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## ABOUT FACE



Deputy PM Anutin Charnvirakul, who also serves as Health Minister, welcomes travellers from a Xiamen Airlines flight as they arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok on Monday (Jan 9). Photo: AFP

## INSTANT U-TURN ON VACCINATION ENTRY RULE AS CHINESE TOURISTS ARRIVE

**The Phuket News**  
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Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on Monday (Jan 9) declared that no international arrivals needed to present evidence of vaccination against COVID-19 in order to enter the country, in a public reversal of the policy he had announced just days earlier.

The instant U-turn on the policy, which had sparked thousands of tour cancellations from other countries, came as Anutin welcomed hundreds of Chinese tourists arriving at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok on the first direct flight from mainland China into Thailand since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020.

Joining Anutin for the occasion were Tourism Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

Deputy PM Anutin said that requiring visitors to show evidence of two vaccine doses was “inconvenient” and that a panel of experts

had resolved that it was unnecessary as enough vaccinations “had been administered globally”.

Visitors not vaccinated at all would also be granted entry without restriction, he said.

“Showing proof of vaccination would be cumbersome and inconvenient, and so the group’s decision is that it is unnecessary,” Anutin told reporters.

However, visitors travelling onward from Thailand to a country that requires a negative RT-PCR test result must provide proof of insurance. This will ensure that they can meet the costs of their treatment if their test in Thailand is positive, he said.

China still requires a negative RT-PCR test result no older than 48 hours prior to arrival for all incoming travellers. India last week imposed a similar mandate for visitors from five countries: Thailand, China (including Hong Kong), South Korea, Japan and Singapore.

### FLIP-FLOP

The policy reversal on Monday followed Anutin himself for weeks

repeatedly attempting to allay fears of Chinese tourists being allowed into the country unrestricted, bringing new variants of COVID-19 with them – the same variants that global news agencies have reported have left hospitals and crematoriums in China overwhelmed.

The reversal also came without warning, just four days after Anutin himself announced the policy that all international arrivals – from any country – would have to show proof of vaccination in order to be allowed into Thailand.

That announcement, berated by the public, was made to avoid displeasing China, which had openly criticised other nations for imposing recent negative tests on travellers from China, calling the practice “discriminatory”.

The list of such countries imposing tests on arrivals from China is extensive, and includes the United States, United Kingdom, Greece, Sweden, France, Australia, India, Canada, Japan, Italy, Spain, Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea, Qatar, Israel, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Morocco imposed a ban on people arriving from China, whatever their nationality, from Jan 3.

Anutin’s rationale for forcing all arrivals to show proof of vaccination only last week was: “The principle is there will not be any discrimination against a particular country because COVID-19 is spreading in all countries and the strains are similar. So, COVID-19 should not be an issue of discriminating against any country.”

### FORCE MAJEURE

Following the announcement on Jan 5 that all arrivals must be fully vaccinated, thousands of tourists cancelled their trips to Thailand. The Phuket Tourist Association confirmed the extent of cancellations in a formal appeal to revise the entry measure sent to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha last Saturday (Jan 7).

The formal request was also addressed to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul, Minister of Tourism and Sports Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn and Tourism Authority of Thailand Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

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## News



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# Phuket is 'COVID ready': PPHO chief

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Phuket is ready to receive Chinese tourists, assures Kusak Kukkiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO), the leading government health official on the island.

Dr Kusak's statement of confidence, declared last Saturday (Jan 7), came ahead of Chinese tourists being allowed to enter Thailand on (Jan 9). The first flight landed on Monday (see page 1).

At the time of Dr Kusak's announcement, all international travellers, including Chinese, were required to show proof of vaccination in order to enter Thailand. As of Monday, that requirement has been rescinded.

More than 300,000 Chinese tourists are expected to visit Thailand in the first three months of this year.

PPHO Chief Dr Kusak last Saturday said, "The medical sector [in Phuket] is ready to receive foreigners who will come into the country, not only Chinese tourists, because we already have experience in this.

"In addition, more than 90% of Phuket people have had their first and second



Dr Kusak Kukkiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO), the leading government health official on the island. Photo: PR Phuket

doses of vaccine, 69% have had a third dose, and 40% have had a fourth dose, while three to five people being admitted to hospital for COVID-19 per day is considered very little," he added.

"Therefore, we are ready to accommodate if there are more patients, in terms of patient beds, pharmaceuticals and personnel... And the issue of the COVID strain is not a concern because it is the same strain that we have previously had spread [throughout Thailand].

"Therefore, I would like

everyone to mainly follow the news from the government," Dr Kusak concluded, urging people to not heed any independent reports.

Dr Kusak noted that people in Phuket were already – or still – practicing the government's DMHTT policy to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"It is currently found that Phuket people are already taking action, especially wearing a hygienic mask," he said.

The 'DMHTT' stands for: D – Social Distancing, M – Mask wearing, H – Hand

washing, T – Temperature checking, and T – Thai Chana app (which was scrapped in October last year).

Despite his assurance that Phuket is ready to cope with a resurgence of COVID infections, Dr Kusak urged people at risk of developing serious infections – long called 'Group 608' by officials – to present themselves to have their third or even fourth COVID vaccination jab.

Since the lifting of the proof of vaccination requirement on Monday, at time of press Dr Kusak had yet to

re-affirm his confidence in coping with an increase in viral load across the island.

## JABS GALORE

Meanwhile, Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town is continuing its walk-in COVID vaccinations and booster jabs freely available to Thais and foreigners throughout the remainder of January.

The injections are being administered on the first floor of the Luang Por Chaem Building at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

In order to receive a vaccination jab, foreigners need to present only their passport, while Thais need to present only their government ID card.

The vaccination injections are available for people receiving their first, second, third or fourth jab.

Those receiving their third jab must have waited at least three months since their second jab in order to receive their third, Vachira Hospital explained in its announcement yesterday (Jan 4).

The vaccine injections are being provided in dedicated sessions:

- Pfizer for adults (12 years old or older): 8:30am - 11am
- Pfizer for children 5-11 years old: 1pm - 3:30pm

• Pfizer for infants 6 months to 4 years old: 1pm - 3:30pm

• Long-Acting Antibodies (LAAB): 1pm - 3:30pm

The schedule for the remaining vaccination days is as follows:

Mondays: Jan 16, 23, 30 – Pfizer for Adults (morning); Pfizer for children 5-11 years old (afternoon); LAAB (afternoon).

Tuesdays: Jan 17, 24, 31 – Pfizer for Adults (morning); Pfizer for children 5-11 years old (afternoon); Pfizer for infants 6 months to 4 years old (afternoon); LAAB (afternoon).

Wednesdays: Jan 18, 25 – Pfizer for Adults (morning); Pfizer for children 5-11 years old (afternoon); Pfizer for infants 6 months to 4 years old (afternoon); LAAB (afternoon).

Thursdays: Jan 19, 26 – Pfizer for Adults (morning); Pfizer for children 5-11 years old (afternoon); LAAB (afternoon).

Fridays: Jan 13, 20, 27 – Pfizer for Adults (morning); Pfizer for children 5-11 years old (afternoon); LAAB (afternoon).

Saturdays / Sundays – no service available.

## More than 300,000 Chinese tourists expected within first months

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The appeal followed an initial formal request sent to PM Prayut only one day earlier (Jan 6), in which key tourism figures for Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi and even Koh Samui united in their call for the government to lift the 'vaccinated only' restriction.

"Please refrain from the 2-dose vaccination requirement, since in most countries that do not have those measures the epidemic has passed and has become an endemic disease that is not being monitored, and most of the population has already received more than 2 doses of [a] vaccine," the initial request said.

"Currently, the country's tourism sector has recovered more than 70% compared with 2019, which will be an important engine in driving the economy. The private sector urges you to reconsider such measures to speed up building confidence [in Thailand's tourism industry] as soon as possible," the request added.

The formal appeal sent last Saturday spelled out the damning effect the vaccination requirement

was already having.

The request, signed by Phuket Tourist Association Advisory Chairman Bhumikitti Ruktaengam and Phuket Tourist Association President Thanet Tantipiriyakit, noted, "The Phuket Tourist Association has received contact and coordination from guided tour operators in many countries, in which all companies have shown are of the utmost concern regarding the changes to the entry policy," the request noted.

Worrying reports had been received by tour and travel companies in England, Germany, France and Scandinavia as well as Russia, the appeal pointed out.

In the 72 hours from Jan 5 through Jan 7, tour operators in Germany alone had suffered cancellations of thousands of room nights, the letter continued.

Another key concern was that as the new 'vaccinated only' rule was outside the tour operators' refund policy, operators in all the countries contacted were now scrambling to find ways to provide refunds.

Tour operators in England com-



plained extensively about the lack of notice given in introducing the rule, with passengers being refused onto the plane at the airport.

The operators said they had tried to find official information on government websites, but were not able to find any.

Tour operators in Scandinavia said they were unable to notify their customers in time, exacerbating the problem.

Tour operators in France were greatly dissatisfied with the change. Fly, a French travel agency, is seeking a way to have the rule change declared force majeure in order to cancel its tours to Thailand in the name of Thai political instability, the letter explained.

Tour companies in Russia were greatly concerned about the number of passengers who had booked holidays to Thailand but were not vaccinated.

"In addition, companies have sold prepaid packages, especially large operators that have entered into aircraft charter or purchased large numbers of seats from airlines in advance," the appeal said.

"Most of them are unable to travel to Thailand, which is causing great damage and impact on business. The requirements and Code of Conduct as an official document is needed, more than news from the media that may cause confusion and misunderstanding.

"The operators said they had been informed by the Russian Embassy in Bangkok that the announcement has not yet become official because [embassy staff] were unable to find official documents for reference," the appeal said.

"The Phuket Tourist Association is concerned about the situation, especially because tour companies have expressed dissatisfaction, and

many tourists will be affected by the changing of the rules,"

"Please Prime Minister, consider ordering as soon as possible to find solutions to problems and find a way out for the benefit to the country's economy," the appeal concluded.

## INFLUX

Thailand now anticipates 300,000 visitors from China in the first quarter, despite China experiencing its worst outbreak of the virus since it was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019 and a widespread acknowledgement of the ineffectiveness of China produced and administered vaccines.

A total of 15 flights from China, carrying 3,465 passengers overall, arrived in Thailand on Monday. Airports of Thailand (AoT) expects some 7-10 million travellers from China to travel through its airports, including Phuket, throughout 2023 – up from 5mn before the announcement on Monday.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, AoT airports in 2019 had about 20.5mn Chinese tourists pass through its airports.



# 'Beach club barge' nears nod

## Officials spotlight safety over Patong's first 'floating beach club'

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The Phuket office of the Marine Department is deciding whether to allow a 500-gross-ton floating 'beach club barge', complete with bar and on-board swimming pool, to be anchored in Patong Bay.

The high-end barge, technically registered as the vessel 'Sawasdee', can accommodate 500 guests with a crew of 35 on board, the Phuket Marine Office explained through an official report last week.

The boat is already at anchor in Patong Bay, where Patong Municipality has already approved the vessel to operate as a restaurant. However, the decision whether the boat is allowed to remain at anchor in the bay has yet to be decided, the official report said on Jan 6.

Other floating restaurants are allowed in Phuket, particularly off Bang Rong Pier and in between Phuket and Koh Maphrao, off Phuket's east coast.

However, if approved, the Sawasdee will be the first such floating 'beach club barge' permitted to remain at anchor in Patong.

The boat has already run afoul of Marine Department regulations,



Photo: PR Phuket

with its registration expiring last month, the Phuket Marine Office reported.

The boat operators were fined B10,000 for the infraction. The operators have applied to renew the boat's registration, the report confirmed.

However, Phuket marine officials have yet to complete their inspections of the boat, which they reported as a steel vessel with a size

of 579 gross tons. No other dimensions of the boat were mentioned in the report.

Key concerns for marine officials are safety measures on board the boat, which carries at least six life rafts ready to be deployed from its stern. The boat also features a fire hose station on board.

Explaining the boat's history, Phuket marine officials reported that the Swasdee was initially

registered with port authorities at Kantang Port in Trang province, south of Phuket, on Dec 16, 2021.

The boat, powered by dual 373kW Cummins diesel engines, is registered as a "type of sea-going vessel" permitted to operate only in specific areas. Which "specific areas" were not specified.

The ship's owner is a company located in Rawai. The boat arrived in Phuket from Kantang on June

4 last year, with its master named as "Mr Thanawat" (family name not reported), said Phuket marine officers.

Officers from the Phuket Marine Office first inspected the boat at the Baan Yamu Pier on Nov 16 last year. Officers instructed the boat owner to immediately take action to change the boat's registered type of use.

The boat owner was also instructed to present plans of how waste management is to be conducted on board, and present a passenger safety plan.

The shipowner's representative [sic] on Dec 29 submitted an application for a license to use the boat, and requested the Phuket Regional Harbor Office to again inspect the boat.

Officers returned to inspect the boat again on Jan 4 as part of the procedure for the boat license renewal.

This time the inspection was conducted in Patong Bay, where the Sawasdee had already relocated.

The officers inspected the boat's 'sailing equipment', communication equipment, maritime signal apparatus, hull structure and safety equipment on board, "including large machinery and other fixtures, etc.", Phuket marine officials noted.

## Romanian expat diver feared drowned

AS OF TUESDAY (JAN 10), search teams were continuing to scour the waters around Koh Kaew Noi, south of Phuket, for missing 46-year-old Romanian national Sebastian Emil Somesan, who failed to return from a dive to free a snagged boat anchor two days earlier (Jan 8).

Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos on Monday explained to reporters that Mr Somesan along with Romanian friend Alexandru Florin Miron, 47, and Thai woman Saowalak Kanhawong all departed Nai Harn Beach on board Mr Somesan's speedboat 'Shonica' at about 9am on last Sunday.

Mr Somesan and Mr Morin wanted to go diving off Koh Kaew Noi, he said. Mr Somesan lives in Phuket with his wife and daughter, he noted.

Mr Somesan and Mr Morin completed a dive and safely returned to the boat, but when they tried to depart, they were unable to raise the anchor as it had become caught on a rock on the seabed below.

Mr Somesan then dived



Photo: Rawai Municipality

under the boat to free the anchor, reportedly at a depth of some 30 metres.

However, Mr Somesan had previously dived to a depth of only 18 metres, raising concerns whether he could complete the dive to free the anchor safely. He failed to return to the boat.

Mr Morin raised the alarm by calling wife, Nichkamol Theparak, 42, at around 12:45pm last Sunday, asking for help to find the contact number for lifeguards in Rawai.

A search for Mr Somesan was launched immediately, with lifeguards, defence volunteers, rescue workers, officers from Rawai Municipality, Marine Police and personnel from the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Com-

mand all joining the search operation.

Local foreign divers also joined the search efforts to locate Mr Somesan.

A search command centre has been set up at Yanui Beach, just north of Nai Harn.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew arrived at the command centre Monday evening to be briefed on the search efforts underway.

Governor Narong emphasised that all people should exercise caution while on or in the water. "There are still strong currents even though we are at the end of the [southwest] monsoon season," he said.

At last report, Mr Somesan had yet to be found.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN JANUARY 15



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

MON JANUARY 16



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE JANUARY 17



High: +32°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

WED JANUARY 18



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

THU JANUARY 19



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

## Police stage riot response drill

The Phuket News  
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Phuket Provincial Police conducted a riot response exercise on Jan 5 simulating the incidents that led to the notorious Thalang riot in 2015 during which hundreds of angry residents laid siege to Thalang Police Station.

The exercise was conducted in front Phuket City Police Station, led by Region 8 Police Deputy Commander Maj Gen Saksira Phuakam and Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong, and joined by Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabham and Phuket City Police Chief Col Sarawut Chuprasit.

The aim of the exercise was "to train the readiness of officers from various departments to have expertise in handling situations that arise," noted an official report of the drill.

The exercise simulated several situations, starting with Phuket City Police and Wichit Police taking action against 120 teenagers street racing at Saphan Hin. In the simulation, 10 teenagers were arrested. The teens denied involvement with drugs or street racing.



Photo: PR Phuket

The simulation included teenagers fleeing police, with two teens injured in an accident, sparking a response by 70-80 teenagers gathering in front of the police station, accusing police of excessive force.

As such, the simulation repeated the same chain of events that led to the riot in 2015 that saw hundreds of local residents, not just teenagers, angry at the Thalang Police's role in the arrest and injury of two teenagers who were chased down by police.

However, a marked departure from the real events that occurred

was that in the simulation on Jan 5 the two teenagers were injured, whereas in reality in 2015 the two teenagers involved died.

During the riot, cars in front of Thalang Police Station were set on fire, with the angry mob pelting the police station with bricks and bottles. Officers barricaded themselves inside the police station until the mob dispersed.

Police arrested at least 64 people involved in the riot, including one man arrested in Bangkok four years later.

The Jan 5 exercise included a slew

of police units and law-enforcement agencies, along with rescue workers to provide medical treatment in such incidents.

Among those taking part in the exercise were personnel from Phuket Provincial Office of the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor) as well as Special Branch police officers and officers from the Phuket Provincial Police Forensics Unit.

Joining them were medical teams from Vachira Phuket Hospital and the Kusoldharm Foundation Phuket emergency rescue service.

The exercise saw officers train in ways to prevent "the assembly" of angry mobs, and where negotiations failed to be able to respond using arrest tactics in accordance with appropriate measures set out by United Nations guidelines, noted the official report.

"The operation set out for officers to together analyse and assess the situation to lay out guidelines to prevent incidents that may actually occur in the area and stop [such] incidents in a timely manner, and is considered training for all officers to be ready to perform their duties when an incident occurs in their area of responsibility," the report said.

## Warning over fake banknotes

OFFICERS FROM THE BANK of Thailand are warning people in Phuket to beware fake banknotes in circulation on the island.

Officials from the Bank of Thailand Banknote Handling Center branch in Surat Thani arrived in Phuket last Saturday (Jan 7) to investigate a counterfeit banknote received at a shop in Baan Khian, Thalang.

The fake banknote was handed over by two young men driving a blue PCX motorbike who arrived at the shop and legally bought kratom leaves from the store. The shop owner realised only later that the banknote handed over was fake, the officers reported.

The shop owner, reported only as "Nong Por, then posted a warning online, urging all shop owners to beware fake banknotes in circulation.

"In this case, the victim has done the right steps, only that he did not notice it in time," one of the officers said in a report posted online.

"But Nong Por knows what the villains look like. He kept the counterfeit note and posted a warning online. When we heard the news, we followed up and we also went to the police station,"



Photo: PR Phuket

the officers noted.

The incident served as a warning to all shops as an example, the officers also noted in their report.

The owner of the shop next door to "Nong Por" asked the officers to issue a warning over fake banknotes, the officers said, as elderly people living next door to that shop had also recently received fake banknotes.

"It would help if everyone accepting banknotes paid a little attention [to the banknotes they are receiving]. It takes only about five seconds and we can help stop counterfeit banknotes," the officers noted.

While in Phuket, the team of officers from the Bank of Thailand visited shops in the area and handed out posters explaining the details to look for in order to identify a genuine Thai banknote, including the watermark image of The King, the metallic thread woven into the paper, and the quality of the paper itself.

The Phuket News

## Russian with knife incident ends with hugs

TWO POLICE OFFICERS HAVE received public praise for playing along in a charade to help a Russian man surprise his wife and bring a cake for his 2-year-old daughter's birthday.

Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong was unaware of the incident until a video of the officers playing along, pretending to have the Russian man under arrest, was posted on TikTok.

Maj Gen Sermphan on Jan 4 summoned the two patrol officers in question, Maj Hattaporn Thongkhao Bua and Maj Suwit Chattri, to clarify the incident.

The officers explained that Karon Police Station received a call from a local clinic at 6:12pm on Jan 3. Staff were concerned for their safety as a Russian man who had been drinking heavily had arrived at the clinic carrying a knife.

The officers arrived at the clinic to find out that a doctor had spoken with the Russian man, and that no people were in danger. The man had presented himself as he had experienced irregular heartbeat. The man said that he had been drinking heavily.

The man was also in some distress because he had done nothing for his daughter's birthday and his omission had caused problems with his wife, Maj Gen Sermphan said.

Alarmed by the knife the man was carrying, the doctor asked why



Police officers show the knife the Russian man was carrying. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

the man was carrying it. The man said he had the knife only to peel fruit for his daughter.

After talking with the man, the two patrol officers agreed that the man had calmed down and was to be taken back to his hotel room. Along the way, the man said he wanted to surprise his wife and daughter at their hotel room, and the two officers agreed to play along.

When they arrived at the hotel room, the wife opened the door to find her husband marched into the room with his arm held behind his back by one officer, on the pretense that her husband had been placed under arrest.

What the wife did not know was that the second officer was carrying a birthday cake with candles for the daughter.

When the cake was presented, all three men started singing, 'Happy Birthday'. After kissing his daughter, the Russian man turned around and hugged the officers to say thank you.

Eakkapop Thongtub



# Phuket steadfast in Expo bid

The Phuket News  
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Leaders of all 19 local administrative bodies across Phuket have expressed their anger and disappointment over Interior Ministry Permanent Secretary Suthipong Juljarern's suggestion that Phuket drop its planned bid to host the Specialised Expo 2028.

Mr Suthipong made the suggestion last week, saying Phuket should consider not seeking hosting the global event if it cannot deal with its waste problem.

His remark prompted all 19 tambon administrative organisations (OrBorTor) in Phuket and the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) to submit an urgent letter to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on Jan 4 to reiterate the province's readiness to host the Specialised Expo 2028.

On hand to receive the letter from local mayors and administrative leaders, led by PPAO President Rewat Areerob, were the Phuket Vice Governors Amnuay Pinsuwan and Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam.



PPAO President Rewat Areerob joins Phuket Vice Governors Amnuay Pinsuwan and Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam with the lead representatives in presenting their joint letter to the prime minister. Photo: PR Phuket

The letter explained that hosting the expo would improve Thailand's competitiveness in medical tourism and reinforce its position as a medical hub and a world-class provider of medical tourism services.

Thailand made a name for itself after hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) 2022 summit in November last year, which shows the country can be a venue for other world events, the local leaders said.

The country's image from hosting the Apec meetings could boost Phuket's chances

of winning the right to host the World Specialised Expo, which has been presented under the theme "Future of Life: Living in Harmony, Sharing Prosperity", the letter continued.

Vice Governor Amnuay said he would pass the letter on to the Interior Ministry. The local administrative bodies had shown they were willing to play host for the expo, he said.

Phuket had also shown resilience in pulling through critical problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent floods, the vice governor added.

Meanwhile, Mr Suthipong admitted he made the suggestion during a meeting with senior officials of the Interior Ministry via a video conference on Dec 27. The meeting was to follow up on key policies, including waste management, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

He was also depicted in a video clip telling the meeting to find measures to take care of the garbage, particularly in Phuket where he was told by the Department of Local Administration of the need to ramp up local participation in managing wet waste produced

by households.

The department said that only 1.28% of households in Phuket took part in the management of wet waste. He instructed the provincial office to campaign for effective garbage handling and disposal.

He said his remark about dropping the bid to host the expo was meant to motivate the province to work harder to take better care of the environment. He had no intention of undermining the province. Mr Suthipong earlier drew flak for berating a subordinate during a video conference meeting.

Meanwhile, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew met with Sarun Charoensuwan, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, at the ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok last Saturday (Jan 7) to discuss efforts to promote Phuket for the Specialised Expo.

Thailand this week launched its campaign to solicit support in the international community for its bid to host the Expo.

Phuket is competing with four other cities in the United States, Serbia, Spain and Argentina to host the Specialised Expo 2027/2028 with the host

country to be selected by 170 members of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) in June this year.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kanchana Patarachoke last Saturday said the launch of the campaign to woo support was to begin at the Foreign Ministry on Thursday (Jan 12).

The "Local to Global: Phuket Expo-2028" event will be presided over by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Don Pramudwinai. Diplomats, members of the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce of Thailand (JFCCT) and the press were invited to the launch.

Under the theme of "Future of Life: Living in Harmony, Sharing Prosperity", the expo is to focus on the narrowing of gaps in access to public health and potential of Thailand and Phuket to turn themselves into a medical hub and health tourism destination as the economy rebounds.

The global event has received B4.18 billion from the government budget and is expected to draw 5-6 million visitors during the off-peak season, aiming to contribute B49.2bn to the national economy.

## Thalang top cop scoops Red Cross lucky draw car

LT COL ANUKUL NOOKET, DEPUTY Chief of Thalang Police, won a brand-new Haval H6 SUV, the first prize of this year's edition of the annual Red Cross Charity Lottery. The price of the car starts from B1.249 million.

The winning numbers of the five-digit charity lottery to support Phuket Red Cross were announced on Jan 5.

As the tradition is, the lottery draw was concluding the big New Year festival at Saphan Hin, a popular public park south of Phuket Town.

The top prize this year was a "Rot Yon Haval H6 See Khao", a white Haval H6 sport utility vehicle manufactured in Thailand by the Chinese automaker Great Wall Motors that specialises in crossovers and SUVs.

As *The Phuket News*' sister publication Khao Phuket reported, the "lucky owner" of ticket number 61138 turned out to be Lt Col Anukul.

*The Phuket News* has previously mentioned the officer in a few stories, but in connection with his duties as law-enforcer and not just a lucky man.

The full results of the lottery draw are as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize. Haval H6 car. 1 prize in total. Winning number: 61138;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. Honda Wave Motorcycles. 5 prizes in total. Winning numbers: 17869, 28087, 26715, 25576, 65782.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize. Gold necklaces, 1 bahtweight. 8 prizes in total. Winning numbers: 88580, 39711, 26331, 73664, 32006, 54896, 47018, 73952.



A new Haval H6 from Great Wall Motors valued at B1.249 million was the top prize of this year's Red Cross Lottery. Photo: Thalang Police

- 4<sup>th</sup> prize. Gold necklaces, 2 saleung weight. 10 prizes in total. Winning numbers: 22229, 62986, 28608, 60076, 81932, 59770, 39756, 66170, 27341, 79015.

- 5<sup>th</sup> prize. Refrigerators. 15 prizes in total. Winning numbers: 25587, 64196, 36423, 38680, 84639, 15334, 77920, 75723, 73348, 59928, 14352, 60253, 23980, 35902, 56969.

- 6<sup>th</sup> prize. Rice cookers. 80 prizes in total. Winning numbers: 214 (last three digits on the ticket).

People who have winning tickets have until Feb 23 to claim their prizes at the Phuket Red Cross Office near Saphan Hin. If after that date prizes have not been claimed, they will be considered donated to the Phuket Red Cross. Winners may contact the Phuket Red Cross by calling 076-211766.

*The Phuket News*

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## Headline CPI rises 5.89%

THAILAND'S HEADLINE consumer price index (CPI) rose 5.89% in December from a year earlier, in line with analyst forecasts, but above the previous month driven by higher energy and food prices, reports state news agency NNT.

The index compared with a forecast for a 5.9% rise in December in a Reuters poll and followed November's 5.55% increase, NNT reported.

The pace remains well above the Bank of Thailand's (BOT) target range of 1% to 3%, reinforcing expectations that the central bank will raise its key interest rate at its next meeting on Jan 25, to bring prices back within target.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, the core CPI index was up 3.23% in December from a year ago, versus a forecast rise of 3.28%.

For 2022, headline CPI increased 6.08% for a 24-year high, while the core CPI index rose 2.51%.

Headline inflation is expected to slow to 2% to 3% in 2023, helped by a high base and a global slowdown, explained Poonpong Naiyanapakorn, director-general of the Trade Policy and Strategy Office, told a briefing on Jan 5.

The index, however, is set to remain high in the first



Photo: NNT

quarter this year due to a low base in the same period last year, but should not top 5%.

Meanwhile, the government is expected to spend B50 billion on the state welfare card scheme in fiscal 2023, says Deputy Finance Minister Santi Promphat.

Around 21.5 million Thais registered for the cards during the latest registration period, reports the *Bangkok Post*.

Mr Santi said last Friday (Jan 6) that the ministry is working with 43 state agencies to examine the qualifications of the applicants in the latest round to ensure the scheme provides financial assistance to targeted vulnerable groups.

He expects the ministry to announce the final list of qualified registrants on March 1.

There are 13.5mn cardholders at present and all existing cardholders are required to re-register for any new rounds.

The government stands ready to provide additional budget for the scheme if the planned budget of B50bn is insufficient, said Mr Santi. *NNT*

# New travel curbs hobble return of Indian MICE

Bangkok Post

Tourism operators have started to feel the pinch from the slowing Indian market in the first quarter, particularly the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) segment and independent travellers, as the Indian government requires COVID-19 RT-PCR tests for those returning from Thailand.

The Indian MICE segment from February to April is "on hold" because of the rising cost of COVID-19 tests and fear of getting COVID-19 abroad, said Rajesh Nair, chief executive of Enchantive Asia, an inbound tour company focusing on the subcontinent.

"The problem is travellers are discouraged because of the test requirement before boarding," said Mr Nair.

He said travellers are reluctant because of unclear measures if they test positive in Thailand before flying back.

MICE meetings this month might confirm their schedules because payments were already made, but some of them requested the group size be reduced.



Tourists take photos in Old Phuket Town. Photo: PR Phuket

For instance, one confirmed group decided to reduce the number of participants from 150 to 90.

Mr Nair said he estimated corporate meetings from India would be downsized by at least 40% or suspended in the first quarter. Many are waiting for updated regulations, or until the next quarter.

He said the first quarter is usually a busy period for corporate meetings as it is the last opportunity for companies to use budget for the fiscal year before reporting financial statements in March.

"Corporations are unhappy

because they have already allocated budgets for these trips, but have to increase them for RT-PCR tests," said Mr Nair.

Although some groups are prepared to postpone their trips to the second quarter – another strong period for Indian MICE meetings – the loss of income for Thai tourism in the first quarter should be substantial, he said.

Moreover, some companies are offering incentive money to employees to compensate for cancelled trips as they cannot transfer leftover budget to the new fiscal year, said Mr Nair.

Companies that confirmed

their MICE trips are seeking extra insurance for COVID-19 medical expenses on top of regular travel insurance bought earlier, he said.

Some independent travellers are also hesitant, with more of their trips cancelled or rescheduled, said Mr Nair.

He said Indian families don't want to face the hassle of taking COVID-19 tests and paying extra.

In 2022, India ranked second in terms of arrivals with 965,994 visitors, followed by Malaysians with 1.9 million arrivals, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

## Power bills to rise 'only' 13%

THE ENERGY REGULATORY Commission (ERC) has scaled back a huge increase in power tariffs for businesses after they complained to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha about the impact on their costs.

Instead of rising by 20.5% for the four-month period from Jan 1 to April 30, the new rate will be just 13% higher than it was before, the ERC said last Friday (Jan 6).

Business groups, led by the Federation of Thai Industries, told Gen Prayut earlier that they were worried about production cost increases at a time of global recession and the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war.

The premier subsequently told energy officials to find ways to reduce electricity bills for businesses.

Household power tariffs were left unchanged for the January-April period as authorities wanted to spare consumers from more hardship. But that left businesses to shoulder the full burden of higher fuel and other costs that are factored into electricity bills.



The already high power tariff for households remains unchanged for the first four months of this year while the increment for businesses has been revised downward. Photo: Bangkok Post

The ERC originally proposed to charge businesses B5.69 per kilowatt-hour (unit), a rise of 20.5% from B4.72 before.

Last Friday it announced the new rate would be B5.33 a unit, a 13% increase, following a change in its estimate of natural gas prices, according to an ERC press release.

Higher power tariffs are being driven by a higher fuel tariff (Ft), which is reviewed every four months.

Natural gas makes up 60-65% of the fuel used for electricity generation in Thailand, far more than other sources including coal and renewable energy.

The country has been

importing more costly liquefied natural gas (LNG) following a decline in supplies of cheaper natural gas from the Gulf of Thailand.

It also agreed to adjust its diesel price estimate to B28.22 per litre, down from B31.90.

Also factored in is the estimated foreign-exchange rate, which has been reduced from B37 per US dollar to B35.68.

The new calculation resulted in a reduction of the Ft rate for businesses to B1.5492 per unit, from the previous estimate of B1.9044.

The power tariff for households is B4.72 per unit and the Ft is B0.9343.

*Bangkok Post*

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# Demerit points system for drivers now in force

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Royal Thai Police (RTP) on Monday (Jan 9) implemented a demerit point system in a bid to improve driving discipline and road safety in the kingdom.

Deputy government spokeswoman Rachada Dhnadirek said as part of the new system, every driving licence holder will be given 12 points.

Infractions such as speeding, riding without a helmet, using a mobile phone while driving, failing to fasten seat belts or not stopping for pedestrians will warrant a one-point deduction, Ms Rachada said.

Two points will be deducted for running a red light or driving on the wrong side of the road, she said, adding that for more serious traffic offences, such as a hit and run, three demerit points will be deducted.

The highest penalty of four demerit points will be driving while impaired by alcohol or illicit drugs, as well as being involved in illegal street racing and reckless driving, she said.

In addition, one point will be deducted if violators fail to pay the associated fines for their driving infringements.

If drivers lose all their points within a year, their licence will be suspended for 90 days.



The new demerit point system aims to improve safety on Thailand's notoriously dangerous roads. Photo: Bangkok Post

Drivers who fail to comply with the suspension order will be liable to a maximum term of three months in jail and/or a fine of up to B10,000.

A licence may be suspended for more than 90 days if drivers repeat the same offence three times in three years. Their licence will be revoked for committing a fourth offence.

Points will be restored after one year, Ms Rachada said.

In the case where a driver's points have been reduced to zero, their points will only be stored to eight points unless they attend a training course at the Land Transport offices.

Motorists can check all remaining

points at the "ptm.police.go.th/eTicket" website or the Khub Dee app and can pay fine via the government's Paotang e-wallet app, she added.

The introduction of the new points system came after the annual Seven Days of Danger road safety campaign concluded last week.

In Phuket authorities confirmed a reported 42 injuries and three deaths from a total of 41 road accidents during the campaign, which ran from Dec 29 – Jan 4.

There were 317 people killed and 2,437 others injured in 2,440 traffic accidents across the country during the same seven day period.



Well wishers at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok on Jan 5. Photo: Bangkok Post

## Princess still unconscious

### BANGKOK

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendiradebyavati remains unconscious and royal doctors attribute her illness to a bacterial infection, the Royal Household Bureau confirmed on Monday (Jan 9).

In its third statement on the princess's condition, the bureau said royal doctors believe her unconscious state is the result of severe heart arrhythmia due to inflammation of the heart after a mycoplasma infection.

The bureau said the princess remains unconscious and royal doctors continue to administer medicine, including antibiotics, and use equipment to support the function of her

lungs and kidneys while monitoring her condition closely.

Earlier the bureau said the princess passed out while she was training her pet dogs in Pak Chong district of Nakhon Ratchasima at 6:20pm on Dec 14, 2022.

The princess was taken to Pakchongnana Hospital in the district to receive initial treatment under the advice of royal doctors, the bureau said. She was transported by helicopter to King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital after her condition was stabilised.

The princess's pets were being trained as they competed in the Thailand Working Dog Championship 2022 organised by the Royal Thai Army at the Military Dog Battalion.

Bangkok Post

# Guidelines on the use of cannabis for visitors issued by government

## BANGKOK

THE PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTRY HAS issued a guideline to improve visitors' understanding of what they can and cannot do with cannabis while they are in the country.

Thailand is the first in Asia to decriminalise cannabis use, leading to increased interest in cannabis-based products and treatments among visitors.

One consequence of the plant's decriminalisation is the boom in recreational use. The plant was removed from the list of prohibited narcotics in June 2022, but to date, laws controlling its use and preventing its abuse, especially among youngsters, has yet to be passed.

It remains far from certain that the cannabis and hemp control bill will be passed into law before the House is dissolved to pave the way for an election later this year.

As such, the ministry wants to ensure that visitors know what is permissible under the law. It has asked provincial tourism offices to distribute the English-language handbook to visitors, with plans for Chinese and Russian versions.

According to the guideline, these are the 10 things tourists need to know about cannabis in Thailand:

1. Carrying seeds or parts of cannabis plants from and to Thailand for personal use is not permitted.

2. Cannabis cultivation is legal, but growers must register on the Food and Drug Administration's Plook Ganja application or



A worker at a cannabis shop on Khao San Rd in Bangkok shows their legal license. Photo: Bangkok Post

the agency's website.

3. A permit is needed to use cannabis buds for research, export and sale and further processing for commercial purposes.

4. Individuals under 20 years old, pregnant and breastfeeding women are not allowed to use cannabis except under the supervision of health professionals.

5. Possession of extracts containing more than 0.2% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and synthetic THC requires permission.

6. Dishes containing cannabis are only available in authorised restaurants.

7. Approved cannabis-based health products can be purchased through authorised channels.

8. Smoking cannabis in public spaces, including in and around schools and shopping malls, is illegal.

9. Avoid driving after consuming food or health products containing cannabis.

10. Those who experience adverse side effects from cannabis should promptly see doctors for treatment. Bangkok Post



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# 'Puss in Boots' a magical revival

**I**f it seems like a long time since audiences have been transported to the Kingdom of Far Far Away. That is because it has been exactly 13 years since the last *'Shrek'* film and 11 years since the *'Puss in Boots'* spin-off hit our screens. Given the raging success of the franchise at the box office it is hard to believe that DreamWorks has left it so long between outings into Far Far Away, but now at last the wait is over as Puss returns in *'Puss in Boots: The Last Wish'*.



Antonio Banderas in 'Puss in Boots: The Last Wish' (2022). Image: IMDb

rocky friendship begins but soon they find themselves in danger when the criminally minded Goldilocks (Florence Pugh – *Black Widow*) turns up with Papa Bear (Ray Winstone – *The Departed*), Mama Bear (Olivia Colman – *The Lost Daughter*) and Baby Bear (Samson Kayo – *The Bubble*) turn up looking to kidnap Puss to take him on a daring mission to steal from the murderous Jack Horner (John Mulaney – *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*).

Credit really must be paid to screenwriter Paul Fisher (*The Croods: A New Age*) for his work on this film because it is his ingenious screenplay that has led to one of the most enjoyable films of the year. And this is not just a film that the kids are going to love, this is a film that is guaranteed to become a favourite for the entire family – even the adults.

is that in amongst all the laughter, singing and dancing, Fisher has also created an amazing story that explores what it means to be a family, especially touching on whether Goldilocks can accept that she is adopted yet still loved, and the impact of facing one's mortality may have on someone. The thoughts and emotions that Puss has when he discovers that he is on his last life are no different to what someone would feel if they find out that they are terminally ill.

The advertisement features the PSD logo at the top, which includes a stylized house icon with the letters 'psd' and the text 'PROJECT SUPPLIES DIRECT' below it. The main heading is 'Safe, Secure, Soundproof Windows and Doors' in a large, bold, blue font. Below the heading is a 4x4 grid of 16 icons representing various window and door styles. The icons are arranged in four rows and four columns. The first row shows a single door (blue), a double door (red), a single door with a transom (blue), and a double door with a transom (red). The second row shows a circular door (blue), a single door with a transom (red), a single door with a transom (blue), and a double door with a transom (red). The third row shows a single door with a transom (red), a single door with a transom (blue), a single door with a transom (red), and a double door with a transom (blue). The fourth row shows a single door with a transom (red), a single door with a transom (blue), a single door with a transom (red), and a double door with a transom (blue). The icons are drawn with simple lines and are color-coded: blue for single doors and red for double doors.

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# Elegant steakhouse dining

The Phuket News  
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Every now and then a restaurant pops up ‘head and shoulders’ above the rest. Such is Plum Prime Steakhouse. It’s not just the bird’s eye view across Kamala Bay – perfect for sunset-watching – although that is amazing. Rather, it’s how they’ve put together all the things that mark a restaurant as top of its class – and made them work.

Plum’s seating choices are inside with air conditioning, outside on the terrace overlooking the bay, or in one of a few recessed circular tables surrounded by water – a perfectly romantic setting for that special anniversary dinner or perhaps a marriage proposal with finesse.

Then there’s the service. Plum’s charming, smiling, friendly and knowledgeable service team achieves the perfect balance between leaving you in peace to chat without interruption and magically appearing the moment your glass needs topping up or you have a mid-course request. Informative when necessary, but with none of that overbearing, incessant interruption so often suffered these days – where the restaurant and kitchen teams seem to believe diners have come just to listen to them.

We went for the very reasonably-priced Dégustation Menu (for two) so



we could sample as much as possible of Plum’s offerings. Following an amuse bouche of anchovy and butter on toast, we were treated to Zola, pere e noci (Gorgonzola cheese and walnuts bavaoise, served with acacia honey and red wine poached nashi pears) and Hokkaido scallops, beluga lentils (Hokkaido scallops, flash roasted, served on beluga lentils and garnished with crispy leek). The bavaroise was light and creamy, softening the sharpness of the cheese, while the walnuts contributed mild, earthy and slightly tangy undertones. The scallops were flawless – slightly sweet with a touch of melt-in-your-mouth decadence, while the lentils added a contrasting texture to surprise the senses.

Our main course comprised Grilled salmon (imported fresh Norwegian

salmon) and Grilled tenderloin (200g of imported Australian 120 days grain fed Black Angus tenderloin). They were accompanied by a flight of four different sauces (Bordelaise, Béarnaise, Lexington Dip and Chimichurri Verde), a delightful touch – for grills only – that lets diners make minor tweaks to the flavour of each bite, if the fancy takes them. The salmon, served with a mixed salad, was cooked to perfection – beautifully tender with a slightly buttery flavour. The tenderloin, preceded by a Green apple sorbet (spiced up with a touch of Campari) was served with baked potatoes. It came out from Plum’s traditional clean-burn charcoal oven exactly how steak should be served: the outside seared to seal the juices inside. This was so good that it converted a usually reluctant beef eater!

The entire feast bore out the accuracy of how Plum describes itself: “... walking a tasty line between ‘steakhouse’ and ‘fine dining’”.

We finished off our evening with a Gelato di pistacchio di Bronte (Bronte’s Pistachio ice cream with poached wild cherries), the sharp, tangy cherries contrasting perfectly with the creamy, nutty flavour of the ice cream.

If you love good food, hanker after top flight service and don’t mind a stunning ocean view thrown into the mix, you won’t be disappointed when you pay a visit to Plum Prime Steakhouse. A reservation is advised.

*Plum Prime Steakhouse: From Kamala main road 800m onto Millionaires’ Mile! Open daily 6pm-11pm, closed Mondays Reservations: Tel: 076-337300.*



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# POP QUIZ

1. What was the former name of New York?
2. Which country was formerly called Ceylon?
3. Which city was the capital of Australia from 1901 to 1927?
4. Which country sent its navy around the world to fight the Japanese in 1904?
5. Which household pet was domesticated by Indigenous people in South America more than 3,000 years ago as a source of food?

Answers below, centre

## SUDOKU

Hard

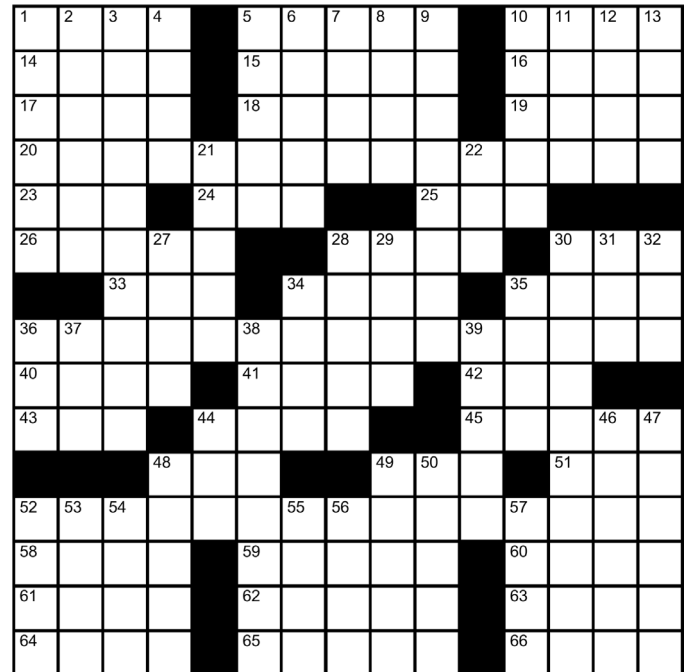
				2				
6					9			4
		1			7		8	3
							7	5
	4	9		1		6	2	
5	6							
8	5		3			4		
3			4					1
				9				

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Handouts
  5. Tyson, for one
  10. Mouselike animal
  14. Lender's protection
  15. Honey badger
  16. Caddie's offering
  17. Gay Talese's "\_\_\_ the Sons"
  18. Character
  19. Divide
  20. Fundamental
  23. Apprehend
  24. Ottoman governor
  25. Bird \_\_\_
  26. \_\_\_ shirt (colorful garment)
  28. High-hatter
  30. Datebook abbr.
  33. Resinous deposit
  34. Lou Gehrig, on the diamond
  35. Insect stage
  36. Building materials
  40. Lie in the sun
  41. Food sticker
  42. Deface
  43. A Welsh valley
  44. Ethereal
  45. Indian nursemaids
  48. It's found in banks
  49. Cooler
  51. Day break
- Down**
1. She has a degree
  2. One-dimensional
  3. Organic process
  4. Priggish one
  5. Davit
  6. Robust
  7. Crowning
  8. Kind of pad
  9. Political aims
  10. Connoisseurship
  11. It comes in black and white
  12. Kind of wolf
  13. Purposes
  21. Sternward
  22. Vatican vestment
- 27. Ward-heeler**  
**28. Hell's Angel Barger**  
**29. Art subject**  
**30. Surpassing**  
**31. Busy bee in Apr.**  
**32. Blacken**  
**34. Worth a C**  
**35. Beseech**  
**36. "Monty Python" ailer**  
**37. Cold and wet**  
**38. Ship section**  
**39. Muscat resident**  
**44. It often follows you**  
**46. "Go, hounds!"**  
**47. Bewitches**  
**48. Alpha's opposite**  
**49. Storage medium**  
**50. Examine**  
**52. Bricklayers' equipment**  
**53. Adjoin**  
**54. Pre-stereo**  
**55. Last word?**  
**56. Emergency CB channel**  
**57. Algonquian Indian**

## Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) New Amsterdam; 2) Sri Lanka; 3) Melbourne; 4) Russia; 5) Guinea pigs (They are still a popular dish today.)



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

## Solutions to last week's puzzles:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
P	L	O	D	F	O	N	D	U	A	N	I	S				
L	O	G	E	A	R	I	A	N	T	O	D	O				
O	N	E	P	A	R	E	N	T	F	A	M	I	L	I	Y	
T	E	E	T	H	J	U	A	N	L	E	A					
H	I	S	T	A	M	I	N	E								
A	N	A	M	E	W	R	E	A	D	E	R					
L	E	V	S	A	I	N	T	S	O	M	A					
T	W	O	P	A	R	T	Y	S	V	S	T	E	M	S		
H	E	I	R	S	C	A	L	A	T	E	E					
O	L	D	I	E	S	R	E	F	T	H	R	S				
G	R	O	O	M	S	M	A	N								
S	O	U	N	A	P	A			R	E	A	L	S			
T	H	R	E	E	R	I	N	G	C	I	R	C	U	S		
A	I	D	E		E	N	T	E	R		V	E	N	T		
Y	O	U	R		D	E	A	L	T							

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

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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

6

times is how much more likely men are to be struck by lightning than women

10

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

45

years is how long a restaurant in Bangkok has been cooking and serving its "perpetual soup".

98

percent of the atoms in your body are replaced every year

1,350

is roughly how many volcanoes are currently active around the world

940 million

kilometres (about 584mn miles) is how far the Earth travels to complete one orbit of the Sun in one year.

Source: *Uberfacts*

## ISLAND VIEW



Kamala Beach parasail. Photo by Josie Burgess

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

## This week in history

### January 13, 2018

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

### January 14, 1967

Counterculture 1960s: The Human Be-In takes place in San Francisco, California's Golden Gate Park, launching the Summer of Love.

### January 15, 2001

Wikipedia, a free wiki content

encyclopedia, goes online.

### January 16, 2003

The Space Shuttle Columbia takes off for mission STS-107 which would be its final one. Columbia disintegrated 16 days later on re-entry.

### January 17, 1981

President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos – his regime infamous for corruption, extravagance and brutality – lifts martial law eight years and



The Hawaii false missile alert in 2018.

five months after declaring it.

### January 18, 1591

King Naresuan of Siam kills

Crown Prince Mingyi Swa of Burma in single combat, for which this date is now observed as Royal Thai Armed Forces day.

### January 19, 1986

The first IBM PC computer virus is released. A boot sector virus dubbed (c)Brain, it was created by the Farooq Alvi Brothers in Lahore, Pakistan, reportedly to deter copying of software they had written.

Source: *Wikipedia*



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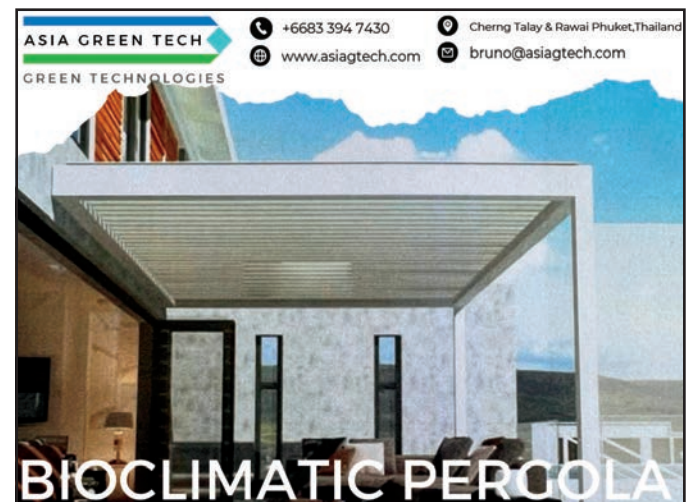
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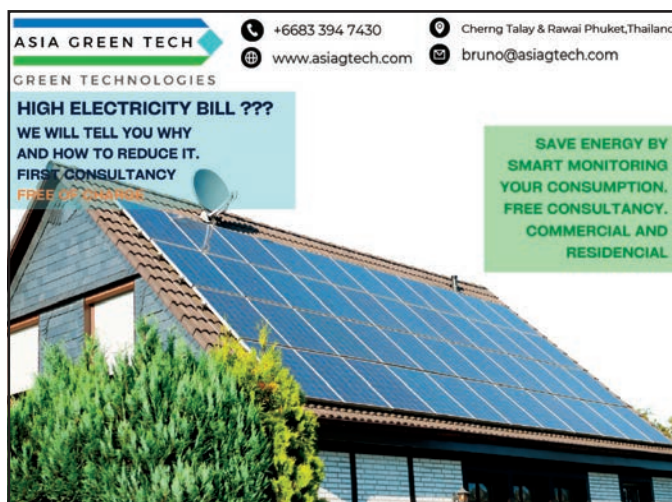


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16 JAN



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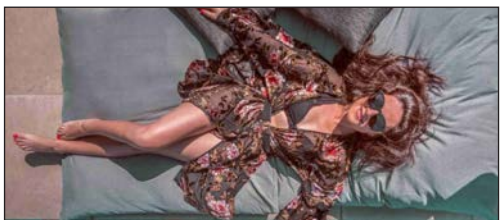


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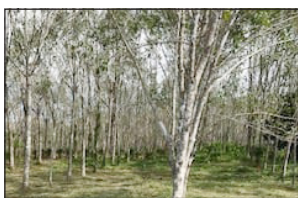
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## GROW BOATING JANUARY NETWORKING EVENT

Another great evening at Royal Phuket Marina on January 6 for the Grow Boating monthly networking event. Thanks to Asia Sponsorship News - ASN for being the drinks sponsor and thanks to Isola Restaurant providing some tasty treats.



## MALAYSIAN CLUB THAILAND ANNUAL CHARITY

On December 17, Asia Mice Planner, Only One Tour International and Uni Royal International with the cooperation of Malaysian Club Thailand and Malaysian Thai Friends Group successfully donated B100,000 worth of goods and B100,000 in cash to the Child Watch Phuket Foundation.





The press conference announcing the event. Photo: Bangkok Post

## Star shuttlers in Bangkok

### BADMINTON

THAILAND'S TOP BADMINTON stars will compete in the Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters 2023 in Bangkok later this month, organisers said on Jan 7.

The HSBC BWF World Tour Super 300 event, which offers a total purse of US\$210,000 (B7.24 million), will be held at Nimibutr Stadium from Jan 31-Feb 5, Badminton Association of Thailand (BAT) president Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul told a press conference.

Thailand's world No.9 Kunlavut Vitidsarn will be the highest-ranked player in the men's singles.

World No.6 Ratchanok Intanon, No.10 Busanan Ongbamrunphan and No.12 Pornpawee Chochuwong will lead the Thai challenge in the women's singles.

World No.5 Jongkolphan Kititharakul/Rawinda Prajongjai and No.9 Benyapa Aimsaard/Nuntakarn Aimsaard will be among the favourites in the women's doubles.

Some of the world's top players will join them in the tournament including Spain's Carolina Marin, China's Han Yu and Canadian Michelle Li in the women's singles, and Chinese stars Shi Yuqi and Lu Guangzu in the men's singles.

The winners will receive trophies graciously donated by Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya. Patama said the event is being held in honour of the Princess.

Her Royal Highness is a former national team player who won the title in the women's team event at the 2005 SEA Games.

Patama also said the event will help boost the country's economy. *Bangkok Post*

# Osaka, Alcaraz set to miss Australian Open

### TENNIS

AFP

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka became the latest star to pull out of the opening Grand Slam of the year last Sunday (Jan 8), leaving the tournament deprived of some of the biggest names in the game.

No reason for the Japanese player's withdrawal was given with organisers Tennis Australia tweeting: "We will miss her at AO2023."

Ukrainian Dayana Yastremska was promoted to the main draw at Melbourne Park in her absence.

Osaka has not played a competitive match since September and reports last week said that, despite being on the official entry list, Tennis Australia were having trouble verifying her whereabouts.

The 25-year-old's social media accounts indicated that she had been travelling in Europe with her on-again, off-again boyfriend rapper Cordae.

Her no-show was another blow for the tournament starting on Monday (Jan 16) after US Open champion and world number one Carlos Alcaraz withdrew on Jan 6 with a leg injury.

Veteran American Venus Williams will also be missing after picking an injury at the recent Auckland Classic and handing back the wildcard she had been awarded.



Naomi Osaka will not be competing at this year's Australian Open. Photo: AFP

Open organisers were already reeling from the retirements last year of reigning women's champion Ashleigh Barty and legends Serena Williams and Roger Federer.

Former world number one and two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep is another not playing after she was provisionally suspended in October for taking the banned substance roxadustat.

But nine-time champion Novak Djokovic is back after missing last year's event when he was deported over his vaccination status.

Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal, who won the 2022 title in Djokovic's absence, will also line up, taking over the top seeding from Alcaraz.

Osaka, the champion in Melbourne in 2019 and 2021, last played at a tournament

in Tokyo in September before pulling out with abdominal pain, slumping to 42 in the world rankings.

The four-time Grand Slam winner has previously talked about struggles with her mental health and spent all of 2022 outside the top 10, enduring first-round defeats at both the French and US Opens. She withdrew from Wimbledon with an Achilles' injury.

Speaking at the Pan Pacific Open in September, she admitted she had gone through "more down than up" in 2022.

"This year has been not the best year for me but I've learned a lot about myself," said Osaka, who also won Grand Slams at Flushing Meadows in 2018 and 2020.

"Life is ups and downs, and this year was more down than up, but overall I'm pretty happy with where I am now."

## Bale calls time on glittering career

### FOOTBALL

GARETH BALE ANNOUNCED his retirement from club and international football at the age of 33 on Monday (Jan 9), bringing the curtain down on one of the most decorated careers in British football history.

The former Real Madrid star won five Champions League trophies and made a record 111 appearances for Wales, becoming their greatest goalscorer.

Bale led his country from the international football wilderness to two European Championships – reaching the semi-finals of Euro 2016 – and a first World Cup since 1958.

The forward, who also played for Southampton, Tottenham and Los Angeles FC confirmed his decision on social media.

"After careful and thoughtful consideration, I announce my immediate retirement from club and international football," he wrote.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have realised my



Bale in action for Wales. Photo: AFP

dream of playing the sport I love.

"It has truly given me some of the best moments of my life, the highest of highs over 17 seasons. That will be impossible to replicate, no matter what the next chapter has in store for me."

Bale started his career at Southampton but made his name in the Premier League at Tottenham, where he was twice named players' player of the year, before Real Madrid paid a then world record fee of around £85 million (B3.4 billion) to sign him in September 2013.

The high point of Bale's club career came in May 2018 when he scored twice in the 3-1 Champions League final victory over Liverpool, including a stunning overhead kick.

He also won three league titles in Spain but had a troubled final few years in Madrid as injuries and a perceived lack of commitment pushed him to the fringes of the first team.

The forward joined Los Angeles FC last year and went on to win the MLS Cup in early November in his short stint in the United States. *AFP*

## MMA world pays tribute after Victoria Lee dies aged 18

### MMA

THE DEATH OF 18-YEAR-old rising MMA star Victoria "The Prodigy" Lee, announced last Saturday (Jan 7), has prompted an outpouring of tributes from people associated with the sport.

Asia-based ONE MMA Championship chief Chatri Sityodtong said he was "heartbroken" by Lee's passing and that he would remember her "for the beautiful and precious soul that she was."

Lee came from a family of champion MMA fighters – her older sister Angela is the ONE Championship atomweight world title holder while her brother Christian holds the ONE lightweight title.

"I first met Victoria when she was 11 years old. I watched her blossom over the years as a martial artist and a human being," Sityodtong wrote on his Facebook page on Sunday.

Indian-Canadian mixed martial arts star Gurdarshan Mangat tweeted: "This one is tough. Her energy was felt whether you knew her or not."

"She was destined for greatness. I just pray she



Image: ONE Championship

knew that before she left us. That she truly was a light."

Lee died on Dec 26 but was only announced late Saturday by her sister Angela on Instagram.

"We miss you so much sis. More than you could ever realise," Angela wrote.

"We're all broken. Because a piece of you was in each of us and when you left, those pieces were ripped out of us. We will never be the same."

The cause of death was not revealed by her family.

Lee was born and raised in Hawaii to a Singaporean father and South Korean-Canadian mother and fought under the Singapore flag.

She had her first MMA fight at 16 and her last bout was in September 2021.

According to the ONE website, the young Lee had put competition on the back burner in 2022 to focus on graduating from high school, but she had planned to make a big return in 2023.

Lee had a close relationship with her siblings, baking treats after each of their victories.

"This time he requested a banana cake. So, as soon as we finished watching the fight, I was in the kitchen baking for him," she was quoted as saying in the ONE website after her brother won a title match recently. *AFP*



# Back under-fire Potter, says Pep

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Pep Guardiola told Chelsea co-owner Todd Boehly to back under-fire boss Graham Potter after Manchester City thrashed the Blues 4-0 in the FA Cup third round last Sunday (Jan 8).

Potter's troubled side were beaten by City for the second time in four days as their hopes of winning a domestic cup this season came to a painful end.

Already knocked out of the League Cup by City in November and defeated 1-0 by the Premier League champions on Jan 5, Chelsea's turbulent season was pushed deeper into crisis as Guardiola's men ran riot at the Etihad Stadium.

With Chelsea languishing in 10<sup>th</sup> place in the Premier League – 10 points adrift of the top four – Potter is already beginning to feel the heat just four months after replacing the sacked Thomas Tuchel.

The former Brighton manager will hardly have been comforted by the sound of Chelsea fans chanting Tuchel's name and sarcastically shouting "shoot" whenever they embarked on a rare attack during their latest abject defeat.

Chelsea have won only three of their last 12 games in all competitions, but Guardiola came to



Potter (left) and Guardiola embrace at full time after Man City's 4-0 win last Sunday (Jan 8). Photo: AFP

Potter's aid as he urged the Blues hierarchy to give him time to make his methods work.

"I would say to Todd Boehly, give him time. I know in big clubs, results are important but I'd say give him time," Guardiola said.

"What he's done at Brighton is outstanding, but we need time in the first season. I had (Lionel) Messi in Barcelona my first season so I didn't need two seasons because Messi was there."

Chelsea did not muster a single shot in a first half even Potter described as "painful".

Potter could point to an injury crisis which kept nine players side-

lined and led to teenager Bashir Humphreys making his senior debut in defence. But the 47-year-old conceded performances must improve quickly.

"The results in a small space of time are not positive. You can make excuses and look for reasons or say it isn't good enough. Both of those answers are correct," Potter said.

"We have to keep improving and stick together because clearly we are suffering as a football club and it's not nice at all. But that's where we are at the moment.

"We can't do anything apart from do our jobs better and work harder. You understand the supporters' frustra-

tion, we respect that. But our job is to do our job and keep working."

### HIGH DRAMA

Elsewhere, there were plenty of FA Cup shocks in a weekend of high drama.

Aston Villa held a 1-0 home advantage over against Stevenage on Sunday until the 88<sup>th</sup> minute when two late strikes saw the fourth tier side emerge as 2-1 winners.

"It is really special. The chairman just said to me it's the greatest day in his life and he's been with the club for over 20 years," said Stevenage boss Steve Evans, whose side face Championship team Stoke

in the fourth round.

Premier League high-flyers Newcastle suffered a shock exit against Sheffield Wednesday when they lost 1-2 on Saturday after Josh Windass's double stunned the Magpies.

Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, the Hollywood actors who co-own Wrexham, led the celebrations on social media after their non-league side's surprise 4-3 victory at second tier Coventry on Saturday.

"It's a great chapter in the story of Wrexham since the new owners have come in and I'm sure they will be overjoyed with what they've seen today," Wrexham boss Phil Parkinson said.

Championship leaders Burnley comfortably won 4-2 at Premier League Bournemouth while Nottingham Forest were humiliated 4-1 by Blackpool.

Harry Kane scored in a 1-0 win against Portsmouth, edging the England captain just one behind the club's all-time record scorer Jimmy Greaves, who scored 266 times for Spurs.

Liverpool drew 2-2 with Wolverhampton Wanderers in a controversial game at Anfield, with Wolves boss Julen Lopetegui furious his side had a late goal disallowed, while also claiming that Mohamed Salah's strike should have been ruled out for offside.

## Ronaldo urged to highlight human rights challenges in Saudi Arabia

### FOOTBALL

CRISTIANO RONALDO HAS BEEN urged to speak out about human rights issues in Saudi Arabia after completing his big-money move to Al Nassr.

The Portuguese superstar signed a deal on Dec 30 believed to be worth more than 200 million euros (B1.2 billion) which will take him to June 2025.

Ronaldo, who was greeted by fireworks and deafening roars at his official unveiling at Al Nassr's Mrsool Park stadium on Jan 3, said he wanted to "be part of the success of the country and the culture of the country".

The 37-year-old left Manchester United in November after an explosive interview in which he criticised the club and manager Erik ten Hag.

He also endured a difficult World Cup after Portugal lost to Morocco in the quarter-finals, when Ronaldo started on the bench and ended the tournament in tears.

Amnesty International said Ronaldo's signing is part of a "wider pattern of sportswashing" in Saudi Arabia.

The arrival of the former Real Madrid forward comes against the backdrop of a Saudi push into sports including golf, boxing, tennis and F1 as well as football, following the takeover of English Premier League club Newcastle United in 2021.

The Gulf nation is also mulling a joint bid to co-host the 2030 World Cup.



Ronaldo with Al Nassr club president Musalli Al-Muammar. Photo: AFP

"Instead of offering uncritical praise of Saudi Arabia, Ronaldo should use his considerable public platform to draw attention to human rights issues in the country," said Dana Ahmed, Amnesty's Middle East researcher.

"Saudi Arabia regularly executes people for crimes including murder, rape and drug smuggling. On a single day last year, 81 people were put to death, many of whom were tried in grossly unfair trials.

"The authorities are also continuing their crackdown on freedom of expression and association, with heavy prison sentences handed down to human rights defenders, women's rights activists and other political activists.

"Cristiano Ronaldo should not allow his fame and celebrity status to become a tool of Saudi's sportswashing. He should use his time at Al Nassr to speak out about the myriad of human rights issues in the country." AFP

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# Sport



**Chelsea's poor run continues in FA Cup > p15**



# STAR SAILOR

**Phuket-born yachtie completes Sydney to Hobart**

Finn de Bruin (right) on Sydney harbour with his father Andrew and cousin Ella Stephens. Photo: Donna Stephens

## SAILING

The Phuket News  
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When young Finn de Bruin started out sailing at the Phuket Yacht Club (PYC), he had no idea as to the kind of places that the sport would take him – and most certainly did not expect Hobart would be a future destination.

But that is exactly where he found himself on Dec 30 as he and his crewmates aboard the Beneteau 44.7 yacht *Bowline* successfully completed the world-renowned Sydney to Hobart race.

The race, which starts on Boxing Day (Dec 26) in Sydney Harbour, attracts

huge media coverage each year, with the 628 nautical mile course often described as the most gruelling long ocean race in the world, a challenge to everyone who takes part.

It was therefore a fantastic achievement for the 21-year-old Phuket-born yachtsman and his team to finish in 75<sup>th</sup> place overall – but 15<sup>th</sup> in IRC Div 3 – after an arduous challenge that took close to four days to complete.

Sailing was in Finn's blood from a very early age as he accompanied his family on regular visits to the PYC and joined his father Andrew on numerous trips. His first such voyage was as a passenger from Phuket to Langkawi on SY *Stargazer* when he was just a young boy, closely followed

by sailing from Australia to Phuket aboard the mighty *Awatea*, a 36-foot Swanson.

However, it was during his time at PYC under the tutelage of Alfie Rowson, who was heading the youth sailing program at the time, that Finn truly started to flourish.

Things only improved once Phuket sailing icon Scott Duncanson became commodore and his own children became of sailing age as PYC truly raised its standards. It was at this time that the Phuket Youth Sailing Club was afforded new boats and affiliations, which resulted in a more resilient sailing program.

Additionally, Ploypan Meeyousamsen, aka 'Coach Garfield', joined the team as instructor, organising regular

training sessions, fun days out of the water, weekend getaways to islands and regattas to support the families and the budding sailors.

Sailing might not be for everyone but for children living on an island it is considered an ideal way to learn water skills and develop an understanding and appreciation of the ocean, while gaining independence and making friends. Indeed, many say the social side of the youth sailing club is as important as the sailing itself.

## KNOCK, KNOCK

Finn continued to develop and, on reaching his teens, was given the opportunity to race in local regattas, firstly on Lori Ashton's *Lunasea* in the

Phang Nga Bay regattas and later with John Newnham's Firefly one design 850 *Twin Sharks* in the Multihull Solutions Regatta. As a student at British International School, Phuket, Finn was further able to extend his passion of sailing through the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

After graduating school, border closures and restrictions induced by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that Finn could not fulfill his dream of experiencing a gap year on superyachts, so he decided to join the Australian Defense Force program and was eventually posted to Adelaide.

The age old adage states "if you don't ask then you don't get" and this was certainly the case with Finn who, while in

South Australia, decided to take it upon himself to knock on boats and approach a variety of crews to explain his passion and ask whether any opportunities were available.

Demonstrating how genuine initiative can be rewarded, a fabulous opportunity then presented itself when the commodore of the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron, Ian Roberts, offered Finn the chance to join the crew of *Bowline* in the 2022 Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

The rest, as they say, is history. It was a priceless, unforgettable experience and surely just the start for the young man who will undoubtedly have many exciting and challenging endeavours on the waves in the years to come.

# Malaysia edge War Elephants in first AFF semi-final

## FOOTBALL

THAILAND COACH MANO Polking was confident that the War Elephants could bounce back from their 1-0 away loss to Malaysia last Saturday night (Jan 7) ahead of the second leg of their AFF Mitsubishi Electric Cup 2022 semi-final at Thammasat Stadium.

Malaysia claimed the crucial goal against the run of play in the 11<sup>th</sup> minute when Faisal Halim found the net to celebrate his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in style in front of a cheering crowd

of 59,000 at Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur.

The War Elephants held an edge in possession in the first half, but hardly troubled the Malaysian defence. They came the closest to scoring shortly after the start of the second half when Teerasil headed a Suphanan Bureerat cross against the woodwork.

Malaysia then had a goal ruled out while Thailand's appeal for a late penalty was turned down too, meaning the six-time champions tasted their first defeat in the AFF Championship since 2016.

However, Polking remained upbeat ahead of Tuesday's (Jan 10) semi-final second leg.

"It is not over yet. We have just reached the halfway mark.

"We controlled the game throughout and we hope that during the second leg, we will be able to do it again.

"The result of this game is not what we were expecting, but we created a lot of chances. We dominated the game throughout but still lost – that's football.

"Now we need to make sure that we don't repeat the same mistakes

in the second leg.

"We will attack for sure but we must avoid conceding a goal or the away-goal rule will make things even more difficult for us."

Thailand captain Theerathon Bunmathan also said he expected a better result at Thammasat Stadium on Tuesday.

"We played well in Kuala Lumpur but we just couldn't score," Theerathon said upon his return from the Malaysian capital on Sunday. "I am sure it will be our day on Tuesday... The Malaysians can't be lucky all the time."



Thailand's Theerathon Bunmathan (left) in action. Photo: AFP

Should Thailand make the final they will meet Vietnam who managed to overcome Indonesia in their semi-final.

The two-legged final is to be played today (Jan 13) and on Monday (Jan 16). *Bangkok Post*