

PHUKET OFFICIALS TO TARGET 'BAD FARANG' > PAGE 3

NOW SCOOT!



E-scooters sit lined up across from the iconic Chartered Bank Building in Phuket Old Town. Photo: GCOO

CONCERNS RAISED OVER SAFETY OF E-BIKE, E-SCOOTER PROJECT TARGETING TOURISTS

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A slew of concerns have been raised by commenters online, calling for safety issues be addressed regarding an e-bike and e-scooter service launched late last month.

South Korean company GCOO launched its clean-energy personal transport services in Phuket – with e-bikes and e-scooters now available at key locations on the island, including Patong and Phuket Town – at an event branded 'Phuket Smart Mobility' held at the Chartered Bank Intersection in Phuket Town on Dec 15.

The e-bikes and scooters are operated by Thai Personal Mobility

Co Ltd (TPM), a joint company of GBike Co Ltd (the Thai incorporation of GCOO) along with state-owned National Telecom (NT) and Thai company Dhipaya Insurance.

The aim of the project is to promote the use of clean-energy transportations, starting with tourist areas in the country.

Supang 'Lee' Eawpadung, Chief of GCOO's Southern Regional Office, explained, "There 100 bikes in Phuket Town, 100 bikes at Patong Beach, 30 scooters at Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus and 100 scooters at Phuket Rajabhat University have been provided."

"We have provided bikes in public areas and scooters in private areas of university... Kata, Karon and Kamala

beach are our next service areas," Ms Supang added.

At the launch event last Friday were Phuket Vice Governor Satha Thongkham along with NT President Col Sanphachai Huvanandana, Dhipaya Insurance Executive Vice President Suphap Pradabkarn and Jongsu Yoon, CEO of GCOO, one of the leading micro-mobility sharing services in Asia.

Mr Jongsu explained, "We are currently experiencing one of the hottest years on record since humanity began observing the weather. Our efforts to reduce carbon emissions have never been more important.

"Experiencing global climate change, more and more cities are embracing micro-mobility as a sus-

tainable transportation option. Micro-mobilities are eco-friendly and among the most energy-efficient transportation modes globally. I am delighted to see Phuket join the micro-mobility wave, taking a significant step toward the Net Zero mission," he added.

Mr Jongsu gave three specific reasons for launching GCOO in Thailand.

"Firstly, Thailand is a leading country in ASEAN with excellent citizens. A key factor for the success of micro-mobility sharing services is a high level of civic awareness, especially regarding the environment, and Thailand is excellent in this aspect," he said.

"Secondly, it is a country with a stable communication network and...

NEWS PAGE 2

Club bouncers to beef up Bangla security



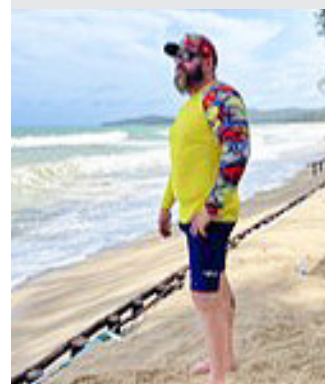
LIFE PAGE 7

Baz discovers the art of 'Slow Cycling'



SPORT PAGE 11

Todd to swim around Phuket to help kids



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News



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'E-scooters' launch spurs safety concerns

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...reliable insurance services. We are honoured to collaborate with Thailand's leading telecom company, NT, and the top insurance company, Dhipaya," he added.

"Personal mobility sharing services, combining personalised eco-friendly transportation with the latest communication technology, and most importantly, backed by robust insurance, are crucial for ensuring users' safety.

"If telecommunication is unstable, we cannot guarantee service quality, and without insurance, we cannot guarantee our users' safety. Therefore, with NT's developed telecommunication infrastructure and Dhipaya's insurance services, we can focus more on our mission, Net Zero," Mr Jongsu explained.

"Lastly, but personally, Thailand is a special country in my heart because my wife was born in Thailand and spent her childhood in Bangkok. We came to Phuket for our honeymoon, creating unforgettable memories. I am very glad to contribute to ensuring that this beautiful island, Phuket, can



Tourist Police join the launch with an e-bike of their own. Photo: Phuket City Municipality

preserve its stunning natural beauty forever," he said.

Ms Surapong explained to *The Phuket News*, "The e-bikes and e-scooters use Internet of Things (IoT) technology linked via NT's 5G network for tracking 24/7 to prevent the bikes and scooters from being stolen. We also use geofencing to limit our service areas."

In addition to tracking the where-

abouts of the bikes and scooters, the IoT links with the bikes and scooters also allow GCOO's vehicle management platform to monitor aspects such as battery levels and usage patterns in order to determine which areas need which types of vehicles.

NT President Col Sanphachai explained the wireless connectivity with the vehicles was through NT's 5G 700MHz framework. NT

obtained the 700MHz spectrum licence through CAT Telecom, which participated in the 5G spectrum licence auction held in February 2020. NT acquired the spectrum licence through the merger of CAT and TOT that created the state enterprise NT in January 2021.

Dhipaya Insurance Executive Vice President Ms Suphap noted, "Dhipaya Insurance joining this project allows us to provide life insurance coverage from accidents, including medical expenses, to people who use the e-bikes and scooters."

ABOUT FACE

The dangers of using e-bikes, and especially e-scooters, in Phuket were highlighted last year, when officials at Provincial Hall started using them to determine how safe they were.

In February last year, Phuket police banned electric scooters from all public roads in Phuket after police seized four electric scooters being ridden by tourists on the streets of Patong.

People caught riding electric scooters on public roads were liable to a fine of up to B10,000 following

an order issued by the then Phuket Provincial Police Commander, Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong.

People caught riding electric scooters on public roads also could be charged with operating a vehicle without a valid licence under Section 64 of the same act, as no licence exists for operating electric scooters, as they are not recognised as vehicles by the Department of Land Transport and hence cannot be registered, Maj Gen Sermphan said in the order.

The penalty for operating a vehicle without a licence is up to six months' imprisonment or a fine of up to B9,000, or both, Maj Gen Sermphan added.

However, Maj Gen Sermphan did ask officers to issue warnings first before moving to press formal charges. He also explained to police that the law applied to public roads only.

"Electric scooters may be used in parks, but not on the roads" he said.

Phuket police have yet to publicly declare their current stance on the order issued by Maj Gen Sermphan last year.

Bangla bolstered by 117 'volunteer guards'

TOURIST POLICE HAVE CERTIFIED 117 'volunteer guards' who underwent training last week to help bolster security on Bangla Rd now that nightlife venues in the area have been granted 4am closing.

The training and the use of 'volunteer guards', namely nightlife venue security staff, comes under the Strong Tourism Community (STC) project rolled out by Tourist Police Commander Lt Gen Saksira Phueakam, Phuket Tourist Police explained in a post online.

"Bangla Rd is one of 10 pilot areas where security staff at entertainment venues play an important role in maintaining safety for tourists, and if the guard has working standard as well as having a service mind, we will be able to build a lot of confidence among tourists," Phuket Tourist Police noted.

Similar projects are being carried out by Tourist Police in 'Walking Street' areas popular with tourists, including the famed Walking Street in Pattaya.

The training, held at the Patong Resort Hotel on Dec 26, was provided by officers and personnel from the Royal Thai Army and the Tourist Police, and was joined by Ratchadaphon O-in, head of the Phuket office of the Ministry Tourism & Sports, and Patong Deputy Mayors Sanakorn Keesin and Lalita Maneesri.

Also present were Patong Police Commander Pol Col Chalermchai Hersawat as well as officials from Patong Municipality and representatives of the Patong Entertainment Business Association (PEBA), whose hundreds of members include owners and



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

operators of nightlife venues on Bangla Rd.

The 117 'volunteer guards' received training in: being a good host; providing assistance and tactical guidelines for maintaining safety for tourists; and first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Certificates were awarded to all volunteers who passed the training. Tourist Police Division 3 have also created a Line chat group called "Soi Bangla Volunteer Guards" to serve as a network for operations so the volunteers can work together, inform each other of incidents and coordinate quickly, Phuket Tourist Police explained in their post.

The aim of the volunteer guards participating in the training was "to create confidence among them so they know and understand their role and duty of being a good host in helping to take care of the safety of tourists in Soi Bangla", the Phuket Tourist Police added.

The post included the hashtag #บางลาต้องปลอดภัย (#Bangla must be safe).

The Phuket News



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Phuket 'visa extensions' go online

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Foreigners in Phuket staying in Thailand on one of any 12 types of visas are now allowed to apply for extensions to stay via an online portal, Pol Lt Gen Itthiphon Itthisanronnchai, Commissioner of the Immigration Bureau, announced during his visit to Phuket last week.

Lt Gen Itthiphon made the announcement while on the island on Dec 25 to promote the Immigration Bureau's current efforts to help facilitate tourists entering the country for the New Year holidays, and those wanting to stay.

As part of his visit, Lt Gen Itthiphon inspected the operations of the Immigration officers stationed at Phuket International Airport to ensure they were ready for the anticipated influx of tourists for the coming New Year holidays.

"Convenient, fast, safe, impressive", is the motto behind the inspections, Lt Gen Itthiphon noted.

"Phuket is the main tourist area in the upper southern region which the government gives importance to. In addition, Mr Srettha Thavisin, the Prime Minister, has a policy of waiving visas for tourists from certain countries, such as China and India, resulting in an increased influx of tourists, especially during important festivals," Lt Gen



Pol Lt Gen Itthiphon Itthisanronnchai in Phuket last week. Photo: PR Phuket

Itthiphon said.

"This will result in Thailand's tourism industry getting better and better. For example, the highest number of incoming tourists traveling through Phuket Airport during December 2023 are from Russia with an average of 3,600 people per day, followed by China with an average of 1,500 people per day, the United Kingdom with an average of 780 people per day and India with an average of 720 people per day," he said.

Phuket expected to see some 350,000 tourists arrive via the airport during December, he added.

"The Immigration Bureau therefore must prepare to support facilitation along with screening for prohibited groups of people not being able to infiltrate [the country]

and commit crimes in the country," Lt Gen Itthiphon said.

After his inspection at Phuket airport, Lt Gen Itthiphon joined an event at the main Phuket Immigration Office in Phuket Town, where he revealed that online applications for so-called 'visa extensions' (extensions to stay) will be available for foreigners staying on 12 types of visas.

According to a post online by Phuket Immigration, Lt Gen Itthiphon explained that "in addition to increasing service potential, such as visa extensions for tourists, the Immigration Bureau has created the E-Extension Visa project, which provides visa extension services via the internet for tourists, who can submit documents and make an appointment before bringing your

passport in to receive a stamp granting permission to extend your visa.

"This will reduce the steps, and the duration of service can be greatly improved," he said.

According to the post by Phuket Immigration, now shared by a variety of local government agencies, the 'E-Extension Visa' service is "currently available at Immigration Bureau 1 (Bangkok), Immigration Offices in Chonburi, Phuket, and Chiang Mai, providing services for 12 types of visas such as tourist visas, teachers, etc."

However, Phuket Immigration at time of press had yet to announce any details of the 'E-Extension' service available for foreigners in Phuket, or post a notice announcing the new service on the Phuket Immigration official website.

YEAR TRIAL

The 'E-Extension' service was initially in November last year as a 'trial' for foreigners staying on 12 types of visas – but at the time of launch only available for foreigners staying in Bangkok.

The online service is provided in partnership with VFS GLOBAL, which is the authorised partner for the UK Government to receive passport applications from British citizens.

The Immigration Bureau has since carried the notice "Apply for Electronic Extension of Thailand Visa" on the home page of its main national website.

However, VFS Global notes 13 categories of foreigners who can apply online to extend their stay. Among the categories of foreigners are those who tourists, teachers working at government schools and those performing other work for the government, people working in mass media, people enrolled to study at government educational institutions, and family members of a Thai residence – specifically explained as "only for family member of a foreigner (not Thai nationality) who has residence certificate and alien registration certificate of the alien granted residence permit in Thailand".

See the full list of categories at <https://thaiaextension.vfsevisa.com/document-information>.

Phuket officials to target 'bad farang'

POL LT GEN ITTHIPHON ITTISANRONNACHAI, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Police Immigration Bureau, in Phuket on Dec 26, called for Phuket officials to establish a task force to identify 'bad foreigners' so that the Immigration Bureau can help to deal with them.

After staying overnight on the island, Lt Gen Itthiphon presided over a meeting joined by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat and a host of government agency heads, and leading representatives from Phuket's tourism and business community.

The meeting was touted as held "to brainstorm ideas to build a strong Phuket city, ready to receive tourists impressively".

Present at the meeting were Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO); Rear Admiral Suchat Thammapitakwet, Commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Naval Area; as well as Phuket Town Deputy Mayor Prasit Sinsawaphak, the Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office, the head of the Phuket Provincial Labour Office, and of course senior local Immigration officers.

"Phuket is an important province with many tourists arriving, especially during this period when Mr Settha Thavisin, the Prime Minister, has a policy to open 'Free Visas' to attract tourists from many countries such as China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan and Taiwan. Therefore, we would like to come and listen to problems from all sectors to integrate and solve problems quickly and comprehensively,"



Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat confirmed the task force will be set up. Photo: PR Phuket

Pol Lt Gen Itthiphon said, according to an official report of the meeting.

"We must help control bad people so they do not spoil the image of tourism," Lt Gen Itthiphon said.

"In terms of the security of the province, I would like Phuket Province [the Phuket provincial government] to have a working group to identify foreigners whose behaviour is a danger to society," he said.

"We can provide support information, and the Immigration Bureau can consider revoking permission to stay in the Kingdom," he added.

In concluding the meeting, Phuket Governor Sophon Suwanarat thanked Lt Gen Itthiphon for his visit, and confirmed that a subcommittee will be set up to consider and screen the stay of foreigners in the Kingdom.

The subcommittee is "to be a mechanism for driving the control and screening of foreigners who cause chaos, affecting the tourism image of Phuket province", Governor Sophon noted. *The Phuket News*

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Boat show returns in style

ADVERTORIAL

From the latest luxury yachts to superyachts, private jets and more, the 2024 Thailand International Boat Show will showcase the country's marine leisure lifestyle and luxury credentials

Showcasing a multi-billion baht line up of luxury yachts, superyachts, private jets and more, the Thailand International Boat Show A Luxury Lifestyle Event is set to boost Phuket's economy and high-end tourism with thousands of High Net Worth Individuals expected to attend the show and generate a minimum of 500 million baht for the Thai marine leisure and luxury lifestyle industries.

With many boats and lifestyle brands exhibiting from around the world, organisers JAND Events aim to grow Phuket's appeal as a destination for investment and business amongst the international community, while also working closely with the Thai government and industry stakeholders to drive yacht tourism and cement Thailand's position as Southeast Asia's leisure marine hub.

"The response to the 2024 Thailand International Boat Show A Luxury Lifestyle Event has been excellent. We have increased the in-water space to accommodate brokers and brands and will have a wide range of luxury boats of all sizes upto superyachts at the show. We have also seen considerable growth in the number of luxury brands and businesses exhibiting. The show has become a platform that will not only drive sales and business for the marine and luxury industries, but also attract international investors who are keen to do business and live in Phuket," commented David Hayes, CEO of organisers JAND Event.



New innovations for the 2024 show include the inaugural Thailand Yachting Conference - a B2B platform for ideas exchange amongst local and international business people - and the Robb Report Thailand Best Of The Best Yachting Awards Gala - a celebration of the best yachts and brands.

Billed as the biggest boat show in Thailand, organisers are also leading the way in sustainable business practices. By reducing the show's environmental footprint and carbon offsetting, the Thailand International Boat Show A Luxury Lifestyle Event is the first show of its kind to be carbon neutral.

In the water, Boat Lagoon Yachting will be displaying three Princess Yachts amongst a number of other brands at the show with the highlight being the Princess Y95 - the largest boat showing for the first time in Thailand.

Simpson Marine has the largest in-water line-up with six boats including a Sanlorenzo SX76, Lagoon

51 and Fairline Targa 45, amongst others while Derani Yachts will be displaying three boats from the popular Axopar brand as well as the striking Brabus Shadow 500 Cabin and a Greenline 40.

Other boat brokers with boats in-the-water include Asia Marine, Asia Yacht Agency, Asia Yachting, Extreme Marine (Thailand), Go Boating, Lee Marine, Leopard Catamarans, Northrop & Johnson, The Yacht Sales Co and V Yachts Asia.

Complementing the in-water display is a wide range of marine businesses and products, and services from the luxury lifestyle sector who will be exhibiting onshore. Exhibiting in the new purpose-built air-conditioned exhibition space are A. & Marine, Aqua Air Asia, ASA Group, Cholamark Boat, Flexiteek, FLS Yachts, Hull Co. Ltd, Marine Services Asia, Nava by Thaicom, Nespresso, Octopus Electrical Service, Royal Phuket Marina, SEA Yacht Sales, Siam Legal (Thailand) and Thailand Privilege. On the

boardwalk at Royal Phuket Marina are AMI Marine International, Aoy's Hoy Oyster Bar, Disabled Sailing Thailand, Entropy Solar, Hilda Loe Associates, SEABOB, Torqeedo Asia Pacific and UWC International School.

The place to be and be seen in January each year, the Thailand International Boat Show is known for its social activities. From jazz on the boardwalk and live DJ performances, to alfresco dining and oysters, there's plenty to see and do, day and night. And on Children's Day (13th January) there'll be a range of activities for the youngest family members ensuring there's something for all at the 2024 Thailand International Boat Show.

The Thailand International Boat Show A Luxury Lifestyle Event will be held 11-14 January, 2024 at Royal Phuket Marina and is open daily from 13:00 - 20:00 except on Sunday 14th January when the show closes at 19:00. For more information, visit www.thailandinternationalboatshow.com.

Class Act Media wins APAC Insider awards

CLASS ACT MEDIA AND IMAGE asia have been bestowed the award 'Most Comprehensive Print & Online Regional New Media Company 2023 - Thailand' at the UK-based APAC Insider Business Awards 2023.

The Phuket News was also awarded 'Most Comprehensive Media Outlet 2023 - Southern Thailand' in the 'South East Asia Business Awards' category.

The Phuket News, and its sister newspapers Thai-language *Khao Phuket* and Russian-language *Novosti Phuket*, are published by Class Act Media, in print and online.



The Class Act Media house is also home to the popular Live 89.5 radio station broadcasting across the island and JP Mestanza's Phuket News TV 'Phuket Xtra' video reports. The IMAGE asia brand, under the same media ownership, produces the popular *Window on Phuket* magazine and the

Where to Eat in Phuket dining guide.

Class Act Media & IMAGE asia General Manager Jason Beavan commented on receiving the awards, "Very special to be nominated and win again this year. Congratulations goes to our team, you continue to deliver quality news and media products to the Phuket community. It is fantastic to work with you all."

The Phuket News and Class Act Media / IMAGE asia have performed well in the APAC Insider awards over the years.

In the previous awards for 2022, Class Act Media and IMAGEasia were bestowed two accolades. Image

Asia/Class Act Media was bestowed 'Most Outstanding News & Information Business - Phuket' while The Phuket News was awarded 'Leading Provider of Digital News & Information - Southern Thailand'.

The Phuket News was recognised for its news service by being awarded the 'Best Online News Platform 2022' in APAC Insider's 'South East Asia Business Awards'.

In 2021, Class Act Media and IMAGE asia were recognised in the annual APAC Insider Business Awards by being bestowed the accolade 'Most Outstanding Small Local Business - Phuket'. The Phuket News

PM to revise 20-year plan

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The administration of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin is set to revise the 20-year national strategy laid down by the previous government, saying it should be made more flexible and keep up with a fast-changing world.

Mr Srettha told a national strategy committee meeting on Dec 27 that he does not believe in planning too far ahead, especially for a national pathway that hinges on an outlook spanning 20 years.

"These days it's hard to even plan five years down the road," he said at the meeting held at Government House which was also attended by House Speaker Wan Muhamad Noor Matha, Senate Speaker Pornpetch Wichitcholchai and senior officials, including the defence permanent secretary.

The existing strategy was implemented on Oct 8, 2018, under previous prime minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and his administration. The strategy remains in effect until 2037 and is built on a vision of making the country secure, prosperous, sustainable and achieving developed country status. The strategy is guided by the sufficiency principle set out by the late King Rama IX.

Subsequent governments are bound by the strategy to lift people's well-being, increase the country's competitiveness through economic development and better income distribution, improve human resources, create social equality, maintain



Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin chairs a meeting on the national strategy at Government House on Dec 27. Photo: Government House

ecological diversity and environmental sustainability and achieve effective state management.

However, the junta-promoted charter's 20-year national strategic plan is widely criticised as a tool to continue junta policies into the future. With a fast-changing world, the long-term plan is accused of being too rigid due to its enshrinement in law and prone to becoming outdated and blocking new development ideas.

Mr Srettha said the plan needs to change with time. New technology and trends dictate a rethinking of priorities in formulating government policies, he said.

"Take clean energy, for example.

During my trips overseas, this is the very first issue people brought to the table for talks," he said.

Also, the world's geopolitical landscape is being reshaped by conflicts such as the growing trade friction between China and the US and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Srettha stressed the need to fine-tune strategies to reflect the evolving environment. The key is to make them impervious to change so the country's future does not move on a fixed course.

"We don't want future generations in the next 20 years to be tied to the ideas of older people. They should be free to choose the direction in which to steer strategy."



Photo: NNT

Daily minimum wage hike confirmed

BANGKOK

THAILAND'S NATIONAL wage panel has confirmed to increase the daily minimum wage, with Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin indicating a further hike is anticipated in March.

The Cabinet has recognised the decision of the tripartite wage committee, which proposed raising the daily wage by B2 to B16 across different provinces, despite initial government reservations.

Effective as of Monday (Jan 1) the minimum wage will see an average rise of 2.4%, resulting in wages varying between B330 and B370, based on the province.

This increase follows a 5% rise implemented in October 2022. However, the modest B2 hike for regions like Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat has drawn criticism from the Prime Minister, who expects a more significant increase in

the upcoming March review.

Labour Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn announced plans to establish a sub-committee in the coming month to deliberate on new wage rates, targeting an announcement around the Songkran festival in April. The proposed system will consider local wage rates and professional categories, potentially leading to diverse wage structures within the same province.

The subcommittee's deliberations will incorporate insights from various bodies, including the Bank of Thailand and the National Economic and Social Development Council, with the government planning unit to sanction new rates by the end of March.

This initiative aligns with the ruling Pheu Thai Party's election pledge to elevate the daily minimum wage to B400 by the end of 2023 and ultimately to B600 within their four-year tenure. NNT

Telemedicine scheme for Thais abroad

BANGKOK

THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH has announced it will provide telemedicine services to about a million Thais living abroad under its universal healthcare scheme, Public Health Minister Cholnan Srikaew said on Dec 27.

Mr Cholnan said the policy would allow all Thais access to medical treatment regardless of location.

He said the ministry has been working with the National Health Security Office (NHSO) to consider establishing a telemedicine consultant service for those abroad who don't have access to universal healthcare but who should have the right, Mr Cholnan said.

During the initial phase, the ministry will conduct a pilot test with Thai monks living in India, working with a medical team based in Bodhgaya to care for the monks.

A similar concept will be applied to other countries, which could be done under international law.

The telemedicine service will be operated under the NHSO, Mr Cholnan said.

"We have around one million people who live abroad. Some of them do not have a chance to have medical services. The telemedicine service will help them access better medical healthcare and have primary care by doctors," he said.

The ministry will work with Thai ambassadors overseas to make a list of pharmacy shops that can provide over-the-counter



Cholnan. Photo: Bangkok Post

drugs in each country so Thai patients can purchase drugs after being diagnosed by doctors via the telemedicine service.

Apart from India, the ministry aims to introduce the service in South Korea, Israel, the United States and Japan, he said.

In another development, the ministry announced its success in administering 1.3 million doses of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines to women aged 11-20 within one month.

Mr Cholnan said another success for the ministry is the policy of B30-plus, which is operated under the concept of "One Card for All".

He said people holding the universal healthcare card, known as the gold card, can access any medical services from any hospital under the scheme in four provinces during the first phase. The four provinces are Roi-Et, Phrae, Phetchaburi and Narathiwat.

The ministry also plans to introduce technology to 799 hospitals, turning them into "smart hospitals" next year.

Bangkok Post



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POP QUIZ

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2. Which three US states comprise the New York 'Tri-state area'?
3. Dated to the 11th century, the Bayeux Tapestry features which astronomical phenomenon?
4. 'Rizz', one of the latest words to be officially added to the English language, means what?
5. How long does it take for sunlight to reach Uranus?

Answers below, centre

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

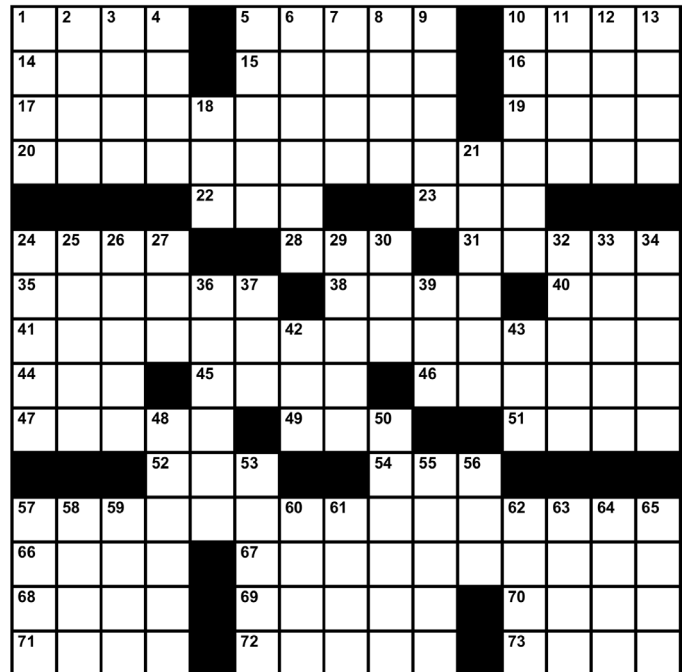
- Across

 1. Fire ____
 5. Lowest deck
 10. Londoner, e.g.
 14. Magic charm
 15. Poet's "below"
 16. Highway division
 17. Give
 19. As soon as
 20. Raleigh resident, for one
 22. "Uh-huh"
 23. Common connector
 24. Huff
 28. Ford Explorer, e.g.
 31. Keisters
 35. Understanding
 38. Like some decrees
 40. Grazing spot
 41. '60s TV series
 44. Windsor, for one
 45. Depressed
 46. On an annual basis
 47. Build on
 49. "That's ____ ..."
 51. Celebrated
 52. Belief system
 54. Attorneys' org.
 57. U.S.-based Christian group
 66. In pain
- Down

 1. Augur
 2. Game on horseback
 3. Cracked
 4. Disoriented
 5. Chilled
 6. Summaries
 7. Animal house?
 8. ____ von Bismarck
 9. Classes
 10. Fair
 11. Indian princess
 12. Ancient Andean
 13. New driver, typically
 18. "____ will be done"
 21. Private
 24. Cone-shaped ornament
 25. Greenfly, e.g.
 26. Mount
 27. Handle clumsily
29. Single
 30. Seven, in ancient Rome
 32. Heads-up
 33. Edison contemporary
 34. Nymph chaser
 36. Block
 37. Building wing
 39. Crafty
 42. Pair
 43. Is no longer
 48. Self-conscious laugh
 50. Play around
 53. Nickel, e.g.
 55. Discloses
 56. Barbary beast
 57. The Beatles' "____ Leaving Home"
 58. River in northeastern England
 59. "Major" animal
 60. Frost-covered
 61. Bills
 62. Crunchy munchie
 63. Sacred image: var.
 64. Hawk
 65. Highchair feature

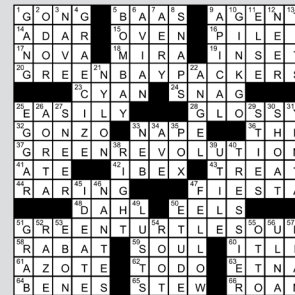
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Capricorn; 2) New York, New Jersey and Connecticut; 3) Halley's Comet; 4) Chastama; 5) 2 hours and 40 minutes



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

0

states in the US have a 40-hour, minimum wage work week that pays enough to afford a two-bedroom apartment.

2.5

days is spent every year by the average American looking for misplaced items.

10

dollars in your pocket and no debt makes you wealthier than 15% of American households.

11,415

sharks are killed every hour by human activities, according to a study by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).

43 billion

US dollars worth of unopened, edible food is thrown out in the US every year.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Peaceful sunset. Photo by Chris Pålman

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

This week in history

Jan 5, 1066

Edward the Confessor, one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England, dies childless, sparking a succession crisis that eventually leads to the Norman conquest of England.

Jan 6, 1929

Mother Teresa arrives in Calcutta, India, to begin her work among India's poorest and sick people.

Jan 7, 2015

Two gunmen commit mass murder at the offices of Charlie

Hebdo in Paris, executing 12 people by gun, and wounding 11 others.

Jan 8, 1297

François Grimaldi, disguised as a monk, leads his men to capture the fortress protecting the Rock of Monaco, establishing his family as the rulers of Monaco.

Jan 9, 2007

Apple CEO Steve Jobs introduces the original iPhone – colloquially known as the 'iPhone 2G' after 2008 – at a



Steve Jobs and the first iPhone. Photo: AFP

Macworld keynote address in San Francisco.

Jan 10, 49 BC

Julius Caesar crosses the

Rubicon river, in northeastern Italy, just south of Ravenna, signalling the start of civil war.

January 11, 532 AD

Nika riots in Constantinople: A quarrel between supporters of different chariot teams – the Blues and the Greens – in the Hippodrome escalates into violence. Nearly half of Constantinople is burned or destroyed and tens of thousands of people are killed in one week of unrest.

Source: Wikipedia

The art of 'Slow Cycling'



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel

baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

Fighting my way through a forest of jostling 'selfie sticks', I hopped off my bike atop Promthep Cape at sunset in order to take in the iconic moment when our great scarlet solar power station dipped below the horizon. The selfie sticks clashed and bristled like febrile insect antennae and a collective explosion of 'influencer' verbal ejaculations ran through the assembled ranks of 'content generators' as the sun finally disappeared for another night.

Is this what modern travel has become? An endless competition to record and communicate into the Internet aether once-in-a-lifetime experiences of beauty and personal rapture in order to let the watching world (if indeed anyone can actually be bothered to follow these myriad gangs of primping 'influencers') know how wonderful their lives are compared to your own dull, pathetic, repetitive slog?

I cycled thoughtfully back down the twisting road to Yanui Beach and plunged into a quiet little local bar overlooking the sands for a well-earned cold one. As I closed my eyes and let the sound-bath of dusk sweep over me, I felt a wave of nostalgia for the quieter, gentler times of bicycle travel which I'd relished so much when I first started cycling around Phuket some 20 years ago.

In those seemingly far-off halcyon days, the roads were so much emptier and laid-back and cycling was much more of a serene pleasure, rather than the grim Darwinian fight for survival which cycling in so much of Phuket has become.



Down the Danube by bike and boat. Photo: Baz Daniel

Sitting in the Yanui gloaming I pulled out my battered copy of Dan Kieran's seminal book *'The Idle Traveller'* and started to quietly read. Kieran was one of the founders of the so-called 'Slow Travel' movement which popularised the ground-breaking concept of deliberately choosing to take the most joyous and serendipitous means of travelling from A to B, rather than the fastest, usually stress-packed alternative, which most of us are forced to take.

Kieran describes in enchanting detail the unplanned delights unleashed by travelling on foot, bicycle, bus, train or even following in donkey-prints of Robert Louis Stevenson, whose 1879 tome *'Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes'* is considered one of the earliest 'Slow Travel' classics!

The Slow Travel philosophy is based on maximising the experiential pleasures of slow movement and engagement with local people and cultures as a way of actually evolving and growing our own internal perceptions and knowledge of this glorious planet upon which we all find ourselves.

Instagrammable beach club vibes, a Jeroboam of Whispering Angel to hand and a gaggle of bikini-clad delectables dangling from every bodily appendage, are probably not what Dan Kieran had in mind, yet that sort of impossible fantasy seems to be the unattainable chimera which so many of today's young Phuket visitors seem to be seeking.

With savage irony, Slow Travel has become the default mode on Phuket's roads these days, as endless tailbacks of furious and fuming pickups and spanking new SUVs ram our overburdened highways, as tempers fray and road-rage explodes.

Bicycles, which by definition are a sort of slow travel time machine, can still take you away from all that, to quiet corners of our island where Slow Travel can be a happy experiential choice, rather than the result of too many illusion-chasers trying to attain the same perfect Instagrammable moment.

Sitting in the quiet Yanui night, sipping my second 'Slow Drink', I thought of Robert Louis Stevenson's sage words; "I travel not to go anywhere, but merely to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move; to feel the needs and hitches of our life more clearly; to come down off our feather-bed of civilization and find the global granite underfoot," and I felt privileged indeed that I'd discovered and come to love the pleasures of 'Slow Cycling'.

'Bicycling' Baz Daniel has been penning his Blazing Saddles column, chronicling his cycling adventures in Phuket and beyond, since 2013.

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FRI5JAN



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Friday Mussels Night

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Grow Boating Evening

We look forward to seeing you at the Grow Boating Evening at the Isola restaurant at the Royal Phuket Marina from 5pm on Friday the 5th of January. We are delighted to announce that our drinks sponsor for the evening will be Blue Peter Marine, Specialists in international yacht regulations and marina classifications. See https://www.facebook.com/bluepetermarine/ There will be a delicious buffet sponsored by Isola Restaurant for all attendees and as always, all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along To join our mailing list please send an email to growboatingphuket@gmail.com Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/growboat-

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SUN7JAN



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Sunday Roast

12PM – 9PM: All you can eat Sunday Roast Buffet Beef, Pork & Capon chicken – Cauliflower, Broccoli, Peas, Carrots, Fried mushrooms, Grilled Tomatoes – Yorkshire pudding – Roasted Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes – Gravy, Mushroom sauce, Horse radish, Mint Sauce. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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Monday BBQ Night

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Sausages,

Fish, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet and veggies, Choice of potatoes, cold and hot sauces, Bread, Buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

WED10JAN



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shakersphuket@gmail.com

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Wednesday BBQ Night

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Sausages, Fish, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet and veggies, Choice of potatoes, cold and hot sauces, bread, buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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FRI19JAN



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AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, AMCHAM, BCCT, Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber, CanCham Thailand, FTCC, GTCC, TICC, NTCC, Phuket Chamber and Thai-Swedish Chamber, invite you to join us for "Australia Day Phuket Sundowners" at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, on Friday 19th January 2024, from 18.00-21.00 hrs. A celebration of all things Australian, join us for your favourite Aussie food & beverages, and welcome in the New Year as the first business networking event of 2024! www.austchamthailand.com/event/19-jan-joint-chambers-australia-day-phuket-sundowners/

WED31JAN



Phuket Jewelry Fair 2024

Phuket Chamber of Commerce will host the Phuket Jewelry Fair during 31 January to 4th of February 2024. Held at the Floresta Mini Convention Hall Central Phuket, visitors will enjoy the jewels and gems gallery by the leading Phuket brand jewelry, a Diamonds & Ruby Fashion Show, seminar from The Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand (G.I.T), plus free real gems verification by G.I.T. For more info please visit picphuket.com/phuketjewelryfair

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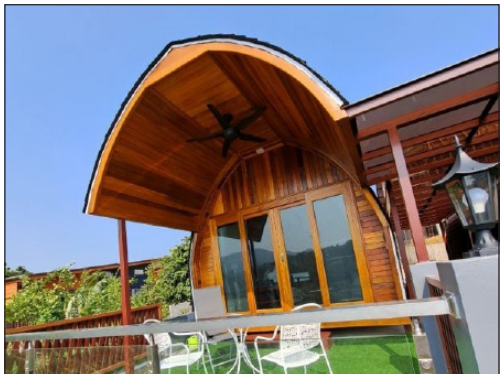
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How Thailand became world petanque champs

PETANQUE

AFP

On a shaded practice court in the sticky heat of rainy season in Bangkok, Ratchata Khamdee half-crouches, pauses and launches a petanque boule at the jack.

Aged just 20, he is already a double world champion, the latest winner to come off Thailand's production line of top petanque players.

Half a world away from its home in the squares of southern France, the quintessentially Gallic sport has found an unlikely hotbed of talent in the land of kickboxing, helped by royal approval and support from the armed forces.

Thailand finished top of the medals table at the world championships in Benin in September – beating France – with three golds, two of them won by Ratchata.

"It was my goal to become a world champion," Ratchata explained.

The shy Ratchata grew up in Sukhothai, a rural province 250 miles (about 400km) north of Bangkok, picking up petanque by playing with his neighbours.

By 18, he was competing at the national level and now studies in Bangkok on a petanque scholarship, with the promise of a career in the air force when he graduates.

Every day he gets up at 6am, jogs for up to an hour and practises for seven hours.



Petanque players train at a court in Bangkok. Photo: AFP

"Petanque requires a lot of leg muscles and technique," he said.

Ratchata's prize money – about US\$8,000 (approximately B282,000) for each of his titles – has been a boon to his mother Kanta Khamdee, who raised Ratchata alone.

"I can pay for my house loan," she said.

As well as producing fine players, Thailand is also home to one of the only officially approved boule-making factories outside France.

On the edge of Bangkok, 17 workers assemble, polish and engrave the boules, turning out up to 400 a day.

STEADY HANDS, STEADY JOBS

Petanque demands precision, power and strategy.

Players try to land their hollow steel boules, about the size of a tennis ball, as close as possible to a jack – and to knock their opponents' boules away.

Groups of older men, often with a cloudy glass of pastis nearby, playing on tracks in village squares have been a common sight across southern France for generations, but the sport is a more recent arrival to Thailand.

It came to the kingdom through a Thai educated in France in 1975, but

its popularity took off thanks to the support of Princess Srinagarindra, the grandmother of current King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

The princess promoted petanque as an inexpensive way for Thais of all ages to get active, and the royal backing gave it standing with the police and military – bastions of Thai royalist conservatism.

Now the kingdom boasts 30,000 to 40,000 registered club players, and the best are snapped up by the armed forces, which offer them jobs paying enough that they can devote their time to training.

Suphonnarth Lamler, vice-president of the International Federation of Petanque, said that for lower-income Thais, petanque can be a way to get a job that brings prestige and security.

"The army and police force would offer the best deals to snatch the best petanque players," she said.

WOMEN'S POWERHOUSE

Military support has helped Thailand establish itself as a powerhouse in women's petanque, led for years by Thongsri Thanakord – multiple world champion, legend of the sport and officer in the Royal Thai Navy.

Nantawan Fuangsanit is taking the baton now, with half a dozen world championship medals at the age of just 29 thanks to a 9-5 desk job with the air force, obtained through her petanque skills.

Her steady job means she can support herself and help her parents, who are farmers.

"I support my family financially. They are way better off than before," Nantawan said.

At the Foundation for Petanque Development in east Bangkok, the next generation of champions is being groomed.

The youngest national player, Saharat Aramros, 13, has his sights on the top but his feet on the ground.

"I want to be a policeman," he says.

"I love petanque, but I want to have a job so I can help my parents."

Solo swim around Phuket aiming to save kids' lives

SWIMMING

PHUKET RESIDENT TODD Blankenship will be taking to the waters off the coast of Phuket this month as part of a charity solo swim to help local children via a Rotary Club of Patong initiative.

The Swim Challenge Phuket will see former U.S. Marine Todd swim the approximately 140-kilometre distance around the island over the course of 14 days between Jan 20 to Feb 3.

The challenge encourages community engagement, raises awareness and provides significant support for the Save a Child Swim Program, a life saving initiative sponsored by Rotary Club of Patong Beach that helps children learn to swim and be safe in the water.

Todd has challenged people to join him on his historic swim by joining him in the water, for just a couple of metres or an entire leg of the challenge, with each day relayed via live



Big-hearted Todd will be undertaking the solo swim later this month. Photo: Supplied

feeds across popular social media channels.

The project also offers a range of engaging partnership, sponsorship and brand recognition opportunities so businesses can align with the cause.

A target of B3.5 million has been set although Todd very much hopes his efforts can exceed this, saying "there is no cap on funding hope."

The project will partner with local and international schools in Phuket to engage children in a range of different ways and on 10 of the 14 days of the challenge Todd will launch each day with the help and involvement

of students from around the island.

The challenge will start at 11am on Jan 20 at the Wave Beach Bar at Bang Tao Beach and is scheduled to conclude on Feb 3 back at the same location.

Additional initiatives to help raise funds include children's art projects, the sale of commemorative t-shirts and items personally autographed by Todd and a silent auction of souvenirs and goods from local business vendors.

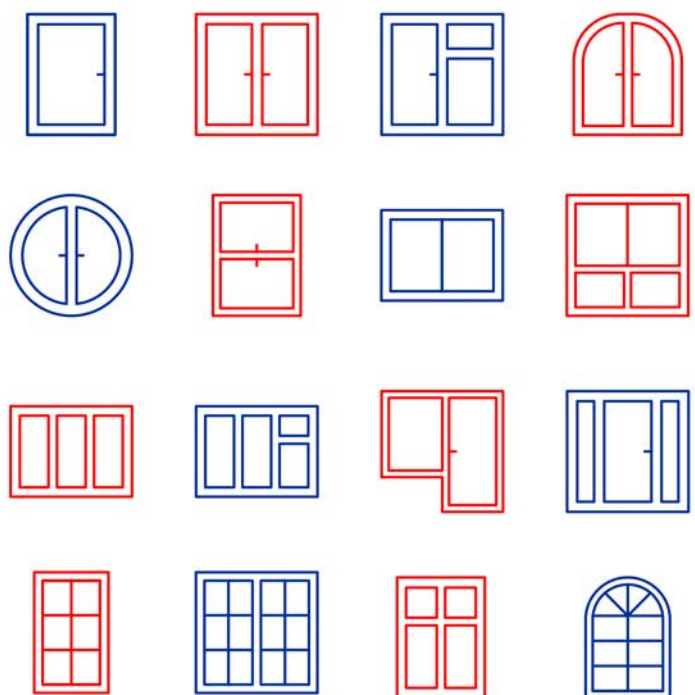
More information on the swim and how to get involved and donate can be found at: <https://www.rotarypatong.org/13774/Page/Show?ClassCode=Page&Slug=save-a-child-swim-program>.

Alternatively contact Todd at swimphuket@gmail.com, on +1 406 696 0883 (WhatsApp), or Movies13 (LINE), or Frank Walbaum frank@fxstrategies.asia, +65 9447 3234 (WhatsApp) or [jungleman80](https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/00299a00000000000000000000000000) (LINE).

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11-14 January 2024 THE BIGGEST BOAT SHOW IN THAILAND

**The One & Only
Luxury Lifestyle Event**

Royal Phuket Marina

- ✂ Food & Beverage
- ✂ Luxury Product Exhibits
- ✂ 50+ Boats On-Water
- ✂ Private Jets
- ✂ Entertainment Until Late



CAPTAIN'S LOUNGE

Indulge in exclusivity in our Captain's Lounge – a space for leisure, meetings, and social networking

11-14 JANUARY 2024

Scan Here To Reserve Your Tickets



Tickets Price For Captain's Lounge 3,000 THB
Tickets Price For Captain's Lounge & Conference 4,000 THB
(VAT is included)

COMPLIMENTARY CHILDREN'S DAY ENTERTAINMENT FUN FOR ALL ON SATURDAY THE 13TH JANUARY 2024

OPENS 14.00 HRS.

- Bozo twisting balloon
- Cotton candy booth
- Stilt walker
- Face painting
- Popcorn booth
- Bouncy house



Kick Off 2024 With A Great Party ! OPEN TO ALL

RobbReport



Yachting Awards Gala Dinner

Gala DINNER 10TH JANUARY 2024

Menu Created & Delivered By DANIEL ISBERG
Celebrity Chef & Culinary Artist

- ◆ Drinks on Arrival
- ◆ Free-Flow Beverages
- ◆ Live Band & DJ
- ◆ Award Ceremony
- ◆ Party Until 1 AM



*Dancing to Eka Soundz 9 Piece Band



Scan Here To Reserve Your Tickets

Tickets Priced at 10,000 THB per person
(VAT & Service is included)

TO VISIT THE SHOW REGISTER FOR FREE & THE CHANCE TO WIN APPLE PRODUCTS

Online Registration: www.thailandinternationalboatshow.com

To Purchase Tickets & For More Details Of All The Above

Call: +66 76 600 225 Email: info@thailandinternationalboatshow.com



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