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LAST OF THE MONKEY VIEW

The view from 'Monkey Hill', where only 300 rai of protected forest remains. Photo: Nattha Thepbamrung



300 RAI FENCED OFF TO PROTECT LAST GREEN AREAS ON 'MONKEY HILL'

Nattha Thepbamrung
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Three hundred rai have been fenced off and marked 'Protected Forest' on Khao Toh Sae in Phuket Town to ensure the natural beauty of the popular natural attraction is preserved.

The move comes amid growing concern among local residents that much of the remaining green area on the tallest hill in Phuket Town is under threat.

The hill is often called 'Monkey Hill' by locals due to the large troupe of monkeys that live there and the stunning view of Phuket Bay that together attract many tourists and local residents alike.

Krich Thepbamrung, the head of Toh Sae Hill Walking Club, which has more than 200 members, explained to *The Phuket News* that 'for decades' a sign posted on the hill by the Phuket Forestry Office confirmed that about 600 rai on the hill was protected forest.

However, the sign was removed and only through a project to mark off the remaining forest did the group learn that the remaining protected forest measured some 300 rai.

The move to install a fence around the remaining protected forest is a joint initiative by Phuket office of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE Phuket), Phuket Provincial Forestry Office, Charoen Samanakij Temple which is located on the hill, and the Toh

Sae Hill Walking Club.

It was only while measuring the land in order to install the fence did local residents learn just how little protected forest area was left, Mr Krich explained.

One of the main supporters of the fence project, Thendon Thamrangsri, Associate Justice of Phuket Juvenile and Family Court, explained that impetus to install the fence came from 15 rai on the hill being encroached on last year.

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News

THAI Smile makes emergency landing

A THAI SMILE AIRWAYS Airbus A320 suffered engine problems and made an emergency landing at Phuket International Airport last week.

Confirmation of the incident came via Phuket Info Center, which operates under the Phuket Provincial Office, on Feb 23.

The THAI Smile flight made the emergency landing at 1pm on Feb 22, said the report by Phuket Info Center.

The A320 made a “hard landing” with a tailstrike on the runway, said the report.

Thankfully, the pilot managed to bring the plane to a halt and all passengers disembarked safely, the report added.

The runway was closed from 1:55pm to 2:50pm while repairs were made to the one square metre on the landing strip that suffered damage from the tailstrike.

The runway closure caused



Photo: via Phuket Info Center

delays to “about 20 flights” that were due to take off and land during the period, said the report.

At last report, the Thai Smile Airbus A320 was being checked and undergoing repairs at the Delta section of the airport.

As recently as Monday (Feb 27), Airports of Thailand Phuket branch (AoT Phuket), which operates Phuket International Airport had yet to recognise the safety incident directly to the public.

THAI Smile is a wholly owned subsidiary of Thai Airways International.

The Phuket News

Law-breaking tourists on motorbikes in sight

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket officials are proposing a standard agreement for motorbike rental operators to use to ensure that legal basics are covered when renting motorbikes to tourists.

The standard agreement was proposed at a meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall on Feb 22.

Present at the meeting were police, disaster and safety officials and officers from other relevant agencies, including the new Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office, Lertchai Wangtrakuldee.

More specifically, but not mentioned in the report, was the mass motorbike rally by mostly French nationals that overwhelmed the streets of



Photo: PR Phuket

Patong earlier this month.

Following mass arrests after the motorbike rally, the issue was raised by police in talks with the French honorary consul on the island.

Patong Police Chief Col Sujin Nilbadee pointed out to the French consul that the rental operators found guilty of hiring motorbikes to people without a valid licence have been charged with a B1,000

fine as they are responsible for ensuring the correct and legal documentation is in place.

Similarly, anyone found guilty of renting a vehicle without the correct licence would also face a fine of B1,000, Col Sujin added.

The standard agreement proposed at the meeting was described as “control guidelines to organise motorcycles for rent in the Phuket area to

be orderly and legal”.

“Since there is no [single] law to directly control the vehicle rentals, the meeting has discussed for all government agencies to integrate relevant law information into enforcement,” said the official report.

Attendees at the meeting suggested that vehicle rental operators use a standard agreement that was “clear and correct”, and available in at least three languages: Thai, English and Chinese.

Under the agreement, tourists renting vehicles must strictly follow the traffic rules, said the report.

All cars and motorbikes rented must also be covered by the compulsory insurance required by law so that every vehicle rented has insurance coverage in the event of an accident that results in injury and death, the report added.

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Monkey Hill under protection

Continued from page 1

An individual fenced off the 15 rai, which is located behind Charoen Samanakij Temple, and built two houses on it, Mr Thendon said.

“The case was closed and the encroacher was arrested and the houses were demolished,” he noted.

DIMINISHING RESOURCES

The Director of Forest Resource Management Office 12, Krabi Branch, Somchai Nuchananonthep, told *The Phuket News* with certainty that in the past the protected forest on Monkey Hill measured about 600 rai.

However, part of the area was given to the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) as well as the Phuket Provincial office of the Treasury Department, he said.

The Treasury Department is the standard government department for legal possession of government properties that have not been assigned to specific departments to use.

Mr Somchai this week was in Bangkok attending a conference, and said that he would have to return to his office in Krabi to look into the history of the land.

“The PPAO asked the Forestry Office in the past to use some of the land for a public sports area, and another piece of the land was given to the Treasury Office – but I have to check how many rai of land were given to each office and what were the conditions under which the land was provided,” he said.

Mr Somchai added that he will come



The hill is popular for visiting the troupe of monkeys. Photo: Nattha Thepbamrung

to Phuket early this month to discuss the issue of the disappearing ‘protected forest’ with Phuket forestry officials.

PROTECTION NEEDED

“The fence is needed to protect the ‘urban forest’ of the hill,” said walking club chief Mr Krich.

The club became involved in the installing the fence through a project by Charoen Samanakij Temple, located on the hill, he said.

The temple aimed to plant saplings on the hill to help preserve the natural forest, Mr Krich explained.

“Local officials, the temple and all of the club’s members agreed that we should put up the fence to mark the boundaries because it would be useless if we planted trees and the land kept getting encroached on,” he said.

Work on installing the boundary fence began mid-last year, and is now completed, Mr Krich confirmed.

Wastewater returns to beaches

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Local officials are rushing to take action over dark wastewater flowing across the sand and into the sea at the northern end of Karon Beach, scaring tourists and local people over health concerns.

The dark water was first noticed by officials last Sunday (Feb 26), “causing tourists to panic and run away from the sea”, said a report by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

The colour of the water led many people in the area to believe that untreated sewage was being dumped into the waterways further upstream, the report noted.

Officers from Karon Municipality arrived to inspect the site, at Nong Harn Lake, on Monday (Feb 27). Among them was Karon Deputy Mayor Wanlop Nadon, joined by Karon Municipality Public Works Chief Sanan Rakdam and Chatporn Charoenvej, Head of Wastewater Treatment Works at Karon Municipality.

Rain in the area usually washed away sediment in the channel coming from local public waterways, said the report.

However, the report said the key factor was that the channel had not been dredged for 10 years. “This caused the water flowing



Black wastewater has returned to flowing across Karon Beach. Photo; PR Phuket

into the sea to turn black, similar to wastewater. This made people and tourists understand that it is wastewater,” the report said.

“Originally, the solution was to dredge the channel twice a year, but it was not possible to do so because the contractor had left the job due to bidding at a very low price, and was therefore unable to proceed according to the specified contract,” the report continued.

Karon Municipality has now ordered the channel to be dredged as soon as possible so that the dark wastewater would not be impeded in flowing into the sea.

Also, more than 200 local business operators were also called to a meeting and told to strictly ensure their wastewater treatment systems were fully functional according to correct standards.

Many operators had reopened their businesses quickly after the COVID-19 measures were eased, with many of the “systems” not operating at 100%, the report said.

Officers from Karon Municipality will now be conducting inspections of local businesses to ensure compliance, the PR Phuket report said.

“If an offense is detected by releasing wastewater into public

waterways, affecting the image of tourism, the business will be shut down immediately. Many restaurants near the Karon Municipality Office have been ordered to close until the renovations are completed and have passed the inspection. Only then will it be allowed to open for service,” he said.

“Karon Municipality will expedite short-term solutions to the problem and start making long-term plans with the relevant agencies in order to build confidence among the public and tourists,” Mr Sanan concluded.

ALGAE BLOOM

Patong Municipality and local environmental officials have started talks about preventative measures regarding an algae bloom that has persisted in Patong Bay since last month.

Patong Mayor Chalernsak Manesri chaired a meeting of more than 50 officials, including Wattanapong Suksai, Chief of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Phuket office (MNRE Phuket), at the Patong Municipality offices last Friday (Feb 24).

The meeting was called “to discuss algae boom problems at Patong Beach”, said an official report of the meeting.

Mr Wattanapong pointed out that the algae bloom had remained a persistent problem that had become

a considerable drain on the resources of the Patong Municipality Division of Public Health and Environment.

The health and environment division had staged a mass cleanup of the beach days earlier, on Feb 22, with workers assigned to clean up the beach in an all-day effort.

Teams worked across three shifts, with the first session from 5am to 10am, the second session from 2pm to 4pm and the third from 5pm throughout 8pm that night.

A second team was assigned to help the beach cleanup from 5am to 9am and again from 3pm to 7pm at night.

The volume of algae collected, initially reported as ‘seaweed’, was not reported, but photos of the cleanup evidenced that the amount was considerable.

“It affects the water recreation activities of tourists in the Patong beach area,” Mr Wattanapong said.

“Since there are many tourists traveling each day now, measures must be put in place to prevent and take care of all aspects,” he added.

At the meeting the officials discussed “every aspect” of measures to solve the problem, including the issue of boats mooring in the bay and “solving wastewater problems”, said an official report of the meeting.

However, the official report gave no indication what measures are to be taken.

Foreigners remain divided on ‘tourist entry fee’, says poll

RESPONDENTS TO AN ONLINE POLL by *The Phuket News* are divided over whether the ‘tourist entry fee’ currently set to come into effect in June should be implemented in its current form.

The Phuket News conducted the online poll from Feb 21-24, asking the simple question, “Do you support the B300 tourist entry fee?”

The entry fee, now approved by Cabinet, will see the government charge B300 for people arriving by air and B150 for people arriving by land or sea. The issue has sparked much debate over whether the fee should be introduced at all, and what the money should be spent on.

The primary reason given by government officials so far is that the entry fee will be used to provide health and accident insurance coverage for tourists during their stay in the country.

“The entry fee will support care for tourists. From 2017 to 2019, foreign tourists used services at public hospitals and that cost the state as much as B300-400 million,” Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn explained.

However, the move is projected to collect B3.9 billion from the introduction of the fee this year alone, and more than B10bn from 40mn visitors estimated for next year.

Asked if they supported the move to introduce the entry fee, 45.56% of people voting in the online poll chose, “No, we can’t trust that the money collected will be spent properly”.

A further 28.40% voted, “No, let the tourists spend the B300 while on holiday here”.

In support of the fee, 20.12% of respondents



voted, “Yes, but only if the use of funds is transparent”.

Only 5.92% voted, “Yes, without any conditions”.

Of note, while the issue stirred much debate and comments online, the poll last week garnered only 169 responses.

Of those, 68% of the respondents marked themselves as ‘Local expatriate residents’ and 30% considered themselves to be a ‘Foreign visitor to Phuket’. Only 2% of the respondents said they were Thai nationals.

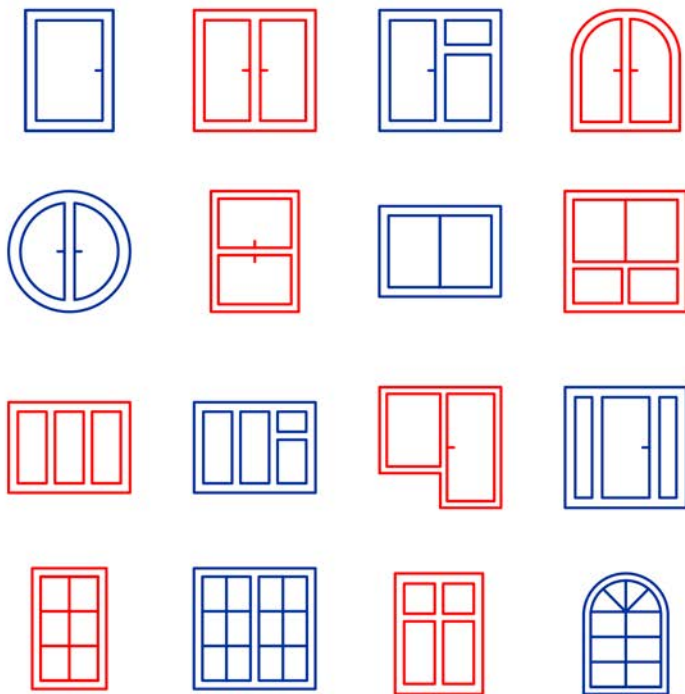
Although the poll represents a small sample of those to be affected by the entry fee, a consistent response in the comments provided marked that many foreigners in Phuket – and Thailand – already have health and accident insurance, and thus should be exempt from the entry fee.

Similar comments suggested that Thai officials make health and accident insurance mandatory for entering the country, and offer a range of Thai-based policies at the point of entry.

The entry fee does not apply to Thai nationals. *The Phuket News*



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Five more drivers nabbed

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The campaign by the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) against those who they consider to be operating illegally on the island is continuing.

Five more drivers were apprehended in the most recent round of checks conducted in Cherng Talay on Feb 22.

So far there has been no development in the 'peace talks' between the PLTO and recently banned 'green plate' taxis from outside Phuket, despite the office having promising during talks to find a solution for them to become legal on the island again. The talks happened on Feb 9, more than three weeks ago.

Officers from the PLTO, acting under instructions by PLTO Chief Adcha Buachan, staged yet another check on Feb 22. This time officials set up their checkpoint on Baan Don – Cherng Talay Rd, merely metres from the Boat Avenue traffic lights.

The PLTO did not specify whether any police officers were present, and none were present in the images posted after the check. Yet, one picture showed a man in a military-style uniform and a beret taking part in the inspection.

The check was conducted from 3pm to 6pm with officials inspecting



PLTO officials chose Cherng Talay as the location for their hunt on Feb 22. Photo: PLTO

not only 'green plate' taxis and private vehicles with black and white plates, but also a school bus and a truck. The PLTO did not explain what led them to believe those drivers could provide illegal transportation services.

During the inspection five drivers were apprehended for violating the provincial order issued on Feb 3 and prohibiting taxi services via private cars, which was already illegal, and green plate vehicles from other provinces – which had never been a crime before.

The PLTO said that three drivers were busted for driving private cars with commercial purposes and two were apprehended for providing service in Phuket while registered outside of the province.

It has not been explained why the latter is now an offence and what tourists should do to get to Phuket

International Airport from Khao Lak, Natai or Ao Nang.

The most recent development in the negotiations between the PLTO and green plate taxi drivers dates back to Feb 9. The meeting on that day was also joined by Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Col Jirasak Siemsak.

PLTO Chief Mr Adcha later revealed that the talks focused on how green plate cars registered outside Phuket may be able to operate on the island legally. He assured that his office also aimed at finding a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved.

However, despite Mr Adcha's public comments after the meeting, the PLTO's campaign to arrest and suspend driving licenses of taxi drivers whose vehicles are legally registered elsewhere continued in the days following.

UKRAINIAN CLEARED

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian man has successfully defended himself from allegations that he was illegally working in Phuket as a taxi driver, but has been fined B1,000 for driving a vehicle without a driver's licence.

The issue came to light after a video was posted online showing the man, Ukrainian national Andrii Mindalin, 35, parking a passenger van in a sidestreet in Patong. In the van were four other people, including Mr Mindalin's friend and compatriot Aleksei Kikhaev, 39, Kornpitak Assuwan of the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) told the press on Monday (Feb 27).

Mr Kornpitak said that he had been informed of, and already investigated, the incident. The group had indeed travelled to Phuket from Pattaya. The van belongs to Mr Kikhaev, and is legally registered in Chonburi as a 'private van with more than seven seats', complete with blue-and-white licence plates, he added.

The group had driven from Pattaya, with Mr Kikhaev behind the wheel for the drive to the island. After reaching Phuket, Mr Mindalin took the wheel as he had lived in Phuket before and was more familiar with the roads, Mr Kornpitak explained.

However, Mr Mindalin was fined B1,000 for driving without a licence, Mr Kornpitak confirmed.



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

Children lost near Patong Beach quickly found safe

TWO YOUNG CHILDREN reported lost near Patong Beach were soon found safe last Sunday night (Feb 26), local Tourist Police have reported.

The children's mother reported the children – a boy and a girl, aged 4-5 – as lost to officers on patrol at the beach end of Bangla Rd at about 9:35pm last Sunday night, reported Maj Gen Chatuphon Kraiyuraprasong of the Tourist Police.

The officers called in help from other people

who work along the beach road, and took the mother and father, both Russian nationals, to search along the streets, and even back to their hotel in case the children had managed to find their way back there.

The children were eventually found safe and sound at 10:30pm at a playground area on the beach.

The parents were very grateful for the assistance, and very happy to have their children returned unharmed.

The Phuket News

'Anxious' Saudi tourist steals jet-ski, rescued

A SAUDI TOURIST WAS RESCUED from the water about one kilometre from Patong Beach last Friday (Feb 24) after he stole a jet-ski from an operator on the beach.

Patong Police were called to the beach at about 1pm. Arriving in force soon after were Patong Police officers led by Capt Sarawut Phuttaphonphiban along with Phuket Tourist Police officers, tourism officials from the Phuket Tourist Assistance Center and even a rescue team from the Kusoldharm Foundation.

A Patong lifeguard informed the officers that a tourist had taken off on the jet-ski after he had an argument with a jet-ski rental operator on the beach.

The man, later identified as "Mr Abdullah", had jumped off the jet-ski he had taken and was treading water about a kilometre from the beach.

Jet-ski operators went out in force on three jet-skis to recover Mr Abdullah and the 'borrowed' jet-ski, but they returned saying that he had refused help and chose to keep treading water.

Mr Abdullah continued treading water for about half an hour before "rescuers" returned to bring him back to shore on a jet-ski. Apparently Mr Abdullah's hands were tied during the journey back to the beach to prevent him from further endangering himself or others.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Once ashore, Mr Abdullah was rushed to Patong Hospital as he was apparently in a state of exhaustion, though he remained conscious for the journey to the hospital.

Local officers at the scene said Mr Abdullah was speaking incomprehensibly and appeared to be in a state of anxiety.

At last report Mr Abdullah remained under care at Patong Hospital while officers continued their investigation into the incident. As recently as Monday (Feb 27), police had not confirmed any charges against 'Mr Abdullah'.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Playground corruption probe hits Cherng Talay

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket branch of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) is investigating the purchase of children's swings at a municipality playground in Cherng Talay where the small 'bouncy rides' cost B65,000 each.

The investigation follows comments by angry local residents about the exorbitant prices paid for the swings, located at the Cherng Talay Municipality Sport Center.

NACC Phuket officers met with Cherng Talay Municipality Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Samart Aisawan for over an hour on Feb 21 to discuss the purchases.

After the meeting Mr Samart told reporters that the playground equipment was purchased in 2015, and later led reporters to the playground to show that the equipment was still functioning safely.

Mr Samart showed reporters a total of six 'swings' of moulded plastic shapes mounted on springs as 'bouncy



Cherng Talay Palad Mr Samart shows that the swings are still safe to use. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

rides' for young children. "This equipment will remain safe to use for eight to nine years because it is made of reasonable quality. Usually playground equipment like this lasts only two to three years," Mr Samart said.

Mr Samart said the project to purchase the playground equipment had already been inspected by the Office of the Auditor General in 2016 and cleared of any wrongdoing.

"People are saying that we paid too much for this equipment, but there is no standard price for buying things like this, and what we bought was

equipment that lasts a long time," he said.

"The correct procedure under the procurement regulations was followed in all respects," he added.

However, NACC Phuket officials the next day (Feb 22) revealed that Cherng Talay Municipality in 2014 paid Genius Kids Co Ltd B1.193 million to install a pair of slides and a set of adventure swings, priced at B870,500. The company also installed a slide for B44,500, a rope-climb swing (B39,500), six horse 'bouncy rides' at B49,800 each (total B298,800), a stone bar

(B67,500) and a play tunnel (B53,000).

The installation was completed from April to May 2014. The total cost of the equipment was B1,373,800, with the company pocketing the difference of B556,200 for the installation.

Just a year later, Cherng Talay Municipality in 2015 contracted Genius Kids Co Ltd again, this time to install children's playground equipment for B1.95mn.

A 'fun garden' set costing B834,000 was installed, along with two spring 'bouncy ride' swings costing B65,000 each, a hippo spring rocking 'bouncy ride' also for B65,000, and two spring rocking 'bouncy ride' lions also for B65,000 each.

The swings were installed from July to August 2015, the NACC Phuket office reported.

Total cost of the playground equipment installed in 2015 was B1,159,000, with Genius Kids Co Ltd this time pocketing B791,000 for the two-month installation.

The NACC Phuket office said it was continuing its investigation.



Anti-war rally held peacefully in Patong

AROUND 30 FOREIGNERS, presumably all Ukrainians or Russians, gathered in front of the Police Box on the beach road in Patong last Saturday (Feb 24) to call for the end of the war and demand withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine.

Phuket Police and volunteers were present at the scene to ensure safety of all parties.

The group held printed placards with calls and slogans in English and Russian. Some held flags – either Ukrainian national flags or the new Russian white-blue-white flag used by those opposing Moscow's invasion into Ukraine, which started on

Feb 24 last year.

Calls and slogans on the placards included: "No war"; "Peace for Ukraine"; "We do not need war"; "We are many, we are not alone"; "Russians against the war"; "Putin, go away"; "Russia will be free"; "Freedom to political prisoners".

The demonstration of placards continued for 15 minutes only, according to reporters at the scene. Yet the event also included some communication with local police during which the group did not disband and the placards were still visible to passers-by. Apparently, no Thais came out to oppose or support the rally.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Water aplenty for dry season

WATER LEVELS AT the island's three main reservoirs are holding at about 80% and Phuket officials are confident there will be no water shortage during the dry season this year.

The news came at a meeting of the Phuket Water Resources Sub-Committee at Provincial Hall on Feb 22, led by Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan.

Due to the impact of water shortages in previous years, the meeting was attended by not only government officials, but also key industry leaders including former Phuket Chamber of Commerce (PCC) President Thanusak Phungdet.

Vice Governor Amnuay noted that Phuket had a lot of rain during the wet season last year and that the water levels at the Bang Wad, Bang Neaw Dum and Klong Kata reservoirs were holding steady at 80%.

Water consumption had increased due to more people on the island, especially compared with the past three years, he noted.

However, there was no cause for concern, Vice



Photo: PR Phuket

Governor Amnuay said.

"Following climate data over the past 10 years, heavy rains to replenish the water levels at the reservoirs will come in June or July," he added.

"Regarding tap water production during this period, raw water is still used from other water sources, namely from various [smaller] reservoirs across the island," Vice Governor Amnuay said.

"If the water in these smaller reservoirs decreases substantially, then the water from all three main reservoirs will be increased," he added.

Efforts by the Provincial Waterworks Authority were continuing to improve the water-supply system, V/Gov

Amnuay noted.

"The PWA is working to improve the water-delivery system to be more efficient in order to reduce the problem of weak water supply. Currently, the PWA has prepared a plan and hastened improvements in such matters," he said.

The PWA this week is conducting 'step tests' across large areas of the island to check water pressure in water mains. 'Step tests' help to identify where pipes may be suffering leaks.

"All agencies have confirmed that this year Phuket has enough water supply. However, people are asked to use water economically in order to have water available until the rainy season arrives," V/Gov Amnuay said. *The Phuket News*

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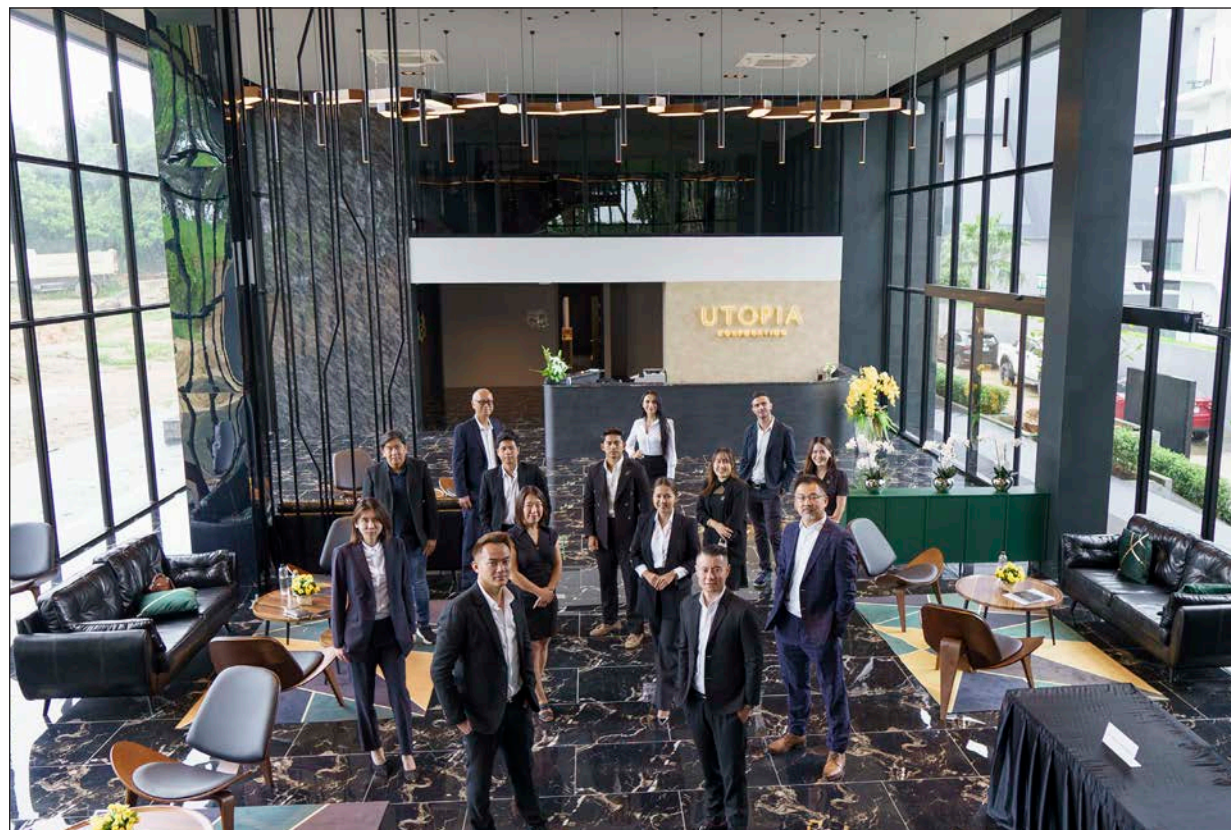
ADVERTORIAL

Phuket's Top Developer - Utopia Corporation announced today that its co-founder and CEO, Hachi Yin, will be moving on from his role as the leader of the company and passing ownership to new owners.

Utopia Corporation, a leading Phuket-based real estate developer in Southeast Asia, announced today that its co-founder and CEO, Mr. Hachi Yin, is moving on, handing the company over to its new owners led by Mr. Surapong Yangchareonsakul and Mr. Jaikar Singh Manchanda (Jay). The handover was completed on February 20, 2023.

In a statement, the former CEO of Utopia Corporation, Hachi Yin, said, "I'm ready to let Utopia go. It is time for someone else to continue growing it and make it even bigger and better. That's what I had planned for. Utopia has done amazingly well, but to bring it to the next level, we need to hire more experienced people to grow it. My knowledge in this industry is still limited. No matter how fast I learn, I've reached maximum capacity."

"As for myself, in 2023, I want to take a break. So, 2023 is a complete holiday. But of course, being an entrepreneur, it's hard to fully not do anything. But I want to focus this year on thinking about the next thing for me."



He added, "Utopia will be handed over to new owners, who have all been part of the Utopia team and know the company and its culture well. They are all truly qualified and wish them all the best."

Handing over to the new incumbents will bring renewed energy to Utopia, believes Hachi. He added, "I feel like I've achieved something, created something solid with Utopia Corporation. Even though it's in a field I had not studied about or had

expertise in, pushing and learning over the past ten years made me reach where I am today. So, in that sense, Utopia will always be a part of me."

Expanding on his reasons for bowing out of leading Utopia Corporation, Hachi revealed, "The decision to leave was brought on by the difficult period of COVID and everything that it brought, even though Utopia Corporation survived and through this pandemic, this challenging period underlined for me what family

means to me. I realized I wanted to create a family, have kids, travel the world, spend time with my wife and my parents and family."

Hachi is often described as a serial entrepreneur with a diverse background in various industries. He started his first business on eBay at a young age, then a successful telemarketing company whilst completing his Nutrition degree at Monash University, before finding his passion in the real estate indus-

try, which eventually led to Utopia Corporation's founding.

On what the future holds, Hachi is clear that his next venture will not be in real estate, "I feel that I've been there, I've done that. Life is too short to be stuck in the comfort zone, and real estate is the 'comfort zone' for me now. But I've still got the energy, so I want to do something new. I will see if I can achieve something that is way out of my comfort zone again. Whether it's a win or lose in the business doesn't matter. But at least I know I've tried, and I'll keep pushing until I know when to stop. So, I'm excited about the next thing. I'm not sure what that is yet, but I'm excited to figure it out and to see where it takes me."

As for Thailand, Hachi is clear, "It continues to be my home. I've lived in Thailand for ten years, and my wife is Thai, so Thailand is now home to me. More than Melbourne, Australia, or China, where I was born. So, for sure, it will still be home. Thailand still has a lot of opportunities for many other things."

For more information contact:

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www.utopia.co.th
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PHUKET'S TOP DEVELOPER 10 PROJECTS LAUNCHED

7年开发10个项目 7个项目均已现房交房

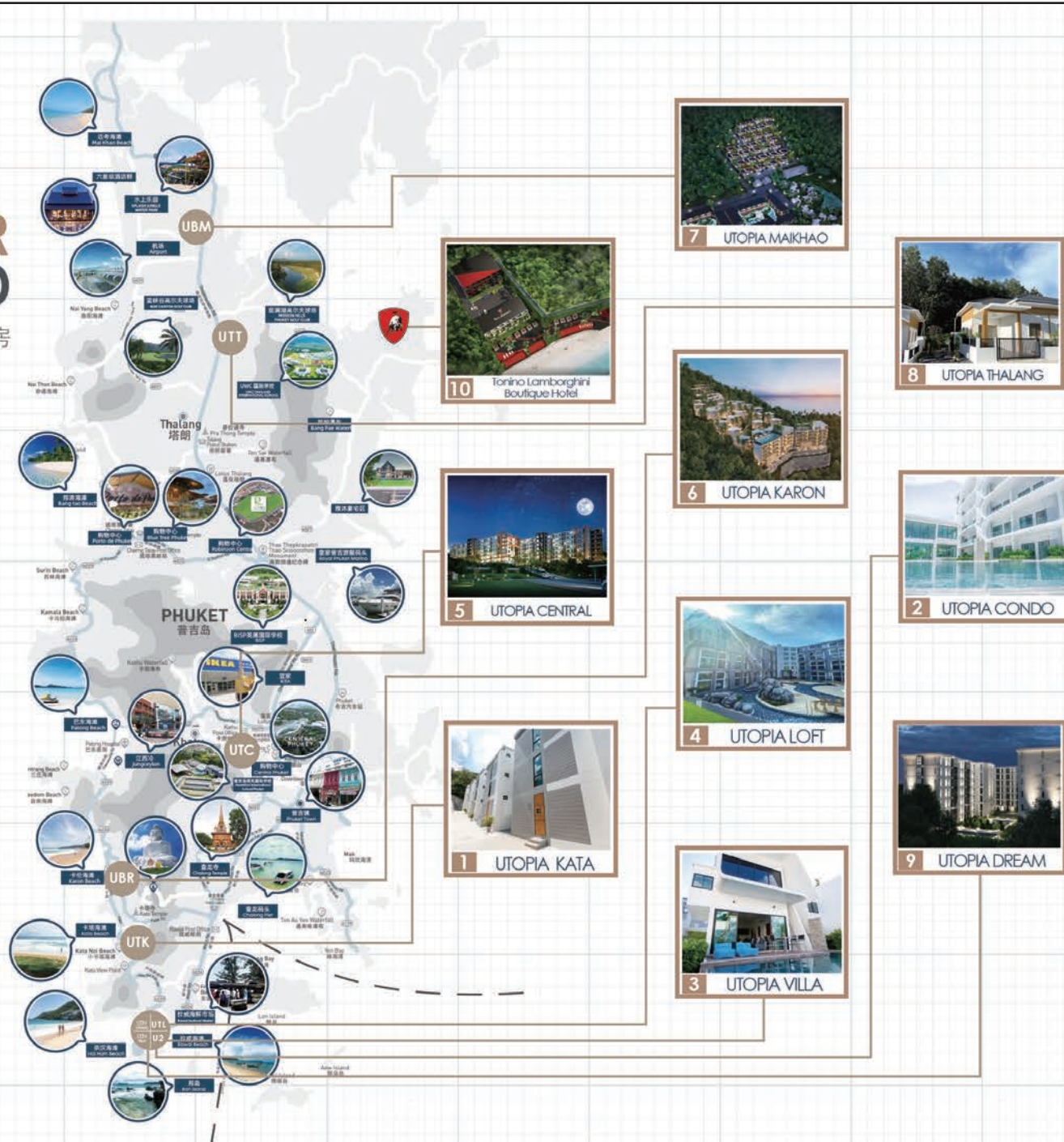
UTOPIA CORPORATION

UTOPIA CORPORATION has built and developed 10 real estate projects in Phuket in the last 8 years, including apartments, villas, and commercial complexes, with a total construction area of 100,000 square meters, for a great total investment equal to 4 billion Thai Baht, and a total of nearly 2000 keys. Five of our projects have already started with our hospitality management and are ready to welcome local and international tourists for short and long term, achieving high rating in the top Touristic website.

Utopia Corporation is an international company originally from Melbourne Australia. More than 100 elite senior managers and directors work together to make the dream become true. Our professional international team has been selected among the top managers worldwide including Australia, India, Thailand, France, Singapore, Philippines, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong and Kazakhstan, offering several services from construction, engineering, architecture, technology, design, hospitality, F&B and Legal support. The team spirit created in the last 8 years became stronger and more professional day after day.



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Thailand supports end of Russia-Ukraine war

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Thailand has pledged support to the UN's resolution calling for an end to the war in Ukraine and demanding Russia's immediate withdrawal from the country.

Thailand had abstained on the two previous UN resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but joined 140 other countries on Feb 23 when the General Assembly approved its third resolution.

Countries which voted against the resolution are limited to Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua and Syria.

With any de-escalation of the tensions, Thailand stands to gain economically while the elected government after the next poll will win more international recognition for the decision to back the UN resolution, Virot Ali, an international relations academic at Thammasat University said last Friday (Feb 24).



A Thai woman in Bangkok protests against the war in Ukraine on March 5, 2022. Photo: Bangkok Post

Since international pressure is mounting and Thailand is now in election mode with the transition of its power structure, the kingdom has now attached importance to its relations with other countries and its efforts to revitalise the economy, he said.

"With these factors at play, the country has to take sides. Thailand will not benefit from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Efforts to end the conflict will at least ease geopolitical tensions and the energy price crisis.

"We can no longer resist international pressure over

the Russia-Ukraine conflict. We have no other option but to join calls for Russia to withdraw from Ukraine," Mr Virot added.

"As long as the conflict continues, it is likely that China and the US will also join the fray, which could deal a blow to Thailand.

"Defusing the Russia-Ukraine tensions would put Thailand at an advantage."

Mr Virot added that the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the global energy situation would also stunt Thailand's economic growth.

As the general election,

tentatively scheduled for May 7, is approaching, Thailand also wanted to show the world at the UN meeting that the country acted in line with international principles, suggesting that the poll will be held in line with democratic values.

"In light of this, an elected government will gain more legitimacy in the eyes of the international community," Mr Virot said.

The UN voted overwhelmingly on Feb 23 to demand Russia immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine, marking the one-year anniversary of the war with a call for a "just and lasting" peace.

Coming on the eve of the first anniversary of the brutal war, support for Kyiv has little-changed from that of last October when 143 countries voted to condemn Russia's declared annexation of four Ukraine regions.

"This vote shows that the international community stands with Ukraine," said European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.



Photo: NNT

No more foreign plastic waste starting 2025

BANGKOK

THE THAI GOVERNMENT has announced that it will completely ban plastic waste imports by the end of 2024 as the kingdom sets its sights on reducing the environmental impact of plastics and shedding the label of being one of the world's plastic bins.

Deputy Government Spokesperson Tipanan Sirichana explained last Friday (Feb 24) that the move will also reduce the price of local plastic products, adding that the policy will mainly be under the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Industry.

Beginning 2025, Thailand will no longer allow imports of plastic scraps. These items

will be listed as prohibited materials by the Ministry of Commerce and will be denied entry into the kingdom, reports the National News Bureau of Thailand (NNT).

Only 14 Thai factories in tariff-free zones have been allowed to import and utilise these items for export purposes over the period of 2023-2024.

The total ceiling limit for importing plastic scraps is currently around 373,000 metric tons annually.

According to Ms Tipanan, the import volume is allowed at 100% of actual domestic plastic production capacity this year, with the volume to be reduced by half next year.

Importers must also have measures in place to mitigate the potential environmental impact of plastic waste. NNT

Budget for police bodycams approved

BANGKOK

THE CABINET HAS APPROVED A budget of about B445 million to purchase bodycams for Royal Thai Police officers, it was confirmed last Friday (Feb 24).

According to new regulations, officers are now required to record their actions while on duty, including interrogation process, traffic control and negotiations.

Government Spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri explained that the Royal Thai Police will be responsible for the procurement of 48,500 cameras, which will be used in crime suppression, road traffic and investigatory works.

The budget will also cover cameras used in interrogation rooms as well as police stations, Immigration police offices and police vehicles.

According to the 2022 Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Forced Disappearance Act, which came into force on Feb 22, officers must record images and sounds of the accused at all times. It is therefore necessary to provide cameras for this purpose.

Mr Anucha reiterated that the budget will allow police officers to quickly perform their duties to their fullest capacity. He also quoted Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha as stating that the procurement must be conducted in a transparent manner, using traceable procedures.

Mr Anucha said relevant officials – including those from the Ministry of Interior



A police officer with a helmet-mounted camera at a checkpoint in Phuket. Photo: The Phuket News / File

and the Ministry of Defense – must strictly follow the act and related protocols in order to ensure maximum benefits for members of the public.

On Feb 4, national police chief Gen Damrongsak Kittiprapas issued new guidelines on conduct at police security checkpoints including a requirement that officers store footage from their body cameras for at least 20 days after recording.

In reporting the new regulations, the Public Relations Department (PRD) posted a notice saying plainly, "Without Bodycam, do not set a checkpoint".

The move followed two accusations of extortion involving police and a Taiwanese actress and her companions in Bangkok, and a Chinese tourist in Pattaya.

The guidelines also require that the nearest police crime report centre be informed of all police security checkpoints set up, such as those in cases of a criminal suspect chase.

NNT with additional reporting by the Bangkok Post



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Singing on the south coast

Nattha Thepbamrung
life@classactmedia.co.th

Last month, we had the pleasure of sitting down with a talented soul singer by the name of Eric Canham, who we saw perform at Reflections Rooftop Bar at The Nai Harn resort, in the southern part of Phuket.

Tell us a bit more about yourself

Eric Canham: I am a singer and songwriter, from South Africa. I'm a self-taught musician (vocalist), who began singing at a very young age. I come from a Christian religious family. My grandmother from my dad's side was influential in motivating the family to sing every day during family devotion. Family devotion was a time we would all be still, sing a song or two, and then my grandmother would say a prayer before we all went to sleep.

When and how did you end up in Phuket?

Eric Canham: I was invited to come and perform in Phuket in February 2019 for The Nai Harn resort. This was a one-month contract. I was discovered by the management while I was performing in 2018 at the NIHI Resort on Sumba, an island located east of Bali. The Nai Harn Resort was happy with my performance and they offered me a second contract for the high season (October 2019 until Feb 2020).

I then traveled to the Maldives to perform a one-month contract there as well for the Hotel Fairmont Maldives - Sirru Fen Fushi. I returned to Phuket in February 2020 to perform until March 30, 2020. But my contract had to end due to COVID regulations. I was scheduled to leave Phuket at the end of March but I ended up stuck here until the beginning of May 2020 because my country, South Africa, was under lockdown.



Eric Canham.

I returned to my home in South Africa and stayed there. I have now returned to Phuket, Thailand, and will be here for as long as I am welcome. I love it here.

What style of music do you specialise in? What is your favourite style of music and why?

Eric Canham: I'm an eclectic performer as I sing covers and I enjoy singing a variety of styles. Pop, Jazz, R'n'B, Reggae. I also love jazz and country music.

My repertoire consists of many artists, the likes of Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Mink Deville, and many more.

Where can we listen to your voice and when?

Eric Canham: I perform with my band at The Nai

Harn from Thursday to Monday as the Resident Entertainer, from 5:30pm until 8:30pm.

Tell us more about your band

The Eric Canham Music Collective has been together since May 2022. It was formulated by me, as singer-songwriter. The band to date has performed together on many occasions in Durban, South Africa, and Namibia. Their first international performance engagement was actually in Phuket. The band is versatile and prides itself as professional and has a basket offering of entertainment. There are Ntuthuko on bass, me on vocals, the pianist Sphe on keyboard, and Phila on drums. All of us are from South Africa.

What does the future hold for you?

Eric Canham: The music I've recorded is ready for release and I will release it at the end of April. I am in Thailand indefinitely and want to live and work here for a longer period of time. However, my band will return to South Africa at the end of March so I'm uncertain which part of the world I will explore next.

Finally, tell us one thing you absolutely love about the island, and one thing you wish could be changed or improved.

Eric Canham: I love the weather and the temperament of the people. It's difficult to think of something that needs to be changed.

Eric's voice can be heard at the Rock Salt Restaurant and the Cosmo Restaurant, belonging to The Nai Harn resort, right on the northern part of Nai Harn Beach. For more information about his performances, make sure to follow his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/EricCanhamMusic

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The April-May 2023

hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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Want to be in it?

CONTACT JASON TODAY – gm@classactmedia.co.th

Howson leaving the 89.5 house

Jason Beavan

gm@classactmedia.co.th

After an outstanding eight years hosting Good Morning Phuket on Live 89.5 FM, we must bid farewell to Chris Howson. At the end of February 2023 the voice that has kept us entertained on our morning drive to the office is departing the Phuket airwaves, to further his career and not have to wake up at 4am every day to host a breakfast radio show. His replacement is a familiar face and voice to all of us in Phuket, JP Mestanza.

When Chris arrived in 2015, fresh off the plane, wide-eyed and very white, he was instantly liked by all at Class Act Media. Learning to speak Thai very quickly he was an instant hit with all the people he interacted with, add in his Canadian nationality, you could not meet a nicer person. He has seen a lot of changes in Phuket, as we all have over the eight years, and he has let you know his feelings on most of them during his daily monologues that really gave us time to pause and look at it all.

Personally I would like to express my gratitude for his hard work, especially the last few years during the pandemic – Chris, thank you.

Chris has his own words for this farewell: "It's been an amazing eight years, thank you Phuket! JP has been



Chris Howson in the studio.

such an important part of Live 89.5 since even before I arrived on the island, and I can't wait to hear what he does with 'Good Morning Phuket'. Even though he is lacking my delightful Canadian twang, I know JP will make your mornings even better. Good luck!"

You will all have probably seen and heard JP as he has been with Class Act Media for many years, first as the sports editor for *The Phuket News*, and now the face of Phuket News TV, hosting the daily Phuket Xtra show, Monday to Friday evenings on YouTube, Facebook and thephuketnews.

com. He is also the voice of the local news updates every hour on Live 89.5. We are looking forward to what JP will be bringing to Good Morning Phuket on Live 89.5 starting March 1, Monday to Friday from 7am till 11am.

JP is excited to be hopping in the chair: "Becoming the new host of the Breakfast Show on Live 89.5 is a daunting task, given how great of a host Chris Howson has been for years. I have some big shoes to fill, but I'm excited and can't wait to talk with all of Phuket about all the goings-on around the island. Listeners can expect a fun,



JP Mestanza - host of Phuket Xtra, and taking the reins of 'Good Morning Phuket' on Live 89.5.

exciting show, with some daily banter on all things Phuket!"

Please join us in wishing Chris all the best for the future and we look forward to catching up again.

Jason Beavan
General Manager
Class Act Media



Catch JP every weekday from 7-11am on 89.5 on your FM dial or online – www.thepuketnews.com/radio/listen.php



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POP QUIZ

1. How many zeros are in one Googol?

2. Who was the first person to be crucified upside down?

3. What was US President John F. Kennedy's middle name?

4. Which explorer was the first European to reach India by sea?

5. What is vitamin riboflavin also known as?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Virus type

6. Mitts

10. Sea eagle

14. Pine exudation

15. Unbending

16. Aggravate

17. Madonna hit

20. Give

21. Earache

22. South African org.

23. Yemeni port

24. Standard of living?

28. Witch's broom

30. Italian turnover

32. Desert

36. Football Hall-of-Famer Hein

37. Take night classes, e.g.

42. Bossy remark?

43. Ties

44. Stance

47. Cavalry weapon

51. Eye sores

52. Ice melter

55. Mad. ____

56. Engine enclosure

59. Lily family member

60. Be independent

64. Sundae topper

Down

1. Home built in a day?

2. Colorless solvent

3. Jellies

4. Demoiselle

5. Needle point?

6. Ski trail

7. Indo-European

8. Seventh anniversary gift

9. Tight-fitting

10. Unreal

11. Spawn

12. Valueless

13. One with a pole position?

18. Settler's building material

19. Cambodian currency

23. Early pulpit

25. "Where the heart is"

26. Turow book

27. Theme of this puzzle

29. It fits in a lock

30. Masked critter

31. Alimentary canal orifice

33. Testify

34. Actress Campbell

35. Turn red, perhaps

37. Pucks

38. Kind of court

39. Floral arrangement

40. Deteriorate

41. Watering hole

45. Sinew

46. B-52 org.

48. Whalebone

49. Come about

50. Brought down a mast

52. More cunning

53. At ____ for words

54. Moldovan moolah

57. Wrap

58. Therefore

59. In a muddle

60. Coxcomb

61. Part of B.C.E.

62. Just out

63. Dashboard abbr.

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) 100 zeroes (1 Googol = 1 x 10¹⁰⁰); 2) St Peter; 3) Fitzgerald; 4) Vasco da Gama; 5) B2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14					15				16				
17					18				19				
20					21								
22				23					24		25	26	27
28			29					30	31				
			32		33	34	35				36		
37	38	39							40	41			
42					43								
44			45	46						47	48	49	50
51							52	53	54		55		
			56		57	58					59		
60	61	62								63			
64					65					66			
67					68					69			

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

P	A	T	S	Y	T	A	N	G	M	A	M	A										
S	L	A	K	E	I	C	O	N	V	A	X	E	L									
S	P	R	I	N	G	E	R	S	P	A	N	I	E	L								
T	S	P			F	A	R	E		M	U	S	T	Y								
					F	A	Z	E		C	R	E	E									
					F	A	L	L	M	A	D	L	I	N	L	O	V	E				
					I	L	I	U	M		L	A	T		T	R	A	N				
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						N	A	N		F	A	R	M		R	A	I	S	E			
						D	R	A		C	O	N	I	A	N		W	I	N	T	E	R
							R	U	D	D		O	I	L	I							
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							S	U	M	M	E	R		T	I	M	E	B	L	U	E	S
							C	R	A	P		I	O	T	A		R	E	A	V	E	
							I	O	N	S		P	E	E	L		A	I	M	E	R	

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

4

in 10 Americans are afraid of walking alone at night within a mile of their home.

80

percent of genetic information found in humans is identical to that found in cows.

741

consecutive weeks is how long Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* album was on the Billboard charts from 1973 to 1988.

11,000


amendments to the US Constitution have been proposed during its 229-year history, only 27 have been ratified.

20 million

years is how long it has been since tapirs, the most primitive large mammals in the world, evolved substantially.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Promthep sunset. Photo by Jupit Donoso

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

This week in history

March 3, 1938

Oil is discovered in Saudi Arabia.

March 4, 1899

Cyclone Mahina sweeps in north of Cooktown, Queensland, with a 12-metre (39ft) wave that reaches up to 5 kilometres (3.1 mi) inland, killing over 300.

March 5, 1872

George Westinghouse patents the air brake.

March 6, 1836

Battle of the Alamo: After a 13-day siege by an army of 3,000 Mexican troops, the 187 Texas volunteers, including frontiersman Davy Crockett and Colonel Jim Bowie, defending the Alamo are killed and the fort is captured.

March 7, 321 AD


Emperor Constantine I decrees that the Dies Solis Invicti (sun-day) is the day of rest in the Empire.

March 8, 2014

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, carrying a total of 239 people, disappears en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

March 9, 141 BC

Liu Che, posthumously known as Emperor Wu of Han, assumes the throne over the Han dynasty of China.



The missing aircraft, 9M-MRO in December 2011. Photo: Laurent Errera

Source: *Wikipedia*

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MON

6 MAR

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International Women's Day

Lunch 2023

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-we must focus on our wellbeing

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Wednesday 8th March 2023

11:30 to 14:30

Donation: 1,500 BAHT NET

Contact: tina@phukethasbeengoodtous.org

International Women's Day Lunch – Wednesday, 8th March 2023
Join us for the International Women's Day Lunch at the Four Points by Sheraton Phuket Patong Beach Resort. Connect with like-minded guests and find motivation from inspirational speakers. Share your experiences and your ideas to inspire and stimulate

the focus on our well-being: Our Health is Our Wealth. Embracing equity is about recognizing all of the factors that feed into women being disadvantaged and under pressure, then finding ways to share the load and provide support. Our health is truly our wealth and we must focus on our wellness. Let us pledge to dismantle gender stereotyping and forge a world where we support women to put themselves first and to believe in themselves. We ask both women and men to join us by making a donation of 1,500 Thai Baht to book your seat or a table of 10 for 15,000 Thai Baht. To reserve a ticket please contact Tina at tina@phukethasbeengoodtous.org Thank you so much to our amazing supporters: The Australian Consulate-General Phuket, Four Points by Sheraton Phuket Patong Beach Resort and The Phuket News. Tina@phukethasbeengoodtous.org Tina Hall.

THU

16 MAR

SKÅL PHUKET

INTERNATIONAL

Connecting Tourism Globally

Skål International Phuket Dinner at SAii Laguna Resort
Host Bart Callens, Skalleague and GM of SAii Laguna Resort Phuket, has organised the ultimate shared dining experience: a multi-course Lebanese Mezza meal. Sunset drinks start at 18:00 Location: SAii Laguna Resort, Bangtao Beach (private room). Dress code: Smart Casual, tropical style. More info - facebook.com/SkalPhuket

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46TH PRESIDENT CUP 2023 AT PHUKET COUNTRY CLUB

The Phuket Golf Association held their 46th President Cup Golf tournament on Feb 25, a sold out event with 144 golfers across 3 flights and a shot gun 12 noon start. An Audi Q3 was up for grabs for a hole in one on hole 14, although no one succeeded. A very well organised day of great golf and networking, with the prize-giving dinner stretching late into evening.



PHUKET RENOVATION EXHIBITION 2023

Held Feb 23 - 26 at Central Phuket Floresta, with over 1000 renovation product items on display, showing that Phuket is certainly open for business. On display at the trade show were supplies and technology to renovate, build and maintain hotels, condos, villas, restaurants, pubs, bars, cafes, bakeries, catering service businesses and tourism and services.

Vu wins LPGA Thailand in nail-biting climax

GOLF

AMERICAN LILIA VU snatched the LPGA Thailand trophy from Thai rookie Natthakritta Vongtavealap, scoring a one-shot victory after a helter-skelter final round last Sunday (Feb 26).

The Californian had realistically only been in contention for a top-five finish as players teed off in gusty headwinds at the Siam Country Club in Pattaya but carded an eight-under-par final round of 64 to win.

Natthakritta, 20, had also hit a 64 in Saturday's third round to maintain the tournament lead but the title slipped from her grasp with a one-under closing round of 71.

Vu's fortunes changed at the eighth hole, where she hit the first of five consecutive birdies.

That set up the 25-year-old for a winning 22-under-par total of 266, her first Rolex LPGA tour victory that came with prize money of \$255,000 (B9 million).



Lilia Vu. Photo: AFP

It was a bitter end to a stellar performance for Natthakritta, who came out of relative obscurity after receiving a tournament invitation from a sponsor.

She had grabbed a shock lead by the halfway point of the tournament with successive rounds of 65 and 64 in front of enthusiastic local supporters.

Natthakritta started six shots clear of Vu, and two ahead of her nearest rival, compatriot Attaya Thitikul, but intense nerves betrayed her on a scorecard that included four bogeys and a double bogey.

Attaya, a former world number one and runner-up in the 2021 tournament, finished third after a final-round 68. *AFP*

Formula One returns with a record-breaking season

FORMULA ONE

AFP

The 2023 F1 season begins in Bahrain this weekend (Mar 3-5), with the 23-race championship the longest in the series' 73-year history.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen will be targeting a third consecutive world title having won 15 of 22 races last season to finish on 454 points, 146 ahead of second-place Charles Leclerc of Ferrari.

Verstappen is an odds-on shot with the bookies for a three-peat, with Red Bull at comparably skinny odds to win the constructors title again.

Their silver-arrows blunted, dethroned eight-time constructors champions Mercedes, seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, and the prodigiously gifted George Russell are back in black livery meaning business.

Team chief Toto Wolff described last term as "character building", as his team more than any other struggled to cope with the new ground effect rules. The capricious W13 car has been given pride of place in reception at their UK home "to remind us every single day how difficult it can be" said Wolff.

Hamilton, 38, approaching his 17th year in the fast lane, is as hungry as he has ever been, and is in the process of negotiating a new contract with the team



Red Bull's Max Verstappen, seen here during testing in Bahrain on Feb 23, will be targeting a third consecutive world title this season. Photo: AFP

he is backing to supply him with a record eighth world drivers crown.

As for Ferrari, they had a car to match Red Bull but were time and again let down by reliability and questionable strategy on raceday, with team principal Mattia Binotto paying the price.

Under his successor Fred Vasseur, Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz will be out to exploit their car's evident speed to knock Verstappen off his pedestal. Between them they annexed 12 pole positions to Red Bull's eight in 2022, but only four wins to Verstappen's and Sergio Perez's total of 17.

The Chinese Grand Prix is missing for a fourth straight season, while the

Russian-invasion of Ukraine keeps Sochi off the roster. It's also au revoir to the French Grand Prix, first staged in 1906 and as such the oldest in F1's history, although Las Vegas makes its debut as a venue and there is also a return to Qatar this season.

The number of sprint races, first introduced in 2021, has doubled to six.

The cost cap limit on how much teams can spend on their cars (other than the engine) throughout the season has been set at US\$135 million (B4.7 billion), with the FIA audit office calculators at the ready to divvy up the accounts and hand out penalties, including points, for significant breaches of over 5%.

Where to eat in PHUKET

March/April 2023 issue



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Australian women cricketers hailed as among greatest ever

CRICKET

AUSTRALIA'S ALL-conquering women cricketers were hailed as among the greatest sporting teams the country has ever produced after winning yet another Twenty20 World Cup.

Meg Lanning's side beat hosts South Africa by 19 runs at Newlands in Cape Town last Sunday (Feb 26) to lift the trophy for a sixth time in the last seven tournaments.

"Don Bradman had the Invincibles. Meg Lanning has the Immortals" said *The Australian* newspaper.

Australia were already reigning 50-over World Cup champions and they won the inaugural Commonwealth Games gold medal last year.

"It's a spectacular achievement and one that has been criminally underappreciated in recent weeks," the broadsheet added.

"For this Australian team not to be nominated for the Laureus World Sports Awards is a disgrace and



Champions! Photo: AFP

makes a mockery of the once-prestigious awards."

The England women's football side has been nominated for this year's Laureus team award, along with five others, including the French men's rugby team and Formula One's Red Bull. But Lanning's world-beaters were overlooked.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* lauded them as one of the all-time greats.

"They've played in a way that has changed the status and perception of women's cricket forever," it said.

"It's almost impossible to deny that when everything that matters is taken into account – achievement, grace, inspiration to a generation and social impact – they've put more stakes in

the ground than any other."

Lanning has now led the team to five titles at ICC tournaments, with Sunday's triumph adding to her previous wins as skipper in 2014, 2018 and 2020, and the 2022 one-day World Cup victory in New Zealand.

Overall, she has been part of seven World Cup-winning teams.

Opener Beth Mooney, whose unbeaten 74 set up the victory over South Africa, said Lanning should be considered one of the finest leaders in world sport.

"When Meg retires – hopefully not for a few more years – I think she'll go down as one of the greatest leaders not just in cricket, but in sport, and just generally as well," she said. *AFP*

Gunners down Foxes as Man City pick off Cherries

FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal managed to overcome tough opposition at Leicester City last Saturday (Feb 25) to maintain their title chase, as Manchester City maintained their pursuit of the Gunners by thrashing Bournemouth 4-1.

Gabriel Martinelli was the match-winner for Arsenal at the King Power stadium in a game dominated by the visitors.

“For the amount of time we dominated ball possession, territory and the amount of situations we had in the final third, we should have created much more and scored more goals,” said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta.

“When you don’t, you have to be exceptional in your defensive work and we conceded one shot. Defensively we were outstanding.”

Bukayo Saka had a second goal ruled out for offside as Arsenal failed to turn their domination into a more convincing scoreline.

At time of press, Arsenal had the chance to extend their lead as they were set to host Everton on Wednesday (Mar 1).

Defending champions City put Bournemouth to the sword to cut the gap at the top back to two points.

Julian Alvarez, Erling Haaland and



Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli scores the winning goal against Leicester City. Photo: AFP

Phil Foden were all on target for Pep Guardiola’s men before half-time.

Alvarez’s shot was then turned into his own net by Chris Mepham at the start of the second half.

But City have now gone six games without a clean sheet as Jefferson Lerma netted a consolation for the Cherries, who drop into the relegation zone.

Tottenham consolidated fourth place with a 2-0 win against Chelsea, with Oliver Skipp and Harry Kane on the scoresheet.

The defeat increased the pressure on Chelsea boss Graham Potter whose side have now won just two of their last 15 top-flight matches and sit 14 points off the Champions League places.

Elsewhere Liverpool struggled in a poor 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace and now remain six points adrift of fourth-placed Spurs.

Leeds won the battle of the bottom two by beating Southampton 1-0 in new manager Javi Gracia’s first game in charge, with Junior Firpo netting the crucial winner 13 minutes from time.

Fellow strugglers West Ham scored four goals in the final 20 minutes to potentially save David Moyes’ job in a 4-0 win over Nottingham Forest.

According to reports, Moyes faced the sack if the Hammers lost but two goals in three minutes from Danny Ings and further strikes from Declan Rice and Michail Antonio sealed West Ham’s second league win since October.

Everton slipped back into the drop zone after losing 2-0 at home to Aston Villa.

Ollie Watkins’ penalty and Emi Buendia’s strike condemned Sean Dyche to a first home defeat since taking charge of the Toffees.



Photo: AFP

Manchester United end six-year trophy drought

FOOTBALL

MANCHESTER UNITED clinched their first major trophy for six years with a ruthless 2-0 win against Newcastle in the League Cup final at Wembley last Sunday (Feb 26).

Erik ten Hag’s side took control by half-time thanks to Casemiro’s header and a Sven Botman own goal and held firm despite Newcastle’s second-half pressure.

United’s first silverware since 2017, when they won the League Cup and the Europa League in the Jose Mourinho era, was just reward for a mature display that underlined the impressive work done by Dutchman Ten Hag since he arrived from Ajax last year.

The celebrations that accompanied United’s sixth League Cup triumph could be

the first of many trophy parades on the evidence of Ten Hag’s transformative first season.

“You have to win the first one and that is what we did today,” Ten Hag said.

“We can get a lot of inspiration from this and more confidence that we can do it.

“We are still at the start of restoring Manchester United to where we belong – winning trophies.”

United remain challengers on three other fronts, sitting third in the Premier League, still in the FA Cup and with a Europa League last 16 tie against Real Betis in March.

After 10 years in the wilderness since Alex Ferguson retired having led them to their last Premier League title in 2013, United are finally emerging from one of the darkest periods in the club’s illustrious history. AFP

Ireland stay on course for Six Nations Grand Slam

RUGBY

IRELAND REMAINED on course for a first Grand Slam since 2018 with a hard-fought 34-20 win away to Italy last Saturday (Feb 25).

The Irish have been rightly lauded for the quality of their rugby under coach Andy Farrell on the way to topping the world rankings.

But another aspect of that rise was on show in Rome against a much-improved Italy – strength in depth.

Ireland were without seven frontline players yet it was still their bench that made a key difference at the Stadio Olimpico, with replacement scrum-half Conor Murray sending in Mack Hansen for the visitors’ fifth and decisive try.

Substitute forwards Tom O’Toole and Ryan Baird also made their presence felt after coming on in the 36th and 52nd minutes of a thrilling contest.

Elsewhere, England may well have enjoyed a more comfortable success against



Ireland's Hugo Keenan scores a try. Photo: AFP

Wales in Cardiff than their eventual 20-10 triumph had not captain Owen Farrell endured a torrid time off the kicking tee.

The fly-half missed four of his six attempts, a squandering of points that meant the game was still in the balance until centre Ollie Lawrence scored the third of England’s three tries five minutes from time at the Principality Stadium.

Farrell’s kicking form appears to have declined since he suffered an ankle injury last year.

Nevertheless, in a low-scoring contest, Farrell proved his worth in defence by making 17 tackles and contributing to four turno-

vers – a reminder there is more to his game than goal-kicking.

France kept their slim hopes of retaining the Six Nations alive with a 32-21 win against Scotland.

An impressive performance and ability to hold on and then claim a bonus point against the in-form visitors highlighted France’s credentials for the Rugby World Cup on home soil in September.

It also places them in good stead for the trip to England on Mar 11, which has not been a happy hunting ground for Les Bleus.

The last time France won in the Six Nations at Twickenham was in 2005. AFP



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THE FAB ONE

‘Wonder Boy’ wins Bantamweight title

An emotional Fabricio Andrade with the Bantamweight belt. Photo: ONE Championship



MMA

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After five gruelling years on the island, training with some of the world’s top fighting talent, Phuket-based Fabricio Andrade has finally laid claim to the ONE Championship Bantamweight title.

The 25-year-old Brazilian made his mark in one of the top fight promotions on the planet with a stirring performance in the main event of ‘ONE Fight Night 7’ in Bangkok’s famed Lumpinee Stadium last Saturday (Feb 25) against his fellow countryman John ‘Hands of Stone’ Lineker (35-10) to take his record to 9-2.

The visible results of Andrade’s performance were seen on his op-

ponent’s face, as Lineker’s coaches threw in the towel just after the fourth round due to their fighter’s inability to keep his eyes open.

As the referee waved his hands in the air to bring an end to the fight, Andrade celebrated and jumped onto the corner of the ring, much to the delight of the thousands in attendance.

Andrade, who has called Phuket his home for just over five years, is now the fifth bantamweight champion in the 65kg weight classification since the inception of ONE Championship in 2011. The win is a sweet ending to a two-fight saga with Lineker after their first title fight was declared a ‘no contest’ due to an illegal knee strike to the groin at ‘ONE on Prime Video 3’ in October of last year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

“I have no words to explain what

this means to me,” Andrade said through tears of joy after he was awarded the title. “It’s been just such a long journey, so many hard things that I’ve been through in my life, with the dream to get here and become the world champion – and to be able to change my life and my family’s life, it’s unbelievable, I don’t know how to explain what I’m feeling right now.”

‘A STEP AHEAD’

Andrade, who fights out of Chalong’s Tiger Muay Thai and MMA Training Camp, was able to win the title in the seventh fight for the promotion, and his 11th overall. ‘Wonder Boy’ made his debut for ONE Championship in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, back in July 2020, with a victory over Mark Abelardo, also in Bangkok.

In the win over Lineker, Andrade

was simply a step ahead in almost every exchange and was able to throw a variety of attacks – from knee strikes up the middle to hard counterstrikes and kicks. Andrade had Lineker on wobbly legs at the end of the first round following a strong right hand to the head.

However, unlike their first meeting in October, in which Andrade was able to clearly land a hail of punches, Lineker stayed composed. In the ensuing rounds of Saturday’s fight, he was hunting for Andrade’s head, and clearly showed a willingness to give as much as he took. Ultimately, Andrade’s attacks were too much and Lineker’s corner brought an end to the fight before the final round.

Still, Andrade gave credit where it was due.

“The first fight [Lineker] was scared, but this fight, he came to

fight,” Andrade stated. “As you can see I got a lot of damage. It was a good fight, and he made it difficult work to hold this belt right now.”

But Andrade’s warrior spirit carried him to victory.

“I was like ‘there’s no way I’m walking out here without this belt, I’m going to win this fight, with all costs’ and that’s why I’m so overwhelmed now to be able to hold this belt and be called the world champion right now,” he said.

As for what’s next for the Brazilian, he says he’s ready to defend the title against up-and-coming contender Stephen Loman from the Philippines, who is currently ranked number 2 in the division and is on an 11-fight win streak.

“We already got a contender in line. Loman, you want this, come get it,” Andrade said in his post-fight speech.

Anticipation ahead of cycling’s Tour of Phuket return

CYCLING

AFTER A THREE-YEAR HIATUS due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the popular Tour of Phuket 2023 returns to the island next weekend.

The 7th edition of the highly anticipated cycling event is set to take place on March 10-12, covering the area of both Phuket and Phang Nga provinces and is expected to attract large numbers of both participants and spectators.

The Tour of Phuket is a cycling race showcasing some of the best

cycling athletes from Thailand, Singapore, the USA, Latin America, Australia and numerous other countries from all over the world.

Notable participating cyclists include Australian Professional Ironman Triathlete Dimity-Lee Duke, former Triathlete and World Duathlon Champion Jürgen Zäck from Germany, and Peem Tanadol, a Thailand triathlete champion from Z-Coaching training by Jürgen Zäck.

The teams participating in the Tour of Phuket 2023 include Specialized Dynasty Mavericks, Greyhounds, Matador Racing, Barracudas Phuket and Roojai team, to name



Photo: Cycosports

just a few.

The Tour of Phuket 2023 is organised by Cycosports and this year’s event will see a wide range of leisure

rider participants from Gran Fondo up to the World Champions such as Dimity-Lee Duke and Jürgen Zäck.

The cycling race will be a thrilling experience, showcasing the best cycling scene in the Andaman region, with riders and spectators from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the USA, Latin America, Australia, France, Germany and other countries all enjoying the action.

The organisers confirmed that they expect to have periodical live updates and broadcasts during the three-day event.

The occasion is set to be a highlight on the cycling race calendar for

Thailand with the approval of the Thai Cycling Association and will provide an opportunity for athletes to show their best skills and compete against international athletes in their class.

In a press release on Feb 20, Cycosports said it is proud to host the event and invites sports enthusiasts and fans from all over to join in with the excitement, stating it is an event not to be missed and that they expect to attract an even larger number of participants and spectators next year.

For more information and further details please visit cycosports.com or email: admin@cycosports.com

The Phuket News