risk areas amid concerns over the Nipah virus, as authorities stress that Thailand has recorded no confirmed cases but remains on heightened alert.

Phuket Airport General Manager Monchai Tanode chaired a working group meeting on Monday (Jan 26) to finalise upgraded screening guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of Nipah virus and maintaining public health confidence among travellers, airport users and tourism operators.

The measures follow guidelines issued by the Ministry of Public Health and mirror protocols previously implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Phuket Airport working in close coordination with the International Infectious Disease Control checkpoint.

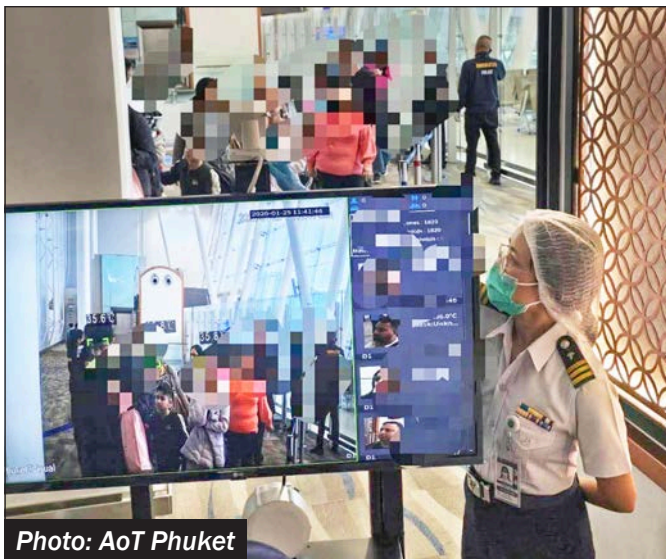
Under the new rules, airlines operating flights from areas affected by

Nipah virus infections are required to brief flight crews and ground staff to wear personal protective equipment during check-in and boarding, as recommended by the Department of Disease Control (DDC).

Passengers arriving from affected areas who present with high fever or respiratory symptoms will be required to show a Fit to Fly medical certificate. If a passenger becomes ill during a flight, they must remain seated, and the airline must immediately notify air traffic control to coordinate with the International Infectious Disease Control checkpoint for screening and case management on arrival.

All airlines flying from high-risk areas must also distribute Form T.8 (Health Declaration) to passengers prior to landing in Thailand, in accordance with Section 39 of the Communicable Diseases Act B.E. 2558 (2015). Completed forms must be presented to communicable disease control officers before passengers proceed through immigration.

Aircraft arriving from



affected areas will undergo sanitary inspections, and in the event of a suspected case on board, airlines will be required to disinfect the aircraft before its next departure under the supervision of international disease control officers.

Phuket Airport on Monday prepared designated parking bays for aircraft arriving from high-risk locations, along with isolation rooms, patient transfer routes and specific baggage-handling procedures in the event a sick passenger is identified. Designated screening at Gate 15 was to begin on

Wednesday (Jan 28).

The upgraded measures came into effect at 12:01am on Monday. Phuket Airport currently receives direct flights from Kolkata, India, with one airline operating five flights per week. Authorities said screening efforts are focused particularly on passengers arriving from West Bengal, which remains under close international surveillance.

In addition to passenger screening, airport officials confirmed that cleaning within terminal buildings has been intensified, with increased attention paid to high-contact surfaces and

common areas. The airport is maintaining close coordination with disease control officers stationed on site to ensure a rapid response if screening protocols are escalated.

For patients travelling from India and Bangladesh for medical treatment in Thailand, the originating hospital must conduct a Nipah virus PCR test prior to departure. Officials warned that failure to comply with disease control orders is punishable by a fine of up to B20,000 under the Communicable Diseases Act.

Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn confirmed that the province is closely monitoring the situation in cooperation with the International Infectious Disease Control checkpoint and national health agencies. Risk assessments are ongoing, and screening measures may be adjusted in line with announcements from the Ministry of Public Health.

The move follows confirmation from the DDC that Thailand has not recorded any cases of Nipah virus infection. Government

spokesman Airin Phanrit said authorities nationwide have been instructed to strengthen screening at international disease control checkpoints and closely monitor developments in affected countries.

Dr Montien Kanasawasdi, Director-General of the DDC, said the Nipah virus is classified as a dangerous communicable disease and can cause severe neurological and respiratory symptoms, but is significantly more difficult to transmit than COVID-19, as infection generally requires close contact with bodily fluids.

Health officials said fruit bats are the natural reservoir of the virus, with transmission to humans occurring through infected animals or, in limited cases, person-to-person contact.

Travellers returning from affected areas are advised to monitor their health for 21 days and seek medical attention immediately if they develop symptoms such as fever, cough, fatigue or neurological abnormalities, while informing doctors of their recent travel history.

Phuket candidate disqualified

THE SUPREME COURT HAS ordered the removal of Kla Tham Party candidate Cholsit Kaewyarat from contesting Phuket Constituency 2 in the Feb 8 national election, ruling that he is disqualified for holding shares in a media organisation.

The ruling, issued on Jan 21, found that Mr Cholsit possessed prohibited characteristics under the Constitution, which bars individuals who hold shares in media companies from standing for election as constituency Members of Parliament. Mr Cholsit had been registered as candidate number 1 on the ballot for Phuket Constituency 2.

In a Facebook post following the decision, Mr Cholsit said he respected the court's ruling and apologised to Phuket voters for his disqualification. He said the issue stemmed from his failure to divest a single share in a radio media company dating back to 2012, which he described as unintentional.

"Even though I cannot continue in the election, I remain committed to working for Phuket society and standing alongside the people," he wrote, thanking supporters for their encouragement.

Phuket Election Commission (ECT Phuket) Chief Orapin Achivasuk confirmed that Mr Cholsit was officially removed from the constituency candidate list on Jan 22 following the Supreme Court decision.

Mr Cholsit is the second Phuket candidate to be disqualified from the



Photo: Cholsit Kaewyarat / Facebook

election, after the Ruam Thai Sang Chart Party confirmed the expulsion of lawyer Anandrak Petchhin from party membership, rendering his candidacy invalid.

Meanwhile, election officials have confirmed that nationwide alcohol bans will be enforced for both advance voting and election day. Ms Orapin said alcohol sales and distribution will be prohibited from 6pm on Jan 31 until 6pm on Feb 1 for advance voting, and again from 6pm on Feb 7 until 6pm on Feb 8 for the general election.

The bans apply nationwide and cover all shops, bars and entertainment venues, including nightlife areas such as Patong and Bangla Rd. Violators face up to one month in prison, a fine of up to B10,000, or both.

The general election will be held on Sunday, Feb 8, with advance voting scheduled for Sunday, Feb 1.

The Phuket News

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Low: +29°

Wind 11 m/s

SAT JANUARY 31

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Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

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High: +35°
Low: +28°

Wind 11 m/s

MON FEBRUARY 2

High: +35°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE FEBRUARY 3

High: +35°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

WED FEBRUARY 4

High: +37°
Low: +28°

Wind 4 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 5

High: +36°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

Swedish tourist killed while crossing road

A 67-YEAR-OLD SWEDISH tourist died after being struck by a car while crossing a road near Phuket International Airport on Jan 22, police have confirmed.

Thalang Police identified the victim as Kurt Benny Rosborg, who was pronounced dead at Thalang Hospital at 6:51pm.

According to police, Mr Rosborg had been travelling from Krabi Province with his wife, Eva Susanne Eiinor Rosborg, 65. The couple were scheduled to return to Sweden on Jan 23.

Mr Rosborg was struck at about 5:47pm as the couple were crossing the road in front of a PTT petrol station near the main intersection with Route 4026, south of the airport. Rescue workers rushed Mr Rosborg to Thalang Hospital, where attempted resuscitation was unsuccessful.

Police said Mr Rosborg had no pulse during transport and required defibrillation. He arrived at the hospital at 6:19pm,



Thalang Hospital. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

and the preliminary cause of death was determined to be severe injuries resulting from a road traffic accident.

Sakhu Police Chief Pol Col Salan Santisasanakul told *The Phuket News* that the vehicle involved was a private car driven by a 34-year-old Thai man. He confirmed that the driver was not operating a taxi or ride-hailing service and has been charged with negligence causing death.

Pol Col Salan said the driver stopped immediately after the collision and attempted to assist the victim, including providing CPR until emergency responders arrived.

Police said investigations into the circumstances of the collision were ongoing.

Eakkapop Thongtub

German man nabbed for cash theft at spa

Eakkapop Thongtub
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Phuket City Police have arrested a 24-year-old German national after CCTV footage showing the theft of cash from a spa in Phuket Town was widely shared on social media.

The incident occurred on Jan 20, at a spa on Ranong Rd, where staff later discovered B2,000 missing from the cash register during an end-of-day revenue check. After reviewing CCTV footage, staff found a foreign man taking cash from the drawer while the cashier was briefly away assisting other customers. A police report was subsequently filed.

On Jan 21, officers from Phuket City Police Station arrested Laszlo Ruben Eschenlohr, 24, a German national, at Thanya Spa & Massage on Ranong Rd. He was charged with theft and taken into custody for legal proceedings.

The arrest was carried out under the direction of Phuket City Police Superintendent Pol Col Chatree Chukaew and



CCTV image: via Phuket City Police

Deputy Superintendent of Investigation Pol Lt Col Korapol Liengboonjinda, with the investigation led by Pol Maj Kant Aksornthong. Officers from Phuket Tourist Police and Phuket Immigration assisted in the operation.

Police said the suspect had previously visited the spa and stolen cash from the cashier's drawer. He later returned to the shop in an apparent attempt to apologise and return the money, but staff declined as a formal complaint had already been lodged.

During questioning, Mr Eschenlohr reportedly broke down in tears and expressed remorse for his actions.

Phuket City Police later confirmed that two companions who had accompanied the suspect – identified only

as a German woman and an Austrian man – were also arrested on Jan 22. Both were charged with jointly committing theft.

A cashier at the spa told police that the suspect entered the shop with two companions and remained near the counter while she briefly assisted other customers. After the group left, staff conducted a full reconciliation of cash and electronic payments, confirming that only cash was missing.

CCTV footage later confirmed the theft and showed the group behaving suspiciously before leaving the premises.

Phuket City Police said the investigation has concluded, with all suspects now in custody and legal proceedings underway.

Russian Interpol fugitive arrested

A RUSSIAN MAN WANTED by Interpol for alleged large-scale construction fraud involving losses of more than B100 million was arrested in Phuket on Jan 20, Immigration Police have confirmed.

Phuket Immigration announced the arrest following intelligence received from the Immigration Bureau's Foreign Affairs Division, which led officers to locate the suspect at a residence in Phuket Town.

The arrest took place at about 3:30pm under the direction of Phuket Immigration Police Chief Pol Col Khemachat Wattananapakasem, with the operation led by Deputy Superintendent Pol Lt Col Wisarut La-iad-ong and Immigration Police Inspector Pol Maj Adisorn Boonchum.

Police said the suspect was subject to an active Interpol arrest warrant and was wanted



Photo: Phuket Immigration

for allegedly operating a construction company involved in collusive bidding practices that caused financial damage exceeding B100 million.

Following surveillance, officers confirmed the suspect's identity and moved in to make the arrest, presenting the Interpol warrant before taking him into custody. The location of the arrest and the suspect's name were not disclosed.

Immigration officials confirmed the man's visa was revoked immediately and deportation procedures were initiated to return him to face legal proceedings in the requesting jurisdiction.

The Phuket News

Man opens fire over motorbike revving

TWO MEN WERE INJURED after a gunman opened fire following an argument over loud motorcycle revving in Cherng Talay last Saturday (Jan 24), with police later arresting a 24-year-old suspect and seizing a firearm.

Cherng Talay Police reported receiving notification of the shooting at about 2:40pm at a house on Layan Soi 7, in Moo 6, Cherng Talay.

Police said the victims, identified as Phanupong 'Sak' Madsit, 36, and Ekkarat 'Maan' Jaeyong, 36, were walking in front of their house when they heard three gunshots. Mr Phanupong was struck in the calf, while Mr Ekkarat was grazed by a bullet.

Investigators determined that the shooting followed a heated argument the previous night between the victims' group and another group over loud engine revving from a motorcycle. The dispute reportedly escalated into a physical altercation.



Photo: Cherng Talay Police

Cherng Talay Police identified the alleged shooter as Dulyawit Makkhunnthod, 24, a resident of Thepkrasattri.

Police said officers gathered evidence and obtained an arrest warrant from the Phuket Provincial Court (Warrant No. 89/2569). The suspect was later apprehended, and a firearm believed to have been used in the attack was seized.

Mr Dulyawit was handed over to investigating officers for legal proceedings, Cherng Talay Police confirmed. Eakkapop Thongtub

DLT bans 'out-of-province' taxis

The Phuket News
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The Department of Land Transport (DLT) has moved to prohibit taxis and ride-hailing vehicles registered outside Phuket from operating in the province, as authorities intensify enforcement efforts following the arrest of 162 illegal taxi drivers in an island-wide crackdown.

Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn confirmed that the arrests were made during a four-day enforcement operation carried out between Jan 13-16, as officials stepped up action against unlicensed and illegally operating transport services.

The crackdown saw police, transport and local administration officials establish 11 checkpoints at key locations across the province to inspect vehicles suspected of operating without proper licences.

Checkpoints were set up in Phuket Old Town, Patong, Kathu, Chalong, Wichit, Kamala, Tha Chatchai, Karon, Sakhu, Thalung and Choeng Thale,



Photo: PLTO

including a major checkpoint at the entrance and exit of Phuket International Airport under the responsibility of Sakhu Police.

Governor Nirat said the operation was jointly conducted by Phuket Police, the Phuket Provincial Transport Office and local administrative officials as part of ongoing efforts to suppress illegal taxi services, restore order to the transport sector and protect lawful operators.

Separately, Thalung District Chief Siwat Rawangkul confirmed that district officials, working with the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), Phuket Provincial Office,

Sakhu Police and Phuket International Airport authorities, carried out continuous inspections in the airport area between Jan 13-17.

During those inspections, approximately 500 vehicles were checked – averaging around 100 vehicles per day – to ensure compliance with transport regulations. Mr Siwat said drivers and operators were warned to strictly comply with laws governing taxi and hired vehicle services, adding that inspections will continue.

E-BAN

Following the on-street arrests, the Phuket Provincial Office confirmed it had formally forwarded com-

plaints from the Provincial Electronic Taxi Association to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, following ongoing disputes between local taxi drivers and ride-hailing vehicles operating illegally in the province.

In response, the ministry's Permanent Secretary instructed the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) to review the matter within its legal authority and report back with regulatory recommendations.

Following its review, ETDA formally requested support from the Department of Land Transport to ensure strict enforcement of transport regulations and

appropriate legal action against offending drivers.

To address the issue, ETDA convened a joint meeting last week with the DLT and representatives of digital ride-hailing platform operators. During the meeting, the DLT instructed platform operators to prohibit unregistered vehicles – including private cars and motorcycles not registered for public transport use – from accepting transport jobs in Phuket.

The DLT also ordered ride-hailing platforms to block vehicles registered outside Phuket from accepting platform-based transport jobs within the province, effectively banning 'out-of-province' taxis from operating via digital platforms on the island.

Phuket authorities reported that illegally registered vehicles using ride-hailing applications had fuelled repeated disputes with local taxi drivers and raised concerns over Phuket's image as a regulated and safe tourist destination.

Following those reports, ETDA issued urgent

instructions to digital platform companies to strictly comply with DLT measures.

The directives require platforms to refrain from allocating jobs to incorrectly registered vehicles, limit job allocation to legally registered public transport vehicles registered in Phuket, and prevent vehicles registered in other provinces from operating through applications in the area.

ETDA has also requested that ride-hailing platform operators submit monthly reports on job allocation and service usage in Phuket, starting from January 2026. The data must be submitted within five working days after the end of each month and will be used for monitoring, evaluation and ongoing regulatory planning.

Provincial officials said the combined enforcement and regulatory measures are aimed at restoring fair competition, reducing conflict between operators and protecting Phuket's image as a well-regulated and tourist-friendly destination.

Sea turtle lays nest on Karon Beach

A GREEN SEA TURTLE CAME ashore on Karon Beach to lay a nest containing 125 eggs on Jan 22, marking the third confirmed sea turtle nesting site in Phuket so far this year, marine officials have confirmed.

The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) said officers inspected the site at about 8am after receiving reports from tourists and staff at the Karon Municipality Tourist Assistance Centre.

Officials from the Upper Andaman Sea Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center and the Marine and Coastal Resources Office Region 10 confirmed a single nest containing 125 eggs, each measuring about four centimetres in diameter. The turtle was identified as a green sea turtle, a protected species under Thai law.

Authorities said several tourists were present on the beach at the time, with many witnessing a sea turtle nesting in the wild for the first time. Staff from Karon Municipality and local beach operators helped secure the area to prevent disturbance.

The turtle spent about 45 minutes laying eggs before covering the nest with sand and returning to the sea, officials said.

Because Karon Beach is a busy tourist area and the nesting site was considered vulnerable to human disturbance, predators and possible flooding, officials decided to relocate



Photo: DMCR

the eggs to improve the chances of successful hatching.


The eggs were transferred to the Upper Andaman Sea Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center, where they will be incubated and monitored by marine specialists. Samples were also collected to assess egg health and support conservation research.

DMCR officials said the nesting is a positive sign for Phuket's coastal ecosystem, noting that sea turtles typically return only to beaches they consider suitable for reproduction.

The Karon Beach nest is the third confirmed sea turtle nest in Phuket this year, all in the Karon area. Earlier nests were found on Jan 3, with 124 eggs, and on Jan 10 near Le Méridien Phuket Beach Resort, containing 84 eggs.

Marine authorities urged the public to report sightings of nesting turtles or tracks and to avoid lights, touching nests or approaching turtles, as disturbance may cause turtles to abandon their eggs.

Eakkapop Thongtub



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Nominee Arrangements and CRS

Thailand's New Data-Driven Compliance Landscape

ADVERTORIAL

What was once considered a grey-area structuring solution has rapidly become a high-risk compliance exposure. In recent months, nominee arrangements have moved back into the spotlight as Thai authorities intensify enforcement efforts — this time powered not just by domestic law, but by global data and tax transparency standards.

A classic nominee arrangement involves a Thai national holding shares on behalf of foreign investors to bypass restrictions under Thailand's Foreign Business Act B.E. 2542 (1999). Such arrangements have long been illegal, but enforcement was historically driven by complaints, inspections or isolated investigations. That has now changed.

Since 2024, scrutiny has escalated significantly, driven by Thailand's full operational maturity under the OECD's Common Reporting Standard (CRS) and



increased pressure from international peer reviews. The result is a shift from reactive enforcement to systematic, data-driven detection.

WHAT IS CRS?

Developed by the OECD, the Common Reporting Standard is a global framework for the automatic exchange of financial account information between tax authorities. Financial institutions must identify account holders,

determine tax residency and report financial data — including balances, dividends and proceeds — to local authorities. This information is then exchanged with over 100 participating jurisdictions worldwide.

CRS as an Enforcement Multiplier: CRS is no longer a passive reporting exercise. In Thailand, it has become a powerful enforcement tool. Banks now report financial information of foreign tax residents to the Thai Revenue Department,

enabling authorities to identify dividend flows, capital movements and remittances that are inconsistent with declared Thai ownership.

These inconsistencies often trigger broader investigations linking CRS data with beneficial ownership filings, corporate records and anti-money laundering checks. Even structures that appear compliant from a corporate law perspective may raise red flags when financial

flows reveal a different economic reality. In some cases, this has resulted in account freezes, transaction delays and heightened audits across multiple agencies.

A System-Wide Burden: The crackdown extends beyond business. Banks are under increasing pressure to comply with overlapping obligations under CRS, Anti-Money Laundering, Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) and beneficial ownership regulations — while also responding to requests from foreign tax authorities and correspondent banks. Compliance teams are expected not only to collect documents, but to challenge ownership explanations and assess substance, leading to longer onboarding times and growing de-risking measures.

Why This Matters: This is no longer just about deliberate non-compliance. Well-intentioned businesses may face scrutiny if their structures lack clarity or fail to reflect actual control and

benefit. Nominee issues now sit at the intersection of the Department of Business Development, Revenue Department, Anti-Money Laundering Office, Bank of Thailand and international authorities.

What Businesses Should Do: Businesses should proactively prepare by declaring true controllers, aligning banking, tax and corporate records, and ensuring tax residency is properly supported with valid certificates. Legal alternatives — such as BOI promotions or appropriate licenses — should be explored. With more than 46,000 entities reportedly under review, reactive compliance is no longer sufficient.

In an era of automatic information exchange, transparency is not optional. Structures that rely on opacity are increasingly exposed—often not through inspections, but through data.

For more information, contact: infophuket@bdo.th

Job Fair deemed 'success' despite meagre turnout

DESPITE ATTRACTING just over 100 job seekers, the Phuket Job Fair 2026 recorded an on-the-spot hiring rate of nearly 74%, prompting officials to defend the event as a success despite its lowest turnout in years.

Only 103 people registered for the job fair, held at Phuket Grocery's Thalang branch on Jan 16, with 76 securing jobs immediately, the Phuket Provincial Employment Office confirmed.

The fair offered more than 1,500 vacancies from 24 employers across 58 job categories, meaning just 6.6% of available positions were filled on the day. Attendance was sharply down from last year's event at Robinson Chalong, which drew an estimated 600 to 700 participants.

Somchok Sri-ngernthom, head of the Labour Specialist Division at the Phuket Provincial Employment Office, said the



Photo: PR Phuket

turnout still met the agency's target of 100 job seekers and attributed the lower numbers largely to venue location and transport access.

"When events are held in city areas with convenient transport, participation is much higher," Mr Somchok said, noting that last year's job fair in Chalong nearly exceeded the venue's capacity.

He added that around 270 people visited the Thalang event throughout the day, although fewer than half formally registered for jobs.

Despite the reduced turnout, Mr Somchok said the high placement rate demonstrated the fair's effectiveness.

"Those who attended were serious job seekers

and were able to match directly with employers," he said, adding that job fairs are rotated across different areas of Phuket to support local businesses.

The strongest demand at the fair was for shop staff, administrative roles, food and beverage service workers and general management positions.

Mr Somchok said the employment office continues to prioritise job placement for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and ex-convicts, with some cases monitored after hiring to ensure long-term stability.

Vice Governor Teeraphong Chuaychoo, who attended the event, said Phuket's tourism-driven economy continues to generate strong demand for workers, particularly in hospitality and service sectors.

Natnaree Likidwatanasakun

'Phuket lobster' granted GI status

THE PHUKET SEVEN-COLOURED lobster has officially been registered as a Geographical Indication (GI) product, marking a major milestone for local fishermen and reinforcing the island's use of "soft power" to support its grassroots economy and tourism sector.

The registration was announced on Jan 22 by Oramon Saphaveetham, Director-General of the Department of Intellectual Property (DIP), confirming that the lobster has unique characteristics of origin, quality and reputation that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

GI certification guarantees that only lobsters raised in Phuket under approved standards can be marketed under the name, strengthening consumer confidence and increasing value for local producers.

Phuket Governor Nirat Pongsitthaworn welcomed the announcement, describing the designation as both a source of pride and a tangible economic benefit. He said the GI status would help increase income for fishermen and aquaculture operators while supporting premium seafood offerings across restaurants, hotels and tourist venues.

Often referred to internationally as "Phuket Lobster", the seven-coloured lobster is known for its large size, colourful shell patterns, clawless form and firm, flavourful flesh. It is commonly served cooked or as sashimi and has long been regarded as a signature local delicacy.

Provincial officials said the lobster has been farmed in Phuket for nearly 50 years, gaining prominence as the island developed into a major tourism destination. Its rising



Photo: NBT Phuket

popularity and premium price — frequently exceeding B1,800 per kilogramme — drove efforts to secure GI protection to safeguard its identity and reputation.

Beyond economic value, officials said the registration reflects a broader strategy to promote Phuket's local products as soft power through gastronomy tourism, coastal community lifestyles, local aquaculture knowledge and sustainable resource management.

The GI application process has been underway for several years. In November 2023, officials released 700,000 lobster larvae off Koh Thanan under the "Phuket Seven-Coloured Lobster Bank" project to replenish stocks and support sustainable farming. Inspections of lobster farms in Mai Khao and other areas followed as part of the certification process.

The seven-coloured lobster becomes the second aquatic product from Phuket to receive GI status, following the Phuket pearl. *The Phuket News*

Anutin says unfazed by Pita

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul says he is unfazed by talk that the People's Party (PP) could overtake rivals in the final stretch of the election campaign following the return of Pita Limjaroenrat to the campaign trail.

Anutin, also leader of the ruling Bhumjaithai Party (BJT), said it is normal for every party to be confident about leading the next government, stressing that BJT continues to receive strong nationwide support.

He cited recent campaign rallies, including one in Nong Khai, as evidence of a positive public response. He also pushed back against criticism of the party's policy platform, insisting that BJT prioritises policies that are realistic, responsible and deliver tangible benefits without risking economic damage.

On questions about whether BJT would roll out eye-catching cash handout pledges similar to those proposed by Pheu Thai (PT), Anutin said the party's policies are already well-calibrated, achievable and credible and do not rely on "attention-grabbing" promises that could cost the country in the long run.

PT prime ministerial candidate Yodchanan Wongsawat said last Saturday (Jan 24) the party intends to create tens of thousands of new



Anutin campaigning in Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat) last week. Photo: Bangkok Post

millionaires if it forms a government after the Feb 8 election via its "Nine New Millionaires a Day" policy, describing it as part of a large-scale economic data initiative aimed at bringing Thailand's vast informal economy into the tax system

Mr Yodchanan said the "big picture" digital governance policy would consolidate transaction data to improve price monitoring and targeting of assistance for farmers, the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

MOMENTUM

Meanwhile, the PP staged a high-profile campaign march and rally in Bangkok last Sunday under the theme "Trust the People", led by party leader and prime ministerial candidate Natthaphong Ruangpanyawut. Supporters lined the route from Siam Square One to Samyan Mitrtown,

chanting slogans and waving signs calling for Mr Natthaphong to become prime minister.

Mr Natthaphong said the enthusiastic turnout reflected growing momentum, framing the election as a choice between "politics of the past" and a future-oriented alternative. He called on voters to cast both ballots for the PP to secure a "people's government", arguing that the absence of Senate votes in selecting the prime minister after the Feb 8 election makes public consensus more decisive than ever.

Mr Pita, former leader of the now-defunct Move Forward Party and predecessor of the PP, appeared as a campaign aide on Sunday, urging undecided and habitual non-voters to turn out as the PP seeks to mobilise millions of previously disengaged voters in what he called a rare chance to reshape Thailand's political future.

New standard for sugar in drinks

BANGKOK



Photo: Bangkok Post

THE DEPARTMENT OF Health (DoH) is set to introduce a new national standard for made-to-order drinks, as part of a broader effort to curb the nation's sugar intake and reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Dubbed "Normal Sweetness = 50% Sweetness", the guideline seeks to cut the amount of sugar in a "normal" drink order to about 50% of the current standard, according to DoH director-general Amporn Benjapolpitak.

Dr Amporn said the department aiming to officially launch the initiative on Feb 11.

The decision followed a Jan 15 meeting that was held to finalise the implementation mechanisms to ensure the new standard is consistently adopted across the country.

The meeting involved representatives from the DoH, led by Nutrition Division Director Saipin Chotivichien, as well as

private-sector partners that have committed to supporting the initiative, including Bangchak Retail Co (Inthanin coffee shop), PTT Oil and Retail Business Public (Café Amazon), CP All Public Co (All Café, Kadsuan, Bellinee's) and Black Canyon (Thailand) Co.

Health officials emphasised that the policy won't force outlets to alter their beverage recipes, but changes the default sweetness level to 50% – already a standard option at many outlets – to gradually shift consumer preferences toward healthier levels of sugar.

Dr Saipin urged consumers to keep an open mind and try less sweet beverages, while calling on businesses nationwide to adopt the new standard.

Bangkok Post

Same-sex marriages reach 26,000 mark

BANGKOK

MORE THAN A YEAR AFTER Thailand's Marriage Equality Bill came into force, over 26,000 same-sex couples have legally registered their marriages nationwide, accounting for roughly 10% of all marriage registrations and marking a significant milestone in the country's push for legal equality.

Bangkok Pride, organiser of the capital's annual LGBTQ+ parade and festival platform, shared the update on Jan 23, citing official figures on marriage registrations since the law took effect.

The Marriage Equality Bill was enacted on Jan 23 last year, representing a historic breakthrough for LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand, allowing same-sex couples to legally register their marriages and granting them the same legal rights, protections and benefits as opposite-sex couples.

Data from the Ministry of Interior show that between Jan 23, 2025, and Jan 12 this year, a total of 265,816 couples registered their marriages across the country. Of these, 20,083 were female-female couples, 6,204 were male-male couples and 239,530 were opposite-sex couples.

While welcoming the progress, Bangkok Pride cautioned that the official figures may not fully capture the lived realities of LGBTQ+ communities. The current marriage registration system



Photo: Bangkok Post

continues to classify couples based on sex assigned at birth rather than gender identity.

As a result, many LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly transgender people whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth, may not be accurately reflected in government data.

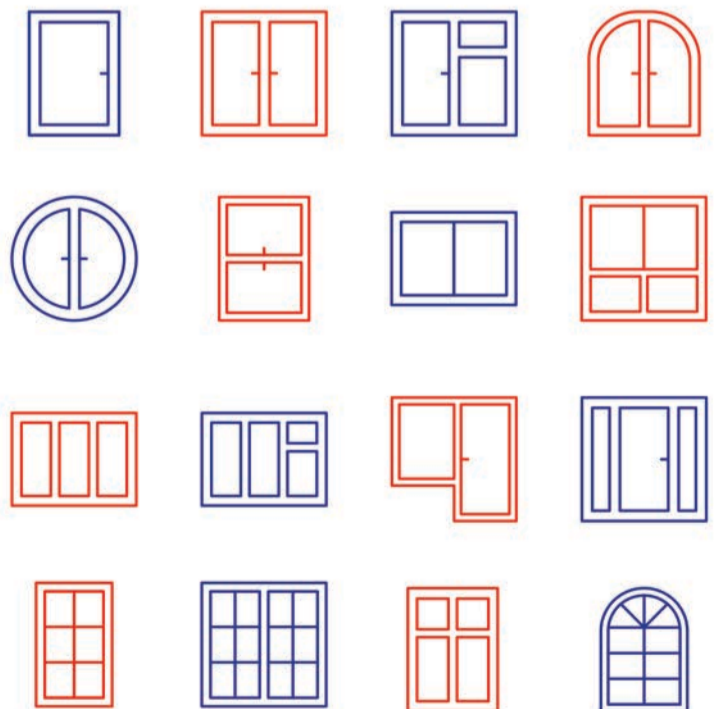
Bangkok Pride noted that this limitation could mean the diversity of married couples and the actual number of LGBTQ+ marriages may be higher than official statistics suggest.

It also stressed that legal equality remains incomplete, noting that approximately 50 related laws still require amendment. Delays in revising these laws continue to create practical barriers for LGBTQ+ couples seeking full and equal access to their rights.

"The enactment of the Marriage Equality Bill is only the first step toward equality," the organisation said. "Further legal reforms are needed." Bangkok Post



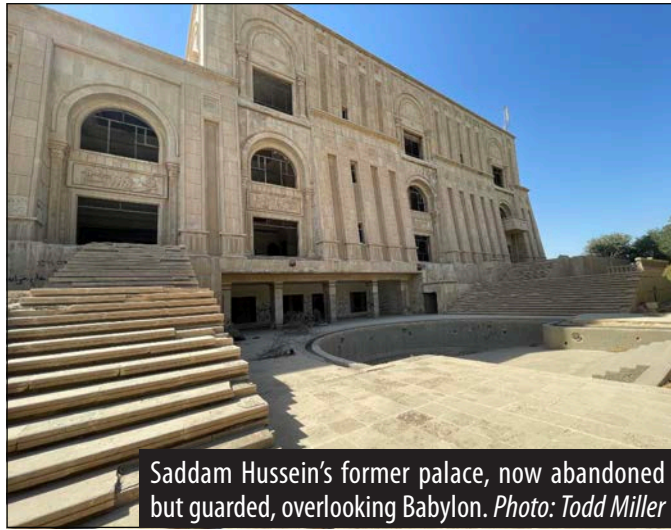
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The Al Kazimayn Shrine near Baghdad is a major pilgrimage site in Shia Islam. Photo: Todd Miller



Saddam Hussein's former palace, now abandoned but guarded, overlooking Babylon. Photo: Todd Miller



The monumental Roman ruins at Baalbek, dedicated to Jupiter, Bacchus and Venus, is a UNESCO world heritage site. Photo: Todd Miller

Rewards of ignoring travel warnings



GLOBETROTTER

Todd Miller

There's a certain anxiety in booking a ticket to a destination that your government insists you absolutely should not visit. For some people, that red-letter advisory triggers alarm bells. For me, it's more of a polite suggestion – like “limit yourself to one dessert.” A challenge, really.

According to the official travel advisories, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria are a cocktail of instability, militia checkpoints, and “unpredictable security situations.” What I found were three countries full of warmth, history, heart-break and perseverance – places where

life carries on with remarkable force and where the reality on the ground is far more nuanced than any travel advisory.

Iraq: From Basra to Babylon

My Iraqi adventure began with a ground border crossing from Kuwait. The drive north was startlingly uneventful – flat desert, the occasional camel, and then, quite suddenly, a series of checkpoints and an expansive no-man's land.

My introduction to Iraq began in Basra. Its world-class archaeological museum was a surprise – beautifully curated, impeccably presented in a former palace of Saddam Hussein, and a potent reminder that Iraq isn't just the cradle of civilization; it's the entire maternity ward. I was the museum's sole guest at the time of my visit.

I ventured into the marshes of southern Iraq. Once deliberately drained and starved of water, the marshes today are a testament to Iraqi resilience. The wetlands have returned with quiet defiance: reeds rising where cracked earth once lay, water buffalo wading through silver channels and the Ma'dan people navigating their world in slender canoes as they have for millennia. It feels both ancient and newly reborn.

From there, I traveled north to Karbala, home to two of the most important pilgrimage sites in Islam. Even as an outsider, the experience was deeply moving: waves of pilgrims in black, soft murmurs of prayer, golden domes glowing like torches at dusk. Regardless of one's beliefs, it's impossible not to feel the enormity of devotion here.

The journey continued into Mosul, where the devastation left by ISIS is impossible to soften. Entire neighbourhoods sit in blasted silence, buildings hollowed like ribcages. Yet amid the wreckage, people rebuild – brick by brick, shop by shop. It's humbling in a way that lingers.

Further north, the Kurdish region felt almost like a different country: cleaner, greener, more orderly, with an energy distinct from the Arab south. If Iraq were a novel, Kurdistan would be the unexpected twist in the final chapter.

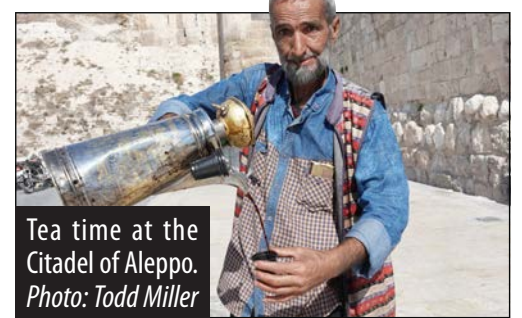
But the coup de grâce – the surreal moment – was standing inside one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Babylon. There, on the dais where the dictator once received visitors and issued edicts, I stood quietly, marveling at the absurdity of the place. History rarely lets you climb onto the stage quite so literally.

Lebanon: Beirut's Buzz and Baalbek's Grandeur

Arriving in Lebanon from Iraq felt like stepping into technicolor. Beirut has an energy that borders on defiant – half Mediterranean cool, half Middle Eastern swagger. Power outages might be scheduled like the evening news, but nightlife ignores them entirely.

And then there was Baalbek, home to some of the most impressive Roman ruins anywhere in the world. Standing beneath the towering columns of the Temple of Jupiter, it's impossible not to feel very small and very lucky – small because these structures dwarf everything around them and lucky because you're witnessing a wonder without any crowds.

But Lebanon, too, bears its scars. The civil war may have ended decades ago, but the bullet holes remain, etched



Tea time at the Citadel of Aleppo. Photo: Todd Miller

into the architecture like punctuation marks in the city's ongoing story.

Syria: Damascus, Aleppo, and the Echo of Ruins

Driving into Syria from Beirut, I expected tension. Instead, Old Damascus welcomed me with its timeless serenity. The famed Umayyad Mosque, a fascinating mash-up of religious heritage – Islamic, Christian, and even Roman – remains one of the most extraordinary spiritual spaces on Earth. Every stone seems to whisper several thousand years of stories. I visited four times.

But travel in Syria is a tour through layers of loss. Homs, once a vibrant city, is scarred by the war – entire districts reduced to concrete skeletons. Aleppo, similarly wounded, still carries the haunting silence of what was once the beating cultural heart of the Levant. And yet, life persists: children dart through alleyways, bakeries sell fragrant flatbread and merchants offer goods with a smile fierce enough to convince you everything will be fine eventually.

Why Go?

Because behind the headlines and warnings are people living full, complicated, generous lives. Because history doesn't pause for politics. Because sometimes the places we fear most have the greatest capacity to change us.

Visiting Iraq, Lebanon and Syria wasn't always easy. At times it was sobering – and unsettling at frequent military and militia checkpoints throughout Iraq and Syria. But the people were warmly welcoming; deeply, unexpectedly so.

Government advisories say DO NOT TRAVEL. But if you travel thoughtfully, carefully and with open eyes, you may find – as I did – that these so-called no-go zones are full of humanity, resilience, and unforgettable stories.

And honestly, the kebabs alone might justify the risk.

Adventurer Todd Miller has explored more than 120 countries. He authored the best-seller ENRICH: Create Wealth in Time, Money, and Meaning. www.ToddMiller.asia

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The Housemaid cleans up as a suspenseful classic

David Griffiths

It feels like it has been a good number of years since we have a decent thriller in our cinemas. Most films in the genre feel like they are too predictable or rely on a last minute supernatural explanation that is really only there to cover up some poorly thought out screenplay.

That all changes though with *The Housemaid*, the brand-new film from director Paul Feig (*Bridesmaids*), a thriller that keeps its audience guessing throughout the film before completely pulling the rug out from underneath them with a final act that is guaranteed to shock.

The plot starts off with a simple premise. Millie Calloway (Sydney Sweeney – *Christy*) has just been released from prison. In order to stay free she has to find a job – quickly. She applies for a position as a housemaid for well-off couple, Nina (Amanda Seyfried – *Les Misérables*) and Andrew Winchester (Brandon Sklenar – *Midway*), and much to her surprise lands the job.

That is when the weirdness and bullying starts. The once nice Nina suddenly turns into a nightmare – she not only bullies Millie but sets her up on a daily basis to make her look bad in front of Andrew. Millie is terrified at what will happen if she loses her job so endures it all – but was this what really happened? Is Millie losing her mind and

really making the mistakes she feels she is not? Or is Nina simply a bully or is she suffering from a mental illness that Andrew seems to keep hinting at?

To the credit of Paul Feig and screenwriter Rebecca Sonnenshine (*The Keeping Hours*) this is a well thought out film that certainly doesn't sign post its twists and turns to the audience. The result of that is the fact that the audience remains as surprised as Millie does as things play out and the suspense level goes through the roof throughout the film.

Lukewarm

I have to admit that I didn't think that Feig had a movie like this in him. With films like *Bridesmaids* and *The Heat*, Feig proved that he knew how to create some great comedies, but after flops with *Ghostbusters* and *Spy*, Feig's first attempt at a thriller, *A Simple Favour*, was lukewarm if that. But here Feig takes on the traits of the great Alfred Hitchcock as he delivers a thriller for the ages.

The scenes between Sydney Sweeney and Amanda Seyfried play out like methodical chess games. The wariness between them ups the suspense each time and Sonnenshine's screenplay leaves you constantly wondering who the villain in the piece here is. Then there is the inclusion of Nina's 'Allie' Enzo (Michele Morrone – *Subservience*), who is so mysterious that at times you start wondering whether or not he is a figment of Millie's imagination.



Sydney Sweeney (left) and Amanda Seyfried in *The Housemaid*. Photo: IMDb

Then there is the third piece in that chess game – the husband Andrew. In the early days of film Sonnenshine and Feig use him like a pawn. He's there, every female outside the family seems to want him, but he is a small time player watching on at this interesting development between Millie and Nina. But as the 'game' goes on Sonnenshine brings the pawn into the game more often and soon the audience is left also asking questions about him. Does he have an interest in Millie or is he part of the cruel games that Nina is inflecting on her?

Enhancing the film even more are the acting performances of the three leads. Seyfried has grown as an actress in *Long Bright River* and that shows in her performance here. Likewise, the past 12 months have seen Sweeney put in some amazing performances in films like *Christy* and *Echo Valley*, but here she goes to a whole new level with a role that should have garnished her an award. Together she and Seyfried deliver scene after scene of perfection.

Announcing himself as an actor to watch in the future here is Sklenar.

While he pretty much just has to sit back and look handsome for the first half of the film it is in the final act where he really gets to show what he is capable of. His performance here guarantees that we will be seeing a lot more of him in films over the next few years.

When people talk about great modern-day thrillers you can expect to hear *The Housemaid* be at the top of that list. Possibly the best thriller to grace our cinema screens since *The Invisible Man*, this is one suspenseful classic that shouldn't be missed.

The Housemaid is currently screening in Phuket and is rated '15'.

4/5 Stars

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

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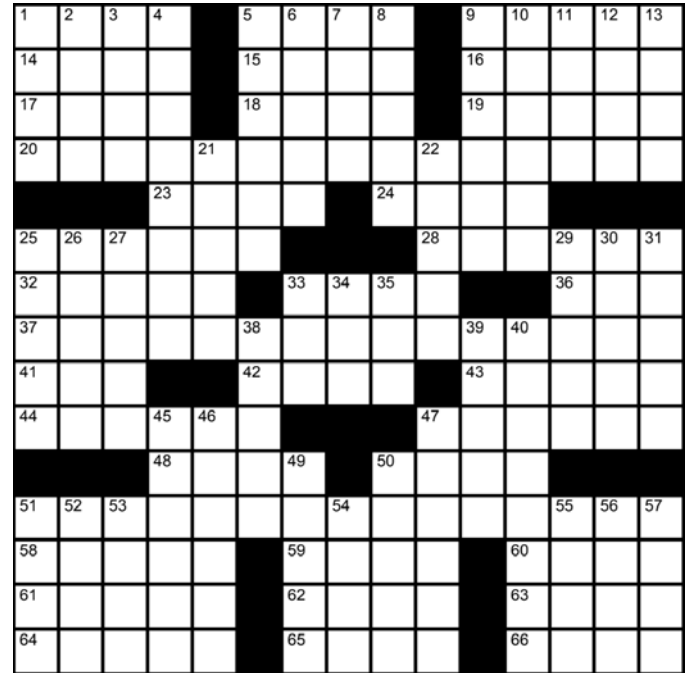
POP QUIZ

1. What was invented by James Dewar in 1872?
2. What links Buddy Holly, Lyndon Johnston and Janice Joplin?
3. Who was Cleopatra's first husband?
4. 'Citius Altius Fortius' is the motto of what organisation?
5. Which classical composer wrote the Hungarian Rhapsody?

Answers below, centre

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Percussion instrument
 5. Bleats
 9. Ten-percenter
 14. Purim's month
 15. Microwave, e.g.
 16. Mushroom caps
 17. Astronomical sighting
 18. Oscar winner Sorvino
 19. Atlas feature
 20. Wisconsin team
 23. Shade of blue
 24. Catch
 25. Without much effort
 28. 8 x 10, often
 32. Crazy
 33. Scruff
 36. Not just any
 37. Period of agricultural improvement
 41. Ended a fast
 42. Wild goat
 43. Milk-Bone biscuit, e.g.
 44. ___ to go
 47. Religious celebration
- Down**
1. Jets or Sharks, e.g.
 2. Carbon monoxide's lack
 3. Church part
 4. Adopt Hellenic ways, var.
 5. Mumbai, formerly
 6. For the birds?
 7. Lofty nest
 8. Loses it
 9. At the top
 10. Chinese tree
 11. Choice word
 12. Literary adverb
 13. Small songbirds
- Across**
48. Author Roald
 50. Sushi fish
 51. Chinese delicacy
 58. African capital
 59. Music category
 60. "___ cost you"
 61. Nitrogen, formerly
 62. ___ list
 63. 11,000-foot Italian peak
 64. Elaine ___ ("Seinfeld" role)
 65. Fret
 66. Horse color
- Down**
21. Hose material
 22. Broadway backer
 25. Actress Samantha
 26. Heart line
 27. Contemptuous look
 29. Pignons
 30. Young hog
 31. Busybody
 33. Kan. neighbor
 34. Hail, to Caesar
 35. Chicken ___
 38. Appropriate
 39. Handy
 40. Having thicker hair
 45. Imagine
 46. 1598 edict city
 47. Guy
 49. Hungers (for)
 50. Short musical piece
 51. Seize
 52. Bring down
 53. Deep black
 54. Cheer
 55. Conductor Klemperer
 56. Arm part
 57. Arrange



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

SUDOKU

Hard

4			3			6		
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		1		3				9

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:
 (1) Vacuum or thermos flask; (2) The US State of Texas; (3) Ptolemy Dionysus (her brother); (4) Olympic; (5) Franz Liszt

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

in 5 women buy Valentine's gifts for themselves.

20

baby girls in the US were named 'Kindle' in 2013.

6,000

cell phones, 3,500 digital cameras and 18,000 hats are handed in to 'Lost and Found' at Walt Disney World each year.

40 million

Americans have tattoos, and 17% of those people are figuring out how to get them removed.

10 billion

doughnuts are consumed by Americans every year.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Drone shot of Merlin Beach (foreground) and Patong Bay in the background. Photo by James Stewart

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

This week in history

Jan 30, 1826
The Menai Suspension Bridge, considered the world's first modern suspension bridge, connecting the Isle of Anglesey to the north West coast of Wales, is opened.

Jan 31, 1949
These Are My Children, the first television daytime soap opera, is broadcast by the NBC station in Chicago,

United States.
Feb 1, 1662
The Chinese general Koxinga seizes the island of Taiwan after a nine-month siege.

Feb 2, 1913
Grand Central Terminal opens in New York City.

Feb 3, 1930
The Communist Party of



George Washington

Vietnam is founded at a "Unification Conference" held in Kowloon, British Hong Kong.

Feb 4, 1789
George Washington is unanimously elected as the first President of the United States by the U.S. Electoral College.

Feb 5, 62
A magnitude 6 earthquake hits Pompeii in Italy, widely considered a precursor to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. Source: *Wikipedia*

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FRI 30 JAN



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AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, AMCHAM, BCCT, CanCham Thailand, GTCC, NTCC, Phuket Chamber of Commerce, and SATCC, Joint Chambers Australia Day Phuket Sundowners. This event is scheduled to take place 18.00 - 21.00 hrs., at Bangkok Bob's Restaurant Phuket. We invite you to join us for an enjoyable evening of networking with members of the Australian-Thai business community at the newly opened Bangkok Bob's Restaurant Phuket. And supported by our corporate sponsor, The Australian Consulate-General Phuket. THB 650 for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members, THB 1,200 for non-members. To book contact - office@austchamthailand.com

FRI 6 FEB



Grow Boating Phuket Evening - Feb 2026

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm. We are delighted to announce that our sponsor for both the drinks and burgers will be the 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. There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar for all attendees and as always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. If you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along. Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/GrowBoatingPhuket

SAT 7 FEB



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Carnival Cookout Market Phuket

Carnival Cookout is a new outdoor weekend market event in Phuket that brings together food, music, culture, and a lively open-air atmosphere aimed at locals and visitors. It's described as a monthly weekend market with good vibes, live music, diverse food vendors and cultural experiences in a social setting. Food & Drink: A variety of food stalls and cookout-style offerings – likely including street-food favorites, barbecue, local eats and more creative food vendors. Music & Entertainment: Live music and performances are part of the weekend market vibe. Community & Culture: A social outdoor gathering space that blends local culture with casual festival energy – essentially a lively food + music + social market event.

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TUE 3 FEB



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SKÅL PHUKET - FIRST DINNER OF THE NEW YEAR

The first Skål Phuket dinner of the new year, hosted by Pamela Ong and her team at Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town, was held on Thursday, January 21. The evening started with networking drinks and the traditional Skål toast at the Talung Lounge, followed by a Japanese Dinner Buffet at Krua Talad Yai. It was a great way to start the year with tasty food, excellent networking, and Skål friendship. To find out more about Skål Phuket visit facebook.com/SkaiPhuket



ASEAN Para Games joy for Thais

ASEAN PARA GAMES

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Thailand were crowned champions of the ASEAN Para Games for a record seventh time last Sunday (Jan 25) after amassing an impressive 488 medal haul.

The 13th edition of the competition in Nakhon Ratchasima saw the hosts finish with a total of 175 gold medals, 155 silver and 158 bronze to place ahead of Indonesia and Malaysia.

One of the highlights on Sunday's final day saw Thailand win gold in both the men's blind football and the cerebral palsy 7-a-side competitions.

The hosts eased past Malaysia 4-0 in the blind football gold medal match, with Kittikon Buadi scoring a 19-minute hat-trick and Panyawut Kuphan providing the other goal, while Chanatip Deeman scored a 51st minute winner in a narrow 1-0 victory against Myanmar in the cerebral palsy final.

Elsewhere, wheelchair fencing star Saysune Jana continued to dazzle as she won four golds in the women's individual foil class B, sabre class B, mixed team epee and mixed team sabre, confirming



Thailand's cerebral palsy 7-a-side football squad celebrate their gold medal win. Photo: ASEAN Para Games Facebook

her status as one of Thailand's most decorated para athletes.

Para swimmer Eakapan Songwicchan, who also performs as rapper EarthSN, won five golds in the pool, producing a superb swim in the men's 200 metre individual medley SM5 final on Saturday to clock 3 minutes 32 seconds and set a new Games record.

He then anchored Thailand's mixed team to victory in the 4x50m medley relay S1-S10, finishing in 3m 18s alongside teammates Wilasini Wongnonthapoom, Patcharin Chanin and Zy Kher Lee.

Eakapan, 24, had already

claimed gold in the 50m backstroke, 100m backstroke and 100m butterfly earlier in the tournament.

Another standout performer was Natirat Meeprom, who added to his medal collection with gold in the men's 200m backstroke S14 final. That came after the Thai swimmer had set a Games record in the 200m individual medley SM14 event on Friday, confirming his status as one of the brightest prospects in the region.

Thailand also celebrated a one-two finish in the men's 400m freestyle S11 final, with Adisorn Chokniramit winning in 5m 45s ahead of compatriot Chon

Sonsamrong, who clocked 6m 52s, while in the men's 400m freestyle S14, Nithikorn Jeampiriyakul and Phakhawat Kumarasing ensured another Thai podium sweep.

Nantawat Ropkob captured the men's 400m freestyle S9 gold and added silver in the 50m butterfly S9 final, while in the women's competition Nattharinee Khajhontha triumphed in the 400m freestyle S14 and Wachiraphon Thavornvasu secured gold in the 100m breaststroke SB14.

GAMES RECORD

In track and field, Sasirawan Inthachot won the women's long jump T46/T47 with a leap of 4.74 metres, while it was a one-two finish in the women's discus throw F37 as Fasai Yapakham led with 26.81 metres and Apasiri Nootsreathee followed with 22.47m, and Witaya Charoenying won gold in the men's shot put F57.

Techinee Duangin stormed to victory in the women's 100 metre T54, clocking 17.99 seconds to set a new Games record, while Pongsakorn Paeyo electrified the crowd with a new Asian record in the men's 100m T53, his time of 14.20s securing gold and reinforcing his reputation as one of the contin-

ent's fastest para sprinters.

Elsewhere, Artitaya Premphon won gold in the women's 5,000m T54, while Orawan Kaising won the women's 800m T20.

Thai athletes also excelled in boccia with Pornchok Larpyen edging compatriot Supachok Kwanphok 4-3 in the men's BC4 final, while Phakphum Linchum stunned the field in the men's BC2 as he defeated Olympic champion Worawut Saengampa 6-3.

In table tennis Phisit Wangphonphattanasiri clinched the men's singles TT8 title after a straight-sets 3-0 win over Jan Wilfred Redulla of the Philippines and Thirayu Chueawong dispatched Indonesia's Audy Ngangi 3-0 in the men's singles TT1-2.

Archery brought another all-Thai final, with Phattharaphon Pattawao defeating Tat Chatyotsakorn 6-0 in the women's individual recurve W2 to secure her second gold of the Games, while wheelchair basketball also brought Thai gold in both the men's and women's finals.

After the Games Dr Kongsak Yodmanee, Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand, revealed that prize money for the Thai para athletes will be increased to honour their achievements.

Additional reporting by
the Bangkok Post

Silver shuttler stars

BADMINTON

THAILAND'S PITCHAMON Opatniputh and Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul shone at the US\$500,000 (B15,750,000) BWF Indonesia Masters in Jakarta last Sunday (Jan 25) but just fell short as they claimed silver medals in their respective finals.

World No.36 Pitchamon, the former world junior champion, put up a brave fight before losing to top seed Chen Yufei of China 21-23, 13-21 in the women's singles final.

In the men's singles decider, the 44th ranked Panitchaphon fell to world No.18 Alwi Farhan of Indonesia, who clinched the third World Tour title in just 25 minutes, winning 21-5, 21-16.

The crushing defeat ended the 21-year-old Thai's impressive run in Indonesia, which saw him upset sixth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore and seventh seed Lakshya Sen on his way to the final.

The tournament was



Pitchamon (left) and Chen Yufei. Photo: AFP

both Pitchamon and Panitchaphon's first ever Super 500 finals appearance.

Third seeds Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei of Malaysia were crowned mixed doubles champions after beating Mathias Christiansen and Alexandra Boje 15-21, 21-17, 21-11 in the final.

Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia took the women's doubles title after Japan's Arisa Igarashi and Miyu Takahashi withdrew from the title match.

In the men's doubles final fourth seeds Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin of Malaysia defeated Raymond Indra and Nikolaus Joaquin of Indonesia 21-19, 21-13.

Bangkok Post

Patriots, Seahawks set up Super Bowl rematch

NFL

THE SEATTLE SEAHAWKS defeated the Los Angeles Rams in a high-scoring shootout in the NFL playoff's last Sunday (Jan 25) to set up a Super Bowl rematch with the New England Patriots.

In Seattle, Seahawks' quarterback Sam Darnold outdueled Rams counterpart Matthew Stafford in a 31-27 thriller to clinch the NFC championship.

The victory sends Seattle into a repeat of their epic 2015 Super Bowl against the Patriots, who prevailed in a blizzard-hit 10-7 AFC championship victory over the Denver Broncos earlier Sunday.

The Seahawks' win marked the latest milestone in what has been a fairytale campaign for Darnold, who has enjoyed a renaissance with Seattle this season after a rocky start to his career.

"It's amazing, to be able to do this with these guys in this locker room, with this coaching staff – it means the world to me," said Darnold, who played for four different clubs before arriving in Seattle last year.

The 28-year-old finished Sunday's classic with three touchdowns, 346 passing yards and no interceptions.

It leaves Seattle looking ahead to a Super Bowl clash with the Patriots in Santa Clara, California, on Feb 8, 11 years after losing to New England



Cooper Kupp scores a touchdown for the Seattle Seahawks. Photo: AFP

in the NFL showpiece in 2015 during the Tom Brady era.

BRONCOS TAMED IN BLIZZARD

The Patriots, meanwhile, are targeting a record seventh Super Bowl following their gritty, low-scoring victory in Colorado.

The AFC title game played out in brutal conditions, with the field in gradually blanketed in snow as a storm swept over the venue.

New England quarterback Drake Maye held firm after a shaky start, leading the Patriots upfield for the decisive field goal after rushing for a first-half touchdown.

"We battled the elements," said Maye.

"These conditions, it's not great throwing the football. But hey, we do

what we need to do... We're off to the Super Bowl. Let's go!"

The win cements a remarkable resurgence for the Patriots.

After the dominant era of the Brady dynasty that yielded six Super Bowl titles, New England have endured a painful rebuild.

But under new head coach Mike Vrabel they were a revelation this season, topping the tough AFC East for the first time since 2019.

"Just so happy for Mike Vrabel, former teammate of mine," said Brady, now working as a commentator for Fox television.

The Patriots, who already boasted the most Super Bowl appearances with 11, will now have their 12th showing on American football's biggest stage, and a chance to vie for a record seventh Vince Lombardi trophy. AFP

Red Devils spook Gunners

FOOTBALL

AFP

Manchester United inflicted Arsenal's first home defeat of the season in a 3-2 thriller to blow the Premier League title race open last Sunday (Jan 25).

A week on from dominating City in the Manchester derby, Michael Carrick's dream start as United boss continued thanks to Matheus Cunha's stunning later winner.

A Lisandro Martinez own goal put Arsenal in front but the Red Devils quickly levelled when Bryan Mbeumo pounced on an error by Martin Zubimendi before Patrick Dorgu's brilliant strike put the visitors in front early in the second half.

Mikel Merino forced an equaliser on 84 minutes before Cunha took aim from outside the box and delivered a telling blow to the Gunners' hopes of a first league title in 22 years.

Victory also propelled United into the top four to boost their chances of Champions League football next season for the first time in three years.

Impressive Aston Villa beat 2-0 Newcastle to close within four points of the Gunners and go level on points with Manchester City.

Villa kept their outside shot at a first league title since 1981 alive with their first victory at St. James' Park for 21 years thanks to goals from Emiliano Buendia and Ollie Watkins.

Manchester City beat bottom club



Bryan Mbeumo scores for Manchester United. Photo: AFP

Wolves 2-0 on Saturday, with Omar Marmoush and Antoine Semenyo on target for Pep Guardiola's team.

Erling Haaland was left on the bench after a lean spell and centre-back Marc Guehi made his debut after his move from Crystal Palace, easing City's crippling defensive crisis.

Elsewhere, Chelsea piled more pain on Crystal Palace with a 3-1 win at Selhurst Park and Nottingham Forest gave their survival chances a huge boost by beating Brentford 2-0.

Mohamed Salah was back in Liverpool's starting line-up for a Premier League match for the first time since November but Arne Slot's men came unstuck on England's south

coast, losing 3-2 to Bournemouth, while Thomas Frank faced fresh calls for his dismissal from angry Tottenham fans after a dispiriting 2-2 draw at strugglers Burnley.

Spurs boss Frank is under intense pressure just seven months into his reign at the London club, seemingly powerless to halt a slide down the table. Their winless league run in 2026 is now five matches and they sit 14th in the table, eight points above the relegation zone.

Fulham came back from a goal down to beat Brighton 2-1 at Craven Cottage, Everton and Leeds drew 1-1, while West Ham blew Sunderland away 3-1 to make it two wins out of two.

Thailand to host inaugural women's FIFA Series comp

FOOTBALL

FIFA HAS CONFIRMED that Thailand will host the women's FIFA Series 2026, marking the first time an Asian nation has staged the pilot tournament.

The Football Association of Thailand (FAT) received official notification from the governing body on Jan 21, following a successful bid led by FAT president Nualphan Lamsam. Matches will be held in Ratchaburi province between Apr 9 and 15.

The FIFA Series is a new initiative designed to broaden participation in international football by bringing together nations from different continents.

The project aims to expose players, coaches and supporters to contrasting styles of play, while fostering development both on and off the pitch. FIFA also views the competition as a means of strengthening cultural exchange and opening new markets for the sport.

Thailand, currently ranked 53rd in the women's



Nualphan Lamsam (left) with Gianni Infantino. Photo: Bangkok Post

world standings, will be joined by three other nations: DR Congo (No.109), Nepal (No.89), and one representative from Oceania. Each team will play two matches.

The opening fixtures on Apr 12 will determine the finalists, with the winners progressing to the championship match and the defeated sides contesting a third-place playoff on Apr 15 at Ratchaburi Stadium.

For Thailand, the tournament represents both a sporting milestone and an opportunity to showcase its growing football infrastructure. Bangkok Post

Thai FA makes changes to foreign player quotas

FOOTBALL

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF Thailand (FAT) has confirmed significant changes to foreign player quotas in Thai League 1 for the 2026-2027 season, following a meeting with all 16 top-flight clubs on Jan 22.

The virtual session, chaired by FAT president Nualphan Lamsam and secretary general Ekapol Polnawee, concluded with 12 clubs voting in favour of reform.

Under the current rules, clubs may register seven foreign players, including Asian nationals, alongside unlimited ASEAN players, though only five plus two ASEAN players are permitted on the pitch at any one time.

From next season, however, teams will be allowed to register up to 10 foreign players of any nationality, with a maximum of seven eligible to play in a match.

The decision comes in the wake of Thailand's defeat to Vietnam in the SEA Games final last December, a result that extended the nation's gold medal drought in the tournament to a decade.

The loss sparked widespread criticism, with one recurring concern being that Thai players are not afforded sufficient opportunities in domestic competition due to the heavy reliance on foreign talent.



Photo: FAT Facebook

Critics argue that the new quota, while offering clubs greater flexibility, risks further limiting the development of homegrown players unless carefully managed.

Officials at FAT insist the changes are designed to raise the overall standard of Thai League 1, aligning with regional trends and ensuring competitiveness in continental tournaments.

Meanwhile, the FAT has renewed the contract of Thailand U23 head coach Thawatchai Damrong-ongtrakul.

The former national midfielder, who took charge in July 2025, will continue to lead the side until the conclusion of the 20th Asian Games in Japan this September.

Thawatchai has overseen a busy schedule since his appointment, guiding the team at the ASEAN U23 Championship in Indonesia, the AFC U23 Asian Cup qualifiers, the 33rd SEA Games on home soil, and most recently the AFC U23 Asian Cup finals in Saudi Arabia.

Bangkok Post

Advertisement for The Phuket News featuring a collage of newspaper front pages and a central logo. The logo includes the text 'The Phuket News Your Island - Your Paper' and 'HOME DELIVERY'. A QR code is provided for subscription, with a 'SUBSCRIBE HERE' button below it. The collage includes headlines such as 'HE BILL', 'LOW LAKE', 'STOP', 'NG LIMITS', 'CASINO', 'DIVIDED ON PROSPECT', 'BABY SHARK', and 'HIGHWAYS DEPT TO ON UNDERPAS'.

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Sport



Thais on top at ASEAN Para Games > p14



BRIGHT FUTURE

'Sky the limit' for Dojo Phuket in 2026

The Dojo Phuket team celebrate their success at the recent Philippines International Judo Open in Manila. Photo: Dojo Phuket Facebook

COMBAT SPORTS

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

The mood at Cherng Talay-based Dojo Phuket is one of clear vibrancy and positivity as lead instructor and founder Alexis Plantard and his team of talented students look towards a fruitful year ahead.

The project has come a long way since its inception in 2020, successfully navigating the COVID era and a brief period of being without a training base, to establish themselves as one of the leading and most successful Dojos in the region.

To illustrate the point, the team started the new year much in the same way they concluded the last by once again being amongst the podium finishers and medal winners at international competition level.

The team's most recent exploits saw them win a total of eight medals at the Philippines International Judo Open in Manila on Jan 10, consisting of two golds, two silvers and four bronze.

Proving herself once again as one of the finest emerging young talents in regional combats sports, 6-year-old Lea won gold in the Philippines' capital city to take her tally of tournament wins to a

staggering 24 in just 11 months.

This time she dominated every opponent she faced across three challenging contests, winning one match in just 3.5 seconds. Her fearless form was illustrated by the fact she was awarded ippon (the highest possible score) in each contest she won.

Having won the accolade of Best Female Fighter at international judo competitions in China, the USA and Singapore last year, in addition to similar titles at the Thailand National Judo and Jiu Jitsu Championships, Lea's talent is clear for all to see and her future in the sport is extremely bright.

RELIABLE

The other gold medal winner for the Dojo Phuket team was claimed by newcomer Dominykas, who triumphed in the under 66kg youth category. Adding to his previous gold medal won at the Riga European Cup 2025 in Lithuania last year, Dominykas is clearly one to watch as year progresses.

Meanwhile, ever reliable team captain David fought hard across four gruelling contests to claim a silver in Manila, as did Shane who performed with astute speed, technique and intelligence to secure his runner-up spot.

Bronze medals were won by Leo, Evgenii, Daniil (who also

qualified for his green belt) and newcomer Iroslav, who, competing in his first ever judo tournament, fought like a lion to secure an impressive three wins from four matches.

Fellow team members Mayel, Sagit and Domantas just missed out on podium finishes but still fought impressively and will no doubt be among the medal winners in future competitions.

"Overall it was an excellent team performance to start 2026 and I am incredibly proud of everyone involved," Alexis told *The Phuket News*. "We start as we mean to go on and I am extremely excited about what is to come in the year ahead."

MEMORABLE

The success in Manila came after a similarly impressive performance by the team at the Indonesia International Judo Open, which ran across the weekend of Dec 13-14 last year in Jakarta.

Eight medals overall were won, comprising three gold and five bronze, with the club also awarded a special trophy for best ranking in the children's division.

It was an especially memorable day for Kevin who won gold in what was his first championship victory. The young athlete was also promoted to white belt with a second yellow stripe status for his successful exploits.

Meanwhile, Meera excelled with fantastic technique and tactics to win gold, simultaneously securing her blue belt status, and Lea was once again among the medals, picking up gold for her 23rd international competition win.

Johnathan delivered an incredible performance to win bronze and reach the podium at international level for the first time, while teammate Daniil also won bronze, qualifying for his orange belt with second green stripe status in the process.

Sagit demonstrated great spirit across his four contests, including against an opponent 10kg heavier than him in the medal match. His endeavours were rewarded with a bronze medal and a promotion to blue belt with one brown stripe status.

Elsewhere, Mayel delivered strong performances across four fights in the cadet division to win bronze and his blue belt with one brown stripe status, while team captain David was similarly solid, his control and technique evident as he also secured a podium finish and a bronze medal.

It was another fine team performance and a fitting end to an incredible, medal-laden year across numerous international tournaments. Confidence is clearly high and big things are expected in 2026.

INSPIRING

Further fuelling this confidence is the fact the team now have a new dojo facility at which to hone their skills, recently opened in the Manik area of Cherng Talay. This came after the Dojo spent several months without a base, having been ejected from their previous location at Blue Tree Phuket.

"It is in an idyllic spot near the lake and we are surrounded by mountains, forest and nature," Alexis explained.

"No traffic, no noise, no pollution – just the sound of birds and crickets. It's a peaceful and inspiring place and the perfect space to train and develop future champions and Olympians."

The new facility is 400m², making it the largest private judo dojo in Thailand, while there is also a 200m² gym/CrossFit area and a spacious 4,400m² garden.

The goal is to have 100 children enrolled as students at the facility within the next 12 months, Alexis explained.

"It is an exciting time. Good things are happening here at the Dojo Phuket and we genuinely believe the sky is the limit," he concluded.

For more details including how to get involved please visit the Dojo Phuket Facebook page.