

**OFFICIALS SET SIGHTS ON HELPING BEGGARS, HOMELESS > PAGE 3**

# FIRST JAB



A medical staffer receives the Sinovac vaccine at Vachira Phuket Hospital on Monday (Mar 1).  
Image: Eakkapop Thongtub

## COVID VACCINATIONS BEGIN, FIRST DELIVERY OF SINOVAAC ARRIVES WITH 4,000 DOSES

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The first injections of the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine in Phuket began at Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town on Monday (Mar 1), with medical personnel the first to receive the injections.

Making history was Vachira Hospital Ear, Nose, Throat specialist Dr Sawatchai Nawakitranagan, becoming the first person on Phuket to be vaccinated.

Hospital Director Dr Chalermpong Sukontapol confirmed that 4,000 doses of the vaccine arrived at about 9am, the first delivery of

any COVID-19 vaccine to Phuket.

Among the first to be vaccinated will be 1,500 medical staff on the island, followed by 500 local officers, Dr Chalermpong explained.

The vaccine requires two injections, he noted.

A total of 1,800 doses will be used to vaccinate 900 medical personnel at Phuket's five government hospitals: Vachira Phuket Hospital, Thalang Hospital, Patong Hospital, Chalong Hospital, and the Phuket Provincial Hospital, Dr Chalermpong said.

A further 1,200 doses will be distributed to vaccinate 600 staff at four private hospitals on the island: Bangkok Hospital Phuket, Bangkok

Hospital Siriroj, Dibuk Hospital and Mission Hospital.

"We have already arranged staff and set up an area to conduct the eight steps for the vaccination process. Today, we will start injecting the vaccine to our 50 medical staff who already registered to be the first group," Dr Chalermpong said.

"Vachira Phuket Hospital has the capacity to inject the vaccine to only 400 people per day. However, we will send the vaccine to the other hospitals across the island so that the total rate of vaccination [for Phuket] can be about 1,500 people per day," he said.

"In the next delivery, we will

receive 16,000 doses of vaccine, and another 48,000 doses will come in May. In total, for the first three months, we will receive 68,000 doses of vaccine," he added.

"In total, the vaccine will be provided to our target groups, comprising those who have high-risk contact with infected patients, those who have chronic diseases, workers in the tourism industry, and elders more than 60 years old," Dr Chalermpong said.

### PRACTICE RUN

Before the vaccine delivery arrived on the island, medical personnel from the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO) and Vachira Phuket Hospital...

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**Police promise family help after shooting**



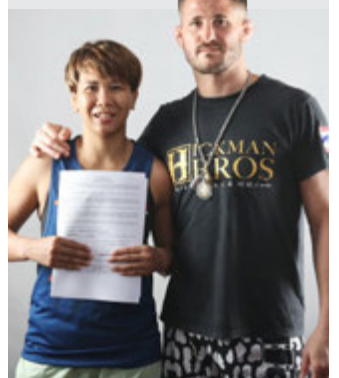
## LIFE PAGE 9

**Time for kids in the kitchen to get cooking**



## SPORT PAGE 16

**Phuket's Loma inks new UFC fight deal**



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## News



First turtles in  
20 years hatch  
at Kata > p5

# Mass vaccinations underway

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...held a practice session for vaccinating the public for COVID-19.

The rehearsal was held late afternoon on Feb 25 at the Lan Muang Khao open area at Vachira hospital, which has been set up specifically for the vaccine rollout.

Present to oversee the procedures to be observed while administering vaccines was Dr Pitakpol Bunyamalik, an Inspector General from the Ministry of Public Health Region 11 office, which is responsible for the seven Upper Southern Thailand provinces, including Phuket.

Joining him from the Region 11 office was Dr Apichat Romsom.

Closely observing the procedures was Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong.

"The government recognises the importance of the affected areas of the economy where the epidemic situation of COVID-19 must be stopped and has allocated the COVID-19 vaccine to Phuket Province to build herd immunity, restore the economy, return a smile to Thailand," Vice Governor Pichet said.



Dr Sawatchai Nawakitangsan became the first person on Phuket to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Screenshot: Apiwat Sudsamai

"We are preparing to COVID-19 mass vaccination to build confidence among the people that they will receive a quality, safe vaccine and to receive follow-up care after it has been administered," he said.

Vice Governor Pichet said the first to receive the vaccine in Phuket will be specific target groups. As shown on Monday, medical person-

nel and public health personnel will receive the vaccine first, followed by those who have frontline interaction with the general public.

After that will be workers aged 18-59 years, and people with underlying diseases including chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, cerebrovascular disease, cancer,

diabetes and obesity. The candidates will be selected by doctors by using the hospital databases, Vice Governor Pichet explained.

Among those targetted to not receive the vaccine are patients with "uncontrollable" chronic diseases, he noted.

"People with severe neurological conditions and pregnant women should be wary of taking the vaccine, as well as women who are breastfeeding and people with immunodeficiency," he said.

As practiced procedure by medical personnel who will administer the vaccine at the rehearsal last week, after being screening by having their body temperature taken, cleaning their hands with sanitiser and entering the service area, people receiving the vaccine are to follow the following steps:

Step 1 Register

Step 2 Have their weight and blood pressure recorded

Step 3 Pass the screening process: have their history and risk assessment recorded and sign a consent to receive the vaccine

Step 4 Wait for vaccination

Step 5 Vaccination

Step 6 Take a break and observe symptoms for 30 minutes. Scan the official Line account "หมอพร้อม" ("Doctor Ready")

Step 7 Pass a final check before receiving a document confirming vaccination

Follow-ups to determine and confirm whether people have experienced adverse reactions to the vaccine will be carried out after one day, seven days and 30 days after vaccination, Vice Governor Pichet said.

Appointments will be set for people to receive their second shot of the vaccine, with those receiving the Sinovac vaccine receiving their second shot 2-4 weeks after their first injection, and those receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine receiving their second shot 10-12 weeks after their first injection, he added.

"At this time, we have no information on any other types of vaccine to arrive, so the vaccines administered should be only these two," he said.



A large section of the road has collapsed into the lake. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

## Road collapses into Chalong reservoir

LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE been warned to beware travelling on the road around the Khlong Krata reservoir in Chalong after a large section of road collapsed into the water.

Chalong Municipality has installed a sign warning motorists of one section 35 metres long that has collapsed into the water, some 10 metres below.

The danger area has been marked off with traffic cones and old tyres, for safety.

Local residents pointed out that many sections of the road that circles the reservoir, located behind Luang Pu Supha Temple, have already

fallen into the water, which has not risen.

Some sections of the road show cracks up to 100m long, they pointed out.

If no action is taken, it is only a matter of time before more large sections of the road fall into the water, they said.

"Local villagers have had accidents many times because the road around the reservoir has collapsed," said local resident Wichian Sangsai, 53.

"The responsible agency has come to inspect [the damage], but have not come to make any repairs or improvements at all," he added.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Staff must stay on site during 'villa quarantine'

PHUKET VICE GOVERNOR Phichet Panapong has explained some of the control measures in place at the Sri Panwa resort, where the island's first travel bubble 'villa quarantine' foreign tourists, who arrived on Sunday (Feb 21), are observing a 14-day quarantine before being allowed to travel freely within Thailand.

The tourists are the first 'villa quarantine' travel bubble tourists to enter the country. The model, if successful, is hoped to be used elsewhere to help reopen the country to tourism.

The tourists arrived from Indonesia on two flights operated by Indonesian national airline Garuda Indonesia.

In welcoming the tourists, Vice Governor Pichet said that 59 tourists had arrived.

However, according to a report by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket), V/Gov Pichet on Feb 23 said that only 58 foreign tourists were observing the 14-day quarantine at the resort.

No explanation was given for the person no longer counted as a tourist.

Regardless, according to the PR Phuket report, Vice



Phuket Vice Governor Phichet Panapong (centre) at Phuket airport to receive the tourists on Feb 21. Photo: PR Phuket

Governor Pichet said, "At this stage, the villa quarantine has been well organised and it will be used as an example for other hotels across the country to accept foreign tourists.

"Thank you to all the officers involved for their cooperation in making everything done very quickly, from the identification-checking process, whereby we had received the information before the tourists arrived on the island, all the way through to taking the tourists to the hotel.

"Every procedure [at the airport] was done quickly, including having swab test samples taken at the X-terminal building, which took about only 1.5 minutes each.

All this was completed with no obstacles, which meant no instances of people being forced to gather in one area," he added.

V/Gov Pichet also confirmed that the hotel staff must stay only in the resort area while the tourists are completing their 14-day quarantine.

"They cannot go outside of the location to ensure confidence for all people," he said.

"Accommodation for them has been arranged so they don't contaminate their homes," he added.

"The 92 hotel staff who work in guest service areas also had their body temperature checked and were tested for infection first. They must

also be tested again on March 5 and March 13 as part of the quarantine being provided in the resort," V/Gov Phichet said.

Officers from the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO) are also involved in taking care of the guests and hotel staff there to keep an eye on both tourists and hotel staff, he said.

"They can communicate with health officials via CCTV in case of urgent help," he added.

The PPHO officers will also provide daily reports on the activities undertaken at the resort by both staff and guests.

"Hotels and guests who are engaged in activities such as going to the gym, taking a walk or playing beach sports are also recorded so that the correct standards of conduct for these activities can be maintained. The measures used here will be used as the central standard and applied to other places in the future," V/Gov Pichet said.

"I would like to inform you that today's report, for the second day of quarantine, went quite smoothly. The screening results of all arrivals were negative, no infections were found," he said.

The Phuket News



# Police promise help for family

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
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Patong Police Chief Col Sujin Nilabodi has promised to help the family of noodle vendor Aroon Thongplab, who was shot by a drunken off-duty Phuket police officer on Bangla Rd on Tuesday last week (Feb 23).

"At this stage, officers from the Phuket office of the Ministry of Justice have already come to discuss this with us," Col Sujin told reporters at Patong Police Station Tuesday morning (Mar 2).

"If the victim's family asks for any compensation or help, we will file a request to the Ministry of Justice Phuket office so they can provide help and safety for them," he said.

The officer arrested for the shooting, Pornthep Chanarong (who was a corporal of the Phuket Provincial Police at the time of the incident), was quickly stripped of his rank and dismissed from the Royal Thai Police.

He now faces an attempted murder charge for shooting 25-year-old Mr Aroon in the stomach just before 6am while Mr Aroon was walking along the street after collecting a



Renowned Bangkok lawyer Kerdphol Kaewkerd speaks with Mr Aroon's wife, Kulthida Chananan, during talks with Patong Police on Tuesday (Mar 2). Photo: Kerdphol Kaewkerd / Facebook

noodle bowl from a customer.

Pornthep also faces charges of carrying a firearm in a public area, and discharging a firearm in a public area.

Col Sujin on Tuesday said that he had been informed by the case investigator, Lt Col Kittisak Sommart, that officers were still in the process of compiling evidence and witness statements in order to formally press charges against Pornthep.

"The next step is to question more witnesses and send

the evidence collected to the Central Police Forensic Science Division," he said.

"I assure that we will work straightforwardly and decisively on this case. We will be fair to both sides. We will do our best for this case and will coordinate with relevant officers for helping the family," Col Sujin said.

Col Sujin's assurance of support for Mr Aroon's family came as Kerdphol Kaewkerd, a renowned Bangkok lawyer

who has volunteered to help Mr Aroon's wife, Kulthida Chananan, with legal assistance, arrived in Phuket.

Mr Kerdphol on Tuesday said that a key concern was the Phuket Provincial Court approving Pornthep to be released on B600,00 bail. The court granted bail approval last Thursday (Feb 23).

Ms Kulthida, and another lawyer who is volunteering his services, last Saturday (Feb 25) filed an appeal to the court to

reconsider its decision.

"The worrying issue is what we can do if the Phuket Provincial Court continues to approve the suspect to post bail," Mr Kerdphol said.

"The bail approval is now under the court's consideration again, even though the investigation police and the victim's family have already filed an appeal with the court to refuse bail," he added.

"At this stage the relatives of the suspect have not presented to the court the surety to post bail. If there is the second request for detention, I want police to again ask for the court to refuse bail.

"The victim's family is worried about their safety, of themselves and of witnesses. If the suspect posts bail, they are afraid he will threaten the witnesses to change their statements about the incident," Mr Kerdphol said.

Regarding the police offer to help, Mr Kerdphol explained, "At this stage, Mr Aroon's condition is still stable. Doctors are treating his lungs and kidneys. Doctors will not operate on his damaged spine [which the bullet hit] because they have to keep him alive as their priority.

"If relatives want to transfer him to a private hospital or a hospital in Bangkok, the Patong Police will file a request to the Royal Thai Police to give assistance," he said.

However, he added, "Doctors have not given any comment whether it is safe for Mr Aroon to be transferred [to any other hospital]."

"In case Mr Aroon does survive, but cannot live his life like before, how do we help him and other members of his family – his wife, sick mother and two children?" Mr Kerdphol posed.

"If police can ensure that they can take care of their safety, they will go back to selling noodles," he said.

"I feel sad for Mr Aroon's two children [a 4-year-old daughter and a 4-month-old son]. How can we help them, if Mr Aroon becomes disabled and his wife cannot work or make enough income for their family?"

"They need a huge amount of funds, for living costs, the children's education and for legal processes involved in this case," Mr Kerdphol.

"I may hold a fundraising auction for my gold amulets to help them," he concluded.

## Beggars, homeless to receive assistance

PHUKET PROVINCIAL officials are drawing up plans to provide more assistance to the number of destitute people in Phuket turning to begging and those left homeless by the current economic crisis.

Phuket Vice Governor Piyaphong Chuwong raised the issue at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Feb 25.

The meeting involved a collection of officials working under the name the Phuket Provincial Begging Control Committee, with the goal of providing assistance to homeless people and those begging to get by in the hope of making them self-supporting.

The committee members at the meeting drew up preliminary guidelines of action to be taken and launched what they called the 'beggars welfare project'.

The meeting concluded that the immediate steps to be taken were:

1. Establishing information on where beggars live in each community
2. Organising a community forum platform through which other people can help improve the quality of life of beggars
3. Providing appropriate welfare for families and target groups to meet the needs of work, health, education and



Phuket Vice Governor Piyaphong Chuwong leads the meeting held to ramp up assistance provided to the homeless and beggars in Phuket. Photo: PR Phuket

welfare, as well as educating local people about the Control of Begging Act (2016)

4. Following up on beggars' potential development and report their progress

"According to Phuket Provincial Government official statistics, last year Phuket had only four beggars and 163 homeless people registered in the database. Of those, 123 of the homeless were taken into care to stay at the Phuket Mit Maitri Home homeless shelter in Mai Khao. The other 40 people chose not to use the service to stay at Phuket Mit Maitri Home," noted Vice Governor Piyaphong.

Since 2017, only 79 people in Phuket were issued cards officially recognising them as destitute, with 15 of those people issued welfare benefit cards for the poor only last year, he added.

"The action plan has been arranged to develop skills and talents of the [affected] people by implementing a project to promote and support them, through which developing talents and skills is an important issue," V/Gov Piyaphong said.

Government officers will help such people to develop their talents and skills, and help them promote their talents and skills on social media... in the hope they can gain employment and help themselves to make a living, V/Gov Piyaphong added.

"This will be done while officers explain the welfare benefit card for poor people to them, so these people can receive help from the government," he said.

*The Phuket News*

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Wind 11 m/s

SUN MAR 7

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Low: +26°

Wind 7 m/s

MON MAR 8

High: +35°  
Low: +27°

Wind 7 m/s

TUE MAR 9

High: +34°  
Low: +26°

Wind 11 m/s

WED MAR 10

High: +35°  
Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

THU MAR 11

High: +35°  
Low: +26°

Wind 11 m/s

## Hanging in the balance

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Immigration is urging all expats staying on retirement visas whose applications to renew their one-year permit to stay have been refused due to financial reasons to apply for a 60-day "COVID visa" so they can continue to stay in the country.

The issue came to the fore after a retired expat who has been living in Phuket on a retirement visa for nigh on 10 years informed *The Phuket News* that his application to renew his permit-to-stay for another year had been refused.

The reason given for refusing his application was that he had failed to maintain the B400,000 minimum bank balance in a Thai bank account as required by the conditions



A foreigner has an application processed at the Phuket Immigration Office in Phuket Town. Photo: The Phuket News / file

of being approved a one-year 'extension' to his visa.

Phuket Immigration Deputy Chief Lt Col Nareuwat Putthawiro has since confirmed

to *The Phuket News* that the requirements for a one-year permit-to-stay for people on retirement visas have not changed, despite the ongoing

crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, he added, "Foreigners who have financial problems and are unable to

meet the requirements [for renewing their permit-to-stay], please apply for the 'COVID visa', which allows them to stay in the country for 60 days.

"This type of visa is aimed at helping all foreigners staying in Thailand during tough situations like this, both those staying here permanently or just traveling through," Lt Col Nareuwat said.

"Additionally, they can extend the visa many times," he added.

"To apply for the COVID visa, foreigners only have to present their passport and pay the B1,900 fee. Then the officer will have a one-page document for them to fill out their information," Lt Col Nareuwat explained.

"They can also contact the Immigration office to discuss their situation to see what other options there are," he added.

## Phuket Monopoly tokens go on holiday

THE CREATORS OF 'MONOPOLY: Phuket Edition' are looking for suggestions as to what to use as 'tokens' in the game that is being specifically tailored to Phuket.

It was announced last month that Phuket will soon be getting its own edition of the world's favourite family board game, Monopoly, which will see the traditional streets being replaced by key places around Phuket, from the shops and markets, to the beaches and hotels, all the way through to the most iconic attractions.

"We have had a wealth of emails and suggestions coming in for Phuket, so thank you for each and every single one of them! We are taking them all into consideration whilst putting together the design of the game," said Jennifer Lau from Winning Moves UK, who is producing the game under official license from Monopoly brand owners, Hasbro.

Whilst 'Monopoly: Phuket Edition' is being put together, it is now revealed that the playing tokens will be taking on a holiday theme.

People not familiar with



the terminology may well remember the original 'tokens' which players used in order to progress around the board, including the iron, boot, wheelbarrow, thimble as well as the every-popular sports car and top hat.

"We wanted to change the tokens so that they would be more suitable for an island like Phuket, where so many people like to go on holiday to," Ms Lau explained.

"There will be six themed tokens that replace the original and we want to hear your suggestions for what these tokens should be!"

Thoughts and suggestions can be sent via email to phuket@winningmoves.co.uk as well as the Phuket Monopoly Facebook page.

The Phuket News



# Turtle nest hatches at Kata, first in 20 years

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A total of 29 baby leatherback turtles broke through the sand and made their way into the sea at Kata Beach last Friday night (Feb 26), as a large gathering of well-wishers stood back to watch.

Local residents massed at Kata Beach in high hopes of watching the turtles hatch last Thursday night after the sand above the nest started to collapse earlier in the day.

Marine life experts from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) last Saturday morning reported that the first turtles surfaced at about 10pm and began making their way to the water's edge.

There were 80 eggs in total in the nest, the marine life officers reported.

In addition to the 29 that made it into the sea, five were taken into care as they were too weak to make the life-starting journey across the sand.

Three of the five baby turtles taken into care were released this morning. The other two will remain in care until they are strong enough to be released, the DMCR officers noted.

Of the 80 eggs, 32 baby turtles did not survive, and a further 14 eggs were not fertilised, the officers confirmed after inspecting the nest.



Baby leatherback turtles make their way across the sand at Kata Beach last Friday night (Feb 26). Photo: DMCR

The laying – and now hatching – of leatherback turtle eggs on Kata Beach is seen as a very positive sign of the return of nature to the island's beaches after years of occupation by visiting tourists.

The nest that hatched last night is the first to be recorded at Kata Beach in more than 20 years.

The eggs are believed to have been laid by a 'supermum' turtle, weighing an

estimated 300kg, which marine wildlife experts believe has laid at least five nests in the region, including at Mai Khao Beach at the northern end of the island and at Thai Muang Beach in Phang Nga, just north of Phuket.

The marine officers have named the 'supermum' turtle 'New Year', as she laid the nest on Kata Beach in the first hour of Jan 1.

## Patong jet-skis cleared for legal compliance

A CHECK ON JET-SKI operators at Patong Beach last Friday (Feb 26) found no irregularities, the regional office of the Marine Department, based in Phuket, has announced.

The check came at the order of Nachaphong Pranit, Director of Phang Nga Marine Department office, and who is currently serving as Acting Director of the regional Marine Department office, based in Phuket.

The officers confirmed that the jet-skis offered were legally registered and covered by the mandatory insurance, and the officers checked that the operators used the standard rental agreements when renting out the jet-skis.

Rental prices must be clearly shown and operators must conduct basic safety training to people who rent jet-skis before being allowed to operate the vessels alone, Mr Nachaphong said.

"Life jackets must be put on before using the vessel, for example, and our officers emphasised that jet-ski operators must implement COVID-19 screening measures under the New Normal guidelines issued by Phuket



Marine Department officers check jet-skis at Patong Beach last Friday (Feb 26). Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

health officials," he added.

Mr Nachaphong said that the checks were being conducted in order to build confidence in safety among tourists who travel to Phuket during their holidays.

"Officers from the Phuket office of the Marine Department will conduct random checks in every area," Mr Nachaphong said.

"If any violations are found, the highest legal proceedings will be taken," he warned.

"Therefore, we remind operators with jet-skis that are no longer fully legally registered to proceed with the renewal of the license and have their jet-skis inspected to make sure they are ready to use, and make sure the jet-skis are covered by Insurance Act as well," he said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Underwear thefts worry locals

TIRED OF WOMEN'S underwear being stolen from homes in the middle of the night, local residents in Baan Lipon, Thalang, have called in the police in the hope of catching the culprit.

Officers were called in after a teenage man was recorded on CCTV cruising the neighbourhood and then stopping his motorbike to snatch women's underwear from in front of a house last Sunday night (Feb 28).

Woralit Poonthawa, whose 40-year-old wife's underwear was stolen, told *The Phuket*



Mr Woralit points to where his 40-year-old wife's underwear was stolen. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

*News*, that he had never had "this kind of incident" at this home before.

Mr Woralit also said that he had already asked police to watch the area for the safety

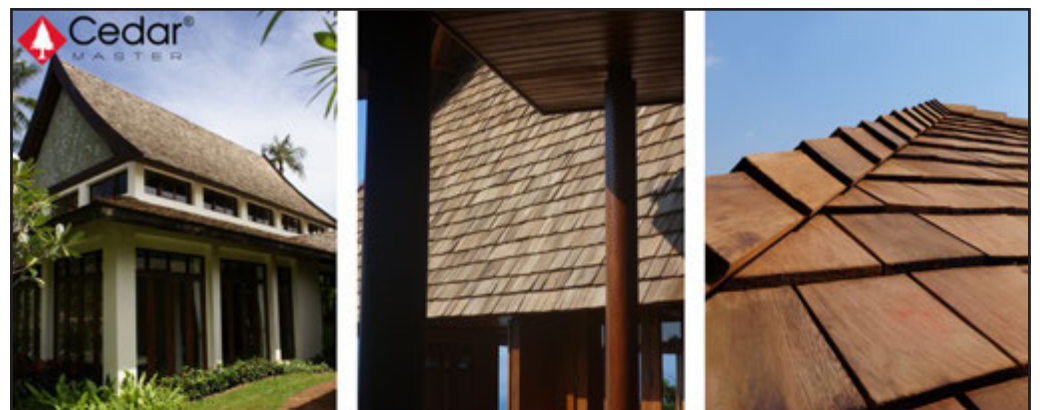
of residents as he said "it is a dangerous situation for children and women".

Songsri Phakdee, who is the wife of the village headman, said that there had been a spate of underwear thefts in the village recently.

One resident reported seeing someone on his roof. Several roof tiles broke and the man fell to the ground, she added.

"At this stage, we have reported the incident to the police and they are still searching for the man," she said.

Eakkapop Thongtub



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# Food festivals to serve hope

## Seafood festivals return to attract more domestic tourists to island

The Phuket News  
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The first of three large-scale seafood festivals was launched at Saphan Hin last Friday night (Feb 26) in the hope of helping local people make an income by attracting more domestic tourists to the island.

Present for the grand opening was Rawat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or *OrBorJor*), joined by Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong and Phuket City Municipality Chief Administrative Office (Palad) Chalermpon Piyanarongroj.

Mr Chalermpon said that the seafood festivals, launched under the banner “Roi Rim Lay”, aimed to not only help vendors at the festival to make an income, but also farmers, producers, food business operators and other businesses.

“Anyone whose incomes have been affected by COVID economic situation,” he said.

The Roi Rim Lay festival at Saphan Hin will continue for the days, concluding to-



The three-day ‘Roi Rim Lay’ seafood festival at Saphan Hin last weekend will be repeated in Patong and Cherno Talay in the hope of boosting incomes of local vendors. Photo: PR Phuket

morrow night (Feb 28), Mr Chalermpon said.

The festival has 170 stalls, mostly offering renowned local delicacies, but also including vendors offering a wide range of products, he added.

“There are local food prod-

ucts sold in Phuket, fresh and cooked seafood and agricultural products, as well as tourism-related products, all sold at cheap prices under the [Department of Interior Trade] Blue Flag project, which has joined the event,”

Mr Chalermpon explained.

The festival also includes live music and entertainment, and on-stage performances by local students, he added.

Mr Rewat pointed out Phuket’s standing as a tourism destination, and its recogni-

tion by Unesco as a City of Gastronomy.

“This gives an opportunity to develop the economy and further investment from the food tourism business in the future,” he said.

“The spread of the COV-

ID-19 virus has affected the economy of Phuket, the main source of income [in Phuket] is from tourism. Therefore, we must stimulate the economy in Phuket to recover after being affected by the COVID-19 epidemic.

“We sincerely hope that the first local food festival of Phuket, Roi Rim Lay, will help stimulate the economy, strengthen the foundation of the economy, and accelerate spending by people to stimulate purchasing power in the economy of Phuket, which will allow farmers, producers and entrepreneurs to earn more income from this event,” he said.

The Roi Rim Lay festival will also be held later in Patong and in Cherno Talay, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew announced at a launch event held earlier this week, also attended by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket office Director Nanthasiri Ronnasiri.

The festival will be held at Patong Beach on Mar 19-21, and at Laguna Grove in Cherno Talay on Apr 10-12.

## VAT lifted on visiting superyacht charters

THE ROYAL THAI Government has removed valued-added tax (VAT) from being levied on all visiting superyacht charters to help support the country’s marine industry.

The decision came at a meeting in Bangkok late last Tuesday (Feb 23) chaired by the new Minister of Finance, Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, and attended by officials from both the Customs and Revenue departments.

At the meeting it was finally confirmed that foreign-flagged visiting superyachts will from now on be welcome to spend the winter seasons in Thai waters and offer their yachts for charter without having to pay VAT on the value of the vessel.

The meeting marked the culmination of a six-year campaign to bring this all-important change in the local regulations, and thus finally enable a new ‘third destination’ for the global fleet and a new ‘Superyacht Tourism’ industry to boost Thailand’s pandemic-challenged tourism economy.

Meeting with Finance Minister Mr Arkhom were



Finance Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith at the meeting in Bangkok on Feb 23. Photo: Ministry of Finance

Chairperson of K-Bank and Committee of National Reform on Economics, Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul; Andy Treadwell, CEO of Verventia and Thailand Yacht Show; Matthew Na Nagara, Chairman of the Thailand Yacht Business Association (TYBA); and Peerawich Thoviriyavej, Verventia & TYBA Board Member.

The campaign started in earnest in 2015 when the then Minister of Transport was tasked by the Prime Minister with launching Thailand’s own Yacht Show. The show was conceived as

a platform to promote the Kingdom as the Marina Hub of Asia and develop an important new yachting industry bringing in significant foreign investment for the benefit of all Thai people, noted a release from Thailand Yacht Show organiser Verventia.

“Ms Kobkarn, then Minister of Tourism and Sport, became a real champion for the cause, and her unflagging belief in this opportunity remains to this day, despite her having left politics two years ago,” said the release.

The Phuket News

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# Public registration for vaccine to start in May

Bangkok Post

Members of the public who are interested in being inoculated against COVID-19 will be able to register in early May, ahead of Thailand's vaccination drive which is set to begin later in June, the government said on Monday (Mar 1).

Registrations will be done on the Mor Prom ("Doctors Ready") app, a new platform that was specifically designed to facilitate the government's vaccination program, Deputy Public Health Minister Sathit Pitutecha said.

According to the deputy minister, a large batch of COVID-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca is due to arrive in June, which will enable the government to cover a greater subset of the population.

"The timing isn't that late especially when compared with other Asean nations," he said.

The first batch of COVID-19 vaccines supplied by China's Sinovac was distributed to 13 provinces that the government considers high-risk areas on Monday. The doses were then administered to eligible priority groups, which include frontline healthcare workers and individuals with underlying health conditions.

In Pathum Thani, 200 people received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at Pornpat Market in Thanyaburi district on Monday, which recently made



A large batch of COVID-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca is due to arrive in Thailand in June, which will enable the government to cover a greater subset of the population. Photo: Bangkok Post

the headlines after a large number of COVID-19 cases were linked to the market's premises.

The province is aiming to administer the first dose of vaccines to 8,000 healthcare workers, state officers and health volunteers handling COVID-19 cases, individuals with underlying health conditions, as well as vendors at Pornpat and Suchart markets.

Pathum Thani Governor Chaiwat Chuenkosum was the first person in the province to receive the first dose of the vaccine.

In Ratchaburi, the vaccination program began with the province's chief

public health officer, Pachari Arirop. The province received 2,500 doses of Sinovac vaccines. An hour after she was injected, Dr Pachari said she didn't develop any unusual reactions.

Ratchaburi was among the first provinces to first receive COVID-19 vaccines because it neighbours Samut Sakhon, the epicentre of the nation's second wave of COVID-19, she said.

In Bangkok, 130 doctors and healthcare workers were given their first shots of the COVID-19 vaccine on Monday, said Bangkok Governor Aswin Kwanmuang, adding that the city plans to vaccinate 3,700 people in six areas throughout this week.



The first shot. Photo: Anutin Charnvirakul / Facebook

## Anutin gets first COVID jab

PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER Anutin Charnvirakul became the first person in the country to receive the vaccine against coronavirus last Sunday (Feb 28) when Thailand rolled out its COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

The event, which was held at the Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute on Tivanon Road in Nonthaburi, began at 7:30am and was chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The person who administered the first COVID-19 shot into the arm of Mr Anutin was Dr Yong Yong Poovorawan, a medical professor in pediatric hepatology at the Faculty of Medicine of Chulalongkorn University.

The vaccine given to Mr Anutin is the Chinese-made CoronaVac developed by Sinovac Life Sciences, which can

be used on people aged 18-59.

Mr Anutin said that Gen Prayut could not receive the first shot at the discretion of doctors due to his age of 66.

He explained that AstraZeneca vaccine, which was shipped to Thailand on Feb 24, has not been endorsed by the Medical Science Department. "AstraZeneca has yet to submit documents and samples," he said.

After Mr Anutin, other persons who were vaccinated were Deputy Public Health Minister Sathit Pitutecha, Culture Minister Attipol Khunplome, Deputy Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Chalermchai Sri-on, Deputy Education Minister Kanokwan Wilawan, and permanent secretary for health Dr Kiatiphum Wongrajit, followed by a number of concerned health personnel.

Bangkok Post

## Prayut defends police over rally

PRIME MINISTER PRAYUT Chan-o-cha on Monday (Mar 1) defended the police's handling of the anti-government rally the previous day in front of the 1st Infantry Regiment barracks, King's Guard, insisting crowd-control measures were in compliance with international standards.

Riot police from the Metropolitan Police Bureau (MPB) used tear gas and water cannon to block the protesters from approaching the prime minister's residence in the barracks.

They also fired rubber bullets at the protesters during the clash, with MPB commissioner Pol Lt Gen Phukphong Phongpetra admitting that rubber bullets were used to quell violence before the situation spiralled out of control.

In defence of police actions, Gen Prayut said the protesters had advanced into police and restricted areas and assaulted police officers, so officers needed to respond to the situation.

"I insist the crowd-control measures were in accordance with international



Police clash with protesters near the 1st Infantry Regiment barracks, King's Guard, in Bangkok last Sunday. Photo: Wichan Charoenkiatpakul

standards and police did not violate the protesters' rights," Gen Prayut said.

The prime minister took to task some media outlets for what he claimed were unbalanced reports about the clashes between the protesters and the police, saying they only carried reports about police's use of force against the protesters.

Gen Prayut also expressed sympathy for police who were told to exercise restraint in the face of violence and ended up injured.

Thirty-three people, 23 police and 10 protesters, were confirmed injured during Sunday's rally and 22 protesters were detained by police. A police officer, Pol Capt Wiwat Sinprasert, of Thammassala police station,

died of a heart attack while on duty.

The rally was organised by Restart Democracy (REDEM) – the latest incarnation of the Free Youth group that had previously rallied against the government and campaigned for reforms of the monarchy.

National police chief Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk said police actions were not intended to disperse the protesters but to arrest those who physically assaulted officers.

"We've discussed it several times that we will enforce the laws where necessary. If the protesters didn't harm officers or destroy barriers, we wouldn't have had to act. And the protesters, they were unable to control each other," he said. Bangkok Post

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# How do you like my island, Mr Bond?

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By Joanna Matlub

With the current lack of tourists and usual hordes of day trippers gone, now really is the perfect time to explore the islands around Phuket. During a normal high season, Ao Phang Nga National Park can get jam packed with speedboats full of sightseers. So why not take the time now to visit one of the (normally) busiest islands in this National Park – the one and only James Bond Island.

With a custom Phang Nga Bay tour, 5 Star Marine will guide you around hidden coves and lagoons as well as stopping off to explore the iconic island which became a major attraction since being featured in the 1974 Bond movie *The Man With The Golden Gun*.

During your private day trip, you could start your day by exploring Panak

Island to experience floating gently along inside one of the hidden caves surrounded by mangroves, before enjoying a peaceful golden bay or two all to yourselves.

Make a stop at Koh Kudu Yai to take in the exquisite beauty of the clear turquoise water in this utterly stunning lagoon. Enjoy diving off the boat, or have a leisurely float around what can now be your very own private lagoon; with not another boat in sight.

No need to worry about packing food to take on board, as you can pause at the small island community of Koh Pan-ye for lunch; where huts, houses and restaurants are built on stilts over the water. It is definitely worth stopping to view their unique floating football pitch; something you certainly don't come across every day!

Exploring Phang Nga Bay by private speedboat is such a memorable experience, presenting you with an unobscured panoramic seascape. This truly is one of nature's spectacular works of art; the vast karst rock scen-

ery is one of the most visually stunning locations to visit at any time of the year. In fact, with the sheer number of unique formations, you could explore for days without running out of remarkable sightings.

Get your Bond Instagram pose ready as you make your way to James Bond Island, or Koh Khao Phing Kan if we are to use its correct name. An internationally renowned tourist destination since appearing in *The Man With The Golden Gun*, as the hideout for Bond's antagonist, Scaramanga. From then on, this island together with Koh Ta Pu became widely referred to as James Bond Island, and the original names are now rarely used, even by locals.

As a protected marine area of this National Park, boats are not allowed too close, so you can view the famous sight from the Koh Khao Phing Gan. This island has an immensely tall and impressive leaning rock, plus some small caves to explore. With the tourists gone, you can actually see the island properly and take some great

snapshots without people crowding in front of the main sign. Take your time to stroll around, in peace and quiet for the first time in around 40 years.

After getting your fill of this notorious island, you can stop off to enjoy a spot of sea canoeing or more cave exploring before making your way back to Boat Lagoon. Perhaps you might make a final sunset stop at Koh Pear, a small strip of an island which looks and feels like you are walking on water – a perfect end to the day.

Make the most of exploring now, for an unforgettable time at this world-renowned destination. Remember to pack your beachwear, because as Scaramanga would say, *"I like a girl in a bikini. No concealed weapons."*

A Phang Nga Bay Private Tour is now 50% off (March bookings) for up to 18 of your friends and family. Plus, if you quote *'The Phuket News'* you will receive FREE round-trip private minibus transfers to and from Boat Lagoon.

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# Time to get cooking

## SPONSORED

**K**ids from five international schools across Phuket will be competing for a chance to spend a day in the kitchen learning from an Iron Chef this month. This extraordinary opportunity for young gourmets is the top prize at a culinary competition being hosted in Kathu, on the campus of QSI International School of Phuket (QSIP), on Saturday, March 13.

The competition is part of a wider family event for students, teachers and parents from around the island. It gives students the chance to flex their creativity and show off a skill set that they do not generally get many opportunities to demonstrate to their peers at school.

QSIP's director, Robert Peters, is a strong advocate for students acquiring knowledge outside of the classroom just as much as inside of it. "QSI Phuket's cooking competition gives students the opportunity to learn about the culinary arts. It is a great way to learn something new outside of the classroom."

The event, which is sponsored by *The Phuket News*, Villa Market and Kids Meals Phuket, will start at 10:30am with an hour-long competition between the junior teams, aged 11 and under. Each team will have a maximum



of five students and a maximum budget of B1,000 to spend on their uncooked ingredients.

After that, the senior students get to show what they can do. As with the juniors, each team of 12- to 18-years-olds can have up to five participants. However, while they get more cooking time, they also have more demanding targets. Not only do they have to prepare their own unique signature dish, but they must also replicate a complex, mango-

based, professional-grade recipe provided by a chef, all within 90 minutes.

The judges these young cooks need to impress are Adam Goodman from Kids Meals Phuket, Davide S from the four-star Katathani Phuket Beach Resort in Kata Noi and Pablo Rene from the acclaimed DeDos Restaurant in Cherg Talay – one of the finest French eateries on the island.

This will be the fifth annual culinary competition held at QSIP since



2017. The event was started by QSIP teacher, the late Mr Warren Murray, after a successful food fair, in conjunction with Chef Noi from Positive Kitchen. It was intended to allow students to show off their culinary skills and compete against other schools on the island – a goal that it has consistently lived up to.

*Tune into Live 89.5 on Saturday, March 13 to hear a live broadcast of the contest and to hear who wins!*



# THAI

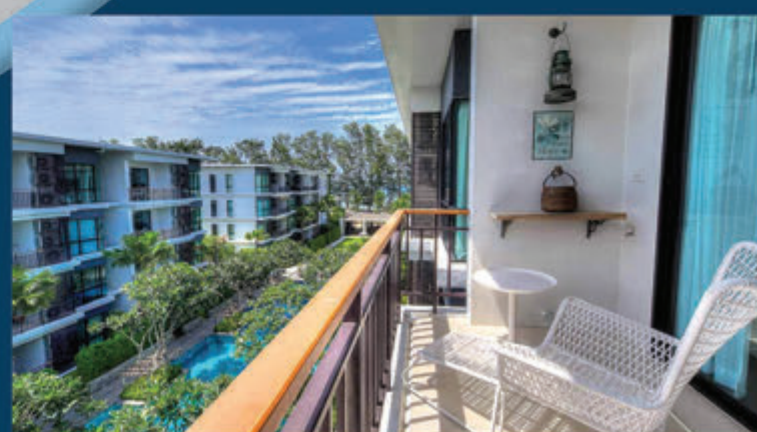
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## POP QUIZ

- How many zeros are in one Googol?
- Who was the first person to be crucified upside down?
- What was US President John F. Kennedy's middle name?
- Which explorer was the first European to reach India by sea?
- What is vitamin riboflavin also known as?

Answers below, centre

## SUDOKU

Hard

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

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

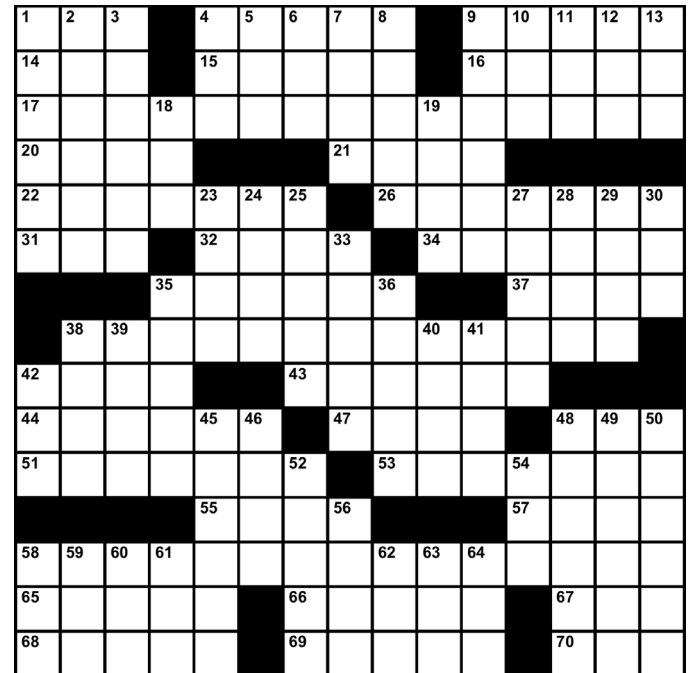
Across

- Windy City trains
- Office worker
- City of witch trials
- Manuscript encl.
- Comedy
- Home security warning
- More than a resume
- God of war
- Fencer's weapon
- Calls something different
- Napoleon opponent
- 6-pointers
- Over
- Play ending
- Arctic jacket
- Prefix with phobia
- You might present a 17 across during these
- Peppermint, for one
- Mongolians, e.g.
- Get close to
- "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" role
- Bill
- American marsupial
- Moolah
- Tres y tres
- Peruvian civilization
- One might come up during 38 across
- Cinderella's

Godmother

- ....then we will
- Evidence collectors, abbr.
- Waitress' needs
- Getz, et al.
- Sault \_\_\_ Marie
- Down
- Take
- Acclaimed
- Canary cousins
- Acupuncture regulated life force
- Picard's middle name in 'Star Trek'
- Flightless bird
- Acting part
- Man of steel
- Stockpile
- "Love Story", first name: \_\_\_ McGraw
- Upper back muscle, for short
- Pitcher's stat.
- Madame, for short
- Cellular stuff
- Simple
- Nail salon staple, slangily
- School to many Brit. P.M.'s

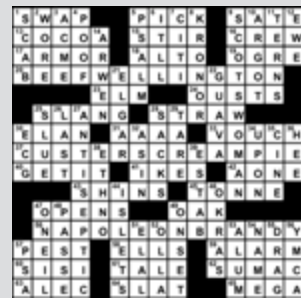
- In a way, slangily
- High dice rolls
- Bunch
- Charged particles
- Way back when
- Country in Italian
- Clergymen
- Whale food
- \_\_\_ Grand Cherokee
- Yes \_\_\_ (choice words)
- Subject used by Picasso in many paintings
- \_\_\_ the buzzer
- "Game of Thrones" channel
- Subjects to chemical analysis
- One having second thoughts
- Loose fitting garments
- Confront
- Skull cap
- Calf-length skirts
- Little bird
- Floor meas.
- Back of a boat
- \_\_\_ of words
- Amanti is one
- Somewhat twisted
- A, in Argentina
- Big time
- Roads (abbr.)



## Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) One hundred zeroes (1 Googol = 10<sup>100</sup>); 2) St Peter; 3) Fitzgerald; 4) Vasco da Gama; 5) B2

## Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

## 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



Sunset fishing at Nai Harn Beach. Photo: Mark Pimbley

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket? Email it to [exceditor@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:exceditor@classactmedia.co.th)

## This week in history

Mar 5, 1872

George Westinghouse patents the air brake.

Mar 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.

Mar 7, 321 AD

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

Mar 8, 2014

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

Mar 9, 141 BC

Liu Che, posthumously known as Emperor Wu of Han, assumes

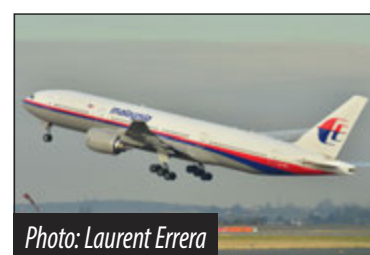


Photo: Laurent Errera

the throne over the Han dynasty of China.

Mar 10, 1909

Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909:

Thailand relinquishes its sovereignty over the Malay states of Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu, which become British protectorates.

Mar 11, 2011

A 9.0 magnitude earthquake strikes 130km east of Sendai, Japan, triggering a tsunami killing thousands of people, and triggering the second largest nuclear accident in history.

Source: Wikipedia



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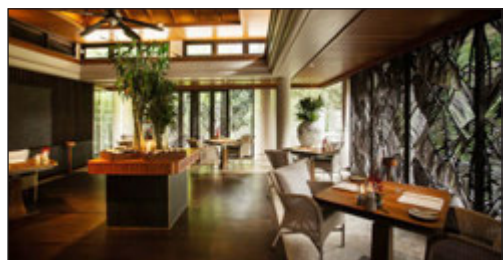
**SUN 7 MAR**



### Sunday Brunch at Pine Beach Bar

Try exciting new items including organic truffle poached egg, lobster house made pasta and unagi don. Enjoy complimentary use of pool and beach facilities before and after your brunch with a bottle of sparkling, a selection of delicious dishes, funky tunes of our DJ and beach activities. Intercontinental Phuket Resort, Kamala, 076 629 999.

**THU 11 MAR**



### Chaine dinner at Michelin star restaurant PRU

We are delighted to invite you to a very special dinner as our first event of 2021. The PRU restaurant in Trisara is the first and only restaurant in Phuket to receive a Michelin star, and is the only Michelin Green Star in Thailand. Having done the food and wine tasting already, we can certify that this is going to be an extraordinary experience. THB6,500 for members and THB 7,000. Dress code - Smart Casual with your Chaine ribbon. If you plan to do one dinner 2021, this is it. More info - <https://www.facebook.com/events/1601375776725863/>

**SAT 13 MAR**



### PAIS 5th Annual Culinary Competition

PAIS 5th Annual Culinary Competition hosted by QSI

Phuket. Saturday March 13th @ 10:30-16:00. Come Join and cheer on these "Kid Top Chefs"

**SAT 20 MAR**



### Lean On Me Live Fest

Lean On Me Live Fest will feature between 10 and 14 local bands. The concert is free and we will rely on donations from the patrons to raise money for the food charity drives. Contact [gary@legendmusic.net](mailto:gary@legendmusic.net)

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- Stop** classes, working or other outside activities
- Close** mouth and nose with tissue paper regularly when sneezing or coughing
- Do not** share your personal belongings and separate them from others
- Wear** hygiene or face mask and maintain a distance of more than 1 meter
- Avoid** close contact with patient/elderly
- Separate** bedrooms
- Clean** clothes and other items frequently
- Wash** your hands frequently with soap and water
- Throw** your mask and used tissue paper correctly in a plastic bag and tie tightly. Make sure to clean your hands immediately after.

\* For emergency cases, you must receive permission from an officer before leaving

### Monitor your symptoms

- Check your body temperature every day
- Observe your fever 37.5°C and respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath)
- Record your health status every day in the report system
- If you have a fever accompanied by at least one of the symptoms, you are to inform of disease control officer immediately

Date : 23/03/63

ICDDC

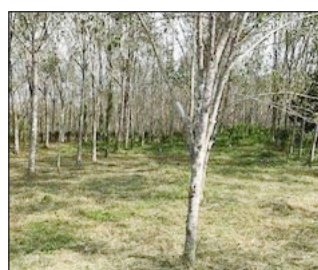
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- A scan of your education certificates and transcripts
- A scan of your passport's photo page

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SUCCESS FOR ALL





## SUAY POP UP AT PATONG BAY HILL - FEB 23, 2021

Over 140 Phuket people attended a lavish dinner, poolside at Patong Bay Hill Resort in Patong, with Chef Noi of Suay Restaurants cooking up a storm to the delight of the guests, while entertainment from Malika had everyone's toes tapping. DJ Shane closed out the night with some top tunes.



## AUSTCHAM PHUKET BUSINESS BRIEFING AND AUSTRALIA DAY SUNDOWNERS

Feb 25, 2021 - Over 150 Aussies and friends attended the AustCham members briefing and Australia Day Sundowners organised by AustCham Thailand and the Australian Consulate General Phuket, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, British Chamber of Commerce Thailand (BCCT), Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber of Commerce, CanCham Thailand, Franco-Thai Chamber of Commerce (FTCC), German-Thai Chamber of Commerce (GTCC) and the Netherlands-Thai Chamber of Commerce (NTCC), held at Renaissance Phuket Resort & Spa. It was a celebration of all things Australian, Australian food and beverages, and a welcome to the New Year with the first business networking event of 2021.



# Robertson rampage at ACG

## Captain's knock ensures series goes to fifth game showdown

### CRICKET

Neil Quail

A much needed captain's innings by Jason Robertson saw an eight-run victory for the Rest of the World (ROW) against an Asia select XI at the ACG last Sunday (Feb 28), meaning the series goes to a fifth and final showdown next week to determine who will become Phuket champions.

In winning the toss, Asia captain, Shivam Bhattacharaya opted to allow ROW to set the pace by putting his opposition in to bat.

First to the middle saw the left, right combination of Justin Swart and Jeremy Bootsy, with Bootsy characteristically taking little time to settle into his stride, racing to 25 runs from just 15 deliveries, including five boundaries, three of which came from the first over.

Halfway through the seventh over, with the score at 60, Bhattacharaya made the breakthrough by bowling Bootsy, bringing Paul Judge to the crease.

Perhaps, inspired by the performance of his son Dom, who scored his maiden half-century last week, Judge immediately got off the mark in cracking a four off his first ball. Meanwhile, Swart hammered out a boundary-laden innings of six fours and two sixes to reach 49, but in trying to heave a Bhattacharaya delivery for his 50, instead



ROW captain Jason Robertson launches one of his nine boundaries on his way to an unbeaten 73 against an Asia select XI at the ACG last Sunday. Photo: Michael Way

found Waseem Musa just inside the ropes, with ROW at 93 for 2.

Down from the capital for the weekend, Craig Morgan's inclusion to the ROW side proved invaluable as he and Judge added 53 runs to the total before Judge was adjudged lbw in the 15<sup>th</sup> over.

Michael Flowers joined Morgan at the middle after the drinks' break, and within

seven overs the partnership delivered 58 runs, with Morgan the game's first half-centurion.

Young Zan Coplestone tempted Morgan to go for his 11<sup>th</sup> boundary but an alert Joe Ninan intercepted, sending Morgan back to the pavilion after pummelling 66 from 34.

**CAPTAIN FANTASTIC** Skipper Robertson then took to the crease alongside Flow-

ers and soon found his range, menacing the Asia bowlers to bludgeon six 6s in reaching a devastating and unbeaten 73 not out off 39 deliveries.

The 75-run partnership also saw Flowers achieve his half-century before Bhattacharaya dismissed him for 56 as ROW finished on 332 for 5.

In reply, Asia's Ninan and Imtiyaz Mushtaq forged a

71-run partnership before ROW's other father-son duo of James and Eddie Chattaway combined, the latter catching Ninan from his father's off-spin bowling.

Mushtaq would eventually claim the day's fourth 50 on his way to 64, including nine 4s and a partnership of 73 with Ali Khan before Robertson's reap of three catches began as he saw off Mushtaq

from a Paul Judge delivery to conclude the 14<sup>th</sup> over with the score on 152 for 2.

Khan soon also fell into Robertson's clutches four overs later off Eddie Chattaway's medium pace, just six runs short of another half-century, introducing Coplestone to the middle along with Sameer Khan.

Producing a 108-run partnership, Khan and Coplestone took the score from 167 to 275 before Flowers and wicket-keeper Anthony Van Blerk combined to first dismiss Coplestone (18), and then bring Khan's excellent 83-run innings to an end nine balls later, as he was caught behind with Asia's total at 288 for 5 in the 31<sup>st</sup> over.

With just under five overs left to play and 44 runs needed for victory, Asia's five remaining batsmen could only muster another 35 more runs as Saju Abraham (10) looked to threaten the outcome before Robertson dismissed the Asia tail-ender with a stunning reflex catch off his own bowling.

A determined all-rounder performance including figures of 73 not out and 1 for 50 off seven overs earned Robertson the game's MVP award, with mentions to Bhattacharaya (3 for 59 off six) and Flowers (56 and 2 for 48 off seven).

The fifth and final game of the series will start at 10am this Sunday (Mar 7) at the ACG to decide who will be crowned series champions.

## Vagabonds Academy boosts Phuket rugby profile

### RUGBY

PHUKET'S RUGBY future continues to improve, with the island's club Vagabonds RFC establishing their youth development academy from their base at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang.

Last Saturday (Feb 27), players and coaches from the Vagabonds held a free coaching clinic for just over 80 young rugby enthusiasts, some of whom had never played the game before.

Santiago Lopez, the club's youth development officer, led the day's organisation in bringing 40 youngsters from Patong Municipality School with an additional 40 attending from a number of other schools located around the island.

With a dozen coaches on hand, four stations were pre-



Phuket Rugby Academy participants gather together in front of the ACG clubhouse last Saturday. Photo: Neil Quail

pared to educate the young players in skills such as safe tackling, accurate and timely passing, agility and manoeuvrability, rounded off with an enjoyable and engaging game of touch rugby.

Yet again, the event has been met very favourably with grateful and complimentary feedback received from both players and parents. Plans for

the next clinic are already underway with the date of March 13 or 20 expected to be confirmed shortly.

Over the years, Phuket Vagabonds have been heavily involved in rugby and the sport's youth development programs. Last Saturday's clinic followed an equally successful camp organised in November last year and is part

of a broader drive to establish a scheduled youth training program on the island.

"By pushing rugby we hope that we can build a mini and juniors Phuket rugby team to compete with neighbouring and nationwide provinces in the near future," commented Dan Ashburn, captain of the Vagabonds.

"With rugby on the rise in Thailand and more and more enjoying the game over its many provinces we want Phuket to join the party and become a competitive team within the Thailand rugby union set-up," he added.

If you would like to involve your children or are interested in becoming a sponsor for the Vagabonds youth program, please contact Santiago Lopez via the Phuket Rugby Academy Facebook page.

Neil Quail

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# New UFC deal for Loma, next opponent confirmed

## MMA

JP Mestanza

tv@classactmedia.co.th

Thailand's first and only Thai fighter in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) will remain with the promotion after signing a contract extension last week.

Phuket-based fighter Loma Lookboonmee recently announced the signing of her extension in a social media post. Not long after, news broke online of her next opponent. Loma (5 wins, 2 losses) is scheduled to take on America's Sam Hughes (also 5-2) on May 1 at UFC Fight Night in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The fight will be Loma's fourth in the premier promotion, and she will be looking to extend her winning streak to two. Loma's last battle in the Octagon was a unanimous decision victory over former Invicta Atomweight champion Jinh Yu Frey in October last year. In that fight, Loma displayed a significantly improved arsenal of attacks, including her grappling, while picking off strikes seemingly at will.

UFC officials were impressed enough with the victory, coupled with improvements in her game, to offer Loma another slate of fights for the promotion.

It's a decision that the Buriram native and Tiger Muay Thai and MMA Train-



Loma Lookboonmee in training at Phuket's Tiger Muay Thai and MMA Training Camp. Photo: Hip Santayanon

ing Camp is ecstatic to accept, given her status as Thailand's lone UFC fighter and the struggles of fighting, training, and travelling during the worldwide COVID pandemic.

"I'm looking forward to getting back in the cage and continuing my journey as a mixed martial artist," Loma said in an Instagram post announcing the contract extension.

At 25-years-old, Loma has already been fighting for over 17 years, having stepped into her first professional Muay Thai bout at the age of 8 through her father's gym, Boonmee Sithemarat, a Lumpinee and Rajadamern stadium

veteran. In a career that spanned over 200 Muay Thai fights, and multiple world titles, Loma is looking to become a force in MMA, while also putting her country on the combat sports map.

"I believe we will see more Thais in the UFC," said George Hickman, the head MMA coach at Tiger Muay Thai and MMA Training Camp in Chalong.

"I don't think the rest of the world really understands without coming here, that it's such a rich culture, and history of fighting. It's important that, not just Thai people, but the next generation understands what MMA is and realise that it can be very impactful for their lives."



## Muay Thai debuts at Euro Games

### MUAY THAI

THAILAND'S NATIONAL sport has been confirmed on the official medal program for the 2023 European Games in Poland, the International Federation of Muay Thai Associations (IFMA) confirmed last Friday (Feb 26).

The IFMA is recognised by the IOC as the world governing body for the sport, made up of 146 member National Federations, working united towards promoting Muay Thai as a way of life.

The competition format has been designed to be in line with the standards of the Olympic Movement which strive for full gender equality, a goal that IFMA has been dedicated to achieving over the years.

The categories for the European Games will be equal, with seven male and female divisions and two mixed gender team events ensuring complete gender parity for the Muay Thai program at the Games.

"This is a historical day for Muay Thai and most importantly, for the athletes of Europe to be part of this important continental multi-sport event governed by the European Olympic Committee," said Chair of the IFMA Athletes' Commission Janice Lyn.

"This step forward gives the athletes and the youth a chance to be a part of the Olympic Dream and embody the Olympic Values of Excellence, Friendship and Respect," she added.

*The Phuket News*

## Derby day blues for Reds?

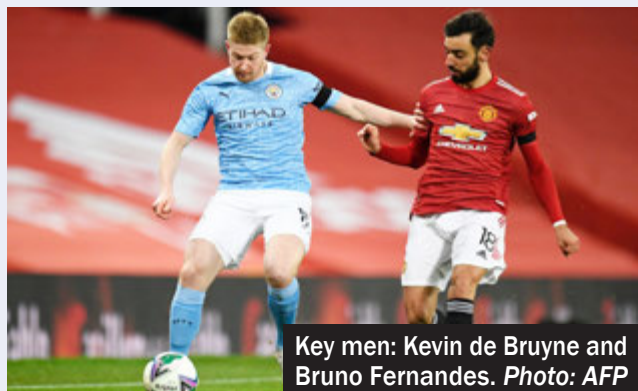
### FOOTBALL

THIS WEEKEND SEES one of the most passionate derbies in the English football calendar as Manchester United and City meet for the 185<sup>th</sup> time.

The Premier League encounter Sunday (Mar 7) at the Etihad Stadium sees hosts City in fine form on the back of a 20-game winning run in all competitions (at time of press). They are 12 points clear at the league summit and look odds-on to secure their seventh league title.

West Ham made them work hard for their victory last Saturday (Feb 27) when goals from central defensive pairing Ruben Diaz and John Stones afforded them a narrow 2-1 win. Manager Pep Guardiola admitted City "were not going to paint anything beautiful" but they still found a way past a well-organised and enterprising Hammers team.

United sit a place behind them in the table and know any distant hopes of catching their cross-city rivals are slim. Lose this game and they



Key men: Kevin de Bruyne and Bruno Fernandes. Photo: AFP

all but disappear altogether.

The Reds experienced a frustrating game last Sunday when they drew 0-0 with Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, a game dominated by a controversial referee decision that denied them a stonewall penalty.

Their statistics away from home may be impressive, now unbeaten in 20 league matches away from Old Trafford, a sequence that includes 13 wins, but they have never truly showed the belief and ruthless edge of potential champions, especially against the bigger teams.

Their talisman, Bruno Fernandes, has gone off the boil of late and the lack of an authoritative centre-forward has meant points dropped in

games drawn that arguably should have been won.

City, on the other hand, have played out the majority of their season without a centre-forward yet have largely flourished, relying on a roving pack of talented midfielders to force their attacking intent. The fact Kevin de Bruyne and Sergio Aguero have now returned from injury only suggests more trouble for United.

Even with the continued absence of fans and the vociferous, unpredictable atmosphere they often create on derby day, the inevitable outcome seems to be another three points for the City machine as they continue their relentless march to the title. *Ben Tirebuck*

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