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NOW PUSH

PHUKET GOVERNOR PUSHES TO VACCINATE 50,000 RESIDENTS IN SEVEN DAYS

Governor Narong is pushing for as many people in Phuket to be vaccinated as quickly as possible. Photo: PR Dept

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw has called for people to register to be vaccinated for COVID-19 in a push that he hopes to see 50,000 people in Phuket receive their first injection within seven days of the April delivery arriving on the island.

The call for people to register came at a special meeting of Phuket Communicable Disease Committee at Phuket Provincial Hall last Sunday (Mar 28)

"We will certainly receive 100,000 doses of vaccines in April, and we plan to administer injections to 50,000

people within seven days," Governor Narong said.

"The 50,000 people will be mainly those who work in the tourism industry," Governor Narong said.

"At this stage, 15,000 people have registered to be vaccinated. However, the vaccine will also be provided to officers and people from other industries who want to be vaccinated," he said.

The push to get mass vaccinations underway is in line with the goal of opening Phuket to receive foreign tourists by July 1 without enforcing any quarantine, Governor Narong explained.

The Centre for Economic Situation Administration (CESA) last Friday (Mar 26) approved Phuket to

receive vaccinated foreign tourists from July 1 under the 'Phuket Tourism Sandbox' plan on the condition that 70% of the island's residents had also been vaccinated for the virus.

"For the Phuket Tourism Sandbox plan to open and welcome foreign tourists without quarantine from July 1, we will vaccinate our Phuket-registered people, those from other provinces but who work in Phuket, and foreigners," Governor Narong said.

"We all have to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity as well as to boost confidence among foreign tourists [wanting to travel to Phuket]," he added.

"So, I want everyone to register for vaccination as fast as possible,

in order to show our intention to the central government," he said.

"Show them that we all will be vaccinated before July 1 in order to recover Phuket's economy as soon as possible," Governor Narong urged.

However, the logistics of how so many people in Phuket can receive vaccination injections in just seven days remains to be explained.

Repeated explanations by officials report that nine vaccination centres will be set up across Phuket. Administering injections to 50,000 people in just seven days will require each centre to vaccinate nearly 100 people an hour, every hour for eight hours a day, during the seven days.

However, the vaccination centre...

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Patong gets a new mayor in local elections



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Wal Brown receives Order of Australia



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F1 season off to a flying start in Bahrain thriller



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News



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National support for vaccine push

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...set up at Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town, according to the online registration form, is open only from 9am to 4pm.

Also not yet confirmed is when the vaccines will arrive. Governor Narong kept repeating “next month”, which started yesterday (Apr 1).

Another aspect that has raised much concern across the island is whether expats and retirees are included in the definition of “foreigners” when officials report who will be vaccinated.

The form to register to be vaccinated is in Thai-language only and applicants must be Thai nationals. Applicants must enter a Thai government ID card number in order for the application to be accepted.

Of note, one foreign retiree reported to *The Phuket News* this week that he had presented himself at Vachira Phuket Hospital in person to register to be vaccinated at a later date, only to be declined as he did not have a Thai government ID card.

GROUND RULES

In approving the Phuket Tourism Sandbox plan, the CESA in Bangkok explained that it will first reduce, then elimi-



Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn and Public Health Deputy Minister Dr Satit Pituthecha last week publicly discuss their support for the July 1 re-opening amid plans to develop Thailand as a Medical Hub. Photo: MoTS

nate, mandatory quarantine requirements.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn announced last Friday (Mar 26) that tourists visiting Phuket who have been vaccinated and test negative for the virus on arrival from April 1 to June 20 will now have to serve only seven days' mandatory quarantine.

From July 1 quarantine will not be required for tourists visiting the island, on the basis

they have been vaccinated and test negative for COVID-19, he said.

“In the second quarter of this year, we will open for tourists who are fully vaccinated with two doses of vaccine to some areas, but they have to face quarantine for seven days,” he said.

“The areas are Phuket, Phang Nga, Koh Smui, Pattaya, and Chaing Mai.

“For the third quarter, tourists will not face quarantine

only in Phuket,” he said.

“Then, in the last quarter, we will open for tourists without quarantine in Krabi, Phang Nga, Koh Samui, Pattaya and Chiang Mai. However, they still must follow disease control measures,” he added.

“For the roadmap to open Phuket as the first area in the country, 70% of people on the island must be vaccinated to create the herd immunity before July 1,” he said.

“We expect about 100,000

tourists to visit Phuket in the second quarter, and more tourists thereafter.

“Within this year, we expect about 6.5 million tourists to visit Thailand and generate income estimated at B350 billion.”

SANDBOX STRATEGY

Bhumikitti Raktaengam, President of Phuket Tourist Association, in his presentation explained the Phuket Tourism Sandbox strategy to revive Phuket's tourism industry.

Mr Bhumikitti explained that two key requirements for reopening Phuket to receive tourists were: 1) mass vaccinations in order to achieve herd immunity; and 2) No quarantine for tourists.

“Currently, Phuket Province has requested a quota of 933,174 vaccine doses to cover 466,587 people – including groups of entrepreneurs and migrant workers in the Phuket area,” he said.

Phuket Province has a population of 417,402 people who are eligible for vaccination, Mr Bhumikitti said.

The requested vaccine doses are enough to vaccinate all 310,357 people registered in the civil registration database as 18 years old and over, he said.

The quota also allows for

94,000 people who work in tourism-related businesses but who are not registered as living in Phuket, he added.

“This group must be 100% vaccinated,” he said.

The quota also accounted for vaccinating 70% of 7,500 people known to work in other businesses on the island but are not registered as living in Phuket, he noted.

Mr Bhumikitti also clarified that 80,000 foreign workers were known to be living and working on the island.

“Of those, 70%, about 56,700 people, can receive the vaccine, which will bring the total number of people in Phuket who can be vaccinated to 466,587 people, hence the request for 933,174 doses of the vaccine,” he said.

Repeating the explanation by Phuket's leading health officials, Mr Bhumikitti also explained that the plan for Phuket to receive the vaccine doses was as follows: 4,000 doses in March, 100,000 in April, 300,000 in May, 200,000 in June, 64,587 in July, 200,000 both in August and in September, and 64,587 doses in October.

“There will be nine vaccination points across Phuket to make Phuket a white area safe from COVID-19,” he said.

Parking scam gang busted

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED eight people for illegally charging people to park their vehicles in public areas near Nimit Circle on the east side of Phuket Town.

Capt Wiripol Tip-aut of Phuket City Police told *The Phuket News* that he was called to the scene around 10pm last Thursday night (Mar 25).

On arriving he found the eight people who had been demanding a fee from people who parked in the public areas near the circle, a spot popular with many entertainment venues.

Capt Wiriphol confirmed that the eight people were taken to Phuket City Police and charged for “bullying” in public under Section 397 of the Criminal Code.

The eight, all men, were named as Boonrat Sawek,



Photo: Phuket City Police

Aroon Chitchonlathan, Arun Chitchonlathan Sophat Sengmueng, Yai Duangkhamtib, Winai Mankarn, Thani Khemkheang and Wassana Jitprasong.

The arrests followed a similar incident on Mar 18 when police arrested Adisorn Ruethong, 36, for the same charge.

Adisorn was arrested in front of Robinson Department Store on Thawornwong Rd where he had been asking for parking fees

from people.

Section 397 of the Criminal Code stipulates: Any person who, in a public place or in public and through whatever act, treats another with insolence or in an offensive way or causes another to undergo disgrace, trouble or annoyance.

The person shall be liable to imprisonment for not more than one month, or a fine not exceeding B1,000 or both.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Human bones found near pond

POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING human skeletal remains found in long grass beside a pond in Baan Manik, Srisoonthorn last Wednesday morning (Mar 24).

Capt Kraisor Boonprasong of the Thalang Police was notified of the remains at about 11am.

Police together with rescue workers from Srisoonthorn Municipality and Kusoldharm Foundation arrived at the scene to be directed to the bones by local resident Thong Sanwong, 66.

Nearby the bones were a sport shirt and shorts as well as two large plastic bottles of water joined by a length of rope.

Mr Thong told police that he, his wife and two neighbours had come to the pond to fish. After a good day's catch on the Tuesday, the four returned to the pond Wednesday morning (Mar 24).

Mr Thong said he found the remains while cutting long



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

grass to clear a path to the pond to make the journey to the pond easier.

Mr Thong's neighbor, Boonyong Soonsaelor, 57, explained, “We were all using our knives to cut the grass to walk to the area, which is about 500 metres from the main road. “[After finding the remains] We all were shocked and ran away. Then we called the police to come and examine them,” she said.

“I will never ever come to this pond again,” Mrs Boonyong added.

After inspecting the scene, police gathered the bones and

had them taken to Thalang Hospital.

From there they will be forwarded to the Central Institute of Forensic Science (CIFS), Capt Kraisor said.

Thalang Police Deputy Chief Lt Col Krissana Channit, who also inspected the scene, said that he believed the person whose remains were found died at least months ago.

“We believe that the person drowned in the pond. The body would have resurfaced and was likely dragged back to shore by a flesh-eating animal,” Lt Col Krissana said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Key towns elect new mayors

The Phuket News
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Patong, Phuket Town and Chalong all have new mayors, according to the preliminary results of the municipal elections held across Phuket last Sunday (Mar 28).

The Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) revealed the preliminary winners on Monday afternoon, and posted the preliminary counts later that evening.

More than 230,000 eligible voters turned out to cast their votes for candidates contesting the positions of mayor or as councillors in the 12 municipalities across Phuket: Phuket City, Patong, Kathu, Wichit, Chalong, Rawai, Rassada, Srisoonthorn, Karon, Chong Talay, Thepkasattri and Pa Khlok.

However, PEC Chief Pasaakorn Siripakayapon cautioned that the official results of the election might take 30-60 days to announce.

Among the unofficial winners announced on Monday was Chalernsak Maneesri, who won the election for Patong Mayor.



Chalernsak Maneesri has been elected Patong Mayor, according to preliminary results of the elections last Sunday (Mar 28).

Mr Chalernsak, representing Patong Palang Mai Party (Patong New Power Party), was No 1 on the ballot.

Mr Chalernsak was elected Patong mayor in November 2002 after his brother Surasak was removed from office by Interior Minister at the time, Purachai Piemsomboon, for election fraud.

Then Mr Chalernsak and his entire 17-member council

were themselves dismissed from office for election fraud in November 2003.

Now Mr Chalernsak finds himself standing on the verge of victory in being elected mayor of Phuket's busiest tourism town, again.

Mr Chalernsak garnered 2,924 votes in the election, compared with Chalermluck Kebsup's 2,811 votes. Pakrit Keesin, younger brother to in-

fluential Patong businessman Preechawut 'Prab' Keesin, scored 2,686 votes.

"Thank you to all the votes from the parents and brothers of Patong who trusted and chose me as the mayor of Patong," Mr Chalernsak posted on the Patong Power Team Facebook page on Monday.

Another surprise result was long-standing Phuket

City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana being ousted by former Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or *Or Bor Jor*) councillor Saroj Angkhanaphilas.

Mr Saroj, representing the Rak Phuket Party (Love Phuket Party), was allocated No 2 on the ballot.

"I would like to thank you for every encouragement, all the support from the brothers and sisters of Phuket Municipality.. We (Phuket Municipality residents) all join hands to reach this point with hope... Hope that the quality of our family's lives and the future of our children is about to change for the better.. Rak Phuket team is involved in making everyone's hopes come true... 'Then we will change the city together.' Thank you," Mr Saroj posted online.

According to the preliminary counts, Aroon Solos has so far kept his seat as Mayor of Rawai, Kreetha Chotiwichiphapath looks set to reclaim his position as Mayor of Wichit, and Chaianan Sutthikul appears to have kept his seat as Mayor of Kathu.

However, Samran Jindaphon appears to have lost his

seat as Chalong Mayor to Ms Thanaporn Ongsantiphap of the Ruam Pattana Chalong Party (Chalong Development Together Party), who ran for elections as No 3 on the ballot.

In the remaining municipalities, according to the initial counts, the following candidates have been elected as follows: Jadet Wicharasorn, Mayor of Karon; Nakharin Yorsengrathas, Mayor of Rassada; Suniran Rachatapruet, Mayor of Chong Talay Municipality; Prasong Trairat Mayor of Thepkasattri; Chalernpol Kerdsup, Mayor of Srisoonthorn; and Panaya Sampharat, Mayor of Pa Khlok.

Staff at the PEC explained that in accordance with election law the PEC will forward the ballots to the Election Commission of Thailand in Bangkok for confirmation of the results, which by law must be announced within 30 days of the election, notwithstanding any complaints filed against candidates.

"The Election Commission will complete the count as soon as possible and announce the election results within 60 days of the election day," a PEC staffer said.

Immigration overloaded by COVID visa rush

PHUKET IMMIGRATION has yet to explain what caused the mass of foreigners to be forced to wait outside last Thursday morning (Mar 25) while waiting to even receive a numbered ticket to have their applications processed.

Foreigners at the office in Phuket Town reported to *The Phuket News* that the long queue of foreigners had already stretched down the stairs at the front of the building, waiting to be served in the upstairs section of the building.

The upstairs section is usually where foreigners staying on non-immigrant visas apply to renew their one-year permit-to-stay.

One foreigner told *The Phuket News* that most of the people waiting outside were Russian-speaking, and were waiting to renew their 60-day "COVID visas".

Phuket Immigration Deputy Chief Col Nareuwat Putthawiro, who is usually prepared to answer questions about immigration issues, told *The Phuket News* that he was unaware of the situation as he is currently in



Foreigners were already forced to wait outside when the office opened on Mar 25. After that, the queue just grew longer. Photo: Supplied

Bangkok on a three-month training course.

He offered no alternative contact.

Calls to the Phuket Immigration office number went unanswered. Even calls to the Immigration bureau national hotline 1178 went unanswered.

The crowd last Thursday came while the country remains under the emergency decree enacted specifically to allow the government to create laws to avoid any situations that might assist the spread of COVID-19.

One foreigner who arrived before the office opened that morning left after realising how long the queue

was to get inside the front door to the upstairs section of the office.

Another foreigner who arrived at the Phuket Immigration Office early that morning reported that the crowd had "settled down" by 11am.

The foreigner, a long-term expat waiting to renew a one-year permit to stay, was still waiting after midday.

An immigration volunteer at the office told the foreigner still waiting that the crowd was "because it's near the end of the month and all the tourists trapped by the COVID situation must renew their visas at the same time." *The Phuket News*

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 22 m/s

SAT APR 3

High: +32°
Low: +26°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN APR 4

High: +32°
Low: +27°

Wind 7 m/s

MON APR 5

High: +32°
Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE APR 6

High: +31°
Low: +27°

Wind 7 m/s

WED APR 7

High: +32°
Low: +27°

Wind 7 m/s

THU APR 8

High: +32°
Low: +27°

Wind 7 m/s

Man surrenders for posting revenge porn

Eakkapop Thongtub
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A 28-year-old man wanted on an arrest warrant for posting a sex video of himself and his ex-girlfriend online has surrendered to police.

Lt Col Chatchai Chunoo of the Wichit Police explained that Narong Chuthong, 28, presented himself at Wichit Police Station at about 2:30pm on Mar 24.

Narong was wanted on an arrest warrant issued by the Phuket Provincial Court on Dec 9 last year for defamation of character by publication.

However, Narong was already in police custody – and later released – just days earlier, on Monday that week (Mar 22), Lt Col Chatchai said in his arrest report.

Narong had been arrested for causing damage to a police vehicle after he tried to flee a routine stop-and-search early that morning, Lt Col Chatchai explained.

Capt Thammanoon Poon-saen was on patrol on a motorbike when he saw Narong “acting suspiciously” parked in front of The Future Condominium on Chao Fa West Rd, Wichit, at about 4:40am, Lt Col Chatchai said in his report.

Capt Thammanoon was accompanied by Manop Duen-peng, who was driving a police



Narong Chuthong, 28, presented himself at Wichit Police Station on Mar 24. Photo: Wichit Police

pickup truck, Lt Col Chatchai noted.

Mr Manop was not reported as a police officer, but no reason was given as to why he was driving a police vehicle that was on patrol.

Regardless, Lt Col Chatchai reported that Capt Thammanoon had parked his motorbike near Narong in order to examine him and search his motorbike.

Not wanting to oblige, Narong took off down the road on his motorbike.

Mr Manop followed in the police pickup truck, and swerved in front of Narong

to prevent his escape.

Narong suffered minor injuries when he was unable to avoid colliding into the side of the pickup truck, Lt Col Chatchai reported.

Mr Manop was fined B500 for reckless driving and causing other injury and damage to people and their property, while Narong was fined for B400 for reckless driving and causing damage to other people's property, Lt Col Chatchai explained.

That was on Monday.

Come Wednesday morning (Mar 24), police checked Narong's criminal history and

found that he was wanted on the arrest warrant issued by the Phuket Provincial Court, Lt Col Chatchai said in his report.

Wichit Police officers visited the unit at The Future Condominium that Narong had given as his address when being charged on Monday, but instead of finding Narong, they met his ex-girlfriend Chalita Sang-iad, 28.

Ms Chalita told police that Narong was no longer staying at the condo.

She also explained that she had filed a complaint at Wichit Police Station on Mar

15, after Narong had hit her and damaged her condo by spraying a fire extinguisher throughout the unit.

While police were still there, Chalita called Narong and told him to surrender to police, which he did, Lt Col Chatchai reported.

Narong confessed that he had posted online sex videos of himself and several of his ex-girlfriends, Lt Col Chatchai added.

Lt Col Chatchai did not include in his report any additional charges Narong may now face for assault of Ms Chalita.

Kusoldharm joins COVID relief efforts

THE KUSOLDHARM FOUNDATION has handed out 1,500 packs of essential goods to local people suffering financial hardship during the ongoing COVID-19 economic crisis, with more to come.

A total 500 packs of the essential items were handed out at the foundation's headquarters on Takua Pa Rd in Phuket Town each day over three days, from Mar 19-21.

The packs contained rice, canned foods and eggs, explained foundation president Benjawan Tumpanuruk.

“The next donation of 3,000 packs of essential goods will be held in May to celebrate the birthday of the Poy Jun Sia Hook, the patron god of the Kusoldharm Foundation,” Ms Benjawan said.

“For people who are interested



Photo: Kusoldharm Foundation

in receiving the packs of goods, please follow our Facebook page or contact our foundation,” Mrs Benjawan said.

The Kusoldharm Phuket Foundation can be contacted as follows: 076-355301-2 (Phuket Town); 076-621338 (Thalang); 076-344432 (Patong).

The Phuket News

Montri Rd closes for bridge repairs

REPAIRS TO THE BRIDGE IN front of the main post office on Montri Rd in Phuket Town has forced Phuket City Municipality to close the road while repairs are being carried out.

The road was closed on Monday (Mar 29) and will remain closed 24 hours a day until May 1, said an announcement by Phuket City Municipality.

The closure is to allow contractor Aung Sae Heng Limited Partnership to excavate under the bridge in order to install larger drains to help alleviate any potential flooding, said the announcement.

Motorists in Phuket Town were urged to avoid the area.

Those approaching the road closure from the Montri Hotel are asked to turn right at the post office intersection – do not go straight – said the announcement.

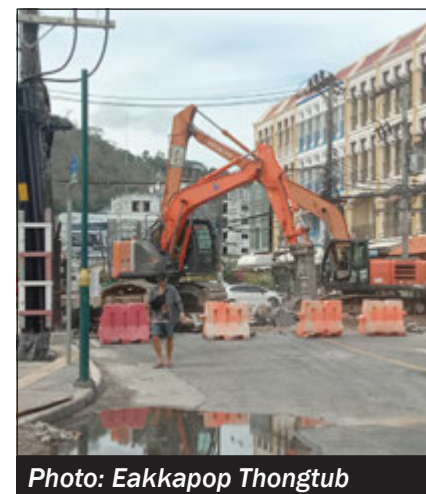


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Those traveling from Surin Circle (the ‘Clock Tower Circle’) are asked to turn left or turn right to enter Phang Nga Rd – do not go straight – the announcement added.

Phuket City Municipality apologised for any inconvenience caused by the road closure. The Phuket News

Historic cave damaged by motocross riders

The Phuket News
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Officials in Ao Luk, Krabi, are trying to track down a group of motorbike riders who rode their motorbikes inside – and damaged parts of – Toh Luang cave earlier this month.

Local residents reported the incident after some 20 riders on motocross bikes from out of town were seen at the cave on Mar 21, reported state news agency MCOT.

About 10 of the motorbikes were ridden into the cave, and raced an obstacle course around stalagmites.

The riders left about 20 minutes later, local residents said.

To protect ancient cave paintings at the site, the Fine Arts Department declared Toh Luang cave, Also known as Khao Pa Mak, a historic site on Sept 16, 2016.

A survey of the cave interior was conducted by Royal Forestry Department officials and local administrative organisation representatives on Mar 23.



About 10 of the motorbikes were ridden into the cave, and raced an obstacle course around stalagmites. Screenshot: MCOT

Marks were found showing that the motorbikes had been ridden two levels in the three-level cave.

The officers found that some of the stalagmites and stalactites had been damaged, and tyre marks were found on ancient paintings on the cave wall.

A video showing the riders gathered at the cave, and then riding through the cave, was posted on social media,

but later removed.

Officials are now trying to track down the riders and the organisers of the event, which they said may include local politicians.

Royal Forest Department Director-General Adisorn Nuchadamrong assured that the offenders would face charges for any damage caused to the cave.

Winit Relungla, a councillor with the Khlong Hin

Tambon Administrative Organisation, said motocross riders were often in the area, riding through palm and rubber plantations.

However, the riders usually obtained permission first. The riders might not have known the cave was off-limits, he said.

The cave had been used for filming for several major movies, including the *Fast & Furious 9*, Mr Winit said.

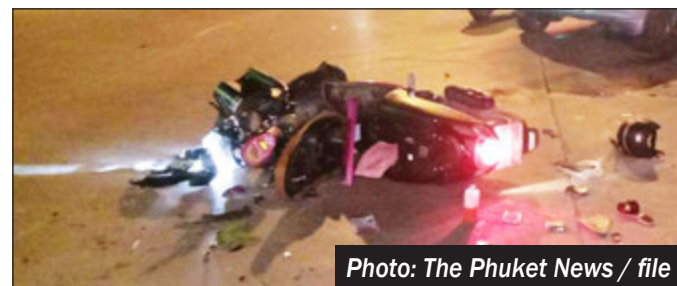


Photo: The Phuket News / file

Phuket targets zero road deaths during Songkran

OFFICIALS HAVE SET a target of zero fatalities on Phuket's roads during the Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign this Songkran holiday, to be enforced from April 10-16.

Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee announced the goal on Mar 25 at a meeting to coordinate all government agencies in carrying out this year's Songkran campaign.

"The goal is to reduce the number of accidents, injuries and fatalities in comparison to previous years," V/Gov Vikrom said.

"The meeting aims to set out our objectives and establish a clear understanding on the relevant preparations required from each relevant official.

"We hope to reduce the number of accidents and have no deaths during the long holiday," he added.

This year's slogan is "Joyful Songkran - drive safe and

away from COVID".

"Ultimately our goal is to ensure the safety and happiness of road users during the holiday period," V/Gov Vikrom concluded.

Last week, Natapanu Nopakun, Deputy Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed that the upcoming Songkran festival will not include water splashing, powder smearing or foam parties.

"The focus will be on more traditional aspects such as merit making, pouring of water on Buddha statues and on the hands of elderly people.

Strict anti-COVID measures will still apply, he added.

The Songkran holiday last year was classified as a normal working period after the COVID pandemic forced festivities to be scrapped. The days were carried over to form a substitute public holiday later in the year. *The Phuket News*



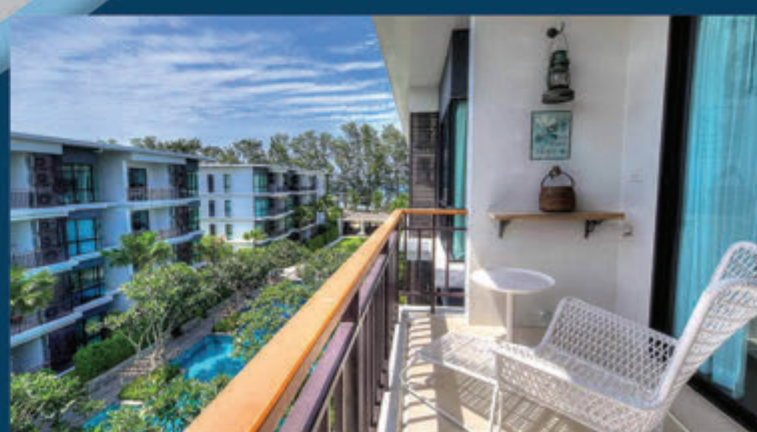
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Phuket average income now B1,900

The Phuket News
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Deputy Prime Minister Jurin Laksanawisit, who also serves as the Minister of Commerce Meeting, was told at a meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall last Saturday (Mar 27) that the average income in Phuket had plunged to B1,900.

Mr Jurin explained to the meeting that his visit to Phuket was to discuss guidelines for economic rehabilitation preparation measures for Phuket, plans to push for mass vaccination of residents on the island, and plans organising tourism promotion activities as the country moves toward reopening to tourists.

During his last visit in December, Mr Jurin faced a hostile welcome to Phuket over the lack of support from the central government to help people in Phuket.

This time brought a high-powered entourage of officials with him.

Joining him last Saturday were Chaayos Jiramethakorn, Deputy Secretary-General of the Political Affairs branch of the Prime Minister's Office; Ruan Phoonphiphat, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce; Rungratana Boon-Long, Inspector-General of the Prime Minister's Office Supervisory District 6 office; Ministry of Commerce Inspector-General Wanchai Warawit; and Dr Pitakpol Bunyamalik, Inspector-General of the Ministry of Public Health District



Deputy Prime Minister Jurin Laksanawisit at the meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall last Saturday (Mar 27). Photo: PR Phuket

11 branch, which oversees all public health policy issues in Phuket.

Representing Phuket were Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, Vice Governor Piyapong Choowong and Rewat Areerob President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or *OrBorJor*), and leading tourism business figures.

Mr Jurin said that the meeting was to focus on five key issues. First was the period from April 1 to June 30, during which Phuket would rely on the central government's "Tour Tiew Thai" tourism stimulus campaign, which the government hopes to generate B15.5 billion in revenues among tourism-dependent operators throughout the country.

The second key issue was the mass vaccination of Phuket and how the vaccine doses will be distributed

once it arrives from Bangkok.

"Now the Ministry of Public Health has confirmed that 930,000 doses of the vaccine will be delivered to Phuket so that Phuket can provide comprehensive vaccination for people and related persons," Mr Jurin said.

The mass vaccination is currently hoped to be complete by June 30, Mr Jurin noted, adding that how that was to be achieved would be left with Phuket Governor Narong.

The third key issue was for Phuket to continue its push to hold and promote local tourism activities, such as Rim Lay seafood festival.

"This activity has begun to become well known and has attracted a large number of tourists to Phuket. Other events include the Heroines Festival and sports activities," Mr Jurin said.

The fourth key issue is to help reduce the cost of living and help the unemployed and other "vulnerable people", Mr Jurin noted.

"In addition to the government's projects, Phuket province has helped to supplement the Ministry of Commerce's low-cost products fair [known as the 'Blue Flag' fairs] by including it at tourism promotion activities," he said.

"The Phuket Provincial Commercial Office, the private sector and the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation have integrated their activities so that products can be sold at cheap prices to help reduce the cost of living for people in the area," he added.

For the fifth issue was the government's budgetary support for holding tourism promotion activities.

"I am ready to act as a central coordinator to lead the budget approval for Phuket Province to be able to proceed with activities and projects," he said.

"The Phuket office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand has reported data showing an increase in room reservations in the Phuket area. Is that a good trend that sees a revival in tourism and the economy of Phuket," Mr Jurin posed.

GROUND ZERO

In response to his question, Dr Chayanon Pucharoen, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at PSU Phuket's Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, was asked

to present his understanding of the economic situation in Phuket.

The news was not good.

The central government's "We Travel Together" campaign was able to generate B1.5bn for the province, Dr Chayanon reported.

However, that did not prevent the number of unemployed people in Phuket rising to about 64,000.

The average income had now fallen to only B1,900 per person per month, he said.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

At the meeting, PPAO President Mr Rewat thanked the central government for its help in supporting local activities to stimulate the economy, such as by promoting the Rim Lay seafood festival, which helped people at the "grassroots" level.

However, he asked the Ministry of Commerce to help support people in Phuket left jobless and without any income to get by until tourism starts to recover. The ministry could provide assistance by providing consumer products such as rice, eggs and cooking oil to help people, he said.

A PPAO survey identified more than 14,000 people as unemployed and without any income, Mr Rewat added.

Kongsak Khoopongsakorn, President of the Thai Hotels Association Southern chapter, urged for the Ministry of Labour to provide more projects to support the hiring of workers, which will enable hotels and other tourism-related businesses to operate.

Government rolls out B350bn relief package for businesses

THE CABINET HAS APPROVED financial relief measures worth B350 billion to help the business sector recover from the impact of COVID-19 after the existing B500bn aid programme underperformed.

The measures include B250bn of soft loans provided by the central bank and another B100bn for asset warehousing to assist debtors who are still unable to repay loans, reported the Bangkok Post last Tuesday (Mar 23).



Bank of Thailand Governor Sethaput Suthiwartnarueput.

Under the B250bn loan scheme, business operators with a credit line of no more

than B500bn with financial institutions can seek loans of no more than 30% of the credit line as of Dec 31, 2019 or Feb 28, this year, depending on which is higher, but no more than B150 million.

For entrepreneurs which have no credit line with any financial institution as of Feb 28, they can seek loans of no more than B20mn at an annual interest rate of no more than 2% during the first two-year period of the

contract and an average rate of no more than 5% per year.

The guarantee period will last no more than 10 years and the maximum claim of the portfolio guarantee is no more than 40% of debts under the scheme.

The measure aims to address limitations of the existing B500bn soft loan measure by expanding the pool of eligible borrowers to include both new and existing borrowers, raising credit limits, lengthening loan tenors, and amending interest rates to better support a business recovery, the Bank of Thailand (BoT) said.

Effective from April 2020, the B500bn soft loan decree has underperformed, with the disbursement rate falling below expectations.

Some B132.8bn worth of soft loans or only 26.6% of the money under the scheme had been disbursed to SMEs as of March 15, according to central bank data. As for the B100bn for asset warehousing, the measure includes the transfer of collateral assets for debt settlement and giving debtors the right to rent

their assets or buy back their assets later.

The programme will prevent businesses such as hotel operators from having to liquidate distressed assets at firesale prices or from going out of business because of their debts.

BoT governor Sethaput Suthiwartnarueput told a briefing yesterday that the economy is expected to return to pre-COVID levels in the third quarter of next year, with the recovery slow and uneven as tourism remains sluggish.

The tourism-reliant economy could take at least four to five years to see the number of foreign tourists return to normal levels, he said.

"The existing measures are not enough to deal with the current sluggish situation which is lasting longer than expected. Therefore, it is necessary to roll out two new measures which are more flexible," Mr Sethaput said.

The Cabinet on Mar 23 also approved the extension of the "We Travel Together" scheme to cover an additional 2 million people, to boost domestic tourism.

The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, approved the third-phase extension of the stimulus package. The Cabinet also approved a package tour stimulus programme called "Tour Tiew Thai".

Earlier, the Cabinet had turned down the proposed Rao Tiew Duay Kan extension, after the first stages were found to be riddled with fraudulent claims. It instructed the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and the Tourism and Sports Ministry to redesign it to prevent further misuse.

At the Cabinet meeting on March 9, the TAT presented improvements and proposed extending it to cover more than 2 million more people and lengthening it.

It was due to end on April 30 but under the proposal approved on Mar 23, it will run to Aug 31.

Launched on July 15, 2020, the domestic tourism stimulus policy was part of the government's effort to spur domestic travel, with foreign tourists still largely refused entry because of the pandemic.

Bangkok Post

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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!

Thailand agrees to accept refugees from Myanmar

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Thai authorities on Monday (Mar 29) denied refusing help to around 3,000 refugees fleeing Myanmar after they had been subjected to an aerial bombardment by the country's military the previous day.

Sitthichai Chindaluang, Governor of Mae Hong Son province where many refugees had fled, insisted measures have been made to accommodate and care for the refugees, contrary to reports from two activist groups.

Governor Sitthichai said any refugees who fled out of panic would be asked to return while those who fled out of fear for their safety will be sheltered on a humanitarian basis, reported *The Bangkok Post*. He added that the refugees will only be allowed to remain near the border.

His comments were supported by Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul who said the Third Army Region commander would deploy soldiers to provide shelter to refugees along the border but not allow them to enter the country.

Thousands were forced to flee Myanmar last weekend after fighter jets attacked villages stationed near the Thai border where ethnic groups that had attacked a military post in the wake of the Feb 1 coup were believed to be based.

"There's still fighter jets over the area," Mark Farmaner, head of Burma



Refugees cross into Thailand after air strikes in eastern Myanmar's Karen state on Sunday (Mar 28). Photo: Ei Tu Hta community leaders handout/AFP

Campaign UK, told *Reuters* on Monday.

Earlier on Monday, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had stated that Thailand was prepared to accept refugees while also dismissing claims that his government was supporting the Myanmar junta.

"In what ways do we support Myanmar troops? Nobody supports use of violence against the people," PM Prayut said.

"We don't want an exodus into our territory, but we will observe human rights, too," he added.

His remarks came two days after the deadliest day of conflict so far in Myanmar where over 110 citizens, including several children, were killed after the junta staged a major show of might for its annual Armed Forces Day by opening

fire on anti-coup protesters.

At time of press, over 500 civilians have been killed by security forces since the start of the coup.

On Tuesday, the Public Health Ministry confirmed it will allocate COVID-19 vaccine doses to frontline border security officers who are routinely in close contact with migrants and those fleeing the unrest.

It is estimated that 800,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine will be made available for those policing the northern border areas.

The permanent secretary for public health, Dr Kiattiphum Wongrajit, also on Tuesday ordered border hospitals in 10 provinces to prepare for an influx of Myanmar people seeking refuge in Thailand.

Government targets 30mn jobs by August

THE PUBLIC HEALTH Ministry has unveiled a plan to progressively roll out almost 30 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine across all 77 provinces by August.

The plan adds to the more than 100,000 people in the target groups already inoculated in the national vaccination programme, according to Dr Opas Karnkawinpong, director-general of the Department of Disease Control (DDC).

The department chief said the next phase of vaccination has 300,000 people earmarked for the jab. The vaccination timetable will continue until August when the last 10 million doses will be provided.

The priority is at-risk groups of people who make up 10.4 million of the 28.1 million candidates for vaccination during that time.

The vaccine distribution plan also involves identifying and entrusting 4,000 clinics and medical facilities to deliver the jabs nationwide with the number of provinces receiving the jabs increasing from 13 this month to all 77 next month.



Dr Opas Karnkawinpong. Photo: Bangkok Post

"Indeed, the inoculations hinge on the amount of vaccines made available.

"We can only operate within our capability to meet these targets. We will distribute as many of the vaccines as we possibly can," Dr Opas said.

The first phase, from Feb 28 to March 25, 136,190 saw doses administered. Of these, 121,392 were first doses and the rest were receiving their second of the two required jabs.

"The numbers of people being vaccinated and health facilities offering the service will increase in the coming months. This is vital for fast and effective vaccine distribution and coverage," Dr Opas said. *Bangkok Post*



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All good things must come to an end

ADVERTORIAL

By Joanna Matlub

Last Chance Tourism isn't a new concept. The fear of missing out, or 'FOMO', social and psychological notion has been around for several years, feeding tourists with a hunger to visit or experience a place at risk of vanishing or altering due to climate change. Now, I am not suggesting that Thailand is about to disappear, however a huge shift is most certainly on its way, so this might well be your Last Chance Tourism window of opportunity.

With a strong push by the Thai government to reopen Phuket by October, and even hopes to open the door by July, along with a relaxation in minimum mandatory quarantine days for vaccinated travellers starting this week, it is inevitable that tourists will come flocking back.

The month of April provides one of the last periods to see the islands around Phuket as they currently are – think Phi Phi's famous 'The Beach', snorkelling around Koh Racha Yai, the striking turquoise waters of the Similan Islands, Hong Krabi's lagoons and new 360-degree viewpoint, rock climbing at Railay Beach, the iconic limestone karsts of Phang Nga Bay, and so on. The list goes on and on with numerous day trip and overnight itin-



Right now might be your last chance to experience the stunning beauty of the islands around Phuket before the weather changes and tourists return.

eraries easily accessible with 5 Star Marine's fleet of private VIP speedboats.

So, for those of us in or around Phuket right now, we do have a small opportune time frame in which to enjoy these islands in all their natural beauty, before the tourists return. April bestows fantastic water clarity, which makes for an even more memorable day especially if your private VIP group fancies a spot of snorkelling. Towards the end of May, this starts to change. From then onwards we will see the arrival of more and more rainy days, and with rougher seas making

their entrance too, the ideal weather we have experienced will be going, going... gone.

In addition to this, National Parks have been known to consider shutting certain areas for a few months before tourists return, to give them a chance to recover. So, we have another time frame to get sorted and go off to explore and appreciate some exquisite scenery right on our doorsteps before it is literally too late. Also, for example if and/or when Maya Bay – made famous after its starring role in Danny Boyle's 2000 film *The Beach*, featuring Leonardo DiCaprio – reopens the tourists

will be back like a shot there; so get a glimpse of it now, unspoilt, utterly beautiful and completely deserted.

Which Thailand islands are on your bucket list? Maybe your list contains some you have never been to, or perhaps you have already been to a dream location but it was so overrun with tourists that the experience was more like a nightmare.

So, go ahead – make the time, and take the opportunity NOW while you still can, as this could be your last possible chance to experience the islands around Phuket in peace and quiet before the borders reopen, the rainy season is upon us and the rougher seas make an appearance.

For added convenience, 5 Star Marine have launched a new, super convenient and tempting day-trip picnic menu. Lunch menu orders will be delivered to the departure pier ready for your trip, making the process completely hassle-free. The menu features firm picnic favourites which are easy to eat on or off board; and cater to vegetarians and meat eaters with a selection of set lunches including sandwiches, wraps and salads.

So why not embrace the theory of Last Chance Tourism and make the effort to see somewhere you're unlikely to ever see again in its present state?

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For service to the community

Australian ambassador awards Phuket's Wal Brown with Order of Australia medal

Wal Brown receives the Order of Australia medal from Australian Ambassador to Thailand Allan McKinnon. Photo: The Phuket News

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Australian Ambassador to Thailand Allan McKinnon in Phuket last week decorated long-term Phuket expat Wal Brown with an Order of Australia medal for his outstanding service to the community. At a small ceremony held at the Australian Consulate-General in Phuket on the bypass road last Friday (Mar 26), Wal Brown, well known for not blowing his own trumpet, said, "It's such a moment, you don't expect to be recognised this way."

"It is an emotion in you that can't be described... It's just a wonderful feeling and a great ending to my day," he added, his voice starting to creak with emotion.

Ambassador McKinnon was not as shy in explaining what Wal had achieved to deserve the award. "It really is a big pleasure for me today to recognise the tireless work of Wal Brown in the Phuket community," he said.

"The Order of Australia medal is a very serious medal – it means you have made a real contribution to many people," he explained. "It is such an obvious one for you, Wal, and I am delighted that it can be recognised during my time here and that I can be involved in the investiture," he added.

Wal is recognised for his coordination and support of the police volunteer programme in Patong and the International Liaison Volunteer Program supporting the Region 8 Police.

Present for the ceremony were Phuket Provincial Police Commander

Pol Maj Gen Pornsak Nuannoo and Patong Police Chief Col Sujin Nilabodi.

"The programme wouldn't have been possible without the tireless and admirable dedication of Wal who acted as coordinator of the programme from its inception," Amb McKinnon noted.

"Some of the numbers really do part of the story: the programme involved volunteers from 14 countries, speaking 22 languages, with volunteers ranging in age from 43 to 79," he added.

"The volunteers provided a valuable service to tourists needing a helping hand, no matter the circumstances. Volunteers worked alongside police and acted as liaison points for embassies and consulates in Thailand and the tourists they serve."

"In his time, Wal and his volunteers have logged some 100,000 hours of work on the streets of Phuket. Many a dispute or incident was de-escalated as the result of the tireless voluntary work of Wal and the team," Amb McKinnon said.

Also recognised was Wal's efforts in helping to organise the Feeding Friends Patong food-relief campaign, launched with the help of friends to help feed people in Patong left without any income due to the COVID-19 crisis.

"So Wal has been something of an unofficial ambassador in Phuket in his time here," Amb McKinnon continued.

"Many Australians visiting Patong find themselves in trouble will often turn to Wal often as a first port of call for advice, and that demonstrates not only his expertise, but also his connections and mostly the high esteem with which he is held."

"Wal embodies the very best of

Australian values when it comes to cooperation and mateship with those in his community," Amb McKinnon said.

Wal thanked those who nominated him for the medal, and credited Amb McKinnon and Matthew Barclay, the Australian Consul-General to Phuket, for their efforts in holding the investiture ceremony in Phuket.

"I could not go to Australia to receive the award. They had to get permission from the Governor-General to present it here because it is not normally done [outside Australia]," he said.

"When you receive an award, you have to be there, you have to have done it, been everybody to, well, everybody – but it's not only me, it's all the other volunteers," Wal emphasised.

"Working with the police in Patong has really taught me something deep inside. Thai police are diligent. They are very good. Australian police wouldn't put up with what the Thai police put up with," Wal noted plainly.

"People come from all countries, don't speak the language, don't speak English – and yet they go to the police for help," he added.

Wal also explained that he recently paid Patong Police Chief Col Sujin a visit.

"He wants the volunteers to go back in October this year when the COVID restrictions are lifted."

"We still have about 20 volunteers still here in the country, and we will get them back to work," Wal assured.

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POP QUIZ

1. Which best-selling children's novel by American author E. B. White was first published in 1952?
2. What name is given to a triangle whose sides are of unequal length?
3. What was the London address of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes?
4. What is the collective noun for a group of Rhino?
5. What did RMS stand for in the ship's name RMS Titanic?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

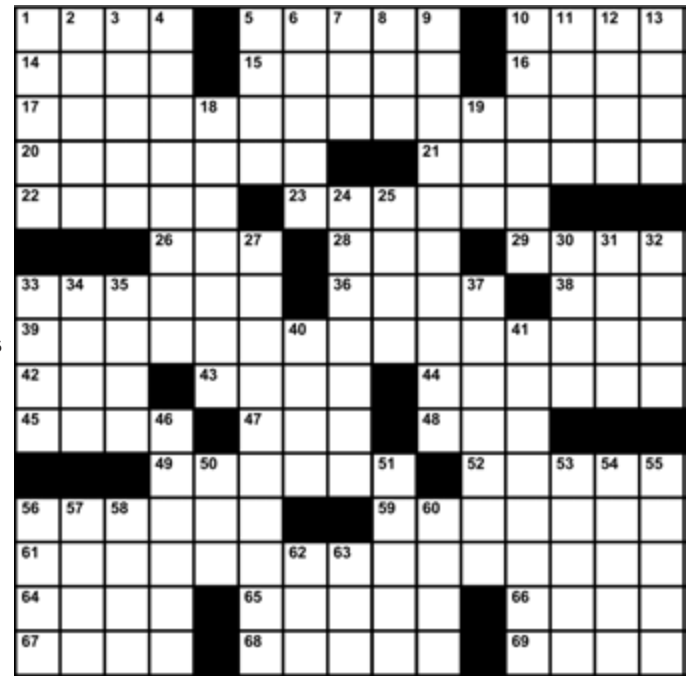
1. Anita Baker, for one
5. Dandruff
10. Latte locale
14. High-five, e.g.
15. Hollywood agent "Swiftly"
16. City on the Yamuna River
17. CASE
20. Punishes legally
21. Sneak
22. Microwave, e.g.
23. Tree adornment
26. Lookout point
28. "Welcome" site
29. Q-Tip
33. Retro car
36. Decorous
38. Clod chopper
39. CASE
42. U.N. workers' grp.
43. Merlin, e.g.
44. Actor Wesley
45. Call to attention
47. Atlanta-based station
48. Scale notes
49. Good-for-nothing
52. Kind of battery
56. Catalog

59. Knotting technique

61. CASE
64. Nanking nanny
65. Woven fabric
66. Canal of song
67. British Conservative
68. Garden tool
69. Bluster

Down

1. Indian state
2. Andean animal
3. Accounts
4. The Mikado, e.g.
5. Pivot
6. Art able to
7. Action film staple
8. Backstabber
9. Most musty
10. Intrigues
11. Long, long time
12. At liberty
13. Benjamin Disraeli, e.g.
18. Moves screen text
19. ___ simple
24. Pier 1 merchandise
25. Bust maker
27. Recurrent
30. Congressional enforcer
31. Bang-up
32. Panhandles
33. Radar image
34. Congers
35. Freudian topics
37. Cartilage disks
40. City near Sparks
41. Ailment
46. Grin modifier
50. Encouraging word
51. "South Pacific" hero
53. Mrs. Bush
54. At full speed
55. Found a new tenant for
56. Doctor's abbreviation
57. Clash of heavyweights
58. Antares, for one
60. Assert
62. Affirmative action
63. Archaeological site



Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Charlotte's Web; 2) Scalene; 3) Scalene; 4) A crash of Rhinos; 5) Royal Mail Ship

GOT YOUR NUMBER

12

years old is the age Morgan Freeman first started acting, when he was forced into a drama competition as a punishment for teasing a girl in his class.

80

cigarettes a day, chicken soup and coffee was the diet that 16-year-old Judy Garland was put on while filming *The Wizard of Oz*.

427

is the most one-handed claps in one minute, achieved by Abhinabha Tangerman of the Netherlands in Potsdam, Germany, in 2016.

2004

was the year that a man named Malcom Myatt suffered a stroke that left him unable to feel sad.

35 million

people worldwide are direct descendants of the Mayflower Pilgrims.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Laem Promthep. Photo: Geoffrey Morris

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

This week in history

April 2, 1992

New York mafia boss John Gotti, head of the Gambino family, is convicted of murder and racketeering and later sentenced to life in prison.

April 3, 1888

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, 1976

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

April 5, 1992

Peace protesters Suada Dilberovic and Olga Sučić are killed on the Vrbanja Bridge in Sarajevo, the first casualties of the Bosnian War.

April 6, 1896

The opening of the first mod-



Opening ceremony of the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens.

ern Olympic Games is celebrated at the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, 1,500

years after the original games are banned by Roman emperor Theodosius I.

April 7, 451

Attila the Hun sacks the town of Metz and attacks other cities in Gaul.

April 8, 1820

Created around 130 -100 BC, the Venus de Milo is discovered on the Aegean island of Milos. Source: Wikipedia

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11th. To enter the tournament register at Mini Golf and pay fee of B700. After registration all practice rounds are half price (B175) Open for everyone... PhuketAdventureMiniGolf.com 076 314 345.

TUE 13 APR



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Whip out your tropical shirts and swimsuits because it's The Deck Beach Club Songkran Splash Jungle

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Loch Palm lifetime golf membership for sale - THB230,000. 50/50 on transfer fee. Call Mr. Bill on 089 594 4067.

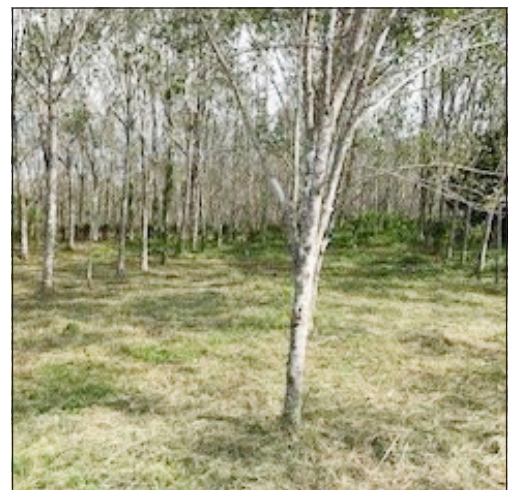
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18 Seater Mitsubishi Bus (2 buses), Year December 2011. Yellow Registration Plates. THB 950,000 (each). Contact: Robin Lee on Mobile 061 829 8293.

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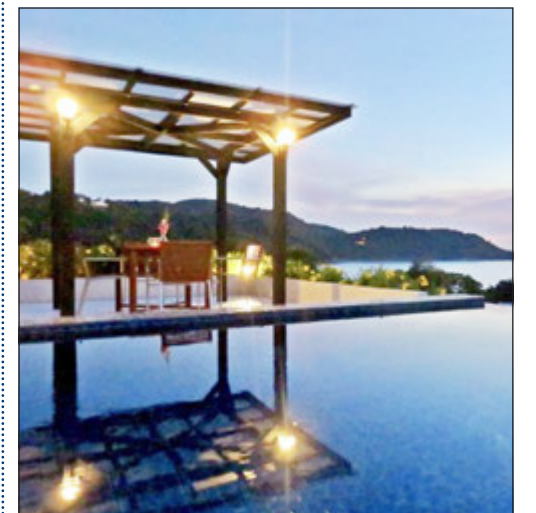
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HAWAIIAN ANNIVERSARY PARTY

The 9th Degree Waterfront restaurant at Phuket Boat Lagoon held its 1 year anniversary party on Mar 26, 2021. Everyone got into the Hawaiian spirit with the help of Ai Naan, Coco Club, Chalong Bay, Whisgars, Something's Gotta Bliss, BB & B and Boat in the Bay. The toes were tapping with DJ Shane and the Hulu dancers, and a special performance from Malika Kazakova.



PIWC committee members 2021.



Missy & Maggy (New and former PIWC president).



Rita, Wipa & Carole



Keep smiling and proud to be PIWC.

PIWC MARCH (NEW PRESIDENT)

PIWC held their AGM (Annual General Meeting 2021) on 18th March 2021 at Novotel Phuket City Phokeethra where members thanked Maggy for her service as President and welcome Missy as the new President. The PIWC committee 2021 joined other members and guests for a great charity lunch at Novotel Phuket City Phokeethra.

F1 off to a bang in Bahrain

Hamilton triumphs in incident-laden season curtain-raiser

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Wheel-to-wheel racing, pit wall tactics and an unexpected winner – the Bahrain Grand Prix last Sunday (Mar 28) had it all, and it teased what's shaping up to be a thrilling season of grand prix.

After 56 laps of racing, after clever strategy and counterstrategy and after three changes of the lead, just 0.745 seconds separated title rivals Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen at the chequered flag.

To reigning champion Hamilton went the spoils, but this seemingly familiar result was anything but expected. Indeed the Bahrain Grand Prix was confirmation that momentum has swung away from Mercedes for its seventh consecutive title defence and towards the once-dominant Red Bull Racing team.

For the first time since 2013 the German marque hasn't started the year with



The 2021 Formula One season opener in Bahrain had it all. Photo: AFP

the fastest car, and Max Verstappen took full advantage to storm to pole by 0.4 seconds.

But Mercedes hasn't dominated the sport since 2014 by accident. Already its car is markedly improved on its difficult preseason testing form, and when Verstappen and Hamilton launched from the line and lights-out on Sunday it was clear the W12 was a close match in race trim.

Mercedes, adjusting comfortably into the aggressor role it has so rarely had to play, was immediately on the offensive.

Hamilton came into the pits early, on lap 13, and his out-lap on fresh rubber was so fast that Verstappen was sure to lose the lead if he covered on the following tour. Instead Red Bull Racing changed tactics, leaving the Dutchman

out an extra four laps to give him a tyre life advantage to retake the lead.

But Mercedes knew there was little to gain in a straight fight so soon, so when Verstappen cruised up behind Hamilton, Mercedes brought the Briton back into the pits for new tyres on lap 28, committing him to run the entire second half of the race without another stop.

'HORRIFYING'

Red Bull Racing was sure the aggression was folly, and the Dutchman stayed out in the lead until lap 39, giving him tyres 11 laps younger with which to vie for victory.

The window was slim but achievable: Verstappen would besiege Hamilton for the final six laps to convert to victory.

But as the late great motorsport commentator Murray Walker once said: catching is one thing, passing is quite another.

It took until lap 53 of 56 for Verstappen to finally launch his move – a sweeping pass around Hamilton's outside at turn four – but he drove off the track to make it stick. Race control ordered him to hand the position back and try again.

He did as instructed, but he had lost precious momentum. Hamilton maintained centimetre precision in defence to avoid a second pass, and he took the chequered flag without another challenge.

"It was horrifying!" Ham-

ilton said. "I loved every minute of it. Every minute of this weekend I've loved."

"Knowing for us as a team that we were behind in performance... for us to come away with this result given that weren't he fastest car this weekend is a real result."

Verstappen was sanguine in defeat.

"Of course it's a shame, but you also have to see the positives," he said. "We were really putting the fight onto them and I think that's great to start the year like that."

Great not just for Red Bull Racing and Verstappen but for the sport overall, for in Hamilton versus Verstappen we have the makings for a generational struggle between old guard and new, and with the might of the two most prolific constructors of the last decade behind them, it's a fight over which every last tenth of a second will be fought and at which everything will be thrown.

Formula 1 started 2021 with a bang in Bahrain, but the battle is only just heating up.

Girls school parents and teachers

FOOTBALL

A SELECTION OF TEACHERS AND students' parents from Kajonkiet International School, Phuket (KISP) were given a lesson on the football pitch last Tuesday (Mar 23) when teams took to the field at the school campus.

The KISP Under-17 girls team excelled as a team and thoroughly deserved their 3-1 victory against the parent and teacher combination team in a closely fought and thoroughly enjoyable match for all involved.

With the scores tied 1-1 at the three-quarter mark, the students upped their game to register two well constructed goals in the last quarter which secured their deserved win.

A huge congratulations goes to the win-



The winning team. Photo: Donna Toon.

ners, both teams and everyone who played in the game which was conducted in such a friendly yet competitive spirit.

A big shout out also to all those involved in making the game happen and also thanks to the supporters who came down and cheered both teams on. *The Phuket News*

Atthaya bags 6th professional crown

GOLF

TEENAGE STAR ATTHAYA Thitikul cruised to a five-shot victory at the B1 million Phoenix Ladies Classic in Pattaya on Sunday (Mar 28).

The 18-year-old star, who held a six-shot advantage after two rounds, closed with a three-under-par 69 to win on 15-under 201 at the Phoenix Gold Golf & Country Club.

Making seven birdies against four bogeys in the final round, Atthaya claimed her sixth professional title after turning pro last February.

It was also her third win at the course where she won the Ladies European Tour Thailand Championship as an amateur in 2017 and 2019.

Chakansim Khamborn fired seven birdies and one bogey for a 66 to share second on 10-under 206 with Chanettee Wannasaen (68).

Atthaya took home B110,000, while Chakansim and Chanettee each received B65,000.

Onnarin Sattayabanphot (69) was fourth on 208 with



Atthaya Thitikul celebrates with the Phoenix Ladies Classic trophy on Sunday (Mar 28). Photo: Bangkok Post

Phannarai Meesom-us (72) and Yupaporn Kawinpakorn (68) tied for fifth on 211.

The tournament was a special event organised by the newly established Thai Women's Professional Golf Association (ThaiWPGA).

"This win is special because I can take the winner's cheque now," said Atthaya, who could not claim prize money for her previous wins at this course due to her amateur status.

"Every golfer has his or her favourite course and I

think this one is my favourite and it suits my game."

She added that she learned a lot during the event, especially the way to adjust her game after poor starts.

"I did not play well on the front nine throughout the tournament, but managed to bounce back through my short game," she said.

Atthaya added that domestic tournaments were like training grounds for her to hone her skills before playing abroad. *Bangkok Post*

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Dwarves fall short as giant Ninan smashes maiden ton

CRICKET

Michael Flowers

Phuket cricket was divided by height on Sunday, Mar 21 for a new 30-over series at the ACG between the Giants and the Dwarves.

A few late withdrawals left the favoured Dwarves short-handed but with the in-form Justin Swart in the line-up, the game still seemed to be an even contest.

The Giants won the toss and elected to bat, with openers Dan Nicholson and Seemant Raju reaching 69 after just 6.3 overs before the latter was caught by Mushtaq from the bowling of Justin Swart.

Swart struck again by bowling Stuart Hamilton before Joe Ninan took to the crease to forge a 45-run partnership with Nicholson with the score reaching 119-2 at drinks.

Nicholson was out for 37 shortly after play resumed to send Paul Judge in to partner Ninan. The pair combined for a 75-run partnership in less than seven overs to boost the score



Joe Ninan scored 102 runs off just 64 deliveries as the Giants won the opening game of the series against the Dwarves at the ACG on Mar 21. Photo: Michael Flowers

to 196-4 before Judge was dismissed by Curt Livermore.

Ninan went on to hit a devastating 102 runs off just 64 deliveries, supported by the in-form Shivam Bhattacharya's 39, before he was caught by Waseem Musa to set the Dwarves a target of 300 to win at 10 runs per over.

The Giants' bowlers Bhattacharya and Sajal Gaur combined for one of the best opening bowling spells in recent memory as they went up against the very capable combination of Imityaz Mushtaq and Sameer Kahn with a very quick outfield to manage.

After five overs the score had only reached 18 with Mushtaq already back in the clubhouse after a cracking reflex catch at cover by Nicholson from the bowling of Gaur for just a single run.

Next to the crease was master batsman Swart who tried his utmost to change proceedings, going on to hit a scintillating 126, reaching his 3rd ton of the year in the process.

Unfortunately, Khan (37) and captain Neil Quail, 16 not out off 16 deliveries in a nice little cameo in his first game in many months, were the only batsmen able to provide support before the Dwarves' tail order collapsed and with it any hopes of salvaging a result as they finished 59-runs short of victory.

Raju (6 overs, 4 for 61) and Gaur (4 overs, 1 for 10) were the pick of the Giants bowlers.

Centurion Ninan was awarded the Man of the Match for his big innings which set up the match and contributed significantly to the Giants taking a 1-0 lead in the best-of-three-game series which will resume at a later date yet to be confirmed.

'Proud' Aguero to leave Man City

FOOTBALL

ARGENTINA STRIKER Sergio Aguero said on Monday (Mar 29) he was "proud" of his time at Manchester City after announcing his departure when his contract runs out this July.

Aguero joined City from Atletico Madrid in 2011 and has 257 goals in 384 games since, making him their record goal-scorer.

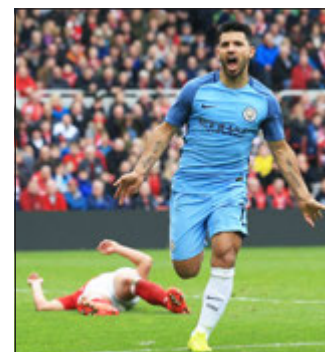
He scored the dramatic winning goal as they edged local rivals Manchester United to the 2012 Premier League.

"When a cycle comes to an end, many sensations arise," he posted on social media.

"A huge sense of satisfaction and pride remains in me for having played with Manchester City for a whole ten seasons – unusual for a professional player this day and age.

"I will continue to give it my utmost for the rest of the season to win more titles and bring more joy to the fans," he added.

In a club statement,



Aguero: Man City's record goal-scorer. Photo: AFP

City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak said he would reserve any farewell speeches until Aguero leaves, but revealed he had commissioned a statue of the striker.

"Sergio's contribution to Manchester City over the last 10 years cannot be overstated," Al Mubarak said.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce that we will be commissioning an artist to create a statue of Sergio to live at the Etihad Stadium," he added.

The 32-year-old Aguero contracted COVID-19 in January after a season already ravaged by injury and has played only 14 games for City this term, scoring three times. AFP

World Cup qualifiers shine light on Qatar human rights

FOOTBALL

SEVERAL EUROPEAN teams lent their support to a growing movement protesting against the treatment of migrant workers involved in building venues for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar during last weekend's World Cup qualifiers.

Danish players wore jerseys with the slogan "Football supports CHANGE" as they lined up for a photograph before their match against Moldova, with the Danish Football Union saying the shirts would be put up for sale and the money given to migrant workers in the Gulf state.

Norwegian players, including superstar striker Erling Braut Haaland, donned T-shirts with the slogan 'Human rights, on and off the pitch' prior to their game in Gibraltar on Wednesday (Mar 24).

Players from Germany then undertook a similar action before taking on Iceland the next day, lining up in



Germany's players make their point. Photo: AFP

T-shirts which spelled the message 'Human Rights'.

"We have the World Cup coming up and there will be discussions about it... we wanted to show we are not ignoring that," said Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka.

"We have a large reach – and we can use it to set an example for the values we want to stand for."

The Dutch team joined in prior to kick-off in their game against Latvia in Amsterdam on Saturday and the movement raises the question of whether players, or national federations, would be prepared to actually boy-

cott the World Cup.

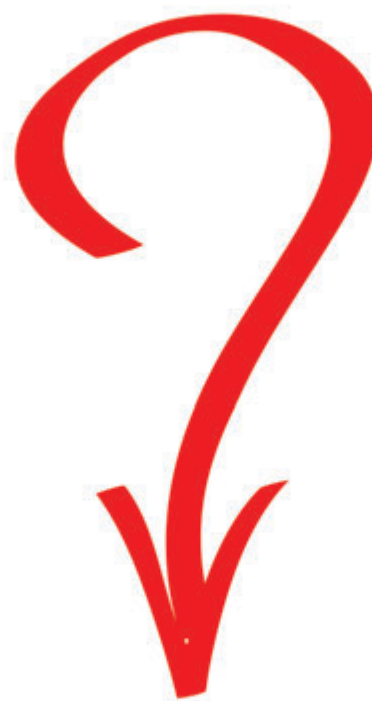
"It is 10 years too late for a boycott. We should have thought about that at the time," admitted Bayern and Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich.

Qatar has faced criticism for its treatment of migrant workers, many of whom are involved in preparations for the World Cup, with campaigners accusing employers of exploitation and forcing labourers to work in dangerous conditions.

It is reported more than 6,500 foreign workers have died building infrastructure for the tournament scheduled for next year. AFP



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