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Phuket MP calls to revise ‘visa-free’ policy

PHUKET: Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee has submitted a formal request urging the government to reconsider Thailand’s visa-free policy, listing concerns over rising incidents of inappropriate tourist behaviour and its impact on the province’s image.

[tourism](#) [crime](#) [economics](#)

[By The Phuket News](#)

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“While the government’s visa-free measures, allowing tourists from many countries to travel to Thailand without a visa, have increased tourist numbers and revenue, they have also led to a number of inappropriate behaviors by tourists, including creating pornographic content, using drugs, causing disturbances, engaging in illegal activities, and taking jobs from Thais,” MP Chalermpong’s formal request explained.

“These behaviours damage the country’s image and impact residents in key tourist areas such as Phuket, Pattaya and Chiang Mai, the country’s main tourist destinations,” he added.

MP Chalermpong raised an example of reports from both domestic and international media, including the BBC documentary ‘Thailand: The Dark Side of Paradise’, that he said reflected Thailand’s negative image as a result of low-quality tourists.

“Therefore, I urge the new prime minister to reconsider the visa-free measure. Measures should be implemented to screen quality tourists, ensuring Thailand truly benefits from tourism while mitigating long-term damage,” MP Chalermpong said.

After submitting the formal request, he shared his concerns on Facebook.

“Phuket has been in the news recently, mostly because of scandals. Reports include Russians hiring Thais to make adult content in the back of pickup trucks, and a Russian man dancing naked in Patong after taking mushrooms. These incidents have attracted a lot of attention.

“Honestly, these are just the reported cases. Many more likely go unnoticed, escaping both authorities and public scrutiny. But they all follow similar patterns of disruptive behaviour,” MP Chalermpong said.

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He stressed that while many tourists are positive contributors to Phuket’s economy, the undeniable rise in problematic behaviour is largely due to the visa-free policy.

“It’s not just Phuket; other major tourist provinces face similar challenges. Some individuals even pose as tourists while engaging in illegal activities, shady businesses or taking jobs from Thais,” he added.

Tourism remains a crucial driver of Thailand’s economy, especially for Phuket. The revenue generated supports local businesses, merchants, and residents, he noted.

“But for these low-quality tourists, the damage far outweighs the economic benefit,” MP Chalermpong said.

“We must review Thailand’s visa-free policy and screen tourists to allow only high-quality visitors. Otherwise, we’ll continue addressing issues reactively, after serious problems have already harmed Thailand’s tourism image. Screening at the source is far better, even if it can’t completely eliminate troublemakers,” he added.

“The visa-free policy must be reviewed before Thailand suffers irreparable losses,” he concluded.

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