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WE ARE READY

PHUKET HEALTH CHIEF SAYS ISLAND READY FOR COVID TO BE DECLARED ENDEMIC

Phuket Provincial Public Health Office Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon. Photo: PPHO

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon says Phuket is on the cusp of clearing all the requirements in order to have COVID-19 declared 'endemic' on the island, opening the door to having all restrictions against the disease lifted.

Dr Kusak highlighted the continually falling number of new COVID cases reported each day. As of last Saturday (May 7) new cases had fallen for six consecutive days.

The number of new cases has been under 100 since Apr 25. The number of new cases reported for Monday (May 9) totalled 35 confirmed by RT-PCR tests and 78 testing positive by antigen test kit (ATK).

At time of press Phuket health officials had marked two deaths as

attributed to COVID-19 so far this month. Last month officials recorded 20 deaths. One of the deaths reported for May 8 was that of a 55-year-old bed-ridden man who was already suffering from epilepsy, diabetes, cerebrovascular disease, hypertension and abnormal blood lipids.

"The current situation of COVID-19 in Phuket province has a clear and noticeable trend of decreasing," Dr Kusak said.

"This means we can prepare Phuket for COVID-19 being declared as an endemic disease," he added.

"We are preparing to propose to the CCSA [Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration] to declare COVID-19 an endemic disease," he explained during a live radio interview on May 4.

"The number of infections and deaths from COVID-19 in Phuket have continued to decline and we

are ready to move forward with the campaign for booster vaccinations for people in Group 608 [high at-risk patients] and students before the start of the semester," he added.

Dr Kusak expressed concern for the slow progress made in providing booster vaccinations to higher at-risk people designated as Group 608 patients.

"If looking at the details of the third dose of vaccinations in Group 608, it is still 52%. Therefore, we need to continue the campaign to provide more booster vaccinations to people in Group 608 and students in order to reach the 60% required by the criteria [for declaring COVID-19 'endemic']," he said.

"If people want to be vaccinated, they can walk in at any vaccination service point, hospital or health care centre in their area," he added.

"As for those who are stuck in the

house or in bed, they can coordinate with medical officers. There will be officers to proactively vaccinate all areas as well," Dr Kusak said.

According to the latest PPHO report on the mass vaccination campaign in Phuket, so far 508,375 people, or 94.29%, of the 539,183 target population have received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

In total, 484,158 people, or 89.79%, have received two doses.

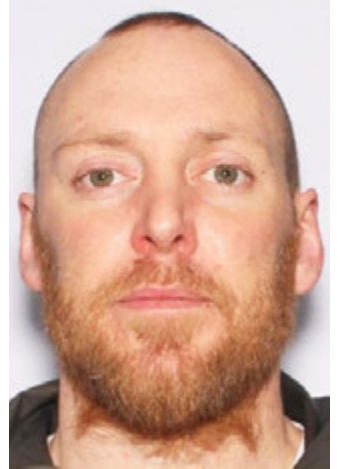
The PPHO report on Tuesday (May 10) marked that 326,955 people have received a third-dose 'booster jab', reported as 67.53% of those who had already received two doses.

A total of 125,747 people in Phuket have received a fourth dose of COVID vaccine, reported as 38.46% of those who had already received three doses.

Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul last week announced that the government expects to declare...

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Readying to get back to normal

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...COVID-19 an endemic disease in Thailand in early July, “allowing people to return to normal life as planned by the Ministry of Public Health”.

AUNJAI TO CLOSE

The PPHO has already announced that the Aunjai Clinic will close on May 16. The clinic opened last year for people who test positive for COVID-19 to contact for medical assistance and advice.

“Patients can receive services at the respiratory clinic at hospital according to the rights of the people,” said the PPHO in announcing the closure.

The Aunjai Clinic – with ‘aunjai’ in Thai meaning “peace of mind” – opened at the Auditorium of the new Phuket Provincial Hall on the south side of Phuket Town on Sept 15, 2021. As clarified by Governor Narong Woonciew at the time of the opening, it was set up for people who tested positive for COVID-19 by ATK and did not know what to do next.

“These people, when tested and found themselves infected, do not know what to do... The clinic will have staff to give advice, check symptoms, and even check x-rays of the lungs and administer medication for those with light symptoms,” Gov Narong explained.

“[Staff at the clinic] will consider the treatment and referral as to where the patient should be sent for treatment, at a hospital, field hospital, Community Isolation centre or



With no people infected with COVID-19 to treat, the Aunjai Clinic will close on May 16. Photo: PR Phuket / file

return to recover at home,” he added.

The Aunjai Clinic also provided consultations via phone. For information about COVID-19, people were free to call its hotline 076-254207 (20 lines) available 24 hours a day. The PPHO did not mention in its most recent announcement if the call centre will continue operation after May 16.

The move to ease restrictions further will be much welcomed following the falling number of international arrivals despite the easing of entry requirements since May 1, when it became no longer required for arrivals to be tested for COVID-19 pre-departure or on landing in Thailand.

While officials have touted increasing numbers of tourists since May 1, Phuket airport has actually

seen a drop in tourist arrivals. According to Phuket Immigration, Phuket airport showed an average of only 2,089 arrivals each day from May 1-9. On Monday (May 9), officials recorded only 1,621 international arrivals at Phuket airport.

INTO THE NIGHT

Meanwhile, night entertainment operators have called on the government to allow them to reopen their businesses in “blue-zone” provinces promoted for tourism from June 1.

The move is one of several proposals presented to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha at Government House on Monday (May 9), said Sa-nga Ruangwathanakul, president of the association of business operators on Khao San Rd, reported

the Bangkok Post.

The proposals were put forward by more than 10 associations of night entertainment and tourism business operators in Bangkok and other provinces, including Phuket, Mr Sa-nga said.

The associations have also thrown their support behind moves to downgrade COVID-19 to endemic status ahead of a full reopening of the country.

The proposals were expected to go before a meeting of the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) on Tuesday (May 10).

Since the Test & Go entry scheme was cancelled on May 1, businesses on Khao San Rd are surging back to life as foreign visitors are returning, Mr Sa-nga said.

Now was the time to further ease curbs on nightlife as it would give the industry an extra shot in the arm. He reiterated his call for the government to scrap the Thailand Pass registration requirement for foreign travellers and roll out special promotions to draw tourists back.

According to the letter to be handed to the prime minister, the associations said the outbreak of COVID-19 has dealt a serious blow to the tourism industry.

As a result, some have gone out of business because they lacked the resources to swallow heavy losses. The closures had also left many workers unemployed.

Among the proposals is allowing night entertainment venues, pubs, bars and karaoke parlours that have met Safety and Health

Administration (SHA) Plus or Thai Stop COVID 2 Plus standards to reopen in two stages.

In Stage 1, such venues in 12 “blue-zone” provinces and certain districts which are also designated as blue zones in 16 other provinces would be allowed to reopen from June 1. In Stage 2, permission for reopening would be given to those venues nationwide from July 1.

Another proposal is for provincial governors and various agencies to work with night entertainment operators to ensure compliance with COVID-Free Setting measures and roll out campaigns to encourage people to comply with health safety precautions.

A third idea involves replacing the emergency decree and the Communicable Disease Act with other laws after the current extension of the decree’s enforcement ends on June 1.

As part of their plan to reinvigorate nightlife in tourist areas, the associations will urge the government to designate special zones in which alcohol can continue to be served from 11pm-4am but with additional public transport laid on to discourage drink-driving.

“Several tourist spots have the potential to be further developed into special zones for night-time leisure activities. They include Khao San Road, Soi Cowboy and Patpong Road in Bangkok, Walking Street in Pattaya, Bangla Road in Phuket, Hat Rin on Koh Pha-ngan in Surat Thani and Nimmana Haeminda Road in Chiang Mai,” Mr Sa-nga said.

Use sharks to attract tourists, says Kamala Chief

JUTHA DURLAK, PRESIDENT of Kamala Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor), has suggested that if a shark actually bit an 8-year-old boy at Kamala

Beach last week, then Phuket should be using “real sharks” as a way of attracting tourists.

“It would be added as a ‘new landmark’ to attract tourists from all over the world

to visit the paradise island with abundant nature,” Mr Jutha said.

The suggestion follows 8-year-old Naphat Chaiyarak Khrystenko suffering deep

bites to his lower right leg at the beach on May 1. In total, the wounds took 33 stitches to close.

Local lifeguards still maintain that they believe a barracuda inflicted the bites, despite Dr Kongkiat Kit-tiwattanawong, Director of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) and the leading marine biologist on the island, remaining adamant that a small shark was the culprit.

In response, Kamala OrBorTor has ordered the beach guards to ramp up patrols to keep an eye out for any potentially harmful predators and signs have been posted to warn visitors to the beach in English and Thai of potential danger in the water.

Mr Jutha argued that while the fish might have been a barracuda, he admitted it could have been a small shark, which



Mr Jutha at Kamala Beach. Photo: PR Phuket

in his opinion was possible.

“Due to the situation of the COVID-19 outbreak over the past two years, natural resources in the area have recovered to become more abundant. Fish populations that disappeared years ago are now being seen again,” he said.

“However, if it were a real shark, experts estimate that a non-violent shark species will have a positive effect on the area, which may be added as a new landmark to attract

tourists,” Mr Jutha said.

“This would have a positive effect on the tourism sector and attract tourists from all over the world to travel to visit Kamala Beach even more so in the future,” he added.

“Kamala OrBorTor has given importance to preserving the environment to be beautiful, clean, peaceful and safe to support tourists from all over the world who visit Phuket,” Mr Jutha said.

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Kamala hill grab probed

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Phuket officials are investigating an alleged illegal land excavation believed to be conducted within a protected forest in Kamala.

Phuket Provincial Land Office and other related agencies are conducting an investigation after an alert was raised online that a backhoe was seen digging soil and loading it on heavy trucks in Kamala Hills. The plot measuring just over four rai is believed to be within a protected forest reserve.

The case was brought to light by the Isra News Agency. On May 5 it reported that excavation was ongoing in the hills of Kamala “near the famous golf course”. The agency published photos of a backhoe and two trucks working at what looks like a construction site on a steep slope. The agency provided coordinates of the site as 7°56'09.599"N; 98°21'44.639"E claiming it is “90 meters above sea level” and is “on a slope of more than 35 percent”.

“Excavating soil in such steep hill areas without permission from relevant authorities may be in violation of many laws,” Isra wrote, adding that they cannot exclude a possibility of encroachment on a



Phuket officials inspect an alleged illegal excavation site in Kamala. Photo: PR Phuket

protected forest reserve.

On May 6, the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket) posted an announcement saying that the aforementioned information is now being investigated.

PR Phuket noted that “relevant agencies have inspected the said area and it appears that it is an area operated by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT)”. The information had reference to “Somchai Jitlang, Director of the

Phuket Forest Center”.

PR Phuket did not elaborate on the EGAT connection any further, saying instead that later another inspection was conducted by the order from Kathu District Chief Siwat Rawangkul who assigned a team of officials to check the site. The team included officials from Phuket Forestry Center, Phuket City Forest Protection and Development Unit, Kathu District Office and other agencies.

The team failed to find anybody at the site and no construction machinery was present at the moment of the inspection. Yet, officers took pictures of the site with signs of excavation visible. The photos were posted by PR Phuket.

“The team examined the plot according to satellite coordinates (GPS). The result showed that the area where the soil was excavated, with a total area of 4 -2-91 rai, is within Mueang Phuket District

in the area of Kamala Mountains National Reserved Forest, Muang District, Phuket Province,” PR Phuket reported.

“Later Mr Cherng Namkaew came into the area to take care of the said plot and explained that a NorSor 3 land title deed for 12-1-52 rai of land in Kathu District was issued on January 30, 1983. Mr Cherng said he hired a backhoe to excavate the land for donations to nearby temples and schools and he was also assigned by the rural road district to help open the Kathu – Koh Kaew route, so excavation had been conducted since May 2, 2022,” the report continued.

As per PR Phuket announcement, officials are now checking all the information related to the case, including:

- If the real excavation site is within the boundaries of the specified Nor Sor 3 plot;
- If the land documents for the plot are correct and genuine;
- If Koh Kaew administration indeed has assigned somebody to conduct works in the area;
- If all relevant permissions were granted for excavation (if any were needed).

“Phuket Forestry Center will summarise the facts and report the results of the audit to all relevant sectors”, PR Phuket concluded.

Jimi Sandhu killer killed in plane crash

GENE LAHRKAMP, wanted for slaying Indian gangster Jimi Sandhu in Phuket in February, has died in a small plane crash in Canada.

Lahrkamp, 36, was among four people who died in the crash in northwestern Ontario on Apr 30, reported the *Vancouver Sun*.

Lahrkamp along with fellow Canadian national Matthew Dupre were wanted for shooting dead Sandhu in an assassination carried out at his rented beachfront villa in Rawai on Feb 4.

The two men, both ex-Canadian military, were soon identified as the killers and Interpol Red Notices for their arrest were issued.

The two suspects – described by Interpol as armed and dangerous – left Thailand on Feb 6, according to the international agency’s notice.

Police obtained CCTV footage showing two unidentified men jumping from bushes near the beachside villa to open fire on Sandhu before fleeing into the night.

The two were also caught on CCTV at Suvarnabhumi

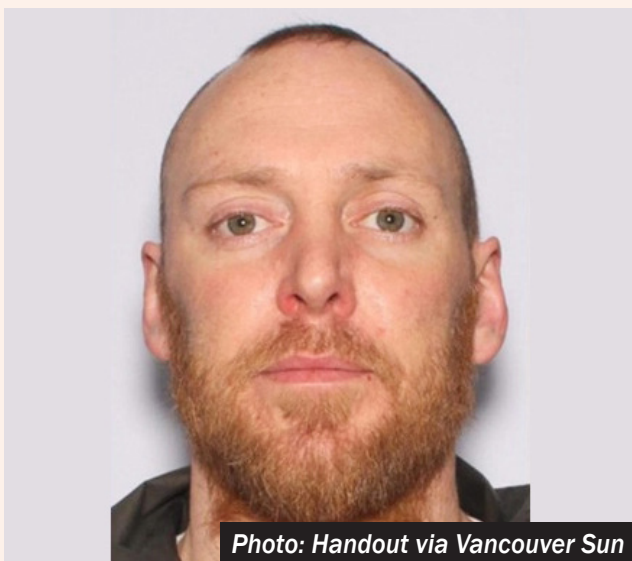


Photo: Handout via Vancouver Sun

airport as they left the country.

Dupre was arrested in Edmonton, Alberta, on Feb 20, and is being held in detention by the Alberta Court, pending a request for extradition to Thailand, while Lahrkamp remained at large.

Lahrkamp’s body was recovered from the crash site near Sioux Lookout, Ontario, on Apr 30. He was one of two British Columbia men facing murder and conspiracy charges in gang-linked violence killed in the plane crash, the *Vancouver Sun* noted.

Duncan Bailey, 37, linked

to the Independent Soldiers gang, also died in the crash. He had been out on bail on a conspiracy to commit murder charge related to a Vancouver shooting on Oct 6, 2020, the *Vancouver Sun* reported.

The four were travelling in a four-seater Piper PA 28-140.

Ontario Police are conducting a criminal investigation into the flight, while the Transportation Safety Board also has a probe into why the plane went down, the *Vancouver Sun* reported.

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Big Joke spotlights gun arrests

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Assistant national police chief Lt Gen Surachate 'Big Joke' Hakparn was in Phuket last Friday (May 6) to lead a presentation to the press more than 60 firearms seized during an anti-crime blitz that was conducted in the name of instilling confidence among tourists that Phuket and neighbouring provinces were safe to visit.

The campaign, ordered by national police chief Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk, had officers conduct "search and seize" operations throughout the Region 8 Police area, Lt Gen Surachate explained.

The Region 8 Police area comprises the seven provinces of Upper Southern Thailand, including Phuket.

In total 409 "targets" were set for the search and seize raids: 77 in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, 75 in Phuket, 68 in Surat Thani, 54 in Phang Nga, 47 in Krabi, 45 in Chumphon and 43 in Ranong.

All raids were conducted under warrants issued by the relevant court, Lt Gen Surachate noted.

Locations raided included hotels, rental rooms, guesthouses, resorts "and other areas where crime patterns indicated that they may affect



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

tourists or the tourist area", Lt Gen Surachate said.

The raids, carried out from April 25-29, netted 67 firearms, including one "war weapon", as well as three homemade bombs, Lt Gen Surachate said.

The most guns were seized in Chumphon province (16 guns), followed by Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province (14 guns), Lt gen Surachate said.

Also seized during the week were 127,471 pills of methamphetamine (ya

bah) and 9.433kg of crystal meth (ya ice), he added.

Almost as an aside, he added that officers collected DNA samples from 305 individuals who were released from prison as part of the campaign.

"National police commander Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk has ordered police to take action to ensure the safety of life and property of people [local residents] and tourists to support the opening of the country, especially important tourist areas that foreigners

and Thais like to travel to visit," Lt Gen Surachate said.

"During the past three months, there has been a mobilisation to crack down and search the Region 8 area seriously all the time, which has seen more than 1,082 targets searched and more than 193 firearms seized in order to make the tourist areas of Southern Thailand safe from various crimes, so we can welcome tourists and reduce crime in the area. Let the people live in peace," Lt Gen Surachate said.



Photo: Courtesy of Natthaphong Kongkim

Dogs rescued from sewage pond

LOCAL EMERGENCY WORKERS were able to rescue three wayward dogs from a wastewater treatment pond in Thepkasattri, in Thalang District, last Friday (May 6).

Nutthaphong Kongkim, stationed with the Kusoldharm Foundation Muang Mai branch, explained that a passer-by had called the rescue centre after noticing the dogs were unable to climb the steep sides to get out of the small man-made reservoir.

The pond was constructed as a wastewater treatment pond for the Phuket Coastal Fisheries Research

and Development Center in Baan Para, Tambon Thepkasattri.

The man had been trying for an hour, without success, Mr Nutthaphong said.

After rescue workers, including Mr Nutthaphong, arrived, it took them about 30 minutes to lead the dogs to safety by tying a lead to them and using a long ladder to scale the steep bank of the pond wall.

All three dogs were safely recovered without injury, Mr Nutthaphong confirmed.

Mr Nutthaphong said he also counted them as "three lives saved".

Eakkapop Thongtub

Tourists urged to respect shrines

TOURISTS ARE BEING URGED to show more respect at shrines set up at local venues after a foreign woman sat at an altar for incense and offerings at a popular market on the outskirts of Phuket Town, ignorant of where she was sitting while fully engaged with her mobile phone.

The need for tourists to be more respectful came to the fore after a young foreign woman sat at the Phra Phrom shrine, honouring Brahma, at the Chillva Market on Yaowarat Rd, near the Samkong Intersection.

A video of the woman was posted on TikTok on May 4, raising concerns among local residents.

The woman is seen sitting at the altar in front of the shrine, oblivious to a woman who had come to pay her respects. After minutes of waiting, the Thai woman asked the young foreign woman to move.

The foreign woman finally realised what she had done. She apologised and respectfully moved.

Pussadee Chakmanon, a clothing seller at the market, said that vendors at the market were understanding of the transgression. "No one warned her because we understand that she did not know our culture," Ms Pussadee said.



A Thai visitor to the market waits to pay her respects at the shrine while a young female tourist sits at the altar preoccupied with her mobile phone. Image: supplied via Eakkapop Thongtub

Wirot Somchit, another clothing merchant at the market, noted the woman had plugged her phone into a power socket at the altar. "She was probably worried her battery was going to run out while talking to her friend," he explained.

Regardless, comments posted after the video of the woman was shown online called for tourists coming to Thailand to be more aware, and more respectful, of local culture.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Local community left homeless

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Homeless residents of the Sa Ton Pho community evicted from land in Chalong and then again from land near Rassada Pier set up camp in front of the new Phuket Provincial Hall last week in their plea to be allowed to live on unused state land.

Chonthee Changruenkul, the coordinator of the Phuket Community Rights Development Network, explained that the camp, set up on May 4, comprised some 50 residents.

Mr Chonthee said that the residents were pursuing their right to be granted a place to live under rights already given by the Ministry of Natural Resources following a Cabinet resolution in 2010.

The Sa Ton Pho community derives its name, meaning “Bodhi Tree Pond”, from where the residents once lived near Phuket Zoo in Moo 3, Chalong, said Mr Chonthee.

The residents lived on unused land around a natural pond in the area, which is primarily mangrove swamp, but were evicted by the landowner, he explained.

The residents then were granted permission to move to 50 rai of unused land on Sri Suthat Rd, near the monkey viewpoint near Rassada Pier, but are now being asked – through legal action – to vacate the area by



With no place else to go, the now homeless residents of the Sa Ton Pho community set up camp in front of the new Phuket Provincial Hall. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) as there is no legal provision to allow them to stay on that particular land, Mr Chonthee said.

The residents have appealed to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Director-General of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources to change the official designated use of the land

to allow them to stay.

“The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment responded and officials came down to discuss with the provincial government to create an MoU [Memorandum of Understanding] between the Ton Pho community and related agencies to allow the residents to stay,” he said.

Of the 34 households that comprised the original Sa Ton Pho com-

munity in Chalong, only 23 are left. The rest of the people moved away during the COVID pandemic, Mr Chonthee noted.

“That still leaves 23 households, comprising 78 people, in trouble,” he noted.

“They have no place to go, so they are asking for permission to stay at the Phuket Community Rights Center network at the entrance of

Rassada Pier by building temporary housing only,” Mr Chonthee said.

“But the land there is under the care of PPAO, and the PPAO has taken legal action against the villagers who tried to set up homes there as the official permission from the Director-General of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources given is still not being upheld,” he added.

The residents submitted yet another formal request to Phuket Governor Narong Wonciw to resolve the long-standing problem on May 5.

“Of the 50 rai of state land not being used, we are asking to use only four and a half rai,” Mr Chonthee said.

Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam met Mr Chonthee and other representatives on May 5, but delivered no promises other than that officials will continue to meet and discuss the issue.

However, that was enough to convince the group to disband the protest late that night.

Discussions did lead to the suggestion that the residents be allowed to live on unused state land near Saphan Hin controlled by Phuket City Municipality.

Provincial officials were to meet with Phuket City Municipality officials this week to discuss the proposal, Vice Governor Anupap said.

Patong Pansuk resumes

THE PATONG DEVELOPMENT Foundation resumed its ‘Patong Pansuk’ (‘Patong Cupboard’) charity activities last Sunday (May 8), handing out 400 “Survival bags” of food and other essential household items and financial assistance to 30 children to ensure they can continue their studies.

The event, held at the Patong Bay Hill Hotel, was the first Patong Pansuk activity since the nightlife venue at the hotel was ordered closed for 15 days for breach of the Hotel Act for holding late-night events beyond the COVID-mandated closing time of 11pm at the time.

With the closure ordered from Apr 22, Patong Pansuk activities were suspended from Apr 24 on.

Phakarat Tamchu, Chairman of the Patong Development Foundation, explained that the foundation’s charity activities were still much needed to help alleviate the financial stress of those left without incomes due to the COVID-19 situation.

The children who received “scholarships” of



Photo: PR Phuket

B1,000 financial assistance had to be under 15 years of age and registered to attend a school in the Patong, Kamala or Kathu area, she added.

“In addition, members of the Patong Development Foundation went to donate small cash allowances to the elderly and bedridden patients in seven communities in the Patong city area,” Ms Phakarat said.

“Twenty people received a grant of B500 each under the ‘Patong Pansuk Senior OK’ project,” she added.

The activity also saw children from the Ban Tawan area in Phuket Town brought to the hotel to freely enjoy the pool.

Preechavude ‘Prab’ Keesin, Executive Director of the Pisona Group and hence the Patong Bay

Hill Hotel, pointed out that the hotel had previously organised many similar such activities.

“This is an activity for children to relax and do various activities free of charge, which has been well received in the past because besides children having fun it is also another way to connect family relationships,” he said.

“Because having a warm family will make society strong, and the impact of various social problems that will occur in the future will be reduced.

“Plus, those who took part get a prize to take home as well,” he added.

“The Pisona Group is ready to support these activities to continue creating a better society,” Mr Prab said. *The Phuket News*



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TAT defends target of 20mn tourists for 2023

THE TOURISM AUTHORITY of Thailand (TAT) has said it expects around 20 million tourist arrivals in 2023, in line with the government's plans to revitalise the tourism sector following the relaxation of travel regulations.

TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn stated that attracting 20mn tourists to Thailand by 2023 is a realistic goal, given that the tourism industry is expected to grow this year as a result of Thailand's and other countries' relaxation of travel restrictions.

The target is also consistent with Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha's forecast of 20mn tourist arrivals next year if COVID-19 is declared endemic and no other threats to the tourism industry exist, he said.

Positive indications were reported this week as the country welcomed 19,727 tourists on May 1, followed by 15,439 tourists and 14,108 tourists on May 2 and 3, respectively. The number has increased from around 10,000-12,000 daily arrivals last month, reported state news agency NNT.

Thailand had welcomed 853,165 tourists as of May 3 from the United Kingdom,



Tourist arrivals are processed for entry at Phuket airport on May 1. Photo: HKT Quarantine

Germany, Russia, India, and the United States. As of May 3, 172,545 people had registered for the new Thailand Pass, which was launched on April 29, noted NNT.

However, statistics of the number of international arrivals as reported by Phuket Immigration at Phuket airport showed an average of only 2,089 arrivals each day from May 1-9.

The TAT governor stated that the first critical step is to attract 7-10mn tourists this year in order to maintain the momentum and increase to 20mn next year. He hopes for tourism revenue to reach around B2.4 trillion in 2023 in order to revitalise the tourism industry. *The Phuket News*

Phuket needs government support to move forward

The Phuket News
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Phuket Chamber of Commerce (PCC) President Thanusak Phungdet has urged the Thai government to continue supporting Phuket in its efforts to raise tourism to a new level in parallel with developing alternative income sources in line with GEMMSST strategy and preparing to host the World Specialized Expo 2028

In his overview of the Phuket economy for Radio Thailand Phuket, Mr Thanusak said that he wants the government "to never stop supporting the tourism sector to develop further".

PCC President specifically mentioned the Tour Teaw Thai program aimed at helping tour group operators by offering a 40% subsidy discount on tour packages. The scheme has been recently extended by the government to the end of September.

"Thai Teaw Thai is a project encouraging people to travel more throughout the country generating a constant cash flow for businesses," Mr



Thanusak Phungdet, President of the Phuket Chamber of Commerce (PCC), ex-Chairman of the Phuket Real Estate Association (P-REA). Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

Thanusak said.

While tourism remains the key pillar of Phuket's economy, the private and government sectors are also working to develop other industries in line with GEMMSST strategy.

"Both private and government sectors work together to create new business pillars, more than ever. It is important to improve the economy and the well-being of the people," PCC Chief stressed.

Adopted amid the coronavirus crisis, the GEMMSST

policy is the government and private industry push to develop Phuket in the fields of Gastronomy, Education, Medical & Wellness, Marina Hub, Sports & Events, Smart City and Tuna in order to broaden the island's economic base to be less dependent on tourism.

Last but not least, Mr Thanusak stressed that support is needed for Phuket in bidding for the right to host the World Specialized Expo in 2028. The PCC President believes that the neighbouring

provinces of Krabi and Phang Nga should join forces with Phuket as the whole Andaman region will benefit from the event.

The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) earlier said it estimates that income generated from hosting the expo will be at least B40 billion and create jobs for about 100,000 people. The previous World Specialized Expo, held in 2017 in the Kazakhstan capital Nur-Sultan, attracted almost 4 million visitors.

"However, the aim to develop the economy of Phuket is to be strong. This includes cooperation from all sectors and joining forces to keep the economy strong and stable. And separate gratitude to Thai people who still choose to visit Phuket," Mr Thanusak concluded.

Mr Thanusak, a long-standing mediator between Phuket businesses and the government, has strongly championed ideas hoped to revive Phuket's devastated tourism industry, and has been vocal in his criticism of the lack of support from the government for business operators and employers.

Domestic tour subsidy schemes extended

THE GOVERNMENT LAST FRIDAY (May 6) agreed to extend two travel packages to the end of September, to further encourage people to go on holiday and help the ailing tourism sector.

The decision was reached at a meeting of the Centre for Economic Situation Administration chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

Government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said after the meeting that the government decided to add 1 million more room rights to the We Travel Together hotel subsidy programme and extend it from the end of this month to the end of September.

The present phase of the scheme offered 2mn room rights, until May 31. All rights were taken up, according to its website.

Under the package, the government meets 40% of the room rate, to a maximum B3,000 a night, and 40%, or up to B2,000, of the air ticket.

Mr Thanakorn said the Tour Teaw Thai package will also be extended, from the end of April to the end of September.

This programme is aimed at helping tour group operators by offering a 40% subsidy discount on tour packages.

The Association of Domestic Travel, Thai Chamber of Commerce (TCC) and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) have orchestrated calls for the government to continue the subsidy schemes to promote domestic travel.

It was earlier this week, when TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn said cooperation from hotels was important to stimulate domestic trips without solely depending on a government budget and asked hotels to add another 1mn rooms to the We Travel Together programme.

Yet, the idea received a tepid response from the industry. Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi,



Tourists disembark a boat at Chalong Pier. Photo: TAC Phuket

president of the Thai Hotels Association (THA), said most hotels had already reduced their room rates by 50%.

With a limited budget, she said the government should instead offer a 20% subsidy, instead of 40%, to cover 2mn room nights.

"May is a transition period for tourism as the country can expect an average of 15,000 air passengers per day, or at least 450,000 tourists this month," said Mrs Marisa.

"However, the domestic market remains vital to support operators."

Thanet Supornsahasrungsri, acting president of the Chon Buri Tourism Council, said hoteliers might be reluctant to add their rooms to this programme because of delayed payments for participants.

This problem may have been rectified recently, but some hotels in Pattaya have been waiting since December to get paid, he said.

Moreover, mid-level hotels are concerned about feedback as local tourists using the privileges usually opted for five-star hotels or international chains in prime locations, said Mr Thanet.

He said the TAT needs a better mechanism to help mid-level hotels benefit more than in previous phases. *Bangkok Post*

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COVID alert downgraded

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

As the overall COVID-19 situation in the country has significantly improved, the Ministry of Public Health on Monday (May 9) resolved to lower its COVID-19 alert level from Level 4 to Level 3, allowing most members of the public to resume their daily activities with fewer restrictions.

However, those over the age of 60, those suffering from an underlying medical condition which could be exacerbated by COVID-19, and those who have yet to be fully vaccinated will still have to avoid certain activities that could increase their risk of infection, said Dr Opas Karnkawinpong, Director-General of the Department of Disease Control.

A fully vaccinated individual, he said, should have received at least three COVID-19 vaccine injections.

The adjustment from Level 4 to Level 3 was approved by the ministry's committee tasked with directing its medical and public health operations.

The committee works separately from the government's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA).

Under the Level 3 COVID-19 alert, most people are advised to only avoid visiting entertainment venues or crowded places.

All other activities that were previously prohibited and/or discouraged under the Level 4 alert are now permitted, Dr Opas said.



A boy is comforted as he receives a COVID-19 vaccine jab in Nonthaburi province on Saturday (May 7). Photo: Nutthawat Wicheanbut

That said, people in the aforementioned risk group are still advised to avoid unnecessary travel from one province to another, as well as abroad.

Infections have stabilised across 23 provinces, while the remaining 54 provinces are seeing continuous improvements in their outbreak situation, which altogether indicates that the country is heading to the post-pandemic stage where COVID-19 will be officially declared an endemic disease, he said.

That said, infections may rise again when the new school term begins later in the month.

To avoid another mass outbreak, the Public Health Ministry wants to make sure over 90% of teachers, other staff and students aged 12-17 are fully vaccinated and boosted before they return to school, Dr Opas said.

When asked about the growing pressure on the government to allow night entertainment venues to reopen, he said the matter will be discussed by the CCSA at its next meeting.

"Although the COVID-19 situation has improved significantly, the risk of a sudden change is still there," he said.

In order to allow all people to resume their daily activities as soon as possible, all provinces are now encouraged to pay extra attention to at-risk groups and speed up the provision of COVID-19 booster shots.

"It's believed the CCSA will ease the rest of the restrictions when at least 60% of the risk groups have been fully vaccinated," he said, before noting that authorities are pleased with the progress of vaccinations in Bangkok and its surrounding provinces.

PM affirms neutral stance on Russia-Ukraine war

BANGKOK

PRIME MINISTER PRAYUT Chan-o-cha reconfirmed that Thailand will not take sides in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, ahead of his attendance at a top-level US-Asean meeting this week.

During a media briefing at Government House last Friday (May 6), Gen Prayut talked about his trip to America for the US-Asean Special Summit, scheduled for yesterday and today (May 12-13).

He said his attendance is required as per other Asean meetings such as the recent Japan-Asean summit and the China-Asean summit.

Given Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there might be some opinions about it during the meeting, Prayut said.

He added there is a broad range of issues that Asean leaders will want to discuss with US President Joe Biden and his administration.

Thailand supports Asean's stance over the conflict which promotes the need for peaceful dialogue among the parties concerned, he said.

"I am going as a member country of Asean to discuss the economy, trade, investment



Photo: Bangkok Post

and situations in the region. I will put my best effort into it," said Prayut.

"Do not listen to those who cluelessly voice their opinions. They might have done it out of good intentions but I believe the person whom you should listen to is your prime minister."

He added that his seven-year experience as prime minister guaranteed his insight into international affairs and Thailand's appropriate stance.

Usana Berananda, Director-General of the Department of Asean Affairs, said there would be a discussion on Russia-Ukraine at the summit as well as on tensions in the South China Sea and the crisis in Myanmar.

Bangkok Post

Maya Bay to close again for 2 months

KRABI

MAYA BAY, WHICH reopened to tourists on Jan 1 after being off-limits for over three years, will be closed again from August to September for the purposes of natural rehabilitation.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment announced the news to protect the island's sensitive ecology last Friday (May 6).

Minister Varawut Silpaarcha said that plans to manage tourism in the beautiful cove – made famous by the 2000 movie *The Beach* starring Leonardo DiCaprio – were on track.

Almost 100,000 people have visited the bay this year generating over B20 million of income, he said.

"We could say we made the right decision by introducing new regulations to manage tourism activity on this small but world-class island. It was prudent to forbid boats from docking in front of the beach, and also moving the entrance to the back of the island," Mr Varawut said.



Photo: Krabi PR

He said that despite strict measures to control the number of tourists, the area was inundated over the long Songkran weekend when Maya Bay received over 3,000 visitors a day.

The ministry closed the island for three and a half years to restore its broken marine ecosystem. The long break has helped turn back the clock and restore its marine ecology, resulting in a healthier coral reef and attracting long-absent blacktip reef sharks.

According to the ministry's regulations, up to 380 tourists can visit the island for every hour it is open so as not to disturb the balance of nature. They are required to get off at Loh Sama Bay at the back of the island and

walk five minutes along a wooden trail to Maya Bay. Swimming activity is prohibited in the bay, and advance bookings are required.

As more tourists are expected following the country's recent reopening, the minister said he has ordered the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation to fix any outstanding problems related to the QueQ application. The department has been relying on this app for advance bookings to visit national parks.

Tourism revenue from national parks countrywide is expected to double by year's end. In 2021, the department collected B30 billion from entry fees.

Bangkok Post



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Palmer Owyong

In 2019 Phuket saw around 9 million passenger arrivals, in 2021 we saw just over 900,000, a 90% decline. Most experts predict that the industry won't recover until 2024 or later.

The pandemic has changed the world, and as we come out of Test & Go and look toward the future, we should consider whether we want to return to business as usual or change how things are done.

B-Corporations

The term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was coined by Economist Howard Bowen in his book 'Social Responsibilities of the Businessmen', published in 1953. He defined it as, "The obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society." The main problem with CSR is that it lacks transparency and accountability.

In 2006 a new iteration of CSR was introduced called B-Corporations with the lofty goal of transforming the economic system by changing how business is done. Instead of focusing on the single-minded drive for profits, a B-Corporation has a triple bottom line that also considers their environmental impact and the community they serve.

The main difference to CSR is that to become a B-Corporation there is a lengthy certification process and the businesses are regularly audited to ensure they are meeting standards. Some well-known businesses that are B-Corporations include The Body Shop, AllBirds, Ben & Jerry's ice cream and Patagonia. They are just a few of the 4,850 B-Corporations located in 79 countries in over 150 different industries.

While most local businesses are not B-Corporations there are still things that they can do to lower their environmental impact, while saving money.

1. Offer vegan/vegetarian options on your menu – A single burger uses the same amount of water as two months of showering. Studies show that 50% of Americans are trying to reduce their meat consumption and over one-third of



Using soapnuts is healthier for you, helps the environment and helps support hill tribes in the North that produce them.
Photo: AxelleBCOM / Pixabay

Europeans are, too. Having plant-based menu options just makes good business sense. If you are not sure where to start, local chef Jamie Raftery, who was trained at Michelin-star restaurants, shares some of his plant-based recipes on his website Holistic Chef Academy.

2. Use soapnuts – These are grown sustainably, inexpensive to buy, don't use palm oils (which cause deforestation), are hypo-allergenic, don't leave a perfumey smell and are actually berries, so they are okay for people with nut allergies. You can use them to do your laundry, for cleansers, hand soaps, shaving cream, dishwasher soap, body wash and shampoo. Not only will you cut down on your use of palm oil, but you will also reduce plastic waste while supporting the Indigenous Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand that grow them.

3. Compost and recycle – Even during the pandemic Phuket's waste collection has been operating beyond capacity. Overall the waste has gone down, but the lack of visitors has been made up for this with an increase in plastic trash from takeaway containers, plastic masks and hand sanitiser bottles. Studies show that between 40-60% of household waste is organic and almost 20% is recyclable. When you combine the two you can reduce your household waste by as much as 80%. Composting also reduces the need for pesticides and fertilisers and reduces water usage.

4. Use drip irrigation – Although it may not seem like it in the middle of the rainy season, Thailand is becoming increasingly water-stressed because of increasing temperatures, drier dry seasons and the fact that it is one of the world's largest rice producers. Drip irrigation is a strategy that reduces water use by about 70% by watering only the roots. Although commercial systems are available you can also DIY it.

5. Collect rainwater – This can range from a simple barrel to a more complex system that integrates with your irrigation and plumbing. This water can be used to flush toilets or water the garden. Not only does this help to alleviate the burden on groundwater, but it can also reduce the amount of pollution from pesticides, fertilisers

and car oil that is washed into the ocean by stormwater runoff.

6. Give out branded water bottles – Almost 1 million plastic bottles are used per minute, which translates to about 62 bottles for every person on the planet per year. Plastic bottles are a scourge on our beaches. A simple way to ensure that your guests are not part of the problem is to give them a branded reusable water bottle. You can then make filtered water freely available.

7. Switch to LED lightbulbs – These last more than twice as long as fluorescent lights, 25 times longer than regular incandescent ones and use 90% less energy than convention bulbs. LED light bulbs are also safer as they emit very little heat and are cool to the touch.

8. Plant flowers and plants that are pollinator-friendly – One-third of our food supply is pollinated by bees, bats and birds. Most plants rely on animal pollinators for reproduction, but about 30% of plant-pollinator networks have been completely lost, which translates to the disappearance of food, bees, plants, trees and a loss of biodiversity. The main culprits driving declines are habitat loss and pesticide use. One way you can help is to plant pollinator-friendly native plant species.

9. Change your gas burners to electric – Gas stoves are not well-vented and can exacerbate respiratory illnesses like asthma, COVID or even allergies. They also leak methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than CO₂, even when turned off. These can be replaced with inexpensive induction burners and you will save on your monthly gas bill.

10. Check your tyre pressure every two weeks – Your tires will naturally deflate by 2-3 PSI per month. For every 10% decrease in tyre pressure your fuel consumption increases by 2%. Multiply this across several vehicles driving every day and it can add up. Improperly inflated tires also affect your ability to brake and wear out your tyres and engine more quickly.

Palmer Owyong is an environmental activist working with the Kamala Green Club and the Global Sustainability Hub.

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Welcome to the Google Meet?

ON CAMPUS

Jie Jie Limpanapa

Ahem. I've told you, Khun, take that silly dog-face filter off before turning your camera on. Oh, sorry, that's just your real face. You, Nadia, turn your mic on! Has anyone seen Tim this morning? Okay, guys, please settle down. Right, everyone, please look this way and get ready for the lesson.

What lesson, I hear you ask? Well, today, dear readers, you'll be learning all about the world of online learning.

I'm Jie Jie Limpanapa and I am a Year 8 student at HeadStart International School. But today, I will be your teacher to take you through the pros and cons of online learning. From my own online learning experience (a grand total of 8 months in the last two years), about 90% of the students I know absolutely hate remote lessons. But is there still some good in it, or is it more disastrous than one of Elon Musk's tweets?

For most people, online learning is quite convenient. After all, you have the ability to learn from the opposite ends of the world. However, some people take convenience a bit too far; I even heard of one boy who "took part" in a lesson from his phone while at Central Festival! In this situation, how can anybody stay focused and be able to extract some information from the lesson?

"Can I go to the toilet?"

"Eliott, I have told you for the millionth time, turn your mic off!"

Sorry about that. Where was I? Yes, so what is online learning for in the first place? Anyone?

Obviously, we are in this Google Meet because of



Jie Jie Limpanapa.

COVID-19. From this perspective, online learning gives us a safe place where we can at least get some education. Ah, I can see that Yim's made a point in the chat box. Yes, that's right, you are more likely to learn some research skills and be more autodidact through online learning.

Now, we have come to the most important part of the lesson. I want you to remember this and take some notes. They'll need to be uploaded later onto our Google Classroom, I'll know if you don't complete it.

In all seriousness though, one of the reasons that online learning isn't as effective as it should be is because most of the students are unmonitored. During online lessons, we are being given trust and accountability to be responsible people. I have to agree with the teachers on this point, some of us aren't grown up

enough to behave ourselves.

During online learning, we all went through some degree of social retardation. I, myself, became a human jellyfish! From a world of chatter and laughter, to waking up, sitting in front of the computer, and going to sleep. The cycle just went on and on and on for so long that when we finally returned to school, we became awkward and stilted.

At this point, I think we can all agree that our screen time has increased, right? This is one of the cons of online learning. If left unmonitored, it's easy to see how this can snowball into an addiction, with a multitude of apps, games, and sites spilling into our daily lives.

Who knows when we will stop wearing masks? Maybe the world will soon be an empty dystopia, with unoccupied streets, people living in their own cyber-bubble, and onsite learning impossible. Who knows if online learning is to be used again? We could very well be the generation of Online Learners...

But next time, if there is a next time, let's focus on the lesson a bit more and try to be more aware when using the chat box. Please remember to turn on your cameras too, else I'll be talking to icons of Peppa Pig, rainbow puke, and shopping bags. Anyway, you may leave the Google Meet. I hope to never see you here again.

Class dismissed.

NOTE: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of PSU Phuket and its employees or official policies.

This article was featured in 'The Phuket Collegiate Magazine', the university magazine published by Milla Budiarto at PSU Phuket. For more information, visit: <https://www.phuket.psu.ac.th/en/magazine> or email: magazine@phuket.psu.ac.th.



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POP QUIZ

1. The Don't Make A Wave Committee later became which world-known organisation?
2. American teenager Michael P. Fay in 1994 became renowned for what?
3. Which countries border Lesotho?
4. 'Avengers: End Game' is the second-highest grossing film of all time. Which movie still holds the record?
5. Which company has held the Guinness World Record since 2012 as the largest tyre manufacturer in the world?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

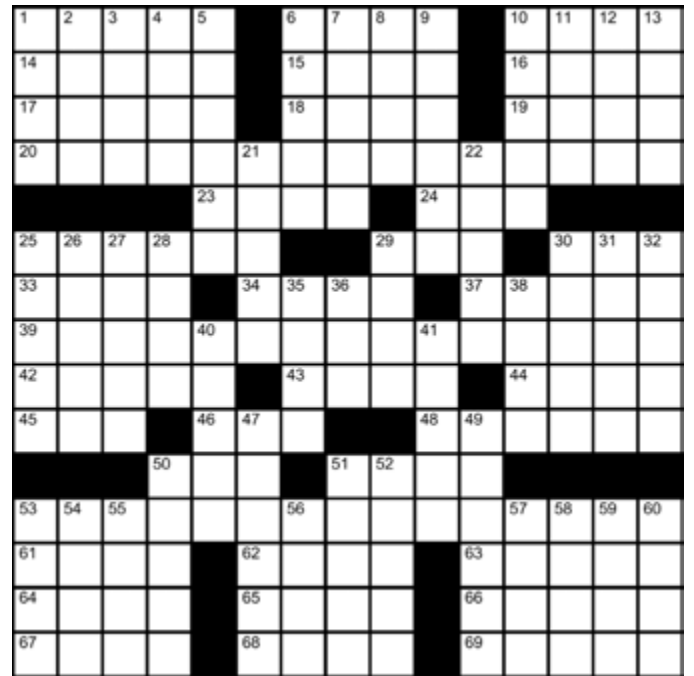
			8		3	4	2	
6					7			
3			4		2			
9	4	6				7		3
2		7				1	9	6
			5		1			4
			7					9
	3	1	9		8			

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Wet nurses, overseas
 6. Auction actions
 10. Agenda
 14. Japanese-American
 15. Brown family member
 16. Comme ci, comme ça
 17. ___ live one
 18. Knock for a loop
 19. Blood-related
 20. Have many secrets
 23. Arrives at
 24. Belief
 25. Whalebone
 29. "___ show time!"
 30. Baby carrier?
 33. Favorite
 34. Spot remover?
 37. Colonel's insignia
 39. Ambiguous expressions
 42. Preserved, in a way
 43. Wheedle
 44. Chapter 11 issue
 45. "May I help you?"
 46. Symbol of strength
 48. Social strata
 50. Natl. Humor
- Month**
51. Look
 53. Looks twice
 61. Fine things
 62. Taro variety
 63. Send on
 64. Authority
 65. Norse goddess of fate
 66. Quibbles
 67. Knock off
 68. Cheese ___
 69. Play too broadly
- Down**
1. Word with phase or retention
 2. Entangle
 3. Like some salts
 4. Principal
 5. Fodder
 6. Stupefy
 7. Sudden attack
 8. Cudgel
 9. Illuminated, in a way
 10. Hymn
 11. Trickster of myth
 12. "Yeah, right!"
 13. All alternative
 21. Packed
 22. City near Oberhausen
 25. Fussbudget
- 26. Reverse**
27. Vuitton
 28. Hamburg's river
 29. Itty bit
 30. Cousin of a bittern
 31. Church property
 32. Exploits
 35. "Darn it!"
 36. "Peace Piece" artist
 38. Contributes
 40. Antiparkinsonian agent
 41. Surpass
 47. Eager
 49. Punish with an arbitrary penalty
 50. Test, as ore
 51. Indian caste
 52. Key material
 53. Blocks
 54. Viva-voce
 55. Vulcan's Chimney
 56. Emanation
 57. Bulls or Bears
 58. Big top?
 59. Set aside
 60. Gael's tongue

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Greenpeace Foundation; 2) Being canned in Singapore for stealing road signs and vandalising cars; 3) Just one; South Africa (entirely); 4) Avatar; 5) LEGO (318 million tyres per year)



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

3

days is how long George Washington's body was laid out after his death before he was buried. It was at his request. He was terrified of being buried alive.

16

hours a day hippos spend in water, but they can't swim because they're too muscular and sink. Instead, they walk around under the surface.

254

break-ins were carried out by a thief finally caught by Japanese police in 2017. He was a 74-year-old ninja who had stolen more than US\$260,000 in items throughout his career.

30,000

US dollars a month is how much Johnny Depp spent on wine, he admitted in 2018.

3.2 billion

images are posted on social media every day.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Nai Harn sunset. Photo by Sutharat Khaodee

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

This week in history

May 13, 1787

Captain Arthur Phillip leaves Portsmouth, England, with 11 ships full of convicts (the "First Fleet") to establish a penal colony in Australia.

May 14, 1939

Lina Medina of Peru becomes the youngest confirmed mother in medical history at the age of five. She is still alive today, at age 88.

May 15, 1905

Las Vegas is founded when 110

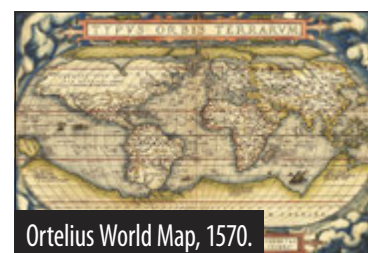
acres (0.45 square kilometres), in what later would become downtown, are auctioned off.

May 16, 1888

Nikola Tesla delivers a lecture describing the equipment that will allow efficient generation and use of alternating currents to transmit electric power over long distances.

May 17, 1980

Mount St Helens erupts in Washington State, United



States, killing 57 people and causing \$3 billion in damage.

May 18, 1962

A birthday salute to US President John F. Kennedy takes

place at Madison Square Garden, New York City. The highlight is Hollywood starlet Marilyn Monroe's sultry, intimate rendition of "Happy Birthday, Mr President".

May 19, 1570

Cartographer Abraham Ortelius issues Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, the first modern atlas, comprising 53 maps created by other masters, all credited for their works.

Source: Wikipedia

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tendeas and as always all your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. We hope to see you there and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming, please invite them along. A special thanks to our Media Partners - The Phuket News, Live 89.5 Radio and Phuket News TV

THU

19 MAY



SKAL INTERNATIONAL PHUKET NETWORKING EVENT

1st post Covid event hosted by Banyan Tree Phuket at Angsana. We will celebrate our 26th anniversary and what better way to celebrate with drinks sponsored by Cocktails & Co who will be launching their new product in Thailand. 096 270 9080, contact@skalphuket.org Join us by invitation only. *ALCOHOL MAYBE A HEALTH HAZARD! SKAL International Phuket

THU

2 JUN



Grow Boating Evening

We look forward to seeing you at the next Grow Boating Evening at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar at the Phuket Boat Lagoon from 5pm on Thursday the 2nd of June. The reason for the change is that Friday the 3rd is a public holiday for H.M. Queen Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshana's Birthday. We are delighted to announce that our drinks sponsor for the evening will be SEA property group. A stalwart in Phuket real estate, SEA property group has over 25 years of experience on the paradise island. The family team at SEA Property group boasts unparalleled knowledge in Phuket real estate solutions. See <https://sea-property.com/> There will be a delicious free burger for all at-

FRI

10 JUN



Phuket Sundowners hosted by AustCham - Friday 10 June

AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (AMCHAM), British Chamber of Commerce Thailand (BCCT), Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber of Commerce, CanCham Thailand, Franco-Thai Chamber of Commerce (FTCC), German-Thai Chamber of Commerce (GTCC), Netherlands-Thai Chamber of Commerce (NTCC) and Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce, invite you to join us for Phuket Sundowners to be held on Friday 10th June, 2022, at the Angsana Laguna Phuket. Please register in advance, as walk-ins are not allowed for this event. Limited spaces, please book early to avoid disappointment COVID-19 Requirements: Attendees must be able to show proof of at least double vaccinated and a Negative test result (ATK/RT-PCR) conducted within 24 hours of arriving at the event. Cost: Baht 500 for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members. Baht 900 for non-members.



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LAMBERT BROTHERS INSURANCE BROKERS OPEN HOUSE

Celebrating their move to a new office location, at Biz Town on the bypass road, Lambert Brothers Insurance Brokers hosted clients and friends to drinks and snacks on Friday, May 6. Lambert Brothers Insurance Brokers is a leading independent broker with a proud record of serving its clients for more than 60 years.



Photos: courtesy of Dushenkovskyi

CHAÎNE DES RÔTISSEURS PHUKET, THAILAND CHAPITRE 2022

The first Chapitre in just over two years was held on May 5 at the Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach, followed by a 'Phantom of the Opera'-themed dinner. Guests arrived in theme, or in black tie attire, and enjoyed a very exciting and special evening.

Muay Thai gets Saudi Arabia Olympic boost

MUAY THAI

SAUDI ARABIA HAS promised to help push Muay Thai to become an Olympic sport, Thai officials have confirmed.

Prince Fahad Bin Jalawi Al Saud, vice president and secretary general of the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee, presided over the opening of the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) headquarters in Bangkok on Monday (May 9).

According to NSDF manager Supranee Couptasa, the prince vowed to promote Muay Thai on the international stage to enhance its chances of making its Olympic debut.

"Prince Fahad likes Muay Thai and intends to help promote the Thai heritage and push it to become an Olympic sport," Supranee said.

Prince Fahad was attending the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup badminton tournament in Bangkok.

He also met with Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, who is also president of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand (NOCT) in a meeting aimed at strengthening



Prawit Wongsuwan (left) and Prince Fahad Bin Jalawi Al Saud. Photo: Bangkok Post

ing bilateral sporting relations.

Prawit praised the prince for his role in sports including pushing his country to earn the rights to host the 2034 Asian Games.

Also present at the function was International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Patama Leeswadtrakul.

While Thai officials believe that Muay Thai is close to be included in the Olympic programme, some observers say it is still a long way to go.

Saudi Arabia and Thailand agreed to restore their diplomatic ties earlier this year. The two countries established their ties in 1957 but their relations turned sour in the 1990s due to certain events.

Bangkok Post

Ferrari wilts in Miami heat

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

In just two races Max Verstappen has more than halved his championship deficit to Charles Leclerc, and the pressure is now on Ferrari to respond to Red Bull Racing's (RBR) quickening car.

After such a difficult build-up to race day, Verstappen made victory at the Miami Grand Prix last Sunday (May 8) look easy.

Despite Ferrari's first front-row lockout since 2019, Verstappen took the race into his hands with a drive of measured aggression befitting the new world champion.

He was lightning off the line from the grippy side of the grid to muscle alongside second-place Carlos Sainz and force him to concede. It was then a matter of hunting down Leclerc.

It took him just nine laps to get the job done. His car's straight-line speed was more than enough to counter Ferrari's rapidity through the corners, and by half distance he had an unassailable lead.

Only a late safety car threatened to undo his good



Ferrari's Charles Leclerc during qualifying for the Miami F1 Grand Prix. Photo: AFP

work by closing the gap, but a faultless 10-lap defensive drive snuffed out Ferrari's victory chances for good.

The divide between Verstappen and Leclerc is now just 19 points, down from 46 only two rounds ago, and all of a sudden a comfortable early lead is looking vulnerable.

There's a fascinating dynamic behind Ferrari and RBR early this season. The cars have very different strengths – the RB18 in straight lines, the SF-75 around the corners – but the teams also have opposing development plans.

RBR has brought upgrades to just about every round this season, the most substantial

being weight-saving changes at the previous race in Imola. It's why the team has crept from being a step behind to having the overall fastest car.

Ferrari instead is still racing fundamentally the same machine it launched in pre-season testing with the aim of bringing a major update to the next round in Spain.

It's a strategy the Italian team thinks is more efficient in the cost-cap era and will allow it to be more targeted in its development. But it also carries its own risk: if the upgrade package doesn't work, it'll be solidly on the back foot and find it difficult to respond. The buffer it built

up in the first three races will be easily wiped clean.

"We need to keep pushing," Leclerc said. "Upgrades will be very important throughout the year, and I hope now that we can do a step up from next race onwards."

There can be no championship battle without the development war in this new regulatory era, when low-hanging fruit is plentiful, and it's no exaggeration to say the title could be won or lost in the factories of Maranello and Milton Keynes.

Ferrari's taken the first punch. It now needs to strike back.

Teenager Alcaraz eyes Roland Garros after Madrid triumph

TENNIS

TEENAGER CARLOS ALCAZAR continued his blazing rise by demolishing Alexander Zverev in the Madrid final last Sunday (May 8) and then said, "I really want to prove my level in a Grand Slam".

Two weeks before the start of the French Open, the young Spaniard brushed aside his third-ranked foe 6-3, 6-1 in 62 minutes to continue a run that signals tennis has a new power.

"I really want to go to Paris to win a Grand Slam, to show my level in a Grand Slam," said Alcaraz after winning the second Masters 1000 of his career.

Before the Madrid tournament last year, Alcaraz was ranked 120th in the world. On Monday he reached number six.

"I have five more to go to be the best in the world," he said.

Alcaraz became the youngest US Open quarter-finalist of the Open era last September, then won his first Masters 1000 title in Miami in early April.

Victory on Sunday brought a second Masters 1000 title. The only younger player to reach that milestone was Rafael Nadal, who won in Monte Carlo and Rome when he was 18.

Alcaraz turned 19 last Thursday (May 5) and over the next two days battled past Rafael Nadal in two hours and 28 minutes



Carlos Alcaraz lifts the trophy after his Madrid win against Zverev. Photo: AFP

and Novak Djokovic in 3hr 36min.

Zverev complained that he was "dead" because he had played the latest matches the previous two nights, yet he was impressed with Alcaraz.

"Carlitos, right now you are the best player in the world. Even though you are still five years old you are still beating us all," he told Alcaraz on court after the match.

"It's great to see for tennis that we have such a new superstar who is going to win so many Grand Slams and is going to be world no. 1," the German added.

However, Alcaraz said he still had some way to go.

"I still have to improve in everything," he said. "I have very good shots, but they can be improved and can be much better." AFP

Phuket News

English Premier League Predictions

thepuketnews.com/predictions.php

City take upper hand in title race as Liverpool slip

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Manchester City moved a step closer to retaining their Premier League title after they demolished Newcastle 5-0 last Sunday (May 8) to take advantage of Liverpool's stumble against Spurs 24 hours earlier.

Pep Guardiola's team were smarting after a heartbreaking defeat to Real Madrid in their Champions League semi-final second leg on Wednesday and, aware that the domestic league is now the only title available to them, came out all guns blazing against the Magpies.

Goals from Aymeric Laporte, Rodri, Phil Foden and a Raheem Sterling brace saw City storm back to the top of the table, a position Liverpool had held momentarily after their 1-1 home draw against Antonio Conte's side.

Liverpool controlled the game and had the better scoring opportunities although it was Son Heung-min who fired Spurs ahead in the 56th minute.



Raheem Sterling (right) scored twice for Manchester City in the 5-0 win against Newcastle. Photo: AFP

The South Korean's strike means he is the first Spurs player in a Premier League season since Gareth Bale in 2013 to reach 20 goals, excluding penalties. It also means he is just two behind Liverpool's Mohamed Salah in the race for this season's golden boot award.

Luis Diaz equalised for the Reds but they were unable to secure a much-needed winner. They sit in second place in the table on 83 points, three

behind leaders City having both played the same number of games. At time of press, Liverpool were due to visit Aston Villa on Tuesday (May 10) with City travelling to Wolves 24 hours later.

The result may mean Liverpool's dream of the quadruple has slipped although they still stand to have a fantastic season, having reached the Champions League Final and due to contest the FA Cup Final against Chelsea tomorrow

(May 14). By season's end they will have played 63 matches, the absolute maximum possible across all competitions.

At the bottom of the table, Liverpool's rivals Everton secured a vital 2-1 win at Leicester City to edge themselves clear of the relegation zone after Burnley lost to Aston Villa 1-3 and Arsenal managed to defeat Leeds United 2-1. Leeds now occupy the final spot in the bottom three after Watford were officially relegated when they lost to Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Fourth-placed Arsenal are four points clear of fifth-placed Tottenham, with three games left for both teams in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

Elsewhere, the end of the season cannot come soon enough for Manchester United who were not only soundly beaten 4-0 by Brighton on Saturday but who submitted one of their worst performances in recent memory. The crushing defeat means the Red Devils will end the season with their worst ever points return in the Premier League.

Can Todd Boehly mimic Dodger revamp at Chelsea?

FOOTBALL

IT WAS CONFIRMED on Monday (May 9) that billionaire US businessman Todd Boehly is the head of a consortium buying Chelsea in a £4.25 billion (B180bn) deal.

The 46-year-old from Virginia was a key member of the ownership group that bought the Los Angeles Dodgers 2012 for US\$2bn (B69bn), a record for a North American sports team acquisition at the time.

In the decade since the club have become perennial contenders, making the playoffs the past nine seasons.

They reached the World Series three times in four years, coming away empty in 2017 and 2018 before winning the title in 2020.

The turnaround, along with the revitalisation of Dodger Stadium, was fueled by a multi-million-dollar media deal which saw the Dodgers eclipse the New York Yankees as the biggest-spending club in Major League Baseball.

Boehly is also a part owner of the WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks and last year purchased a stake in the



NBA's Los Angeles Lakers.

The opportunity to buy Chelsea, the reigning European champions, came after Russian owner Roman Abramovich put the club on the market in early March, just days before he was sanctioned by the British government in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"What you are trying to build with these teams, you are really trying to win and be part of the community," Boehly told Bloomberg in 2019.

That being said, there is no doubt that the Premier League's status and opportunity for global return on investment is a key driver of Boehly's interest. AFP

Davis returns to haunt Singapore

FOOTBALL

THAILAND HEAD INTO A CRUNCH top of the table clash with Cambodia at the South East Asian (SEA) Games in Vietnam tomorrow evening (May 14).

The War Elephants suffered a shock 1-2 loss to Malaysia in the their tournament opener, falling to a last-gasp stoppage-time winner last Saturday (May 7).

However, they came storming back in their second game as they thrashed Singapore 5-0 on Monday to get their campaign back on track.

The star of the show was midfielder Ben Davis, born in Phuket to a Thai mother and an English father, but who moved with his family to Singapore at age 5 before becoming a citizen four years later.

Davis represented Singapore up to Under-19 level but was embroiled in controversy after he defaulted on his national service commitments in 2018 upon being signed up by English football club Fulham. Shortly afterwards Davis decided to switch his nationality to Thailand. He currently plies his trade with English third-tier club Oxford United.

Singapore's loss was Thailand's gain as 21-year-old Davis won and scored a penalty on the stroke of half time to set up the second half goal fest.

An own-goal by Singapore's Harhys Stewart shortly after the restart was followed by an Ekanit Panya brace and a Korawich Tasa strike in the 81st minute.



Thailand's Ben Davis. Photo: Bangkok Post

The loss was Singapore's heaviest in the SEA Games since losing 1-8 to Myanmar way back in 1971.

"This win is very important, because in the first round we made a mistake and lost," Thailand manager Mano Polking said after the win. "We are back in this year's SEA Games gold medal race."

At time of press Thailand top Group B with 3 points from 2 games although Cambodia, in second place after their 4-1 opening game victory against Laos, were set to play Singapore on Wednesday (May 11), a game they were expected to win.

Following the key game against Cambodia tomorrow, Thailand's final game is against Laos on Monday.

Should they qualify successfully they will play in the semi-final at My Dinh National Stadium in Hanoi on Thursday (May 19). The final is scheduled for May 22. Ben Tirebuck

Summer PROMOTIONS

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Sport



**SEA Games
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HOWZAT!

Phuket hosts festival of cricket as touring sides return

The Patong Penguins and The Elite Club pose after their T-10 final on Saturday (May 7) which the Penguins won. Photo: Neil Quail

CRICKET

Curt Livermore

The Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) hosted a festival of cricket last weekend that saw the welcome return of touring sides to Phuket shores following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last Friday (May 6) the Pakistan Warriors from Hat Yai took on the island's Phuket Cricket Group (PCG) in a 30-over contest before being joined by newcomers The Elite Club and the Patong Penguins in a T-10 tri-series the following day.

PCG opened the batting in Friday's curtain-raiser with captain Michael Flowers and James Chataway building a solid 30-run partnership

after Curt Livermore's early dismissal.

However, after Chataway was caught by Warriors' captain Hani Khan and Flowers top-edged for 17, a middle order collapse ensued with the ever-dangerous Ashan Fonseka, debutant Toby Gilbey and Abu Bakar all falling for low scores.

Stuart Hamilton (24) and Sajal Gaur (18*) did manage to combine for an unlikely yet much-needed partnership although the home team posted a well below par 137 all out after 26 overs.

In response Fonseka stepped up to the crease and did not disappoint, the Sri Lankan producing a devastating bowling spell to rip through the Warriors' top order and pick up a "5-fer", conceding just 2 runs in 7 overs.

Jagsir Brar and Saju Abraham also chipped in with fine bowling performances as PCG wrpped up the innings within 20 overs to claim a convincing 57-run win with Fonseka claiming Man of the Match.

BRUTAL OPENING STAND

The disappointment continued for the Warriors in Saturday's T-10 tri-series as they were soundly beaten in the day's opening game by The Elite Club, a side comprising old school friends who currently reside all over the globe.

The Warriors posted 113/3 inside their allotted 10 overs but Craig Morgan (28) and Ammu (56*) shared a brutal 56 run opening stand in just 3 overs which ultimately contributed significantly to a 6-wicket

victory with 10 balls to spare.

The Warriors would remain on the field for what was now a must-win game against the Patong Penguins who lost Seemant Raju (2) early on before regular openers Anthony Van Blerk (34/27) and an Imodium-filled Chataway (30/18) built a solid platform, Manish Sadarangani (31/10) exploding at the back end to boost the final total to 111/4.

An excellent bowling display in response from Jason Robertson (1-6) and Guar (2-7), backed up by a solid performance in the field, ensured a 30-run win to set up a final showdown against The Elite Club.

After electing to bat first The Elite Club were hoping their openers could repeat their earlier success, although un-

fortunately they couldn't have made a worse start as Morgan was dismissed by Robertson's first ball.

However, the in-form Ammu managed to score 35 from 17 balls before Manish took a stunning boundary catch to remove the opener off the bowling of Ike Bekker who marked his return to the ACG with a match defining 3-13 from 2 overs. Decent contributions from VC and Super at the end ensured their side posted a defendable, albeit below par, 91/6.

The Penguins openers then went hard before Flowers (7/5) edged behind early. Robertson kept up the pressure on the fielding side with a destructive 29 from 15 before a Mayur Dueskar spell of 3-9 from 2 overs gave his

side a fighting chance.

However, decent cameos from Manish (11/6) Livermore (15/10) and Gibley (8/5) ensured the game and trophy was all but won before returning Penguin Rhys-Thomas struck the winning runs with 5 balls to spare.

Player of the series went to Ammu for his combined score of 101 from 44 balls faced, which included 7 maximums, whilst Saju Abraham's 7 wickets was the standout bowling performance over the course of the weekend.

Everyone involved with Phuket cricket would like to thank both the Pakistan Warriors and The Elite Club for an excellent two days in which cricket was the overall winner and we look forward to welcoming both sides back to the ACG in the near future.

Sloman races to victory at Laguna Phuket Challenge

GOLF

TOM SLOMAN WAS THE winner of the Laguna Phuket Challenge last Thursday (May 5), as the first of four Beautiful Thailand Swing events jointly co-sanctioned by the Asian Development Tour and MENA Tour got underway.

The 25-year-old Englishman finished with a five-stroke victory over Thai Poosit Supupramai in the US\$75,000 (B2.5 million) event which sees him leap from seventh to the summit of the MENA Tour's 2020+ Journey to Jordan Order of

Merit (OOM) standings.

If he is able maintain that rank come the end of the four-event series on May 20, Sloman will earn himself an invite to one of the Asian Tour's new \$1.5mn-plus International Series events and a free pass to the final stage of Asian Tour Q-School for next season.

Sloman's 19-under victory over 54 holes at the Laguna course was nearly flawless. He started the final round with a two-stroke advantage over Supupramai and Jesper Alm of Sweden and all but played all of his pursers out of contention with five birdies in

his first seven holes.

It is Sloman's fourth professional win but comes after his career was stalled by COVID and then by a series of frustrating near-misses on the EuroPro Tour last season. His consolation for seven top-10 finishes, including a pair of joint runner-up placings, was being crowned Rookie of the Year to follow in the footsteps of Tyrrell Hatton, Jordan Smith and Jack Senior.

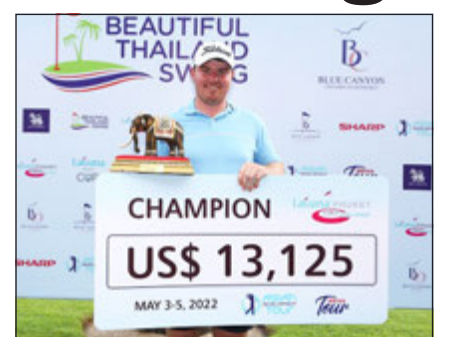
"Obviously delighted with the win... it's been a long time coming," Sloman said. "I bottled a few tournaments at the back end

of last year so to get over the line is a big relief.

"My goal is obviously to get to the PGA Tour one day and hopefully win majors. Obviously, that's a fairly big goal but I believe I have the game for it if all goes well," he added.

The second event in the Beautiful Thailand Swing series is the Laguna Phuket Cup (May 8-10) although at time of press the results were unavailable.

The players will then proceed to play the Blue Canyon Classic, to be held on the Lakes Course at Blue Canyon Country Club from



Tom Sloman with the winner's cheque. Photo: Kritsanaphong Rattanaong

May 13-15. The Swing will conclude with the Blue Canyon Open, to be played on the Canyon Course from May 18-20. *The Phuket News*