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HIGH HOPES



Tourists arrive on the first Firefly direct flight from Penang in two years. Photo: PR Phuket

TAT EXPECTS 7.5MN FOREIGN ARRIVALS IN SECOND HALF, HOPING FOR B400BN BOON

The Phuket News
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Thai tourism in the second half of 2022 is expected to draw 7.5 million foreign arrivals contributing B403 billion to the economy, according to a market forecast by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

The international market analysis for the 2022 H2 could see 3.5-times growth from the first half, which closed with 2.12mn tourist arrivals in total as more favourable factors

help support demand from every source market, said TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

Of the 7.5mn total, Southeast Asia is forecast to account for 3.13mn tourist arrivals, generating B114bn, followed by Europe with 1.6mn travellers and the highest revenue of around B119bn due to a longer length of stay, particularly after the government extended the length of stay from 30 days to 45 days from October this year until March next year.

Southeast Asia has the most promising outlook as land border check-

points have fully reopened while most airlines have resumed their routes connecting key cities in the region.

South Asia, led by India, could see 989,320 tourists arriving, with a total spending of B50bn. The tremendous growth of this market derives from flight connectivity which has no shortage like other destinations.

However, Northeast Asia, which previously dominated Thai tourism during the years before COVID-19 with over 10mn tourists from China, would drop to fourth place with 831,900 tourists, generating B42bn,

mainly attributed to tight border controls in China and restrictions still in place in Japan.

Meanwhile, the Middle East is poised to generate B40bn in revenue from 449,800 travellers, followed by the US with 257,420 travellers contributing B19bn in receipts.

Oceania would account for 234,570 tourists generating B18.4bn and another 27,500 tourists are expected from Africa with total spending of B1.8bn.

Mr Yuthasak said the results from the analysis showed that this year...

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News



A 'ma song' rides in the back of a pickup at Saphan Hin during the Vegetarian Festival last year. Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

Veg Fest to be held under COVID rules

THE ANNUAL PHUKET VEGETARIAN Festival this year, to be held from Sept 26 - Oct 4, will maintain its COVID-19 prevention measures from last year, officials have confirmed.

The news came at a meeting held at the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) on Monday (Aug 29), chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan.

Chantana Sitthiphan of the Phuket Provincial Office of the Ministry of Culture, explained that the measures observed last year, such as social distancing, the wearing of masks at all times and body temperature checks, will be required this year.

All people taking part in ritual ceremonies at the shrines must be vaccinated with at least two injections of COVID-19 vaccine and must be tested by antigen test kit (ATK) every three days during the festival.

Any person who tests positive by ATK will be quarantined and admitted to a medical facility, and will not be permitted to take part in any further activities in the festival, she said.

Shrine administrators will be responsible for enforcing the measures, Ms Chantana said.

Administrators must ensure safe and hygienic health practices are observed at all areas where food is prepared and served. PPHO officers will conduct checks, Ms Chantana said.

"Shops are forbidden to sell firecrackers, except for those used as part of the festival. No fireworks or playing with firecrackers is allowed," she added.

The Phuket News

Firefly returns after two years

Continued from page 1

...Thailand could secure at least 9.62mn travellers in total, which is close to the target of 10mn.

However, there are headwinds that could impact travel sentiment in the second half, led by the Russia-Ukraine war with no end in sight, while tensions between China and Taiwan need close monitoring.

LEVELLING OFF

The TAT's forecast comes as the number of international arrivals in Phuket has levelled off, averaging in the low- to mid-4,000s.

According to the Phuket Airport Immigration Daily report for Monday (Aug 29), since May 1 this year a total of 103,999 arrivals have come from India, followed by 44,135 from Australia and 39,078 from Indonesia.

Arrivals from the UK so far have totalled 27,515, followed by Malaysia (22,636), Germany (15,978), the US (14,073), Russia (12,838) and Israel (11,220).

FIREFLY RETURNS

Firefly Airlines resumed its Phuket-Penang flights last week as the first scheduled flight from the carrier in over two years touched down on the island.

The COVID-19 pandemic had seen all scheduled flights between the two destinations cancelled indefinitely but last Friday (Aug 26) saw flight FY3600 from Penang arrive in Phuket at 2:20pm with a total of 134 passengers on board a newly renovated Boeing 737-800.

Firefly Airlines, a subsidiary of Malaysia Aviation Group, confirmed the new schedule will see four flights between the two destinations every week. It marks the airline's second international destination after the Seletar-Singapore route was launched in June.

"The global travel restrictions



brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic saw many flight routes cancelled, particularly across the Asean region," commented Firefly Airlines CEO Philip See.

"Now restrictions have eased, customers are excited and looking forward to travelling again. The launch of our new Boeing 737-800 earlier this year will help drive traffic and bring more passengers to connected destinations between cities and popular tourist destinations such as Phuket," he added.

Flights have been purposefully planned to arrive in Phuket in the early afternoon to enable passengers sufficient time to clear the airport, check in at their accommodation venue and start enjoying the wonders the island has to offer such as fine food and beverages, world-class beaches, markets and street entertainment, Mr See added. Likewise, passengers travelling to Penang will enjoy exploring the beautiful colonial architecture and history, idyllic beaches and some of the best street food in the world.

Nongyao Jirandon, Director of

the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) office in Kuala Lumpur, said, "It's great to see Malaysian travellers from Penang considering Thailand as a desirable destination and equally great that they can now travel to the island with Firefly."

"Penang and Phuket are similar in history and culture so Malaysian tourists will feel at home while in Phuket. At the same time, one can enjoy Phuket's signature southern cuisine and beautiful beaches. This year, Phuket attracted 890,000 tourists from around the world. Thailand also welcomed more than 560,000 Malaysians from January to August as well," Ms Nongyao added.

Nanthasiri Ronnasiri, Director of TAT's Phuket office, said, "Phuket has so much to offer tourists such as amazingly beautiful beaches and delicious local cuisine, from Michelin-starred restaurants to street food. There are also many high quality standard hotels and resorts that welcome Malaysian tourists in a safe and hygienic environment."

Ooi Chok Yan, Executive Chairman of Penang Global Tourism, said, "We are committed to increasing the number of tourists to Penang and the relaunch of Firefly flights to regional destinations only helps with this objective."

"Penang is much more than a secluded beach getaway," added Mr Ooi. "It is dubbed the Pearl of the Orient and recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage City. With its quaint old buildings it has much charm with history, art and culture coexisting with modern developments including Penang Hill, which has recently been recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve."

Firefly also operates routes from Penang to Langkawi, Johor Bahru, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. Customers flying in the Boeing 737-800 can choose value packages that offer flexibility with flight changes, reward points earned, 20kg of checked baggage allowance with hot meals served on board and priority with bags, boarding, check-in and seat selection.

Kamala holds tsunami evacuation drill, ignores 440m beach wall

HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS, local officials and members of the public joined a tsunami evacuation drill held at Kamala last week.

The exercise, held on Aug 24, began with a 'table-top' exercise in the morning so that emergency responders and disaster officials could co-ordinate their response, explained Kathu District Chief Siwat Rawangkul, who presided over the opening ceremony of the event.

At 1pm, a tsunami warn-

ing sounded and the participants made their way from the "100th Anniversary Memorial Public Park", known to everyone else as Tsunami Memorial Park, at the southern end of the beach to the shelter set up at Kamala Subdistrict Administrative Organization (OrBorTor) about 1.4 kilometres away.

Many of those who took part, including officials, actually ran the course, leaving many exhausted on arriving at the shelter.

However, the exercise did not



Photo: PR Phuket

account for any people who may be on the northern end of the beach fleeing a tsunami.

The northern end has a wall 440 metres long along the beachfront marking the boundary of the Kamala Muslim Cemetery, forcing people fleeing a tsunami to run along the beach before making any distance away from the danger.

Some of the participants played the role of people injured in the simulated disaster, with emergency responders providing medical attention.

Mr Suwit thanked all agencies and parties involved in taking part, and announced that the goal of the

exercise had been achieved.

"This is to build confidence among residents and tourists, for people to feel safe and not panic, and survive if a tsunami strikes again," he said.

The number of tourists returning to the area had increased to about 60% of pre-COVID levels, Mr Suwit noted.

"Another evacuation drill may be held later at night once more hotels re-open and more tourists are staying in the area," he added.

The Phuket News

Landlord denies sex assault

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The owner of a dormitory in Phuket Town who has been accused of sexual assault by one of his tenants has denied all charges against him, police have confirmed.

Kwanruethai Phajongkiat, 26, filed a formal complaint of sexual assault against her landlord at Phuket City Police Station on Aug 21 after claims he had used a spare key to access her room and accost her while she was asleep.

The landlord, 50-year-old Mr Sasin, initially only named in the report as "Mr Pae", had been summoned to Phuket Police Station on Aug 24 to be questioned by officers, said Phuket City Police Deputy Chief Lt Col Sarawut Chotsuwan.

Lt Col Sarawut confirmed that Mr Sasin had denied the allegations made against him of trespassing and indecency and that he declined to make any statement on the incident.

Mr Sasin was subsequently released, Lt Col Sarawut confirmed, as he had complied with the terms of the summons willingly. Col Sarawut

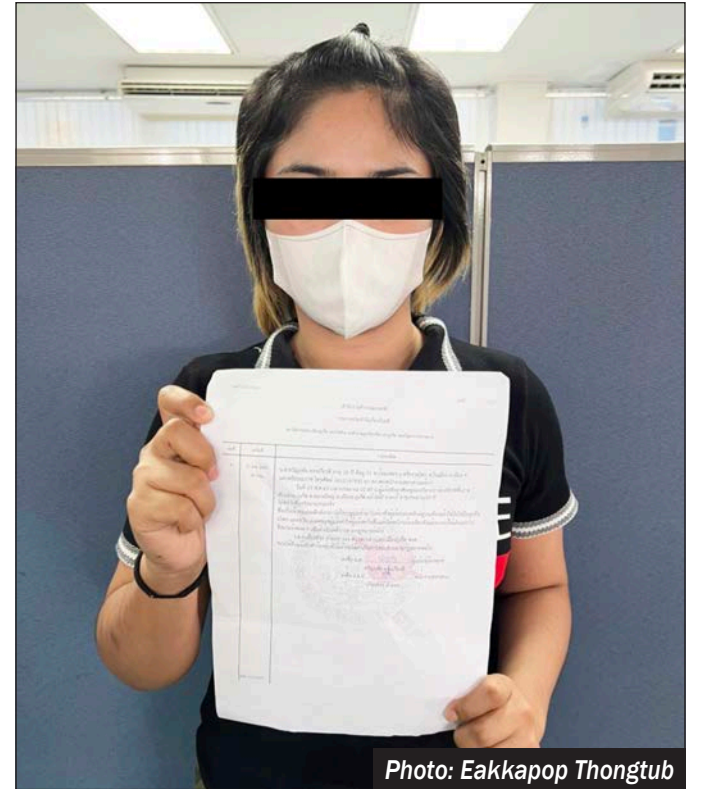
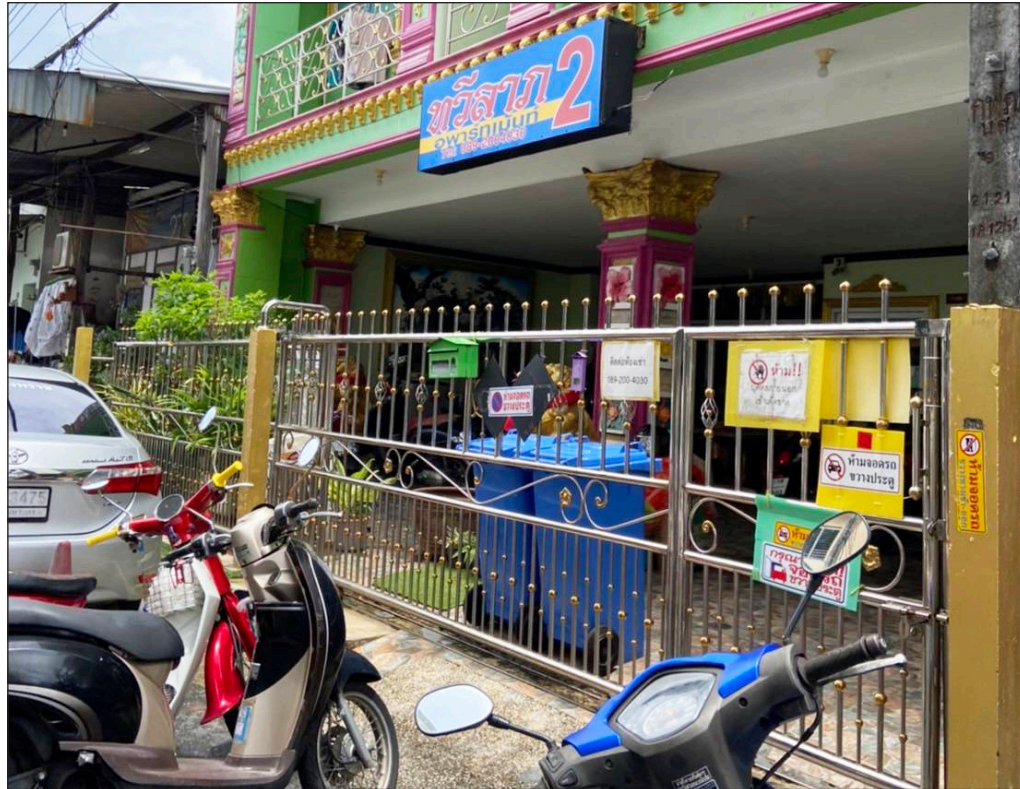


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

did not provide any comment on the status of the case or whether it will be pursued further.

Ms Kwanruethai, originally from Nakhon Si Thammarat, filed the complaint at Phuket City Police Station at 4:12am on Aug 21.

Lt Col Kiatjorn Amloy, Deputy Chief of Investigation, was the officer who received the complaint.

The incident happened at about 2:30am on Aug 21, at her room on the second floor of the Thawilarp 2 dormitory in Soi Hub Ek, off Phuket Rd in Phuket Town, Ms Kwanruethai said.

She was asleep in her room when she woke, feeling a hand on her hip sliding down between her legs.

Beside her was her landlord. It was dark. She could

not see his face, but she recognised his voice and could see he was wearing only underpants, Ms Kwanruethai added.

Realising what was happening, Ms Kwanruethai screamed, startling Mr Sasin, who fled the room, she said.

Ms Kwanruethai called her brother to pick her up and take her to Phuket Town Police Station to report the

incident.

Ms Kwanruethai said that before the incident she felt safe staying at the dormitory-style accommodation. She had seen Mr Pae before and always offered her respects with a wai, she said.

However, even after police were informed of the incident, they asked her if she wanted to drop the charge.

"I said no, I want to pros-

ecute," she said.

Ms Kwanruethai said that after she had filed her complaint, more people had come forward to file their own complaints.

"I want people to be careful because they think that their place is safe, but if there are many copies of key cards to enter your room, it may not be as safe as you think," she said.

Rains cause road collapse

MOTORISTS HAVE advised to avoid using the road from Kathu to Koh Kaew (Route 3030) after a large section of road collapsed last Friday (Aug 26).

The road has been closed for safety, officials reported.

Motorists looking to access Golfand View Village or use the road to access British International School, Phuket are affected by the road closure.

Following the collapse last Friday morning, police soon arrived and set up traffic cones and barriers to redirect traffic away from the danger zone, a section of road washed away by erosion brought on by heavy downpours that had strafed the island for weeks.

Kathu Municipality reported that repairs, including laying new pipes, carrying out earthworks and paving a new road across the damage section will take about 70 days.

Officials apologised for any inconvenience caused while repairs to the road are made.



Photo: Phuket Info Center

The road will remain closed while repairs are being made to the road, Kathu Municipality confirmed.

Motorists were advised to take alternative routes, such as making their way back to the Sam Kong Intersection (where the main Lotus branch is located

on the bypass road). From there, motorists will need to make their way along the bypass road to the Bang Khu Intersection, then turn left onto Thepkrasattri Rd then left again to make their way to locations on the east side of the damaged road.

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Man stabbed on street

Suspect confesses, but denies daughter, 9, taken for ride along

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A man wanted for riding up to another man and stabbing him on a street in Wichit last week has defended himself, saying that his 9-year-old daughter was not with him on his motorbike when he committed the stabbing.

Officers arrested the suspect, Anuphat Chuwaree, 31, from where he was hiding in front of an apartment in Soi Sukniran 2, Wichit, reported Wichit Police Deputy Chief Lt Col Thammasan Boonsong.

Lt Col Thammasan confirmed that Anuphat was wanted for attempted murder.

Anuphat answered police questions at Wichit Police Station on Monday (Aug 29). Anuphat also confessed to the stabbing to reporters, but dismissed the notion that his daughter was present during the attack.

Anuphat's claim cannot be substantiated by CCTV footage before and after the stabbing.

CCTV coverage in the area showed Anuphat approaching his victim, Kittisak 'Phan' Mahiphan, 31, on Soi Muang Thong 5, Moo 6, Wichit, while his daughter was riding pillion.

Another camera showed Mr Kittisak hobbling along the road clutching



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

his left leg while trying to flag down passing motorists for help before collapsing on the footpath.

The time on the first camera showed the conversation with the daughter present occurred at 2:34pm, while the second camera showing Mr Kittisak after the stabbing was marked as recorded at 1:34pm.

"The child on the motorbike is irrelevant. This is something between me and Mr Phan," Anuphat said, repeatedly referring to the man he stabbed as his "friend".

Anuphat also denied that he stabbed Mr Kittisak three times. He stabbed Mr Kittisak only once "up close", and slashed his leg, Anuphat said.

"I didn't try to kill him. If I wanted to kill him I would have gone for his throat or stomach," Anuphat explained.

Anuphat blamed drinking for the attack. "I was drunk every day because I broke up with my girlfriend and I was stressed," he said.

Anuphat also blamed Mr Kittisak for spreading false rumours about

him sleeping with Mr Kittisak's wife.

"He drinks every day and I was told that he had been telling other people he drinks with that I was having an affair with his wife," Anuphat said.

"This is not true. Many people have called me asking if it were true. I explained to them it was a little misunderstanding," he added.

"I told him a thousand times to stop, but we ended up fighting," he continued.

Anuphat said he went to Mr Kittisak's house, located in Soi Muang Thong, to confront him about the rumours, but denied breaking the front door. "The door was already broken," he said.

"I went there to talk, but he was already drunk and we ended up fighting, punching each other," Anuphat said.

"I want to apologise to my friend. I felt guilty but I didn't run away, I didn't mean to run away," he said.

Despite Anuphat's confession, police have yet to confirm that he has formally been presented with the charge of attempted murder.

Also despite Anuphat's confession and the CCTV footage, police have made no mention of Anuphat facing drunk driving charges or even a fine for not wearing a helmet while riding a motorbike.

Police fine woman B500 for ghost driving

POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED that they have fined a woman B500 for driving against traffic flow on a small road at the busy intersection leading to Phuket Rajabhat University.

The confirmation came through a statement issued on Aug 25, in response to a post online showing the car, a Ford Everest, blocking traffic on the small road leading to the university just after 10am that same day.

The narrow road is two lanes wide and allows traffic in both directions. The Ford Everest was on the wrong side of the road heading toward the busy intersection. Cars turning from Thepkasattri Rd into the small road found themselves facing the Ford Everest head-on.

The police statement named no less than four senior officers, including Phuket City Police Chief Col Sarawut Chuprasit, involved in police action in tracking down the culprit, a woman named by police only as "Ms B".



Photo: Phuket City Police

Ms B, a resident of Ratsada, presented herself at Phuket City Police Station just before 4pm, the statement said.

She was duly fined B500 for the infraction, the statement added.

The woman apologised for the incident and said she would follow the traffic rules strictly from now on, said the statement.

The woman does have a valid driver's licence. She said that she was unaware that the road was not one-way as she "rarely" used it.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Fisherman knocked overboard found safe on uninhabited island

A FISHERMAN KNOCKED overboard amid heavy seas was later safely recovered from a small uninhabited island south of Phuket.

The Royal Thai Navy (RTN) Third Area Command, based at Cape Panwa, reported that the Navy base received a call for assistance from the fishing boat 'Siri Namchok 12' at about 5:30pm on Aug 21.

Crewman Ekarat Limsomboon, 43, had been knocked overboard by a sliding ice box amid strong waves, the boat reported.

RTN Boat Tor 233 was dispatched to aid in the search being carried out by Siri Namchok 12 and other fishing boats in the area.

Mr Ekarat had been knocked overboard about 1.5 nautical miles west of Koh Kaew Noi island, small uninhabited island no more than 500 metres from north to south and about 300m across at its widest point.

The island is located about 2.5 kilometres south-southwest of the southernmost tip of Promthep Cape. The whole island has been designated



Photo: Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command

a protected national forest.

The flotilla of vessels that had joined the search scoured the waters around Koh Lone, Koh Bon, Koh Kaew Yai and Koh Kaew Noi.

Finally, at 11:30am on Aug 22, a Navy sailor on Tor 233 spotted Mr Ekarat through his binoculars. Mr Ekarat was standing on a rocky outcrop on Koh Kaew Noi waving his orange life vest in the air.

The Siri Namchok 12 came as close to shore as it safely could in the heavy swell, with Mr Ekarat having to swim out to the boat to be brought on board.

Mr Ekarat was then transferred to the Tor 233, which rendezvoused with the RTMS Klaeng, and brought back to Phuket. *The Phuket News*

Officials to plug LTR visa

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket officials met last week to discuss promoting the new Long Term Resident (LTR) visa. Applications for the new visa type opened on Thursday (Sept 1).

Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan chaired the meeting of the “Joint Public-Private Sector Committee for Development and Solving Economic Problems in Phuket”, held on Aug 25.

Joining the vice governor were leading business representatives on the island, including Phuket Chamber of Commerce President Thanusak Phungdet.

A host of officials from relevant government departments on the island also joined the meeting.

The meeting was the ninth time the committee had met so far this year. However, according to a report by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket), no decisions were made on exactly what to do to promote the new LTR visa, other than publish notices on Thai-language government channels.



Kantharos Laopradit from the Board of Investment (BOI) explained the new LTR visa. Photo: PR Phuket

Senior national government figures have already announced that the new visa scheme is hoped to attract more than 1 million “highly skilled” foreigners over the next five years, apparently drawn by the low cost of living and vibrant lifestyle in Thailand.

The new LTR visa has been promoted as making Thailand “an even more attractive destination” by sim-

plifying the visa and work permit process and offering attractive incentives.

It is hoped that the new visa will bring more than B750 billion extra investment into Thailand by 2026.

At the meeting, Kantharos Laopradit from the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI), explained the scheme to Phuket officials.

The concept for the LTR visa was first raised last year,

with the Cabinet approving the draft Notification of the Ministry of Interior on Long-Term Visa on May 10 this year.

The tax relief measures offered under the scheme were Gazetted on May 24. The Ministry of Interior rubber-stamped its own initiative on June 2, and the Ministry of Labour gave its approval on June 9. The conditions of entry under the visa were approved on June 20, Ms

Kantharos explained.

The official “opening ceremony” of the scheme was to be on Aug 31 and the BOI was to start accepting applications for the LTR visa on Sept 1, she said.

The visa will be open to:

- Foreigners holding assets worth at least US\$1 million

- Foreign retirees aged 50 and over who receive a pension or have a stable income

- Foreigners working from Thailand for foreign companies with “acceptable operating results”

- Highly skilled or specialised persons working for companies or higher education institutions or research institutes or specialised training institutes or government agencies in Thailand and must work in businesses in the targeted industries

The LTR visa will allow up to four direct dependents, namely the successful applicant’s spouse and children under 20 years of age, Ms Kantharos added.

The benefits of the LTR visa were given as:

- The duration of the visa is 10 years (five years, plus extended for five years)

- The right to exempt the ratio of 4 Thai workers per 1 foreigner

- Permission to work in Thailand under a Digital Work Permit

- Report to Immigration every 1 year instead of every 90 days and can travel in and out of the country unlimited times (Multiple entries)

- Reduce income tax to 17% for skilled professionals and tax exemption for income coming from abroad

- The right to use the “fast track” at international airports where available

- Facilitation of visas and work permits at the Visa and Work Permit Service Center (OSS).

Qualified applicants may apply online by directly applying to the BOI, or at Royal Thai Embassies and consulates overseas, or at Immigration offices throughout Thailand.

The application for the visa is B50,000.

Under the visa, the annual digital work permit fee is B3,000.

Applications will be processed within 20 days, the BOI notes.

Robinson Thalang finally opens

THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED and much delayed Robinson Lifestyle Shopping Center and Robinson Thalang Department Store has finally opened its doors for trading.

Construction on the complex near the Heroines Monument on Thepkasattri Rd was hindered due to the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic meaning the original opening date of May 2020 was continually postponed.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw on Aug 25 presided over the official opening ceremony and was joined by Chakrapop Piyarat, Senior Executive Vice President of Operations of Robinson Lifestyle Shopping Center, President of the Phuket Red Cross Wandee Woonciw who was guest of honour, in addition to selected government officials.

Mr Chakrapop said that the complex has been developed to be a “comprehensive shopping centre”, which offers a new experience and dimension of modernity in a convenient form for shoppers and the local community.

The Robinson Lifestyle



Photo: PR Phuket

Thalang Shopping Center is the 26th store across the Asean region developed with the “Design Your Own Journey” slogan. It covers an area of more than 44,000 square meters and has been developed with a budget of B1.1 billion to reflect the distinctive Sino-Portuguese architecture of Phuket.

All construction materials and decorations are locally sourced and environmentally friendly to create an experience that both Thais and foreign tourists visiting Phuket can enjoy. It is hoped that it can penetrate the Andaman retail space and become established as a major shopping and entertainment complex.

Governor Narong thanked the Vice Chairman and Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors

of Robinson Public Co Ltd for the development, adding that the complex has the potential to create over 1,200 jobs locally.

He also paid tribute to the Red Cross of Phuket who helped drive education standards among local children, especially with English-language skills, which will be an important factor in helping local communities develop in future.

The Robinson Lifestyle Shopping Center Thalang is now open for business every day from 10am to 9pm. Robust health and safety measures are in place to monitor any potential spread of COVID-19 and to ensure comprehensive sanitation standards are adhered to and in line with government measures.

The Phuket News



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Small hotels petition for help

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More than 100 representatives from small hotels gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall last week to continue their appeal for the government to allow them to legally re-open and receive tourists.

Manosit Jangjob, Acting President of the Phuket Boutique Accommodation Consortium (BAC), on Aug 24 submitted yet another formal request to the Phuket Provincial Government for a reprieve allowing small hotels to re-open.

He repeated the explanation that small hotels were not allowed to re-open since an amnesty by the national government expired in August 2021 and that many small hotels could not be registered as hotels under the hotel Act as the required renovations to the buildings were not possible.

The gathering was met by Phuket Provincial Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Somprat Prabsongkram, who invited the representatives to discuss the issues at the Phuket Damrongtham Centre (provincial ombudsman's office).

The formal petition submitted listed six requests:

- A waiver be issued allowing small hotels to operate until a new ministerial regulation comes into effect.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

- That a 'Legal Sandbox' using Phuket as a pilot province be established to be appropriate in the context of diverse tourism areas.

- That small hotel businesses that have registered for a waiver in accordance with the amnesty requirement be able to access assistance from government projects to alleviate the suffering from the COVID-19 crisis, including access to financial measures from both public and private financial institutions.

- That specific laws preventing small hotels from making the changes required in order to be legally registered as hotels businesses, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment regulation requiring

that 30% of the plot area be left undeveloped (the 'green areas' rule that requires buildings' footprint to cover no more than 70% of the total square area of the plot), be waived

- To consider that Phuket is a special area where business operators are facing problems with laws regarding converting commercial buildings into hotels, especially where hotel licenses cannot be obtained due to the requirements of Land Allocation Act 2000.

- To help push for specific laws for small accommodation businesses that are more suited to the changing dynamics of today's tourism.

As explained when Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam visited

Patong last month, Mr Manosit repeated that many small hotels had been seized by banks and other financial institutions in foreclosure motions for failure to pay loans.

Financial pressures had forced other owners to sell their properties at very low prices, Mr Manosit added.

Many other businesses had received government assistance to alleviate the suffering caused by the tourism shutdown during the pandemic, Mr Manosit noted.

Palad Somprat said that the government was aware of their situation and were working on a solution. However, he pointed out that any changes to the law will af-

fect business operators throughout the country, not just Phuket.

Mr Somprat assured that the Phuket Provincial Government will issue a letter for small hotel owners to present to any relevant financial institutions in the hope that their financial constraints might be eased.

Mr Somprat also repeated the assurance given by Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong last month that the law would be revised so that businesses with 10 or more hotel rooms and the ability to accommodate 30 or more guests would be required to register as a hotel.

At last report the Hotel Act required that all accommodation owners with venues with five or more rooms that are rented out at daily rates must be registered as hotels.

According to Mr Somprat, the '10 or more rooms' requirement under the Hotel Act was now in effect.

Mr Somprat also said that the Ministry of Resources and Environment was now in the process of revising the 'green areas rule' so that developers needed to reserve only 10 square meters of green space at the minimum.

All six issues raised in the formal petition would be passed on to the relevant national authorities to review so that appropriate measures could be implemented as quickly as possible, he added.



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Household debt hits 16-year high

THAI HOUSEHOLDS are dealing with the highest level of debt in 16 years, according to the latest survey by the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC).

The survey, based on interviews with 1,350 respondents conducted from Aug 15-20, deemed Thailand's household debt situation as "not yet serious" because rising debts stem largely from asset purchases.

According to the survey, the average debt per household stands at B501,711 this year, up by 3.7% from B483,950 in 2020.

The figures represented the highest level in the 16 years the survey has been conducted. There was no survey in 2021.

"Some 99.6% of respondents were in debt, which was incurred mainly from personal loans and credit cards as their income stagnated while expenses increased, driven by higher costs of living," said Thanavath Phonvichai, president of the UTCC.

"People's borrowing objectives were for daily



Photo: Phuket Commerce Office

expenses, purchases of durable goods such as houses and vehicles, and doing business."

According to Mr Thanavath, most household debts were formal or organised, reflecting that Thais remain capable of borrowing from financial institutions.

It is considered a normal condition for middle-income earners to borrow more to buy assets, he said. No mention was made of low income earners.

"Now it's time for the government and private sector to accelerate investments to boost economic growth, which should increase people's income, in lieu of cash handouts," said Mr Thanavath.

"Household debt will improve once the domestic

economy recovers to strong growth."

He cited the latest data from the Bank of Thailand that revealed Thailand's household debt totalled B14.6 trillion in the first quarter of this year, representing 89.2% of GDP, a slight decrease from the fourth quarter of 2021 when household debt stayed at 90.0% of GDP.

Thai household debt rose to 90.9% of GDP in the first quarter of 2021 because of the pandemic and the government's lockdown measures in February of 2021 to contain the virus spread.

Mr Thanavath said Thailand's household debt is likely to bottom out and gradually decrease in line with the economic recovery.

Bangkok Post

Prawit in as Acting PM after Prayut suspension

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Constitutional Court voted 5-4 last Wednesday (Aug 24) in ordering Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha suspended from duty, effective immediately.

The court's order came after it ruled to accept the petition asking for a ruling on his eight-year tenure as prime minister.

The petition, signed by 171 MPs, was forwarded from Parliament to the court on Aug 22.

The opposition has asked the court to rule on his tenure, when it began and ends, as it is still open to interpretation.

Critics say his term should have ended on Aug 24 as his first day in office should be counted from Aug 24, 2014, when he was named prime minister after leading a military coup in May, while his supporters say the count should start on June 9, 2019, after the present constitution came into force in 2017.

The court said the nine



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha at Government House last Tuesday (Aug 23). Photo: Chanat Katanyu

judges unanimously agreed to accept the petition for consideration and ordered Gen Prayut to counter the petition before the court within 15 days of receiving official notification.

However, the decision to suspend him from work was by a majority vote, it said.

The court did not say when it will make a ruling on the issue raised in the petition.

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon is now

caretaker prime minister while Prayut remains in Cabinet in his role as defence minister, a government spokesman said.

Anucha Burapachaisri said Gen Prawit will remain caretaker prime minister until the Constitutional Court makes its ruling on Prayut's tenure as prime minister.

Prawit is highest in the hierarchy of the six deputy prime ministers, according

to an order of the Prime Minister's Office signed by Prayut in 2020.

Prawit turned up at Government House last Friday (Aug 26) for his first day as acting premier but refused to answer reporters' questions upon arrival. He only smiled when reporters asked how he felt about his first day on the job.

He did not reply when asked if he had held talks with Prayut after the Constitutional Court ruling and also refused to comment when asked if there would be a House dissolution or Cabinet reshuffle.

Meanwhile, Prayut made his first public appearance since being suspended at a defence exhibition in Non-thaburi on Monday (Aug 29).

In his capacity as Defence Minister, Prayut officially launched the Defence & Security 2022 exhibition, being held at the Impact Exhibition and Convention Centre.

He declined to answer questions relating to his eight-year term limit, only saying he was in very good spirits as he toured the exhibition.



Anutin has assigned the DDC to monitor the situation. Photo: Bangkok Post

DDC asked to track outbreak of tomato flu

BANGKOK

PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER Anutin Charnvirakul has assigned the Department of Disease Control (DDC) to monitor India's tomato flu outbreak despite the lack of cases in Thailand, says deputy government spokeswoman Traisuree Taisaranakul.

Ms Traisuree said last Saturday (Aug 27) that even though there has been no report of a local outbreak, it is necessary to monitor the disease because Thailand has reopened for tourism and must prepare for screenings and treatments.

Initial reports have indicated that tomato flu patients only show mild symptoms and the disease has not spread widely.

Ms Traisuree said poly-

merase chain reaction tests are already available in both public and private hospitals in Thailand.

Ramathibodi Hospital's Centre for Medical Genomics posted on its Facebook page on Friday (Aug 26) saying that tomato flu could be a variant of hand, foot and mouth disease.

The latest tomato flu outbreak was first found in Kerala in southern India where children under 5 years old have been diagnosed with the virus, it said.

The Centre for Medical Genomics said children are especially vulnerable to the virus as it spreads via contact with unclean surfaces.

Children with the disease will develop red blisters on their skin, which is contagious through close contact, it said.

Bangkok Post

Ban on e-cigarettes to remain

BANGKOK

THE GOVERNMENT HAS AFFIRMED its stance against vaping, saying e-cigarettes are affecting the health of vapers of whom more than half are considered youths.

Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul stressed the need to continue banning e-cigarette imports to protect youths from vaping health risks when he spoke at a national conference on cigarettes and public health in Bangkok on Monday (Aug 29).

A survey conducted by the National Statistical Office of Thailand last year found more than half of the about 80,000 e-cigarette smokers in Thailand were people aged 15 to 24.

"This clearly showed vaping has created new smokers, especially young people, while a growing number of international studies found smoking e-cigarettes has negative effects on young people's brains," said Anutin.

Learning from the experiences of other countries in dealing with vaping problems, he said Thailand has found there currently is no other option more effective in controlling vaping than banning the import of e-cigarettes.

Crackdowns on e-cigarettes smuggled into the country will also continue to limit access to the products on the black market, he said.

Citing 6,971 international studies published between 2014 and 2021, Asst Prof Dr Vijj Kasemsap, director of Tobacco



Photo: AFP

Control Research and Knowledge Management Centre, said vaping is associated with various diseases, namely respiratory, heart and blood vessel, oral and dental, brain, liver and skin diseases.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has already warned that nicotine in e-cigarettes is harmful to all systems in the human body as it causes blood vessels to contract and consequently obstructs blood flow, Dr Vijj said, noting there are also several other toxic chemical compounds found in e-cigarettes, he said.

Vaping is associated with 1.8 times higher risk of ischemic heart disease, a 49% higher risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and a 39% higher risk of asthma, he said, citing the American Heart Association.

Exposure to vapour containing nicotine, directly or indirectly, affects the brain of unborn babies and is associated with a number of health problems including some irregularities with their nervous system, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and low birth weight. Bangkok Post

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Cyperus papyrus.



Water canna (thalia geniculata).



Water lettuce and water hyacinth (foreground).

In the blooming water



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

As the high annual rainfall continues to soak Phuket during these months of the south-western monsoon, we continue our look at water-borne plants that feature prominently across Thailand's floral landscape. Among those are water lilies (nymphaeas).

To those of us who hail from the West, water lilies are much more familiar presences, in part because some

varieties thrive in cool conditions that would spell death to the exotic lotus. There must be few goldfish ponds in Europe or America without a complement of lilies. Moreover, they have been immortalised for art lovers in the paintings of French Impressionist Claude Monet who created more than 200 paintings based on the water lilies in his garden at Giverny.

While nymphaeas is less revered in Thailand than the lotus, it is still regarded as a key element in any aquatic landscape. Indeed, there is a Thai book devoted entirely to water lilies – all 150 hybrids. You can grow them here in shallow pots – but although they

are sold in this way at most garden centres, they look better in fish ponds in company with other aquatics, where their floating pads have plenty of room for manoeuvre, and where their exotic blooms illuminate the watery setting. Remember that they require more lateral space than the lotus. Remove spent leaves and flowers and feed regularly.

Where the water lily wins over the lotus is in its spectacular range of colours (I have grown magenta and violet varieties, but there are also white, red and yellow varieties); on the other hand, the lotus scores because it is fragrant and because it is much longer lived. Moreover, since its flowers and leaves hover above the water on long stems, it needs a much smaller surface area. Both need plenty of sun; the water lily in particular will not thrive and bloom unless it is in a sunny position. Both can be propagated by seed or, more reliably, by root division.

Cyperus papyrus

If the lotus and water lily are pre-eminent in the world of Thai water-gardens, there are others which can perform useful cameo roles. One such player is the Egyptian papyrus (Cyperus papyrus). Every schoolboy knows one fact about this plant: it was used to make the first paper. The second 'fact' is not common knowledge – namely that the "bulrushes" in which the infant Moses was hidden, were almost certainly papyrus reeds. Tall with long, elegant stems surmounted by a ring of fine leaves (modified stems) which radiate out from a central hub, this sedge will grow a couple of metres tall, a stately presence above the surface of your pool or pot.

Smaller but equally valuable as a water margin plant and much easier to find in garden centres, is its relative, Cyperus alternifolius. Sometimes known as the umbrella plant, it hails from Madagascar and has somewhat broader, grass-like leaves gracing the top of each stem.

Both are what Americans like to call "accent plants", and provide a contrast to surface-hugging plants such as water-lilies, or floaters such as water lettuce or water hyacinths. I have a cyperus growing at the edge of my fish pond and a couple in large pots keeping company with guppies and Mexican swordtails which hide in its ample roots. And it will grow more-or-less anywhere.

Water canna

Another familiar sight on Thai forecourts is the water canna or Thalia geniculata, an upright foliage plant, often with attractive red stems, and large bright green, lanceolate leaves which appear lower down the growth. The clusters of tiny flowers are purple with white spots and dangle from the ends of these long stalks. For aesthetic reasons, they should be removed. Thalia can take the full sun of a patio, but will also survive in permanently moist soil or at the edge of your fish pond where it will add height to existing foliage. Leaves tend to go yellow at the edges, particularly if short of water. Thalia will germinate from seed or can be divided at the roots. An "accent plant" with a difference.

Water hyacinth

The water lettuce (Pistia stratiotes) and water hyacinth (Eichornia crassipes), both "floaters", have been mentioned in previous articles. Consider carefully before growing either of these because they can become invasive. Indeed in some parts of the developed world, they are considered an environmental hazard. Better that they are cultivated in a confined space where they can be controlled.

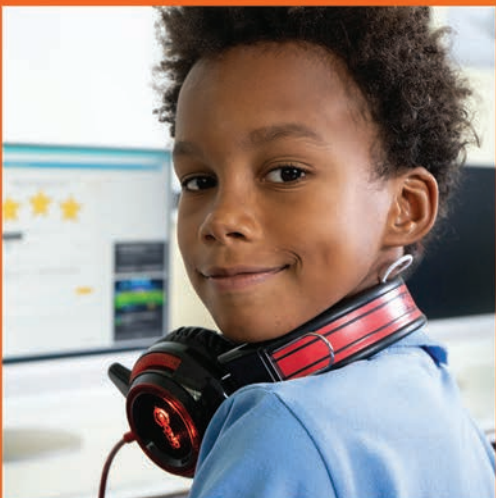
The water hyacinth is so named because it produces lilac-hued spikes of hyacinth-like blooms above bulbous, air-filled stems. The flowers look attractive in a confined space. The free-hanging submerged roots are purplish-black, the stiff oval leaves a deep green.

One of the fastest growing of plants, it reproduces by means of stolons or runners which form new plants. Because of its extremely rapid growth, it can colonise and dominate a stretch of water in days, carpeting the entire surface and killing off other aquatics. The water hyacinth also has some commercial value in Asia: its fibrous roots are used to make up-market, woven furniture. This needs to be exploited.

Dr Patrick Campbell can be contacted at his home Camelot, located at 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13; Rawai; Phuket 83130. Tel: 66 076613227 (landline), 065-5012326 or 085-7827551 (mobile). His book *The Tropic Gardener, an indispensable guide to plants and their cultivation in Thailand*, is available from Seng Ho bookshop in Phuket Town or Delish in Rawai, or arrange a copy to be delivered by emailing him at drpaccampbell@gmail.com

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GRIP IT sets sights on clean water

New project targets clean drinking water for school, local community

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

After many successful projects in the past year, GRIP IT, a charitable organisation based in the south of Phuket that consists of friends from around the world who want to do good for the community, came up with a new exciting project.

And this time, it's about the most important element of life: clean drinking water.

GRIP IT has learned that Thai people in many areas have limited access to clean drinking water especially in underprivileged schools and villages.

"We want to make it easier and affordable for those people to have access to clean drinking water and to help reduce the burden of expense on drinking water from the locals," said Nurama 'Khun Ji' Taleh, the head of GRIP IT team.

"We also hope that this project will help reduce the use of single-use plastics which has become a pressing issue worldwide," she added.

GRIP IT has been in contact with Sombhop Khomkla, the principal of Wat Sawang Arom School in Rawai for a while. The team visited the school to donate toys to the students and had a chance to sit down with the principal to discuss what the students needed the most.

Mr Sombhop expressed that their

drinking water issue required attention.

"Bottled drinking water is costly and wasteful but it is what the students have to rely on. The plastic bottles cannot always be reused or recycled. A water-filtration system could help reduce the parents' expense on drinking water and the amount of single-used plastic bottles," said Mr Sombhop.

The school collects the bottles in their recycle bins and can be sold to recycle facilities. However, the plastics cannot be recycled indefinitely as they lose their property each time they are processed. The school needed a more sustainable way to reduce plastic waste.

GRIP IT saw this as an opportunity to start this new project. This month, the team decided to help the school with this issue and installed GRIP IT's first water-filtration system. They have received good feedback from the school staff and the students, who are very excited about the project.

"This is a good project that helps fulfil people's basic needs and a good way to send a message to all the students and the communities about how a small action in our daily life can help the environment," added Mr Sombhop.

The good news is this will not be the last. The team has planned to provide

more water-filtration systems in Phuket and hopefully, nationwide in the future.

GRIP IT has been aiming to provide more sustainable support that leaves a long-lasting impact on local communities since the very beginning of the initiative. It is clear that this project set sail into that direction.

"We want to raise awareness about the lack of access to affordable clean drinking water and the amount of single-use plastics that comes from small drinking water bottles," said Khun Ji.

"We want to invite people to use less single-use plastics by choosing sustainable alternatives whenever they can. Moreover, we hope this project will inspire more people to help their local community with this issue," she added.

This is just one of many on-going projects that GRIP IT is doing. Their clothing and toy donation campaigns have been ongoing since last year. The donated clothes, toys and other products, such as sanitary products, from kind people all over Phuket have been distributed to hundreds of families throughout the year. The door is still wide open for anyone who wants to give back to the community.

To be a part of the project or if you need advice on how to help your community contact GRIP IT at ji@gripit.life, +66 993 600840 (Khun Ji) or Instagram @gripit_forward



GRIP IT team members and students of Wat Sawang Arom School in Rawai celebrate their first water-filtration system. Photo: Tonia Olsen / GRIP IT



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POP QUIZ

1. The death penalty is legal in how many US states?
2. As a girl, which Hollywood actress smuggled messages and supplies for the Dutch resistance during World War II?
3. Tetris was originally developed in which country?
4. Which novel series is described as "a trilogy in five parts"?
5. In which year was the name 'Burma' changed to 'Myanmar'?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

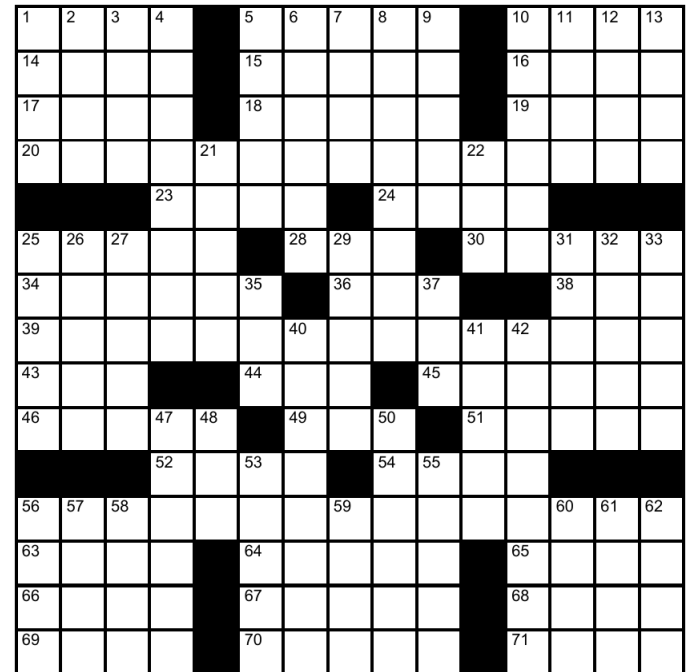
Across

1. Blubber
5. City on the Loire
10. Ready a gift
14. Hodgepodge
15. Confounded
16. Epitaph opener
17. Red River, to the Vietnamese
18. Addict
19. Copacati worshipper
20. Aims high, like a TV host?
23. Low islands
24. Heads up
25. They meet in the middle
28. Self-image
30. Accords
34. Myanmar natives, e.g.
36. Piz Bernina, e.g.
38. Indeed
39. Appeared on TV host's show twice?
43. Be up
44. Inits. on a rocket
45. Sportsman's guide
46. Feature of some photo layouts
49. Chinese brew
51. Finish lines
52. Car until 1957
54. Thai currency

Down

1. Prominent Danish physicist
2. Insect repellent ingredient
3. Stage area
4. Syllogist, e.g.
5. Sweet confection
6. Of no use
7. Tech support caller
8. Landlord's paper
9. Hindu holy man
10. Odd idea
11. City north of Carson City
12. Big name in oil
13. Hymn of praise: Var.
21. Angel
22. U.S.N.A. grad
25. Browning's Ben Ezra, e.g.

26. Assoc. of nations
27. Fare reductions
29. Loud Australian bird
31. African antelope
32. Rhodes of Rhodesia
33. "Land ___!"
35. Pittance
37. Hard throw, in baseball
40. Onion plant
41. ___ owl
42. Record holders
47. The Supreme Court, e.g.
48. Child's play?
50. Erode
53. ___ Tower
55. Expressed pleasure
56. ___ Canyon
57. Snap request?
58. Plot unit
59. Pipe type
60. Hypothetical substance
61. 90's party
62. De novo



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
H	A	S	N	T	S	A	R	D	A	P	S	E		
O	U	T	E	R	A	G	H	A	B	A	I	L		
G	R	A	D	U	A	T	I	O	N	G	O	W	N	S
S	A	G	E	B	O	N	G	R	A	N	G	E		
E	T	I	D	E	R	E	R	S	E					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
E	R	N	S	D	I	S	T	E	N	D				
C	O	A	L	S	P	A	R	A	D	I	S	M		
H	O	M	E	C	O	M	I	N	G	D	A	N	C	E
O	D	E	A	W	O	L	E	N	D	U	E			
S	A	L	E	S	L	E	P	T	I	N	T	O	D	D
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
S	A	L	E	S	L	E	P	T	I	N	T	O	D	D
O	N	L	I	N	E	B	I	L	E	E	V	E		
G	E	O	M	E	T	R	Y	O	L	A	S	S	E	S
L	A	N	E	C	A	R	L	L	A	I	R	S		
E	K	E	D	T	H	Y	D	E	S	T	A	T	E	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9	7	1	2	8	6	4	3	5				
8	6	3	4	9	5	7	1	2				
5	2	4	1	7	3	9	8	6				
6	8	5	3	4	7	2	9	1				
7	1	2	9	6	8	5	4	3				
4	3	9	5	1	2	8	6	7				
1	5	7	8	3	9	6	2	4				
3	9	6	7	2	4	1	5	8				
2	4	8	6	5	1	3	7	9				

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) 27 (out of 50); 2) Audrey Hepburn; 3) Russia; 4) The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy; 5) 1989.

GOT YOUR NUMBER

2.5

hours is how long James Earl Jones spent recording all of Darth Vader's lines for *Star Wars*.

43

is the age the world's oldest known spider lived to. She died after being stung by a wasp.

2,500

left-handed people are killed every year from using right-handed products.

156,500

is how many full-time employees Google (Alphabet) has across the world.

39 million

US dollars is how much scorpion venom costs per gallon. It's the most expensive liquid in the world.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Boat Lagoon. Photo by Jennifer Sundram

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

This week in history

September 2, 1945
Vietnam declares its independence from France, forming the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

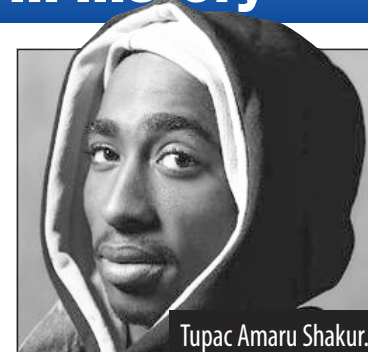
September 3, 2016
The US and China, together responsible for 40% of the world's carbon emissions, both formally ratify the Paris global climate agreement.

September 4, 1998
Google is founded by Larry

Page and Sergey Brin, two Ph.D students at Stanford University, California.

September 5, 1666
The Great Fire of London ends. 10,000 buildings, including Old St Paul's Cathedral, are destroyed, but only six people are known to have died.

September 6, 1620
The Pilgrims sail from Plymouth, England, on the *Mayflower*



Tupac Amaru Shakur.

to settle in North America. The ship becomes a cultural icon in the history of the United States.

September 7, 1996
An unknown man in a white Cadillac shoots Tupac Shakur four times in the chest in Las Vegas, Nevada. The rapper, 25 years old, succumbs to his injuries six days later. The case remains unsolved.

September 8, 1888
In England, the first six Football League matches are played by clubs from the Midlands and North of England.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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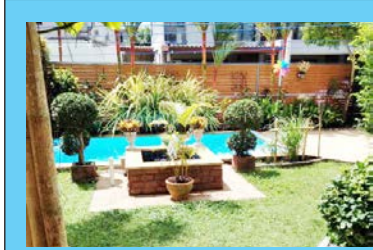
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BELGIAN AMBASSADOR VISITS DISABLED SAILING THAILAND IN PHUKET

Her Excellency Sibille de Cartier d'Yves, Belgian Ambassador to Thailand, landed in Phuket on August 25 for a visit to sustainable boat builders WAWA Creations and visited Disabled Sailing Thailand, a charity very close to her heart. While Mr Lalvani, owner of Royal Phuket Marina, and Yves van Kerrebroeck, GM of Royal Phuket Marina, welcomed her excellency, two wheelchair accessible taxis from CABB Taxi VIP service delivered the parasailors. The volunteers presented their accessible boats: the Royal SV14 kindly donated by Her Highness Maha Chakra Sirindhorn; the Royal Phuket Marina SV14, the Spirit of Freemasonry donated by the masonic lodge "Light of Siam"; and the Belgian-Thai-flagged Arnaud I and II sponsored by Phuket resident and philanthropist Arnaud C. Verstraete. A demonstration was organized with two parasailors being hoisted in their boat and under great interest of all present the two parasailors sailed through the marina. For more info visit www.disabledsailingthailand.org



PROUD TO KEEP KAMALA CLEAN

The official memorandum-signing ceremony for the "Proud Kamala Project", between Proud Group and Kamala Sub-district Administration was held on August 27. "Proud Kamala Project" is a long-term sustainable project that will look after Kamala beach by collecting garbage along the three-kilometre-long beach all year round. On this special occasion, InterContinental Phuket Resort also launched the new restaurant 333 At The Beach, the newest landmark of Kamala Beach.

Title within reach for Verstappen

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen won the Belgian Grand Prix last Sunday (Aug 28) from 14th place on the grid to bring his second world title to within touching distance.

Verstappen was tipped as a pre-race favourite for victory despite serving a hefty engine penalty that dropped him from pole to the back of the grid, but the scale of his domination of the race was in equal parts impressive and fearsome, with the Dutchman in effective control of the grand prix after just five racing laps.

The Red Bull Racing (RBR) driver was in attack mode from the off. He passed five cars on the first lap alone, and after a three-lap safety car intervention to clear some stricken cars from the track, he picked off a driver per lap until he was third after eight laps.

Carlos Sainz was leading Sergio Perez in the lead of the race, and the Spaniard attempted to pre-empt Verstappen's undercut by taking



Max Verstappen celebrates his victory during the podium ceremony of the Belgian Grand Prix last Sunday (Aug 28). Photo: AFP

his first service early, but it didn't do him any good.

Verstappen stayed out for three more laps to rejoin with an almost five-second disadvantage to Sainz, but he obliterated the margin in two laps and was into the lead in three.

With his tyres holding up

well and his car in the perfect sweet spot, Verstappen bolted away from the pack, including teammate Perez, to dominate the race by 17 seconds in the most impressive victory of his career and Red Bull Racing's most comprehensive result of the season.

"It was quite a hectic first

lap to try and stay out of trouble," he said. "But once we settled in after the safety, the car was really on rails."

"I picked the right places to pass people and we could look after our tyres. That's how we made our way forward. This whole weekend has been incredible."

'UNTOUCHABLE'

Perez crossed the line second for an RBR one-two finish and to take second in the drivers standings, albeit with a whopping 93-point deficit.

Verstappen can now win the championship as early as the Singapore Grand Prix in October, just two races from now, but is increasingly likely to claim the chocolates at the following race in Japan, with four rounds to spare.

"I really hoped for more today," Perez said. "It was a good opportunity, but Max was just flying. He was on another planet. He was untouchable."

Sainz crossed the line third for Ferrari after starting from pole and George Russell salvaged fourth for Mercedes ahead of Charles Leclerc, though Leclerc served a five-second penalty after the race for speeding in the pit lane, dropping him to sixth and promoting Alpine's Fernando Alonso in his place.

Leclerc started the race 15th with his second round of engine penalties but had his recovery undone in the opening laps when a helmet visor tear-off – ostensibly from Verstappen's car – got caught in his front-right brake duct,

forcing him into an early stop.

Esteban Ocon started 16th but finished an excellent seventh after a race that featured two sensational double overtaking manoeuvres. The Frenchman had the pace to beat teammate Alonso but was told to hold station to guarantee the team maximised its points score against McLaren, which failed to score, to consolidate fourth in the constructors standings.

Sebastian Vettel was strong for Aston Martin in eighth ahead of Pierre Gasly, who sensationally scored points for AlphaTauri after a pit lane start, and Thai driver Alex Albon, who clung onto the points from seventh on the grid in his Williams car.

Lewis Hamilton retired on the first lap in a big crash with Fernando Alonso at Les Combes. The Briton was attempting to pass the Spaniard around the outside but pinched the Alpine on the apex. The two cars made wheel-over-wheel contact that launched the Mercedes into the air, breaking its gearbox as it thumped the ground.

Valtteri Bottas also retired after a collision with Nicholas Latifi beached his Alfa Romeo in the gravel.

Rising star Kunlavut settles for silver

BADMINTON

KUNLAVUT VITIDSARN claimed a silver medal at the BWF World Championships 2022 after losing to world No.1 Viktor Axelsen 21-5, 21-16 in the men's singles final in Tokyo last Sunday (Aug 28).

The Thai world No.17, who became the first Thai to reach the men's singles final at the championships, lost for the fifth time against the reigning Olympic champion Axelsen, who cruised to his second world title.

Kunlavut, a three-time junior world champion who knocked out Singapore's defending champion Loh Kean Yew in the quarter-finals, was bidding to become Thailand's first-ever senior men's singles world champion.

However, Axelsen, 28, has lost only one singles match this season and was too much for 21-year-old rising star Kunlavut, who was blown away in the first game.

The Dane, who won Olympic gold at last year's



Kunlavut (left) and Axelsen on the podium. Photo: AFP

Tokyo Games, was in imperious form all week, claiming the title without losing a single game. The win gave him his sixth title of the season.

Apart from Kunlavut's silver medal, Puttita Supajirakul and Sapsiree Taeratanachai, who took home the bronze medal for reaching the semi-finals, also made

history by becoming the first Thai women's doubles pair to get a medal at worlds.

Japan's Akane Yamaguchi won the women's singles event, Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan of China claimed the women's doubles title and Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia won the men's doubles.

Bangkok Post

Toyota Gazoo racing ready to rock the streets of Phuket Town

MOTOR RACING

THE STREETS OF PHUKET Town are gearing up to host this year's "Toyota Gazoo Racing Motorsport" street racing expo.

The two-day event, taking place on Sept 10-11, is part of a national tour championship that strives to highlight the potential of the vehicles racing which is not evident in everyday driving.

Confirmation of this year's event was made at a press conference at Phuket Provincial Hall last Wednesday (Aug 24) presided over by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew who said the event can help boost the local economy and tourism sector, still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also present at the press conference was Toyota Gazoo Racing Team Thailand General Manager Thanapon Kaewbamrung who urged people to attend the event and enjoy the high-octane action that will be on show in four separate races across the weekend.

"Toyota is a true pioneer



Photo: PR Phuket

of motorsports in Thailand, having been present in the country longer than any other manufacturers or teams," Mr Thanapon said.

"The Gazoo Championship is just one of many motor sports events that Toyota participates in and supports in Thailand," he added.

"This year Toyota Racing will also be taking part in the Thailand Super Series, where we will send the legendary sports car GR Supra to compete, as well as the RAAT Thailand Endurance International Championship 2022, where the Corolla ALTIS GR Sport racing car will be

on show."

The Phuket leg of the Toyota Gazoo Racing Motorsport Championship is one of five venues nationally. The opening contest was held in Chonburi on June 29 - July 3 and following Phuket the race will visit Buriram on Oct 14-16. Next is Chiang Mai on Nov 18-20 before the season finale back at Buriram on Dec 16-18.

Last year's event in Phuket saw female drivers dominating proceedings with Mekratchakita Kalantanon outclassing her male rivals to take 1st place in car 98 in the Toyota Vios One Make Race.

The Phuket News

Liverpool demolition job shell-shocks Cherries

FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool got their season back on track last Saturday (Aug 27) with a resounding 9-0 demolition of Bournemouth, equalling the Premier League's record win in the process.

On a remarkable day in the top flight, leaders Arsenal maintained their perfect start with a dramatic 2-1 win against Fulham, Erling Haaland fired a 19-minute hat-trick as Manchester City came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 4-2 and Manchester United's revival continued with a 1-0 victory at Southampton.

However, it was Liverpool who stole the spotlight as they recovered in astonishing style from their lacklustre 2-1 loss at Manchester United in their previous game.

After three games without a win, the Reds rebounded by equalling Manchester United's 9-0 wins against Ipswich in 1995 and Southampton in 2021, as well as Leicester's thrashing of Southampton in 2019.



Roberto Firmino (2nd from left) celebrates after scoring Liverpool's fourth goal last Saturday (Aug 27). Photo: AFP

It took just three minutes for Luis Diaz to strike at Anfield before teenager Harvey Elliott bagged his first Premier League goal just three minutes later and Trent Alexander-Arnold scored a screamer shortly after.

Further goals from Diaz, Roberto Firmino (2), Virgil Van Dijk, Fabio Carvalho and a Chris Mepham own goal completed the rout as Liverpool equalled their biggest top-flight margin of victory,

set against Palace in 1989.

"We wanted to show a reaction. Getting to be the best version of ourselves. We scored wonderful goals," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said.

"The game settled and we kept scoring. It was the perfect afternoon."

Van Dijk said he expects his team to use the emphatic win as fuel to erase the bitter taste of their poor start to the season, admitting they had a point to prove after critics

questioned their hunger.

While Van Dijk was on the scoresheet, it was just as significant that Liverpool's creaky defence kept their first clean sheet of the season.

"Today was a good start, a good win, something to build on but it is never guaranteed that we crack on from here. That's what we want, that is what we work for and that is what we will try to do."

Bournemouth manager Scott Parker was left distraught at the final whistle, claiming the rout was the most painful experience of his career.

"It goes without saying it is a really humbling experience. I am pretty shell-shocked," he said.

"This is the toughest day, as a player and certainly as a coach. The touchline today was pretty painful and I could sense it was painful for the players as well. They need some help.

"Liverpool were ruthless and my boys were flat to the floor, searching for oxygen at times and trying to breathe," added the exasperated Cherries boss.



Saemapetch is declared the winner. Photo: Bangkok Post

Saemapetch victorious in Rittewada ONE rematch

MMA

a US\$50,000 (B1.8 million) bonus.

AFTER THEIR HEATED first meeting last year, the long-awaited rematch between Thai powerhouses Saemapetch Fairtex and Rittewada Petchyindee went down on the main card of ONE 160: Ok v Lee II last Friday (Aug 26), at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Top-ranked bantamweight Muay Thai contender Saemapetch finally avenged his loss to number two contender Rittewada, who was the victor of their first matchup in November 2021.

The Fairtex athlete was gunning for revenge and landed a stunning knockout with an overhand left that spun Rittewada to the ground and effectively ended the fight in round two. Saemapetch's performance also earned him

The co-main event of ONE 160 was a barnburner between Thanh Le and number one-ranked contender Tang Kai. The two exchanged powerful strikes for the majority of their match, with Tang withstanding the power Le delivered in the earlier rounds.

The Chinese MMA fighter eventually won, improving his record to 14-2 and becoming the new ONE featherweight world champion.

In the main event, division kingpin Ok Rae Yoon and number one contender Christian Lee battled for the ONE lightweight world championship in a match that didn't go the distance.

Lee attacked Ok from start to finish, delivering a technical knockout in the first minute of the second round and receiving a US\$50,000 bonus. Bangkok Post

Luang cave survivor receives UK football scholarship at Leicester-based academy

FOOTBALL

ONE OF THE 13 SURVIVORS of the Luang cave ordeal is a step closer to achieving his goal of becoming a professional football player after earning a scholarship to study at the Brooke House College Football Academy in Leicester, England.

Duangpetch "Dom" Phromthep, 17, posted a message on his Instagram account on Aug 23 saying: "Today, my dream has come true because I will become a football student in England."

The Chiang Rai native thanked the Zico Foundation, founded by former national team striker and former head coach Kiatisuk "Zico" Senamuang, his teachers at Vachiralai School in Chiang Mai and private firms for providing him this opportunity.

"I want to thank coach Zico and I promise that I will do my best," Dom wrote.

Between June and July 2018, Thai and international rescue teams scoured the



Kiatisuk 'Zico' Senamuang (left) with Duangpetch 'Dom' Phromthep in London. Photo: Duangpetch Phromthep / Instagram

flooded Luang cave in Chiang Rai's Mae Sai district, to try to find 12 "Wild Boar" footballers aged between 11 and 16 and their 25-year-old assistant coach, who went to explore the cave complex on June 23.

The "Wild Boar" members were trapped in the cave for 17 days before they were finally found by two British divers. Dom was the first boy who called out to the rescuers when they were finally reached.

The site has now become a tourist attraction in Tham Luang Khun Nam Nang

Non National Park, and the dramatic real-life rescue has inspired Hollywood film "Thirteen Lives" directed by Ron Howard.

The Brooke House College Football Academy was introduced in 2008 and now has over 150 players, aged 11 to 19 from all ethnic backgrounds.

To date, 21 players have progressed to a professional football career after leaving Brooke House College, alongside players representing their National Teams at Youth & Senior Level.

Bangkok Post

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For more details contact Ian at ilancast@me.com

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Sport



Scholarship for Luang cave survivor > p15

SWELL EVENT!

Phuket Surfing Comp declared roaring success

Men's shortboard winner John Mark Tokong in action. Photo: Mike Eljansantos

SURFING

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Beach Festival International Surfing Competition, which wrapped up last Sunday (Aug 28) at Kata Beach, has been hailed as a great success with the potential to help establish Thailand as a premier global surfing destination.

The event drew over 100 surfers from as far afield as Brazil, Japan, Israel and Russia to compete in men's and women's shortboard and longboard competitions as well as hordes of locals and tourists who packed the beach on a daily basis.

There were plenty of top

class surf skills on show across the six-day competition with mixed weather conditions creating a variety of challenges for the athletes and spectators alike.

Heavy downpours in the early parts of the competition gave way to clear skies and a light offshore breeze which made for clean and glassy three-to-four foot surf on Sunday (Aug 28), the final day of competition.

Japan's Hiroka Yoshikawa won the women's longboard trophy, with Indonesia's Dean Permana taking the men's title. In addition to their winner's trophies, both athletes secured a cheque for B45,000.

Yoshikawa beat Malaysia's Qadeja Munirah Binti Musaddiq in the final, who

had defeated local favourite Annissa Flynn at the semi-final stage.

"I feel so happy and proud," said Yoshikawa after the final. "I love it here, the food, the music, everything is awesome. I really enjoyed this event. When I go back to Japan I will definitely tell my friends and family how amazing Thailand is. I will be back here again for sure," she added enthusiastically.

'SUPER STOKED'

In the shortboard competition it was Dhea Natasha Novitasari from Indonesia who won the women's championship with the Philippines' John Mark Tokong claiming the men's title. Both were presented with trophies and a winner's

purse of B50,000 each.

Novitasari defeated 13-year-old Ziggy Mackenzie from Australia in the final, having seen off Annissa Flynn in the semi-final stage.

"I'm super stoked to win here in Thailand," said Novitasari. "I will definitely invite my friends to come here to Phuket, it has been an amazing experience," she added.

Men's winner Tokong agreed, saying, "This country is the best. I will be back here for the holidays with my family for sure!"

Contest Director and President of the Asian Surf Cooperative (ASC) Tipi Jabrik was delighted with how the occasion turned out. "The Phuket Beach Festival has been a big success," he said.

"Thailand has just shown its potential as the next best surfing destination in the world. I'm sure after this event people will have a much better idea of what Thailand has to offer, not just as a tourist destination but also for surfing.

"Congratulations to the winners! We have two Indonesians, one from Japan and one from the Philippines, with runners up from Thailand. This really shows off the diversity of the surf communities in Asia.

"Asia is an emerging region of surfing, so let's keep the ball rolling and keep supporting surfing."

Thailand Surfing Federation President Chanin "Joob" Aiyarak was equally impressed and pleased with the outcome of the event, saying, "It's our

pleasure to host this kind of event and showcase Phuket to the world. We want to continue this tradition not just in Thailand but with all the Southeast Asian surfing communities."

In addition to the surfing competition, the Phuket Beach Festival also offered a food expo, music, live art and a beach party, which is hoped will become an annual tradition in Kata Beach for years to come.

The results of the Phuket Beach Festival International Surfing Competition can be viewed at:

<https://www.liveheats.com/events/40439/>

To view daily video highlights from the event visit: <https://www.youtube.com/c/AsianSurfCo>

Phuket readies to host Wheelchair Basketball World Championship

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

PHUKET IS GEARING UP FOR the start of the 2021 Men's Under-23 Wheelchair Basketball World Championship which tips off at Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Phuket Campus next Wednesday (Sept 7).

The International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) sanctioned tournament will see 12 teams from across the world competing at the tournament which runs from Sept 7-16 at the sports complex at PSU.

Drawn into two groups for the preliminary stages, Brazil, Spain,

Turkey, Japan, France and Canada will compete in Group A, whilst in Group B the United States, Germany, Israel, Australia, South Africa and hosts Thailand will battle it out for a place in the next phase.

The top four teams from each group advance to the knockout stages of the quarter-finals, semi-finals and medal games.

The IWBF's flagship event for junior male wheelchair basketball players will officially tip off at 4:30pm on Wednesday (Sept 7) when the United States play Germany.

The opening ceremony then takes place the following day at 1:30pm, closely followed by hosts Thailand taking on South Africa.



Japan and Australia are two of 12 teams competing. Photo: IWBF

The Championship will culminate in the Final to be played at 3:30pm on Friday, Sept 16.

One team going into the tournament with high expectations is Australia, otherwise known as the "Spinners", who have a strong track record in international competition.

The 12-man squad features La-

chlin Dalton, who is coming off the back of a gold medal victory in the Men's Wheelchair 3x3 basketball at the Commonwealth Games earlier this month in Birmingham, UK.

The team will face some tough opposition, but Head Coach, Bradley Ness says the squad is up for the challenge.

"We are well prepared to face all challenges as we have been training together for the last four years," he said.

"Our game plan is designed to apply pressure on the opposition for 40 minutes and together with the Aussie spirit of never say die, we are defiantly looking to be playing in the podium rounds."

The tournament was originally scheduled to take place last year in Chiba, Japan but was rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

It was then rescheduled to take place in Chiba between May 27 and June 4 this year although the Japanese Wheelchair Basketball Federation subsequently asked for it to be played elsewhere due to ongoing challenges with COVID-19. The decision was then made to switch to Phuket.

Spectators are welcome and admission is free with no tickets required to attend. All games will also be streamed live and available on IWBF's YouTube Channel. *The Phuket News*