

**SCHOOLS CLOSED AS OMICRON FEAR SPREADS > PAGE 3**

# SEPARATED BY COVID



The family of three, masked up and heading for Phuket. Photo: Supplied

## FAMILY HOLIDAY FOR NEW YEAR COMES UNDONE AFTER SON, 17, TESTS POSITIVE IN PHUKET

**Chris Husted**  
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A family holiday to Phuket has left a 17-year-old trapped in a hotel room for five days waiting for confirmation on whether or not he is a 'Green' COVID patient and allowed to move to a room next door to his father and brother at a 'quarantine hotel', or whether he will be admitted into the local hospital system for treatment.

Jens Brandenborg, a former university lecturer in marketing, now a marketing coordinator for a major football club in Denmark, arrived in Phuket with his two sons Rasmus, 17, and Victor, 15, on Dec 20.

All three tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of boarding their TUI flight from Copenhagen as part of the Thailand Pass requirements.

All three tested negative from

the swab samples taken after landing in Phuket, the results of which took seven hours for the three to receive while waiting at their room at the Patong Merlin Hotel.

To say the family should be well protected against contracting COVID-19 would be an understatement. All three have been fully vaccinated with Pfizer: Jens with three injections, and Rasmus and Victor both with two injections each.

All three had also recovered from being infected with COVID-19 in December 2020.

### THE SCARE

On Day 3 of their stay, Dec 23, Victor started feeling unwell and had a temperature of 38.4°C.

Worried, Jens, a single father, bought home test kits (ATKs) and they went back to the hotel and performed the tests in their hotel room.

All three tested negative for COVID, but a doctor was called as precaution. "He was there in about 20 minutes. He did a test and confirmed that Victor had Influenza Type A," Jens explained.

Jens and Rasmus were not experiencing any signs of infection at all.

Soon all was well and the trio were enjoying their holiday, with Victor turning 15 on Dec 26, and all three tested negative for their compulsory tests on Day 5 of their stay.

### CONFIRMATION

Yet during a trip to Central Phuket shopping mall on Dec 30, Rasmus started feeling unwell.

"Rasmus was feeling tired. His muscles were sore and his nose would not stop running," Jens explained.

"I bought a nasal spray to stop his nose running, but that didn't help," he added.

Jens bought home test kits and they went back to the hotel again to conduct the tests. They tested themselves twice. This time Rasmus tested positive, but Jens and Victor tested negative – bringing forth the horrible scenario that Jens had asked about repeatedly before bringing his family to Phuket on holiday: what happens when a tourist child tests positive for COVID-19, but the parent tests negative?

Jens called his insurance first to make sure they agreed what to do. He was told to follow the Thai authorities' instructions.

He contacted the hotel reception. Considering it was already very late in the night, he was told for the three of them to stay in their room overnight and a SHA+ minivan arrived in the morning to take them to Bangkok Hospital Siriraj.

"They tested us at about 11am...

## NEWS PAGE 3

**Bangla shields up after Omicron cases confirmed**



## LIFE PAGE 9

**Bicycling Baz gets pedalling for the New Year**



## SPORT PAGE 16

**War Elephants charge to sixth Suzuki Cup win**



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# News



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## Waiting for permission to reunite

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...[last Friday, Dec 31] and we were told we must wait 24 hours for the test results. I kept asking but they said the results would not be ready earlier," Jens explained.

"So we went back to the hotel and we stayed in separate rooms, with Rasmus alone in his room, which the hotel provided for free," he said.

With no news last Saturday (Jan 1), Jens called the hospital to find out the test results.

"After about 45 minutes I was put through to a nurse who said that Rasmus had tested positive for COVID, but that they wanted to run the test again to be sure," Jens said.

Jens and Victor had still both tested negative.

By 5pm the hospital confirmed the test results by email, with the test results attached. Of note, the hospital made no mention of whether Rasmus had contracted Omicron or some other variant of COVID-19.

### PROTOCOL IN ACTION

Jens informed the hotel reception and his insurance company of the news. The hotel reception called the hospital. "We were told: 'Just wait in your rooms, stay in isolation. A nurse from the hospital will call,'" Jens said.

Then they waited.

"Nothing happened until yesterday [Jan 2]," Jens explained.

"At 9:30am I received an



Victor waits patiently in his hotel room as he is tested again for COVID-19. Photo: Supplied

email from the hospital and a call from the hospital quality coordinator, asking about Rasmus's height, weight and symptoms. I was asked to fill out the attached to the email. They wanted Rasmus's test results from Denmark, a copy of his passport, proof of his vaccination, a photocopy of his immigration stamp to enter the country and a copy of his Thailand Pass permit – and of course proof of insurance," Jens said.

"I was told it will take 48 hours to look through all the documents," he added.

The two-day wait was despite his travel insurance company, SOS International insurance – which all travel agents in Denmark use for travel insurance – acting quickly and informing the

hospital by email at 9:45am of guaranteed payment of the claim.

The guaranteed payment was two-fold, with written assurance from SOS International's agent in Thailand, April Assistance, also confirming that the medical bills will be covered, Jens noted.

### WAITING

As of late Monday afternoon (Jan 3), with still no news on what will happen with Rasmus, Jens and Victor moved to the Andakira Hotel, also in Patong.

Jens had not yet been asked, but he knew from his enquiries before travelling to Thailand that all high risk contacts must stay at an 'Alternative Quarantine' hotel until health officials approve

them to leave.

Rasmus is still at the Patong Merlin, and not allowed to leave his room, which he has been stuck in since last Thursday.

Jens spoke highly of the efforts of the staff at the Patong Merlin. "The manager herself has given Rasmus her number so he can contact her 24/7. She has also given me her number to contact her directly with anything that Rasmus needs," he said.

As a single father, Jens feels hollow about leaving his son alone while unwell, although he is just one kilometre away. "But he has his computer with him and we can Skype," he said.

Asked how Rasmus is faring, Jens said, "He is suffering extreme fatigue. He is very

sleepy. He has been sleeping about 20 hours a day for the past two-three days.

"In all it is really a mild flu. His muscles are hurting a bit. At home, if he were sick like this, he would have just stayed home from school," he said.

The plan was for the family to fly home at 10:30am on Monday, so Rasmus could return to school on Tuesday.

"But with so many COVID cases in Denmark right now, schools are closed until Jan 5. They can do online classes in the meantime," he added.

On top of feeling unwell, Rasmus just wants to go home.

"He is very mature for a 17-year-old. He is tired, and would like to go to the hospital to be tested to know whether or not he is a 'Green' patient.

Then he could move here [to the Andakira], where the hotel has reserved a room next to ours so we could at least talk to each other on the balconies," Jens said.

Rasmus, a teenager, is also asking the right questions. "He is questioning why there is so much bureaucracy, asking why does this take so long?" Jens noted.

"The Thai authorities are so strong on that if you test positive you must go to a hospital, but why should you wait five days in your hotel room?" he asked.

"My son has now been left unattended of medical care and is left alone in his hotel room. Why is there no doctor or nurse looking at him? That is what I simply cannot get," he added.

### LOCAL HOSPITALITY

On a bright note, Jens highlighted how a local tour agent had refunded fully prepaid tickets for jet-ski riding and for a snorkelling trip to the simlans, despite both tickets being clearly labelled, "No refunds".

"I had to cancel both. However, the tour agent said she could refund the tickets, but only on the condition that she arrive at the hotel in person to hand over the cash.

"She also asked if she could get my boys anything from the 7-Eleven. They were fine, but she went anyway and bought them some candy. Wonderful," he said.

## Phuket marks 24 injured, one death in New Year road accidents

AT THE TIME OF GOING to press, Phuket officials had reported 25 accidents resulting in 24 people admitted to hospital for their injuries, and one death, during the Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign for New Year 2022.

The news was announced by Rear Admiral Kanokpol Pimthong, Deputy Director of the Phuket Provincial branch of ISOC (Internal Security Operations Command), the political branch of the military in Thailand, on Tuesday (Jan 4).

Rear Admiral Kanokpol chaired the daily briefing for the Seven Days campaign at the meeting room of the Phuket Provincial Disaster Prevention



Rear Admiral Kanokpol Pimthong, Deputy Director of the Phuket Provincial branch of ISOC, chaired the daily briefing on Tuesday (Jan 4). Photo: PR Phuket

and Mitigation Office (DDPM-Phuket) on the third floor of the new Phuket Provincial Hall.

Also present was DDPM-Phuket

Chief Udomporn Kan.

Rear Admiral Kanokpol reported just four accidents across the island on Monday (Jan 3), the

sixth day of the campaign for the New Year.

The four injured were two males and two females. There were no fatalities from road accidents during the 24-hour period, he said.

No further details of the four accidents were provided.

Most of the accidents were caused by motorcyclists and risky behaviour, such as driving over the speed limit, Rear Admiral Kanokpol noted.

"From analysis of the causes of daily accidents in Phuket, it was found that one of the main factors causing accidents came from negligence and traffic disciplinary violations, such as driving over the speed limit or driving a motorcycle down a tunnel underpass, which

is considered a risk of causing an accident," he said.

"Although the accident rate has been reduced, it should not be underestimated in the part of the road that is being constructed. There may be sand or oil stains on the road with traffic, so I want people to be careful driving and have informed the relevant agencies to take action to fix the problem for the safety of the people," he added.

"Phuket Province [provincial officials] also asks for cooperation of all road users to strictly respect traffic rules in parallel with the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to reduce the spread of infections in the area," Rear Admiral Kanokpol concluded. *The Phuket News*



# Omicron spurs Bangla ATK blitz

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Following 11 staffers at venues on Bangla Rd, Patong, testing positive for Omicron, the Patong Entertainment Business Association (PEBA) and the Patong Development Foundation, founded by Patong businessman Preechavude 'Prab' Keesin, have set up a centre for all workers on Bangla Rd to be tested for B40.

The "proactive screening centre", open from 7pm to 11pm each night, has been set up in front of Baan Kamnan (the subdistrict chief's house) in Soi Foodland, behind the Hollywood nightclub.

PEBA President Weerawit Kreuasombat explained that the move is to have all people working on Bangla Rd tested for COVID-19 every seven days.

"To reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to society and communities as much as possible," he said.

The tests being used are antigen test kits (ATKs).

"It has come to the point where we need to work together sincerely and earnestly again. We must join forces to



A Bangla venue staffer undergoes an one of the B40 ATK tests. Photo: PR Phuket

fight in order to maintain the balance of public health and the economy of Patong for as long as possible, because Bangla Rd at present is a very important tourist attraction in Phuket," Mr Weerawit said.

"As can be seen in pictures of New Year's Eve, Patong has always been one of the most popular international tourist destinations [in Phuket]," he said.

"For this reason, we seek

cooperation from owners, employees and operators, as well as other business people on Soi Bangla, to come to be tested by ATK at the car park at the kamnan's house every seven days to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 as much as possible," he added.

"The ATK tests meet Thai FDA standards and are available at an affordable price to alleviate the burden of expenses for our Bangla brothers and

sisters as much as possible," Mr Weerawit noted.

"The test fee is only B40, which is probably the cheapest price in the country, and there are no other costs involved, including free advice on what to do and coordinating with the government for those who test positive," Mr Weerawit pointed out.

"We also ask for cooperation from all involved at the checkpoint to enter Soi Bangla

to raise the level of strictness for all entrepreneurs and tourists who come to Bangla Rd to strictly comply with D-M-H-T-T-A measures in Phuket," he added.

"If everyone does not cooperate in the initial detection of infection, this would make various business operations difficult to continue, or may result in government policies such as curbs on selling alcohol or reduced opening hours in the future," he warned.

The move to open the ATK test centre follows 11 Thai women working on Bangla Rd being confirmed as infected with the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

The news was confirmed by two reports posted online by the Phuket Info Center, operated by the Phuket office of the Ministry of Interior, last Saturday night (Jan 1).

The 11 women initially tested positive for COVID-19 on Dec 28. The women were identified by proactive screening conducted by staff from Patong Hospital using antigen test kits (ATKs).

Meanwhile, the Phuket Info Center last Sunday night (Jan 2) issued an update on the number of international

arrivals who have now been confirmed as infected with Omicron.

The update was issued as a notice only, marked as sourced by the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO).

The update marked 19 more international arrivals testing positive for the Omicron variant, bringing the total number of people in Phuket recognised as infected with Omicron to 144.

All 19 reported were Test & Go arrivals who tested positive on landing at Phuket International Airport on Dec 29.

The tourists had arrived from Australia, the US, Belgium, the UK, Indonesia, Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Lithuania, the report noted.

Phuket officials finally recognised local transmission of Omicron on the island with a series of reports released after 8pm on Dec 29.

In the reports, two Thai women and one Thai male were all marked as confirmed as infected at Mission Hospital Phuket on Dec 23. One Thai male was also confirmed at Mission Hospital Phuket on Dec 24.

## Phuket schools closed Over Omicron fears

SCHOOLS ACROSS Phuket have been ordered to cease on-site learning following an order from the Ministry of Education over the concerns of COVID-19 infections spreading throughout the country.

Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong announced the order at 6:30pm Monday night (Jan 3).

Under the order, all educational institutions, including kindergartens and vocational colleges, across Phuket must suspend on-site classes from Tuesday (Jan 4) through Jan 14.

Classes will continue through online instead.

Special consideration will be given to schools that must hold some form of in-person classes before Jan 14, V/Gov Pichet noted.

"For the schools that need to open on-site [classes], they may do so from Jan 11, but all – 100% – of the students and educational personnel must be tested by ATK in order for such classes to be held to prevent the spread of COVID-19," he said.

Under the order, Phuket Provincial Order No. 1/2565,



Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong announced the closures Monday night (Jan 3). Photo: PR Phuket

signed by Narong Woonciew, all educational institutions on the island have no choice but to close for seven days.

Before any classes resume, all students and educational personnel must be tested by ATK and the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) must be informed in advance.

As of Monday, 13 schools had already announced that onsite classes had been suspended: Muang Thalung School, Anubaan Phuket School, Darasamuth School, Phuket Wittayalai School, Satee Phuket School, Muang Phuket Municipal School, Phuket Municipal Kindergarten, Bang Neaw School, Plookpanya School, Baan Samkong Municipal School,

Piboonsawasdee Municipal School, Putta Mongkol Nimit School and Wat Kajorn Rangsarn Municipal School.

All schools across the country have been asked to assess the risk in their own areas and to cease on-site classes for at least a week over concerns of COVID-19 spreading.

The instructions followed Education Minister Trinuch Thienthong expressing that she was highly concerned over the recent spread of COVID-19 and its potential to further disrupt studies after the New Year holidays, and had urged schools under Obec to comply with all necessary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The Phuket News

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 14 m/s

SUN JAN 9



High: +32°

Low: +26°

Wind 7 m/s

MON JAN 10



High: +32°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

TUE JAN 11



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 11 m/s

WED JAN 12



High: +34°

Low: +25°

Wind 18 m/s

THU JAN 13



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 11 m/s

## Police get to practice law

The Phuket News  
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Phuket Rajabhat University (PRU) has teamed up with the Provincial Police 8 to launch a Bachelor of Law degree programme for police officers with the ultimate goal of raising levels of legal education among its personnel.

An official Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Dec 28 between Asst Prof Dr Hiran Prasarnkan, the President of Phuket Rajabhat University, and Lt Gen Amphol Buarabphon, Chief of Provincial Police Region 8.

The program, which will last two years and eight months, aims to provide international standard educational support to police personnel and is open to both non-commissioned and commissioned police officers with bachelor's degrees in diverse professions who work in the Police Region 8.

The additional educational aspects of the course will provide opportunity for police officers to apply more coherent legal knowledge to help develop their skill set and provide justice for the people. The course is particularly relevant for non-commissioned police officer students who graduated with bachelor's degrees in various fields but not in the area of law.



Photo: PR Phuket

It is believed that over 400 officers have already expressed an interest in taking up the course.

"This is a great opportunity for police officers who do not have a degree in law to access the PRU Bachelor of Laws Program," commented Lt Gen Amphol.

"It will help develop officers and their performance of duty with further accuracy and fairness," he added.

PRU will develop an online teaching module in accordance with police

operations to ensure that students can effectively work and study in tandem.

"Moving forward, we envisage further cooperation outside of this collaboration with Phuket Rajabhat University," said Lt Gen Amphol.

"In the future, there may be co-operation in research or innovative training in new forms of technology and how it can relate to on duty police officers," he added.

Asst Prof Dr Hiran Prasarnkan said that PRU is delighted to provide

its expertise in academic, research and innovation skills and helping to develop the police.

"We are happy to work with all units in order to develop the social agency to make steady progress," he commented.

The Provincial Police Region 8 covers seven provinces consisting of Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Chumphon, Ranong, Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Surat Thani, in addition to the Training Center.



Photo: Koh Kaew OrBorTor

## Hotel generator sparks fire at Koh Rang Noi

OFFICIALS HAVE YET TO estimate the damage caused by a large fire at a hotel on Rang Noi Island, off Phuket's east coast, which burned from late afternoon and into the night on Dec 30.

No people were reported as injured from the fire.

Koh Kaew Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor) was notified of the fire at 5:45pm.

After confirming the scale of the blaze, reaching tens of metres into the air, firefighters from Rassada Municipality, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Region 18 office, the Royal Thai Navy Area Third Area Command "Laem Sing Fire Fighting Squad"

and the Phuket Marine Police were all called in.

After everyone arrived it still took three hours to bring the blaze under control.

Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan arrived to inspect the firefighters' efforts and the damage caused by the fire.

Initial reports indicated that an electrical short-circuit near a main generator for the resort may have sparked the blaze, reaching an area nearby where some 2,000 litres of fuel was being kept.

Officers said an investigation was underway to confirm the cause of the fire.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Belgian in care after cutting own throat

A 50-YEAR-OLD BELGIAN man living in Tambon Thepkasattri, in central Phuket, has been taken into care after suffering a self-inflicted knife wound to the throat.

Col Teerayut Suksanguan, Deputy Chief of the Thalang Police, was notified of the incident at 11:06am on Dec 28.

Officers arrived at the scene, a house at Baan Pa Krong Cheep, in Moo 9, Thepkasattri, to find the man holding a knife and bleeding profusely from his neck.

The man was described as in a state of anxiety. His clothes were soaked in blood, police reported.

Rescue workers from Thepkasattri Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor) took the man into care and provided immediate first aid before rushing him to Thalang Hospital.

Rescue workers expressed concern over the volume of blood the man had lost.

Police have yet to reveal what may have prompted the man to cut his own throat.

The Belgian embassy in Bangkok has been notified of the incident so that the man's relatives can be



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

informed of his current condition, police reported.

*If you or anyone you know is in need of emotional support and counselling, please contact the Samaritans of Thailand at their 24-hour hotline 02-713-6791 (English), 02-713-6793 (Thai) or Thai Mental Health Hotline at 1323 (Thai).*

Eakkapop Thongtub

the Phuket News



# New Chief in Cherg Talay

The Phuket News  
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**M**anoch Punchalad, the newly elected Chief of Cherg Talay Tambon Administration Organisation (OrBorTor), responsible for the beach areas in Cherg Talay, has outlined his policies now that he has been confirmed the official winner of the election held late last month.

However, he has remained silent on any action to be taken against squatters still operating businesses illegally on state land while serving tourists.

The Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) on Dec 24 issued a notice confirming the winners of all the OrBorTor elections held in Phuket on Nov 28, with the exception of the election results for Thepkrasattri OrBorTor.

The delay was required in order to allow for complaints to be filed about the election, and to allow the Election Commission of Thailand head office in Bangkok to confirm the vote count.

All five “unofficial” winners announced on Nov 29 (not including Thepkrasattri



Manoch Punchalad has been installed as the new Chief of Cherg Talay OrBorTor. Photo: PR Phuket

OrBorTor) have been upheld, and may now take office.

An officer at the PEC confirmed to *The Phuket News* that the delay with the election results for Thepkrasattri OrBorTor was due to a complaint filed over the handling of the election. The election results are expected on Jan 7, the officer said.

Of note, the PEC on Dec 24 also confirmed that Siricharat Trairat, sister of the former mayor of Thepkrasattri Municipality, has been named the official winner of the mayoral by-election held in the central Phuket enclave on Dec 4.

“I have a strong determi-

nation to develop the Cherg Talay OrBorTor to be prosperous in all aspects. I will focus on development in various areas along with solving urgent problems for sustainable local development in accordance with the policies of the government and the Ministry of Interior under the framework of the subdistrict administrative organisation,” Mr Manoch said following his installment on Dec 28.

“I will implement the policy under the principles of good governance, and transparency which can be examined. I will work effectively to produce worthwhile results according

to the intentions and needs of the people in the Cherg Talay area,” Mr Manoch said.

Mr Manoch stated that he will work by focusing on public involvement and listening to public opinions.

He also outlined his policy by listing six areas that are to be the focus of his administration: 1) to urgently solve problems that local residents face from the COVID-19 situation, and restore the economy; 2) to support the city’s expansion through the creation and maintenance of transportation routes, infrastructure and water supply; 3) improving public health, disaster pre-

vention and mitigation, and overall security; 4) to develop education, religion, art, culture and tradition by improving educational institutions, child development centres and kindergartens in the area; 5) to improve the environment, economy and tourism by improving the waste collection in the area according to the “4Rs” [Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle] and managing wastewater treatment; 6) and to promote the use of technology to develop e-services and transform existing procedures to a digital system.

“All these policies will be implemented by the framework of law and authority based on the principles of good governance. I am ready to drive the policy into practice until the goals are achieved under cooperation from all sectors, including government officials, political parties, the public, the private sector and other organisations both inside and outside of the Cherg Talay area for the best interests of the people,” Mr Manoch said.

## SILENT ON SQUATTERS

Although new to office, Mr Manoch has yet to make any mention of the issue of illegal

squatters occupying state land along the Layan beachfront who continue to operate lucrative businesses targeting foreign tourists.

The businesses remain despite efforts by the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) and even a Supreme Court ruling ordering the squatters to vacate the land.

At last report, previous Cherg Talay OrBorTor Chief MaAnn Samran in late July last year gave the illegal occupiers of prime beachfront land at Layan Beach another extension to vacate the plots.

That last-minute extension followed Mr MaAnn repeatedly issuing a “last chance” for the squatters to move. Mr MaAnn served official notices of eviction to 15 people occupying some 178 rai of land, including the well-known Tony’s Restaurant at Layan Beach.

The land in question in total covers 178 rai along three kilometres of unspoilt beachfront, altogether estimated to be worth more than B10 billion.

Mr MaAnn made no more efforts to remove the squatters before the OrBorTor election was held on Nov 28.

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The view from one of the roof-top pools.  
Photo: Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao

## First Hilton Garden opens in Phuket

HILTON AND GCP HAVE announced the opening of Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao, marking the debut of the award-winning Hilton Garden Inn brand in Thailand.

Developed and managed by GCP Hospitality, the 177-room hotel spanning seven stories is located in the island's prime Bang Tao Beach area, featuring upscale guest rooms in close proximity to pristine beaches, leisure, entertainment and sporting activities.

"The opening of Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao is especially significant for us. It marks the first and only Hilton Garden Inn hotel in Phuket and further confirms GCP Hospitality's commitment to expand its hotel portfolio in Thailand," said Christophe Vielle, CEO & Co-Founder of GCP Hospitality.

"This hotel also serves as a promise from GCP Hospitality to bring world-class hospitality

to some of the world's most exciting destinations. Bang Tao is a location that perfectly marries nature with urban living – making it the perfect fit for travelers seeking to discover the best that Phuket has to offer."

Paul Hutton, area vice president, head of South East Asia, Hilton, said, "We are delighted to welcome our third Hilton hotel in Phuket with the opening of Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao, where our portfolio in Thailand now spans 14 distinctive hotels and resorts."

"Hilton Garden Inn's brand entry to Phuket Island's vibrant hospitality scene is testament to Hilton's commitment to deliver exceptional hospitality experiences. As more travelers return to this beloved resort destination, we will create better and brighter stays with the brand's signature upbeat service," he added.

*The Phuket News*

# Sandbox helps Russians stay top over New Year

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Tourist arrivals from Russia held the top spot as the Number 1 tourist source market demographic over the Christmas and New Year holidays, a position they are likely to keep into the coming New Year.

Russians first climbed into the top spot at the end of November, and have maintained their winter holiday trend to Phuket throughout December.

According to the Phuket Immigration Daily Report for Dec 28, more than 17,513 Russians had landed in Phuket since the beginning of December, followed by German nationals with 11,960 and British in third place with 9,476 arrivals.

By Monday (Jan 3) the gap had blown out to 21,389 Russian arrivals followed by 13,376 German tourists. The UK held third place with 10,365 arrivals, followed by Sweden (7,742) and France (6,399).

As of Monday, 86,272 people had entered Phuket under the Test & Go scheme since its launch on Nov 1, including 3,785 Thai nationals.

During the same period, 43,732 arrivals had landed in Phuket under the Sandbox scheme, including 645 Thais.

Of note, the suspension of the Test & Go scheme never affected Russian tourist arrivals as Russia, and Kazakhstan and Ukraine, were never added to the list of approved countries.



More direct flights to Phuket from Russian-speaking countries continue to launch, despite the Test & Go scheme being suspended. Photo: AoT Phuket

As marked by the TAT reports, both Dec 27 and Dec 28 saw TUI flights bringing tourists to Phuket, despite reports still circulating in the media over the New Year that travel giant TUI Nordic had cancelled all flights to Phuket since Dec 25. The company's Sweden headquarters dismissed the reports in a direct reply to *The Phuket News* by email last Monday night.

Following the suspension of the Test & Go scheme on Dec 21 due to fears of the Omicron variant spreading throughout Thailand, the number of daily arrivals to Phuket dropped from the mid-4,000s to mid-2,000s. However, as of Monday, even with the scheme suspended, daily arrivals had recovered to mid-3,000s.

On Monday (Jan 2), 3,523 tourists landed at Phuket International Airport. Of those, 1,439 were Test & Go tourists and 2,075 were Sandbox tourists, along with seven Alternative Quarantine arrivals and two travellers in transit.

The arrivals had landed in Phuket on 26 different flights, said the TAT Phuket Reopening Daily Report.

Meanwhile, new direct flights to Phuket from Russian-speaking countries continue to launch. Sunday Airlines resumed flights to Phuket on Dec 26, bringing 240 tourists from Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Ural Airlines resumed their direct flights on Christmas Eve (Dec 24), bringing 90 tourist arrivals from Irkutsk, in Russia's Far East.

# WANT TO TALK TO PHUKET?

The Phuket News Your Island - Your Paper

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The map of PHUKET English 中文 Русский

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## Anantara Phuket in B3.5bn Minor resorts, Abu Dhabi deal

THE ANANTARA LAYAN Phuket Resort is one of five properties in Thailand of which Minor International Public Company Limited (MINT) has sold 40% of shares to the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD).

In a deal reported with an aggregate selling price of US\$104.8 million (about B3.5 billion), the shareholding structure will be in a new joint venture, with 60% held by MINT and 40% by ADFD, said a release announcing the deal issued on Dec 22.

The other four properties are the Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort, Avani+ Riverside Bangkok Hotel, Riverside Plaza Bangkok and Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui.

"This valuation reflects ADFD's strong confidence in MINT asset management performance and the future economic projections for Thailand's tourism sector," said the release.

"The net proceeds from the sale of 40% MINT's interest in these five assets are primarily intended for deleveraging and strengthening of MINT's balance sheet position. These five assets will continue to be



Photo: Anantara Layan Phuket Resort

operated under the existing brands and under the control of MINT," the release added.

ADFD was described as a "government linked entity" established in 1971 which has invested in more than 500 projects and companies with more than US\$40 billion in assets.

The fund focuses on two investment areas: liquidity management through various financial instruments including bonds and bank deposits, and equity through full ownership or equity sharing in partnership with public or private companies, the release explained.

Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International commented, "The transaction signifies our continuous commitment to strengthen our balance sheet and solidify our liquidity position to ensure that we are poised for the recovery to come.

His Excellency Mohamed Saif Al Suwaidi, the Director General of ADFD expressed, "The tourism sector has long been a vital driver of Thailand's economy and a large component of Thailand's employment base.

"Despite the current volatility from COVID-19, ADFD is looking beyond the pandemic and believes in the long-term trajectory of Thailand's tourism sector.

"This is our first foray in [the] Thailand market, and we are very excited to partner with MINT. Moreover, given MINT's leading position as the strongest hospitality operator in Thailand, ADFD is proud to form this long-term investment partnership which complements our investment strategy to collectively promote economic growth of our partner countries."

*The Phuket News*



# Test & Go to be suspended

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

At time of press, the government was to consider further delaying the resumption of the Test & Go scheme until the end of this month following the spike in Omicron cases in the country.

Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on Monday (Jan 3) that concern over the global Omicron outbreak previously prompted the government to originally suspend the entry of both Thais and foreign arrivals until Jan 4.

However, Omicron infections have been detected among prior arrivals, he said.

In light of this, a meeting of the Public Health Ministry's Emergency Operation Centre on Monday agreed to ask the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) to consider keeping the Test & Go scheme, which was set to resume on Tuesday, on hold until the end of this month.

"In the interests of health and safety, we have decided to delay the Test & Go scheme further. We will present the proposal for approval by the CCSA," Anutin said.

As for Test & Go travellers whose applications for entry were previously approved, they must now enter Thailand by Jan 10 under revised measures for travel, he said.

After the Jan 10 deadline, visitors must only enter under the Phuket Sand-



Tourists arriving at Suvarnabhumi airport on Dec 17, when Test & Go was still an option for air travellers. Photo: Bangkok Post / file

box scheme or be quarantined, he said.

Anutin added the Department of Medical Sciences reported that Thailand logged 229 more cases of Omicron on Monday, bringing the national total to 1,780.

Dr Kiattiphum Wongrajit, permanent secretary at the Public Health Ministry, expressed concern over COVID-19 infection clusters in several provinces, with pubs and restaurants that had failed to ensure staff and patrons adhered to COVID-free safety measures cited as the main sources of transmission.

Dr Kiattiphum stressed that those who had attended venues where precautions were not being taken should take antigen tests before returning and then work from home for at least 14 days, while those with no choice but to work on-site should also have two more tests during the first

week, and have their health monitored for a further two, he said.

Government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said that returning government agencies, banks and private companies have been urged to conduct antigen testing on their staff to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Public Health Ministry announced on Tuesday morning that 3,091 new coronavirus cases and 12 fatalities had been recorded during the previous 24 hours – the fewest since April 29, 2021.

Since the pandemic started in early 2020, there have been 2,235,576 COVID-19 cases, 2,180,321 complete recoveries and 21,750 deaths so far.

The country's all-time 24-hour high of COVID-19 fatalities was 312 recorded on Aug 18. The highest number of cases was 23,418 on Aug 13.

## Seven Days of Danger stats lower than last year

### BANGKOK

AS OF MONDAY (JAN 3), traffic accidents and road fatalities during the Seven Days of Danger holiday period were both 18.9% lower than in the same period a year ago.

Thirty-four people died and 274 others were injured in 264 road accidents on Monday, the sixth of the "seven dangerous days" of the New Year period, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation reported.

According to official data, speeding (35%) was the most common cause of the accidents on Monday, followed by drink-driving at 18%, while 83% involved motorcycles and 6% pickups.

Almost 80% of accidents occurred on straight roads and 9% were between 4pm and 5pm, while 15% of the casualties were aged 40 to 59 years.

A total of 437,936 vehicles were inspected at 1,905 traffic checkpoints, with 61,730 officers de-



Traffic at the Victory Monument in Bangkok during the New Year break. Photo: Bangkok Post

ployed across the country. As a result, 91,546 people faced legal action for violating traffic rules, including 26,248 motorcyclists who were not wearing a crash helmet and 23,253 people for driving without a licence.

An accumulated total of 2,488 traffic accidents were reported during the first six days of the holiday (Dec 29 - Jan 3), with 2,471 people injured and 300 deaths. Chiang Mai saw the most accidents at 92, Bangkok reported the most fatalities at 20, and Kanchanaburi had the most injured people at 91. Bangkok Post

## New COVID measures for schools

### CHIANG MAI

THE EDUCATION MINISTRY on Tuesday (Jan 4) announced new measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in schools and other education institutions nationwide.

The prevention measures, effective immediately, include each education institution making a thorough assessment of students and teachers who may be at risk of catching the virus.

Those with at-risk students and teachers have to consider



Photo: Chinnawat Singha

offering distance learning options. These include on-air, online, on-hand and on-demand learning, depending on the specific situation each institution finds itself in.

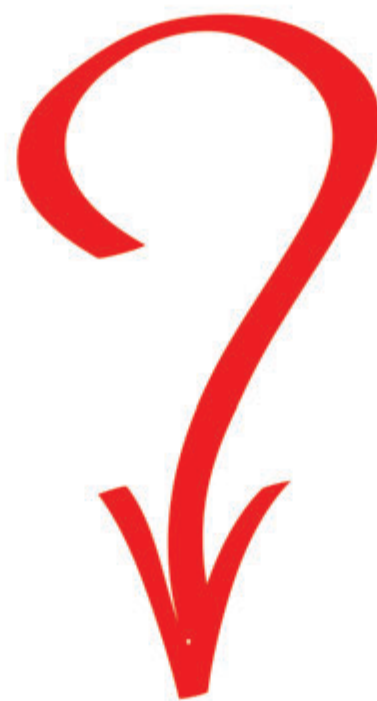
Each institution is to conduct a "Thai Stop COVID Plus" assessment, designed to

help evaluate their COVID-19 control measures. They still have to follow DMHT-RC (distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing, testing, reducing congestion and cleaning) and SSET-CQ (self-care, using serving spoons, eating freshly cooked meals, using a tracking system, check and quarantine) measures.

If students and/or education personnel test positive for COVID-19, the institutions have to strictly follow disease-control protocols and closely coordinate with local health facilities. Bangkok Post



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# The King's Man excels

David Griffiths

One of the best franchises to have surfaced over the past decade has been the very British 'Kingsman' franchise. A kind of mix between James Bond and a Quentin Tarantino film, the original film not only made Taron Egerton a household name but also introduced the world of a cinema to a secret organisation that could even see Colin Firth lay waste to a room full of villains.

A second film soon followed and of course fans of the franchise soon started to ask more and more questions about this society and how it began. Well now those questions are answered as writer/director Matthew Vaughn (*Kick-Ass*) returns to the universe with a prequel aptly titled *The King's Man*.

The film chronicles the early days of the Kingsman organisation as widely respected pacifist Orlando Oxford (Ralph Fiennes – *Schindler's List*) works with his hired help, Polly (Gemma Arterton – *Clash of the Titans*) and Shola (Djimon Hounsou – *Guardians of the Galaxy*), to investigate a cabal that

he believes he is working to keep World War I continuing as long as they can.

While the cabal, which is headed by Morton (Matthew Goode – *Stoker*) and aided by the likes of Rasputin (Rhys Ifans – *The Amazing Spider-Man*), are playing out their cunning plan, Orlando finds himself wanting to try to end the war anyway he can after his only son, Conrad (Harris Dickinson – *Beach Rats*), expresses an interest in enlisting.

The term prequel when it comes to an established franchise is often a scary notion but Vaughn has delivered an absolute classic with this film – it is easily better than the second film and gives the audience a great insight into the organisation and the characters that started it.

The power of this film though is that Vaughn is more than willing to try various things throughout the film. Yes, the traditional action sequences that made the first film so special are back, but added to that is the fact that Vaughn has a real handle on characterisation this time. Then there is also the brilliant screenplay, which is co-written by Karl Gajdusek (*Oblivion*), which goes



Image: IMDB

from tear-jerking moments to laughs with ease and is never afraid to mix genres as well. The scene in which a trio of kingsmen take on Raaputin has just the right mix of comedy and action and is one of the best cinematic moments of the year, as is one of the film's biggest twists that we unfortunately can't talk about here (spoiler alert).

The strongest point of this script though is the relationship that Vaughn sets up between Orlando and Conrad. The dynamics between the two shift from a relationship made up of care and respect through to a combative nature that makes both explore their views on the Great War. Even better is the fact that Vaughn moves away from Hollywood tropes to bring a close to the storyline that is a sheer stroke of screenwriting genius.

To the credit of the screenwriting team there are no wasted characters in this film either. While a lot of focus is placed on Orlando and Conrad that doesn't mean that the characters of Polly and Shola are left lacking. Both have enough characterisation to make them interesting enough characters and most audience members will find

the hint that there may be a follow-up film to this one very welcoming.

The brilliant acting performances here belong to Ralph Fiennes and Rhys Ifans. Fiennes is an acting force in this film – delivering both action and dramatic scenes amazingly well and he is well matched alongside a nearly unrecognisable Ifans playing the notorious Rasputin. Ifans being able to make the character comical while remaining a fearful villain is credit to both actor and screenplay.

*The King's Man* will be loved by fans of the franchise and newcomers alike. The right mix of action and characterisation make this a memorable film while the amazing screenplay and characterisation make this a worthy entry into this already brilliant franchise.

*The King's Man* is currently screening in Phuket and has been classified 18. 4/5 Stars

David Griffiths has been working as a film and music reviewer for over 20 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. You can follow him at [www.facebook.com/subcultureentertainmentaus](https://www.facebook.com/subcultureentertainmentaus)




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# New Year Revolutions



## BLAZING SADDLES

**Baz Daniel**  
baz\_gunner2000@yahoo.com

**M**aking – and often immediately breaking – New Year's resolutions is an age-old tradition all over the world as we pass from one year into the next. Hope, and its close cousin, self-delusion, are abundant at this time of year as we promise to be better and brighter versions of ourselves. In Thailand, in fact you get not just one, but three clear chances to make and then try to keep your resolutions, as Thailand munificently celebrates three separate New Years – Gregorian, Chinese and Thai!

On January 1 of course, we enter the Gregorian year 2022, then on Tuesday, February 1, the Chinese year of the Tiger will spring forth and in April we'll magically slip into 2,565 on the Thai Buddhist calendar. It's a great time for cyclists to take stock and set goals for their future.

Thailand's cyclists, like us all, have had a challenging year of viral restrictions and constraints, certainly in travelling around the country. However, the Andaman region's environment, air quality and traffic have all improved with far fewer tourists around, making cycling more enjoyable and a thoroughly excellent way of counteracting the vectors of ill health such as high blood pressure, obesity, lethargy and poor-quality food intake.

Let me then suggest some New Year's cycling resolutions as we enter 2022.

First and foremost is for the government to develop and fund a well-considered programme of cycling



Baz enjoys his victory stance overlooking the Phuket coastline. Photo: Supplied

infrastructure, particularly a network of cycle-ways separated from other traffic. I had the extreme pleasure of cycling in New Zealand just before the global COVID pandemic and riding on some of the huge network of separated cycle paths and trails which crisscross the country.

Cycling in Kiwiland is an absolutely delightful way to experience the natural bounty of that magnificent country on two wheels and in complete safety. Thailand and Phuket deserve the same! For the government, your New Year's resolution is quite simple. Convert all the grandstanding hype of the TAT and the like into concrete action. Start planning and building a programme of cycling infrastructure as part of the post-pandemic tourism rebound that is safe, scenic and fun.

For us 'Lycra Louts' in Phuket, our resolutions should be highly specific, reasonably attainable and fun... or quite frankly they aren't going to last even until the end of January. "Lose weight and cycle more" just doesn't cut it. That's far too vague to have any real meaning.

Here are five simple resolutions to help you get fitter and enjoy cycling more.

1) Cycle on at least three occasions and for a total of over 60 kilometres each week. Keep a written or digital record and post it on social media so that all your friends and family know you are making the commitment.

2) Cycle with a group of other enthusiasts, some of whom are better and stronger cyclists than you. Research shows that athletic performance improves through association and imitation of those who are better than we are. In addition, cycling in a group is motivating fun and you get to share coffee and gossip after your ride.

3) Cycle before breakfast at least twice each week. This is safer, cooler and gets you out of bed and on the road with just an orange or a banana in your stomach. You go to bed earlier the night before and soon you'll find you want to be out in Phuket's gorgeous sunrise and enjoying the best part of the day.

4) Set a specific cycling objective and publish it to all your friends and family. "I will cycle my age in kilometres in one hour on my next birthday" is a good example. That's a bit of a challenge if you happen to be over 70 like me, so tailor your goal according to your abilities right now and what you can reasonably expect to achieve by your next birthday.

5) Book a challenging cycling holiday or event such as cycling from Bangkok to Phuket with Martin Brott's Siam Bike Tours ([www.siambiketours.com](http://www.siambiketours.com)) with your friends and then train up to be able to achieve and enjoy it.

Happy New Year from Bicycling Baz!

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



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POP QUIZ

1. Where was Elvis Presley born?
  2. What was the first civilian supersonic plane in the world called?
  3. Which is the smallest planet in the Solar System?
  4. What is generally considered to be the average body temperature?
  5. Which five countries share a border with Slovakia?
- Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

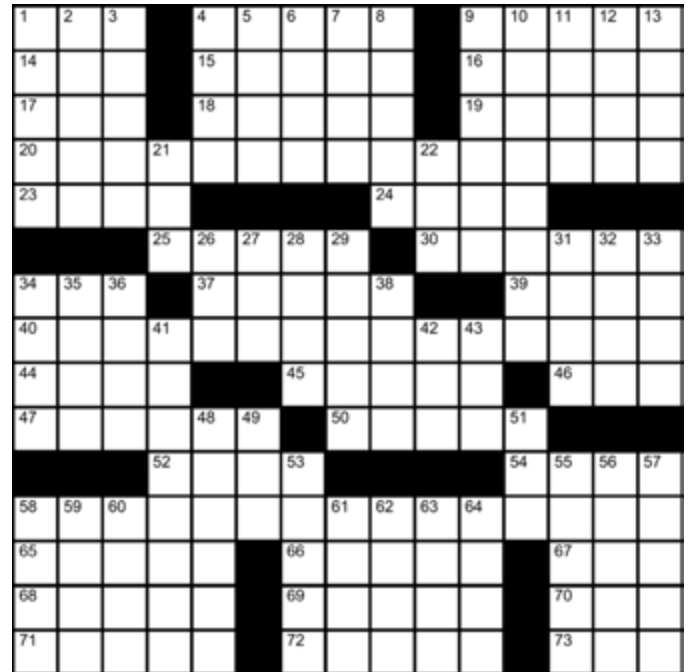
				6	9			
			4			1		
	7	3	5		1	9		
3		8				2	5	
6				3				1
	4	7				8		3
		5	9		7	6	8	
		2			4			
			2	8				

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Oomph
  4. Wake Island, e.g.
  9. It's a snap
  14. Blvd.
  15. Female demon
  16. Traversed a strait, e.g.
  17. McCarthy quarry
  18. Elevate
  19. Rechargeable battery
  20. Dangerous one
  23. Cuba's \_\_\_ of Youth
  24. Bad to the bone
  25. Button material
  30. New York Times employee
  34. Bathroom installation
  37. Excitement
  39. Auto parts giant
  40. "Everyone knows the truth!"
  44. Confess
  45. One step
  46. 1965 Ursula Andress film
  47. Fashioned anew
  50. Young's partner in accounting
  52. Lover of Aeneas
  54. Every which way
- Down
1. Zoroastrian
  2. Squares
  3. Piano part
  4. Downwind
  5. Checker, perhaps
  6. Arabian Sea nation
  7. Light air
  8. Carpenter's machine
  9. Anthropoid ape
  10. Crack type
  11. Shamu, for one
  12. Some are green
  13. 15 and 23, e.g.
  21. Grasp
  22. Twelfth Night, vis-à-vis Epiphany
  26. Flurry
  27. French vineyard
28. Refuse visitors
29. Ham it up
  31. Checks
  32. Colorful fish
  33. Latest thing
  34. Kind of tissue
  35. Cover, in a way
  36. Energy source
  38. Beginning to cry?
  41. Restrains an infant?
  42. Like some ears
  43. Store posting: Abbr.
  48. Linux system
  49. Shogun's capital
  51. Modicum
  53. As a rule
  55. Thick
  56. Willow
  57. Rogers or Chesney
  58. Wail
  59. Noodle concoction?
  60. Chafes
  61. Prefix with scope or meter
  62. Buckets
  63. Tease
  64. Super server

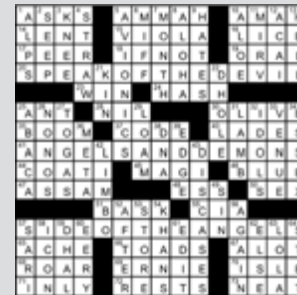
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Tupelo, Mississippi; 2) The Tupolev Tu-144; 3) Mercury; 4) 37°C; 5) Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic



Visit: [www.ilovecrosswords.com](http://www.ilovecrosswords.com)

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

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 how long the average American spends every year looking for misplaced items.

10

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

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Laem Singh Viewpoint. Photo by Hilla Pothier

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

This week in history

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

Francois 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 – the first smart-phone model designed and marketed by Apple Inc, colloquially known after 2008 as the “iPhone 2G” – at a MacWorld keynote address in San Francisco.

Jan 10, 49 BC

Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon river, in northeastern Italy, south of Ravenna, signalling the start of civil war.

Jan 11, 532 AD

Nika riots in Constantinople: A



Steve Jobs and the first iPhone. Photo: AFP

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.

Jan 12, 1554

Bayinnaung, who would go on to assemble the largest empire in the history of Southeast Asia, is crowned King of Burma.

Jan 13, 2018

A false emergency alert warning of an impending missile strike in Hawaii caused widespread panic in the state.

Source: Wikipedia



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The Phuket CSR 2021 Charity was held on December 18, 2021 at the Child Care Foundation. The annual event, organised by Asia Mice Planner and Only One International, saw a delegation from the Malaysian & Thai Friends group, from Phuket and Bangkok, attend. The funds raised, close to B120,000, were used to purchase items that were donated to the Child Care Foundation at Kathu in the morning, followed by a poolside party at Patong Resort Hotel in the evening with a spectacular Seafood BBQ buffet dinner with Malaysian-style cuisine. "We hope to make our annual charity event bigger and also as a way to foster the friendship of people living in Phuket and Bangkok," the group said.





# Honours even in ACG series

## CRICKET

Curt Livermore

The ACG played host to the final matches of 2021 last week as Phuket's Cricket Group (PCG) side took on the Pakistan Academy from Hat Yai in a 30-over double-header.

Having won last year's series and possessing a strong bowling lineup, the hosts went into the first game on Tuesday (Dec 28) in confident mood. Waseem Mir, Sami Pir and Dom Judge were all finding form with the latter claiming 3 wickets to leave the score at 91/4 at the 15-over drinks break.

The spin bowling duo of captain Curt Livermore and Simon Wetherell made sure the run rate stayed under control and wickets continued to fall, although removing the tourists' captain Asif Butt (63) proved problematic. He finally fell in the final delivery of the innings, caught by Livermore off the bowling of Sajal Gaur to leave the visitors 192 all out.

In reply the hosts got off to a forgettable start as openers Guddu Manoj and Stuart Hamilton were soon back in the shed for just 2 runs-a-piece as the visitors demonstrated their class early in both the bowling and fielding departments.

Michael Flowers (37) and An-



Members of the Phuket Cricket Group and the touring Pakistan Academy at the ACG. Photo: Simon Wetherell

drew McMillan (39) combined to forge a healthy partnership before Asif Khan bowled the latter in the 21st over, triggering a batting collapse in which 6 wickets tumbled for a mere 33 runs, enabling the away side to take a 1-0 lead with Butt earning the Man of the Match award.

### DEJA VU

The following day Butt won the toss and elected to bat first although sharp PCG bowling and fielding meant the visitors were struggling on 69/4 at the 10-over mark.

Captain Butt was looking good

to repeat his heroics from the first match before Paddy Ledebour took a smart catch off the bowling of Livermore to leave the tourists 123/5 after 22 overs with 5 wickets falling in the next 6 overs for an additional 51 runs.

In response it appeared to be a case of deja vu as PCG batsmen Anthony Van Blerk (9) and Rhys-Thomas (2), perhaps channelling their inner Englishness, both fell cheaply leaving the home side in a precarious position at the 10-over mark with the score reading 39/2.

Raju (41) and Ledebour (30)

crashed 6 boundaries between them before the latter skied one into the hands of Zakir Kahn off the bowling of Saajid and Raju was bowled by Hani Kahn.

Craig Morgan (32) Simon Bailey (12) combined for a 56-run stand that brought the team total to 147/4 before Morgan was bowled by Muhammad Bilal and Bailey was unfortunately forced to retire.

Sensing another collapse was on the horizon, the visitors pushed hard for more wickets and were rewarded when Jamie Robinson (2) and Richard Clarke (7) were

both run out in the 26th over after a useful partnership, thus leaving the door open for an unlikely Pakistan Academy victory.

Fortunately for the hosts however, Flowers (3\*) and Livermore (9\*) combined for the remaining runs to ensure the hosts were able to rescue a series draw.

Man of the Match went to Raju for his contribution of 41 from 41 balls as well as removing both openers with the ball.

Asif Butt was the visitors' clear standout performer with the bat over the two games with his 81 from 83 balls faced whilst Saajid's figures of 3-51 from 9 overs just edged out Bilal's 3-40 from his 10 overs.

Sajal Gaur and Livermore were the pick of Phuket's bowlers over the two matches with returns of 3-55 from 9 overs and 5-69 from 10 overs respectively.

Phuket cricket would like to thank everyone who made the effort to ensure the series went ahead and look forward to welcoming the Pakistan Academy back to our shores next year for another good-spirited tour.

This Sunday (Jan 9) sees the ACG host the Alan Cooke 'MBE' Memorial Match in what will hopefully become an annual event following the sad passing of Alan last month. If anyone would wish to get involved, please feel free to contact the ACG for details.

## Stokes dismisses captaincy talk as Root considers future

### CRICKET

JOE ROOT SAID ON Monday (Jan 3) that he has "questions to answer" and will assess his future as England captain after the losing Ashes tour, as Ben Stokes insisted he has no ambition to take over.

Root became his country's longest-serving Test skipper at the fourth Test in Sydney, which started Wednesday, surpassing predecessor Alastair Cook's 59 matches in charge.

But he is under pressure after three consecutive heavy defeats to Australia with some pundits, including Ricky Ponting and Geoff Boycott, scathing about his captaincy.

"Obviously it's been very challenging and we've had a lot to deal with, not just on the field but off it, and we are just trying to manage it as best we can," the 31-year-old Root said of the calamitous tour.

"I'll look at my future beyond this tour at the



Joe Root (left) and Ben Stokes. Photo: AFP

end of it," he added.

"I think there are questions for me to answer. I don't think, as a distraction around the group, it should be something I'm wasting energy on now.

"I need to make sure I throw everything I can into these next two games. I owe that to this team and the players. That will give us the best chance of getting the results that we desire."

There are few obvious candidates to replace him with vice-captain Stokes at the top of the pile, a move championed by former captain Mike Atherton, among others.

But the 30-year-old star all-rounder said that he was not interested and backed Root.

"I've never really had an ambition to be a captain," he was quoted as saying by the BBC.

"Captaincy is more than about setting fields, picking the team, making decisions out there in the middle. A captain is someone you want to go out and play for. Joe Root is someone I always want to play for.

Stokes has led England once previously, a Test defeat by West Indies in 2020 when Root was on paternity leave.

AFP

English Premier League Predictions

thephuketnews.com/predictions.php



# Title is Man City's to lose

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Even after a weekend in which Manchester City produced the worst performance of the Premier League's top four, the champions streaked further clear towards a fourth title in five years.

City manager Pep Guardiola admitted his side were second best last Saturday (Jan 1) despite coming from behind to beat 10-man Arsenal 2-1 with a 93<sup>rd</sup> minute winner that secured an 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive league win.

As Guardiola's men have hit their stride, Chelsea and Liverpool have run out of steam to turn a tight three-horse race, into a procession.

Struck down by coronavirus outbreaks and injuries, the two challengers for City's crown threw themselves into a titanic battle at Stamford Bridge last Sunday, but a 2-2 draw did little for either side's hopes of reeling in the leaders.

City's advantage now stands at 10 points from Chelsea, with Liverpool a further point back with a game in hand.

"It's a big gap, so they have the title maybe to lose at the moment," said Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, one of those forced into a swift return to action after testing positive for COVID-19.



Manchester City players wheel away in celebration after Rodri (second right) scored an injury-time winner against Arsenal last Saturday (Jan 1). Photo: AFP

"We just have to get results, play good football and win games. It sounds pretty easy but it's tough."

Rather than cutting the gap, there is a likelihood it could grow in the coming weeks as Chelsea and Liverpool tackle their own issues.

Both are involved in two-legged League Cup semi-finals over the next two midweeks despite calls from managers for the ties to be switched to one-off games.

Chelsea's record signing Romelu Lukaku was dropped for Sunday's crucial clash after an explosive interview with Italian media in

which he revealed his displeasure with how his first season back at the Bridge is going.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was also absent due to a COVID infection, along with Alisson Becker, Roberto Firmino and Joel Matip.

### SALAH, MANE TO BE MISSED

And the Reds now have to cope without their top goalscorers, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane, for up to a month due to their international commitments at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Chelsea will also lose goalkeeper Edouard Mendy to the AFCON, while first choice wing-backs Reece James and Ben Chilwell face months out injured.

"How should we compete in a title race?" Blues boss Thomas Tuchel complained earlier last week after his side were forced to fulfil all of their December fixtures, while 18 other Premier League games were called off due to COVID outbreaks.

Even if Tuchel and Klopp's men recovered their early season form, City's relentless consistency shows no signs of offering a ray of hope.

They have averaged a total of 95 points in each of Guardiola's three title-winning seasons in England and are on course to hit that mark again.

"We showed our champion mentality, we never give up," said midfielder Rodri after his late strike at the Emirates kept City's winning run going.

"We know how tough it is to win the Premier League and we are not going to drop it.

"We don't look at the others much and winning 11 games in a row, it shows that we are focused on ourselves."

Elsewhere the pressure increased on Everton manager Rafa Benitez as his side were beaten 2-3 by Brighton last Sunday. The players were booed from the pitch after their dismal run extended to just one win in their last 12 league games.

Everton sit eight points above the relegation zone and Benitez will know results must improve quickly if he is to avoid increased talk of the sack.

"I don't like to make excuses. The goals we conceded is the lack of focus in the first minute and then after you play under pressure," Benitez said.

"I'm concerned that we have to improve, especially in defence. We are lacking a little quality in the decisions."

## Sadom caps dream year with mixed title

### GOLF

IN-FORM SADOM Kaewkanjana wrapped up his fruitful year on a high note after he beat Wichaya-pat Sinsrang by two strokes to win the B5 million Thailand Mixed hosted by Trust-Golf at the Aquella Golf and Country Club in Phangnga last Friday (Dec 31).

The young gun from Narathiwat and rookie Wichayapat emerged the two strong contenders right from the start as they took turns in either dominating or sharing the leaderboard.

But a gutsy eagle on the 14<sup>th</sup> hole handed All Thailand Golf Tour No.1 Sadom an upper hand with a two-shot margin and he held onto the lead to sign off with a final 64 and a four-day overall score of 29-under-par 259.

"That eagle on the 14<sup>th</sup> really made me more confident which was the key. I'm really confident with my short game and I barely made mistakes. In fact, I committed only two bogeys this week," said Sadom,



Kaewkanjana celebrates with the trophy and his caddy Manop Santhia. Photo: Bangkok Post

who took home B750,000.

Sadom has been the most outstanding male golfer this year with five wins - three on the All Thailand Golf Tour, one on the Thailand PGA Tour and one on the Thailand TrustGolf Tour.

"This is beyond my expectation. If you asked me at the start of 2021, I wouldn't say that I would win five titles," said Sadom.

Sadom is also rewarded a free scholarship at Rangsit University to pursue a degree in golf from bachelor's degree to doctoral level.

Wichayapat started at the first tee-off with a shot advantage and was still one up after 10 holes. However,

a disappointing bogey on the 12<sup>th</sup> allowed Sadom to share the lead on 25 under and even he fought back with two birdies, it was too late. He finished on 27-under 261 and earned B500,000.

Rounding up the top three was two-time Thailand Mixed champion Prom Meesawat, who shot a 65 to finish on 25-under 263. He will return to his home in Hua Hin B300,000 richer.

Whiz Kid Ratchanon Chantanuwat, 14, won the best male amateur while national player Natthakritta Vongtaveelap won the best female amateur. Both shot 267 to finish tied sixth.

Bangkok Post

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All square in ACG double header > p14



Thailand celebrates winning the AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 at the National Stadium in Singapore last Saturday (Jan 1). Photo: AFP

## War Elephants win a record-extending sixth AFF Suzuki Cup

### FOOTBALL

Bangkok Post

Thailand coach Mano Polking is aiming to take the national side to a higher level after guiding the War Elephants to a record-extending sixth title at the 2020 AFF Suzuki Cup last Saturday evening (Jan 1).

Having won 4-0 in the first leg of the final on Dec 29, the Thais were held 2-2 by Indonesia in the second leg for a 6-2 victory on aggregate at Singapore's National Stadium.

Polking hailed the achievement as a "special" one and a base to keep pushing Thai football forward.

"After such a difficult year, football is still a great opportunity to make people happy and I hope this is a New Year gift for all people in Thailand after difficult times," said the German-Brazilian coach who was in his first tournament in charge of the War Elephants.

"I'm so happy that we won but also that we won in a special way and I just have to give thanks to everyone from the staff, the officials and especially the players.

"This is a prestigious tournament and we're so happy that we won it but we don't want to stop here and then not have a chance in the World Cup qualifiers or Asian Cup qualifiers.

"We showed some brilliant moments of football, defended well

when we had to and created the most chances in the tournament so we have to take that belief to the next level now."

The 45-year-old tactician thanked Thailand manager Nualphan Lam-sam for appointing him as national team coach.

"I have to thank Madam Pang [Nualphan] for believing in me," the former Bangkok United coach said.

Polking came to Thailand to be assistant of national coach Winfried Schaefer in 2012 when the War Elephants finished second in the Suzuki Cup.

He succeeded Japanese coach Akira Nishino who was sacked by the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) in July after failing to successfully navigate the 2022 World Cup qualifying round.

### BONUS

Polking and his men arrived in Bangkok from Singapore on Sunday (Jan 2).

The team will receive a B26 million bonus for winning the title from Nualphan and her associates.

They received B10mn from FAT president Somyot Poompunmuang for beating defending champions Vietnam in the semi-finals, and US\$300,000 (approx B10mn) in prize money from the Asean Football Federation (AFF).

"This is a New Year gift for all Thais," Nualphan said at Suvarnabhumi airport on Sunday.

"This is the first step for Thai football to get through the crisis."

Nualphan, who is president and CEO of Muang Thai Insurance, gave the players gifts, which included luxury bags and watches, through a lucky draw before the final.

Thailand have now won the biennial Asean championship six times (1996, 2000, 2002, 2014, 2016 and 2020), ahead of Singapore who have claimed four titles.

The 2020 edition of the Asean championship was postponed from last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### TOURNAMENT MVP

Thailand captain Chanathip Songkrasin won his third Most Valuable Player (MVP) award and shared the golden boot award with teammate Teerasil Dangda with four goals each.

Thanks to his strikes in Singapore, Teerasil is now the event's all-time highest scorer with 19 goals, two more than retired Singapore forward Noh Alam Shah's tally.

"Naturally, I am happy to win the title for the third time. We worked hard for each other. Now all teams in the region have improved and the competition is getting harder and harder," said Chanathip.

"Every [Thai] player wanted to help the national team and also do it for their families and their supporters and we have done it.

"We will not stop developing and look more further than this."

Thailand have never played in the World Cup finals and never won the Asian Cup.

On Saturday, with Thailand on a four-goal advantage from the first leg, it was always going to be a mountain to climb for Indonesia to stage a comeback.

But just eight minutes in, Indonesia gave themselves the best of starts when midfielder Ricky Kambuaya fired in a shot that slipped off the hands of Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Tedsungnoen and into the goal.

The lead for Indonesia would last all the way into the second half before a three-minute blitz from Thailand saw them taking a 2-1 advantage.

Adisak Kraisorn equalised with a close-range finish in the 53rd minute and Sarach Yooyen's grounder three minutes later gave them the lead.

Ten minutes before the end, Egy Maulana equalised for the Indonesians.

Indonesia coach Shin Tae-Yong said his players' lack of experience cost them dearly.

"We will prepare better for the next edition," said the South Korean whose team eliminated hosts Singapore in the semi-finals.

"The next time, we won't be dark horses, we will be contenders," he added.

### COVID PENALTY

Shin also expressed his disappointment after four of his players were

ruled out of the second leg of the final for breaching the competition's COVID-19 protocols.

Rizky Ridho Ramadhani, Elkan Baggott, Victor Igbonefo and Rizky Dwi Febrianto were reported to have left their hotel for up to two hours in breach of the strict arrangements put in place for players and team officials for the duration of the month-long tournament in Singapore.

Following an investigation by an Asean Football Federation (AFF) disciplinary committee, it was decided the players had failed to follow controlled rules and were barred from involvement in the match.

"The four players went out to buy essentials like shampoo and soap and we were informed of the penalty for that, which I totally understand," Shin said.

"However, given the fact that we were locked in our hotel room for as long as one month, it is understandable that you run out of your necessities and essentials."

"We were on a controlled itinerary but at the same time, the two hotel floors that we occupied were not occupied only by us as there were other hotel guests staying there," Shin added.

"On the weekend, there were also some also drunken wedding guests who came up to our floor and made a lot of noise which resulted in our players not getting proper sleep at night."