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ON SHOW

PM SRETTHA PRAISES SAFETY DEMONSTRATIONS AS VITAL FOR TOURISM

Photo: PR Phuket

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin praised marine safety demonstrations held at Patong Beach last Friday (Dec 1), which were aimed at convincing tourists that Phuket is a safe destination for people to spend their holidays.

PM Srettha arrived in Patong at 1:45pm to witness three different “rescue” scenarios.

The first demonstration was of a lifeguard recovering a tourist drowning while caught in a rip current – under the assumption that the tourist

ignored red ‘no swimming’ flags and lifeguards’ warnings.

The second demonstration was of an air-sea rescue by a Royal Thai Navy helicopter in a simulation of a tour boat in distress with tourists left struggling in the water. Lifeguards and emergency responders also took part in recovering the “tourists” from the water and bringing them safely back to the beach to receive medical attention.

The third simulation was an armed police response team taking down an armed tourist posing a public danger on Bangla Rd after using a computerised face-detection system

(which officials called ‘AI’) to identify the suspect.

Following the demonstrations, PM Srettha also visited the CCTV control room showing live feeds from along Bangla Rd.

PM Srettha praised the efforts of all those who took part in the safety demonstrations.

“The important thing is to build trust and confidence with travellers to feel that when you come on holiday you will be safe and comfortable,” he said.

“This will have a positive effect on the image of Thailand’s tourism, leading to an increase in the number

of tourists coming to visit,” he added.

PM Srettha gave words of encouragement for the “sacrifice and dedication of those who worked hard for the safety of life and property of tourists”.

“It raises the level of confidence and safety in life and property of citizens and tourists in deciding to travel in Thailand, and to Phuket, and is in accordance with government policy that aims to make the tourist city [Phuket] a safe city at the international level. This understanding in many countries will attract more money from tourism,” PM Srettha said.

PM Srettha noted that many...

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**Immigration
chief resigns
over ‘morals’**



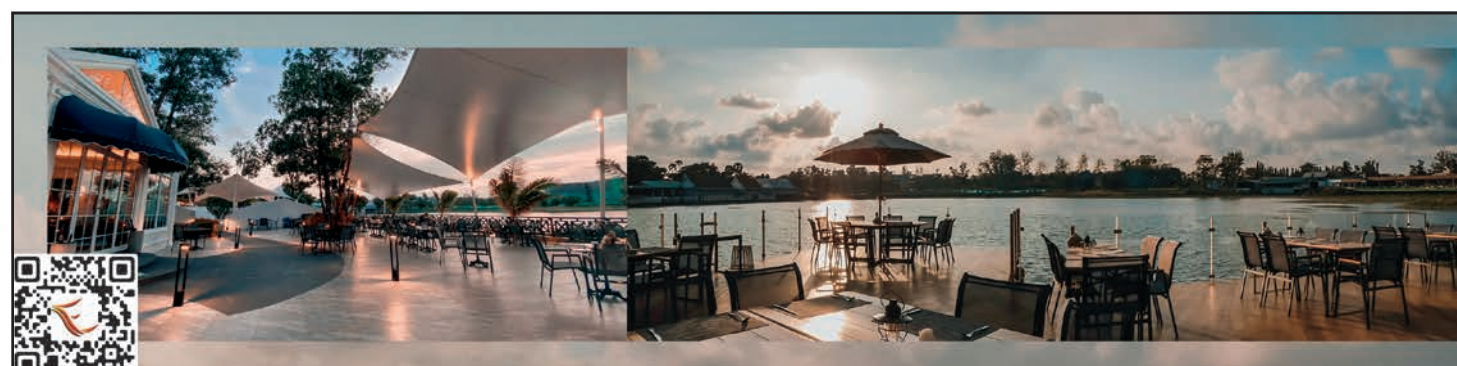
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**Great restart
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**Festival of
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News



CAAT plays down Chinese flight cancellations > p4

Safety goes on show

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...consuls and honorary consuls were present to witness the safety demonstrations, as were Chai Watcharong, spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office, and Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat along with many senior provincial officials.

"They [the consuls] are considered representatives of foreign tourists. It builds the confidence and trust of tourists that we are ready to provide the utmost safety and the best we can do," PM Srettha said.

"And from now on, we will return to considering support in terms of materials and equipment, and CCTV cameras, because Phuket is one of the most important strategic provinces in Thailand in order to build trust among tourists," he said.



Photo: PR Phuket

PM Srettha noted that the CCTV system monitoring Bangla Rd can be integrated with law enforcement island-wide, making it a useful tool in apprehending suspects.

"Phuket is a province that continues to build confidence in safety. This [exercise] is an announcement of readiness in welcoming tourists, it is not just about a free visa policy alone," he said.

"It aims to give maximum importance to the safety of tourists. It is considered to raise the level of being a safe city at the international level," he said.

Phuket Immigration chief resigns

Eakkapop Thongtub
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Phuket Immigration Chief Col Thanet Sukchai has officially tendered his notice and been transferred immediately, it has been confirmed.

Col Thanet submitted his letter of resignation to the Commander of Immigration Division 6 on Nov 29.

In his letter, Col Thanet stated, "I wish to resign from government service. To maintain a moral system for the organisation And I hope that in the coming era, people who work hard, sacrifice, and have good results will be considered fairly. Therefore, I am hereby requesting your consideration."

Instead of accepting Col Thanet's request, the following day he was transferred to the same position at the Immigration office in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province.

Col Thanet had been in



Photo: PR Phuket

the position of head of Phuket Immigration for just over three years and had a mixed time during his tenure.

He and his team received praise for introducing such measures as the Phuket Crime Free initiative, otherwise known as the "white accommodation" project, which focused on crime- and drug-free accommodation deliverables to ensure the safety of foreign nationals and local residents.

Similarly, Phuket Immigration launched a tip-off hotline and an online form for people to report "bad foreigners" in

their area in September.

The launch of the new channels for reporting came after rising concerns of criminality among new arrivals of Russian nationals to the island.

Col Thanet was part of a press conference on Sept 9 to deny reports that surfaced in foreign media stating that the island had effectively been overtaken by Russians, including members of the Russian mafia.

More recently was the incident on Oct 27 when two Phuket Immigration officers intending to execute an arrest

warrant for an Indian man overstaying in the country were assaulted at a luxury villa in Laem Singh, in Cherrng Talay, by foreign private security personnel.

The situation required the Phuket Provincial Police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) unit to intervene and bring an end to the hours-long siege.

Subsequently, the new Commander-in-Chief of the Immigration Bureau, Pol Lt Gen Itthiphon Itthisanronnachai, ordered that the foreigner at the centre of the incident, identified as an ethnic Indian from Vanuatu by the name of Nikhil Arora who was staying in Thailand under a 'Thailand Privilege Visa', be banned from re-entering Thailand for life.

There were reported suggestions that Col Thanet received criticism following the incident from subordinates within the Immigration office which may have led to his decision to resign.

Election for Kathu Mayor announced

AN ELECTION FOR A NEW KATHU Mayor will be held in January, the Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT Phuket) has announced.

The election will be held on Jan 14, ECT Phuket announced through a notice posted publicly on Nov 29.

Of note, although the notice is signed by Rattana Laptanapong, Election Director of Kathu Municipality, Kathu Municipality itself had not yet announced the election date on its official website or official Facebook page.

The ECT Phuket notice marked that the election is to be held in accordance with the Local Council Election Act. As such, the election for Kathu Mayor must be held within 60 days of Nov 21, 2023, the notice said.

Why the 60-day period was invoked on Nov 21 was not explained.

The notice did mark that the position of Kathu Mayor "became vacant" by order of the Governor of Phuket.

The position of Kathu Mayor became "vacant" after years-long incumbent Chai-anan Suthikul was summarily dismissed from office by previous Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew in late January this year.

Mr Chai-anan's dismissal from office followed an investigation into allowing a private operator to pump water from a lagoon at the Tin Mine Museum in Kathu.

Local officials attempted to hold an election on Mar 19 to install a new Kathu Mayor, but the attempt to hold a mayoral election was suspended by court order.

Dechakorn Kaenmuang, Election Director at Kathu Municipality at the time, said, "The enforcement of Phuket Provincial Order No. 439/2560 dated January 20, 2023 and and



Chai-anan Suthikul pictured on the home page of the Kathu Municipality official website earlier this year. Screenshot: The Phuket News / file

Phuket Provincial Order No. 440/2560 dated January 20, 2023 have been temporarily rescinded, therefore resulting in the Phuket Provincial Orders temporarily ceasing to be in force pending the proceedings of the Phuket Administrative Court and the post of Mayor of Kathu is considered to not yet be vacant."

Candidates had from Monday to Friday this week (Dec 4-8) to submit their applications to contest the election at Kathu Municipality.

The ECT Phuket notice published the necessary requirements for candidates to submit their registration applications, including evidence of Thai citizenship, house registration, a medical certificate, a photo of the candidate's face, evidence of education of at least a bachelor's degree. or equivalent, evidence of paying personal income tax for the past three years, and payment of a registration fee of B4,000.

Not noted in the election notice is that, in accordance with election law, there will be a 24 hour ban on the sale of alcohol in Tambon Kathu on the day of the election, Jan 14.

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B1.6bn splurge on Pa Khlok road

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

More than B1.6 billion will be spent on expanding the road through Pa Khlok to help alleviate traffic congestion on the island, Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat confirmed at a press conference held at the Pearl Hotel in Phuket Town last week.

The press conference, on Nov 30, was held as a “public relations project to release important policies to promote the image of Phuket tourism,” said an official report of the conference.

The Phuket Highways Office has drawn up the plan to expand the road through Pa Khlok (Route 4027), Governor Sophon explained.

Present to represent the Phuket Highways Office was engineer Sorasak Tasakarn. Phuket Highways Office Director Yutthana Pitak was not present.

The Pa Khlok road expansion was part of the Phuket Highways Office highway development plan “to hasten to solve the problem of traffic congestion and expand traffic channels to develop the infra-



Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat. Photo: PR Phuket

structure system of Phuket Province”, the report said.

Mr Sorasak explained that in avoiding the major traffic jams on Thepkasattri Rd by travelling from Phuket Town to the airport via Patong and Kamala, a distance 47.9km, currently takes about one hour and 19 minutes.

Travelling from Patong to the airport along the same route, a distance of 37.9km, currently takes about one hour and seven minutes.

To that end, the expansion of the main road through Pa

Khlok (Route 4027) was a viable option.

Governor Sophon explained the Pa Khlok expansion in two parts.

The project to expand the road to four lanes from Baan Para to Baan Muang Mai “to connect tourist attractions safely and conveniently and support the economic and social development of the four-lane expansion area, from km. 14+300 - km. 18+850”, covers a distance of 4.55km, he said.

Construction cost is limited to B510 million, he said.

The current status of the project was that the detailed design stage was completed in 2020. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report was approved by the Supervisory Committee for Protected Areas in Phuket Province on Aug 16, 2021.

The budget is to be applied for during the current fiscal year (2024), and the project is expected to open for service in 2026, Governor Sophon said.

The second section of Route 4027 to be expanded was from Muang Mai to the

‘Phuket Airport Intersection’ on Thepkasattri Rd.

The project requires the construction of a new four-lane road from km.18 850 to km.20+800, and one interchange.

The project covers a distance of 1.95km and construction cost is limited B1.104bn, giving an average cost of B566,153 per metre.

The current status of the project was that the detailed design stage was completed in 2020. The EIA report was approved by the Supervisory Committee for the Protected Areas of Phuket Province also on Aug 16, 2021.

“Currently, the project is in the process of having a proposal prepared to request a waiver of the use of mangrove forest areas from the Cabinet,” Governor Sophon explained.

“If approved, it will propose to issue an Expropriation Act to organise land ownership and construction according to the next steps. It is expected that a budget will be proposed for fiscal year 2026 and the project will be open for service in 2028,” he said.

Governor Sophon also gave a status update on the project to install an underpass at the

Heroines Monument. In short, the project has stalled.

The detailed design stage of the project – budgeted to cost B2.38bn – was completed in 2022, Governor Sophon said.

The Division of Environmental Impact Assessment Development, under the Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning reviewed the EIA report for the first time on Aug 11, 2023 – and resolved not to approve the current report, Governor Sophon explained.

Regardless, the budget request is expected to be submitted during fiscal year 2024, with the project opening for service in 2027, Governor Sophon said.

Of note, according to the official report of the press conference, Governor Sophon made no mention of the Patong Tunnel and Muang Mai - Koh Kaew - Kathu Expressway projects, both of which have also stalled.

He also made no mention of any efforts to alleviate the heavy traffic congestion in the Bang Tao, Cherg Talay area, which continues to suffer intense traffic tailbacks, often taking nearly an hour to travel just a few kilometres.

Efforts to contain subsidence on key road over Patong Hill

REPAIRS TO A SECTION of road over Patong Hill that suffered from subsidence were completed over three days last week, with both lanes heading to Patong now open.

The repairs began on Nov 29 after motorists reported dangerous cracks appearing in the road opposite the Wyndham Sea Pearl Resort Phuket on the preceding night.

While the repair team deployed to the site were overseen by the Phuket Highways office, Kathu Municipality, Patong Municipality and the Phuket Highways Office at the time of the repairs gave no explanation of what repairs were carried out.

The only notice issued by any of the three local government organisations was by the Phuket Highways Office, which issued a notice asking motorists to exercise caution while driving past the area where the work was being carried out.

“We would like to announce this for everyone to



Photo: Phuket Info Center

know and apologise for the inconvenience,” the Highways Office said.

“Please be careful!” the notice added.

Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee inspected the site, and the ongoing repairs, and thanked Patong Municipality for having a light installed at the site so motorists could see the danger and follow the traffic cones as motorists are

guided into one lane past the repair area.

Despite no official reports confirming the work carried out, it appeared officials took steps to repair the area with a backhoe and a repair team attempting to counter the subsidence by reinforcing the area to avoid further slippage of the earth supporting the road.

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New taxi deal at Ratsada Pier

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The 'green plate' taxi drivers stationed at Ratsada Pier will get 70% of all passengers, namely tourists, looking to use a taxi at the key tourist portal under a new deal that came into effect last Friday (Dec 1).

The new deal was just one of several new measures announced by Seatran Travel Co Ltd Managing Director Pornrat Tanpaiboon at a meeting at Ratsada Pier.

Present at the meeting were Pracha Asawatheera, Manager of the Upper Southern Region office of the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA), along with representatives of the Tourist Police, the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), Phuket City Police, Phuket Immigration Office, the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) and Ratsada Municipality – and the Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc), which serves as the political arm of the Thai military, noted an official report of the meeting.

"Those involved join in listening," said the report.

Of note, despite the PLTO, currently under direction by PLTO Chief Adcha Buachan, being the government agency for regulating all public transport on the island, Ms Pornrat was left to explain the new deal for using taxis at Ratsada Pier to the public.

The explanation given by the official report was that Seatran has operated the pier under a concession from the PPAO since 2020.



Pornrat Tanpaiboon, Managing Director of Seatran Travel Co Ltd, explains the new deal at Ratsada Pier. Photo: PR Phuket

In the hope of disguising the new measures for regulating taxis at the pier, Ms Pornrat was tasked with explaining the the new measures were part of Seatran "using technology in helping to solve problems and organise the entry and exit of the pier to be convenient".

The rollout of new technology was deemed fit as part of the 'Smart Pier' project, Ms Pornrat said.

Ratsada Pier, also known by its signed name 'Rassada Harbour', is a very busy port, Ms Pornrat said.

"During the low season there are 2,000 passengers per day, and during the high season there are 3,000-4,000 passengers per day," she noted.

Among the 'new technology' coming into effect to help streamline operations with passengers at the pier are automated turnstiles, card payment systems and face-detection CCTV to help law enforcement identify suspects, Ms Pornrat explained.

'Digital technology' will also now be used to help streamline taxi opera-

tions at the pier, Ms Pornrat added.

"It will be used to verify the correctness of registration as a public vehicle for hire, the sequencing for picking up and dropping off passengers by public hire vehicles and 'setting appropriate fare rates' [sic]," she said.

"Ratsada Pier understands the local taxi business. Therefore, taxi queue arrangements are being made to allow local taxi operators ['green plate' taxi drivers from the local co-operative] to receive queues to serve customers accounting for 70% of the total taxi queue," Ms Pornrat said.

Of note, as plainly exposed during previous taxi driver incidents at the pier, "local taxi drivers" is the term used to politely refer to the 'green plate' taxi drivers working as a co-operative under a concession with Seatran for the drivers to provide taxi services to passengers at Ratsada Pier.

The co-operative has previously been called 'mafia' by members of the public, a label that the local taxi drivers deny.

Police tend to view any such problems with local taxi drivers as the result of a 'misunderstanding'.

However, nearly in recognition of that fact, Ms Pornrat said, "Creating this system will solve various problems, including the huge price differences between taxi app drivers with taxi queue drivers, conflicts caused by taxi app drivers being blocked, and delays and disorderly entry and exit."

A fee will be levied on all taxis picking up passengers, mainly tourists, from the pier, Ms Pornrat added.

Levying a fee on all taxi drivers will force taxi app drivers to charge fares more in line with those charged by the local taxi co-op drivers, she explained.

How that was possible unless local taxi co-op drivers were not charged the fee was not explained.

"A system will be used to manage entry and exit from the pier. This will reduce payment time to make it quicker and more convenient by using a card, and a system for customers to queue up to call a taxi by themselves will also be rolled out," Ms Pornrat said.

"Initially, there are approximately 200 taxis registered to use the system, which are currently being checked for qualifications to see if they are the correct vehicles as required by law," she added.

Another measure being introduced, this one related to safety, was that road barriers will be installed to prevent customers from dragging their bags out to the passenger side of the vehicle, Ms Pornrat noted.

Chinese flight slots 'returned', not cancelled

FOLLOWING WIDESPREAD reports that 10 Chinese airlines had cancelled a total of 5,081 inbound flights from China to Thailand, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) has insisted that the "return of flight slots" by Chinese airlines is a routine practice and should not be interpreted as flight cancellations.

The initial reports marked that CAAT Director Suttipong Kongpool had announced that 10 major Chinese airlines had given notice of cancelling flights to Thailand, starting Dec 1.

Mr Suttipong noted that 10,939 flights were initially scheduled for December, but only 5,858 have been confirmed, marking a decrease of 46%, the reports said.

The 10 airlines were named as: Air China, China Eastern, Shanghai Airlines, Spring Airlines, China Southern, Shenzhen Airlines, Juneyao Airlines, Okay Airways, Hainan Airlines and



Chinese tourists arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport on Nov 24. Photo: Bangkok Post

Beijing Capital.

However, CAAT Director-General Mr Suttipong later on Nov 28 said that the return of slots allocated to airlines was in line with CAAT regulations, and that it was customary for airlines to give back extra flight slots.

Mr Suttipong clarified that it is not only Chinese airlines but also carriers from other countries that return excess slots allocated to them, explained a report by *Bangkok Post*.

He explained that during the finalisation of the winter flight schedule, each airline is required to submit their flight slots in accordance with the regulations set by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The regulations stipulate that cancellations must be made at least seven days before flights are confirmed. If flight slots are not finalised, it indicates the airline's intention to fly. Failure to fly would result in disqualification, according to the CAAT chief.

The issue is simply the relinquishment of flight slots, he added.

The CAAT had earlier allocated 21,923 flights slots from December this year to January next year. Of them, 13,278 flights were scheduled to operate.

In December, 10,939 flights were planned at six airports operated by the Airports of Thailand (AOT). However, due to returned slots, the

number of flights has been reduced to 5,858, he said.

In January, a total of 10,984 flight slots were allocated, but 7,420 flights would operate due to the return of slots.

"I assure that flight cancellations and the return of flight slots are different. The return of slots by airlines is normal," said Mr Suttipong.

"Airlines initially request slots to secure their rights, but various factors, such as the slower-than-expected growth of Chinese tourism, economic challenges in China and global competition for aircraft repair services during the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to the return of slots."

In addition, a shortage of aviation personnel, coupled with market growth falling short of expectations, led to airlines returning their flight slots, and this is a normal occurrence and has no negative implications, he insisted. *The Phuket News*

Songkran plans clarified

BANGKOK
Bangkok Post

The National Soft Power Development Committee has clarified its idea of staging the Songkran festival for the whole month of April, saying the water-splashing festivities will still be held on Apr 13-15 as per tradition, while other cultural events will be organised nationwide during the entire month.

The move follows heavy criticism that the idea of a month-long water splashing event is impractical and would be a huge waste of water and increase road accidents.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Pheu Thai Party leader and chairwoman of the committee, said last Friday (Dec 1) the committee had wanted to promote Songkran to become one of the world's best festivals.

"We will not splash water only for three days but the whole month with events to be held nationwide," she said, adding the extended festival could generate B35 billion for the economy.

Surapong Suebwonglee, the committee's vice-chairman, said that during Songkran, each province normally organises its own activities separately.

But the Songkran festival will now be listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage item by Unesco, he said, quoting the Ministry of Culture, with the official announcement due to be made at a Unesco's Intergovernmental Committee meeting



People celebrate Songkran on Khao San Road, Bangkok, in April. Photo: Bangkok Post

in Botswana on Wednesday (Dec 6).

"Therefore, the committee agreed that next year's Songkran festival should be co-hosted by all 77 provinces throughout the month of April, rather than being held separately. But it is not about water-splashing the whole month," Dr Surapong said.

"Water-splashing activities in each province will still be held in their usual tradition, but throughout the whole month we will also organise events to promote the country's soft power."

Each province will present ideas for events during the extended holiday for consideration in due course, Dr Surapong said.

Pheu Thai explained that plans are in place to transform Songkran into a global event under the theme "World Water Festival – The Songkran Phenomenon", with festivities to be rolled out gradually during April in the expectation of

attracting more than 35 million foreign tourists and generating some B40bn.

Defence Minister Sutin Klungsang said on Sunday (Dec 3) that if activities are to be held in all 77 provinces nationwide throughout April, there may not be enough police to keep order, though soldiers would be on stand-by to assist if necessary.

Nattavudh Powdthavee, a professor of economics at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said the traditional three days of Songkran was time enough to transform the water splashing into something extraordinary, with the brevity of the period meaning that those who don't like getting drenched can still tolerate it.

"If we make every single day of April a Songkran festival day, its value will diminish and people will be bored," he posted.



Gen Prayut with Their Majesties the King and Queen at the oath ceremony on Dec 2. Photo: NNT

Former Prime Minister Prayut joins Privy Council

BANGKOK
FORMER PRIME MINISTER General Prayut Chan-o-cha has officially been appointed as the newest member of the Privy Council, it has been confirmed.

The Royal Gazette announced the appointment on Nov 29, adding that His Majesty The King Maha Vajiralongkorn had decided that there should be another privy councillor.

Gen Prayut was granted an audience with Their Majesties the King and Queen last Saturday (Dec 2), where he took the oath for his new role.

Gen Prayut was presented to the King and the Queen by Gen Surayud Chulanont, the President of the Privy Council.

Established during the reign of King Rama V, the Privy Council is an official

advisory body to Their Majesties the King and Queen.

It plays a vital role in advising the Monarchy and coordinating between the Crown and various branches of the government, including the parliament, the judiciary, private organisations, and citizens.

Gen Prayut, 69, was the 29th prime minister of the country.

Having served as an army commander-in-chief, he led the country as prime minister from 2014 until his departure from office in August this year.

Gen Prayut was succeeded as prime minister by real estate tycoon and newcomer to politics Srettha Thavisin from the Pheu Thai Party.

In July, Gen Prayut announced his decision to resign from politics after nine years in power.

Additional reporting by Bangkok Post

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3. The Palace of the Lost City is a luxurious hotel complex in which luxury resort?
4. Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Thomas Bangalter are better known by what name?
5. What does a person with objectophilia suffer?

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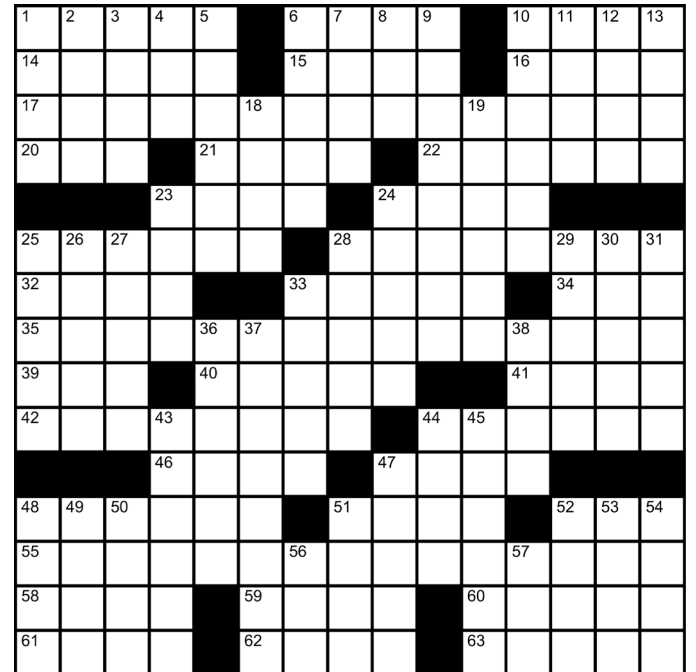
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				2		8		
			6		8	4		

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Under
 6. Priestly garb
 10. Adroit
 14. Caribbean cruise stop
 15. ___ tide
 16. Dwarf buffalo
 17. As fast as possible
 20. Small amount
 21. Crew members
 22. Lassie, for one
 23. Area
 24. Fast feline
 25. Temporary
 28. Guiding light
 32. Oil source
 33. Coffee break snack
 34. Genetic material
 35. Turning right continually
 39. Upholstery problem
 40. Carries on
 41. Believed
 42. Ethanoates
 44. Spooks
 46. Hawaiian strings
 47. Draped dress
 48. Food tray
 51. High school
- breakout
52. Dance step
 55. Defeats soundly
 58. First family member
 59. Hate group
 60. Ado
 61. Capital on the Caspian
 62. Like some threats
 63. "Snowy" bird
- Down
1. Bleats
 2. Hence
 3. Hilo feast
 4. Oriental tie
 5. Malicious
 6. Cavern, in poetry
 7. Leases
 8. Dickensian cry
 9. Medical tool
 10. Second-largest city in Texas
 11. Organic compound
 12. Central points
 13. Profits
 18. Told all
 19. Total
 23. Brass
- component
24. Johnnycakes
 25. African capital
 26. Infant's illness
 27. Figure of speech
 28. Presents
 29. Judge
 30. New World lizard
 31. South African dollars
 33. Plunges
 36. Legendary sea monster
 37. Engage in a summer sport
 38. Bangkok native
 43. Island nation north of Fiji
 44. ___ souci
 45. Foundling hospital
 47. Display
 48. Union foe
 49. Jessica of "Dark Angel"
 50. Soup ingredient
 51. ___ retentive
 52. "D"
 53. Flu symptom
 54. 32-card game
 56. Antiquated
 57. Account

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Heights; 2) Shelbyville; 3) Sun City, South Africa; 4) Daft Punk; 5) A sexual attraction to buildings



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

5

movies made by Steven Spielberg have made more than US\$500 million, after adjusting for inflation.

7

minutes is all it takes for the average person to fall asleep.

80

percent of a human body can be digested by maggots within one week.

18,000

years is how old a deep-sea sponge from the species *Monorhaphis chuni* can live.

2

billion

US dollars of mayonnaise is consumed in the US each year.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Tied up at Racha. Photo by Jeffrey Ephreim Villanueva Villegas

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

This week in history

Dec 8, 1660

A woman (either Margaret Hughes or Anne Marshall) appears on an English public stage for the first time, in the role of Desdemona in a production of Shakespeare's play 'Othello'.

Dec 9, 1937

Second Sino-Japanese War: Battle of Nanking: Japanese troops under the command of Lt Gen Asaka Yasuhiko launch an assault on the Chinese city of Nanjing (Nanking).

Dec 10, 1932

Thailand becomes a constitutional monarchy. King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) signs The "Permanent" Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam on December, 10 1932.

Dec 11, 1998

Thai Airways Flight 261 crashes near Surat Thani Airport, killing 101. The pilot flying the Airbus A310-300 is thought to have suffered spatial disorientation.

Dec 12, 1098

First Crusade: Siege of Ma'arrat al-Numan: Crusaders breach the town's walls and massacre about 20,000 inhabitants. After finding themselves with insufficient food, they reportedly resort to cannibalism.

Dec 13, 1577

Sir Francis Drake sets sail from Plymouth, England, on his round-the-world voyage.



Dec 14, 1911

Roald Amundsen's team, comprising himself, Olav Bjaaland, Helmer Hanssen, Sverre Hassel, and Oscar Wisting, becomes the first to reach the South Pole. Source: Wikipedia



A Meal with... Thomas Brack



A MEAL WITH...

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

Thomas Brack is one of Phuket's most respected restaurant managers and for many years ran, with exceptional grace and efficiency, the famous 9th Floor restaurant off Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd in Patong. So, to meet him, as I recently did, beaming happily in a school playground surrounded by a legion of boisterous, energetic youngsters was something of an enigma.

In fact, 'enigmatic' is a good word to describe the unique personality of Thomas Brack as I have come to realise over some 15 years that I've had the pleasure of knowing him. For not only did Zurich-born Thomas enjoy a successful early career in the Swiss fashion industry, but also went to Swiss officers' school as part of his military training, then became a hobby motor racing fanatic and ultimately had a motorcycle accident and was seriously injured.

A man of many parts indeed!

Thomas and I recently enjoyed a fabulous Italian supper in the sumptuous surroundings of Alessandro Frau's iconic Acqua restaurant, a little way north along Kalim Bay from the new Chicorée Baan Kalim School project, which Thomas is now overseeing with great passion.

Like Thomas, I am a great fan of Acqua and had written many articles about its owner and Executive Chef Alessandro and his amazing Sardinian-influenced cuisine, the most recent in *The Phuket News* during the pandemic titled 'A Meal with... The Chef of Longevity'.

Over delicious starters and drinks I asked Thomas how he first came to visit and get to know Phuket.

"I grew up on the outskirts of Zurich and in 1982, after school and military service, received a job offer from one of the largest fashion agencies in Switzerland as a junior salesman.

"I came on my first trip to the Far East in 1982, visiting India, Hong Kong and Bangkok and got to know Phuket when I came down for a four-day vacation.

"After my motorcycle accident, I was hospitalised for five months and needed a long rehabilitation afterwards and my situation became somewhat normal only after almost two years.

"Unfortunately, I had to give up my job and was never able to regain a foothold in my profession. However, I quickly started exercising after my rehab in a gym and working out became a major pillar of my life which I will never give up."

Over a superb salad of cold cuts and Puglia Burrata, I asked Thomas how he came to be involved in managing the 9th Floor Restaurant.

"In 1998 I started thinking about where I could emigrate and open a restaurant, but I also didn't want to have to go back home if my idea failed. So I chose Phuket as a place where I could afford to live even if my restaurant didn't flourish.

"I started a restaurant, Crystal Bay, with two friends, opening in 1999 on Tri Trang Beach, now the Rosewood. At that time, there was only the Merlin Hotel there and it was great for a while. However, in retrospect, it was fortunate that our lease ended in October 2004 and we were unable to renew it, as the 2004 tsunami destroyed the whole area."

"In 2005, a friend asked me if I could run his restaurant, the Swiss Chalet, situated on the ninth floor of a horrible condo. off Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd in Patong. It was not really my thing and I was preparing to quit when I first met Ernst Bauer, who was a regular there and a friend of the owner.

"Ernst decided to buy the restaurant and renovate it with floor-to-ceiling windows and this new venture became the 9th Floor. We opened in October 2006 and the restaurant quickly became THE very best in Patong and was full of international and local guests enjoying the superb food and wines, the beautiful scenes overlooking Patong and the glamorous, black-dressed wait-

resses... the famous '9th Floor Angels', far into the night."

Millionaires, celebrities and jet-setting playboys made the 9th Floor their second home when in Phuket and for many years Thomas presided over all the hedonistic indulgence with the calm equanimity of the true professional.

As we enjoyed our fabulous main courses of fresh seafood, Sicilian Red Prawns and lobster, I asked how on Earth had Thomas migrated from the high-rolling decadent world of the 9th Floor to be overseeing the renovation and launch of the wonderful Chicorée Foundation charity school in Kalim where I'd met him earlier that day.

"One night in 2007 at the 9th Floor, an old friend, Jörg Weber, whose family owns the world-famous Chicorée fashion empire, stopped by. We'd had no contact for over 20 years until, on the recommendation of a regular guest, Jörg and his family came for dinner. I couldn't remember him and of course I didn't expect to see him in Phuket, but then we recognised each other and had a great catch up.

"In the following years, the family came to Phuket for vacations and my friendship with them was re-established. On my visits to Switzerland, I always met them and we started talking about launching a social assistance project in Phuket, possibly a school.

"In January this year, the family and I decided to support Baan Kalim School, which was built some 40 years ago by the Thai government, but had always struggled with funding until the Phuket Has Been Good to Us Foundation stepped in and started to help run and financially support the children there from 2006.

Sadly, the pandemic significantly hit the Foundation's finances and so they had to concentrate on their main school near Kamala Beach, to the detriment of the Kalim School, which remained open with around 150 kids, but started falling into disrepair and ruin."

Thomas explained, "I'd known the Kalim school for over 20 years as I'd always lived in the area and drove past it daily. I contacted the school administration and from the first visit I knew

that this was the right school. I shared my impressions and the choice with the Weber family and briefed them with photos etc.

"Last May, Jörg and his wife Marianne came to Phuket and were rather shocked by the state of the school, but we had good discussions with the school administration and then agreed the project could begin."

The Chicorée initiative has now renovated the whole building, including the outside areas and re-fitted it throughout with new furniture, learning materials and even TVs in every classroom. There are special classrooms for computer studies, English language and science; a new fully-stocked kitchen and new bathrooms and a children's playground, plus indoor and outdoor sports areas.

In November, the renovations were completed and the school is now full to capacity with 250 children. English lessons are ongoing for all classes including kindergarten with the teachers and tutorials trained by the Phuket Has Been Good to Us Foundation, who worked closely with Thomas throughout. There are also computer and science lessons and a healthy dietary programme with food, all-day drinking water, morning and afternoon snacks and a nutritious lunch.

Thomas explained, "Children who are short of food at home are able to take a food box with them in the evening and we also supply uniforms and backpacks. We want the children to stay at the Chicorée Baan Kalim School from kindergarten through to the sixth grade, which rarely happens in local schools because the learning infrastructure isn't available. We plan to change that by giving children a very good standard of education and support so that they actually enjoy going to school."

The school will welcome Jörg Weber and his family on Dec 9 to see the results of their wonderful initiative bringing much-needed Hope, Health and Happiness to Phuket and Kalim... and indeed to that fascinatingly enigmatic man Thomas Brack who has overseen the whole thing!



OSPITALITÀ ITALIANA 2023: CELEBRATING A DECADE OF CULINARY EXCELLENCE

Presented by the Thai-Italian Chamber of Commerce, this prestigious certification program has been honoring and promoting the essence of authentic Italian cuisine since its inception in 1997, following the requirements set by the Italian National Institute for Tourism Research (ISNART). Held at the Metadee Concept Hotel, Phuket on Dec 1 was a wonderful evening celebrating a decade of culinary excellence as attendees marked the 10th edition of Ospitalità Italiana in Thailand. Ospitalità Italiana has become a symbol of quality, tradition and a passion for genuine Italian flavours. Over the past 10 years, this initiative has grown to become a beacon of authenticity for Italian restaurants, gelaterias and pizzerias in Thailand.





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FRI

8 DEC



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Christmas Market at Phuket Boat Lagoon

Join us on the boardwalk at Lagoon Quay of Phuket Boat Lagoon from 6pm on Friday December 8 for an evening of Christmas fun. For more information call 093 781 1188 or email customercare@phuketboat-lagoon.com

SAT

9 DEC



La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Phuket Christmas Lunch

We are back again at The Boathouse Phuket for our Chaîne Phuket Christmas lunch. Chef Jonathan

Bruell has created a fantastic menu for our lunch this year. Looking forward to seeing you all there for a great day over looking the white sand of Kata Beach. Bookings via PhuketTicketMaster.com



Gala at the Sala

Join us for this one of a kind Gala Fundraiser for The Million Baht Swim - all proceeds going to help The Good Shepherd School build much needed new classrooms. Held on the beautiful beachfront lawn of the Sala Hotel, there will be something to entertain all ages! Starting the afternoon with carnival games, fun football and face painting for the kids whilst the big people can relax and enjoy free flow drinks at the Sala Beach Bar whilst the sun goes down. There will even be a visit from a very special man in a big red coat! As the stars come out you can dance under the stars to the live band and DJ, bid for some amazing prizes in our charity auction and meet Grant 'Axe' Rawlinson, the man behind The Million Baht Swim. Tickets include free flow drinks package and a Thai Street Food BBQ. This will truly be a night to remember and a chance to support a wonderful community event offering the gift of education to migrant children who would otherwise not get this life changing opportunity. Tickets available at: www.ticketmelon.com/themillionbahtswim/galaatthesala

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SUN

10 DEC



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



X-MAS MARKET by The Pavilions Phuket

Join us for an evening filled with mouthwatering Christmas treats, lights, laughter and much more. Christmas is around the corner - join The Pavilions Christmas market by the Firefly Pool Celebrate this festive season with German Glühwein, German BBQ Sausage stations, DIY Gingerbread house workshops and artisans showcasing handmade and unique products and gifts to brighten up your holiday. A percentage of our sales proceeds will go to the local charity, called the Good Shepherd. Save the date: 10 Dec 2023 from 5.00 pm - 8:00 pm (FREE ENTRY!) Location: Firefly Pool and Restaurant

MON

11 DEC



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WED

13 DEC



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THU

14 DEC



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SAT

16 DEC



Rotary Club of Patong Beach Christmas Party 2023

Please reserve the date and register for the annual Rotary Club of Patong Beach Christmas Party happening at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket. Registration and Prepayment is mandatory. Prices until December 01: Rotary Club Members and their immediate family members: 2,000 THB per Adult. Non-Rotary Members: 2,500 THB per Adult. For Children aged 6 to 12 years old: 750 THB. The price includes a sumptuous buffet and free flow of well-chosen drinks per person. For bookings and more info email address: president@rotarypatong.org or LINE ID kamala110

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Gunners extend lead at top

FOOTBALL

AFP
Arsenal beat Wolves 2-1 last Saturday (Dec 2) to maintain their lead at the top of the Premier League, with goals from Bukayo Saka and Martin Odegaard putting the Gunners 2-0 up inside 13 minutes.

However, they failed to put the game to bed and were made to sweat when Wolves forward Matheus Cunha found the top corner in the 86th minute to set up a tense finale.

Despite the wobble, Arsenal, last year's runners-up, held on to notch their 10th win in 14 league games and remain three points clear at the top of the league after Manchester City were held to a 3-3 draw with Tottenham on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's champions led 2-1 at the break thanks to a Phil Foden goal after Spurs captain Son Heung-min had scored at both ends, but Giovanni Lo Celso's superb strike made it 2-2.

Substitute Jack Grealish looked to have won it for City before Dejan Kulusevski headed a dramatic late equaliser for Spurs.

Elsewhere, Liverpool beat Fulham 4-3 in a thrilling game at Anfield, with stunning late strikes from Wataru Endo and Trent Alexander-Arnold securing the win.

High-flying Aston Villa needed a late Ollie Watkins goal to secure a 2-2 draw at Bournemouth, West Ham and Crystal Palace drew 1-1, while Chelsea recorded just their second Premier League home



Bukayo Saka opens the scoring for Arsenal. Photo: AFP

win of the season against Brighton 3-2.

Newcastle United inflicted a sixth league defeat of the season on Manchester United thanks to Anthony Gordon's second-half goal.

The win lifted Newcastle up to fifth in the table and within two points of the top four.

By contrast, United slip to seventh and are still to beat any side in the top nine of the Premier League this season.

At the other end of the table, Burnley got their first home win of the season in style with a 5-0 thrashing of Sheffield United.

Jay Rodriguez fired the home side ahead with just 15 seconds on the clock – the fastest goal of the season so far,

with further goals from Jacob Bruun Larsen, Zeki Amdouni, Luca Koleosho and Josh Brownhill completing the rout.

Burnley close to within two points of safety after only their second win of the season while Sheffield United sit rock bottom, having conceded five or more goals on three occasions this season.

Luton, just outside the drop zone, sank to a 3-1 defeat at Brentford, while Everton boosted their survival hopes despite being hit by a 10-point deduction with a 1-0 win at Nottingham Forest thanks to Dwight McNeil's goal.

"It's a restart. It's a step in the right direction, but there are plenty more steps to go," said Everton manager Sean Dyche.



Logan Sargeant. Photo: AFP

Williams confirm Sargeant stay

FORMULA ONE

WILLIAMS HAVE CONFIRMED American driver Logan Sargeant will stay with the F1 team next season.

The British outfit have opted to retain the 22-year-old for a second campaign despite his troubled 2023 season where he scored just one point.

Sargeant will race alongside Alex Albon, with the London-born Thai's place already announced.

"I am thrilled to be continuing with Williams Racing for the 2024 season," Sargeant said last Friday (Dec 1).

"It has been an incredible journey with the team so far and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue developing as a driver within such a talented and dedicated group.

"We have exciting plans for the future and I can't wait to contribute to the team's success in the coming year."

Sargeant claimed his maiden point in F1 at the United States Grand Prix in Austin in October, the first American to score in the sport since Michael Andretti 30 years ago for McLaren.

Albon finished the year with an impressive 27 points to help Williams land seventh in the constructors' championship, the team's best result for six seasons.

"I am pleased to continue our journey with Logan into 2024," said team principal James Vowles.

"Logan has demonstrated immense skill whilst under the pressure of the world stage, making him a perfect fit for our team.

"We have great confidence in his abilities and believe that together we can achieve even greater success in the upcoming season."

The 2024 F1 season will start in Bahrain on Mar 2.

AFP

Trichat finishes in style

GOLF

THAILAND'S TRICHAT Cheenglab has finished a hugely successful season by claiming the Ladies European Tour's (LET) money title and Rookie of the Year award.

The 28-year-old could only finish in a tie for 55th after a closing 74 at the season-ending Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana at the Real Club de Golf Las Brisas course in Marbella on Nov 26.

However, that was enough for her to finish top of the Race to Costa del Sol by less than 100 points ahead of Thai-French Celine Boutier, the reigning Evian Championship winner.

Trichat is the sixth player to win both the LET's Race to Costa del Sol and Rookie of the Year titles in the same season.

Trichat, who won the 2023 Big Green Egg Open in the Netherlands, followed in the footsteps of compatriot Atthaya Thitikul who secured the honours in 2021.

Meanwhile, India's Aditi



Trichat Cheenglab poses with her trophies. Photo: Bangkok Post

Ashok got her second LET victory of the season triumphing by two shots at the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana.

The two-time Olympian had an impressive week where she improved round by round at Real Club de Golf Las Brisas.

After rounds of 69-68-68 on the first three days, Ashok carded an excellent bogey-free 66 on the final day to win with a total of 17-under-par.

Dutch star Anne Van Dam ended the week in second place on 15-under-

par after a final round of 68.

"It started out slow. I was missing a lot of birdies for the first six to eight holes," said Ashok. "I hit it close on seven, after that I felt like I still had a chance. Initially, it felt like I was two shots away the whole time. I'm glad it picked up on the back nine.

"It was a great battle. Anne [Van Dam], when she's playing good, she can blow the field away and win by five to 10 shots. I knew I had to not stop making birdies and to keep trying."

Bangkok Post



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DOJO ON THE MARCH

More medals for the team from Blue Tree Phuket

The Dojo team after The Indonesian Judo Open Championships on Nov 19. Photo: Alexis Plantard

JUDO

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The year may be drawing to a close but that won't stop the superstar team from Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket who continue to represent the island in style on the international stage.

Most recently, 11 members of the team were in Jakarta for the Indonesian Judo Open Championships on the weekend of Nov 18-19 where they were competing against close to 700 other fighters from 45 regional clubs and gyms.

Student Oscar has had an incredible year, developing at a fantastic pace into a very astute competitor and it was he who led the charge for the Dojo brigade.

Young Oscar triumphed

after five challenging ippon matches in his cadet division, the largest category of the tournament with a total of 30 players involved.

"He is improving all the time and is very impressive," commented Dojo lead instructor Alexis Plantard.

"In the last two months he has won all the events he has contested at international level, including at tournaments in Australia, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and now Indonesia.

"The turning point for him was last summer when he progressed to the top three at US open after 17 matches in three days. This gave him the belief to know he can fight anyone and win."

Oscar was also awarded his green belt for his development and impressive results.

Elsewhere, team captain Gabin demonstrated his talent

by winning a bronze medal in his class to sustain his place on the podium at every event he has been involved with this year and edge to within touching distance of his blue belt classification.

David secured a much deserved silver medal, while young Tomo won a bronze after contesting four gruelling encounters.

Despite being just 8 years old, Kiichi continues to compete in the under-12 age class, winning three of his five matches out of a total of 30 contestants, while teammate Oliver, who is the same age and fights in the same age class, reached the top seven after several very impressive performances.

Leading by example as always, coach Alexis won his four matches against Indonesian and Japanese

opponents to secure his medal haul.

Prior to the tournament in Jakarta, the team travelled north to Vientiane to compete in the Laos International Judo Championships on the weekend of Nov 11-12.

Once again the medals continued to flow, with team captain Gabin showing the way by securing gold in the under-38kg weight class, while Oscar won top honours in the under-32kg class.

Oliver won a bronze medal in the under-32kg, an extra impressive feat as the 8-year-old was facing off against opponents four years older.

Coach Alexis also won bronze in the open weight division although he was left aggrieved at what he said was sub-standard officiating which cost him the chance to claim top honours.

FLYING SOLO

When he is not leading his team into competition, coach Alexis will often fly solo. On Nov 28, for example, he faced off against the world's best 500 wrestlers in front of 5,000 spectators at the national indoor stadium in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, at the 14th World Kurash Wrestling Championship.

Despite a very challenging draw, the Frenchman managed to overcome several opponents, including tough competition from Afghanistan, before falling at the quarter-final stage and finishing fifth after defeat to Iranian world champion and eventual winner Masoud Ghavibazoo.

Prior to this, Alexis battled through several bruising and extremely challenging encounters to finish fifth at the World Judo Championships in

Abu Dhabi on Nov 3.

The bronze medal match between Alexis and his Brazilian opponent descended into an all out war, with several suspect moves on show and penalties handed out to both fighters before Alexis took a risk chasing victory that, alas, was not to materialise.

"To finish fifth in the world, I'll take that," Alexis told *The Phuket News*. "I was close to the podium and will keep pushing until I am back there."

This weekend (Dec 9-10) Alexis and 19 students from the Dojo are competing at the Malaysian International Judo Open.

"All of them started from nothing, with no experience or knowledge but trained hard and are now serious athletes who will only continue to improve," Alexis said. "I am very, very proud of all of them."

BISP Soccer 7s triumphs once again

FOOTBALL

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, PHUKET (BISP) hosted its hugely popular Soccer 7s tournament during the weekend of Nov 24-25 in what was a true festival of football.

A total of 112 teams competed in the two-day tournament at the school's campus in Koh Kaew, including squads from Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, South Korea, India, China, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Football enthusiasts were treated to a staggering 376 games across

the two days with a total 1,190 goals scored – a healthy average of three goals per game.

Favourable weather conditions meant plenty of engaging play on the field, with a range of off-field activities on hand to keep spectators and non-active teams entertained.

In addition to a variety of food stalls, there was also musical entertainment, aerial performances and a host of interactive virtual reality (VR) games, with the latter blending technology with sportsmanship to provide participants a truly immersive gaming experience.

For many of the players and teams involved, it was their first

involvement with the BISP Soccer 7s and the feedback was universally popular, emphasising what the whole BISP community is capable of providing when it pulls together.

There were a total of eight category trophies up for grabs and the winning results were as follows:

Girls Under-11: Cup: St Andrews, Bangkok (Thailand); **Plate:** Dulwich College, Beijing (China)

Girls Under-13: Cup: Harrow International School, Bangkok (Thailand); **Plate:** British International School, Phuket (Thailand)

Girls Under-15: Cup: Bangkok Patana School (Thailand); **Plate:** KLASS (Malaysia)

Girls Over-15: Cup: British International School, Phuket Orange (Thailand); **Plate:** Lanna International School (Thailand)

Boys Under-11: Cup: St Andrews, Bangkok (Thailand); **Plate:** Harrow International School, Bangkok (Thailand)

Boys Under-13: Cup: British International School, Phuket Orange (Thailand); **Plate:** Headstart Panthers (Thailand)

Boys Under-15: Cup: British International School, Phuket Orange (Thailand); **Plate:** Marlborough College (Malaysia)

Boys Over-15: Cup: British International School, Phuket Orange



Photo: BISP

(Thailand); **Plate:** Dulwich College, Shanghai (China); **Bowl:** Bangkok Prep (Thailand)

Congratulations to all who took part, including parents, volunteer coaches, BISP staff, referees, vendors, spectators and all the dedicated players who made the event so successful.

The BISP Soccer 7s will return in 2024, with details announced in due course. *Muchanga Zebron*