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OPEN THE BOX

PHUKET SANDBOX HOPED TO BRING RELIEF TO ISLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY, RESTART ECONOMY



A participant 'checks in' during a rehearsal for receiving foreign tourists at Phuket airport last week. Photo: AoT Phuket

The Phuket News
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Phuket this week marked a milestone in the history of Thailand's world-known tourism industry, becoming the first province in the country to receive vaccinated foreign tourists without having to serve any mandatory quarantine other than staying on the island for 14 nights.

At the time of going to press, five international flights were to land at Phuket International Airport yesterday (July 1) for the 'Phuket Sandbox' reopening to receiving tourists.

A report by the Official Phuket Information Center, operated by the Phuket office of the Ministry of

Interior reported that a Qatar Airways flight from Doha would arrive at 1:30pm, an EL AL Israel Airlines flight from Tel Aviv would touch down at 1:45pm, a Singapore Airlines flight from Singapore would land at 5:10pm, a Fly Dubai flight from Dubai would land at 8:10pm and an Etihad Airways flight from Abu Dhabi was to arrive at 10:20pm last night.

The flights were to bring 440 foreign arrivals in total on Day 1 of the campaign.

A report by the Phuket office of the PR Department (PR Phuket) said that provincial officials expect the number of international arrivals to gradually increase throughout next month, with about 10,000 arrivals in total expected to land in Phuket

in July (see page 6).

Phuket Governor Narong Woonchew last week led an inspection of the processes inbound tourists will go through before being allowed to leave Phuket airport.

The rehearsal included passengers disembarking their planes and having their temperature checked before being escorted to each staging area to have their documents processed and verified and swab samples taken.

Phuket was expected to be ready to meet the goals set by the July 1 deadline, Governor Narong said. "With the measures that Phuket Airport has prepared to make tourists who come to be confident in the standards and safety in the implementation of disease control in Phuket," he added.

"For service places, we are not fully open yet. [Restrictions on] Restaurants have been relaxed [for them] to open as usual, but the disease control measures must be strictly followed, wear a mask and keep social distance. The [disease-control] measures we are taking, we should continue, and there will be officers to look after each other for all parties to relieve their concerns," he noted.

"Many parts are starting to move. Employees are being hired to work. After being closed for a long time, things will change suddenly. Many things are being gradually prepared," he added.

BIG GUNS ARRIVE

Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong...

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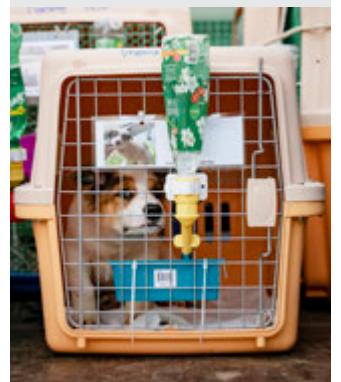
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**Nightlife staff
submit plea to
return to work**



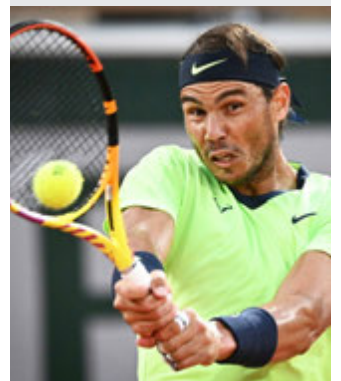
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caught in US
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**Nadal Tennis
Academy to
come to Phuket**



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News



Navy to join
Sandbox tour
patrols > p5

Phiphat raises concerns over taxi mafia

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...Punmeechaow and other top-ranking officials, including Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn, visited Phuket last Thursday (June 24) to inspect the readiness of the island to reopen to receiving vaccinated foreign tourists.

The inspection came in place of an announced visit to Phuket by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha last Friday June 25, which never eventuated. After announcing the prime minister's intended visit, there were no explanations as to why he did not arrive, but on Tuesday this week (June 29) it was announced that PM Prayut was to arrive in Phuket for the July 1 reopening.

Welcomed to Phuket by Governor Narong, Mr Supattanapong arrived at Phuket airport at 4:20pm and proceeded on his tour of the terminal and his inspection of the procedures in place to allow foreign tourists onto the island.

Joining Mr Supattanapong for his inspection were Chatchai Promlert, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, and Thosaporn Sirisam-



Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn raised the issue of what he called Phuket's taxi mafia. Photo: AoT Phuket

phand, Secretary-General of Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDB).

Following their inspection of the procedures for allowing tourists to enter Phuket via the airport, Deputy PM Supattanapong and his entourage visited the Phuket Checkpoint at Tha Chatchai to inspect the capability of officers there to screen people entering Phuket by land.

"At this stage, Phuket is ready for checking tourists and welcoming vaccinated tourists from abroad without

quarantine. We have coordinated with administrative officers, police, soldiers who work at the airport and the checkpoint, as well as medical staff to work on testing," Governor Narong explained.

"We all need to unite together to boost our economy and at the same time protect our people from the pandemic. Our people must be safe to create a good image of Thailand," he added.

Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn also arrived

at Phuket airport to meet with local officials as part of his own inspection.

After the meeting, where he was joined by Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong and other senior Phuket officials, Mr Phiphat told the press that he was assigned by Prime Minister Prayut to conduct his own check of the readiness of Phuket to receive foreign tourists.

"At this stage, I confirm that Phuket is 100% ready to welcome tourists from July 1. What we are waiting for is just the first tourist walking out of the plane at the airport," Mr Phiphat said.

"Regarding concerns about overpriced fares, taxi drivers at the airport must be registered with the Phuket Government first before providing services," he said, according to an official report of his visit.

"The registration is to unlock the issue about the taxi mafia," Mr Phiphat said.

'CONTINGENCY PLAN'

The Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) last week outlined its key criteria for its Phuket Sandbox 'contingency plan', in case

COVID infections start spiralling upward after the reopening of the province to foreign visitors.

Among the criteria was if there were more than 90 infections across the island within seven days. Other criteria included if there were characteristics of a spread of infection in all three districts in the province and more than six sub-districts, if there were outbreaks in more than three clusters, or a widespread outbreak with no cause or link, or if 80% of the number of beds for infected patients were occupied.

The criteria for revising the Sandbox reopening measures were formalised in a provincial order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw last Friday (June 25).

According to the order, the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office must develop a response plan and a plan to delay or cancel the project. Four levels of "adjustment measures" were given:

- Reduce activities
- Use "Sealed Routes"
- Reinvoke hotel quarantine
- Consider cancelling the Phuket Sandbox project

Deep south arrivals face mandatory quarantine

ARRIVALS FROM THE four southern border provinces must face mandatory quarantine for 14 days after arriving Phuket regardless of whether they have been vaccinated or can prove they have tested negative for COVID-19 within seven days of travelling to Phuket.

Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong confirmed the mandatory quarantine for arrivals in Phuket from the four provinces – Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla – after the meeting of the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee on June 21.

"The quarantine is to protect against the disease [COVID-19] from spreading, as a vaccine may not be able to protect against the virus variant [present in the four southern provinces]. This is our latest medical measure to prevent [infections] spreading from students or visitors," he said.

The move to enforce mandatory quarantine on arrivals from the four provinces follows a student being allowed to return home to Phuket from



Arrivals from the four deep south provinces will face 14-day mandatory quarantine, Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong confirmed. Photo: PR Phuket

Yala, where he attended a school that had shut down due to a COVID cluster outbreak.

Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla have been designated 'Maximum Controlled Provinces', the second-highest danger rating under the new classification system brought into effect by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) Monday last week (June 21).

The classification came as the Beta strain of COVID-19, first identified in South Africa, spread quickly throughout the southernmost provinces.

Dr Apisamai Srirangsan,

assistant spokeswoman for the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), explained last week that the cluster at the Muslim religious school of Margaz Tabligh preaching center in Yala's Muang district, where the student had returned to Phuket from, has already spread to 402 patients across 12 southern provinces.

"Those who travel from the four deep south provinces where the virus variant is spreading must quarantine in a local quarantine [LQ] or alternative local quarantine [ALQ] venue for 14 days even though they have all three qualifications to enter the island," V/Gov Pichet said.

"The Phuket Government will release more specific information about provinces and districts as soon as possible," he added.

Of note, arrivals from Trang province, which borders Songkhla and is also classified a 'Maximum Controlled Province', are not subject to the new mandatory quarantine after arriving in Phuket.

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Pub, bar staff plea to work

Eakkapop Thongtub
editor@classactmedia.co.th

More than 40 nightlife and entertainment venue workers gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall on June 22 to file a request to the Phuket Governor asking for help in coping with the continued forced closure of entertainment venues, leaving them with no means of making a living for months.

The group, led by Phromphiriya Thammaapat, included staff, singers and musicians from entertainment venues, pubs, bars all across Phuket.

The formal request, received in person by Phuket Vice Governors Vikrom Jakthee and Piyapong Choowong, read, "Please consider measures to help and assist employees of service and entertainment establishments, pubs, bars, in Phuket province that are affected by the absolute closure of service and entertainment places, pubs, bars.

"Please consider relaxing the order to close entertainment venues, pubs and bars so the venues can open at regular hours in order to have uniform employment in all positions as it was before, by keeping them under the measures to control the spread of COVID-19 as the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office has set for service and



The formal request was handed over at Phuket Provincial Hall. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

entertainment facility operators to strictly follow the order."

The request urged that the move to allow entertainment workers to return to employment received "mercy" from the Phuket Governor.

"Today we have come to ask that the governor have a direct remedy for our group, because in the past we have not received direct assistance. Now we cannot see the light of the future, when we will return to work. Now we can't take it anymore and

don't know how to continue with our lives," Mr Phromphiriya said.

Mr Phromphiriya noted that nightlife workers were often viewed as social stigma.

"Actually people blame us as a risk group. In fact, the term 'risk group' is not how we see ourselves, but the government says we are at risk. We are people who work honestly for our food," he said.

The government relief schemes, including the 'We Win' (Rao Chana

scheme and support for those registered under Section 33 of the social security Act, helped only some people, and even then were not enough to sustain a person, Mr Phromphiriya said.

"As for measures for borrowing long-term low-interest loans under the government's policy through various banks, when night workers go to contact the agency [to take out a loan], they do not accept us because from the past until now our

income is zero," he added.

Singer and cafe owner Usama Puenin asked for even part-remedial measures to allow entertainment venues to open with restrictions.

"There is an issue now that restaurants are allowed to serve alcohol. I came to inquire about that now," she said.

"We can't do our jobs while vendors selling alcohol are allowed to open in the yellow areas? Did you forget that most hotels have restaurants and lobbies where background music is provided safely?" Ms Usama said.

"We can protect ourselves already at an individual level and not let customers come up. I think we should be allowed to open up some space for us to be able to do something.

"As a singer-songwriter, I have been out of work for over a year and have not received any assistance at all. When it comes to [the government providing] assistance, it may be helping broadly, but honestly we sometimes don't get it.

"We were the first to be closed and now we still can't work. Why, when now we have the chance to open? Why not let us open just a little bit? It's okay to play alone or even as a duo. That way we can register [to receive government assistance] and we can get some compensation," she said.

Phuket suffers seventh COVID death in current outbreak

PHUKET HAS SUFFERED ITS SEVENTH death attributed to COVID-19 in the current outbreak, the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) has confirmed.

The news came with the standard daily update of new infections on the island for last Friday (June 25), posted online by the Official COVID-19 Information Center Phuket last Saturday (June 26).

As has become usual with the most recent COVID deaths in Phuket, no details have been made available. As of Tuesday (June 29), no officials had even recognised the death despite including the person's demise in a daily report.

PPHO Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon took two days to recognise in person the sixth death on the island. He confirmed the death during a live broadcast on June 23, following the woman's death being marked on the daily report for June 21.

The woman, who passed away on June 20, was 78 years old and had received treatment for COVID infection for almost two months, Dr Kusak said.

"We had a 78-year-old woman as one dead case in the past week," Dr Kusak noted during the morning briefing, with Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew sitting beside him.

"She had received treatment in hospital for almost two months. She suffered from pneumonia and senility [sic], and died a few days ago," he added.



Dr Kusak (2nd from right) confirmed the woman's death, but provided no details, during a news briefing on June 23. Screenshot: PR Phuket

Dr Kusak provided no other details of the woman's death. Instead he continued to talk about current outbreak measures and "proactive screening" being conducted by officials across the island.

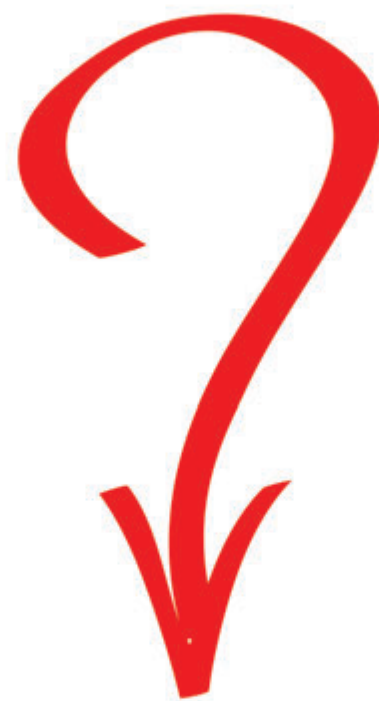
Of note, Dr Kusak on June 23 also said, "I also heard a rumor that some children were infected from school, I would like to confirm that we have not had any new case that is a child."

Missing from the report was that only days earlier, on June 19, the PPHO released the timeline of Case 690, a 7-month old baby of Myanmar nationality that was taken into medical care at Vachira Hospital Phuket for treatment of COVID-19.

The baby lived with its mother and father at their rented home in Moo 3, Rassada. The mother was confirmed infected on June 15, and the baby was confirmed infected on June 16. Both were receiving medical care at Vachira Hospital, the report noted.

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Patong Tunnel work to start in 2023

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Construction of the long-awaited Patong Tunnel project, spanning 3.98km from Kathu to Patong at a cost of B14.47 billion, is now expected to begin in 2023 and open for service in 2027, Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) Deputy Governor Gardphajon Udomdhamabhakdi has revealed.

Mr Gardphajon was in Phuket in person on June 24 to be updated on progress on several transit megaprojects on the island, including the Patong Tunnel.

At a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Land Traffic Management of Phuket at Phuket Provincial Hall chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee, Mr Gardphajon explained that the Public-Private Partnership Policy Committee had agreed in principle with the project.

"On May 31, the Policy Committee received EXAT's recommendations for proceeding with the project before the



Image: Expressway Authority of Thailand / file

plan is submitted to the Cabinet for further approval. EXAT will prepare additional information based on the opinions of the Policy Committee and we expect those to be sent to the State Enterprise Policy Office in July 2021," he said.

Mr Gardphajon confirmed that the current plan is to construct a road with elevated sections and a four-lane tunnel through the hills separating Patong from Kathu. The road itself is to be 3.98km long and construction is expected to cost B14.47bn.

"The project is expected to commence in 2023. Con-

struction will take four years and it will open for service in 2027," he said.

Travelling through the tunnel is currently set to cost motorists B40 per car and B15 per motorcycle.

Regarding the "Muang Mai-Koh Kaew-Kathu Expressway Project", Mr Gardphajon explained that the project was originally called the "Sakhu-Koh Kaew Road project" operated by the Department of Highways.

"But now the central government has assigned EXAT to come into action," he said.

"Currently, the Expressway

Authority is in the process of drafting a TOR [terms of reference] to hire a consultant to study the suitability of engineering, economics, finance and the environmental impact. The feasibility study is expected to begin in October 2021," he added.

The project will stretch some 30km, starting at the intersection of Thepkasattri Rd with Highway 4026, which leads to Nai Yang Beach. The expressway will parallel Thepkasattri Rd all the way through Srisoonthorn and will provide a connection with the main intersection in Koh Kaew,

then continue to run parallel with the bypass road to finally connect with Highway 4029 in Kathu, which will allow motorists to use the Patong Tunnel, Mr Gardphajon said.

"For the Action Plan of the Muang Mai - Koh Kaew - Kathu project, construction is expected to begin in 2025 and the road open for service in 2028," he said.

Mr Gardphajon asked for patience and clear communication in explaining the projects to the public.

"There are many important projects. Each project requires a period of time to complete. For example, the process of studying the environmental impact and the EIA, and the preparation of details, requires a period of time," he said.

"The important thing is to create awareness and communicate to create an understanding among the people in the area to be informed of the process correctly, to participate and drive the implementation of various projects, to achieve results as soon as possible," he added.

Police bust B200mn online gambling ring in Chalong

OFFICERS FROM THE POLICE Cyber Taskforce (PCT) arrested two men at a house off Chao Fa West Rd in Moo 5, Chalong, last Saturday (June 26) for operating nine gambling websites that together had a turnover of more than B200 million.

PCT Commander Gen Damrongsak Kittipraphat announced the news at a press conference held at the Royal Thai Police headquarters in Bangkok.

The two men, who were not named, were arrested while chatting online with their customers in the house, Gen Damrongsak said.

The two men were administrators of the websites, he added.

In placing the men under arrest, police seized 42 items of evidence, including B1.9 million in cash, bankbooks, a safety box, computers and a firearm, Gen Damrongsak noted.

The websites were mostly targeted at people gambling on the Euro 2020 tournament, but also included online 'slot machines' and bingo, Gen Damrongsak explained.

Gen Damrongsak named the nine websites as joker8899.com; joker1788.net; joker789.com; slot8899.com; ufa-bet.com; ufa-thai.com; ufamax.com;



The two men were arrested in Chalong last Saturday (June 26). Photo: PCT

heng-168.com; and lottoheng168.com.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had ordered police to ramp up their efforts against online gambling especially during the Euro 2020 football tournament, he said.

"Regarding these gambling websites, Royal Thai Police Commander Gen Suwat Chaengyodsuk had previously urged all police units to arrest gambling website operators. Next, we will examine the financial transactions and relevant accounts which are believed will link to other arrests in the future," Gen Damrongsak said.

Gen Damrongsak urged any persons with information about illegal online gambling, to inform the PCT by calling the 24-hour hotline 1599, or call the taskforce's direct line 081-8663000 during office hours. Eakkapop Thongtub



The fire started in the kitchen of Korean restaurant Sukishi. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Fire breaks out at Central Festival

NO INJURIES HAVE BEEN reported after a fire broke out at a Korean restaurant in the Central shopping mall in Kathu on June 24.

The fire appeared to have started in the kitchen of the Sukishi charcoal grill restaurant, located on the third floor of the Central Festival side of the mall.

Police and firefighters in five fire engines were called to the scene around 2:35pm to see smoke coming out of the restaurant.

Mall security staff helped block off the area immediately outside the restaurant and firefighters were able to contain the blaze successfully within about 30 minutes. No injuries to staff

or customers were reported.

Capt Chattri Chuwichian of the Wichit Police stated witnesses told him they had seen smoke coming out of the kitchen which then proceeded to spread into the actual dining area, sending concerned customers fleeing.

Staff from the restaurant informed mall security staff who immediately alerted the police and firefighters.

It is unsure how the fire started although from initial examinations police believe an exhaust pipe from the cooker may have overheated and ignited when it came into contact with oil. Forensic officers have been called and will disclose full details in due course. Eakkapop Thongtub

Navy to join Sandbox patrols

The Phuket News
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Patrols by the Royal Thai Navy base in Phuket as well as Marine Police will help provide assistance to make sure that the tourists arriving through the Phuket Sandbox scheme do not leave Phuket by boat before completing the mandatory 14-day stay on the island.

The news came as Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall last Sunday (June 27) called for government agencies and tour operators to coordinate to ensure the Sandbox tourists observe the island quarantine.

Present to receive the instructions was Phuket Marine Chief Nachapong Pranat along with tour operators and those trusted with operating the main tourist ports and piers in Phuket.

V/Gov Vikrom explained that under the latest provincial order, arrivals can travel to islands or the nearby provinces by boat only at three main piers – Ao Por Pier, Rassada Pier, Chalong Pier – and five other marinas and ports.

“To prevent tourists from



Marine Police and Navy patrol boats were put on show for the visiting ministers last Saturday (June 26). Photo: PR Phuket

leaving the island before the 14-day stay is completed, officers from the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command, the Marine Department and the Marine Police will use their boats to patrol the waters around Phuket,” V/Gov Vikrom said.

“We will also install GPS on every tour boat, so that we can track and know the loca-

tion of each boat,” he said.

Last Sunday’s meeting followed Minister of Digital Economy and Society (DES) Chaiwit Thanakamanusorn along with Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow and Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn inspecting the readiness of the ‘Smart Pier’ at Visit Panwa Pier last

Saturday (June 26).

The ‘Smart Pier’ project at the pier has been conducted in conjunction with the National Telecom Public Company Limited (NT) – the recently formed amalgamation of state telecom providers TOT and CAT – to create a tourism safety support and management system, the ministerial delegation

was told on Saturday.

So-called ‘Smart Piers’ developed under the project will have five features in common: tourist registration system, the usage of wristbands or smart watches, CCTV cameras, location sharing systems with an SOS alert, and each will have a control and command center.

Mr Chaiwit explained that under the Smart Pier system the tourist registration system for traveling by sea consists of purchasing tickets or tours through agents. The tourists are registered for travel with their ID card or passport, a photo of which is taken for reference. The tourists bring their booking voucher to the jetty to attach to their personal wristband to use at the gate for boarding. All data is to be stored in the NT cloud.

The system uses a wristband (RFID) or smart watch instead of a pass card to enter and exit the port and board the boat and can be used as e-wallets in the future once tourists are registered. The wristbands or smart watches handed out can be used to monitor tourists’ body temperatures, to register when they enter or leave port and to check the travel reg-

istration of all tourists.

The CCTV system installed at any Smart Pier is to record information of the tourists traveling through the port for reference and analysis, while the boat-tracking system is to help track tourists traveling by sea and includes a signaling device for tourists asking for help in emergency situations, Mr Chaiwit added.

The ‘Control and Command Center’ at each pier will be able to track the location of vessels and provide or receive any alerts of events so that assistance or other appropriate response can be provided in a timely manner. The display system at the Operation Center, called the “Network Operation Center NT”, will serve to coordinate various agencies to complete their checks on day cruise vessels.

The command centres will also coordinate with local help centers with officials from the relevant departments along with on-site interpreters for different languages to assist with any public relations activities and to assist in any emergency situations, Mr Chaiwit concluded.

Additional reporting by
Eakkapong Thongtub

Separate rooms for unmarried couples spurs guest confusion

THE PHUKET TOURIST ASSOCIATION posted a statement last Friday (June 25) to clarify its position on previous posts online claiming that couples who were not married would have to occupy separate rooms while staying in Phuket under the Phuket Sandbox model.

The statement directly referred to a post by the association’s own president, Bhumikitti Raktaengam, a central figure in the creation and deployment of the Sandbox policy.

“From the news on social media that Mr Bhumikitti Raktaengam, the president of Phuket Tourist Association, explained about the case that tourists want to stay with Thai people. They must be married couples only. Those who are just girlfriends, a buddy, or a person who is hired to entertain are not allowed,” the statement read.

“We would like to clarify that the sentence was misunderstood because Mr Bhumikitti explained that the stay together between foreign tourists and Thais can be done under the framework of law, which needs to be considered again,” the statement added.

“To not make any possible confusion, please wait for the clarity from the announcement by the Royal Gazette,” the statement concluded.

Mr Bhumikitti himself shared the statement through his own Facebook page earlier the same day.



The statement issued by the Phuket Tourist Association.

“Please notice and to clarify... The association and I cannot set up the cannot set the rules for traveling or the conditions of stay.

“What I said was through a Zoom [meeting] by ATTA [Association of Thai Travel Agents] and was only my own response to that question.

“The law should allow [people] to do things under the framework, such as those who had a marriage certificate. For other cases, it needs to be considered by relevant officials,” Mr Bhumikitti added.

“Please wait to hear from relevant officials. The association is a private organization. It does not play a role in setting any conditions.

“If what I have communicated has caused any discomfort, I apologize to everyone. From now on I will be more careful when speaking,” Mr Bhumikitti concluded.

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TAT revises down Sandbox impact

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Tourism Authority of Thailand Governor Yuthasak Supasorn has revealed revised down estimates on the number of expected tourist arrivals from July through September under the Phuket Sandbox model.

The new estimates were announced at a meeting at the 'EOC Command Center' last Friday (June 25) joined by Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow and Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn.

According to an official report of the meeting, TAT Governor Yuthasak explained that the TAT now expects 100,000 foreign tourist arrivals during the third quarter this year, down 29,000 on estimates given as recently as last week.

The 100,000 foreign tourists are expected to generate B8.9 billion for the Thai economy, Mr Yuthasak said.

However, he added that Thai domestic tourists were still expected to play a major part in restarting Phuket's tourism industry, with 548,000 "person-visits" expected during the quarter, generating an approximately B5.51bn in revenue for the economy.

Of note, with the TAT now recognising "person-visits" and not expressly domestic tourists, the expected number of domestic arrivals



Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow and Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn at the meeting in Phuket last Friday (June 25). Photo: PR Phuket

appears to now include people who travel to Phuket not just solely for tourism, and now shows an increase from the 500,000 expected domestic tourist arrivals during the third quarter just over a week earlier.

Also joining the meeting on Friday were Natural Resources and Environment Minister Varawut Silpaarcha, Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaiwit Thanakhamanusorn and Chatchai Phromlert, Permanent Secretary of the Interior.

Representing Phuket at the meeting were, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw and all three Phuket Vice Governors, Pichet Panapong, Piyapong

Choowong and Vikrom Jakthee, along with a host of leading local officials and tourism industry figures.

"Phuket Sandbox is an important policy of the government that chose Phuket as the country's pioneering tourism operation area, which Phuket is determined to prepare for the goal of opening the island on July 1 despite having to pass a very difficult test," Governor Narong said.

"At the moment, preparations have been made to cover all aspects, which requires the integrated management of all sectors, including agencies according to the function of the authority and the area, so

that the economy of Phuket can be restored while effectively controlling the spread COVID-19," he added.

A representative of the Ministry of Public Health at the meeting said the ministry was addressing public health goals, including controlling morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 and controlling cluster outbreaks, especially from variants, and creating a balance in medicine, public health, society and the economy to drive continuously and sustainably, said the official report.

In terms of the island's tourism sector being prepared to receive foreign tourists, the meeting was

told that local operators are ready to open the pilot tourism area, the report added.

As of last Friday, there were 440 business operators in Phuket that have been certified as SHA Plus, including 300 hotel/accommodation operators. Other operators including convention centres, spas and golf courses, have also been approved as SHA Plus compliant, the meeting was told.

An estimated 20% of existing tourism businesses are reopening, creating a minimum initial employment of 20,000 people, noted the report.

Jatuporn Burusphat, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, highlighted the progress in making sure natural resource attractions in Phuket meet SHA Plus standards, including Sirinath National Park.

Other natural tourist attractions such as the Khao Phra Thaeo Non-Hunting Area and the Khao Toh Sae National Forest Reserve in Thalang, as well as Phuket Aquarium, were also making preparations to be certified SHA Plus, as well as other tourist attractions in the National Reserved Forests and Community Forests.

Local people and communities were being involved in the process by emphasising the need for proper management of waste and the environment for tourists, Mr Jatuporn said.

Bonds to fund COVID-19 relief

THAILAND'S PUBLIC Debt Management Office (PDMO) plans to issue 'Ying Aom Ying Dai' ("The more you save, the more you earn") government savings bonds to the value of B50 billion next month, aiming to use the funds to finance state projects to ease the impacts of the pandemic.

PDMO Director-General Patricia Mongkhonvanit said last Friday (June 25) that the interest rates on the PDMO bond tranches reflect the likelihood of higher market rates, reports state news agency NNT.

PDMO bonds offer an average annual interest rate of 1.80%-1.90% to individual investors, depending on bond terms. The office will also offer the bonds to non-profit organisations at an annual rate of 2.20%.

The bonds are available via the "Sasom Bond Mung Kung" e-wallet, abbreviated to "Sor-BorMor" in Thai on Krungthai Bank's Pao Tang mobile app, and through four dealer banks. The minimum purchase of the bonds is B1,000, with no maximum purchase limit.



PDMO Director-General Patricia Mongkhonvanit. Photo: NNT

Interest is paid twice a year.

The special savings bonds, available via e-wallet, total B10bn with a three-year term, offering a step-up annual interest rate with an average of 1.80%. The Phuket News

How to keep your car well maintained

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Prime Minister unfazed by ongoing COVID criticism

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has insisted he is unfazed by critics of the government's handling of the worsening COVID-19 situation after some called on him to step down.

Critics have launched a broadside against the prime minister over the latest round of restrictions which deal a blow to eateries and restaurants.

Operators complained that they were caught off-guard as the curbs were announced in the Royal Gazette at 1am last Sunday (June 27).

Under the new restrictions which took effect on Monday and last 30 days, construction sites will also close temporarily while eateries and restaurants can only provide take-away services.

Gen Prayut insisted he was not discouraged by the criticism, particularly on social media.

"I am never fazed by anything. I will do my best for as long as I can. I love the people. I want nothing from them. I will work with everyone to take care of them," he said on Monday.

The government will now prioritise easing the impacts caused by the new restrictions in Bangkok and five surrounding provinces of Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon and Nakhon Pathom during the next 30 days.



'I am never fazed by anything,' said PM Prayut amid ongoing criticism of his government's handling of the worsening COVID-19 situation. Photo: AFP

A B7.5 billion relief package will be expedited to help those affected by the new curbs, Prayut said, adding that construction workers' camps are being isolated due to numerous infections diagnosed among their workforces.

He said further relief measures will also be launched in other provinces later.

"I am very concerned about eateries, particularly small food shops. Therefore, we have sought cooperation from the Thai Contractors Association for many of those businesses to send food to construction workers' camps to supplement their income," Gen Prayut said.

"I assure you that the government

is doing its best to look after everyone and is ready to listen to opinions from all parties involved," he added.

National Economic and Social Development Council secretary-general Danucha Pichayanan said that the relief package worth B7.5 billion had been approved for restaurants, eateries and construction businesses affected in Bangkok and the five adjacent provinces.

The package covers employers and employees both in and outside the social security system.

Of the B7.5bn, 4bn will be drawn from the B1 trillion loan and the rest will be allocated from the Social Security Fund.

Double dose Sinovac 'up to 91% effective' against Alpha strain

DOUBLE DOSES OF THE Sinovac vaccine are 71%-91% effective in warding off infection by the Alpha (UK) COVID-19 strain, according to results announced by the Public Health Ministry last Monday (June 28).

The findings were presented by the National Communicable Diseases Committee and the National Vaccine Committee, public health permanent secretary Kiattiphum Wongrajit said.

The results were taken from a study conducted to determine the effectiveness of Sinovac, otherwise known as the CoronaVac vaccine, between April and May when the Alpha variant of the virus was the most prevalent in the country.

The study confirmed that double doses of Sinovac vaccine were effective in reducing infection by the Alpha variant by 71%-91%. The subjects of the study were from high-risk groups in Phuket, Samut Sakhon and Chiang Rai as well as public health workers.

The vaccine was 90.7% effective in the Phuket subjects, 90.5% in those from those in Samut Sakhon, and 82.8% effective in people in Chiang Rai. The results also showed



A person receives a Sinovac vaccine shot in Pattani. Photo: AFP

the vaccine was effective in lowering infections among public health workers by 70.9%.

No one died as a result of being inoculated with two doses of Sinovac.

Dr Kiattiphum said data was being gathered for a similar study on the effectiveness of the vaccine against the fast-spreading Delta (Indian) strain.

According to a real-world study, the Sinovac jab also proved to be 95% effective in preventing severe symptoms or even death in people who caught COVID-19 after being vaccinated.

The other vaccine being rolled out in large numbers is manufactured by AstraZeneca, a British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology company. The government plans to administer about 10 million COVID-19 vaccine doses this month.

Bangkok Post

Delta strain to dominate in Bangkok

ONE-THIRD OF COVID-19 patients in Bangkok will be tested to determine whether they have been infected by the Delta coronavirus variant as the strain is expected to dominate in the capital within the next few months, according to the Department of Medical Sciences.

The department revealed last Monday (June 28) that Bangkok is the largest cluster of the Delta variant, which was first detected in India, with 331 new cases being recorded last week, increasing the number of patients infected by this particular variant to 822.

For comparison, there are reportedly 2,380 cases of the Alpha variant – which was first detected in the United Kingdom – in Bangkok.

According to the department, 25.66% of detected cases in Bangkok last week were of the Delta variant, an increase when compared with 23.67% in the previous week. Meanwhile, Alpha strain infections declined from 76.33% to 74.31% over the same period, it said.

The Delta variant is



Residents in Sai Mai district await COVID-19 testing last Monday (June 28). Photo: Apichit Jinakul

found less in other provinces but infections are reportedly increasing from 2.58% of all accounted cases there to 5.05%, the department said, adding that the Alpha strain is still the dominant strain outside of Bangkok.

However, the department said the Alpha strain's dominance is declining.

Regarding the whole of Thailand, the department said that 12.3% of infections were of the Delta strain, up from 9.76% in April. It said that Alpha strain cases have increased from 86.31% to 89.63% over the same period.

The Delta strain was first detected in the kingdom in April among construction workers in Bangkok's Laksi district. The variant has raised global concern as

it is 1.4 times more infectious than the original Alpha coronavirus variant and has the potential to lessen the efficacy of vaccines.

"All figures foretell that Bangkok will eventually be dominated by the Delta [variant] in the next few months, but please don't worry," Dr Supakit Sirilak, chief of the department, said. "People should follow [containment] measures to prevent disease infection, including by rushing to get vaccinated."

"Many studies found that all vaccines can reduce the chances of infection when compared with those who are not vaccinated."

"So please do not hesitate to get the vaccine," Dr Supakit concluded.

Bangkok Post

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Hari's idea: A call for all expats

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

WA long-term Phuket expat has launched a simple initiative that may lay the groundwork for an expat association which can serve as an advisory or at least consultative body for local government officials looking to avoid blowback on implementing poor policies – and even help officials effect positive change for the island.

Hari Bedi launched the initiative on June 20 with a post on Facebook titled, "Preparing for the Post-Pandemic Era".

"As Phuket emerges from the present pandemic-induced inertia, enormous dynamism is needed to prepare for the future. The belief that nothing ever happens and it's all a waste of time should be shelved and an opportunity should be taken to stress that expats are an integral part of Phuket life and are ready and willing to contribute their share in building a better place for all of us and the visitors," Hari wrote.

"An outpouring of ideas and an unprecedented level of people participation is needed as an antidote to the inaction and gloom of the pandemic era. In that spirit, listed below are ten ideas.

Please reply to this post as soon as possible choosing five ideas that appeal to you most, writing down their numbers. You may also separately list down your own suggestions," he added.



Phuket will need a positive injection of ideas to help pull itself out of the pandemic-induced slump. Photo: PR Phuket

Hari's 10 ideas were:

- Form an expat association which will own and operate a co-op store for imported produce and a maintenance services (handyman) co-op.
- Modernise and expand the immigration office
- Build a multi-story car park in Phuket Town
- Remove 90-day notification to Immigration
- Reform the work permit system
- Allow expats to work as musicians, artists, teachers, writers and authors
- Build a history/ culture museum
- Build two parks – one in the South and the other in the North.
- Build a theatre for performing arts.

• Build a modern art gallery
The responses have already been largely positive.

Among the responses was one from Wolfgang Meusburger, also a long-term Phuket expat, who called for the following:

Affordable public transport / a mixture of short term solutions eg samlor buses/ trucks/ ac electric buses shuttling around/ bs long term plan of tram.

Create a single authority managing all beaches/ cleaning/ licensing of business/ building shower toilet facilities/ zoning for water sport swimming/ awards /

New waste management/ punish all polluters revoke business licenses for offenders/ capex spending [capital expenditure] for wastewater management in all tambons/

Yearly event calendar a combination of top class music / ASEAN Thai arts/ street food / pride / bike week

Saimohan Pahwa noted, "I think if the thai government allowed people seeking a resident permit to work - it would change the whole equation..."

Eddie Sawiris recommended: "1 Form expat association. 2 remove 90 days checkin. 3 build history/culture centre. 4 build two botanical parks. 5 modernise/expand immigration office."

As an observer, Vitaliy Tsoy noted, "Regarding your suggestions, it is very difficult for me to recommend something, because I live in Hua Hin. On the issue of visa regulations, this is the prerogative of the legislature. The laws of any country, first of all, should protect the interests of the local population, and we are guests, and if we do

not like any laws, then it is better for us to choose another country to live. This is my subjective opinion, I hope I did not offend anyone with my words."

The call for ideas followed Hari's post titled, "The Time Has Come".

"It's about time for Phuket to acknowledge the contribution of expatriates in making it one of the world's top holiday destinations. In the last twenty years this small island has been transformed from a sleepy little place to a well-developed cosmopolitan resort. Of course, its natural setting, beautiful beaches and friendly people have always been its greatest asset. But it's the high standard of its hotels, a wide variety of restaurants, marvellous marinas, and entertainment venues of Patong that have helped to make it a magnet for the tourists," he wrote.

"In all this development, the role of the expatriates has been crucial. But little has been said or done by way of public recognition. On the contrary, their image freely gets confused by some disgruntled person such as the one who once mentioned on Facebook that since he paid his taxes and spent all his earnings right here, Phuket should be grateful to him. The image is also sometimes sullied by an unhappy experience with the bureaucracy of an individual among the large retired community. These are a very small minority and there is overwhelming evidence on the positive side to counteract it. But sadly, no sustained effort has been made," he added.

Many expats have responded on Facebook offering help to Hari. To contact Hari, visit his Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/hari.bedi.1>

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Phuket included in US rabies ban

Soi Dog Foundation calls for CDC to revise ban on import of dogs into the USA

Soi Dog Foundation

Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) is asking the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to rethink their blanket ban on the importation of rescued pet dogs from over 120 countries worldwide, including Thailand. The ban follows mounting concerns by the CDC about the transmission of rabies from unvaccinated dogs entering the country.

In a letter to the CDC, President of SDF John Dalley MBE stated, "We fully support and appreciate the importance of implementing stringent disease control measures. However, we are deeply concerned that the measures due to take effect on July 14 will unjustly penalise the import of dogs by SDF and other reputable and internationally recognised rescue organisations."

"All dogs imported by SDF into the USA come from the southern island province of Phuket and pose no risk to human and animal health in the USA. Phuket is Thailand's first province to be recognised as rabies free," he added.

Mr Dalley went on to state that it was clear from the official CDC announcement that the current issue has been brought about by unscrupulous puppy dealers exporting very



young puppies with false documents for commercial purposes. These documents claim the puppies are over four months old, which is the minimum age requirement for them to be properly vaccinated against rabies.

As an organisation that operates the world's largest stray animal sterilisation/vaccination program, and whose work towards eliminating rabies in Thailand has been officially recognised by the Thai Ministry of Public Health, SDF fully understands the severity of rabies and the risk it poses to both animal and human health.

With an unblemished track record of importing healthy, rabies-free dogs to various countries worldwide for 18 years, SDF finds a blanket ban on the import of adopted dogs to be unduly harsh on reputable organisations who

are fully compliant with – and in its own case exceed – all current import requirements.

Property in Phuket

SDF is therefore urging the CDC to adopt the 'rabies titer test' requirement used by other countries to safeguard against importing infected dogs, which would be equally as effective in achieving the same goal. The requirement for an animal to hold a valid rabies titer test showing immunisation against rabies from a CDC-approved laboratory, and then a three-month wait before the animal gains entry, has proved 100% effective in countries where it is mandatory. The UK, for example, has been free from canine rabies for over a century.

This requirement would also help

to end the commercial exploitation of puppies. SDF, which is totally non-profit, does not import puppies under six months old. The vast majority of its dogs are adult and have been rescued from situations like the dog meat trade and extreme cruelty that American people would find abhorrent.

Sadly, by introducing this ban, the CDC will inadvertently be encouraging the continuation of the dog and cat meat trade, which in itself helps to spread rabies, and other cruel practices that exist in Asia. With time to revise the ban fast running out, SDF is hopeful that the CDC are able to act quickly and revert to a more narrowed approach – one in which there are no losers.

As Soi Dog USA President Janis Rosenthal recently reminded us: "suffering has no borders."



Photo: Soi Dog Foundation



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Answers below, centre

Medium

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

Across

1. Strokes a pet, for example
5. Bothered
10. Emerald for one
14. Just ___ should be
15. French for 'black'
16. "Top Chef" judge Simmons
17. Where the Mets used to play
18. Mixer
19. Director Preminger
20. Has huge meals
23. Normandy beach
24. Elder
25. Spoon bender
27. Wall Street watchdog, abbr.
28. Top quality
32. Petroleum executive
34. More finely sharpened
36. Porridge, essentially
37. Very quiet and unmoving
41. Swiss river
42. Pickle
43. Rough
46. Gluck of the Met
47. Pop-ups, e.g.
50. Govt. Rx watchdog
51. Shoebox marking
53. Call
55. Very courageous

60. Swing around
61. Fab Four member
62. Baseball's Tony or Alejandro
63. Unsubstantial
64. Wearer of three stars, abbr.
65. Chase after
66. Exalted works
67. Football field divisions
68. In a mixed up state

Down

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Strolls | Wind" star |
| 2. Feel guilt | 41. "___ Wiedersehen" |
| 3. Haberdashery item | 44. One engaged |
| 4. Put away | in,suffix |
| 5. Pro's adversary | 45. Just about |
| 6. Grabbed | 47. Parting words |
| 7. German "a" | 48. Hockey Hall-of- |
| 8. Operatic solos | Famer Marcel |
| 9. Synthesized music | 49. Beethoven's |
| 10. "Petrushka" | "Moonlight ___" |
| composer | 52. 1996 Madonna |
| Stravinsky | musical |
| 11. Seedless | 54. Leader of the pack |
| mandarin oranges | 56. Tunis rulers |
| 12. Can read | 57. Tech sch. grad |
| 13. "Don't Bring Me | 58. Worn |
| Down" band | 59. Princes, e.g. |
| 21. Pigeonhole | 60. Brazilian city |
| 22. "...___ quit!" | starter |
| 26. Officeholders | |

29. Sushi bar order
30. Word with
"decision" or
"judgment"
31. Magnetic
measurement
33. Uncouth person
34. Ukraine capital
35. Track
37. Shoe for summer
38. Hold dear
39. "The Wizard of Oz"
studio
40. "Gone with the
Wind" star
41. "___ Wiedersehen"
44. One engaged
in, suffix
45. Just about
47. Parting words
48. Hockey Hall-of-
Famer Marcel
49. Beethoven's
"Moonlight ___"
52. 1996 Madonna
musical
54. Leader of the pack
56. Tunis rulers
57. Tech sch. grad
58. Worn
59. Princes, e.g.
60. Brazilian city
starter

1) Rainbow Nation; 2) Yes; 3) Michael Collins; 4) The Spanish Lottery (El Gordo means "fat one"); 5) Iceland

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50				51		52				53	54			
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63					64						65			
66					67						68			

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[illegible]

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

of a second is how fast a Venus flytrap can close on an insect.

percent of the world's food today
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83% of them were loaded.**

is the current total estimated number of video gamers in the world.

Source: Uberfacts

A wooden signpost stands on a sandy beach at sunset. The signpost has four directional signs: the top sign points right and says '# PK Surf Training'; the left sign points left and says '# Phuket'; the right sign points right and says '# Kata Beach'; and the bottom sign points down and says '# Thailand'. In the background, the sun is low on the horizon, reflecting on the water. A sailboat is visible on the sea, and two people are on the beach near the water's edge.

Sunset at Kata Beach. *Photo by Li Shaokun*

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket?
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Earhart and Noonan by the Lockheed L10 Electra at Darwin, Australia on June 28, 1937.

July 2, 1937

Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan are last heard from over the Pacific Ocean while attempting to make the first equatorial round-the-world flight.

July 3, 987 AD

Hugh Capet is crowned King of France, the first of the Capetian dynasty that would rule France until the French Revolution in 1792.

July 4, 1892

Western Samoa changes the International Date Line, causing Monday (July 4) to occur twice, resulting in a year with 367 days.

July 5, 1946

Micheline Bernardini models the first bikini on July 5, 1946 at the Piscine Molitor in Paris.

July 6, 2003

The 70-metre Yevpatoria Planetary Radar sends a METI message (Cosmic Call 2) to five stars. The messages will arrive to these stars in 2036, 2040, 2044, and 2049, respectively.

July 7, 1928

Sliced bread is sold for the first time (on the inventor's 48th birthday) by the Chillicothe Baking Company of Chillicothe, Missouri.

Source: Wikipedia

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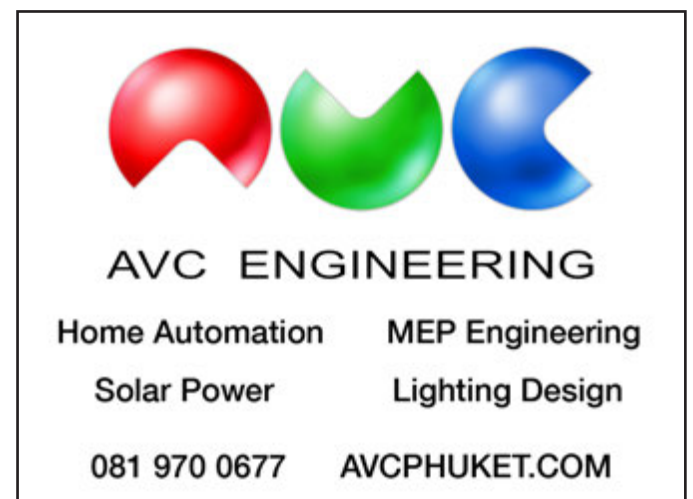
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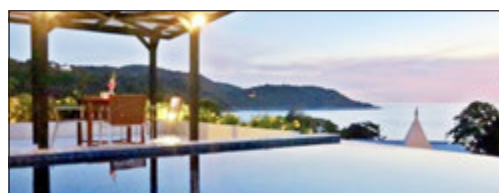
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Jason Beavan



Zhou Guanyu. Photo: AFP

Zhou edges closer to dream F1 debut

FORMULA ONE

ZHOU GUANYU WILL take a major step towards becoming the first full-time Chinese driver in Formula One after the Alpine team announced he will take part in practice at this weekend's Austrian Grand Prix (July 2-4). The 22-year-old from Shanghai, who tops the F2 standings, will borrow the car of two-time former world champion Fernando Alonso for the first free practice session today (July 2).

Zhou, who is already a test driver for Alpine, called his first time behind the wheel in Formula One practice "a dream coming true".

Zhou, who uses the English name "Joe" and went to school in Britain, added: "It's going to be even more special that I'm driving Fernando's car as he inspired me to pursue a career

in racing when I was young."

Zhou follows compatriot Ma Qinghua, who drove in several practice sessions in 2012-2013 with the HRT and Caterham teams, the official Formula One website said. Ma failed to secure a full-time seat in the sport.

Alpine's chief executive Laurent Rossi called it "an important step" in Zhou's promising career.

"This experience will greatly help him as he makes very solid progress towards the ultimate target that constitutes a full-time F1 seat," said Rossi.

Zhou, who as a little boy played with toy cars, has never made any secret of his determination to race in F1 and make history for his country.

"I would say definitely I'm the closest ever to get into Formula One as a Chinese driver," he said.

"But the last step is the hardest." *AFP*

Unbeatable Verstappen cruises to Styria victory

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen clinically dispatched Lewis Hamilton to claim a dominant victory at the Styrian Grand Prix last Sunday (June 27) and steal a march in the championship standings.

Red Bull Racing was untouchable all weekend in the first of two successive races at Austria's Red Bull Ring, and Verstappen converted a comfortable pole position into an all-laps-led victory ahead of helpless title rival Hamilton.

It was Red Bull Racing's most comprehensive performance of the season, taking the Dutchman to an 18-point advantage in the title stakes.

"I felt a good balance in the car," he said. "It's looking really good. We just have to keep on going, keep pushing really hard. I'm confident we can do a really good job."

The final margin of victory was an exaggerated 35 seconds thanks to a late pit stop by Hamilton to take a point for fastest lap with new tyres, but the Briton leaked time to the Dutchman all afternoon, leaving him with no cards to play but limit the damage with the consolation score.

The result marks the first time since 2013, before the dawn of the turbo-hybrid era, that Mercedes has conceded four grands prix in succession, and the reigning constructors champion now sits 40 points behind Red Bull Racing in the standings.



Red Bull's Max Verstappen is congratulated by his team as he crosses the finish line to win the Styrian Grand Prix last Sunday (June 27). Photo: AFP

Mercedes may at least take some solace from Valtteri Bottas completing the podium ahead of Sergio Perez to restrict what could have been a substantial points loss.

STANDOUT DRIVES

Lando Norris took fifth with a strong race for McLaren after running third in the opening 10 laps before Perez and Bottas steamed by in their faster cars.

But it wasn't enough to prevent Ferrari from making inroads into McLaren's third place in the constructors standings off the back of two standouts drives from Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc in sixth and seventh.

Sainz ran until lap 41 on the me-

dium tyre, the longest stint of the race on that compound, to rise from 12th to fifth, losing a couple of places at his stop and recovering to sixth for a quiet final 27 laps.

Leclerc started seventh but was 18th at the end of the second lap with front wing damage from a collision at the first corner, but the Monegasque drove a race of controlled aggression to pick off car after car on either side of his pit stop to rise seventh with 11 laps to spare in what he described as one of the best performances of his F1 career.

Lance Stroll finished eighth at the head of a tight battle for the final points places ahead of Fernando Alonso and Japanese rookie Yuki Tsunoda.

Khun Gunn aiming to shoot high in Tokyo

GOLF

THAILAND'S EMERGING golf star Gunn Charoenkul says his appearance in this summer's Olympics will, surprisingly, mark the first time he has represented his country and that he plans to "aim high" and finish on the podium with a medal.

"During the early part of

my career, when I was 16 or 17 years old, I never got a chance to get into the national team. So, this is the first time," he said last week, after finishing in 52nd place on the Final Olympic Ranking – which see the top 60 qualify for Tokyo 2020.

The 29-year-old, who plays on both the Asian Tour and Japan Golf Tour Organisation, admitted that he could

barely look at his ranking at tournaments each week as he tried to maintain his focus and keep his position in the top 60.

"I felt the pressure, and I think that's partly why I did not perform well in the past eight events. I tried not to think about it too much, tried not to think about my World Golf ranking which determines your Olympic position," he added.

"My goal is one of the medals, they are the only prize. You have to aim high, even though the top players are going to be there."

Gunn will be joined at the XXXII Olympiad by compatriot Jazz Janewattanond and he will be one of seven Asian Tour players competing. At the Rio Olympics in 2016 – when golf returned to the quadrennial event after an absence of 112 years – Thongchai Jaidee and Kiradech Aphibarnrat represented Thailand, with the latter impressively finishing joint fifth.

Appropriately, Gunn has been in Japan since March competing on the JGTO: he is currently 37th on Money List, and has only missed one cut in 11 starts in the 2020/2021 season, with a best finish equal eighth in the Dunlop Phoenix.

"I never thought I would be homesick, but I am," said Gunn, who plans to play the second half of the year on the JGTO after the Olympics – which means he faces the prospect of not getting back to Thailand until December.



Thai golf star Gunn Charoenkul is eagerly anticipating the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. Photo: Asian Tour

"I haven't seen my family for four months. But these are exceptional times and the opportunity to play in the Olympics and more events in Japan helps outweigh the negatives."

He has two more JGTO events before heads into the Olympic bubble.

"I am really looking forward to being part of the Olympic village, soaking up the atmosphere and seeing other athletes, although

it may be difficult with the restrictions," Gunn said.

He says he has not played Kasumigaseki Country Club, host venue for the Olympic golf event, before as they have not held events, but he has been doing some homework about the course by reading their website.

"I feel ok now about things, but I think when I get to the village it will hit me. It will be amazing."

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High drama at the Euros as quarter-finals beckon

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Euro 2020 enters the quarter-finals stage later today (July 2) with the mouth-watering tie between hotly tipped favourites Italy and Belgium the pick of the round.

Like a fine wine, the tournament is maturing with age after the last 16 knockout round saw some spectacular games and results.

Italy were made to work hard for their win against Austria last Saturday (June 26), the first time the Azzurri have been truly tested in the competition thus far.

They required extra-time at Wembley and were indebted to goals from substitutes Federico Chiesa and Matteo Pessina to secure the 2-1 win.

Belgium took on holders Portugal 24-hours later where Thorgan Hazard's dipping 25-yard strike settled the game 1-0 in the Belgian's favour.

Portugal arguably had the better chances although Belgium's three-man backline of Jan Vertonghen, Toby Alderweireld and Thomas Vermaelen, with a combined age of 101 years and 224 internationals caps between them, held firm to protect the lead.

However, injuries sustained by Eden Hazard and Kevin de Bruyne means both could miss out against the Italians.



Switzerland's goalkeeper Yann Sommer saves the decisive penalty from France's Kylian Mbappe. Photo: AFP

Elsewhere, Denmark go up against the Czech Republic tomorrow in a match many are referring to as the game between the tournament's dark horses.

The Danes eased past Wales in a 4-0 triumph last Saturday and continue the fine momentum they have found since the harrowing experience in their first game against Finland when star player Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed on the pitch.

The Czechs impressed as they saw off the much-fancied Netherlands on Sunday. The Oranje had defender Matthijs de Ligt sent off for a VAR-reviewed handball offence just after halftime and subsequently capitulated as the Czechs took control, with goals from Tomas Holes and Patrik Schick securing the 2-0 win.

Last Monday was a day of high drama with Spain edging past Croatia 5-3 after

extra time in a compelling game.

Spain fell behind to a freak 50-yard own goal by Pedri, the ninth own goal of the tournament so far, which is more than have been registered in all the previous Euros combined. "Own goal" looks certain to claim the competition's golden boot award for most goals scored!

Later on Monday, Switzerland caused a seismic shock as they dumped out reigning World Champions France 5-4 in a penalty shootout, after the score stood 3-3 after extra-time. Kylian Mbappe missed the vital spot kick for the French.

Switzerland play Spain in their quarter-final this evening (11pm Phuket time).

At time of press, the games between England and Germany, and Sweden and Ukraine had yet to take place. The winners of these two games will face off in the final quarter-final match tomorrow.

Anurak takes on caretaker charge

FOOTBALL

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION of Thailand (FAT) has appointed former Thailand international Anurak Srikerd as the interim head coach of the Thai national men's teams.

Akira Nishino, who is the official head coach of the War Elephants, returned to Japan to take care of some "personal business" after the Thais finished fourth in their group and failed to reach the final stage of the Asian qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

While Nishino has apparently missed the deadline to submit his report on the Thai failure in the United Arab Emirates, the FAT has yet to confirm if the veteran Japanese coach has been relieved of his duties.

The FAT said Anurak has been appointed to continue the work needed to prepare the Thai squads for participation in the 2022 AFC U23 Championship, the AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers in October, the AFF Suzuki Cup and this year's SEA Games.

Anurak will work with Issara Sritaro, who will serve



Former Thailand star Anurak Srikerd. Photo: Bangkok Post

as his assistant, and they will soon start observing the Thai players in different competitions, including the AFC Champions League group stages which are now underway.

Anurak is currently the assistant coach to Nishino.

The failed World Cup campaign led to FAT president Somyot Poompunmuang apologising to Thai fans after the embarrassing 1-0 loss to Malaysia on June 16.

"As the FAT president, I'd like to apologise to Thai fans for our failure to bring happiness to you," Somyot said.

"As we failed to meet our target, the FAT has to review the performance and seek improvement." Bangkok Post

NSW reclaim State of Origin crown

RUGBY

AN ELECTRIC NEW South Wales piled on four tries in a 26-0 rout of Queensland last Sunday (June 27) to snap a four-year losing streak in Brisbane and reclaim their State of Origin rugby league crown.

The Blues were heavy favourites after their landslide win in the opening clash of the best-of-three series at Townsville, where they crushed the hapless Maroons by a record 50-6.

Besieged Queensland coach Paul Green made a raft of changes after that embarrassing defeat, but they made little difference against a side boasting a top-class back-line.

Josh Addo-Carr, Latrell Mitchell and Tom Trbojevic all crossed to give them an 18-0 half-time lead with another from Addo-Carr adding to Queensland's pain in the second stanza at a packed Suncorp Stadium.

Nathan Cleary nailed all four conversions.

It was NSW's first Origin win in Brisbane since game



NSW's Nathan Cleary nailed all four of his conversions in last Sunday's match. Photo: AFP

one in 2017 and ensured they reclaimed a shield they unexpectedly lost last series, when they slumped to defeat as heavy favourites.

Victory makes the final game in Sydney on July 14 a dead rubber, leaving Queensland battling to save face.

In an electric atmosphere, the Maroons initially looked more aggressive and disciplined than the team from Townsville.

But the Blues were always threatening and it took them just 11 minutes to pull apart the defence with Addo-Carr crossing in the corner after Mitchell won the ball with brute strength inside Queensland's 20.

NSW were dangerous whenever they went wide,

but the home team clung on and a James Tedesco knock on gave them a chance to attack mid-way through the match.

But in a catastrophe for the Maroons, Mitchell made a one-handed intercept as they targeted the try line and sprinted 80 metres for the Blues' second touchdown.

They split the disjointed Queensland defence again eight minutes later, spinning the ball right to Addo-Carr who offloaded to Trbojevic who ran over unopposed for an 18-0 half-time lead.

Queensland battled hard but another Blues try was inevitable and it came from Addo-Carr, who used smart footwork to skip through the defence. AFP



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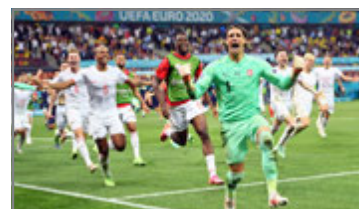
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Sport

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Euro 2020 gathering pace > p15

SEVENS HEAVEN AT THE ACG



Scrum action at the ACG last Saturday (June 26) as Sevens rugby returned to Phuket. Photo: @generic_studios_asia

RUGBY

Anthony Van Sleuwen

After week upon week of mind-numbing lockdown, Phuket sevens rugby fans were finally given something to cheer about last Saturday (June 26) as “the game they play in heaven” returned to the ACG in style.

And what a spectacle it was. Forty minutes of fast and ferocious seven on seven rugby, as the Phuket Vagabonds launched their interclub grudge match with game one of the Vagabonds Sevens Tri-Series.

With the official provincial approval on spectators approved just in the nick of time, the ACG was converted from sleepy Sunday cricket club to a boisterous park footy ground as the island’s rugby faithful swarmed for some bone-rattling tackles, slick hands, fast feet and a fair bit of niggles.

Eager for a return to competitive, full contact rugby, the Vagabonds pitched mate against mate as the Reds and Blues faced off in a four quarter slug fest.

The first quarter saw the larger lumps in red push out to an early lead with some

rapid phase play keeping the Blues on the back foot close to their line. With continued pressure, gaps were found in the Blues’ defensive line and Dan Ashburn barged his way over for try number one.

The Reds continued to dominate the quarter with aggressive ruck work to allow captain Paul Rothwell to find the try line before the end of the quarter.

The Blues fought back in the second quarter as some loose balls and misplaced kicks found their way into the ever dangerous hands of Shaun Kober, who turned the Reds defence inside out before put-

ting team mate Craig Morgan into open space for a well worked try.

As the Reds continued to turn over possession and the set piece began to show cracks, the Blues scored three more times in the quarter.

The Reds started the third quarter with more strong running close to the ruck from their big ball carriers providing Rothwell an opportunity for a quick snipe over the try line to put them back in the match.

The momentum was short lived, however, with the deceptive footwork and strong contact of Kober leading him to the try line.

The Blues kept the Reds pinned on their line for most of the final quarter with Guy Choobal forcing his way over the line for the game sealing try.

The man of the match performance went to Paul Hickey who had his work cut out trying to keep the larger Red pack at bay.

Overall the day was a fantastic exhibition of the hard work put in by a resurgent Vagabonds club and their highly dedicated players. The Vagabonds would like to extend a special thank you to Neil Quail and the team at the ACG for an outstanding effort in hosting the event, the first of many.

A special mention also goes out to Nathan Thoday whose enthusiasm and commitment during his four months on the island have been a driving factor behind the success of the event.

Game two has been scheduled for July 31, with the Vagabonds eager to build on a highly competitive first outing.

The club are also pleased to be launching the long awaited Junior Rugby Academy with Saturday morning training sessions starting on July 10 running for 10 consecutive weeks. For more information visit the website www.phuketvagabonds.com

Rafa Nadal tennis academy is coming to BISP

TENNIS

HE MAY NOT BE VISITING personally but the influence of tennis legend Rafael Nadal will be felt in Phuket later this year and early next as British International School, Phuket (BISP) is delighted to confirm that it will be hosting two Rafa Nadal Academy Tennis camps.

The camps will be led by official training staff from Nadal’s Academy in Manacor, Spain, and attendees will be afforded the chance to, as the official website states, “improve their game and maximize their potential under the Academy’s unique

methodology of training.”

The experience will include world-class tennis development with Nadal’s core values in an exciting, fun, and fast-paced environment.

There will be two junior camps on offer, each lasting five days in duration, from December 27-31, 2021 and January 3-7, 2022.

The junior camps are aimed at players aged 8-19 years-old. Adult camps will also be available.

The Rafa Nadal Academy opened its doors in 2016 and is headquartered on the Spaniard’s home island of Mallorca.

In just five years it has already become one of the leading sports

centres in the world, creating a unique training system based on the experience acquired during all Nadal’s years through the ATP circuit.

Technical staff at the Academy include Nadal’s uncle and coach of 17 years, Toni Nadal, and former ATP world number one and French Open winner Carlos Moya.

‘PROLONG MY CAREER’

The announcement on the Phuket Academy dates came as Nadal withdrew from both this year’s Wimbledon championship and the Tokyo Olympic Games.

“It’s never an easy decision to take but after listening to my body

and discuss(ing) it with my team I understand that it is the right decision,” Nadal tweeted on June 17.

“The goal is to prolong my career and continue to do what makes me happy, that is to compete at the highest level and keep fighting for those professional and personal goals at the maximum level of competition,” he added.

Nadal is a double Olympic champion, having won gold in the singles in Beijing in 2008 and in doubles with Marc Lopez in Rio in 2016, when he also carried Spain’s flag in the opening ceremony.

He won the Wimbledon singles crown in 2008 and 2010.



A US\$100 (approximately B3,200) early bird discount applies until September 1. Places are limited. To register, please visit <https://avanza.rafanadalacademycamps.com/asia/thailand/sign-up/>

For more information on British International School, Phuket please contact info@bisphuket.ac.th.

Ben Tirebuck