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OUR LOSS

PHUKET REELS FROM DEATH OF SWISS SANDBOX TOURIST, KILLER CONFESSES BUT DENIES MURDER, RAPE



A memorial service for Swiss tourist Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf was held at Bang Tao Beach last Saturday (Aug 7). Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Eakkapop Thongtub
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A wave of shock and outrage swept across Phuket last week as news spread that the body of 57-year-old Swiss tourist Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf had been found face down in a stream near the Ao Yon Waterfall, on Phuket's east coast.

Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf, the deputy head of protocol of the Swiss Federal Assembly, had entered Phuket on July 13 under the Phuket Sandbox scheme. She had stayed the obligatory 14 days on Phuket before travelling to Krabi, returning to stay at a small resort at Ao Yon on July 31.

She was last seen walking alone past Ao Yon Beach at 11:33am on

Tuesday, Aug 3, heading towards Ao Yon Waterfall, where her body was found two days later, naked from the waist down and covered with a dark tarpaulin weighed down by rocks. Her denim shorts, Nike trainers and small backpack were found amid the undergrowth nearby.

Police were quickly on the scene, but after news of her body found raced across news and social media sites nationwide, by the next day Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had expressed his sympathies to the Swiss embassy in Bangkok and ordered Royal Thai Police Commissioner Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk to take immediate action to apprehend the killer.

Gen Suwat arrived in Phuket in person last Saturday (Aug 7), bringing with him a cohort of trained officers

from the Crime Suppression Division and Forensic Police from Bangkok, with CSD Deputy Commissioner Maj Gen Jirabhop Bhuridej tasked with leading the multi-police agency effort.

Among the investigators involved in the manhunt were local officers from Phuket Provincial Police, Region 8 Police, with support from Tourist Police and the Immigration Bureau. Jan Dirk Kaethner, Police Attache of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangkok, also arrived to assist with the investigation.

Speaking at the Phuket Sandbox Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at the Phuket Provincial police headquarters in Phuket Town last Friday (Aug 6), Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew said in English, "I, Narong Woonciew, the Governor

of Phuket Province, am really saddened by the passing of Ms Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf... On behalf of the province of Phuket and the people of Phuket I wish to extend my profound sympathies and deepest condolences to Ms Nicole's family and friends, and to the Swiss Federation.

"Most importantly, Phuket officials and I will do absolutely everything we can to investigate what has happened and bring justice to Ms Nicole. Please be assured of our fullest efforts to follow up very closely with this case," he said.

Over a hushed silence in the room Swiss honorary consul for Phuket Andrea Kotas Tammathin said, "I am deeply, deeply sorry what has happened to this innocent woman. I would like to express my deepest...

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News



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...condolences to the family.

"It saddens me to see how evil people can do something like that in a country which is usually known for its friendliness and kindness, and especially for the Phuket community. It is a sad, sad day for Phuket."

KILLER CONFESSES

In less than 48 hours after the influx of police support from Bangkok had arrived on the island, officers had their key suspect in custody: Teerawat Thothip, a 27-year-old resident of Pa Khlok.

During questioning by police, Teerawat confessed to attacking Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf. He repeated his confession during a nationally broadcast press conference held last Sunday (Aug 8).

Teerawat said that he went to the waterfall at about 10am on Tuesday, Aug 3, to look for orchids and forage for other things in the forest.

"I walked up to the highest level of the waterfall, but found nothing I wanted. Then I walked down and saw the foreigner, who was naked from the waist down, sitting beside the waterfall. There was a black backpack near



Teerawat Thothip, 27, from Pa Khlok, last Sunday (Aug 8) performs for police a reenactment of his actions at Ao Yon Waterfall that led to the death of Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf. Photo: Supplied

her which I expected must have had valuable items inside.

"I walked close to her and put her in a headlock from behind. The foreigner tried to get out from under my arm and fought back, which brought us into the water. I put her in a headlock again until she became unconscious. I took her body to the waterside, covered her body with an insulator [a rubber sheet] held down by some rocks," he said.

"Then I opened her back-

pack and found B300 in cash. I put the money into my wallet and threw her trainers away from the area. I walked down and rode my motorbike to a shack of Bang Lit [a friend]," Teerawat continued.

"On the way to the shack, I spent the stolen money on a bottle of soft drink and ice. Then I met my friends at the shack and used the money to buy marijuana and cigarettes.

"After that, I returned home and lived normally until

Aug 5, when my girlfriend told me that the body of a foreigner was found at the waterfall. I was shocked and felt guilty for everything I had done. Then I confessed to the police.

"I would like to say sorry to every person in Thailand and the family of the tourist for what I had done. I'm sorry. Really sorry," he said.

Teerawat replied to several questions asked during the press conference. He denied being under the influence of

any drugs at the time of the killing. "I really just wanted her belongings," he said.

Asked why he had attacked Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf, he replied, "I have been unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am normally hired for cutting grass. I had a very low income, like B1,000 per week. I gave the whole money to my girlfriend and family, so that they can spend it for living and raising my child."

"I did not mean to kill her," he said. "I would like to say sorry to the family for what I did. I am begging for forgiveness from every person in Thailand. I feel very guilty for what I have done."

Royal Thai Police Deputy Spokesman Col Krissana Pattanacharoen last Sunday confirmed, "Police have charged the offender for murder and robbery causing death. The cause of death is yet to be confirmed as the autopsy report is yet to be released by the authority."

At the time of going to press police had yet to press any charges for rape or other forms of sexual assault, as they were still waiting on test results from Bangkok.

The B200,000 reward of-

fered by local tourism businesses for catching Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf's killer was last Sunday received by the police officers who conducted the investigation. The officers also received bouquets of flowers in gratitude for their efforts.

IN MEMORIAM

A memorial service was held for Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf on the beach in front of the Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket resort, where Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf had stayed after arriving in Phuket under the Phuket Sandbox scheme, last Saturday.

"Today we all come together to pay tribute to Ms Nicole at this beach because we know Nicole loved the sea, loved the beach and saw Phuket as a second home," Governor Narong said.

"I, as a representative of the people of Phuket, offer my deepest sympathies and condolences to the family, relatives, siblings and friends of Ms Nicole. The departure of Ms Nicole was a huge loss, not just for us as individuals, but also for the Phuket community, the Phuket Sandbox project and for Thailand as a whole."

Tourism Minister, police chief call for greater tourist safety

TOURISM AND SPORTS Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn along with national police chief Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk in Phuket last Friday (Aug 6) called for greater measures to increase safety.

The call for increased safety measures came one day after the body of 57-year-old Swiss tourist Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf was found near the Ao Yon Waterfall.

"I would like to say I am deeply saddened for the loss, her family, and the people of Switzerland," Mr Phiphat said, speaking at the Sandbox Emergency Operation Center (EOC) in Phuket Town, also attended by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw.

"The Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have expressed our condolences to the Embassy of Switzerland. The incident is unexpected, and no person wants things like this to happen," he said.



Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn (left) alongside Royal Thai Police Commissioner-General Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk at the meeting last Friday (Aug 6). Photo: PR Phuket

"The incident should have never happened to anyone. As Gen Suwat suggested, we must have safety measures at all tourist attractions in Phuket, both popular places and natural places like the scene of the incident," Mr Phiphat continued.

"I want to have teams of staff to screen people entering and exiting the places, we need to set the entrance and exit for each place to

be the same point, so that it will be easy to screen," he added.

"You can say this is 'Wau Hai Lom Khok' ['locking the stable door after the horse is stolen'] because every incident becomes our lesson. We still need to learn and apply what we learn all the time," he said.

"Most importantly, I want everyone in Phuket to be the eyes and ears for our officials, especially those who

live near the tourist attractions. If you see anything suspicious, please inform our police or officers. We all need to work together," he said.

"A measure presented in the meeting which may disturb arrivals' privacy was to check personal information and criminal history of arrivals at all ports before allowing them to enter Phuket," Mr Phiphat noted.

"Another measure is to install more CCTV cameras in each area. There may be insufficient cameras on the island. The Phuket Governor will talk with relevant officers to file a budget [request] for this," he said.

SANDBOX WILL CONTINUE

The safety of tourists in Thailand must be improved, and the Phuket Sandbox scheme will continue, Mr Phiphat said.

"The Phuket Sandbox still needs to continue. To make the island and country safe, the present time is the most important because Thailand

was ranked 110th for tourist safety among 150 countries," Mr Phiphat said.

"We need to unite together to make our country safer to be ranked lower than 100th. We may not be able to do so this year, but I expect that we can make it next year," he said.

"This is to tell the world that we are taking a step up for tourist safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. We had not done very well in terms of safety in the past because we have had more tourists than our staff can handle.

"In 2019, we had about 40 million tourists, but right now we have a lot of time for preparation and taking action to improve.

"However, it needs a budget to do anything. We have spent huge budgets to fight COVID-19. Right now, to spend a budget on something else may need a discussion with the appropriate members of the government," Mr Phiphat said.

The Phuket News

Room capacity at ICUs increased

The Phuket News
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The head of Vachira Phuket Hospital has confirmed that the number of rooms at intensive-care units (ICUs) and in local quarantine venues (LQ) have been increased in order to cope with the expected rise in people infected with COVID-19.

Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Chalermpong Sukontapol was speaking at a press conference on Aug 3 held at Phuket Provincial Hall presided over by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew and joined by Phuket Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon and other relevant officers.

“Dr Kusak explained last week that we have 520 rooms in LQ venues which we have since increased to 700 rooms,” Dr Chalermpong said at the time. “Of that number, 616 high-risk people are currently staying in these rooms.

“Many people in Phuket have now received vaccination and, as a result, the number of red-zone or seriously ill patients is low.

“We currently have 276 beds allocated for yellow-zone patients. Right now, we have a very high bed occupancy rate for this group and the quota is almost full,” he added.

“All hospitals are trying to increase the number of beds to a sufficient level to cover patients, and we will have about 300 beds in the near future.



A second field hospital with 300 beds at Phuket Rajabhat University (PRU) opened on Aug 5. Photo: PR Dept

“Green zone patients account for about 75-80% of all the infected cases. These are the much less serious cases with minimal symptoms from both the delta and beta variants.

“Initially at the field hospital at Prince of Songkla University (PSU) there were only 150 beds but we have added a further 190 beds to reach maximum capacity in the hall. Over 180 people are currently staying here but the number of people coming in is not in balance with the number of people being discharged,” he said.

As a result, Phuket health officials opened a second field hospital with 300 beds at Phuket Rajabhat University (PRU), which became functional on Aug 5.”

Dr Chalermpong added that any green patients who are currently in LQ venues or home isolation will be taken into the field hospital.

“Ideally we do not want home or factory isolation in Phuket, as has been witnessed elsewhere in the country,” he said.

“We will work our best to control the outbreak and boost the trust of the people in our public health system.”

RECORD CASES

Phuket marked a record 81 new COVID cases on one day last Sunday

(Aug 8), bringing the total number of people recognised as infected with COVID-19 in Phuket since Apr 3 to 1,507.

The PPHO report also marked four new Phuket Sandbox arrivals testing positive for COVID-19, and one more patient infected in another province brought back to Phuket for medical treatment under the “Bring Phuket people home” campaign.

The 81 new local infections bring the total number of new local infections on the island in the past seven days to a new record 327, as follows: Aug 2 - 32 cases; Aug 3 - 21 cases; Aug 4 - 65 cases; Aug 5 - 33 cases; Aug 6 - 40 cases; Aug 7 - 40 cases; and Aug 8 - 81 cases.

The total of 1,507 infected in Phuket since Apr 3 did not include nine people infected with COVID-19 in other provinces and four returning from other countries and testing positive.

The tally also did not include 31 COVID patients brought back to Phuket under the “Bring Phuket people home” policy, or 52 Phuket Sandbox arrivals who tested positive for the virus after landing on the island since the Sandbox scheme began on July 1.

According to the PPHO report, 574 people were under medical care or supervision, with a total of 976 people discharged from medical care for COVID infection since Apr 3.

At that time Phuket had in total 792 beds available for COVID patients, with 534 beds occupied.

Of the 574 patients receiving care, 19 were ‘Red patients’; 190 were ‘Yellow’ patients and 320 were ‘Green’ patients.

The PPHO COVID report for last Sunday marked no new deaths attributed to COVID-19, leaving the total number of deaths in Phuket attributed to COVID-19 since Apr 3 at 14. Phuket officials have recognised five deaths in Phuket attributed to COVID-19 in recent weeks: one death last Wednesday (Aug 4), another last Tuesday (Aug 3), as well as one death each on July 29, July 26 and July 25.

Danish Sandbox tourist, 58, found safe after trek in Phuket jungle

A 58-YEAR-OLD DANISH man who arrived in Phuket under the Phuket Sandbox scheme was found safe last Saturday night (Aug 7) after he became lost while trekking through the jungle near the hotel where he is staying on Phuket’s northern west coast.

Lt Col Ekkachai Siri of the Phuket Tourist Police said that his officers were notified through the Tourist Police hotline 1155 at about 7:30pm that the tourist, Michael Hildebrand, was missing.

Mr Hildebrand had arrived in Phuket on July 31 and was staying at the Ideo Phuket Hotel in Sakhu, Thalang, just south of Phuket airport, he said.

Mr Hildebrand went for a walk along Nai Yang Beach at about 4pm, and decided to walk through the jungle and over the hills to Nai Thon. However, darkness fell and he was unable to find his way back, Lt Col Ekkachai said.

Mr Hildebrand called the Tourist Police hotline for help, and was able to give his coordinates, indicating that



Danish tourist Michael Hildebrand safe and happy with the search team after spending hours lost in the dark jungle on Phuket’s northern west coast. Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

he was somewhere halfway through the jungle between the two beaches, Lt Col Ekkachai added.

A search team was quickly dispatched, comprising officers from Phuket Tourist Police, the Tourist Assistance Center (TAC) as well as officers from the Sakoo Police, Phuket Immigration and officers from Sirinath National Park, he said.

After making their way to where Mr Hildebrand had entered the jungle and

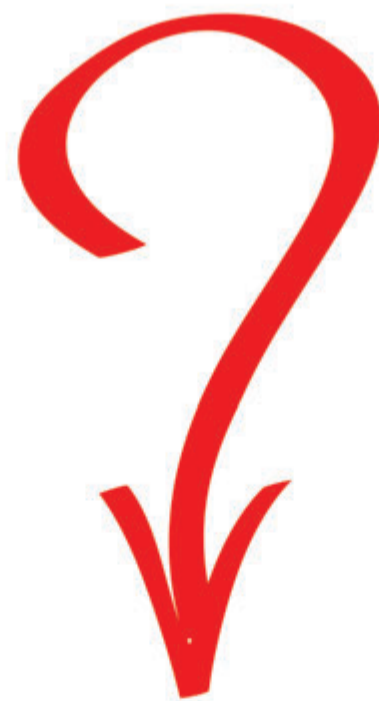
a further hour of searching, the team found him at about 10pm, fatigued but otherwise unharmed.

“He looked exhausted, so Tourist Police offered to take him to a hospital, but he declined to go,” Lt Col Ekkachai said.

Mr Hildebrand was treated for small scratches he had sustained during his trek through the jungle and safely returned to the hotel, he added.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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Wind 11 m/s

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Wind 14 m/s

Phuket asks to jab teenagers

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Provincial Government and the Tourism Ministry have together filed a request for doses of COVID-19 vaccine to be given to people in Phuket who are 12-18 years old, Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn has confirmed.

"There are about 58,000 people who are 12-18 years old. The Phuket Governor [Narong Woonciw] and I have already filed a request to the subcommittee of the CCSA [Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration]," Mr Phiphat said at Phuket Provincial Hall last week.

"The Prime Minister has already acknowledged the request," he added.

"The request also includes the vaccine doses to be given as the 'third' dose for Phuket people. However, the request will be discussed again at a meeting of the main CCSA committee later," Mr Phiphat said.

The move to have teenagers in Phuket vaccinated follows the state mass vaccination campaign in Phuket



Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn at Phuket Provincial Hall last week. Photo: MoTS

grinding to a halt, with very little progress over the past month.

It was not confirmed which vaccine was requested with which to vaccinate Phuket's teenagers.

According to a report issued by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket), as of last Sunday (Aug 8) 419,650 people in Phuket had received at least one state-provided COVID-19 vaccination injection.

The new total represents 90% of the 466,587 target population on the island to

be vaccinated, said the report.

Also according to the report, the total number of people in Phuket who had received their second vaccination injection had reached 323,177, representing 69% of the target population to be vaccinated.

The report also marked that to date 458,362 people had registered to receive a state-provided vaccination.

SANDBOX APPRAISAL
Mr Phiphat, who was staying in Phuket for 14 days after returning from the Olympics in Tokyo, also gave his ap-

praisal of the performance of the Phuket Sandbox scheme. As of last Sunday (Aug 8) 18,267 people had arrived in Phuket under the project, with 638 arriving on seven flights last Sunday.

"Only less than 1% of them have tested positive and received treatment on the island. The percentage is considered very low," Mr Phiphat said last week.

"So according to that, the Phuket Sandbox will continue. However, we need to make sure that the opening will boost the island's economy and make people happy, and

worry less about infection," he added.

Leading Phuket tourism business figure Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, President of Phuket Tourist Association, also joined the meeting and explained that the number of Sandbox tourists in July was only 1% of the number of tourists that arrived during July before the pandemic.

"We have about 400-450 tourists coming to the island each day, while we used to have about 43,000 tourists coming per day before the pandemic happened," Mr Bhumikitti said.

"We consider the number as an interesting starting point because we never expected to have a very high number of tourists coming, as it may increase the risk of infection on the island," he said.

"After this, the percentage will gradually increase to 2, 3, 10 or 20% [of pre-pandemic figures]," Mr Bhumikitti added.

"I like to think of Phuket Sandbox as a shop that has three shareholders: officials, the private sector and the people. If we all agree to keep the shop open, then the shop will stay open," he said.

Rider killed as car makes deadly U-turn

A 30-YEAR-OLD MAN DIED IN a collision between the motorbike he was riding and a car making a u-turn on Srisoonthorn Rd west-bound, in Srisoonthorn, on Aug 4.

Lt Pongphiphat Khamchomphu of the Thalang Police was called to the scene at about 8:20pm.

Police together with rescue workers from Cherg Talay Municipality and an ambulance from Thalang Hospital arrived at the scene to find the motorbike rider, Pracha Laisue, 30, lying on the road.

Rescue workers quickly took Mr Pracha, who was unconscious and had suffered a severe head wound, to Thalang Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

At the scene, police saw Mr Pracha's Bangkok-registered Honda motorbike with massive damage to its front lying on the road and a white Honda Yaris car, registered in Phuket, with damage on the driver's side.

The car driver, Sawanya Hiamhan, 26, explained to police that



The remains of Mr Pracha's motorbike. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

she had dinner with her brother at a restaurant nearby.

Ms Sawanya told police that she was making a U-turn in front of the restaurant, when the motorbike slammed into the side of her car at speed.

The two vehicles were taken to Thalang Police Station.

Lt Pongphiphat confirmed that police will check footage from CCTV cameras in the area and invite Ms Sawanya to Thalang Police Station for further questioning before police determine whether charges will be filed. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Myanmar man found slain, suspect in custody

POLICE HAVE IN CUSTODY three men last seen drinking with a fellow Myanmar worker who was found slain in his worker's accommodation room in Soi King Kaew, Rassada, on Aug 4.

One of the men in custody is the prime suspect for the murder, with a cut to his chin and blood stains still on his hands, police have confirmed.

Maj Chakkrit Thammaraksa of the Phuket City Police was called to the scene, a two-storey workers' accommodation building that is home to about 30 migrant workers, at about 6:25pm.

Police and rescue workers were directed to the man's room on the upper level, where they found the body of Aung Myo Thwin, 29, on his mattress on the floor.

Mr Aung had been stabbed in the neck and had a long cut along his left arm.

Other than Mr Aung's body and blood stains on the floor, officers found no other signs of a struggle and no signs that his belongings had been ransacked.

Police believe that Mr Aung had died at least an hour before his



The room where Aung Myo Thwin's body was found. Photo: Phuket Police

body was found. His body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for further examination.

A worker at the camp told police that Mr Aung did not go to work that day, and was last seen drinking with three fellow workers on the balcony of the building, Maj Chakkrit reported.

Police took the three workers to Phuket City Police Station for questioning, where one of the suspects, named by police as Mg San Shwe, was found with a small cut on his chin and blood stains on his hands.

Maj Chakkrit noted that officers were continuing their investigation and had yet to formally present any charges against Mr Mg. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Land arrivals still denied entry

The Phuket News
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Up to 25% of the people still arriving at the Phuket Check Point to enter the province from the mainland by road are being turned away for failing to meet the current criteria that allow only people conducting essential or urgent business onto the island.

Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Col Aganit Danpitaksat said that since the new measures came into effect on Aug 3, the volume of traffic arriving at the checkpoint at Tha Chatchai had fallen by some 75%.

Even then, nearly a quarter of those who are continuing to arrive are being refused entry to the island, Col Aganit said on Aug 5.

"The people had failed to understand the new measures in effect, and were told to return to their home provinces," he said.

"The Phuket Provincial Government wants to prevent any infections from outside coming into the area, and wants to reduce the chance of any transmissions and reduce the number of new infections



Nearly a quarter of those arriving at the checkpoint are being refused entry to the island. Photo: PR Phuket

as soon as possible.

"This means such measures may affect some parts of the transport industry, which had a meeting to find a way to relax to be able to continue their business to alleviate the suffering and living conditions of the people while being safe from the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible," he added.

The high rate of people being refused entry to Phuket follows 190 drivers being turned away at the checkpoint on Aug 3, the first day

of the 'island isolation' from domestic arrivals from the mainland.

The new measures that came into effect on Aug 3 are to remain in effect until at least Aug 16.

Under the provincial order introducing the measures, the only persons and vehicles to be allowed onto the island during the period are as follows:

- 1) Medical ambulance emergency patient, lifeguard, rescue
- 2) Transport drugs, materi-

als, medical supplies, medical chemicals

- 3) Transport consumer goods, agricultural products, livestock, animal feed
- 4) Transporting cooking gas fuel

- 5) Transport for banks, money, financial institution
- 6) Transport of parcels and publications

- 7) People who need to travel through international channels Phuket International Airport (must have a ticket of the travel date only)
- 8) Persons who have been ordered or have a written assignment from the agency to perform duties in the prevention and control of diseases in Phuket
- 9) People who have been ordered by government agencies to go or perform urgent missions in Phuket
- 10) Those who have an appointment according to the court proceedings prosecutor or the investigating officer which must have clear documentary evidence that if postponing the said appointment will seriously damage the consideration process or an appointment to register rights and juristic acts only in case of urgent need that cannot be avoided otherwise it will cause damage to the parties or greatly affect the economy.
- 11) Transport construction materials, machinery and spare parts used for maintenance. Only used in the implementation of projects to solve the flood problem. or projects of the state, state enterprises, other government agencies in solving problems of people's troubles or in case of urgent need
- 12) Any other cases that

have practical problems that need to be diagnosed and ordered The incident commander at the Phuket checkpoint shall have the authority to consider on a case by case basis.

Even then, the checkpoint onto Phuket will remain closed to all traffic except for emergencies from 11pm to 4am each night.

In order to be allowed into Phuket, all of the above exceptions still must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by having received two doses of the Sinovac or Sinopharm vaccine, or one injection of the Sinovac vaccine and one injection of the AstraZeneca vaccine, or at least one injection of the AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least 14 days before arriving.

Alternatively, arrivals must have been discharged from medical care for recovering from COVID-19 no more than 90 days before arriving.

Also, in order to be allowed into Phuket, all arrivals must present results of an RT-PCR test or antigen test performed by a medical facility within 72 hours of arriving proving that they are not infected.

Fresh markets battered by COVID

THE PHUKET CITY Municipality Fresh Market 1 on Ranong Rd in Phuket Town has been ordered closed for one week while mass testing is conducted on all vendors following a spate of COVID-19 infections confirmed at the market.

Phuket City Municipality ordered the market closed after Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon on Aug 4 confirmed that 27 people at the market had been confirmed as infected with COVID-19.

The 27 new cases were discovered through proactive screening of over 100 of vendors at the market, Dr Kusak said.

Those 27 cases contributed to Phuket on Aug 3 marking a record 65 cases confirmed on one day.

Phuket City Municipality declared the market a COVID risk area and ordered the market closed for seven days, from Aug 5 through Aug 11, "or until the area is managed according to market sanitation measures to control and prevent the spread of disease". At last report the



Health officials continue their mass testing of vendors at the fresh market. Photo: Phuket City Municipality

market was expected to reopen yesterday (Aug 12).

"Phuket City Municipality and related agencies have visited the area to carry out screening of high-risk groups or high-risk contacts," the municipality said in its announcement.

After the mass testing has been conducted, the market is to be cleansed thoroughly, with disinfectant to be sprayed through the entire market, the an-

nouncement added.

Meanwhile, Phuket City Municipality Fresh Market 2, located behind the Robinson department store on Ong Sim Phai Rd, underwent intensive cleansing and disinfecting last week, and reopened last Saturday (Aug 7).

The municipality had ordered that market to close for seven days, from July 31 to Aug 6, after a spate of infections there.

The Phuket News

Man, 50, arrested for stealing B1,010

WICHIT POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A man for stealing a wallet left on a counter at a SuperCheap store containing B1,010.

Officers arrested the man, named by police only as "Mr Sutchai", 50, at about 2pm on Aug 4, Wichit Police reported.

The man stole the wallet from a shopping trolley left in front of the SuperCheap branch opposite the Wichit Municipality offices three days earlier, on Aug 1, said the report.

The owner of the wallet, Ms Pratin Chumthong, reported the theft to police after she noticed it was missing at around 10:20am that day, the report added.

Through CCTV footage, police were able to see Sutchai commit the theft and tracked him to a house in Wichit, where he was arrested, the report explained.



Photo: Wichit Police

Unlike with the man arrested two days earlier, on Aug 2, for stealing food from motorbike baskets, Wichit Police this time gave no explanation from Pratin as to why he committed the theft.

The Phuket News

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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!

Get on board the special bus

Sandbox Express Bus to help stranded tourists reach Suvarnabhumi

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A joint initiative by Phuket officials and the private sector has launched a 'Sandbox Express Bus' service so that Sandbox tourists stuck in Phuket under the current shutdown of flights and buses can travel to other provinces.

The project was explained on Aug 4 by Nanthasiri Ronnasiri, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket office, and Jaturong Kaewsaki, who took up the position as the new chief of the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) just two days earlier.

The Sandbox Express Bus will initially travel only from Phuket to Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, Ms Nanthasiri said.

"From July 21, flights to and from the 'dark-red provinces' [now 29 provinces designed as 'maximum control areas'] are now suspended, but some Sandbox arrivals, either tourists or Thai people returning home, have plans to travel to other provinces after completing their 14-day stay in Phuket," she explained.

"Some Sandbox tourists have plans to travel to other provinces like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Hua Hin or Koh Samui, but



TAT Phuket office Director Nanthasiri Ronnasiri (left) announces the 'Sandbox Express Bus' service to Suvarnabhumi. Photo: PR Phuket

they do not have any flights to go there. Additionally, some tourists also have return flights home departing from Suvarnabhumi airport," she added.

"So the Phuket TAT, the Phuket Tourist Association and other private companies together created the bus service to help tourists traveling from Phuket to the airport [Suvarnabhumi in Bangkok]," she said.

"Interested tourists can register

online through our Google form. We use 40-seat buses but only allow about 20 passengers per trip. Some trips may have only 10 passengers," she added.

"This is just a short-term solution to the problem," Ms Nonthasiri noted.

"Tourists can also rent a car and drive to their destination by themselves. We have immigration officers standing by the Phuket

Check Point to check their documents," she said.

"We have also contacted Nok Air to have special flights from Phuket to U-Tapao [near Pattaya, in Chon Buri] from Aug 3 to 5," she said.

Nok Air has since requested permission to continue operating the once-a-day flight, and last Saturday (Aug 7) confirmed that it will operate two flights a day from Phuket to U-Tapao from Aug 10-18.

Flight DD785 departs Phuket at 11:05am and arrives at U-Tapao at 12:25pm, while flight DD789 departs at 3:10pm arrives at U-Tapao at 4:30pm.

PLTO Chief Mr Jaturong explained that the parties involved in launching the Sandbox Express Bus will meet later to come up with a solution for tourists who want to travel to other provinces.

"If there is enough demand from tourists to travel [outside Phuket], we will need to arrange vehicles for them while flights are still suspended," he said.

"First of all, we need to understand that the project must be done carefully because the CCSA [Centre for COVID Situation Administration in Bangkok] have classified 29 provinces as dark-red provinces. If we do not have strict measures or good communication with the other provincial governments, the tourists and drivers may have problems while travelling," Mr Jaturong said.

"We will rush to find the best solution for tourists who need to go to the airport [in Bangkok] and those who want to go to other provinces. We will see what we can do, and we will see how transport operators can be a part of this under the current restrictions," he added.

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Angry fitness fans file complaint after Phuket gym goes bust

A TOTAL OF 36 FITNESS fans filed a joint complaint with the Phuket City Police against a gym operator last week after the gym closed its two branches permanently without notice, costing the exercisers more than B2.5 million in lost membership fees.

The complaint was filed Aug 4 against BigGym, which had one branch on the bypass road and another branch in Chalong.

"Some customers have paid their yearly memberships which have not expired, but the gyms have already been closed. I have paid nearly B100,000 for membership," said one of the members filing the complaint, who asked to be named only as "Mr Pornchai".

"Before this, there was a post on the gym's Facebook page saying that they will compensate us with the money for a three-month membership, but after contacting the operator we were told that they will not pay us," he said.



The angry gym members lost some B2.5 million in prepaid membership fees. Photo: PR Phuket

Another customer, who asked to be named only as "Ms Araya", explained that she was a member at the BigGym Chalong branch.

"Before this, 16 customers had already gathered and filed a complaint to the Chalong Police, as they had lost about B300,000. Right now, the case is in the court process," she said.

"Me and my boyfriend lost about B50,000 in mem-

bership fees, and I know there are many more victims in Chalong, especially foreigners," Ms Araya said.

"To be a member or buy any special training courses, we always needed to pay first, but when the gyms were closed we did not receive any compensation or any explanation. This is not fair for us as customers," Ms Araya said.

The Phuket News

Nattawut active as 'Tony' itches to return

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

Anti-government activists are back on the streets despite a surge in COVID-19 cases and a virus lockdown.

A focal point is red-shirt leader Nattawut Saikuar who previously refused to join rallies against the Prayut Chan-o-cha government organised by red shirt co-leader Jatuporn Prompan.

But Mr Nattawut did decide to join the Aug 1 'car mob' rally. Some of the protesters in Mr Nattawut's group were seen waving banners in support of deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra while Mr Nattawut himself sported a red shirt denoting *phrai* (commoners) at the rally.

Some political observers see his move as having political implications given Thaksin's increased public profile recently while those in the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) dismiss it just a coincidence.

Mr Nattawut has decided



Red-shirt leader Nattawut Saikuar has returned to rallying against Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. Photo: Bangkok Post file

to make his move now partly because the government is vulnerable and the protest led by red-shirt leader Mr Jatuporn has lost momentum, said a source from the main opposition Pheu Thai Party.

Mr Nattawut, he said, has stayed away from party activity since he was granted an early release from prison under royal clemency in December last year.

"You can say his move will benefit the Pheu Thai Party but I think he still works with Mr Chaturon Chaisang, who is likely to form a new party. But no matter what,

they will eventually merge," said the source.

PUBLIC FRUSTRATION

Some people link Mr Nattawut's move with Thaksin's appearances in the Clubhouse platform as "Tony Woodsome" because they share common ground.

Moreover, the government's poor handling of the COVID-19 situation has caused public frustration to grow and when the people are frustrated, they tend to think about the Pheu Thai Party and Thaksin, said the source.

A source from the UDD said Mr Nattawut has broken his political silence because Gen Prayut has lost the COVID-19 fight and there should be a change in leadership.

It is a mere coincidence that the car mob rally and the ousted prime minister's move have come along at the same time. "It has nothing to do with Thaksin, but Gen Prayut is incompetent in solving the problems," said the source.

Stithorn Thananithichote, director of the Office of Innovation for Democracy at King Prajadhipok's Institute, said there is a clear connection between Mr Nattawut's and Thaksin's moves.

Thaksin, who has recently made clear he wants to return to Thailand, has campaigned through the "Care" group, a breakaway faction consisting of politicians close to the ousted premier, he said.

While Thaksin can count on the Pheu Thai Party for political support, he will look to the red shirt group for public support and Mr Nattawut has done a good job of drawing the red shirt crowds, he said.

Government told to comply with gag order

BANGKOK

SIX MEDIA ORGANISATIONS have called on the government to comply with the Civil Court's decision against a prime ministerial gag order on the media. The court issued the ruling in relation to the emergency decree and other regulations that could hinder free press.

The group – made up of the National Press Council of Thailand, the News Broadcasting Council of Thailand, the Thai Journalists Association, the Thai Broadcast Journalists Association, the Online News Providers Association and the National Union of Journalists, Thailand – said the government is obliged to follow the court's order and consider if other regulations might have restricted free speech during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Civil Court in Bangkok last Friday (Aug 6) issued an injunction against a prime ministerial order issued against the media that went into effect on July 30.

The court said a regulation banning "the dissemination of information that may frighten people" was too ambiguous



Image: Bangkok Post

and broad, which resulted in the unnecessary deprivation of people's rights and freedoms.

The court order was in response to a petition submitted by 12 online media outlets and human rights lawyers who claimed the order threatens accurate media coverage and freedom of expression. The six media organisations also renewed their demand for the government to revoke the 29th announcement issued under the emergency decree because it is an infringement on press freedom.

Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam said the government is willing to comply with the order but declined to respond when asked if the government had made a slip-up.

Bangkok Post

Over 35k foreign residents register online for COVID jab

BANGKOK

MORE THAN 35,000 FOREIGN RESIDENTS have registered online for COVID-19 vaccines, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Spokesman Tanee Sangrat said that as of last Tuesday (Aug 3), a total of 35,455 expatriates across the country had registered via the website www.expatvac.consular.go.th for vaccination services.

Of that number, Mr Tanee confirmed that 7,793 are over 60 years of age, 2,500 have underlying health conditions and 143 are pregnant.

The vaccine registration site was launched on the morning of August 1 for foreign residents in all provinces across the country who have not yet received a dose.

Mr Tanee said priority will be given to those aged 60 years and above, those who are at least 12 weeks pregnant, and those who have any of seven underlying medical conditions.

The applicants will be informed of the date and place for the first dose of vaccination when their slots are ready. There was no information provided on which vaccines were being made available.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health admitted it is racing against time in its efforts to administer vaccines to target groups, especially senior citizens, to reduce their death rate.

Sophon Iamsirithavorn, deputy chief of



Photo: Bangkok Post

the Department of Disease Control, said an aggressive vaccination campaign for the elderly is ongoing, with 20.28 million doses administered.

In Bangkok, 900,000 senior citizens (87%) have been already given the vaccine. However, less than 50% or only 3.668mn of seniors nationwide have received the vaccine, says the Mor Prom app.

"The ministry will speed up vaccinations among our target group," Dr Sophon said. "We want to give the vaccine to elderly people, up to 70% of the population in the red dark zone and 50% in the other zones. That way, we can reduce the number of deaths by half."

"Even one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine could prevent a loss [of life]. We would like to invite all senior citizens to receive the vaccine as fast as possible to reduce their chances of dying."

He added there is clear evidence that vaccinations could reduce death and illness among seniors.

Bangkok Post

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Beginner Class. Photo: Talay Surf



Kid's Class. Photo: Talay Surf

Surfonomics: The Value of a Wave



SUSTAINABLY YOURS

Palmer Owyong

For years the clothing company Billabong used the tagline, “Only a Surfer Knows the Feeling.” Few sports capture the sense of freedom, reconnect you to nature and make you feel more alive than surfing does. It’s that moment of weightlessness as your board drops down the face of a wave, accelerates and you glide effortlessly over the water. That feeling is so intoxicating that some spend their entire lives chasing

it, a hunger that you can only temporarily satisfy. As Thad Ziolkowski writes in his book ‘The Drop’, about the addictiveness of the sport, “The freedom of surfing is oceanic captivity. The first wave, the one that creates the surfer, is bondage.”

However, surfing can be enigmatic even for surfers. Is it a sport? A piece of performance art? Self-therapy? At the very least it’s a reprieve from the stresses of modern life. It is what Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls flow; a mental state in which a person is so fully absorbed in enjoying an activity that their sense of time becomes distorted. He says that in the long-term, consistently being in a state of flow can lead to happiness, per-

sonal development and self-growth.

Although surfing has long been seen as a pastime for slackers, beach bums and stoners, with the addition to the Olympics, it is finally getting the recognition that it deserves as a legitimate sport.

It takes stamina to paddle out into the ocean, balance and coordination to dance across the undulating wave face. Unlike the manicured grass of a football pitch, our playing field is dynamic and constantly moving, shaped by the wind, the seafloor and wave energy generated from thousands of miles away. By plugging into it we are making a primal connection to the ocean.

While surfing doesn’t fill stadiums with rabid fans who buy jerseys and T-shirts, it is not without its monetary value. Surfonomics is the discipline that attempts to quantify the market value of waves, to surfers and businesses, as well as their non-market value, or how much people will pay not to lose them. This can be used to protect coastal areas from overdevelopment, pollution, climate change, erosion, and other threats.

For example, a case study by the non-profit Save The Waves in Uluwatu, Bali showed it averages 240,000 annual visitors, each spending an average of \$150 per day. This contributes \$36 million each year to the Balinese economy just from this single wave.

Although Phuket doesn’t have the quality of waves that Bali does, you can look at the complete ecosystem, including the waves, beach, ocean, reefs, coastline, trees and marine life to determine an economic value.

Creating a valuation like this has been an important tool in protecting surfing breaks like Rincon, Puerto Rico which was being threatened by condo development, or Trestles, San Clemente, which was under consideration for a new road. By quantifying the value of these waves the Surf Rider Foundation successfully showed how the loss of surf tourism would negatively impact businesses and hurt the local economy. By using surfonomics not only were they able to stop the development of Rincon, but it was also turned into a marine reserve. (If you would like to help protect waves under threat download the Save the Waves App).

However, other non-economic values come from the sport as well. For example, surfing creates a community of like-minded people who care for the environment. Recent research has also shown that connecting with nature can



Clocking in for a session. Photo: Greg Powell

reduce your stress and have a positive impact on your health. Also, as Ziolkowski points out in his book, that while surfing is an addictive activity, it can keep people from getting involved in more self-destructive addictions or help them to recover from one.

While surfing may not have played a major role in Phuket’s economy in the past, the sport is gaining popularity according to Tim Campbell owner of Talay Surf in Bang Tao. “Last year saw the boom of surfing amongst the Thais and now in 2021 both locals & expats are getting into it especially with the closing of many indoor activities, the beach & surfing is seen as a healthy option.” Although Phuket is not a world-class surfing destination, in 2013 Surin was good enough to take 47th out of the best 50 surf spots in the world according to CNN Travel.

One of the greatest failures of modern-day capitalism is that it refuses to account for negative externalities. An externality is a cost or benefit that is not paid for by the producer of a good or service. While new hotels and condo developments can bring in immediate financial gain, when not done correctly they can also create negative externalities that disrupt and destroy the pristine natural environment and the benefits that come from it. To live in balance with nature, we must correctly value the services that it provides. It is only then that we can understand the true cost of what we are losing.

As the popularity of surfing grows maybe in the future, it will provide Thailand with a new crop of Olympians and gold medalists, but perhaps more importantly it will create a new generation of environmentalists.

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

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University choices in a COVID era

Jacqui Brelsford and Casey Nolen Jackson

As University Counsellors, we were anticipating continued disruption from the pandemic and the inevitable shifts to higher education last year and 'Post-BISP Planning' is the phrase that was coined.

Changes in the traditional higher education pathways were already starting to emerge before COVID-19; students and families had started to think more practically and more creatively about options after secondary school. "University Counselling" just didn't cover all the possibilities we were talking about with students.

Nevertheless, there was little question that fledgling trends emphasising cost-efficiency, practical experience, citizenship pathways, military service, and flexible degrees were going to grow as the global economic situation gave families and students permission to think differently. Last year saw a quarter of the Class of 2020 take a gap year and the Class of 2021 is on the same track.

Pre-COVID-19, there was more certainty about plans after graduation. University was the norm for 94% of the graduating class at BISP. It was easier to pick a country or university to attend because incomes were generally stable, and travel was less complicated.

Looking back on this year, Post-BISP Planning has meant more emphasis on research: research of total costs, value for money, visa re-



University choice involves many practical matters. Photo: BISP

strictions and vaccination roll-outs. Students and families simply had to take more time to research application options. Many students delayed final decisions as university or gap year plans required thorough vetting of COVID-19 considerations.

Unifrog

How students made choices was one change; how universities found and recruited students was another. For the past five years, universities from around the world would come to the BISP University Fair, an event that hosted over 100 universities. Students had exposure to universities they had not heard of without leaving campus. Now, there is only one way to research – online. And how much time does a student really want to spend watching university webinars after a day of online learning?

The responsibility of filtering and disseminating information is too vast for students to do alone and must be a deliberate team effort with counsellors, students and families working together. The student-led conferences in March and April initiated the shift to emphasise the need for teamwork and to support students to take ownership of their process. The recent addition of Unifrog, a global platform providing support for post-high school planning, will also facilitate comparing and contrasting university options.

This year the University Counsellors have been kept busy as university requirements worldwide have changed dramatically. SAT testing has become optional, in some cases, eliminated, the extension of the UCAS deadline was unprecedented, scholarship applications and home fee status paperwork are the new normal.

Advising BISP students has become more technical. Now, many variables have to be considered for each student. Globally, the highly selective universities have experienced a 20 to 50% increase in applications, earning them the nickname the highly "rejectives" because of their high rates of applications and meagre rates of acceptance.

Students applying to selective universities endured uncertainty caused by the increase in competition. Wisely, many students made adjustments, carefully focusing on practical factors or opportunities they felt matched their interests and goals. Other students took advantage of the new flexibility to change plans as ideas about the future emerged and solidified throughout their final year at BISP.

These lessons have been passed on to the students in the Class of 2022 who have clearly discovered the value of reflecting on what matters most to them as individuals and to not squander this moment to be deliberate and thoughtful about their choices.

Collaboration and efforts to support students to take ownership of their process is certainly the way forward and Unifrog will most certainly facilitate easier comparison of university options. The University Counsellors are now looking forward to completing the BISP Class of 2021's school journey and to seeing their futures transpire.

Jacqui Brelsford and Casey Nolen Jackson are University Counsellors at British International School – Phuket (BISP)

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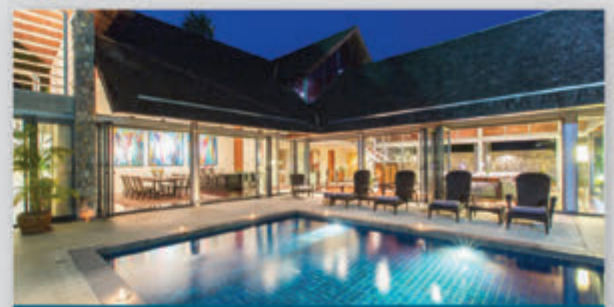
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POP QUIZ

1. What does the acronym USB stand for?
2. Which 1993 multi-Academy Award winning movie featured Vin Diesel and Bryan Cranston?
3. Belgrade is the capital of which country?
4. Which legendary comedian owned the major US baseball team Cleveland Indians?
5. Who sang the 1965 classic protest song 'Eve Of Destruction'?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

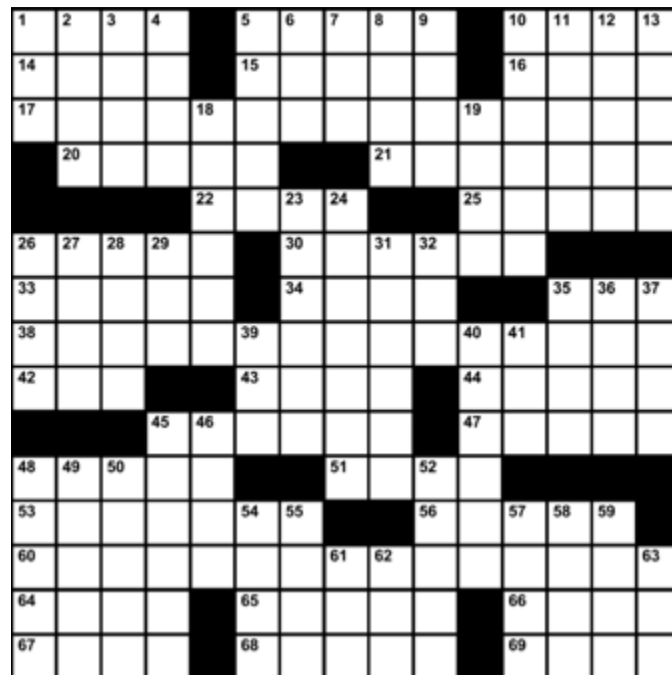
1. K follower
5. Said sheepishly?
10. Big laugh line (slang)
14. Old World bird
15. Charles de Gaulle's birthplace
16. ___ Danger
17. Convention city for felines?
20. Pang
21. Masses formed by heating
22. Downer
25. Brahman, e.g.
26. 1935 Triple Crown winner
30. Ancient Greek weight
33. Lifeboat lowerer
34. Fair share, maybe
35. "My man!"
38. Class for teen felines?
42. But, to Brutus
43. Jack-in-the-pulpit, e.g.
44. Kind of wave
45. Of a great range
47. Wee
48. Big sheet
51. Dalai ___
53. Ham it up
56. Santa's original reindeer, e.g.
60. Feline in a

Salinger title?

64. Cornstarch brand
65. Mushroom caps
66. Dangerous biters
67. Capital of Rhône
68. Light parody
69. Dutch painter, to friends

Down

1. ___-Atlantic
2. Risk prison
3. Little impressionist?
4. Anastasia's father, for one
5. More gloomy
6. Balloon filler
7. "Aladdin" prince
8. Building additions
9. Kosher ___
10. Diminutive
11. Double-reed instruments
12. Bat an eye?
13. Band on a shield
18. As yet
19. Creep
23. Cleave
24. Slow but steady
26. Ends partner
27. Filly's mother
28. All fired up
29. Certain retrovirus
31. She has a degree
32. Certain refrigerant, briefly
35. Dwell
36. Bookbinding leather
37. The "O" in S.R.O.
39. "Awesome!"
40. Hook up
41. 20-20, e.g.
45. Cooling system (Brit.)
46. Wyle of "ER"
48. Central
49. Egg producer
50. "Take your hands off me!"
52. Recurring theme
54. Eur. think tank
55. Field ___
57. Heavy furniture wood
58. European language
59. Ilk
61. 1969 Peace Prize grp.
62. "The Matrix" hero
63. Cousin of -trix



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1. Universal Serial Bus; 2. Saving Private Ryan; 3. Serbia; 4. Bob Hope; 5. Barry McGuire

GOT YOUR NUMBER

3

percent of people change their bed sheets more frequently than once a week, according to a YouGov survey.

12

percent of Americans think that 'USB' is the acronym for a European country, a study has found.

3,860

kamikaze pilots died during World War II, but only 19% of kamikaze attacks managed to hit a ship.

100,000

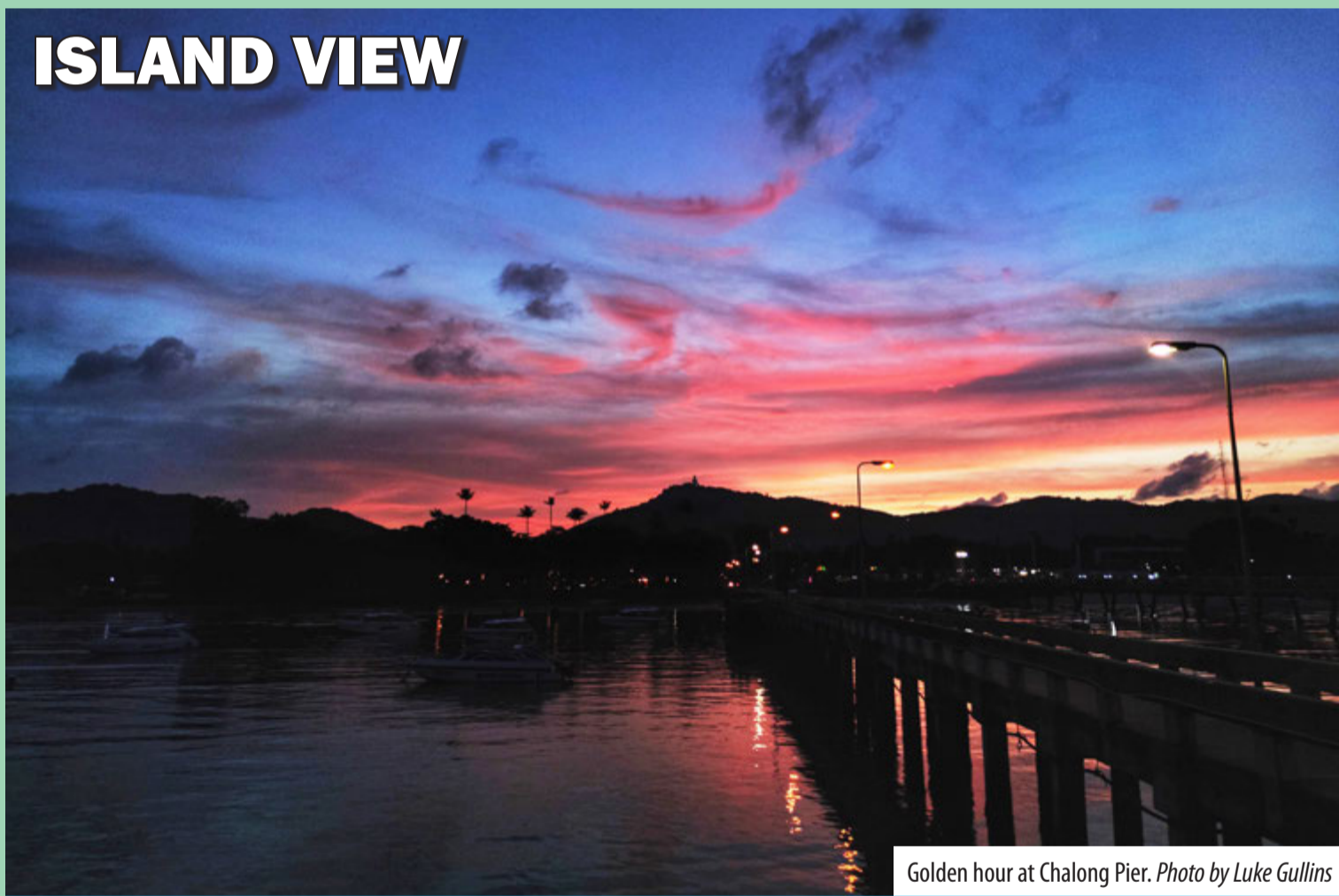
speeding tickets are issued in the US each day, averaging one in six Americans fined each year and totalling roughly 41 million tickets a year.

50 million

crabs are estimated to be living on Christmas Island – so many that special road crossing have been set up for the species.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Golden hour at Chalong Pier. Photo by Luke Gullins

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

This week in history

Aug 13, 1961

East Germany closes the border between the eastern and western sectors of Berlin to thwart its inhabitants' attempts to escape to the West, and construction of the Berlin Wall is started.

Aug 14, 1885

Japan's first patent is issued to the inventor of a rust-proof paint.

Aug 15, 1977

The Big Ear, a radio telescope

operated by Ohio State University as part of the SETI project, receives a radio signal from deep space; the event is named the "Wow! signal" from the notation made by a volunteer on the project.

Aug 16, 1989

A solar flare from the Sun creates a geomagnetic storm that affects microchips, leading to a halt of all trading on Toronto's stock market.



Erawan Shrine. Photo: J Aaron Farr

Aug 17, 2015

A bomb explodes near the Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, Thailand, killing at least 19

people and injuring 123 others.

Aug 18, 1783

A huge fireball meteor is seen across Great Britain as it passes over the east coast.

Aug 19, 1692

In Salem, Province of Massachusetts Bay, five people, one woman and four men, including a clergyman, are executed after being convicted of witchcraft.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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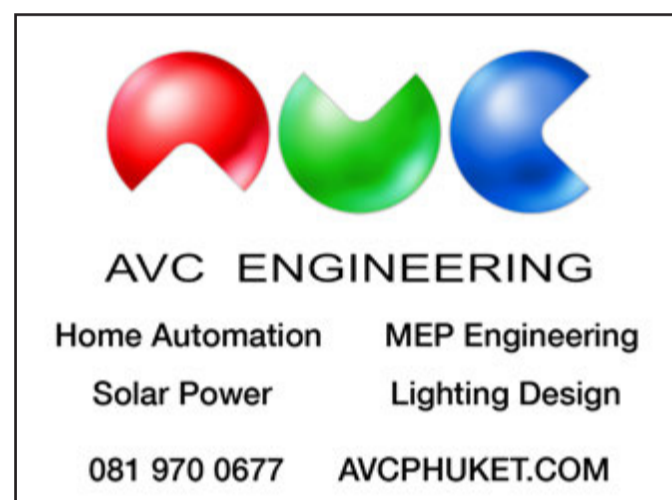
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Tokyo 2020 emerges a winner

OLYMPICS

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Considering it was the most high-profile sports event that almost never happened, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games emerged as a great success and testimony to the power of sports during times of adversity.

Delayed a full year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and plagued by uncertainty almost up to the Opening Ceremony itself, misgivings by a skeptical Japanese public were quickly set aside when Nao-hisa Takato won gold in the men's 60kg judo on the first day of the tournament.

Takato's win seemed to immediately break down barriers of resistance and make it OK for the host nation's population to not only support the Games but actually enjoy it. There's nothing quite like being sucked into the occasion and carried away with the raw emotion that only sports can provide and Japan like most other nations was hooked almost immediately. The feel good factor of national pride is a powerful dynamic and something millions around the world had been desperately seeking for close to 18 months.

This was amplified the next day as Japanese siblings Uta and Hifumi Abe won the women's 52kg and men's 66kg titles in judo. Yuto Horigome then became the first ath-



Much of Japan's public quickly bought into the spirit of the Games. Photo: AFP

lete to win gold in Olympic street skateboarding as the sport made its Olympic debut. Momiji Nishiya won gold in the women's category. Sakura Yosozumi, 19, then won the women's park skateboarding contest, ahead of compatriot Kokona Hiraki who is only 12 years old and Great Britain's Sky Brown who is only 13 years old.

Skateboarding was introduced to the Games roster to connect with new, younger audiences and, along with the likes of surfing and sport climbing, was a huge hit.

There were shocks aplenty as Tunisian tennager Ahmed Hafnaoui won gold in the men's 400m free-style swimming, team USA lost in

basketball for the first time since 2004 and Ash Barty, Naomi Osaka and Novak Djokovic all fell in the tennis without medals.

Elsewhere, there were maiden medal wins for minnows Bermuda and San Marino, and Kimia Alizadeh came close to securing a first ever medal for the IOC Refugee Team in taekwondo. Weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz became an instant national heroine as the first athlete from the Philippines to win an Olympic gold.

The Games were a triumph for LGBTQ+ as it was reported there were a total of at least 172 LGBTQ+ athletes participating, more than three times the number confirmed in Rio in 2016.

Weightlifter Laurel Hubbard of New Zealand became the first transgender Olympian and, after winning gold in the men's synchronized 10m platform, British diver Tom Daley exclaimed, "I feel incredibly proud to say that I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion."

CONTROVERSY

No sporting event is ever complete without at least some form of controversy and Tokyo 2020 was no exception.

Russia had been barred from competing after being implicated for running a state-sponsored doping program. Instead they just re-branded as the "Russian Olympic Committee"

(ROC), adopted Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 as their national anthem and subsequently sent 335 athletes to compete. Where there's a will, there's a way.

China and Taiwan's tempestuous relationship is well documented, so when Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin won Taiwan's first ever Olympic gold medal in badminton it was made all the sweeter given the opponents.

"I am Lee Yang. I am a proud Kinmen (islander). I am a proud Taiwanese," Yang posted on Facebook, much to Beijing's chagrin.

Taiwan's record 12-medal haul has prompted a patriotic surge and seen calls for the country to drop the "Chinese Taipei" title it has used for 40 years in preference of just "Taiwan". After all "Chinese Taipei" exists on no known map.

Ultimately, the Tokyo 2020 Games comes away with its head held high, deserving of a medal itself in more ways than one. Tokyoites deserve praise for how they managed the precarious occasion with grace despite reservations of hosting a global event in a city where the line between contagion and control was already stretched thin.

The Games served as a symbol of triumph and hope in the face of the debilitating global pandemic that has wrought so much disruption and suffering. It emphasised how integral a part of our lives sport is by connecting athletes and viewers across the world and suggested that hopefully one day soon we will all be able to truly unite again.

Olympics turn to Beijing but controversy looms

OLYMPICS

THE FOCUS IMMEDIATELY shifted to Beijing as the curtain fell on the Tokyo Olympics, with a growing coronavirus outbreak in China and boycott calls looming large just six months from the start of the Winter Games.

The 2022 Olympics in Beijing is scheduled to take place from February 4 to 20,

when the Chinese capital will become the first city to host a Winter and Summer Games.

All competition venues were completed several months ago and the Chinese government has been keen to assert that preparations have successfully ploughed on despite the coronavirus pandemic.

But just as Beijing 2022 swings into view, China is now facing its largest virus

outbreak in months, even if infection numbers are still low compared with many other countries.

Another headache for the Beijing Olympics and China's ruling Communist Party is sustained calls from activists, the Uyghur diaspora and some Western politicians for a boycott over the country's rights record, especially the fate of Muslim minorities.

China, where COVID-19

emerged towards the end of 2019, already had some of the world's strictest containment measures and is ramping them up further in the capital.

People flying into China from abroad must quarantine for between two and three weeks in a hotel, and it is unclear if the thousands of athletes, team officials, media and others coming to the Games will have to do likewise.

Beijing 2022 organisers have been urged to take their cue from Tokyo in handling the virus threat.

There were concerns there would be mass infections among participants in Japan but while there have been cases, the worst fears have not materialised.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and local organisers insisted on testing everyone involved before and regularly during the Games, and keeping athletes away from the public. Spectators were also barred from most events at Tokyo 2020 – it is unclear whether Beijing 2022 will follow suit.



Calls to boycott Beijing 2022 remain strong. Photo: AFP

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The United States says Beijing is carrying out a genocide against Uyghurs in the region of Xinjiang and experts estimate more than one million people have been incarcerated in detention camps. Beijing denies genocide and has described the camps as vocational training centres.

Yaqiu Wang, a New-York based China researcher for Human Rights Watch, stopped short of calling for a full boycott: "Athletes have been preparing their whole lives to have this moment, so taking that moment away is wrong."

"Athletes can still go, but sponsors, international dignitaries, celebrities, we think they should not go to lend legitimacy to the Chinese gov-

ernment hosting the Games."

Mark Dreyer, a China sports analyst, said that many questions remain unanswered about the Winter Games, even with fewer than 200 days to go.

"Ticketing plans haven't been released. And do we know about spectators? It's looking likely there are not going to be international spectators allowed, but what about domestic spectators?" asked Beijing-based Dreyer, who runs the China Sports Insider website.

"All this sort of stuff, normally it takes years to plan and there are still test events supposedly happening between now and the Games."

"Will those happen? Will they provide us any additional information in terms of how China plans to run the real thing?" AFP

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City look to retain title as Premier League returns

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

The Premier League returns to action this evening (Aug 13) as newly-promoted Brentford entertain London rivals Arsenal in the season curtain-raiser.

The Bees finally managed to secure promotion in May via the Championship playoff final after heartbreak at the same stage in the two seasons previous. Led by charismatic Danish manager Thomas Frank, they play an enterprising, free-flowing game and will be confident, along with fellow promoted sides Watford and Norwich, of not just being there to make up the numbers this season.

Reigning champions Manchester City will once again be the team to beat as they defend their title. Adding Jack Grealish to their ranks from Aston Villa in a British transfer record of £100 million (£4.6 billion) will bring further dynamism to a team already packed with attacking talent. If City are successful in their ongoing pursuit of Harry Kane from Tottenham then things will look very ominous for the other 19 clubs!

Manchester United have spent astutely, bringing in winger Jadon Sancho from Borussia Dortmund and French World Cup winning defender Raphael Varane



Jack Grealish's move from Aston Villa to Manchester City was a British transfer record. Photo: AFP

from Real Madrid. With Paul Pogba seemingly staying put for another season and wily veteran Edinson Cavani sure to provide goals, the Red Devils could push their City rivals for the top spot.

It will be interesting to see how Chelsea fare after last season's fourth place league finish, FA Cup final and Champions League win only five months into Thomas Tuchel's tenure. If they can pinpoint a consistent goalscorer they will be a major threat.

Liverpool had a poor season by their lofty standards although with Virgil van Dijk back to marshal the defence they will be confident of a better campaign.

Leicester City will once again threaten to upset the league's established order with a well-drilled, exciting team. Beating Manchester City 1-0 in the Charity

Shield last Saturday (Aug 7) will only provide further confidence.

Aston Villa have spent the money from Grealish well and look well equipped for a successful season – signing striker Danny Ings from Southampton could well turn out to be a masterstroke.

Tottenham have a new coach in Nuno Espírito Santo but the unrest with Kane could undermine their preparations. Rafael Benitez will need to get off to a good start to placate the restless Everton fans while it is quite the opposite at Leeds as fan-worshipped Marcelo Bielsa will look to continue their meteoric rise.

With fans back in stadiums after the COVID-induced absence, it promises to be an enthralling season of football ahead for the world's most prestigious and entertaining league.

Emotional Messi bids tearful farewell to Barca

FOOTBALL

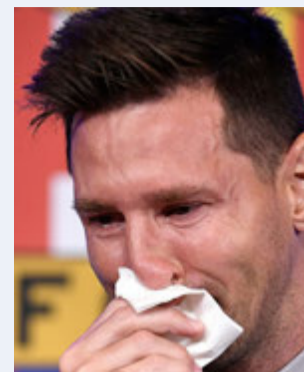
HAVING SAID A TEARFUL farewell to Barcelona after 21 years at the club, Lionel Messi looks destined to be lured by the limitless funds of Paris Saint-Germain for the next chapter of his illustrious career.

The 34-year-old, seen by the French giants' Qatari owners as the vital missing piece of their frustrating Champions League puzzle, has already had fans playing a guessing game.

Stressing no deals had been done, Messi did concede at his tearful farewell news conference in Barcelona last Sunday (Aug 8) that joining PSG was a "possibility".

In reality, they are the only club who can afford what is expected to be a deal worth €35 million (£1.3 billion) a year for the 34-year-old Argentine.

"I gave everything for Barcelona from the first day that I arrived right to the last. I never imagined having to say goodbye," Messi told the news conference.



Lionel Messi was left in tears after his departure from Barcelona was confirmed. Photo: AFP

"I have still not come to terms with the reality of leaving this club now – I love this club," added a suited Messi, who several times wiped away tears before a squadron of reporters at the club's Camp Nou ground who gave him a standing ovation.

Messi, widely considered one of the most gifted players in the history of the game, won 35 trophies at Barcelona who he joined as a 13-year-old – including four Champions Leagues and 10 league titles while his 672 goals are a record for any of the top five European leagues. AFP

Steyn tames Lions as Springboks win series

RUGBY

MORNE STEYN KICKED a late penalty to give South Africa a 19-16 win over the British and Irish Lions in Cape Town last Saturday (Aug 7) and a 2-1 series triumph.

Steyn replaced fly-half Handre Pollard with 15 minutes remaining and almost immediately slotted a penalty to give the Rugby World Cup winner a 16-13 advantage.

Rival fly-half Finn Russell had levelled with his third penalty of the match five minutes from time.

Then, with one minute remaining in a tense tussle, the Springboks were awarded another penalty and Steyn calmly scored to edge the hosts ahead again.

The Lions opted to kick for touch three times in the first half and once in the second when awarded penalties in kickable positions.

They scored the first time after winning the lineout, but failed to secure points on the other three occasions, leading to a ninth series loss in 14 attempts against South Africa.



The Springboks on their way to victory. Photo: AFP

Winger Cheslie Kolbe scored the lone home try after evading full-back Liam Williams and hooker Luke Cowan-Dickie and Pollard converted to put the home team 13-10 ahead after trailing by seven points at half-time.

The rest of the Springbok points came from four penalties with Pollard, who finished the match on 502 Test points after missing two shots at goal, and Steyn slotting two each.

Hooker Ken Owens claimed a pushover try for the Lions and Russell, kept out of the team by an ankle injury since July 7, contributed 11 points from a conversion and three penalties.

It was an historic series victory as no team has succeeded in the 130-year rivalry between South Africa and the Lions after losing the first Test.

The Springboks went down 22-17 in the opener this time and hit back with a 27-9 triumph last weekend to level a series played behind closed doors because of an ongoing third wave of COVID-19 in South Africa.

South Africa had been severely hampered by not being able to play for 19 months due to the coronavirus pandemic after winning the World Cup in Japan yet still managed to do enough to secure victory. AFP



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Sport

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The return of the Premier League > p15

MISS HOT SHOT

Louise in action. Photo: Supplied



GOLF

Ben Tirebuck
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Phuket-based golf prodigy Louise Landgraf's star continues to rise as she recently returned from a hugely successful tour of the USA.

The 12-year-old British International School, Phuket (BISP) student came back from her summer golf tour of the US with a long list of impressive accolades as she continues to make her mark on the sport.

Louise and her family left Phuket on June 21 to head to the west coast of the US and then spent five weeks on the road, playing in a total of four junior golf events, before returning home on July 27.

She made a very impressive start to the tour by winning the Storyi California Golf Junior Open on June 28 and 29 at the Rustic Canyon Golf Course in Moorpark, north west of Los Angeles, with scores of 66 (-6) and 68 (-4).

Next up, on July 8 and 9, was the FCG International Golf Junior Championship at

St Mark Golf Executive Club, in San Marcos, California, where Louise finished in second place with a score of 72 (+1) and 68 (-3). Of note, she also scored a hole-in-one during the practice round on the sister course at the same club.

The third stop on the tour took Louise to the IMG Academy Junior World Championship at Rancho Bernardo Inn Golf Club in Rancho Bernardo, California. Running from July 13 to 15, Louise finished in 10th place with a score of 76 (+3), 78 (+) and 74 (+1).

You could argue that Lou-

ise saved her best for last as she headed inland to the World Star of Junior Golf Championships at Paiute Golf Course, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Playing on the Snow Mountain Course from July 20 to 22, Louise competed in the girls 11-12 age group with 13 other players and managed to win the tournament. She posted scores of 64 (-8) and 71 (-1) before bad weather interrupted then suspended play in the third round.

Louise certainly left her mark as her first-round score of 64 (-8) was the lowest official

score since the competition started several years ago and also a course record.

All in all, an incredibly impressive showing from the young lady and an invaluable experience as she continues her upwards trajectory.

Now back home in Phuket, it is business as usual for Louise – back to school at BISP where the Year 8 student is part of the High-Performance Golf Academy under the supervision of Oliver Bates, head coach and Jeff Lamantia, Director Of Sports.

She also resumes her

daily practice with her Thai coach Pro Noon at Phuket Country Club Phuket, a key contributory factor to her ever-improving game.

Louise is also affiliated with the French Golf Federation (FFG) through Kempferhof Golf Club, Plobsheim, France and is advised by golf coach and trackman expert Mr Laurent Cabanne.

The Phuket News eagerly awaits to see what is next in Louise's journey and wishes her all the very best as her hugely impressive career continues to flourish.

Atu becomes first BISP alumnus to make Olympic bow

OLYMPICS

ATUHAIRE AMBALA BECAME the first British International School, Phuket (BISP) alumnus to compete at an Olympic Games when he made his debut at Tokyo 2020 on July 27. Atu swam in the men's 100 metre freestyle, finishing 7th place in the second of nine heats with a time of 54:23.

Representing his home country of Uganda, Atu finished outside of the top 16 swimmers who advanced to the next phase but recorded a respectable time for his first Olympic outing, which was just outside his personal best and Ugandan

national record of 53:89.

Colin Braund, AtuAmbalaBISP Swim Academy head coach, said Atu's performance was great considering that his preparation has been less than perfect. "Atu faced some training restraints after a team coach tested positive for COVID on entry to Japan three weeks prior to the start of the games," he said.

"He swam well and I'm very proud of what Atu has achieved. I look forward to following his progress through his college swimming career in the US and onto Paris, 2024," Colin added.

Reflecting after the race, Atu told BISP Media that he enjoyed his moment on the global stage.

"In the call room, I felt the tension in the room. It was like the calm before the storm. I would just sit silently in the call room waiting for what was surely to come. Then came the walkout. Walking out under the lights was surreal. I had watched all the big names do it and I was doing the same thing. I felt honoured to walk out wearing my national colours," Atu said.

"The race was tough. I knew it was going to be tough, it's easy to get blown away by what 'could have been' but I simply dealt with what I had, all the work I had put in during training. Behind the blocks I was happy. Happy enough to enjoy the moment but not too much to get

excited. I even remember laughing at how crazy it was that I really was at the Olympics.

"Touching the wall, 100 metres down the line and seeing the Olympic rings right above my face made it seem that all the work I had done was worth it.

"Going forward, I know that with God, there is more that I can do and I'm looking forward to going back into training to come back and race even faster. At the end of the day, I do it all for God and my country," Atu said.

Following his exploits in Tokyo, Atu will take up a merit scholarship at Clark University in Massachusetts, where he will study



A proud Atu at the Olympic pool in Tokyo. Photo: Atuhaire Ambala

Computer Science and Economics.

Fellow BISP alumna Chantal Liew of Singapore came 23rd in the women's 10km open water swim on August 4.

For more information on British International School, Phuket please contact info@bisphuket.ac.th.

Lee Blake, BISP Media