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RED ALERT



New Region 8 Police Commander Lt Gen Kittharath Punpetch oversees people arriving in Phuket by road at the Phuket Check Point in Tha Chatchai. Photo: Region 8 Police

PHUKET COVID MEASURES RAMPED UP AS HEAVY RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED IN 28 'RED ZONE' PROVINCES, INCLUDING BANGKOK

Tanyaluk Sakoot
reporter2@classactmedia.co.th

Provincial officials have set their sights on ensuring Phuket is not declared a 'red zone' amid the COVID-19 outbreak that this week saw 28 provinces, including the capital Bangkok, placed under harsh restrictions in the hope of curtailing the spread of the virus.

The crackdown in the 28 provinces, signed by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha as director of the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), came into effect on Monday (Jan 4).

Areas declared 'red zones' now

have a ban imposed on the use of buildings at schools and educational institutions areas with maximum controls to be imposed for teaching and learning or activities likely to draw a crowd, except for online learning, charities, public services with permission from provincial governors, small schools with no more than 120 students, and border patrol police schools.

Activities which could transmit the virus in red zones, such as meetings, seminars, banquets, and food handouts are forbidden, except where they are carried out or permitted by authorities or they take place in quarantine facilities.

Bangkok and provincial governors are authorised to close pubs, bars and karaoke outlets in red zones. The new restrictions do not ban customers from dining in eateries, however, though the number of sit-in patrons must be limited. Alcohol consumption is not allowed inside eateries.

So far, at the time of going to press, none of those harsh restrictions were in force in Phuket.

Phuket remains a "yellow zone" province, Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Thanit Sermkaew confirmed to *The Phuket News* on Tuesday (Jan 5).

"This means the Phuket is under 'high surveillance', but red zone

measures are not in effect," he said.

"At this stage, domestic tourists and even international tourists landing directly in Phuket are still allowed," he added.

Whether or not Phuket is declared a red zone is beyond the authority of Phuket officials, Dr Thanit explained. "That is for the CCSA to determine," he said.

"Also, please note that the number of [COVID-positive] cases is not the sole factor in determining whether or not a province is declared a red zone," he noted.

"The CCSA will assess the risk level of a particular province before deciding whether it should be declare...

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Phuket inmates moved to new home in Bangjo



LIFE PAGE 9

Soi Dog marks half million sterilisations



SPORT PAGE 16

Asia select XI winners in ACG New Year game



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News



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Officials target avoiding a lockdown

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...a red zone. The decision will include factors that determine the level of risk of an outbreak in that particular province," he said.

Amid concerns spiralling online, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew last Sunday (Jan 3) confirmed there were no lockdowns in Phuket and has asked officials and local people to strictly follow the COVID-19 control measures.

Governor Narong explained that at this stage, all people entering Phuket must be screened to prevent the spread of the virus.

However, in an order posted online over the weekend, he also only "asked" people arriving on the island from risk areas to self-quarantine for 14 days.

All relevant agencies and other organisations, including stores and businesses across the island were also urged to ramp up their COVID-protection measures.

"Every person has to follow

the 'D-M-H-T-T' measure: D- Social Distancing, M- Mask wearing, H-Hand washing, T-Temperature checking, and T-Thai Chana scanning," Governor Narong said.

Walking street markets must remain closed until Jan 20, while department stores are asked to make sure more hand sanitiser is available for customers.

Schools, gyms, fitness centers are allowed to remain open, but must follow the provincial government order issued on Dec 24, Gov Narong confirmed.

Further, the Phuket office of the Department of Land Transport will not provide services that require an applicant to visit the office in person, he added.

Following the Samut Sakhon shrimp truck scare last week, which saw concerns heightened over a truck driving delivering shrimp to Samut Sakhon and returning to Phuket, Governor Narong last Sunday



Gov Narong Woonciew confirmed there are no lockdowns in Phuket yet. Photo: PR Phuket

also confirmed that the 106 migrant workers who recently traveled to Samut Sakhon to extend their work permits were tested for the virus. All 106 tested negative, he said.

The Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket) last Sunday also publicly posted an order issued by Governor Narong on Dec 30, ordering all officials to take appropriate action to prevent any risk of COVID in their areas.

The order also specifically asked, "For those who did travel to the high risk areas, please quarantine yourselves for 14

days and see a doctor as soon as possible if having symptoms."

Under the order, local officials are empowered to take whatever action deemed necessary to help prevent any potential spread of COVID-19, including ordering opening and closing times for all types of businesses, including pubs, bars and restaurants.

Yet, so far, no such harsh actions have been ordered on the island.

Governor Narong repeated that the same anti-COVID measures ordered ahead of the new year remained in effect. As

such all large public gatherings are banned, but smaller, private events may go ahead as long as COVID-prevention measures are enforced.

The confirmation came as Phuket this week saw its three cases of confirmed COVID-19 infections ready to be discharged from hospital, fully recovered.

The 40-year-old Phuket man who tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from a big bike event on Koh Lanta, Krabi, last month, was to be discharged from Vachira Phuket Hospital on Tuesday (Jan 5) after serving a 14-day quarantine under observation by doctors, Dr Thanit confirmed.

The man's two sons were to also be discharged from Vachira hospital on Thursday (Jan 7), confirmed Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Chalermpong Sukontapol.

Once the father and his sons have been discharged from hospital, Phuket's current official tally of COVID cases will return to zero, Dr

Chalermpong pointed out.

"All of them are healthy, and not showing any further signs of infection. Their lungs have cleared, and there is also no evidence of damage to any of their organs," Dr Chalermpong said.

Dr Chalermpong noted that the only evidence of their infection remains are dead cells still in their systems. "These cells are unable to spread," he said.

However, the father and two sons after leaving the hospital will be required to observe another 14-day quarantine at home, Dr Chalermpong explained.

"This is a requirement by the CCSA [Centre for COVID Situation Administration]," he said.

"After all three have been discharged [from hospital], as long as there are no new cases, then Phuket's COVID-19 record will return to zero – and I hope we will keep it at zero like this," he said.

Man shot dead in Phuket car park

A MAN WAS SHOT DEAD in the car park behind the main SuperCheap store on Thepkrasattri Rd in Rassada on Dec 30 over what has been described as a "long-running dispute".

The killer, Akkarawat Manibarat, 37, from Pa Phayom District in Phatthalung, had already surrendered to police, Lt Col Chaleaw Thaihu, Inspector at Phuket Town Police, confirmed the next day.

Police were called to the scene, the warehouse area behind the main building at the complex, at 5:12pm.



Police at the scene. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Officers arrived to find the body of Sanpetch Thongchai, 31, of Khuan Khanun District in Phatthalung, on the ground with a bullet wound to his left temple.

Sanpetch, a truck driver at the store, had arrived at the scene after Akkarawat

had called him to arrange a meeting. Sanpetch, who was about to head home for the day, brought a fellow truck driver friend with him – and a long iron bar, Lt Col Chaleaw said.

As Sanpetch pulled up on a motorbike with his friend riding pillion, Akkarawat exited a black Phuket-registered Toyota car and rushed towards Sanpetch while pointing a handgun at him.

Sanpetch fell over on the motorbike, and Akkarawat walked up to him and shot at close range, Lt Col Chaleaw added. Eakkapop Thongtub



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New prison opens early

Tanyaluk Sakoot
reporter2@classactmedia.co.th

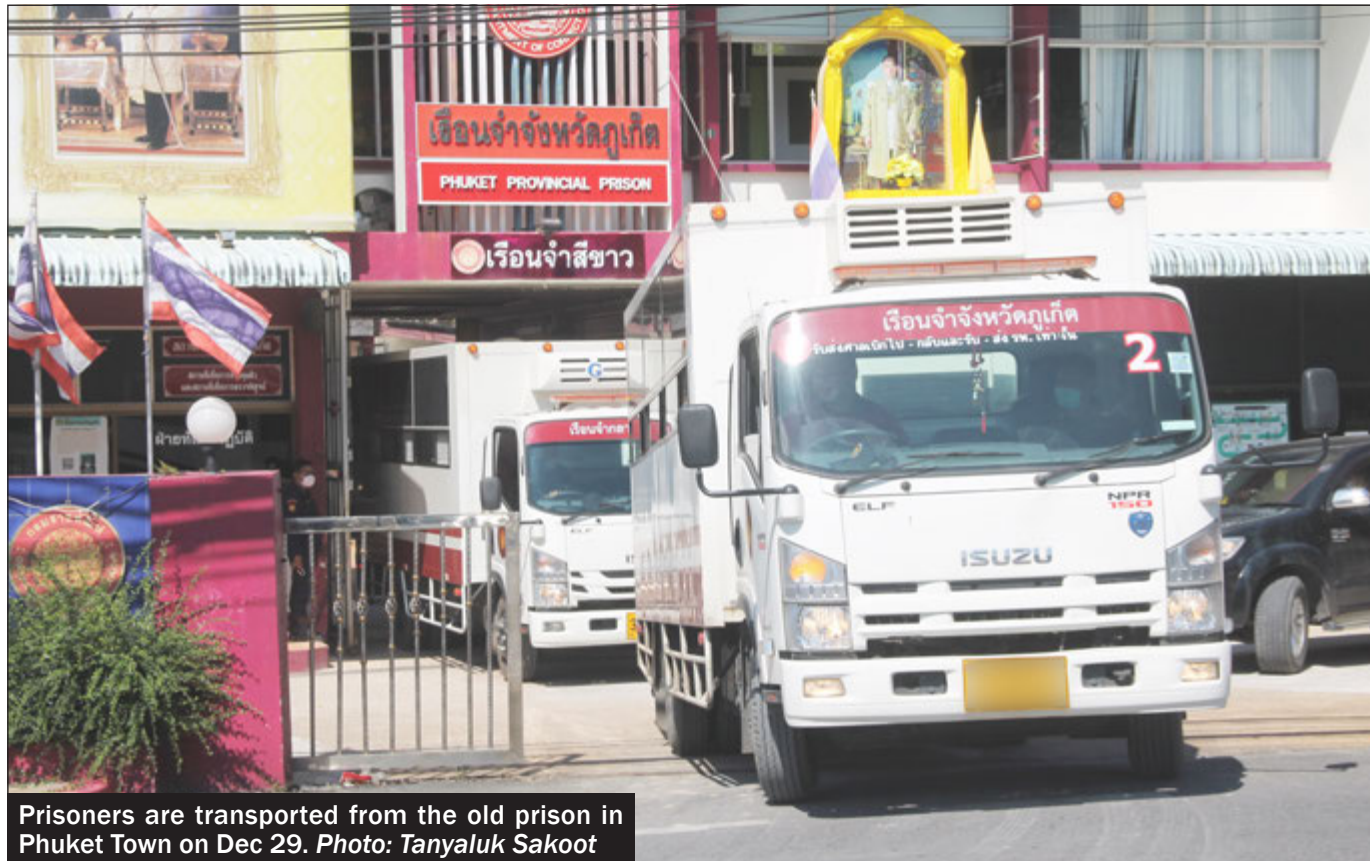
More than 2,000 male inmates were transferred to the new Phuket Provincial Prison in Bangjo, Srisoonthorn, on Dec 29 as an early New Year's gift to the prisoners who had remained incarcerated at the long-overcrowded prison in Phuket Town.

In total, all 2,308 male prisoners who were serving sentences at the old prison were moved to the new facility in Bangjo, built at a cost of B789 million under a project that took nearly five years to complete.

The only prisoners remaining at the old prison in Phuket Town are the 520 female prisoners serving sentences there, Prison Commissioner Suchart Silapachai told *The Phuket News*.

"They will be moved to the new prison soon," Mr Suchart said. He declined to confirm when.

The mass transfer on Dec 29 was conducted by using 10 prisoner transfer trucks, each carrying about 40 prisoners,



Prisoners are transported from the old prison in Phuket Town on Dec 29. Photo: Tanyaluk Sakoot

making multiple round-trips to complete the transfer.

The operation began at 8:30am and was concluded by 2:30pm.

In order to complete each 25-minute transfer window, the prison trucks and their prison officer escort vans used sirens to clear their way through the

traffic along Thepkrasattri Rd.

"I apologise for any inconvenience we may have caused on the roads today. The transfer of the prisoners could not be announced early for security reasons," Mr Suchart said.

"Traffic Police were busy with other duties today, but

we received help from Civil Defense Volunteers [OrSor] and other law-enforcement officers instead," he said.

"In order to complete the transfer safely we needed 90 officers in total. In order to do this we needed to bring in extra prison officers from Ranong, Nakhon Sri

Thammarat, Chumphon and Surat Thani," Mr Suchart explained.

Mr Suchart refuted the idea that the prisoners were transferred early due to fears of COVID-19 spreading among prisoners in the overcrowded prison in Phuket Town.

"It has nothing to do with

COVID-19. The Ministry of Justice wanted to give the prisoners a New Year's gift. The new prison was already 100% complete and all the security systems had been properly tested, so there was no reason to not move them early," he explained.

Previously, the prisoners were not expected to be moved to the new prison until at least next month at the earliest.

The new prison will give inmates some much-welcomed extra space.

Mr Suchart confirmed last August that the total official capacity of the old prison in Phuket Town was just over 1,200 prisoners.

Before today it was home to nearly 3,000 male and female inmates.

Mr Suchart said he was not privy to what will happen with the old prison once the female inmates have also been transferred to the new prison.

"That is beyond my responsibility," he said today.

The old prison has stood for more than 100 years, making it one of the oldest buildings in Phuket Town.

New Year road-safety campaign ends with one dead, 36 injured

PHUKET CONCLUDED THE SEVEN Days of Danger road-safety campaign for the New Year at midnight Monday night (Jan 4) with one death and 36 people injured in road accidents over the holiday period.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket) reported on Tuesday (Jan 5) that Phuket suffered a total of 35 accidents.

Of the 36 people injured, 26 were male and 10 were female, noted the report.

In contrast, the national Thai Road Safety Committee (ThaiRSC) official website reported that 299 people were injured and one person died in road accidents in Phuket during the whole seven days.

According to the DDPM report released on Tuesday, Phuket last year suffered 54 people injured in 47 accidents – with zero deaths. Phuket officials do not recognise two deaths last year as being attributable to the campaign for New year 2020.

Phuket's one recognised road fatality for this year's New Year Seven Days campaign saw Kasemsan Kamphan, 54, killed in the early hours of Jan 1 after the motorbike he was sitting on while waiting at traffic lights to turn right onto Kwang Rd in Wichit was struck from behind by a pickup truck.

The pickup truck driver, not named in official reports, was reported to have been charged with drunk driving.

Meanwhile, Phuket police reported issuing 2,739 fines for moving violations during the campaign this year, with zero



Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee on Jan 1 revealed that four motorbike riders involved accidents were drunk. However, police charged just three people for drunk driving during the whole seven days. Photo: PR Phuket

people fined for speeding and just three people arrested for drunk driving.

In comparison, DDPM-Phuket last year reported that police in Phuket issued 8,437 fines for moving violations during the seven-day campaign for New Year 2020. Of those, 193 were for drunk driving.

Of note, in delivering the daily report on Jan 1, Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee said, "It was found that all six accidents were caused by motorcycles and in four accidents the drivers were drunk, so we would like all sectors to strictly enforce the law in order to deter drivers [from breaking the law]."

The Phuket News



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CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

PURIYA BEAVAN
EditorCHRIS HUSTED
Executive Editor
084 307 7408
executive@classactmedia.co.thBEN TIREBUCK
News / Sport Editor
061 806 8132
editor3@classactmedia.co.thTANYALUK 'MANGO' SAKOOT
Chief Reporter
091 165 0260
reporter2@classactmedia.co.thKIATTIKUL 'JOM' CHUMANE
Translator
082 729 0270
translate@classactmedia.co.thJASON BEAVAN
General Manager
086 479 7471
gm@classactmedia.co.thSIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS
Sales Support
086 479 7470
sales@classactmedia.co.thNIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA
THANAPONG 'OAK' KHAO-AMPHAIPHAN
Graphic designersThe Phuket News
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Wind 14 m/s

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Wind 14 m/s

WED JAN 13



High: +30°

Low: +24°

Wind 18 m/s

THU JAN 14



High: +30°

Low: +24°

Wind 18 m/s

Help for Phuket's COVID jobless

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Rewat Areerob, who has been unofficially named president-elect of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or OrBorJor) following the election on Dec 20, has announced that helping people subsisting on incomes heavily affected by the COVID-19 outbreak among his top priorities.

Mr Rewat made the announcement at the Phuket Merlin Hotel in Phuket Town on Dec 28, where he held his first press conference since being named the unofficial winner of the PPAO presidential election.

Mr Rewat estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 people on the island were greatly affected by the current economic situation.

Centres will be set up in each district in order to find ways to help people who are suffering deep financial distress, he said.

"We will set up a project



Rewat Areerob and his team on Dec 28. Photo: PR Phuket

to source supplies of daily necessities and distribute it to people in Phuket at cheap prices," Mr Rewat explained.

People in need of assistance will be able to register to receive help, he said.

"The project will be set up with centres in all three districts to prevent congestion, and we will coordinate with the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and other relevant organisations," he added.

Residents in Muang District will be able to register at a centre that will be set up at Saphan Hin, while Kathu District residents will be able to register at Kathu Wittaya School, and residents of Thalung will be able to register at Muang Thalung School, Mr Rewat said.

"After that, we'll look at which laws allow the PPAO to provide assistance to people with insufficient income. We will be able to help and take care of at least some of the people who have been unable

to qualify to receive assistance from the central government.

"If the three ministries [named above] are still unable to help these people, we will contact various associations in Thailand for financial support, this goes for local businesses as well," he added.

"We will recover the economy by stimulating tourism, adding more tourist attractions and inviting more tourists and investors to Phuket," Mr Rewat promised.

Mr Rewat also expressed his concern over the PPAO's ability to provide assistance to residents and businesses in need of help.

"I think that the ability of the PPAO to raise funds at this time is worrisome, because we cannot collect any taxes from hotels. The same applies for many other local taxes," he said.

"I think this will affect the province's development budget. I have to use my abilities to contact the central government. For example, the Ministry of the Interior must

allocate the central budget to drive the economy as much as possible.

"We must also check whether there is any other budget that can help, and how we can invite foreign investors to invest in Phuket and increase tourist attractions in order to accelerate the economic recovery of the province," Mr Rewat noted.

Mr Rewat also explained that although he has yet to be installed as PPAO President, he began working as if he were already in office since the day after the election.

"At this time, those who will be serving as councilors and as the PPAO Secretary has yet to be confirmed as the Election Commission of Thailand has yet to fully confirm the election results," Mr Rewat explained.

Mr Rewat concluded the press conference with a message of blessing to the people of Phuket for the New Year to encourage them to overcome the COVID crisis together.

Teens caught with kratom haul

POLICE LAST WEEK ARRESTED two teenagers found in possession of more than 200 kilograms of kratom leaves.

Phuket native Nontharit 'Nice' Ketchart, 19, and Suwimol 'Palm' Mayu, 18, originally from Nongkhai, were arrested at Baan Bang Duk Pier in Mai Khao early on Dec 30, reported Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Pornsak Nuannoo.

The couple were arrested at about 3:30am after officers led by Maj Phirasit Noophayan moved in during a police operation, Maj Gen Pornsak explained.

Nontharit and Suwimol were found with 220kg of kratom leaves packed in 22 black plastic bags.

In making the arrests, police also seized a black Honda Civic car registered in Nakhon Ratchasima and a white Phuket-registered Mazda 2 car as evidence, Maj Gen Pornsak confirmed.

Maj Phirasit confirmed that Nontharit and Suwimol were taken to Tha Chatchai police station where they had been charged with possession of a Category 5 drug with intent to sell.

Justice Minister Somsak



The couple were found with 220kg of kratom leaves packed in 22 black plastic bags. Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

Thepsuthin only last month confirmed that kratom leaves will be removed as a specifically controlled substance under the Narcotics Act.

Kratom is currently classified as Category 5 on the national drugs list.

Mr Somsak said only kratom, a plant containing a natural stimulant, will be removed from the list. It contained only a small amount of the drug, he said.

Proper consumption of kratom, for example no more than 20 leaves per day, would not have harmful effects on people's health or physical condition, Justice Minister Somsak explained.

Once kratom had been officially removed from the list, laws would be issued requiring people to seek official permission to grow it, and to prevent the leaves being sold to children, he said. *The Phuket News*

Provincial Hall finish in sight

MORE THAN SIX YEARS AFTER the contract was signed to build the B546 million new Phuket Provincial Hall, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw on Dec 30 announced that the decades-incoming project is now expected to be finished in July 2021.

The structure of the provincial hall is already complete. All that remains to be done to complete the building is the installation of "infrastructure" such as electrical and water supply fittings, and the finishing touches of painting and decorating the building, Governor Narong said.

A contractor has been found to finish the long-awaited structure, which is supposed to serve as the seat of government power for the province.

"The infrastructure installation was to be completed within 500 days, but we asked the contractor to hurry up to finish it in 210 days. Therefore, it will be finished in the same month with Lak Mueang [sic]," Governor Narong said.

The 'Lak Mueang' is a 'city pillar shrine', a traditional structure used by cities and towns throughout Thailand to serve as the symbolic "centre of the soul" of the community.

Phuket currently has four 'Lak Mueang' erected across the island,



Phuket's new Provincial Hall might finally be finished this year. Photo: The Phuket News / file

with the one built at Baan Muang Mai in Tambon Thepkasattri, Thalung, currently serving as the provincial 'Lak Mueang' for the island, Ms Chantana explained.

The Baan Muang Mai 'Lak Mueang' was built under a project that began in 2010, she added.

The new 'Lak Mueang' will be built also at Baan Muang Mai.

"After construction of the [new] 'Lak Mueang' is finished, we will submit an invitation for The King to preside over the opening ceremony and anoint the pillar," Governor Narong said.

It was not revealed how much the 'Lak Mueang' already completed in Baan Muang Mai cost to build, a point now relevant as its use will be replaced by the new 'Lak Mueang' nearly finished in the same village.

How much is being spent on building the new 'Lak Mueang' was also not revealed. *The Phuket News*

Dangerous beach road to be resurfaced 'soon'

Eakkapop Thongtub
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Patong Mayor Chalermluck Kebsup has announced that the long awaited completion of installing power and communication cables underground along the Patong Beach road will be 'soon', beginning an end to months of motorists having to negotiate dangerous bumps and raised areas on the road where workers have been installing the cables.

The news came at a press conference at Patong Municipality offices on Dec 29, where Mayor Chalermluck was joined by Kittimaet Kornphatsawat, Director of the Provincial Electricity Authority's Special Project Management Construction and Management Division.

Mayor Chalermluck explained that the municipality has been unable to move ahead with resurfacing the road, officially named Thaweewong Rd, as workers have repeatedly needed to access the new cables installed underground to make final adjustments and conduct tests on the cables.

While Mayor Chalermluck admitted that the state of the road had made it "inconvenient", for many people who drive along the road the hazards are just plain dangerous.

That problem will soon be resolved, "as the electrical authorities have pledged that this operation will be completed in



Many parts of the Patong beach road have dangerous raised areas where workers have been working on the cables underground. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

January 2021," Mayor Chalermluck said.

After the new power and communications cables are brought online, the power poles and cables that now line the side of the road will be removed in an operation that is hoped to be completed by sometime in June, she said.

"As soon as the municipality has received confirmation from the Electricity Authority that no more traffic surfaces will be opened, the municipality will hurry to finish the new road surface by February. If we can find a contractor," said Ms Chalermluck.

In a statement of assurance, Mr Kittimet said that PEA workers were conducting final tests on the cables installed underground.

"This work should be completed by January [sic], after which workers will

start removing the cables from along the side of the road. This part will be completed first before Songkran," he said.

"Then after Songkran It will take about a month and a half to two months to dismantle all the power poles," he added.

"This will result in a beautiful landscape in line with the objectives of both agencies, the Provincial Electricity Authority and Patong Municipality," Mr Kittimet said.

The project to install the power and communications cables underground stretches from the bridge at the southern end of Patong beach all the way to Loma Circle at the northern end.

The project is being funded by a budget of B213,640,647 provided by Patong Municipality supported by a budget of B60,365,957 provided by the Provincial Electricity Authority.



The large leatherback turtle was the first in decades to lay eggs at Kata Beach. Photo: PR Phuket

Leatherback turtle lays eggs on Kata beach

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN decades, a large leatherback turtle came ashore at Kata Beach in Phuket to lay eggs early on New Year's Day.

The turtle came ashore in front of the Kata Beach Community Park at 00:50am (Jan 1), much to the amazement of people still on the beach celebrating the New Year.

The turtle's shell measured 150cm long and 119cm wide, with the turtle's front left flipper measuring 86cm long and its front right flipper 83cm long, reported officers from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR).

The turtle was estimated to weigh about 300kg.

After the turtle returned to the sea, at about 4:30am, the

officers inspected the nest and found about 50-60 eggs.

The nest site has been sealed off for protection and a thermometer installed to monitor the temperature in the nest.

Karon Deputy Mayor Itthiporn Sangkaew, himself a native of the Kata-Karon area, was overly happy about the turtle.

"As far as I can remember the last time turtles laid eggs at a beach in Kata-Karon was decades ago. Certainly not in the past 20 years," he said.

Officers have been ordered to protect the nest and people visiting the beach are being asked to ensure the nest remains undisturbed.

The Phuket News

Red Cross calls for donations

WITH THE ANNUAL Phuket Red Cross Fair cancelled this year due to concerns over COVID-19, Wandee Woonciew, President of the Thai Red Cross chapter in Phuket, has called for donations to help the organisation continue with its community outreach projects.

The annual fair each year helps to raise much needed funds for community projects, Ms Wandee explained.

This year, with the number of people suffering financial hardship due to the ongoing economic crisis, the raising of



Ms Wandee was thankful for all donations, large or small. Photo: PR Phuket

funds to help people in need was much greater, she added.

At a recent event at Provincial Hall, Ms Wandee – joined by her husband Governor Narong Woonciew – recognised individuals and businesses who made donations to

help support the Phuket Red Cross. Among the donations singled out for special thanks was one for B710,000. Even donations of just B2,000 to B3,000 were also held up as examples that any donations to help the Phuket Red Cross continue its work were much appreciated.

"This event was organised to raise money for the Phuket Red Cross to use in helping people affected by various disasters in Phuket, including those greatly affected during the COVID-19 outbreak," Ms Wandee said. *The Phuket News*

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What does 2021 hold for local businesses?

Andres Pira, CEO & Founder of Blue Horizon Developments, shares his insights

ADVERTORIAL

Having recently marked the end of a year that admittedly could have been better, many people welcomed the brand-new year with an unshakeable thought: "What does 2021 hold?". Ever since the new strain of the coronavirus, which was first detected in the United Kingdom in the last quarter of 2020, found its way to Asia, many locals believe it is only a matter of time before it spreads to the Kingdom of Thailand and wreaks havoc on public health and the economy. However, real estate tycoon Andres Pira maintains an optimistic outlook.

Pira, who is the CEO & Founder of the Phuket-based property development company Blue Horizon Developments, acknowledges that the potential effects of the new strain of the coronavirus cannot be discounted. It is, after all, 70% more transmissible than the original strain and therefore, could cause more infections in people. To redress the health effects of the new strain, countries would



The Blue Horizon team (bluehorizon-thailand.com).

naturally have to keep the travel restrictions that are currently in place intact or tighten them, which would have an impact on Thailand's tourism-fuelled economy.

At the same time, Pira believes there is hope now that there is a vaccine to fight

the virus. Many countries around the world are already securing vaccines to provide to its citizens, and Thailand is no different. The Thai government aims to vaccinate almost half its population this year and up to 70% in 2022, which would be sufficient

to achieve herd immunity.

When asked about his predictions about the economy, Pira says there is always light at the end of the tunnel. "If 2020 is anything to go by, Thailand has proven that it can handle a pandemic to the best of its abilities," says Pira.

"With the vaccines, there are high hopes that the pandemic will be successfully dealt with this year, which will have a positive impact on the Thai as well as the global economy."

With regards to Phuket's real estate sector, the lack of tourism has reduced property

transactions in Phuket as the island has a significant number of foreign investors. Moreover, the dwindling economy worldwide has also reduced the purchasing power of investors, leaving them unable to go forward with their investment plans. The lack of sales in the development phase of real estate projects has left property developers in a tight spot as they may have no resources to fund construction and other related activities.

"At Blue Horizon Developments, we are grateful for our investors who share our vision and believe in our potential. Together, we are looking forward to a better and brighter future for Phuket as a whole. Blue Horizon Developments has secured new global partnerships during the pandemic that will propel our company to new levels of growth and success. We will reveal and update our clients and investors of the exciting news during this first quarter of 2021," says Pira, who firmly believes that Phuket will recover this year once the roll-out of vaccines successfully takes place.

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More COVID vaccines on way

Total at 63 million after order with China and unnamed provider

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha confirmed on Monday (Jan 4) that the government intends to purchase another 35 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, taking the total number ordered to 63 million.

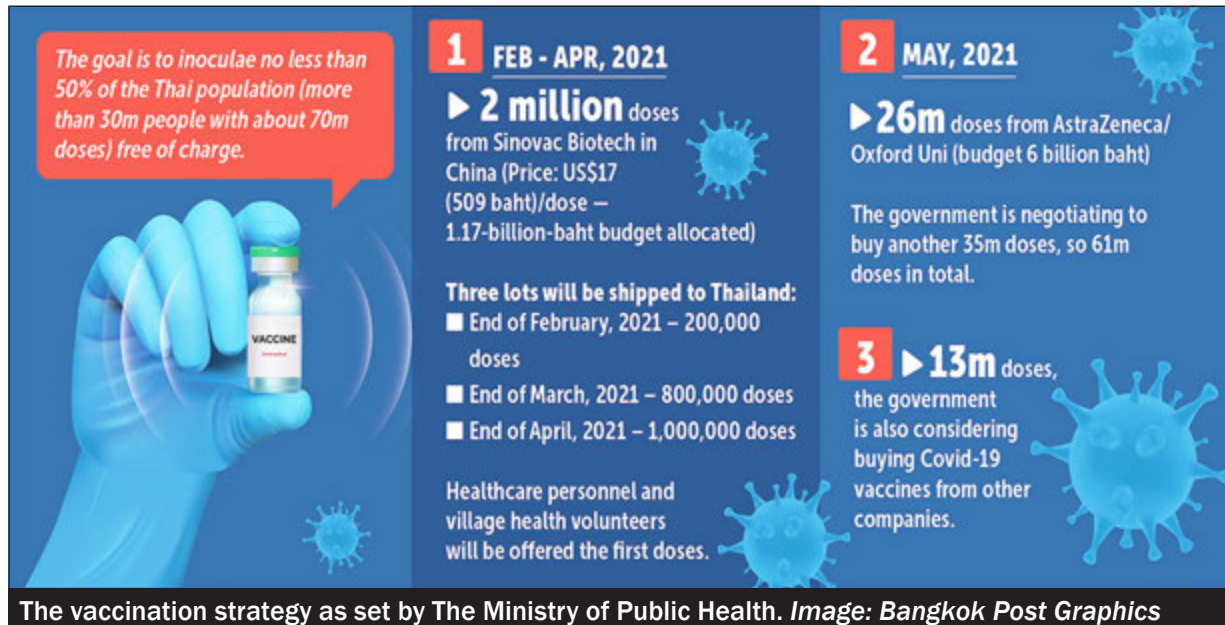
It was not confirmed where the additional vaccine shots would come from but Gen Prayut did state that the government needed to ensure the shots are safe, had no side effects and were in line with standards set by the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"I have also ordered another 35 million doses and most of the population are expected to be vaccinated," the prime minister said.

It is expected that people with the highest risks for infections, healthcare workers and village health volunteers will be inoculated first.

The announcement came on the same day that the government confirmed they had ordered 2 million shots of the Chinese manufactured CoronaVac vaccine which is to be delivered in instalments.

CoronaVac, manufactured by Beijing-based pharmaceutical



company Sinovac Biotech Ltd, will arrive in three batches: the first 200,000 doses will arrive in February, 800,000 will be delivered in March, and another 1 million in April, stated the Health Ministry.

CoronaVac recently underwent trials in Brazil, China, Turkey and Indonesia where it recorded varying results of effectiveness. Last week Ukraine confirmed it has ordered 2 million doses.

The vaccine works by exposing the body's immune system to the virus via killed viral particles

without risking a serious disease response.

"CoronaVac is a more traditional method [of vaccine] that is successfully used in many well-known vaccines like rabies," Associate Prof Luo Dahai of the Nanyang Technological University told the BBC.

'LOCK DOWN YOURSELVES'

The Thai government also recently signed a deal for 26 million doses of vaccine with AstraZeneca and

the right to produce its COVID-19 vaccine in Thailand, with supplies expected by May. That vaccine will be produced by Thailand's Siam Bioscience with a formula and technology developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford.

Gen Prayut said he had instructed the Disease Control Department and National Vaccine Institute to work with the FDA to handle the vaccinations. He also stated that the government was assessing the situation on a daily basis and was mindful of the economic damage

from overly strict containment measures.

"We don't want to lock down the entire country because we know what the problems are, so can you all lock down yourselves?" he said.

"This is up to everyone, if you don't want to get infected just stay home for 14 to 15 days. If you think like this then things will be safe, easier for screening."

Thailand recorded 745 new coronavirus cases on Monday, the highest daily rise since the outbreak of the pandemic in January 2020. A further 527 cases were confirmed on Tuesday, bringing the total to 8,966, at time of press.

One additional death was reported, raising the total to 65. The latest death was a 56-year-old man in Bangkok, said Taweelap Visanuyothin, spokesman for the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA).

The man died on Sunday, two days after testing positive for COVID-19, and had suffered from numerous underlying diseases before being admitted to hospital on Dec 28. Records showed he had recently travelled to Samut Prakan and the Klong Toey district of Bangkok.

Additional reporting
by Bangkok Post

Prawit: No gambling dens in Bangkok

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER Prawit Wongsuwan says he doubts there are any illegal gambling dens in Bangkok, despite warnings by a senior health official that such premises pose a serious coronavirus threat.

Opas Bhudachareon, head of Chulalongkorn Hospital's Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases, said recently one COVID-19 patient there was linked to a gambling den in Bangkok and urged those who had visited the venue to be tested for COVID-19.

However, Gen Prawit



Deputy PM Prawit Wongsuwan. Photo: Bangkok Post

claimed on Monday (Jan 4) there were no such illegal activities because the police had clamped down on them.

"You must ask the

doctor who provides this information," he said. "I don't believe illegal casinos are operating in Bangkok, but if the doctor knows about it, he can inform the authorities."

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) reported 28 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday although a spokesman denied reports that some of those infected had contracted the virus at casinos in Bangkok, saying the Disease Control Department stated they had been infected at casinos in Pattaya. Bangkok Post

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Phuket Town's evolving music scene

Andy Tong Dee

I've lived in Phuket now for 10 years and seen many changes, but none as dramatic and sudden as those caused by COVID-19. Patong, Kamala, Kata and Karon once had thriving music scenes based on covering Western songs, but all that is postponed.

Phuket's musical centre has now shifted to Phuket Town, which is now proving popular with a new generation of Thai tourists lured there by government subsidies. It also has a number of established Thai music bars around the Seahorse traffic circle catering to local Thais. Phuket Town too has always had a faithful community of foreign expats keen to hear or play live music. Most of us are still here.

Over the next few months, I will tell you more about developments in Phuket's music scene, about the places and personalities involved. Happily, this island's musical life is now recovering after the initial lockdown, but it is different from that which we saw before.

Take Phuket Town for example: Before the Sunday night Lard Yai Walking Street project started on Thalang Rd a few years ago, there were already long-established live music venues nearby, such as the Rockin' Angels Blues Bar, Timber Hut and Music Matters Jazz Club. I'm pleased to say they have all survived the lockdown.

However, we now see a number of



Andy and his cigar box guitar.

newer music venues springing up all around the walking street area. The Column in Takuapa Rd to the south is a Thai bar, playing punchy Thai ballads nightly. Next door is the intimate Bebop Bar, perfect if you want to enjoy some cool jazz after a romantic dinner. A few doors away, Michael's Bar (now renamed Michelangelo's Lounge Bar) is under the new and dynamic management of my good friend Don Mangiameli. At my suggestion, he has just started a 5pm to midnight Sunday jam. It is already proving hugely popular with local jazz musicians.

Don't miss tiny 46 Guesthouse in the middle of Thalang Rd. There you will find local DJs playing Electronic Dance Music on Sundays. There you can hear the ever-creative Jason Winder of local radio fame remixing '70s rock classics with modern syncopated drum beats. Bands from the Pastel Bar and solo artists sometimes perform there too.

Take a walk up Thalang Rd's Soi Romanee to the 346 Guesthouse on a Sunday night and you will probably hear Thai bands like The Aod Blues Band, Mary Jane or The Vanguard playing Thai and Western songs. They

rehearse or perform in the Pastel Bar not far away on Phuket Rd. You may also sometimes hear them in Ngor Kaa Key on Thalang Rd, opposite the Eleven/Twenty Café.

The Vanguard is one of the new upcoming Thai "Indie" bands and is of particular interest. It has a brass section and plays jazzy or funky Thai and Western songs. However, the Western songs it covers are not to be found in what I call the "Patong Songbook" of standards such as *Hotel California*, *Country Roads* and *Wonderwall*.

From all this it will be seen that Phuket's music scene is actually becoming more creatively vibrant, being now less dominated by professional musicians. Amateurs can choose to play what they want, and are now quickly filling the musical void that COVID created. This process is driven by the financial squeeze on businesses which don't have the money to pay bands.

To sum up, Phuket Town is now fast becoming a more creative and diverse place musically, which can only be a good thing. I'll tell you more about it over the weeks to come and my own efforts to encourage it.

For now, maybe I'll see you soon in one of Phuket Town's new or long-established live music venues. You might even find me there knocking out a song or two.

But remember if you do, like many of us now, I'm only doing it for fun. So please..... buy me a beverage!

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Thai action star Tony Jaa (right) joins Milla Jovovich on her quest in *Monster Hunter*. Image: IMDB

Tony Jaa, the Monster Hunter

While a film is often judged by the way that it is received during the Awards season, sometimes all you really want to do is sit down, turn your brain off and watch something dumb yet enjoyable. Enter films like *Monster Hunter*.

Based on the popular video game franchise *Monster Hunter* sees director Paul WS Anderson (*Alien vs Predator*) once again reunited with his real-life wife Milla Jovovich (*The Fifth Element*) after the duo made four *Resident Evil* movies together.

The storyline is basic. Jovovich plays Lt Artemis, a strong but caring soldier who is well-respected by her colleagues. While on a mission looking for the missing Beta team, they suddenly find themselves stuck inside a powerful storm that somehow pushes them through a gateway to another dimension where the likes of the Admiral (Ron Perlman - *Hellboy*) are stuck in an everlasting race to survive as they hunted by other-worldly creatures.

As Artemis' crew drop like flies, she suddenly finds her only help can come from a weather-beaten warrior known only as The Hunter (Tony Jaa - *Ong-Bak*). The only problem is that while they rely on each for survival they also don't trust each other.

Chances are if you have enjoyed what Anderson has done with *Resident Evil* over the years then you will also enjoy *Monster Hunter*. The film is pretty much action sequence after action sequence yet somehow it also makes The Hunter and Artemis likeable characters. For me the film's biggest weakness was that it didn't allow us long enough in the world that it had set up.

If you are looking for a film that will keep you entertained without making you think these holidays then *Monster Hunter* is the film for you. *Monster Hunter* is far from the perfect film but is certainly enjoyable for those of us who like action films.

3/5 Stars. *Monster Hunter* is currently screening in Phuket. David Griffiths

Making the cut

Soi Dog Foundation celebrates half-a-million sterilisations

The Phuket News

editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Soi Dog Foundation has shared the incredible news that it has surpassed half-a-million dogs and cats neutered and vaccinated since its founding in 2003 – more than any other organisation in the world.

The foundation marked the momentous milestone with a short film that looks at the past, present and future of its large-scale sterilisation and vaccination programme. The film features appearances from a host of celebrity supporters, including Ricky Gervais, Dame Judi Dench and Peter Egan.

Established in Phuket by three retirees determined to end the suffering of street dogs and cats, Soi Dog now runs the largest sterilisation initiative in the world, known as its CNVR (Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return) programme. An incalculable number of puppies and kittens have been saved from short and painful lives of suffering on the streets as a result of the programme.

Phuket is Soi Dog's best example of the effectiveness of CNVR; the continuation of the programme on the island over the past 17 years has seen the street dog population reduced by over 90% and only one confirmed case of rabies reported. The welfare of the dogs that remain there has also markedly improved, with severely sick, skeletal street dogs largely a sight of the past.

With the situation on the island under control, and a maintenance programme in place, Soi Dog was able to expand into Bangkok in 2015 and later into other provinces too. With the help of six mobile teams in the capital and two more in a changing rota of southern provinces, the foundation is currently able to neuter and vaccinate over 10,000 animals a month.

"I firmly believe that the only way we can control stray dogs here in



Phuket's Soi Dog Foundation has passed the historic milestone of conducting more than 500,000 sterilisations. Photo: Soi Dog Foundation

Thailand, in Asia and the rest of the world is by sterilisation – large-scale sterilisation – and education," explains co-founder and president of Soi Dog Foundation International John Dalley in the celebratory video.

Reflecting on the enormous growth of Soi Dog's CNVR programme, he adds, "In the beginning it was slow. In the last four months of 2003 – which is when we started – and the whole of 2004, we managed to achieve just over 1,400 sterilisations. A far cry from today, but you have to start somewhere.

"Today, of course, things have changed. We've now sterilised 500,000 since we started. The amazing thing about that, I think, is that nearly 250,000 of those have happened in the last two years alone."

With an estimated 10-12 million street dogs across the country, this is only the beginning of a long road for Soi Dog. However, plans are already in place to employ a further two mobile teams in southern Thailand and support a sterilisation project in Chiang Mai next year. Despite the scale of the task ahead, the foundation remains confident that, with the continued support of its donors in Thailand and around the world, it can bring an end to the suffering of companion animals once and for all.

"Thank you so much for everything you do for us," says John in closing. "I often say we can only do as much as the funds we receive, and you've enabled us to do this. It's an amazing achievement. Thank you."



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POP QUIZ

1. Which sportsman was nicknamed 'The Sultan of Swat'?
2. In which American city did Ronald Reagan survive an assassination attempt in 1981?
3. What is the literal translation of the Latin word 'trivia'?
4. Which city was the first in the world to have a population of over one million?
5. Could the phonograph, invented by Thomas Edison in 1877, record sound as well as play it?

Answers below, centre

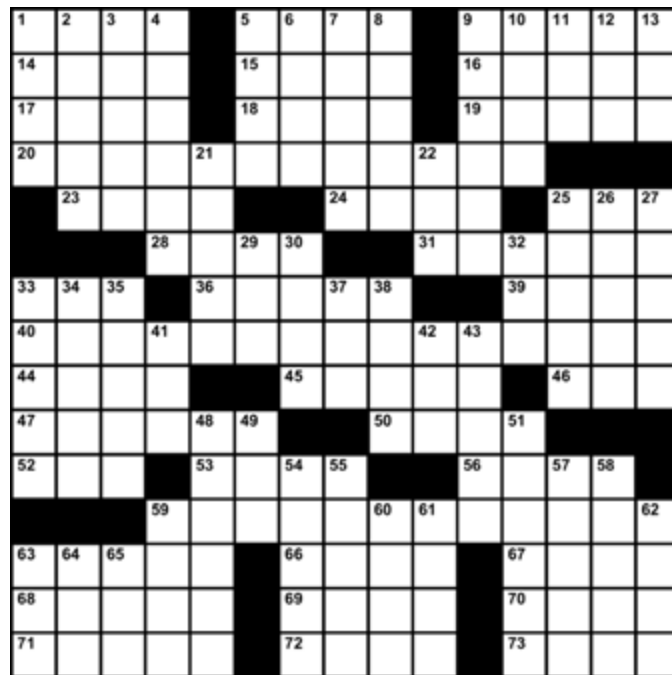
SUDOKU

Easy

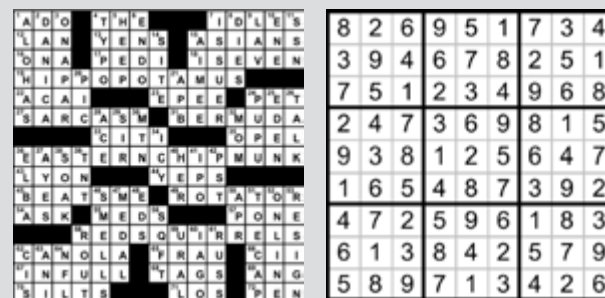
8			6	5	4			1
			9		3			
	4		1		2		7	
3	8						6	5
		4				1		
6	7						4	8
	6		7		8		9	
			3		9			
1			5	4	6			2

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Reunion attendee
 5. Visibility reducer
 9. Illuminate
 14. List heading
 15. Inside
 16. Short straw drawer
 17. Comes to the rescue
 18. Leave a mark on
 19. Had something
 20. Stephen King novel that was made into a film
 23. Strange sounding lake
 24. Send
 25. Important digits on an I.R.S. form
 28. Drink all at once
 31. "Fool's" gold
 33. Old German currency
 36. Massenet opera
 39. Insurer for military personnel
 40. Armchair quarterback's hobby
 44. Served up a whopper
 45. Letters before tees
 46. Bandleader Brown
 47. Chilly US state
 50. Paris airport
 52. "Naughty!"
 53. Wedding exchange
 56. ___ and aahs
 59. They can run wild
 63. Refrain from
 66. Owner's acquisition
 67. Place to find stubble
 68. Sing like Bing
 69. OK city
 70. Compliment
 71. Egypt's capital
 72. Bobbsey, Grey and Woods
 73. Fish-eating duck
 29. Sounds of hesitation
 30. "Let's Get It On" singer
 32. Massage
 33. "Clair de lune" key
 34. Parcels
 35. Quarterback ___
 37. Uncertainties
 38. Fair
 41. 6-pointers
 42. Above to a bard
 43. Letter-shaped opening
 48. Wide-sleeved robe
 49. Palindromic girl's name
 51. Fox hunters cry
 54. "Candy is dandy ..." writer
 55. Historic Tuscan city
 57. Mediocre
 58. Malicious
 59. Aeronautical engineer Sikorsky
 60. Teutonic turndown
 61. Reckons up
 62. Winter precipitation
 63. Communication regulator
 64. ___ pro nobis
 65. Profit, abbr.
- Down**
1. Somewhat
 2. French river
 3. Milk dispenser
 4. Inlay
 5. Not fitting a category, briefly
 6. Clive Cussler's "___ Gold"
 7. Sports figures
 8. Medieval light
 9. One of the Seven Dwarfs
 10. Icy glaze
 11. Philosopher suffix
 12. Born name
 13. Coastal eagle
 21. Conductor Zubin
 22. Kind of boot
 25. Rope fiber
 26. Unoriginal
 27. Actress Patricia et al.



Solutions to last week's puzzles:



Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Babe Ruth; 2) Washington DC; 3) Three roads; 4) Rome; 5) Yes

GOT YOUR NUMBER

6

people in the US die from alcohol poisoning every day.

88

percent of New Year's resolutions fail.

250

percent is how much using a warm air dryer after washing your hands can increase the bacterial count on your hands.

666

is the sum of all the numbers on a roulette wheel.

370,000

tons of wood are burned each year in pizza ovens in São Paulo, Brazil, becoming a surprisingly significant source of pollution.

62.5 trillion

US dollars per gram is how much antimatter costs, the most expensive material on the planet.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Sunflower. Photo: Celina Manaois

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket?
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This week in history

Jan 8, 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson declares a "War on Poverty" in the United States.



Steve Jobs and the iPhone 1. Photo: AFP

Jan 9, 2007

Apple CEO Steve Jobs introduces the original iPhone at a Macworld keynote in San Francisco.

Jan 10, 1927

Fritz Lang's futuristic film Metropolis is released in Germany.

Jan 11, 1527

First recorded lottery in England.

Jan 12, 1967

Dr James Bedford becomes the first person to be cryonically preserved with intent of future resuscitation.

Jan 13, 2012

The passenger cruise ship Costa Concordia sinks off the coast of Italy. There are 32 confirmed deaths. The captain is later jailed for 16 years for negligence.

Jan 14, 1960

The Reserve Bank of Australia, the country's central bank and banknote issuing authority, is established.

Source: Wikipedia

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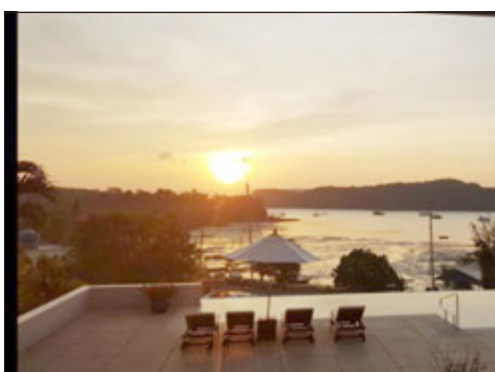
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Dec 16, 2020 - There ain't no party like a Benihana party! A night full of fire, fun, and divine food! We are thrilled to have been invited to the opening of the 4th Benihana in Thailand at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, Mai Khao. It's not just a meal, it's an experience.



ASIA MICE PLANNER – APPRECIATION AND CHARITY PARTY

Asian MICE Planner and the Malaysian Club of Thailand and the Malaysian & Thai Friends Group from Bangkok held their annual appreciation and charity event on Dec 20, 2020 at The Secret Cliff Hotel to raise much needed funds in support of Child-Watch Phuket Foundation.



Hamilton is F1's sixth knight. Photo: AFP

Arise, Sir Lewis!

FOOTBALL

LEWIS HAMILTON has been knighted in Britain's traditional New Year Honours list after equalling Michael Schumacher's record of seven Formula One world titles.

The list recognises outstanding achievements in various fields including showbusiness, sport and politics, as well as the contributions of a larger number of everyday citizens.

Hamilton, 35, surpassed Schumacher's record number of career race wins during a stellar season in 2020 that was shortened due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A group of British lawmakers last month called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to recommend the driver for a knighthood.

The Mercedes driver has become an outspoken supporter of equality, diversity and the environment this year and made several strong human rights statements related to democracy and racism.

Hamilton now becomes Formula 1's sixth knight after Sir Stirling Moss, Sir Jackie Stewart, Australia's Sir Jack Brabham, and the co-founders of Williams Sir Frank Williams and Sir Patrick Head.

"Lewis is one of the very greatest racing drivers of all time and the most successful British sportsperson of his era," said Mercedes F1 team principal and CEO Toto Wolff.

"The UK can be very proud to have a champion and ambassador of the calibre of Sir Lewis Hamilton," he added.

AFP

COVID threatened Aussie GP waits for final decision

FORMULA ONE

AFP

A final call on staging the Australian Grand Prix will be made in the "coming weeks", organisers said on Tuesday (Jan 5) following reports it could be postponed over strict travel restrictions and the emergence of a new strain of COVID-19.

Website autosport.com said the Melbourne-based race, which is due to kick off the new season on March 21, would likely be pushed back to later in the year, with Bahrain poised to open the 2021 calendar on March 28.

It pointed to Australia's tough coronavirus restrictions, which require international travellers to quarantine for two weeks, as posing significant logistical and financial obstacles.

Many of Formula One's teams are also based in England where cases are surging, spurred by a more infectious new variant, further complicating matters.

Australian organisers said they were working through the issues.

"The Australian Grand Prix Corporation continues to work closely with the Victorian (state) government and Formula 1 on conditions and arrangements relating to the staging of the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne in 2021," they said in a brief statement.



A final decision on staging the Australian Grand Prix will be made in the coming weeks. Photo: AFP

"Further detail will be provided upon finalisation of arrangements with all parties in the coming weeks."

Construction around the temporary Albert Park circuit is yet to start and tickets are not currently on sale.

The Australian race, the traditional season curtain-raiser, was called off last year just hours before the first practice session after a McLaren team member tested positive, with drivers scrambling to leave the country.

The pandemic threw the season into chaos and racing only started in Austria in July, with the Melbourne event not rescheduled.

Despite concern about the fate of this year's race, hundreds of the world's top

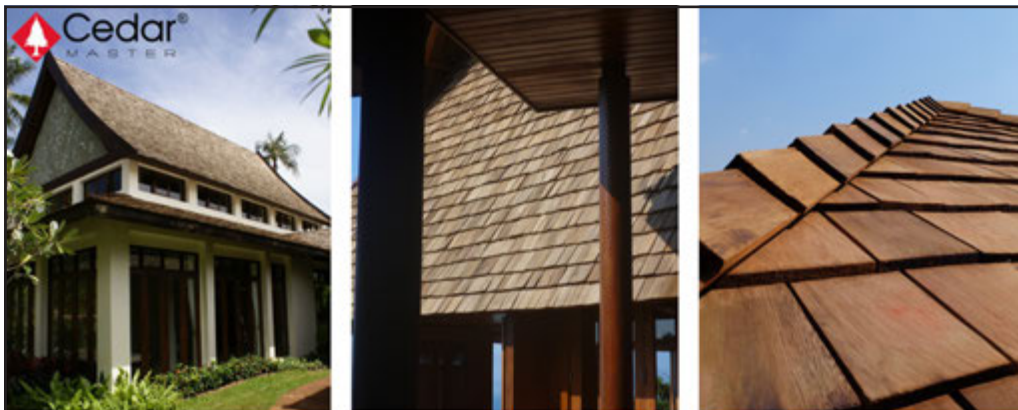
tennis players are set to arrive in Melbourne from January 15 for 14 days' quarantine before the Australian Open.

After months of wrangling, authorities allowed them to train for five hours a day in a bio-secure bubble, shuttled between designated hotels and Melbourne Park, where the tournament is held.

Australia has fared much better than many other nations in dealing with the virus following swift action to close its borders to the world and carry out widespread testing.

Life had been returning to relative normality around the country before a new cluster emerged in Sydney last month.

It has since spread to neighbouring Victoria, forcing the closure of some state borders



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India cricketers negative after bubble 'breach'

CRICKET

INDIA'S TEAM AND support staff all tested negative to COVID-19 after five players apparently breached their bio-security bubble, officials said Monday (Jan 4), as capacity at the Sydney Cricket Ground was slashed over coronavirus concerns.

The quintet – Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Shubman Gill, Prithvi Shaw and Navdeep Saini – were filmed dining inside a Melbourne restaurant on New Year's Day.

The Australian state of Victoria, of which Melbourne is the capital, is battling to stem a cluster of virus cases tied to a wider outbreak in neighbouring New South Wales.

In response, authorities require restaurant-goers to dine outdoors and maintain social distancing.

While the five were allowed to continue training, they were told to stay apart



India's cricket team have all tested negative for COVID-19. Photo: AFP

from the broader Indian squad, with the entire tour party tested last Sunday.

The Indian cricket board, which has not said whether the five will be punished, issued a brief statement on Monday giving them the all-clear for COVID-19.

"Playing members of the Indian cricket team and support staff underwent a test for COVID-19 on January 3, 2021. All tests have returned negative results," it said.

Australia's team and staff were also tested and they too came back negative.

Both teams headed to Sydney on Monday for the third Test, which was to start yesterday (Jan 7), with the four-Test series level at 1-1.

They will play in front of a 25% capacity crowd of around 10,000 after it was slashed from 50% following a backlash on social media and from some experts, given the COVID situation in the city.

Tony Shepherd, head of Venues NSW which manages the stadium, said significant measures had been taken to ensure the safety of fans.

"There are extensive protocols being enacted for the upcoming Test, including increased cleaning, customer service and security staff, along with dedicated social distancing marshals," he said.

The fourth and final Test is in Brisbane next week.

AFP

Premier League plays on under new lockdown

FOOTBALL

The Phuket News
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Premier League football will be allowed to continue despite new national lockdown restrictions announced by the British government on Monday (Jan 4), reports AFP.

Nearly 56 million people in England returned to a full coronavirus lockdown on Tuesday, possibly until mid-February, to try to cut spiralling infection rates, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a televised address.

But a list of exemptions published by the UK government allowed "elite sportspeople (and their coaches if necessary, or parents/guardians if they are under 18) – or those on an official elite sports pathway – to compete and train".

One key point in determining whether a sporting competition can go ahead will be if it has, as the Premier League does, a testing regime and the provision of bio-secure bubbles in place.

Matches, however, will continue to be played behind closed doors.

TIGHT AT THE TOP

On the pitch, Liverpool failed to extend their lead at the top of the table after a 0-1 loss to Southampton on Monday with their former marksman Danny



Bruno Fernandes dispatches his penalty to seal the 2-1 win against Aston Villa on New Year's Day. Photo: AFP

Ings grabbing the crucial goal.

It means the Reds now share top spot on 33 points with bitter rivals Manchester United who started the New Year in fine fashion after defeating Aston Villa 2-1 last Friday courtesy of goals from Anthony Martial and a contentious Bruno Fernandes penalty.

Leicester City continued their fine form with a 2-1 win at Newcastle which kept them in third place, just a point behind the joint leaders.

Tottenham, Manchester City, Southampton and Everton all sit behind the Foxes on 29 points.

Spurs brushed aside Leeds United 3-0 on Saturday with the Harry Kane-Son Heung Min partnership once again proving the difference as the Korean registered his 100th goal for the club.

It was the 13th time the Spurs pair have combined for a goal this season, equal to the number achieved in an entire season by Alan Shearer and Chris Sutton for Blackburn Rovers in their title-winning season of 1994-95.

Manchester City look like they are rediscovering their form as they eased past Chelsea 3-1, heaping further

pressure on Blues manager Frank Lampard whose side have now only collected four points from six matches.

At the bottom, Sheffield United's woeful season continued as they were soundly beaten 0-2 at Crystal Palace and West Brom show no signs of being revitalised under Sam Allardyce as they were humbled 0-4 by a resurgent Arsenal at a snowy Hawthorns stadium.

It meant the Baggies have conceded 12 goals in their last three home games suggesting a long, cold winter ahead in their attempt to beat the dreaded drop.



Games have been postponed for January. Photo: Bangkok Post

Thai League falls to COVID – again

FOOTBALL

ALL THAI LEAGUE 1 matches scheduled for this month have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) announced on Monday (Jan 4).

Following a new surge in coronavirus cases, the government's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) has issued several restrictions over the past few days to contain the spread of the deadly disease.

Executives of the FAT and Thai League Co held a meeting with clubs on Monday to discuss the situation.

They decided to put off all domestic games until the end of this month as the government's new directives would make it difficult to hold football matches, said Thai League co-acting chairman Korrawee Pritsanantakul.

"We always cooperate with the government to help prevent the spread of COVID-19," he said.

They also agreed that the competitions could not be scrapped as the involved parties could face heavy fines from sponsors, he said.

"We expect the season to end in April," Mr Korrawee said.

When the situation becomes better and football is ready to return, the FAT will inform clubs at least five days before resumption, he said.

If it is too difficult for the leagues to restart on a home-and-away basis, then the FAT may organise the remaining games in 'bubbles' to avoid travel restrictions, Mr Korrawee said.

Last year, the domestic leagues were suspended for several months due to the COVID-19 outbreak before they resumed in September.

Bangkok Post

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HOWZAT!

ASIA SELECT XI WIN NEW YEAR OPENER AT THE ACG



Asia select XI's Imtiaz Mushtaq eyes up a drive on his way to 58 and victory against a ROW select XI at the ACG last Sunday (Jan 3). Photo: Neil Quail

CRICKET

Neil Quail

Phuket's 2021 cricket calendar was kick-started last Sunday (Jan 3) with an Asia select XI taking on a Rest of the World (ROW) select XI in a 35-over match at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG).

Chosen from several local teams, players whom would normally face each other

as rivals came together in a traditional annual event held at the island's home of cricket.

Asia captain Shivam Bhattacharaya elected to bat having won the toss, sending Seemant Raju and Imtiaz Mushtaq out to open the morning's proceedings.

Mushtaq's batting in the second over returned an early advantage to Asia, with 18 coming off Stuart Hamilton's spin attack before

Raju (9) was ousted by a towering, one-handed catch by Michael Flowers, with the score on 46.

Mushtaq hit 58 runs off 49 balls before Dom Judge found an edge for Anthony Van Blerk to take behind the stumps in the 14th over.

Joe Ninan's pace and swing bowled Ali Khan for 20 before Flowers caught Sameer Khan just short of the boundary for 29.

Bhanu Pratap fell just

one short of a half-century on 49 and Sami Pir's tigerish 24 not out at the tail-end of the innings boosted the Asia score to 258 all out, just one over short of the full 35.

Jeremy Bootsy and Hamilton opened the batting for ROW but by the sixth over, both batsmen had succumbed to the Asia attack having scored 15 runs each.

A strong partnership between Ninan and Flowers then ensured ROW went

in for drinks on almost an identical score-line as their Asia opponents at 123 for 2 after 15 overs.

After the break, a tiring Ninan fell for 73 and, despite valiant efforts by Van Blerk and Curt Livermore, the run chase was too steep and Asia ultimately claimed victory by 23 runs.

Man-of-the-match went to ROW's Joe Ninan for his 73, and 2 for 39, with mentions to Imtiaz Mushtaq (58, and

2 for 45) and Sami Pir (3 for 28, and 24).

COMING UP AT THE ACG (JAN 5 – 10)

Tuesday: Vagabonds Rugby training (5 – 7pm)

Wednesday: Junior Football training (4 – 6pm) & Senior Cricket training

Thursday: Touch Rugby training (5 – 7pm)

Friday: Junior & Senior Cricket training (4 – 6pm)

Sunday: Cricket from 10am

COVID forces star shuttlers from Thai triple-header

BADMINTON

THE NEWS THAT SEVERAL leading players have withdrawn after testing positive for COVID-19 has rocked three major upcoming tournaments based in Thailand.

The Yonex Thailand Open (Jan 12-17), the Toyota Thailand Open (Jan 19-24) and the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals (Jan 27-31) will all be staged in the capital.

On Monday (Jan 4), the Nippon Badminton Association of Japan confirmed that world number one ranked player Kento Momota tested positive for coronavirus which prompted not only his withdrawal but that of the entire Japanese playing squad.



Kento Momota will miss all three Thailand based championships this month. Photo: AFP

"Momota has tested positive for the coronavirus, and the association has decided not to send any players, including Momota, to Thailand," an

association official told AFP.

National broadcaster NHK said Momota tested positive at Narita airport ahead of the Japan team's

departure for Thailand. An association official confirmed that none of the other 22 Japan players tested positive, but said the entire team would withdraw nonetheless.

Later the same day, the Badminton Association of Indonesia announced that Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, the top-ranked player in the men's doubles, had tested positive for COVID-19.

"Based on the last test that Kevin ran on December 31, 2020, the PCR swab test result was positive," Octaviani, a doctor at the PBSI National Training Center, was quoted as saying by the Indonesian media.

As a result, Sukamuljo and his partner Marcus Gideon, the current world No.1 men's doubles pair, have

withdrawn from the three premier tournaments in Bangkok this month.

The news came after it was confirmed all Chinese domiciled players will not be participating due to a travel ban enforced in their homeland.

The men's competition will now be led by No.2 Chou Tien-chen of Taiwan, No.3 Anders Antonsen and No.4 Viktor Axelsen of Denmark while No.1 Tai Tzu-ying of Taiwan, No.5 Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand, and No.6 Carolina Marin of Spain remain as the top names in the women's field.

The first two events, both Super 1000 tournaments, offer a total purse of US\$1 million (B30mn) each, while the 2020 season finale has a total prize fund of \$1.5mn. AFP