

## Thailand reviewing visa-free stay period amid rising complaints

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Dhaka: Thailand's caretaker government is reviewing the country's 60-day visa-free stay scheme following mounting complaints that some foreign visitors have been exploiting the program for illegal activities.

Foreign Affairs Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow made the remarks on Wednesday, February 18, during a visit to Phuket, where tourism operators have voiced concerns over the impact of the policy.

The visa-free program, introduced in mid-2024 under former Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, allows passport holders from 93 countries to stay in Thailand for up to 60 days without a visa.

Sihasak said the 60-day period is too long, as most tourists typically stay between 15 and 30 days. He added the government is assessing whether shortening the permitted stay would better balance tourism promotion

with security concerns.

Operators in Phuket have also criticized the minimum investment requirement of THB 3 million in real estate to qualify for a long-stay visa. They argue the threshold is too low and could attract so-called “non-quality” visitors while driving up local property prices.

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, proposals to shorten the visa-free period were submitted last year, and the ministry agreed that a reduced duration would likely not hurt overall tourism.

The caretaker administration, led by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul of the Bhumjaithai Party, has the authority to approve amendments to the scheme, as a new government has yet to be formed following the February 8 election.

Sahasak emphasized that any revision must include stronger safeguards to prevent transnational crime, stressing that Thailand must maintain a balance between attracting visitors and ensuring long-term public safety.

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