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DRY DAYS

ANUTIN URGES TO FORGET SONGKRAN WATER FESTIVITIES

Deputy PM and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul. Photo: PRD / file



The Phuket News
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Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on Monday (Mar 28) dampened any hopes for water play zones anywhere in the country during the upcoming Songkran festivities marking the Thai New Year.

The Deputy PM urged business operators on Khao San Rd in Bangkok to forget plans to hold water-splashing activities this Songkran, which at the time of press looked to be the third consecutive year COVID-19 has been blamed for cancelling water-play festivities.

Anutin said patience and coopera-

tion were needed to avoid the risk of another outbreak. National health officials last week suggested infections may reach as high as 100,000 a day following any outbreak that might ensue due to water play being allowed.

Not mentioned in the same warning was that health officials have openly reported that as much as 95% of the new infections being recorded produce little to no symptoms at all.

Anutin's advice to Khao San Rd businesses came as the Bangkok communicable disease control committee was set to meet on Tuesday (Mar 29) to decide whether or not to allow water-splashing celebrations at the capital's tourist hotspot, as was requested by business operators in the area.

The Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) had earlier banned water-splashing and other celebrations associated with the holiday – including powder-smearing – as such activities were deemed to increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.

The move prompted businesses along Khao San Rd, and other tourist-popular locales such as Chiang Mai, Phuket and Pattaya to jointly petition the government to reconsider.

At time of press, Phuket officials themselves had yet to publicly recognise that any such petition had been made.

Speaking to the *Bangkok Post* on Monday, Anutin said, "This year, other social activities aren't prohibited, so

please be patient for another year.

"We are preparing to classify COVID-19 as an endemic disease, so we need to have the cooperation of all stakeholders."

SONGKRAN ORDER

Despite the petition to national authorities to allow water play in Phuket not yet being decided, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew last week issued a provincial order to confirm there will be no water play in Phuket during Songkran this year.

The order, issued at night on Mar 23, was marked to be in effect from April 10-17.

The order marked that the restrictions had been ordered by the CCSA on Mar 14, under advisement by the...

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Governor pushes for 10,000 new base-wage jobs



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Patrick Campbell dishes the dirt on ants



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Max wins Saudi F1 GP shrouded in controversy



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PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

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News



Locals scrap for B1bn of prime beachfront > p4

High risk contact tourists still face quarantine

The Phuket News
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Tourists staying at hotels who are deemed to be high risk contacts will continue to be quarantined for 10 days, according to an order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew.

High-risk contacts must be quarantined in their hotel room, but separated from any person deemed to have been infected with COVID-19, according to the order, one of four issued by Governor Narong on Mar 23.

They must be tested for COVID-19 by ATK method (antigen test kit) on the 5th and 10th day of the quarantine period.

If the tourist tests negative by ATK on Day 5 of their quarantine period and shows no signs of infection, the tourist may be allowed to venture out of their hotel room to enjoy the common areas of the hotel.

However, the high risk contact must remain separated from the "infected person" until the infected person has completed the quarantine period.

"In the event that high-risk contacts do not want to quarantine in



Phuket health officials explain the COVID regulations to a resort owner. Photo: PPHO / file

the room during the first 5 days, they can be tested for COVID-19 by RT-PCR or ATK method before leaving the room on a daily basis.

"If the test result is negative and the tourist shows no signs of infection, the tourist is able to leave the room to use the common areas within the hotel or accommodation.

"They must wear a mask at all

times, keep their distance from other people and not share meals with others. They must also wash their hands with alcohol gel before touching items and appliances that must be shared with other people," the order said.

STAYING TOGETHER

The order allowed high risk contacts

to stay in the same hotel room as the person deemed to have been infected, under certain conditions.

"In case the high-risk contact does not want to move to a separate room from the infected person, they must stay within the room and must not leave the room throughout the period of 10 days," the order said.

"Sharing accommodation with an infected person shall be regarded as the day of exposure to the disease," the order noted.

"Roommates can be tested for COVID-19 by ATK method on a daily basis or be tested on days 5 and 10. If the test results are positive, they will have to remain quarantined for 10 days from the day of testing positive," the order continued.

The order mandated that the hotel or accommodation provider must arrange for a SHA Plus Manager to supervise the COVID-19 testing of high-risk contacts.

The order comes as Phuket health officials themselves are admitting that 95% of the recent COVID-19 infections on the island are asymptomatic or exhibit only mild signs of infection.

Such people, if they are island residents, are only required to self-isolate at home.

LOCALS ARE DIFFERENT

Meanwhile, national health authorities are now advising against the arbitrary use of ATK and RT-PCR tests, while also assuring that four COVID vaccine doses are enough for now and there are no plans to administer fifth doses.

Dr Banlang Uppapong, deputy chief of the Department of Medical Sciences (DMS), said ATK and RT-PCR tests should be used only when individuals have been exposed to COVID risks.

Tests are appropriate for use within 14 days after traveling from locations with high infection rates or after contact with someone who contracted COVID-19, he said, reported state news agency NNT.

Use of ATKs are not recommended when no symptoms or risks are present, Dr Banlang said.

The senior health officials further noted that people who have received their third vaccine dose should make preparations for receiving their fourth.

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COVID fears dampen Songkran

Continued from page 1

...Ministry of Culture, which had presented guidelines for holding activities to commemorate Songkran Day.

"Songkran the new way" is to be observed by carrying out New Normal activities, refraining from splashing water, powdering or group activities, due to the current epidemic situation of COVID-19 in Phuket, the order said.

As such, the following restrictions are to be enacted in Phuket for Songkran:

- (1) Refrain from splashing water, spraying powder, holding foam parties or activities in close contact.
- (2) Refrain from selling and consuming alcoholic beverages (Alcohol Free Zone) in the event areas with large groups of people
- (3) Refrain from organising crowded gatherings of people that cause disorder with the exception of performing water blessing ceremonies involving monks or elders in the community

The following activities shall be reduced:

- (1) Plays and other cultural performances; local



No water play this year. Photo: Zion Gallery / file

traditional activities organised into a parade

(2) Music performances where crowded groups are gathered

People are to:

- (1) Avoid sharing equipment and belongings at religious activity gatherings, such as flowers, incense sticks, candles, bowls, offerings
- (2) Avoid close contact activities or sharing items between visiting relatives, such as hugs, kisses, eating/drinking, joining in karaoke, etc.
- (3) Avoid social gatherings and the sharing food or drink that are held for long periods of time

All people are to observe the government's VUCA policy, and safety measures for the workplace, which must

be monitored and supervised during the Songkran Festival, the order noted.

All Songkran Festival activities must observe the COVID Free Setting guidelines.

The order included the standard warnings that as the order is being implemented under the Emergency Decree, parties may not exercise their right to object.

Penalties for violating the order ranged from a fine of up to B20,000, or up to one year in jail or a fine of up to B100,000, or both.

Violators may also be punished under Section 18 of the Royal Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations, which incurs a penalty of up to two years in jail or a fine of up to B40,000, or both.

Plea to launch 10,000 jobs

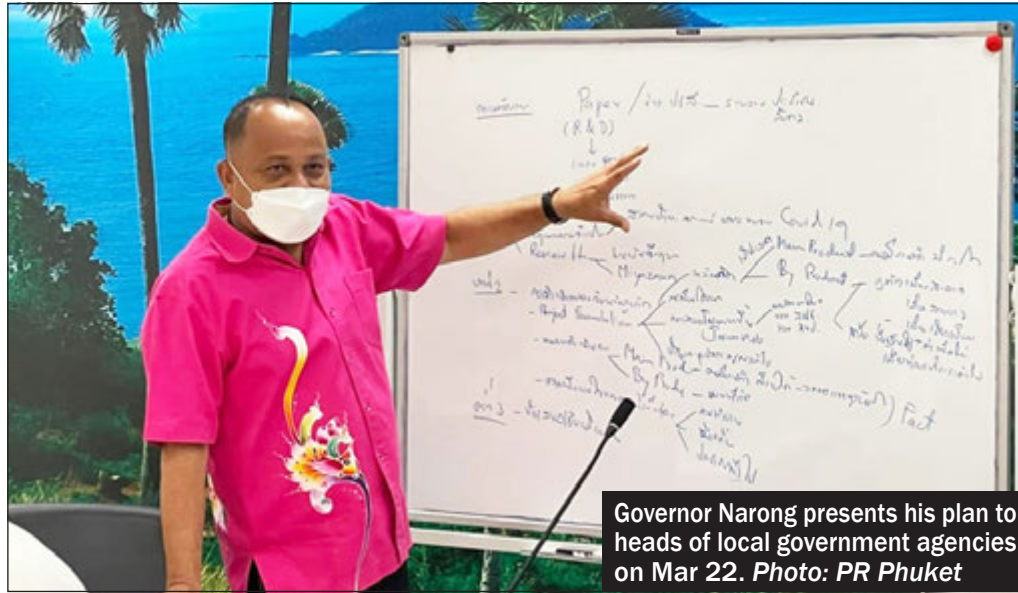
The Phuket News
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Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw is driving a campaign that hopes to provide 10,000 base-wage part-time jobs to provide a means of income for people across the island still suffering severe financial hardship during the current economic crisis.

Explaining the need to develop and strengthen the fundamental economy in Phuket, Governor Narong unveiled the plan to heads of local government agencies gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 22.

"The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has caused people in the area to face the problem of unemployment, leaving them with a lack of income, resulting in acute poverty," Governor Narong said.

"Phuket Province [the provincial government] together with local government organisations in the area are proposing a project to request a budget from the government in order to solve the problem and provide assistance to the people in need of urgent employment," he said.



Governor Narong presents his plan to heads of local government agencies on Mar 22. Photo: PR Phuket

"The project aims to create 10,000 vacancies, with people hired on the minimum wage of B336 per day. The people will be hired 20 days per month for a four-month period, to help them become strong and able to be self-reliant," explained.

Governor Narong recognised that the income provided would not be much, just B6,720 a month (about US\$200 a month).

"At least they will be able to feed themselves," he said.

The jobs to be created will be focussing on cleaning up the island, including any landscaping required, to keep

the island beautiful, he said.

"The clear result from the employment project of landscape modifications in each area is that it will make Phuket a clean and beautiful city as a world-class tourist destination that is ready to welcome tourists at any moment," he said.

Governor Narong pointed out that the project would help keep Phuket recognised by international media as a destination of choice. He noted that Phuket recently placed third best island in Thailand in the DestinAsian Magazine's Reader's Choice

Awards 2022.

"However, to solve the problems of the people at the foundation level it is important that all sectors must move forward and help each other to solve the problems to enable the fundamental economy to move forward in parallel with the economic development at all levels of Phuket," he said.

SHARING

Meanwhile, Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong has praised the slew of Roi Rim Lay seafood festivals held across the island for helping to redistribute what incomes

were being enjoyed in the province.

Speaking at the Roi Rim Lay seafood festival at Saphan Hin last Sunday (Mar 27), Vice Governor Pichet pointed out that the event held at Saphan Hin over last weekend featured 17 operators serving local food, 19 operators selling seafood, 13 outlets selling community products and 71 vendors selling general merchandise.

More than 10 mobile food vendors also joined the event, he added.

All the vendors were able to set up shop at the event "without any cost to truly help entrepreneurs," he said.

"In 2019, Phuket had 14,454,187 tourists and the income from tourism was about B442.891 billion," V/Gov Pichet said. "But in 2020, when COVID-19 began spreading in Thailand, the number of tourists coming to Phuket fell to 4,003,290 tourists, a decrease of 72.54%."

"This resulted in tourism revenue of B108.464 billion, a decrease of 75.51%, leading to household income and employment problems," he said.

However, not highlighted was that according to the

Phuket Reopening Daily Report by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), in the past nine months Phuket has had just over 416,000 tourist arrivals – less than one-eighth of the number of arrivals in COVID-hit 2020.

The Roi Rim Lay, and other food festivals being held across the island, are helping to alleviate household financial stress, V/Gov Pichet continued.

"They increase household income and create employment for entrepreneurs, and help reduce household expenses for local people," he said.

"We sincerely hope that this seafood festival, Roi Rim Lay, will help stimulate the economy in Phuket by increasing consumption of goods, which will increase the income of farmers, producers and entrepreneurs," he said.

Phuket City Mayor Sarot Angkhanapilas said the Roi Rim Lay festival will return to Saphan Hin on April 23-24.

The event, as with the event held last weekend, will be held under New Normal requirements, but still feature the live entertainment and other on-stage activities that have proved popular among visitors to the festival.

Pla Wan survives another high-speed accident

VORASIT 'PLA WAN' Issara, owner of the Sri Panwa resort on Phuket's east coast, has been involved in yet another serious incident involving a car, this time losing control of his B30-million Bentley, which overturned three times before going up in flames, while returning from Khao Lak in Phang Nga.

Mr Vorasit was with three friends when the car caught fire at about 7pm on Mar 24, reported rescue workers from Thai Mueang Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor).

The group were travelling on Petchkasem Rd in Ban Khanim, Moo 7, Thung Maphrao Subdistrict, in Thai Mueang District, Phang Nga Province, when Mr Voasait lost control of the vehicle.

The car struck a guard-rail, spun several times then overturned at least three times before coming to rest in the middle of the road.

Mr Vorasit and his three friends were all safe, having exited the car before flames



Photo: Thai Mueang OrBorTor

engulfed the luxury vehicle, rescue workers confirmed.

Mr Vorasit on Mar 14 last year survived another road accident at speed, when the Subaru sports car he was driving struck a power pole on Sakdidet Rd in Wichit.

The police's handling of the investigation into the accident stirred anger online, with police initially not willing to confirm whether Mr Vorasit had been tested for alcohol.

Police later confirmed that Mr Vorasit had been tested for alcohol, but gave no further details.

Mr Vorasit was placed in the ICU at Vachira Phuket

Hospital as he was initially reported to be in a coma, but discharged from hospital care soon after.

Further, when speaking about Mr Vorasit's accident, police recognised that the section of road and the curve where he had his accident had long been dangerous and the scene of many accidents.

However, no action was taken to make the curve safer until after Mr Vorasit's accident, with officials spending B30 million on road improvements on what has now become known among local residents as 'Pla Wan Corner'.

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B1bn Bang Tao land grab

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A Treasury Department investigation is underway in the hope of verifying, or denying, claims to 72 rai of beachfront land at Bang Tao with an estimated value of B1 billion,

Aisoon Suthamthewakul, chief of the Phuket office of the Treasury Department, led a survey of the disputed land on Mar 24. Joining Mr Aisoon were Cherng Talay Police Chief Col Chumphon Kananurak and fellow police officers, and soldiers to ensure officials were not impeded in conducting their survey.

The land in question is state land held by the Treasury Department under "Phor Kor" registration, marking the land as government owned and allowed to be developed and used by special permission through government-approved projects.

However, some of the people occupying parts of the 72 rai are claiming ownership through land documents that have yet to be verified.

Local resident Rakchat Munsuk said that the land is home to about



Soldiers escort local officials surveying the land on Mar 24. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

900 villagers. Villagers moved into the area after a mining concession expired in 1977. A Cabinet resolution in 1986 recognised only 11 legitimate occupiers of the land, Mr Rakchat said. "Of those, I am today the owner of [one of the parcels of] land," he said.

Mr Rakchat said that he allowed a boutique resort operator to rent his land. The resort operator then sublet the land as separate smaller plots to about 24 people, who now refused to move.

Mr Rakchat said that he has now been refused access to his own land.

"I am the one who has been abused all the time by mafia groups and the villagers... My underlings went in and there were fights all the time," he said.

Mr Rakchat has filed legal action against all 24 occupiers of the land. "The land actually belongs to the Treasury Department, which according to the department will own it in the future according to a ministry resolution," he said.

"Some villagers come to use some of my land to cook [and sell food]. I have allowed this because of the COVID situation. I help them by not

charging them a single baht," he said.

"But there are others who are demanding money from some of them. I have allowed this for now, and when the lease is up they will be gone," he added.

Thanapon Samran said he inherited his area from his mother, Lai-ra Samran, who had the land returned after the mining concession expired in 1977.

"I have worked here since I was 8 years old, when I worked as a 'beach boy'. In 2005 I started a food business, selling Coke and ice creams to tourists," he said.

"But in 2017 a boutique hotel company owned by Manasan Nararatwanchai and others entered the area by claiming they had rights to the land. They claimed to have leased land from a land owner and started demanding rent from villagers. Some villagers have agreed, others, like me, did not.

"I will not give up because my family have made a living here since my mother's generation. When I refused to pay, there was a conflict. I was bullied and my roti shop was 'hit'," he said.

Racing on pier leaves boy, 13, dead

A 13-YEAR-OLD BOY DIED after his head struck a pylon while he and his friends were racing on Laem Sai Pier in Thepkrasattri, Thalang, on Monday morning (Mar 28).

Police and rescue workers were called to the pier, in Moo 6 Thepkrasattri, soon after 11:30am.

The first-responders arrived to find the boy, Chanachon Chaivichian, a 13-year-old local resident of Moo 6 Thepkrasattri, dead from fatal head trauma.

Police explained that Chanachon was racing along the pier on motorbikes with friends when the accident happened.

The youngsters were on three motorbikes. They were fast approaching the covered seating area at the end of the pier when two of the motorbikes collided, spilling their drivers and passengers onto the pier.

Chanachon was riding as a passenger on one of the motorbikes. He fell and his head struck a pylon supporting the roof of the seating area. He was not wearing a helmet.



The driver of the motorbike Chanachon was riding on was a 14-year-old friend from primary school. The boy, a Myanmar national living in Pa Khlok, was rushed to Thalang Hospital for treatment of serious injuries.

The other youngsters involved in the racing were a boy aged 11, a girl aged 12 and another girl, 13 years old. All three live nearby, in Moo 6 Thepkrasattri.

Jetty supervisor Sudjai Leenoi, 42, said that she was in her office with staff when they saw the children arrive on the motorbikes. Before staff could react, the children took off down the pier at speed, then the accident happened.

At the time of press, police had yet to reveal what action they will take over the deadly accident. Eakkapop Thongtub

More stable power supply hoped for mid-year

TWO 500KVA POWER LINES FROM the mainland and the installation of a 500kVA transformer at a power station in Koh Kaew are hoped to mitigate the widespread minor power outages being suffered across the island by mid-year.

Kitti Petchsanthad, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) Assistant Governor for Transmission System Operation and Asset Management, revealed the news during an inspection visit to Phuket last Sunday (Mar 27).

The project is part of plans drawn up after the power outage in 2013 saw all of Southern Thailand suffer an overnight power outage, Mr Kitti explained.

"Since Phuket is a tourism city, we try to take good care of the electrical system in Phuket," he said.

"EGAT is upgrading the transmission system by installing 500kVA lines from Surat Thani to supply Phuket with the construction of a high-voltage power station at Phuket Power Station 3 [in Koh Kaew]," he added.

The new power supply lines and transformer, when added to the existing power supply system, will serve Phuket's power needs for decades to come, Mr Kitti said.

"In addition to being stable and reliable, it will give investors confidence as well. This will result in the development of the Phuket area for 20-30 years. This is where we attach importance to the development of electrical systems in Phuket," he said.

In all of Southern Thailand, Phuket power consumption is second only to



The installation of a 500kVA transformer at the power station in Koh Kaew is hoped to help mitigate the spate of outages affecting the island. Photo: PR Phuket.

Songkhla province, Mr Kitti noted, followed by Surat Thani, Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Trang.

Phuket draws 400mW from the national grid, mostly supplied from the Khanom Power Plant in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, but supplemented by power plants at the Ratchaphrappa Dam in Surat Thani and the Chana Power Plant in Songkhla.

"These power plants are energy sources that supply electricity to use in the Phuket area, but installing the 500kVA supply will link the power grid in the central region to the south, making it possible to extract electricity from the central region down to help in the southern area and then into Phuket, thereby enhancing the stability," he said.

"In the bigger picture, especially with accommodation operators in the Phuket area, this will ensure investors and tourists alike that Phuket and the southern region have a reliable and stable power source with a highly stable power transmission system," Mr Kitti said.

The Phuket News

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Tourists take Patong tuk-tuk for joyride

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A group of four tourists may have escaped any legal action for allegedly taking a Patong tuk-tuk parked at the beach end of Bangla Rd for a joyride early on Mar 24.

The incident came to light when a video of the tuk-tuk driver chasing down the men was posted on TikTok on Mar 25.

The name of the tuk-tuk driver was not revealed, but in the video a man in a yellow shirt with a hip pack slung over his shoulder took exception to one of the tourists and chased after him down the street. He ceased his pursuit only after a Thai man recording the video shouted from him to stop.

The video was also posted on Facebook by 'Base Sae-jo', accusing the tourists of being drunk. However, the tourist being chased appeared to be noticeably agile and aware.

The Phuket News was told that the driver had parked the tuk-tuk and left the key in the ignition while he went to solicit



The tourists are confronted as they exit the tuk-tuk.

customers. Four foreign men got into the tuk-tuk, started the engine and drove away.

At last report police had yet to confirm whether any complaints had been filed over the incident.

The intense reaction by the man who appeared to be the tuk-tuk driver follows an incident in Patong only two nights earlier (Mar 22), when a motorbike taxi driver pursued a female Thai tourist over the motorbike taxi driver's belief

that she and her friends had recorded him producing a weapon in public.

The tourist, Orathai Aemphet, posted a video of the motorbike taxi driver pursuing her while she sat on the back of another motorbike taxi on her Facebook page.

Ms Orathai explained that she and her friends were about to record a video of themselves singing together on the street when a group of motorbike taxi drivers started verbally

harrasing them.

The motorbike taxi drivers believed the group of women wanted to record them. However, the women had already noticed one of the drivers carrying a weapon and decided to not record anything, and promptly left, Ms Orathai said.

As shown in a later video, the weapon was a large knife.

One of the drivers, the one with the large knife, unconvinced the women did not record any videos, pursued the motorbike Ms Orathai was riding as passenger.

Fearful, Ms Orathai repeated her explanations that no previous video was recorded, while recording the motorbike taxi driver pursuing her. In this video the motorbike taxi driver is seen putting the knife away on his motorbike.

Patong Police reported the motorbike taxi driver only as "Mr Teerawat", who they said "apologised and admitted his mistake and is ready to be punished and prosecuted in all respects."

"The Patong Police Station has taken further legal action," was all the report said.

Vietnamese man paddles for India

A VIETNAMESE MAN who had flown into Phuket, rented a dinghy and attempted to paddle to India to see his family has been rescued after spending 10 days seemingly lost at sea.

The Sea Air Rescue (SAR) unit of the Royal Thai Navy confirmed that Ho Hoang Hung, 37, was picked up on Mar 23 about five miles off the Similan Islands after officers based at their Thai Muang base in Phang Nga had been alerted of the man's plight by the local fishing trawler Petchrungruang.

Pol Col Somphop Khamkhana of the Similan Navy SAR set off with a team of officers to locate the man based on coordinates provided by the trawler.

Once they did manage to locate him they realised there was a language barrier issue and initially Mr Ho was not granted entry to the navy boat. Instead his dinghy was tied to the stern of the boat while his documentation was checked. Mr Ho was provided with water and food while the background check was conducted.

It was later confirmed that



The man's dinghy was tied to the Navy boat while his documents were checked and verified. Photo: Supplied

he had entered Thailand via Phuket Airport, although the exact date of his entry was not revealed by officers.

After entering the country, Mr Ho had rented a rubber dinghy and paddle from a vendor in Phuket and set off towards India where his family is currently located. Mr Ho admitted that he does not possess a valid visa to enter India.

He had been at sea for 10 days before being rescued.

Police confirmed they were working with Immigration to verify the exact details of Mr Ho's entry into Thailand and would coordinate with the Vietnamese embassy in order to determine next steps.

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Talks target return of cruises

The Phuket News
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Kevin Cheok, Singapore Ambassador to Thailand, last week paid a courtesy call on the Governor of Phuket to discuss plans to re-open cruise tourism between the two islands.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew and Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong welcomed Ambassador Cheok at the Phuket Governor's Lounge at Phuket Provincial Hall on Mar 23.

Governor Narong opened the pleasantries. "In 2020, I had the opportunity to meet with the Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore in Thailand to drive the opening of direct flights from Singapore to Phuket, which clearly resulted in concrete results. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Singapore for having direct flights to Phuket," he said.

Ambassador Cheok noted that on average there are currently two Singapore-Phuket flights per day. "By next week, it will increase to four flights per day, which will be similar to before the



Singapore Ambassador Kevin Cheok (left) speaks with Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew on Mar 23 about drafting requirements for the return of cruise liners. Photo: PR Phuket

COVID-19 epidemic, when there were about five flights per day," he said.

"On this occasion I would like to thank Phuket as well. I have spoken with Singaporeans who live in Phuket. They appreciate Phuket [officials] for taking good care of Singaporean tourists staying in

Phuket," he added.

Amb Cheok said that the COVID infection situation in Singapore was similar to that being experienced in Phuket. "About 99% of those infected are asymptomatic or suffering only very mild symptoms," he said.

"We have also found that

the weekly infection growth rate from COVID-19 infections has been consistently less than 1, which means cases in Singapore are declining," he noted.

Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) said that the rate of infec-

tions in Phuket was likely to continue to decrease.

"Most of the infected people [in Phuket] are 'Green' patients, meaning mostly asymptomatic, which has resulted in lower rates of hospital bed use," Dr Kusak said.

"Phuket has passed the peak of infections already. Phuket is well managed and the people of Phuket have adapted to live in the midst of the coronavirus situation very well.

"More than 87% of people in Phuket have been vaccinated with complete doses and we have a fatality rate at the national level of only 0.7%, and in Phuket only 0.2% of those infected have died," Dr Kusak said.

Ambassador Cheok noted that both Phuket and Singapore were entering the transition to consider COVID-19 an 'endemic' disease.

"Once that happens, I can see Singapore re-opening cruise routes between Singapore and Thailand. This should help boost the tourism sector and the economy of Phuket," he said.

Amb Cheok highlighted that in 2019 about 110 cruise

ships from Singapore docked in Phuket, carrying more than 250,000 passengers.

Amb Cheok proposed that Phuket and Singapore start drafting "harmonized cruise standards", such as any required measures including any exemptions from RT-PCR tests before and during travel.

"They can provide an ATK test from Singapore before departure instead," he said.

"Passengers on board will be fully vaccinated and undergo Antigen Rapid Test from Singapore prior to departure," he added.

Governor Narong voiced his support for the move.

"Phuket is ready to take care of tourists who come to travel in Phuket. This is the intention of Thailand: to take care of the tourists who come to visit and help restore Thailand's economy as best as possible," he said.

Governor Narong assigned local officials to start working on drafting the measures required for cruise tours so they would be ready to be implemented as soon as they are allowed to be used.

The draft proposal is to be submitted to the central government.



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Defaulted COVID payouts hit B98mn

SOME 30 PEOPLE GATHERED at Phuket Provincial Hall on Monday (Mar 28) to demand action be taken over insurance companies refusing to pay out COVID-19 coverage claims. In total, 831 people in Phuket have been affected by the defaulted payouts, amounting to B98 million.

The group, led by Dechanan Suwanno and Winit Yuraman, submitted a formal request for Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew to take action to protect the people whose COVID insurance policies had not been upheld.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Three companies were specifically named by the group: Southeast Insurance, Thai Insurance Co and The One Company.

The Office of the Insurance Commission (OIC) in January announced that Southeast Insurance had not been approved for liquidation, stressing that

all coverage for policyholders was still in place. In late December, the Finance Ministry revoked the business license of The One Insurance after it failed to raise its capital to solve its liquidity issue and settle COVID-19 insurance claims.

Vice Governor Pichet Panapong and OIC Phuket Director Thanat Kumsantia received the request. Mr Thanat assured the group that the OIC had launched an investigation into the failure of the companies to pay out COVID-19 claims.

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Travel rules eased if caseload decreases

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Test and Go scheme and Thailand Pass registration are expected to be scrapped by June 1 if there is no surge in infections or fatalities during the Songkran festival in April, says the Tourism and Sports Ministry.

Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said Thai tourism has to move forward after opening the Phuket Sandbox in July 2021.

"Thailand started like a rabbit, running quickly last year as we reopened to visitors. We cannot let the country fall behind as many nations are opening borders and have fewer restrictions than us," Phiphat said at the annual general meeting of the Association of Thai Travel Agents last Thursday (Mar 24).

The government and tourism agencies have to work together to propose further loosening of travel restrictions, allowing more tourists into the



Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn. Photo: MoTS

country, with a target of 7 million arrivals this year, he said.

The Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) recently dropped the 72-hour pre-travel RT-PCR test for international arrivals starting from Apr 1.

The next phase of reopening is expected to take place on May 1, with the RT-PCR test on arrival to be replaced with an antigen test kit (ATK) check conducted by a medical professional.

Phiphat said the upcoming Songkran holidays will be a critical test for further easing

of rules. The number of daily cases, including results from ATK tests in April, has to remain stable. An acceptable rate might be 50,000-60,000 cases, while the fatality rate should stay below 100, he said.

The ministry plans to submit an additional proposal in May to the CCSA after monitoring the situation in April, said Phiphat.

The viral caseload in April could lead to the cancellation of the Test & Go scheme and Thailand Pass from June 1, he added.

Phiphat said if the country

fully reopens and returns to pre-pandemic norms, there would be no need to require RT-PCR test results from tourists. However, an ATK test should be administered the arrival day to maintain confidence locally and prevent uncertainty.

Phiphat said the ministry's proposal regarding an end to COVID testing from June 1 still requires approval from the Public Health Ministry based on the caseload.

The ministry previously forecast 10mn arrivals this year, but with the Omicron surge and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the tally might only reach 7mn, he said.

Tourism revenue could reach 30% of levels recorded in 2019 this year, before improving to 50% next year and fully recovering by 2024.

He said the country needs to improve its ranking in the safety index. Thailand ranked poorly at 111 out of 140 countries in the 2019 Tourism Competitiveness Index and aims to rise to 100 in the next index, he added.

Ruling on 'Joe Ferrari' case set for June 8

BANGKOK

SEVEN FORMER POLICEMEN accused of murdering a drug suspect by suffocating him with a plastic bag will learn their fate on June 8, the Central Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases has announced.

After four months of inquiries and testimony from both plaintiffs and defendants, the court announced on Mar 24 that it would rule on the high-profile case at 9:30am on Jun 8. Closing statements from both sides are to be delivered within 30 days from Mar 24.

Those accused are Pol Col Thitisan "Joe Ferrari" Utthanaphon, Pol Maj Rawirot Ditthong, Pol Capt Songyot Khlainak, Pol Lt Thoranin Matwanna, Pol Snr Sgt Maj Wisut Bunkhiew, Pol L/C Pawikon Khammarew and Pol Snr Sgt Maj Suphakon Nimchuen.

All were at the Muang district police station in Nakhon Sawan before they were dismissed from the police force after drug sus-



Pol Col Thitisan 'Joe Ferrari' Utthanaphon (centre). Photo: Arnun Chonmahatrakool

pect Chiraphong Thanapat, 24, was tortured to death in August last year.

Prosecutors have alleged that the officers led by Pol Col Thitisan suffocated Chiraphong during the interrogation, his head covered by a black plastic bag, while trying to extort B2 million from him.

Public prosecutors and the parents of the victim filed complaints that led to four charges: for malfeasance, abuse of authority, torture causing death, and coercion. The accused could face the death penalty if found guilty.

The parents of the deceased also demanded B1.55mn from the accused in compensation for the death of their son.

Bangkok Post

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Amy of Ants

Low Life among the Formicidae

A leafcutter ant gets to work. Photo: Filo gen



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

Last night I was woken by a burning sensation. It started on my right bicep, then I felt another irritation on my forearm. Finally, my wrist. Mystified, I went into the bathroom, where something dropped off me and fell to the tiled floor. The culprit was a large red ant. I squashed it unceremoniously and watched as a microscopic fellow ant, maybe one millimetre long and a hundredth its size, danced round the now lifeless corpse and – lo and behold – began carrying and dragging it to some unknown destination. What pulling power. Within seconds, dozens more

Pharaoh ants had appeared at the impromptu funeral – guardians of the cadaver. A rather quirky Robert Frost poem came to mind. In 'Departmental', Frost notes not only the humanoid-like efficiency of ants, but their preternatural strength, as one ant – 'the solemn mortician' – heaves 'high in air' a dead moth 'many times his size', and 'carries him out of there'. Frost was not wrong...

In various doomsday scenarios, such insects are predicted to take over a world rendered barren and inhospitable by man. It is not entirely preposterous. More than 90% of all current animal life forms are insects. Among these, ants are supreme. At least 12,000 identified species. Ubiquitous, they have colonised every land mass – bar Antarctica. They have certainly colonised your garden. It is estimated that there

are 1 million ants for every human on the planet. And they are aggressive, especially if you stray near their nests, pheromone-scented trails or hunting territory. Part of the larger order *hymenoptera*, their bee cousins are rarely malevolent unless threatened: ants, on the other hand, will attack at the drop of a hat, or a brush with a bush.

Ants have quite an armoury. Most *formicidae*, so called on account of their capacity to store a chemical called formic acid, possess powerful mandibles: they use them to attack, kill and devour small creatures, or to attach themselves to larger mammals including man. In the latter case, they clamp their jaws onto the exposed flesh, thus allowing the ant a degree of purchase. Once locked on, the insect can arch its back and either squirt formic acid into the punctured skin, or actually sting the victim. Formic acid, let it be known, is corrosive and capable of burning soft tissue. Fire ants have something even more unpleasant in their armoury – highly toxic alkaloids which are contained in a venom sac. As for the South American bullet ant, its sting has been measured as the most painful of all insect stings.

Of course, what gives the humble ant most of its clout is the fact that it is a social insect with a highly organised sense of community. Safety in numbers. Strength in organisation.

Ants have complex nests: the weaver ants in my garden build football-sized structures in which the leaves are glued together by silk produced by the larvae. Even more inventive is the leafcutter ant, whose workers collect pieces of sawn off leaves. These are taken to the colony and fed to a specialised variety of fungus which grows in the nest and provides food. Here, as everywhere in ant communities, everyone has their appointed role and place in the hierarchy – larvae, workers, guards, queens. It was weaver ant guards that attacked me years ago when I foolishly attempted to knock a nest to the ground. Ants literally rained down on me, biting me everywhere. The stench of formic acid assailed my nostrils. I tore off my clothes and plunged into the pool, but even when submerged, I was still being bitten. Water is no deterrent to a single-minded soldier ant.

Yet ants are not always the villains of the piece. In some contexts, they are victims rather than victors. Most insectivorous creatures will feast on a meal of termites or ants. Small birds such as magpie robins and mynahs quarter the concrete surrounds of my pool in the search for ants, as do the agamid lizards and skinks on active duty in the morning sunshine. Among mammals,

anteaters and armadillos feed almost exclusively on the wee beasts. A giant anteater can mop up to thirty thousand a day with the aid of its sticky, sixty centimetre long tongue. Thailand's pangolin, incidentally the most trafficked animal in the world, feeds exclusively on termites and ants. Such a refined diet means that the scaly anteater is found only in one zoo – San Diego – in the entire world.

In certain cultures, man, ever the apex predator, has joined the anteaters: he has long since found that ants can bolster a deficient diet with useful amounts of protein. In Southeast Asia, the eggs and larvae of the weaver ant sometimes appear on market stalls: they are considered a kind of poor man's caviar, and their high price reflects the hazardous and potentially painful business of tackling their football-sized nests.

For centuries, the Chinese – who else – have exploited this natural aggression. Aware of ants kamikaze-like capacity to defend their territory, Chinese farmers encourage these tree-dwelling species to nest in their citrus groves, thereby ensuring that their precious oranges and lemons are not attacked by thrips, caterpillars, mites or leaf miners, foliar feeding insects that might otherwise ruin an entire crop. A very effective bio-control.

As every gardener knows, and to his utter frustration, ants also act as protectors towards certain pests such as aphids. Aphids are bad enough on their own; they pierce the tender growing points of plants and suck out the sap. Moreover they breed at such a rate that an infestation can develop within days and can either seriously weaken the plant or even prove terminal. Nor is that the end of the story. Weakened and etiolated plants, coated with the sticky excrement of these green or white flies, then fall victim to other infestations such as sooty mould.

So where do ants come into the picture? They have a symbiotic relationship with these small flies, protecting them from insect predators such as lacewings or ladybirds, so that they can feast off this so-called 'honey dew', a sugary liquid which the aphids excrete. Green and white flies are among the gardener's worst pests; the protective presence of ants merely exacerbates the problem.

Patrick Campbell's book 'The Tropic Gardener', described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, is available for B500 (half price) to personal callers from 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13 in Rawai (Tel: 076-61227 or 085-7827551).

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My journey to the West

ON CAMPUS

By Lee Yan Yee

When it comes to the word 'leadership,' most individuals are probably more familiar with it within the context of the workplace; however, you must be a leader in your own life first before inspiring others. Our parents and teachers were leaders, providing guidance, support and motivation. As we grow up and enter society, we have to take on our own responsibilities in self-leadership to accomplish our objectives in life.

Journey to the West is a well-known Chinese literary work and classified as one of the Four Great Classical Novels in Chinese literature. Perhaps you are familiar with the story's intriguing plot, which involves a journey from China to the West in order to obtain sacred Buddhist scriptures. It features five interesting characters: a monk named Tang San Zang and his four disciples: a monkey named Sun Wu Kong, a pig named Zhu Ba Jie, an ogre named Sha Wu Jing, and a steed, one of the Dragon King's sons, ridden by Tang San Zang. As a child I never considered the deep hidden meaning of this story, but as I grew older I realised that it actually reflects our inner world.

The monk refers to our human nature, which is our fundamental character and traits. For instance, we understand that the only way to improve is to put forth effort in self-improvement, so we never stop learning. As you gain strength, you will be able to make more informed decisions. The monk also refers to the emptiness, the true nature of everything, such as being aware of changes. Change is the only constant in life; and once you understand the inner



Lee Yan Yee.

meaning, you will always be prepared – you won't experience various extreme emotions when confronted with change, such as agitation, frustration, disappointment and so on. The faithful steed that never leaves the monk refers to our human bodies because our thoughts and deeds are interrelated.

The monkey represents our actual intention, which is our goal to accomplish something worthwhile, while the gold hoop worn by the monkey represents the obstacles that hinder us in real life, such as morality, practices and customs. The monkey's special abilities represent our awareness through sight, smell, hearing, taste, body, consciousness and uncertainty in the future. The transformation of the monkey into

other objects or subjects can be referred to as human characteristics changing with time, environment, and experiences. You will be able to lead yourself down different paths if you keep an open mind and make allowance for changes in order to improve.

The pig symbolises our instinct, the human desire to gain something. When you have desire, you are driven to achieve it and are willing to go to any length to achieve it. However, the pig's appearance is ugly because when people have extreme desire, they can appear to be ugly in appearance and in behaviour. This serves as a reminder to us to maintain control over our desires when undertaking any accomplishment in our lives.

The ogre could be a metaphor for purity of heart, peace and logic. As you can see from the story, the monk always consults with him and they have in-depth discussions.

Meanwhile, the evil spirits, demons, and monsters in the story reflect the allurements of life; they appear fascinating and appealing, but we should not give in to their temptations.

Though you may not be a leader right now, you can start your journey by cultivating self-leadership in your daily life. Just like the story in *Journey to the West*, once you fully realise yourself, you will be ready to empower others.

NOTE: The view and opinion expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of PSU Phuket and its employees or official policies of PSU Phuket.

This article was featured in 'The Phuket Collegiate Magazine', the university magazine published by Milla Budiarto at PSU Phuket. For more information, visit: <https://www.phuket.psu.ac.th/en/magazine> or to share ideas with Milla email: magazine@phuket.psu.ac.th.

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POP QUIZ

1. How fast must the DeLorean time machine be travelling in order to go 'Back to the Future'?
2. What did Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen discover in 1722?
3. Which country is the largest exporter of bananas?
4. The Sarasin Bridge, connecting Phuket with the mainland, opened in which year?
5. At which age did Al Capone's reign as the crime boss of Chicago end?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

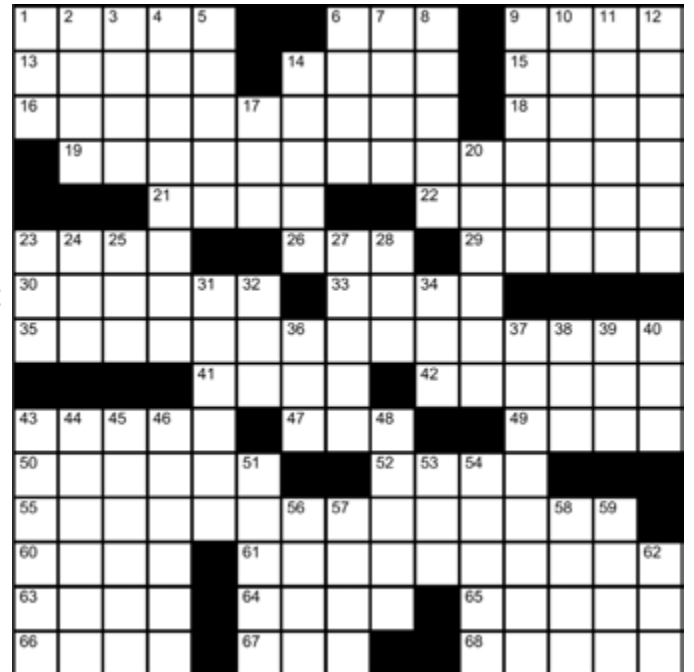
		5				4		
				2	8	5		
2	6		5					1
	5			7		9		
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		4		9			3	
9					2		1	7
		6	9	1				
		1				3		

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Island nation east of Fiji
 6. Stubborn one
 9. Aerobic bit
 13. Milky gems
 14. Mine entrance
 15. Drive----
 16. Justice
 18. Viva-voce
 19. Needs to tighten a bolt?
 21. Use a keyboard
 22. Food tray
 23. "___ Christianity" (Lewis title)
 26. Confer knighthood
 29. Facebook members
 30. ___ Bowl
 33. Try, as a case
 35. Pests in the steeple?
 41. Bridges of Los Angeles County
 42. Woman's hat
 43. Highlanders, e.g.
 47. First name?
 49. Symbol
 50. Breath sweetener
 52. Heave
 55. In a baseball position?
 60. Carbon monoxide's lack
 61. Like Brutus
 63. Last call?
 64. Microprocessor type
 65. Ecu
 66. Open, as an envelope
 67. Army member
 68. Pioneer in Surrealism
- Down**
1. Arnold or Jones
 2. Brilliantly colored fish
 3. Kashmir clan
 4. Shines
 5. Test
 6. Month before Nisan
 7. Net-surfer's stop
 8. Burgoos, e.g.
 9. Places to sit
 10. Flourished
 11. Magical Mr. Clean product?
 12. Whining ones
 14. Like a rainbow
 17. Medicinal amt.
 20. Mediterranean evergreen
 23. Kind of rule
 24. Bygone polit. cause
 25. Blackguard
 27. "Yeah"
 28. Drone, e.g.
 31. Guitar brand
 32. Compass reading
 34. 2, on an ATM
 36. Playing marble
 37. Laggard
 38. TV monitor?
 39. Density symbol
 40. It's made in Japan
 43. Darts
 44. Posterior
 45. Marine mollusks
 46. Dryness
 48. Some nerve
 51. The "U" in UHF
 53. Astern
 54. Weeper of myth
 56. Actress Gray
 57. Certain protest
 58. Beef buy
 59. Udders
 62. Collector's goal

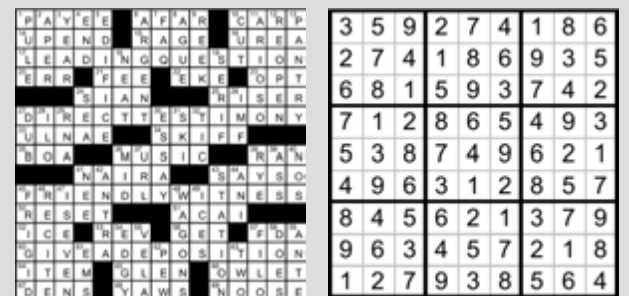
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) 88mph; 2) Easter Island; 3) Ecuador; 4) 1967; 5) 33 years old



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

in five UK adults can't change a light bulb or boil an egg, according to a recent survey.

16

kids are hospitalised every day from gun injuries in the US.

46

percent of Americans have had their private information leaked in data breaches within the past five years.

2,400

US dollars is how much Louis Vuitton's luxury Jenga game costs.

500

billion

LEGO bricks have been created since the first LEGO brick was patented in 1958 – enough to create 10 LEGO towers from Earth to the Moon.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Footprints at Karon Noi. Photo by Paola Vignati

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

This week in history

April 1, 1979

Iran becomes an Islamic republic by a 99% vote, officially overthrowing the Shah.

April 2, 1976

Prince Norodom Sihanouk resigns as leader of Cambodia and is placed under house arrest.

April 3, 1883

Jack The Ripper: The first of 11 unsolved brutal murders of women committed in or near the impoverished

Whitechapel district in the East End of London occurs.

April 4, 1975

Microsoft is founded as a partnership between Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to develop and sell BASIC interpreters for the Altair 8800.

April 5, 1242

During the Battle on the Ice of Lake Peipus, Russian forces, led by Alexander Nevsky, rebuff an invasion attempt



Bill Gates and Paul Allen in 1981. Photo: Microsoft Press Gallery

by the Teutonic Knights.

April 6, 1974

Swedish pop band ABBA wins the Eurovision Song Contest held at The Dome in

Brighton, UK, giving Sweden its first triumph in the contest with the song "Waterloo", and launching the band's historic international career.

April 7, 1933

Prohibition in the United States is repealed for beer of no more than 3.2% alcohol by weight, eight months before the ratification of the XXI amendment. (Now celebrated as National Beer Day in the United States.)

Source: Wikipedia

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The map of PHUKET
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Right race in the wrong place

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc's duel for Jeddah victory made for an absorbing race, but it was never going to be enough to distract from the sport's internal tension over racing in Saudi Arabia.

Unanimity is rare among F1 drivers, but last Friday night (Mar 25) there was agreement among all 20 of them to boycott the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

As the cars took to the track for the first session of the weekend a plume of oily black smoke was rising on the horizon. Its source was an oil depot around 12 kilometres east of the circuit that had just been struck by a rocket.

The Yemeni Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack as the latest salvo in their seven-year war with a Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Saudi Arabia retaliated with airstrikes that reportedly killed at least seven people.

The paddock was understandably jumpy, and the argument that attacks beyond



Max Verstappen during last Saturday's (Mar 26) third practice session ahead of the Saudi Arabia Grand Prix. Photo: Andrej Isakovic / AFP

the urban limits were common enough to be unremarkable did little to settle nerves. But over the course of a four-hour meeting that night the wavering drivers were eventually swayed to complete the weekend, noting it wouldn't have been possible to extract teams and drivers before Monday anyway, so they may as well race with heightened security.

But the drivers managed to extract a concession from F1

to discuss the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix's future on the calendar, even if it's deeply debatable whether those talks will amount to much.

Saudi Arabia is included in the championship on a 15-year deal rumoured to be the most lucrative in F1's history. The national oil company, Aramco, is a major F1 sponsor. The kingdom underpins a significant percentage of F1's bottom line.

The nation has thrown cash around with relative abandon in recent years in what Amnesty International describes as an attempt to 'sportswash' its dire human rights record, one of the worst in the world.

F1 bending its morality for calendar expansion in the name of sporting impartiality is nothing new. Similar arguments have long been wielded against it for races in Bahrain, Qatar and Azerbaijan, but

the bank always wins, and the window of acceptability is each time widened a little further.

But Saudi Arabia is its most daring inclusion yet. It is comfortably the lowest ranked country on the calendar on any index of human rights or civil liberties, and for seven years it's been in a war with Houthi rebels that's turned parts of Yemen into a catastrophic humanitarian disaster.

Jeddah may not quite be a war zone, but the apparent commonality of rocket attacks means it's not far off.

SHINE A LIGHT

Aside from making a mockery of F1's much publicised 'no war' message in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, F1's presence in Saudi Arabia begs the question: how volatile does the security situation have to be before the money no longer outweighs the risk?

When Max Verstappen beat Charles Leclerc to the chequered flag on Sunday night by just half a second to get his first points on the board in his title-defending year, for a precious few hours F1 was able to forget where it was and bask in the evolving

title fight between Ferrari and Red Bull Racing.

After being outwitted in his attempts to take the lead in Bahrain, this weekend Verstappen played a much more patient game, waiting until the final 10 laps to test and prod Leclerc's defences until he finally cracked the Monegasque. But the margins were so fine and the racing so close that even Leclerc admitted afterwards that he'd enjoyed the battle regardless of the outcome.

But as late Sunday night ticked into early Monday morning the sport scrambled for the airport. The diversion of the race had faded and the reality of the situation had been re-established, like an oil cloud hanging thick in the atmosphere.

Formula 1 insists that where questionable human right practices exist, grands prix shine a light on them and hasten progress. If the sport is to return to Saudi Arabia – and it almost certainly will – it must not do so before progress is evident.

The end of the war and the resolution of the humanitarian disaster in Yemen must be the minimum.

Phuket News

English Premier League Predictions

thephuketnews.com/predictions.php

Root's future as England captain in doubt after West Indies rout

CRICKET

QUESTIONS ARE BEING ASKED AS to whether Joe Root should remain as England's Test captain after the West Indies inflicted the latest damaging defeat of his tenure.

A thumping 10-wicket defeat in the third and final Test in Grenada on Sunday (Mar 27) condemned England to a 1-0 series loss after two draws.

Root has now overseen just one win in 17 Tests and has failed to lead England to a series victory in his last five attempts since succeeding Alastair Cook as captain in 2017.

Unlike many an England skipper, Root has maintained his form and is guaranteed a starting place in the batting order, having topped the tourists' batting averages in the West Indies after a 2021 where he scored 1,708 Test runs, the third highest tally in any calendar year.

But longstanding doubts over whether he has the forceful personality and tactical skills needed for captaincy have only intensified in recent months.

Former England captain Mike Atherton is adamant Root's position as skipper was "untenable" and fellow former skipper Nasser Hussain accused "world-class batsman" Root of lacking an "instinctive feel for the game as captain" and being party to a "cop-out" following England's controversial decision to leave James Anderson



Under pressure: Joe Root. Photo: AFP

and Stuart Broad – their two all-time most successful Test bowlers – out of the squad for the Caribbean.

Yet whoever is captain will have a tough task if England keep suffering the kind of collapse that saw them dismissed for 120 in Grenada to leave the West Indies requiring a mere 28 to win.

"I don't see this Test match side suddenly becoming a team that consistently wins series after series and that's even in English conditions," former England captain Michael Vaughan told BT Sport, adding his fellow Yorkshire batsman Root was "a long way short" tactically.

Root, however, insisted on Sunday he wants to remain as skipper, saying: "I feel like the group are very much behind me. I know this is a results-based business but it does not feel like we are far away from turning results." Julian Guyer, AFP

Premier League enters the critical final stretch

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

The Premier League returns to action this weekend following the international break as the season enters its final stretch.

There is still much to play for at both ends of the table with Liverpool and Manchester City fighting it out for the title and a number of teams desperately trying to escape the relegation trap door at the bottom.

Liverpool kick off the weekend's action at home to Watford tomorrow (Apr 2) in a game they are widely expected to win with ease – the Reds have faced the Hornets 27 times in the Premier League era, winning 20 and drawing 2. The last time they faced one another, on Oct 16 last year, Liverpool romped to an embarrassingly easy 5-0 victory in what was Claudio Raineri's first game in charge.

The Hornets are now under the tutorship of wily Englishman Roy Hodgson, facing



Luis Diaz (left) and Digo Jota have added further potency to Liverpool's feared attack. Photo: AFP

one of his many former clubs, although they are still in a woeful situation in 18th place in the table having played at least two extra games than their fellow relegation threatened rivals.

They couldn't pick a tougher opponent as Liverpool have been purring of late. They sit a point behind rivals Manchester City, having both played 29 games, and will

want all three points tomorrow before they travel to the Etihad Stadium on Apr 10 for a game that many are saying will truly determine the fate of this year's title.

Whoever starts from Liverpool's formidable front five of Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane, Diogo Jota, Roberto Firmino and Luis Diaz, expect them to cause the Hornets a torrid time and the Reds to be

top of the league by the time Pep Guardiola's team travel to Burnley a few hours later.

One expects City to emerge victorious but Sean Dyche's team are always a difficult opponent and will be desperately trying to ensure this year isn't the one where they finally drop out of the league, having flirted with relegation in so many years previous.

Leeds face Southampton at home in a game they need to win to edge further away from the drop zone and all eyes will be on Frank Lampard on Sunday as his struggling Everton team travel to West Ham.

The Toffees do have games in hand but are desperately low on confidence and a trip to face David Moyes' stubborn Hammers will be a stiff challenge that they will do well to get anything from.

In the race for the final top four spot, Spurs face a buoyant Newcastle side and Arsenal travel to Crystal Palace, who are still on cloud nine after reaching the FA Cup semi-final. Expect tough games for both the north London teams.



Thailand's Anan Yodsangwal (No.16). Photo: Bangkok Post

Coach apologises as Thais lose again

FOOTBALL

today were because of our mistakes."

NATIONAL U23 TEAM coach Worrawoot Srimaka apologised to the Thai fans for the second time in four days after the War Elephants lost 4-2 to China in the Dubai Cup on Saturday night (Mar 26).

The Thais were also beaten 1-0 by Qatar on the opening day of the tournament in the United Arab Emirates last Wednesday (Mar 23), prompting Worrawoot to say "sorry" to the national team supporters.

Worrawoot said his men made some mistakes early in the match and then forgot to follow the tactics.

"Today, we have to apologise to the Thai football fans once again," said the Thai coach.

"We were way off the mark and all the goals we conceded

Worrawoot added that his men lost their confidence after their efforts to build up the game from the back proved futile on a few occasions at the start of the match and they put themselves under pressure.

"Once you don't follow the tactics, you are bound to lose like this," said Worrawoot. "Now we have to help the players regain their confidence and correct their mistakes as well.

"It all boils down to two things: our players lack fitness and some of them are taking part in their first international tournament.

"We can see that Charnn-arong Promsrikaew has played very well, but it's clear that his fitness is much better than the other players." Bangkok Post

Italy miss out on World Cup again after North Macedonia shock

ITALY

REIGNING EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS Italy will miss a second straight World Cup after losing to a dramatic stoppage-time goal against North Macedonia in Palermo last Thursday (Mar 24)

Four-time World Cup winners Italy were stunned in Palermo as Aleksandar Trajkovski – who used to play club football in the Sicilian city – fired past Gianluigi Donnarumma in the second minute of injury time to give North Macedonia an incredible 1-0 victory.

Italy will again be absent from the World Cup in Qatar after also failing to qualify for the 2018 tournament in Russia when they lost in a play-off to Sweden.

That was a traumatic experience for a nation that had previously been to every tournament since 1958, and this failure is all the more remarkable given that they were crowned European champions less than nine months ago.

That success for Roberto Mancini's side came during a world record 37-game unbeaten run, but four draws in their last five qualifiers last autumn saw them finish second in their group to Switzerland, exposing them to the dangers of the play-offs again.

Elsewhere, Gareth Bale was in inspirational form as his brace secured a 2-1 win for Wales against Austria in Cardiff.



North Macedonia players celebrate as Italy are left dejected. Photo: AFP

Wales, bidding to qualify for their first World Cup since 1958, will be at home in the playoff final but must wait until at least June for that, with the ongoing war in Ukraine meaning their tie away to Scotland remains on hold for now.

It was unbridled joy in Canada after they qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 36 years on Sunday (Mar 27) with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Jamaica in Toronto.

Canada's English manager John Herdman said the qualification was proof that Canada was a "football country".

"I'm just happy for these lads. When I first took over and I said, 'We're going to qualify for the World Cup,' I don't think they believed us," Herdman said.

"I'm happy for them because all of these fans have waited and waited and waited, and hung in with us – and we're going." AFP



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Premier League returns with all to play for > p15



TEENAGE KICKS!

Thai rookie Atthaya wins playoff to capture first professional LPGA title

Atthaya Thitikul poses with the JTBC Classic winner's trophy after her triumph last Sunday (Mar 27) in Carlsbad, California. Photo: AFP

GOLF

AFP

Teenager Atthaya Thitikul won a playoff over Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen with a bogey on last Sunday's (Mar 27) second extra hole to capture the JTBC Classic for her first LPGA title.

World number 14 Atthaya, an LPGA rookie 19-year-old making only her fifth tour start, fired the low round of the week at eight-under-par

64 at Aviara Golf Club in Carlsbad, California.

That left her deadlocked with Madsen after 72 holes on 16-under 272 and, after missing a six-foot birdie putt for the win on the first playoff hole, Atthaya took advantage of Madsen going into water and claimed the crown with a bogey on the second.

"I just focus on my game and do the best I can and it has turned out to be enough," Atthaya said.

"It means a lot. It means the world to me. I know my

parents and coaches back home are watching me now. It's meaningful to all of us not just me."

With the win, Atthaya became the sixth Thai native to claim an LPGA Tour title and took home a prize money payout of US\$225,000 (B7.6 million) from an overall purse of \$1.5mn.

South Korean An Na-rin was third on 273 with Canada's Maude-Aimee Leblanc, Thailand's Pajaree Ananarukarn and top-ranked Ko Jin-young of South Korea on

274. England's Charley Hull was seventh on 276. New Zealand's Lydia Ko fired a 68 for her LPGA-record 34th consecutive under-par round.

The event was the final tuneup for this week's first major women's golf tournament of the year, the Chevron Championship at Rancho Mirage (Mar 31-Apr 3).

The playoff began at the par-4 18th hole. Madsen sent her approach over the back of the green while Atthaya bounced her second shot six feet beyond the hole.

But Madsen chipped the ball two feet from the cup and Atthaya pushed her birdie putt wide left to set up another playing of 18.

After Madsen chipped her fourth onto the green, Atthaya putted to eight feet. Madsen missed her bogey putt and the teen two-putted for the win.

In the final round, Atthaya made nine birdies, matching the lead with birdies at the par-4 16th and par-5 17th and sinking a clutch eight-foot par putt at 18 to stay level with Madsen, who had three holes to play.

The Dane drove over the 16th green, chipped to three feet but then missed her birdie putt as An tapped in for birdie to join the leaders.

Madsen found dirt left of a cart path at 17 but blasted her approach to eight feet and sank the tense birdie putt to reclaim the lead alone as An lipped out on a three-foot par putt to fall back.

At 18, Madsen suffered her first three-putt bogey of the week, missing a six-foot par putt and making a closing 70 that forced the playoff.

Hat-trick for golden boy Pongsakorn at Dubai Championship

PARA GAMES

THAILAND EMERGED WITH great credit from the recent World Para Games in Dubai after a medal haul of 8 gold, 11 silver and 10 bronze resulted in a third place finish overall.

The Dubai 2022 World Para Athletic Grand Prix and 13th Fassa International Para Athletic Championships took place in Dubai from Mar 21-25.

Leading the charge for Thailand was Paralympic hero Pongsakorn Paeyo, showing he has lost none of his quality after storming to another hat-trick of gold medals, as he did at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo last September.

On the opening day of com-



Pongsakorn Paeyo. Photo: Sports Association of Phuket

petition last Monday (Mar 21) he claimed top-spot in the men's 800m wheelchair finals of the T53 class, crossing the finish line with a time of 1 minute 38.36 seconds.

He was followed by fellow Thais Masburi Azae with a time of 1m 41.25s and Sopha Inthasen in 1m 41.51s, who won silver and bronze medals respectively.

Pongsakorn then won gold in the men's 400m T52/53 class in 47.41s, with Masburi and Sopha again finishing second and third respectively.

Rounding off his triple haul, Pongsakorn stormed to gold medal victory in the men's 100m T53 class in 14.45s with Sopha claiming bronze in 15.57s.

Elsewhere, Pitchaya Kuratanasiri won the men's 100m T33/51/52 class with a time of 19.65s, Denpoom Kotcharang won silver in the men's 100m T63/64 class and Chaiwat Ratana, racing in the T34 class, won silver in the men's 100m and bronze in the men's 800m.

Thailand dominated in the men's 400m T54 class as Athiwat Phaengnua won gold with a time of 45.04s, Saichon Konjane won silver

in 46.38s and Phutharet Kongrak claimed bronze in 46.44s.

In the men's 5,000m T54 class Thai veteran History Wahoram claimed silver with a time of 10 minutes. Fellow Thais Phutharet Kongrak and Pipatpong Sianglam finished fifth and sixth respectively.

In the women's wheelchair racing, Techini Duangin won bronze in the 100m T34/54 class and compatriot Athitaya Chukerd won bronze in the 800m race of the same classification.

In the men's shotput class F11/20, Boonkong Sanaeput not only won the gold medal but set a new world record of 13.25 metres with his effort.

Colombia finished top of the medal table overall with Algeria in second place and Thailand in third place.

Ben Tirebuck