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CLOSING TIME

A man holds his hands on his head while walking down a darkened Bangla Rd on Monday night (Jan 11). Photo: Tanyaluk Sakoot

PATONG SHROUDED IN DARKNESS AS HOTELS START CLOSING AGAIN AMID DOMESTIC TOURISM PLUNGE

The Phuket News
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Hotels across Phuket that had re-opened in the hope of attracting enough guests to at least pay operating costs are now closing again, Kongsak Khoopongsakorn, President of the Thailand Hotels Association Southern chapter, has confirmed.

The lack of even domestic tourists due to the current COVID-19 outbreak has taken its toll, he said.

“As a result of the new outbreak of COVID-19, some hotel operators are considering temporarily closing their hotels again because a lot of bookings have been cancelled, and they cannot handle the costs,” Mr Kongsak said.

“From questioning about 10 hotel operators, three of them have confirmed that they are closing again because they cannot handle the cost and loss,” he said.

“There must be more hotel operators considering closing, but at this

stage I cannot estimate how many,” he added.

“I believe this current outbreak will last at least one month because the number of infected people in the country is still increasing. Even though there are no new infected cases in Phuket, the tourists who would normally come to Phuket are usually from the high-risk provinces anyway,” Mr Kongsak explained.

Hotel operators in Phuket have offered exceptional discounts, but to no avail, he added.

“For example, some have offered promotions such as spending more than B2,000 on dinner will give you one-night stay free. Even though there have been some tourists, overall these [promotions] have not had much effect,” he said.

The current outbreak is now causing deep, long-term damage to Phuket’s tourism infrastructure, Mr Kongsak noted – a factor he warned of in April last year.

“The effect from the virus outbreak on Phuket’s tourism industry may last...

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News



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Hotels close in gamble to survive

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...until 2024. Before this, we expected that tourism would become much better by the end of this year [2021], or the beginning of next year," he said.

"Most Thai tourists who come to Phuket are from Bangkok, which now has areas that are classified as high-risk, and people living there are asked to stay home. Hotel operators themselves are also worried to welcome tourists from these areas," Mr Kongsak explained.

"The crisis in Phuket will reach its peak this year, after operators kept trying to keep their businesses alive last year. Both small and big businesses are going to die in the same way this year," Mr Kongsak said.

"This year, some hotel operators may announce to sell their hotels at prices that are 50-60% less than the value of the hotel," he warned.

"We need the government to save us. From AoT [airports of Thailand] reports, the number of tourists coming through Phuket International Airport is continuously falling, so Phuket tourism is still far from recovery," Mr Kongsak said.

"If the government does not have clear measures about soft loans, and moratoriums on debt and interest, many businesses operators will have no choice but to raise the white flag to this situation," he added.



Patong beach road dark and empty on Monday evening (Jan 11). Photo: Tanyaluk Sakoot

Bhummikitti Ruktaengam, President of Phuket Tourist Association, noted, "Although some tourists came to Phuket during the New Year holidays, the number of tourists was lower than expected."

Mr Bhummikitti told *The Phuket News* that he did not have clear figures for the number of tourism arrivals over the New Year. "At this stage it would be better to confirm with the airport the number of arrivals [during the holidays]," he said.

Phuket International Airport General Manager Thanee Chuangchoo on Wednesday (Jan 6) confirmed that the number of flight bookings cancelled had seen six airlines reduce the number of flights to

Phuket for the rest of January.

AoT Phuket also confirmed that from Jan 1-5 a total of 38,915 passengers passed through Phuket airport, as follows: Jan 1 - 7,662 passengers; Jan 2 - 8,692 passengers; Jan 3 - 10,458 passengers; Jan 4 - 7,084 passengers; and Jan 5 - 5,015 passengers.

Domestic passengers passing through Phuket airport for the same days last year totalled 115,714, as follows: Jan 1 - 23,244 passengers; Jan 2 - 24,323 passengers; Jan 3 - 23,808 passengers; Jan 4 - 22,563 passengers; and Jan 5 - 21,776 passengers.

In total, the number of domestic passengers passing through Phuket airport this year was down 69.37% on last

year, AoT reported.

"This time, even without a lockdown there are very few tourists because the Thai guests are people who live in the epidemic provinces, which are currently not traveling," Mr Bhummikitti said.

"A very important factor at the moment is the control of both the source and the destination. The source already has a control process [for COVID-19], but what about the destination?" he posed.

"The control [at the destination - Phuket] has not been that strict... We cannot let this continue," he said.

"Although it has always been discussed that It wouldn't be possible to have zero infections, we cannot have a

cluster that spreads. When an infection is found, it must be quickly dealt with so that business and epidemic control can work together hand in hand," Mr Bhummikitti said.

"But the weight is now more likely to go to epidemic control, which the business community itself gives importance to because we personally think that even if Phuket can control new infections, we will be okay, but if there is an outbreak, no one will come," he added.

Mr Bhummikitti offered words of encouragement for hotel operators to hold on to survive.

"We have all been hit, including our brothers and sisters in outbreak areas who need a lot of encouragement, who as people who travel to Phuket cannot come. So at this time Phuket must keep itself as the safest area. When the situation improves, it will be easier to travel to Phuket," he said.

However, Mr Bhummikitti also said that Phuket hotel operators had been "wrung dry", with many operators not knowing what their next course of action should be.

"It has been exhausting," he said. "Hopefully the government will understand, even though there are many tough questions to be answered.

"But one thing I want to keep in mind all the time is

that the outbreak will eventually end. Then the focus will move back to economic matters. If entrepreneurs are able to survive this period, when the outbreak is over they can continue to operate. But if you let them fall, the impact will be much more negative - and will cause damage to the economy for a long time," he said.

For now, the government must focus on tackling the current outbreak, but must also start providing genuine relief for operators struggling to survive, Mr Bhummikitti said.

"The government must prioritize control of the outbreak, because if the outbreak continues to spread, sparks [sic] will fall all over the place, and tourism definitely will not return. Go put out all the sparks first, and then come to see about tourism," he said.

"But in the meantime, there must be support for entrepreneurs, which have three main issues: existing debt, the issue of labour, and paying for basic utilities," Mr Bhummikitti noted.

"Because there are two sides to tourism: demand and supply. For the demand side, there is the 'We Travel Together' campaign which is very good, but at this time there is probably no one traveling due to the outbreak. But there must be something to support the supply side also," he said.

Mother dies in car accident on family weekend getaway

A WOMAN FROM TRANG living in Phuket has died in a car accident over the weekend while travelling with her family to a popular local market in Takua Thung, just north of Phuket.

Police and rescue workers were called to the scene, on the Khok Khloi bypass road in Takua Thung, Phang Nga, just after 11am last Sunday (Jan 10).

At the scene, officers found the heavily damaged wreck of a grey Phuket-registered Toyota Camry taxi, which had struck a lamp post on the central reservation.

No other vehicles were involved in the accident.

Rescue workers rushed to use hydraulic equipment to remove the seven people in the car from the wreck.

Travelling in the car were



Wanpen Na Nakhorn, 40, her partner Precha Phonrop, 45, and their four children: Ms Natnaree, 18; Ms Anda, 16; Ms Panchawan, 13; and young

boy Theemethinthorn, 9.

Also travelling in the car was Mr Preecha's 7-year-old niece Siranya Meepot.

Ms Wanpen and her family lived in Sakhu, just south of Phuket International Airport.

Ms Wanpen was pronounced dead at the scene.

Police have yet to confirm who was driving at the time of the accident, but Capt Thaweesak Kurasri of the Khok Kloi Police on Monday (Jan 11) confirmed that only Mr Preecha remained in intensive care at a hospital.

Capt Thaweesak said he was unable to give a description of the Mr Preecha's current condition and declined to identify at which hospital Mr Preecha was receiving care.

However, he did explain that of the six survivors from the accident one was receiving care at Vachira Phuket Hospital, another at Thalang Hospital and a third was at Khok Khloi Hospital.

Capt Thaweesak told *The Phuket News* that although the car involved in the accident was a Phuket-registered taxi, Mr Preecha was not a taxi driver. Capt Thaweesak did not give any alternative explanation of why the family were travelling in the taxi.

"We know that they were travelling to the Long Lae Market, but we do not know what caused the accident," Capt Thaweesak said.

"We are still investigating the accident, but now is not the time to question the people involved," he said.

Ms Wanpen's family in Trang have been contacted and her body has already been released to her family so preparations for her funeral can begin, Capt Thaweesak said.

Reporting by Tanyaluk Sakoot & Eakkapop Thongtub

Risk arrivals face quarantine

The Phuket News
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All arrivals from the “highest-risk” areas within the ‘red zone’ provinces for COVID-19 infections must now quarantine for 14 days on arriving in Phuket, following an order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Wo-onciew last Saturday (Jan 9).

The order was marked to be in effect from Jan 9 through Jan 31, or “until the situation is resolved”, and comes as officials endeavour to contain any further spread of COVID-19 following the Samut Sakhon outbreak last month, which has now reached at least 59 provinces.

Of note, at the time of going to press, Phuket had zero COVID-19 patients in the province.

Under the order issued last Saturday, all people entering Phuket are to be classified into one of five groups, with Group 1, people arriving from Samut Sakhon, Chonburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi or Trat, facing the tightest restrictions.

Group 1 arrivals must present to officials a letter certifying the necessity of traveling outside the most



Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Thanit Sermkaew. Photo: PPHO

strictly controlled areas, undergo swab tests at the local hospital for the area where the visitor is staying and observe a 14-day quarantine either at home (for Phuket residents returning to the island) or at a hotel under the supervision of communicable disease control officers.

If the Group 1 visitor has already been tested for COVID-19 within 72 hours prior to departure, the visitor must present a medical certificate with laboratory

test results to officers.

Group 2 arrivals from 28 ‘high risk’ provinces were also ordered to observe a 14-day quarantine on arriving in Phuket, but were not required to undergo swab tests, while Group 3 arrivals were asked to self-quarantine and monitor themselves for any signs of infection.

All new arrivals in Phuket were ordered to download the Mor Chana application on their smartphone and present it to officials on request, and before

travelling to Phuket they must register their travel details through the www.gophuket.com web portal, operated by the Phuket Provincial Police and now available in 15 languages, including English, Russian, German, Chinese, and Malay.

Those unable to install the Mor Chana app on their phones would have to report their movements through official documents filed with the ‘Emergency Operations Centre’ in Phuket responsible

for the area where the new arrival is staying.

All new arrivals must strictly follow the surveillance, prevention and control measures, the order noted.

However, Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Thanit Sermkaew confirmed to *The Phuket News* on Tuesday (Jan 12) that foreigners exiting a 14-day quarantine in Bangkok after testing negative for COVID-19 were not required to complete another 14-day quarantine after arriving in Phuket.

“All foreigners who have already completed a 14-day quarantine in Alternative State Quarantine [ASQ] hotels from ‘red zone’ areas [highest risk provinces] and wanting to travel to Phuket are not required to complete a 14-day quarantine again after arriving in Phuket,” Dr Thanit said.

“But they must present a certificate or document to guarantee that they have been successfully cleared quarantine,” he added.

“The document must mention the final date of the 14-day quarantine, the hotel name and its location. Also the document must be signed by

the government official who is assigned to oversee the quarantine at the ASQ hotel,” Dr Thanit noted.

“The foreigners must travel directly to Phuket after they check out of the hotel. They must not check in or stay overnight at any other places. If they stay overnight somewhere else, they may have to do a 14-day quarantine when they arrive in Phuket,” he explained.

The order issued last Saturday marked that the measures were deemed necessary in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Phuket.

Any person found violating or failing to comply with the order could face legal action under Section 51 of the Communicable Disease Act, which incurs a fine of up to B20,000. Such persons may also be punished under Section 18 of the act, which incurs a penalty of a fine of up to B40,000 or up to two years in jail, or both, the order warned.

The order issued last Saturday also followed Governor Narong re-issuing the order for all people to wear face masks while in public in Phuket, or else face a fine of up to B20,000.

Former Patong taxi boss arrested for guns, drugs

A FORMER PRESIDENT of the Patong Taxi Club has been arrested in a raid that netted 122,000 methamphetamine (ya bah) pills and two illegal firearms.

Chatchawan Khuechan, a 54-year-old resident of Moo 3 Wichit, was arrested yesterday last Thursday (Jan 7) in a joint raid carried out by Phang Nga Town Police, Phang Nga Provincial Police and Region 8 Police, Patong Police reported last Friday (Jan 8).

The report did not confirm where Chatchawan was arrested, but did note that officers from Khok Kloi Police Station and Phang Nga Muang District Police Station were present for the arrest.

According to the report, Chatchawan was found with 122,000 pills of ya bah.

He was also found in illegal possession of a .45-calibre Taurus brand handgun and eight bullets as well as a Remington brand shotgun and 24 12-gauge shotgun cartridges.



Chatchawan Khuechan, 54, was found in possession of 122,000 meth pills. Photo: Phang Nga Police

The meth pills were found packed into 61 bundles marked 999, all hidden in a 40-litre green plastic bucket, said the report.

Each of the 61 bundles contained 10 smaller packs. Each pack contained 200 pills (198 orange tablets, 2 green tablets), the report added.

The pills were imprinted on one side with the letters “WY”, the report also noted.

Chatchawan was arrested in a case that also saw the arrests of Mr Wirote ‘Ko Lek’

Saematakul, Mr Kitt ‘Kob’ Pengboon and Ms Pornpimol ‘Mon’ Chusakulantiwong for possession of a Category I narcotic for the purpose of distribution without permission, the report noted.

Chatchawan faces additional charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, carrying firearms in a public area without a permit or reasonable necessity and urgency for the circumstances, the report concluded.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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Phuket Red Cross calls for blood

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Regional Blood Centre (PRBC) is calling for Thais and foreigners to donate blood after confirming they are facing a shortage to supply Phuket hospitals.

"At this stage, we do not have many units of blood in stock, and we are unable to supply enough blood to patients in need," a PRBC staffer told *The Phuket News* on Monday (Jan 11).

"All people are invited to help replenish the blood stocks and save lives," the staffer said.

The local explanation came after the state news agency National News Bureau of Thailand (NNT) reported that the COVID-19 outbreak has had a big effect on blood reserves throughout the country.

According to the Thai Red Cross Society, more than 340 hospitals in Thailand lack sufficient blood reserves. The Thai Red Cross cannot provide enough blood to meet the demand as regular donors have been coming in less often than usual due to the pandemic, NNT reported.



The Red Cross is calling for more blood donations as the COVID-19 situation has left blood reserves dangerously low. Photo: Thai Red Cross

The Thai Red Cross is able to provide only 700-900 units of blood a day, while daily demand requires 2,200 units, said the report.

Stringent measures are in place at all blood-donation facilities to ensure the donors' safety, NNT noted in its report.

All donors are required to report their travel history before donating blood, and donors must wear a plastic sleeve on their arm before putting their arms into a blood pressure monitor as part of the process.

Other equipment including blood donor beds, chairs and more are cleaned with sanitiser many times during the day, the report added.

Those in the greater Phuket area who want to donate blood can do so at mobile blood-donation stations to be set up at the following locations, as follows:

JANUARY 15:

1pm-4pm at Great Glove (Thailand Co Ltd) factory (Thalang)
Midday-6pm at Tesco Lotus

Phuket (Phuket Town)

JANUARY 18:

1pm-4pm at J.D. Pools Co Ltd (Koh Kaew)
Midday-6pm at Tesco Lotus Phuket (Phuket Town)

JANUARY 19:

9.30am-1pm at Klongtom-ratrangsan School (Krabi)
9.30am-1pm at Klongpon-saritpittaya School (Krabi)

JANUARY 20:

Midday-6pm at Tesco Lotus Phuket (Phuket Town)

1pm-4pm at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa (Mai Khao)

JANUARY 21:

9am-midday at Phang Nga Technical College (Phang Nga Town)
1.30pm-4pm at Deebuk Phang-nga Wittayayon School (Phang Nga Town)

JANUARY 22:

10am-3pm at the Thai Nepali Association (Kathu)

JANUARY 25:

9.30am-1pm at Ao Luk Prachasan School (Krabi)

JANUARY 26:

10am-4pm at Domestic Terminal, Phuket International Airport

JANUARY 27:

9.30am-1pm at Nuaklong-prachabumrung School (Krabi)

JANUARY 28:

1-4pm at Takua Tung District Office (Phang Nga)

JANUARY 29:

Midday-6pm at Tesco Lotus (Thalang)
Midday-6pm at Tesco Lotus Phuket (Phuket Town)

Health officials investigate mystery migrant worker death

HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE investigating the death of a Myanmar migrant worker found dead of no apparent reason at his shanty at a workers' camp in Rassada last Saturday night (Jan 9)

Immediate tests by doctors at Vachira Phuket Hospital have failed to find any evidence that the man was infected with COVID-19, but are continuing their investigation.

Police were called to the camp, located at Prachasamakkee Rd in Moo 5, Rassada, at 6:45pm, Maj Teerawut Chuachak, an investigator with the Phuket City Police, confirmed.

Responding to the call were police, Kusoldharm Foundation rescue workers and a medical team from Vachira Phuket Hospital.

On arriving, the team were shown where the body of Tin Chuou, 39, lay in his tin-sheet shack.

The body lay face up in a sleeping position on the man's bed. The



Health workers recover the body of migrant worker Tin Chuou, 39. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

man was dressed in a black shirt and brown shorts.

There were no signs of wounds on the body, Maj Teerawut reported.

Workers at the camp told police that Mr Tin was seen earlier that morning. He got up and cooked some rice, and complained that he had a pain in his head.

A fellow worker came to check on him later and found him dead that evening, Maj Teerawut reported.

Doctors at Vachira Phuket Hospital are continuing their investigation in the hope of confirming what had led to Mr Tin's death, he added.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Man arrested for robbing Patong 7-Eleven with knife

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a 24-year-old man for robbing a 7-Eleven store off Nanai Rd in Patong at knife point in the early hours of last Thursday morning (Jan 7).

Police were called to the 7-Eleven store, Nanai Rd Branch 3, at 2:10am, the Patong Police explained in a report released last Saturday (Jan 9).

Police arrived to be told by staff at the store that a man about 150-160cm tall wearing a blue-red jacket and blue jeans had entered the store and used a knife to threaten a staffer to hand over whatever money they had.

The staffer opened the cash register and handed over B1,060. The man took the money and fled on a motorbike.

Through footage from CCTV cameras throughout the town, Patong Police saw the man had fled down Nanai Soi 1. The officers eventually tracked the robber to a house on Petchkut Rd, Patong, where they moved in and arrested 24-year-old Patiphan Chaiyothin at 8:30pm last Friday night (Jan 8).



Patong Police have Patiphan Chaiyothin, 24, re-enact his crime of using a knife to threaten a staffer when robbing the 7-Eleven store. Photo: Patong Police

Officers also seized at the house the clothes worn by Patiphan while committing the robbery.

Patiphan was taken to Patong Police Station, where he confessed to committing the robbery, noted the Patong Police report.

Patiphan has now been charged for the crime of committing a robbery at night while using a vehicle to flee the scene of the crime, the report added.

Eakkapop Thongtub

'Cinderella' order for pubs, bars

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

All entertainment venues in Phuket must close at midnight and restaurants are not permitted to sell alcohol after midnight following an order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew on Monday (Jan 11).

The order came into effect on Tuesday (Jan 12) and will remain in effect until Jan 20 or further notice, the order explained.

The order marked that preventative measures were needed in order to prevent any further spread of COVID-19 considering the current outbreak of the virus elsewhere in the country.

Although Phuket currently has zero cases of people confirmed infected with COVID-19, the island has been classified by national health authorities as a yellow "high surveillance" area, meaning that any outbreak is expected to be contained but that strong health measures to prevent an outbreak are to be taken.

The late-night alcohol ban was issued after a meeting of the Communicable Disease Committee, chaired by Governor Narong, on Monday (Jan 11). The committee unanimously agreed to order entertainment venues and restaurants to do as follows:

- All entertainment venues, pubs,



Teams led by health officers inspect venues on Bangla Rd. Photo: Courtesy of 'In Patong' Facebook page

bars, karaoke venues and other places that open to provide similar services must close at midnight.

- Restaurants and food courts are not allowed to sell alcohol beverages inside the venues after midnight.

Failure to comply with the order may be punished under Section 51 of Disease Control Act 2015, which incurs a fine of up to B20,000, or under Section 52 of the act, which invokes a penalty of up to one year imprisonment or a fine of up to B100,000 or both, the order noted.

Those found breaching the order will also be charged under Section 18 of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005), which

invokes a penalty of up to two years imprisonment or up to B40,000 or both, the order warned.

The ban also follows officials in all three districts across Phuket confirming that they are continuing their inspections of pubs, bars, restaurants and entertainment venues to ensure operators are complying with the full COVID-prevention measures.

Muang District Chief Somprat Prabsongkham told *The Phuket News* that he and Civil Defense Volunteers [OrSor] with other law-enforcement officers inspected about eight entertainment venues near Nimit Circle (the "Seahorse Circle" roundabout) immediately after the New Year.

No venues were found to be in breach of the health regulations, Mr Somprat said.

The Nimit Circle area on the east side of Phuket Town is where raids before the New Year found three venues not complying with COVID-19 protocols. All three venue operators were charged.

Mr Somprat said that he expected good cooperation for operators now that they are aware that inspections are continuing. "Officials in all the districts [in Phuket] still have to be strict on COVID compliance to prevent the risk of COVID-19 spreading which might happen from people gathering at entertainment venues such as pubs and bars, and restaurants," he said.

"We cannot ignore the Governor's orders," he added.

Mr Somprat emphasised that the Governor had placed special focus on all people following the 'D-M-H-T-T' measure: D- Social Distancing, M- Mask wearing, H-Hand washing, T-Testing and T- Tracing.

"Also Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee [who led the raids before the New Year] has asked for four square meters per person [as required by the COVID-compliance regulations]," Mr Somprat added.

The nightlife venue inspections will continue, Mr Somprat warned.

"We have to ensure strict compliance every day. I believe that eve-

ryone is worried about COVID-19," he said.

Kathu District Chief Trithip Sakulpradit also confirmed that inspections were continuing in Kathu, Patong and Kamala.

"Most entertainment venues and restaurants are following the measures with good cooperation, but we have received some complaints that some venues and restaurants are not following the measures," Mr Trithip said.

"Some of these venues we had already inspected, but people claimed that after we left the venues stopped following the full compliance order. After receiving such complaints, we went back to the venues, but again it seemed that when we were there the operators were complying with the COVID-19 measures," he explained.

"In dealing with these types of venues, we need more support from people. People can inform us of places doing this by calling 076-321133," Mr Trithip said.

Thalang District Chief Suwit Suriyawong also confirmed his officers were carrying out COVID-compliance inspections throughout Thalang District, which covers nearly all of the northern half of the island.

"I am not particularly worried about venue operators not fully complying with the regulations. Most of the venues have no customers anyway," he said.

Koreans arrested at Phuket Villa Kathu

FOUR SOUTH KOREAN men have been arrested at a housing estate in Kathu for working illegally. One of the four was wanted on an Interpol notice for distributing child pornography.

The arrests were announced by Phuket Immigration through a statement issued on Jan 5.

The Immigration Bureau had received a request from the Embassy of Republic of Korea to investigate the four men, the statement explained.

Officers tracked the men to a house at the Phuket Villa



The four South Koreans were arrested at the Phuket Villa Kathu housing estate. Photo: Immigration Bureau

Kathu housing estate. Officers, armed with a warrant, raided the house at about 4:30pm on Dec 29 and found the men working online trading cryptocurrencies.

The four men were named

as Kang Mingu, Chul Jae Jung, Min Joo Won and Kim Hyun Su. Kang Mingu was wanted on an Interpol for distributing child pornography, the Phuket Immigration statement noted.

Officers also found a loan agreement at the scene showing that the men had operated a loan shark operation.

All four were charged with working illegally, and Kang Mingu, who had overstayed his permit to stay by more than 253 days, was also charged with entering and staying in the country illegally, the report noted. *The Phuket News*

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Phuket economy on the brink

Expert warns another lockdown would have huge impact on island

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Another full lockdown would result in a huge impact on Phuket's economy, a leading economic researcher at the Prince of Songkla University Phuket campus has warned.

Dr Chayanon Pucharoen, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at PSU Phuket, has also warned that some people on the island this year will suffer a loss as high as 91% of their regular income.

The warning came in an online video titled 'Labour and Economy in Phuket during COVID' posted online under the 'LaetaLaetai' ('Let's see the South') program by Thai PBS.

Dr Chayanon explained that the dire prediction followed research by his colleagues at the university.

"This year, Phuket people on average will lose about 73% of the money in their wallet, compared with last year," Dr Chayanon said.

"From our research, employees who have social se-



Dr Chayanon speaking at an event explaining the impact of COVID-19 on the Andaman province economies last year. Photo: Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, PSU (Phuket)

curity coverage now have working hours about 53% less than they did in August last year. We don't need to talk about the lockdown period, as we all already know what it was like," he added.

"In our research, we also found that those who are not registered with the Social Security Office, such as those who worked part-time jobs that were irrelevant to tourism, were also affected, losing

about 39% of their regular income," Dr Chayanon said.

"This significant point shows that the economic crisis affects every person in Phuket. Some people will lose up to 91% of their income," he said blankly.

"If there is another lockdown, there will be a big impact on the Phuket economy," he noted.

"It's clear that the less hours people work, the less

salary they receive from their jobs," he added.

Dr Chayanon also highlighted how the research plainly identified two different types of people who worked in Phuket.

"The first group was those who had already returned to their hometown to work in agriculture, which is like a safety net, or in a field [i.e. industry] that has welcomed unemployed people in this

country for a long time," he said.

"The other group was those who are Phuket natives or those who had already moved to Phuket permanently. They can't avoid being affected, as they are still working in the hotel industry and other businesses," he explained.

"The less hours they work, the less salary they gain, the less money they can spend, leading to the Phuket economy slowing down," Dr Chayanon explained.

Dr Chayanon pointed out that his research had also identified how Phuket residents were coping with the financial stress.

"For example, hotel staff who have work for only 15 days a month become vendors during the remaining 15 days of the month," he said.

"Some people like chefs may go to re-skill or up-skill, like trying to cook local foods and sell in tourist spots and markets," he added.

Dr Chayanon also posed the question, "Is it possible to transfer workers in the tourism industry to others?"

"If Phuket wants to have a third life [sic]. The first one was mining, and the second one is tourism. The third one is supposed to be service providing, not producing," he said.

Dr Chayanon openly supports the current government push to develop Phuket to increasingly become a medical tourism destination.

"Many people talk about medical tourism. Developing Phuket to be a medical hub is possible because we have rooms to welcome and staff with a service mind," he said.

"We are talking about a new growth engine," he concluded.

Dr Chayanon through research pointed out in April last year that the global outbreak of COVID-19 had cost Phuket more than B31 billion in lost tourism revenues in that month alone.

He also delivered his initial 'worst case scenario' prediction that the pandemic would cost the Phuket economy B127bn in lost tourism revenues.

Dr Chayanon has not deviated from that prediction.



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Phuket flights take a hit

SEVERAL AIRLINES have reduced the number of flights to and from Phuket due to falling demand amid concerns over the current COVID-19 outbreak, Phuket International Airport General Manager Thanee Chuangchoo has confirmed.

However, Mr Thanee branded posts circulating online warning that all flights to and from Phuket had been cancelled as fake news.

Mr Thanee explained that six domestic airlines – Nok Air, Thai Smile, Thai Air Asia, Thai Vietjet Air, Thai Lion Air and Bangkok Airways – had cancelled some of their regular flights, starting from Jan 4, due to lack of demand.

In addition, at least seven regularly scheduled flights have also been cancelled for the rest of January, he added.

"The flights were cancelled as there are not enough passengers because people are not confident to travel due to the COVID-19 situation," Mr Thanee said.

"Also, people are concerned about whether or not they will be required to



Flights to and from Phuket airport are still operating. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub / file

complete a 14-day quarantine when they arrive in Phuket, hence some flights have also been postponed," he added.

Mr Thanee confirmed that at least 65 regular scheduled flights will still operate to Phuket throughout January.

Mr Thanee pointed out that the number of passengers passing through Phuket airport over the New Year was "less than expected".

"We had estimated to have more than 10,000 passengers per day, but there were fewer passengers than we predicted," he said.

According to the latest data airport staff could immediately provide this morning, a total of 493

flights operated to or from Phuket airport from Jan 1-5, altogether carrying a total of 38,915 passengers, as follows: Jan 1 - 7,662 passengers (110 flights); Jan 2 - 8,692 (104 flights); Jan 3 - 10,458 (116 flights); Jan 4 - 7,084 (87 flights); Jan 5 - 5,019 (76 flights).

Direct international flights were also still operating to and from Phuket airport, Mr Thanee confirmed.

According to the figures provided to *The Phuket News*, Jan 1-2 saw one international flight each day, but with zero passengers. There were three international flights on Jan 5, carrying just four passengers.

The Phuket News

Vaccine safety first and foremost, vow officials

Apinya Wipatayotin

The permanent secretary for public health, Kiatiphum Wongrajit, defended the use of the Sinovac vaccine on Monday (Jan 11), saying the Chinese-made product is produced with reliable technology and no reports of serious side effects have emerged after its use.

Earlier, the deputy chairwoman of civil society group FTA Watch, Kannikar Kijtiwatchakul, voiced her concerns about the Sinovac vaccine, saying its efficacy and safety remain unclear, as it has yet to progress beyond Phase 3 trials.

To ensure its safety, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has pledged to prioritise patients' well-being when it evaluates the vaccine, which is expected to arrive next month.

"The decision to approve that vaccine will depend on its safety and efficiency," said Surachoke Tangwiwat, the FDA's deputy secretary-general. "Our experts will look into the scientific evidence that will be sent to us."

Dr Surachoke said the FDA is waiting for Sinovac to send documents for the FDA to review and insisted officials will not fast-track the approval process.

He admitted that the plan to administer the vaccine next month may still change, as the FDA will have to adhere to the strictest health and safety principles.



The permanent secretary for public health, Kiatiphum Wongrajit, has defended the use of the Chinese-manufactured Sinovac vaccine saying there are no reports of serious side effects after its use. Photo: Bangkok Post

"And if we don't have all required documents to verify its safety, it is possible we won't approve it," he told the Bangkok Post.

He noted that Sinovac's vaccine is still awaiting approval from Chinese authorities.

Thailand's FDA is currently reviewing the COVID-19 vaccine developed by US company AstraZeneca in partnership with the UK's Oxford University and has received all relevant documents it requested. It has not, however, asked to be sent documents relating to the vaccines developed by US companies

Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna.

The director-general of the Department of Medical Sciences, Supakit Sirilak, said that before deciding to buy from a vaccine manufacturer, the government takes into account several factors, which include the vaccine's properties, its price, as well as the manufacturer's capacity to produce and deliver them.

However, Dr Supakit said, the government is expected to purchase the vaccine from no more than three manufacturers.

"There will be enough vaccine for everyone, free of charge," he said.

Bangkok Post

Municipality keen to buy its own COVID vaccines

THE NAKHON KHON Kaen Municipality is considering buying COVID-19 vaccines for its population of 110,000 using its own reserve fund, but first needs approval from the government, Mayor Teerasak Theekhayuphan said on Monday (Jan 11).

Mr Teerasak said administrators and council members floated the idea to save the government's central budget, after the government said it was in a position to buy vaccines for only about 30 million people, just under half of the population.

The idea had been discussed between local administrations throughout the country as the COVID-19 situation was getting more serious every day, he said. Quick action was needed to control the pandemic.

The Nakhon Khon Kaen Municipality totally supported this idea. It had about 110,000 people under its jurisdiction and all of them should be inoculated, based on the names shown in the domicile registration, Mr Teerasak said.

The mayor said the municipality was only waiting for a clear policy and regulations regarding the acquisition of



People lining up for COVID-19 screening at a market in Khon Kaen province on Jan 11. Photo: Chakrapan Natanri

the vaccines from the central administration, including the Interior and Public Health ministries.

Once the regulations were in place, the council would convene and seek approval to buy vaccines using the municipality's financial reserve.

Mr Teerasak estimated the total cost would be in the range B100-150 million. The municipality had enough money in its reserve, he said.

After the vaccines had been acquired, the municipality's medical office would look into the details of distribution.

Mr Teerasak said if the government put in place a clear policy on this matter, he believed all local administrations would be ready to comply with it.

Bangkok Post



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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!

Cycling in cycles



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

I have my sixth birthday coming up! More specifically, this month I will complete my sixth Buddhist cycle, each cycle comprises 12 years, so by the conventional Western method of calculating the annoying trajectory of time, I will turn 72!

Theravada Buddhism, Thailand's dominant system of spiritual belief, prescribes each 12-year cycle of human incarnation upon this mortal cycling coil in quite specific terms, with precise stages of mental and spiritual development to be attended to, and hopefully attained, during each 12-year period.

My next cycle, my seventh from 72 to 84, should be dedicated to a turning away from the day-to-day concerns of life, and dedicated to the development of quiet spiritual harmony in preparation for my inevitable recycling from my presently constituted format into my next incarnation.

This rather benign Buddhist system of calibrating the passing of one's life, got me thinking about the constants which have sustained and nourished me through my journey thus far, of which cycling and being outdoors, have been prominent.

My first cycling cycle, from the time

I saw fit to pop out from my mother's womb until my 12th birthday, passed in a sort of chaotic blur, as far as I can recall. I was born in 1949 in the post-war Midlands of England and spent many happy hours on the saddles of sundry bicycles careening into various objects in our garden and terrorising our dogs.

From 12 to 24, my cycling horizons expanded to include weekend trout fishing adventures with my father and grandfather. Then at 18, I went up to Nottingham University and spent many happy hours cycling around the leafy campus often in amorous pursuit of sundry delectable female students.

My third life cycle from age 24 to 36 saw me entering work life in advertising, firstly in London, where partying took over from cycling, then Toronto where skiing and sailing were my main outdoor sports. I then moved to work in Hong Kong for two years in 1980 where I played squash and ran the mountain tracks to try and stay fit.

In 1982, when I was 33, I arrived in Sydney, Australia and immediately fell in love with that most beguiling city, where outdoor life is embraced with immense enthusiasm. I spent my mornings furiously lapping the trails of the huge, nearby, Centennial Park before breakfast and then riding off to work. At weekends I did longer rides across the iconic Harbour Bridge and also played competitive squash at a good level and I think that in my late third, and early fourth cycles I was fitter and more active



Cycling north of Khao Lak in the Andaman.

than at any other time in my life.

During my fourth life cycle from 36 to 48, I moved back to Hong Kong and then to Bangkok to open an advertising agency handling the Thai International account worldwide.

My darling daughter Olivia was born in 1993 and I well recall cycling around Bangkok's Lumpini Park in the early morning miasma with her in a kiddie seat screaming as huge monitor lizards waddled away from the lakeside as we approached.

I was fortunate to be able to retire from the intensity of international corporate life in 2005 and embark on a new career. I relocated to Phuket and joined my old friend John Everingham's Art Asia Press as editor of *Phuket Mag-*

azine. It was a renaissance for me, as I was able to regain my passion for being outdoors and cycling in the wonderful Andaman region in which I now live.

I started writing this *Blazing Saddles* column in 2013, when I was 64, and the magical alchemy of words and cycling has taken me on many wonderful outdoor trips to beguiling corners of the world.

As I pedal into the seventh cycle, I feel blessed to have cycling as a mainstay of my journey through Shakespeare's mortal coil and in facing the next 12 years I'll do my utmost to comply with Einstein's marvellous observation that: "Life is like riding a bicycle. In order to keep your balance, you must keep moving."

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To the Moon, Mars and beyond

Jason Jellison

In a historic first for all of Southeast Asia, Thailand has made a new footprint in space history as the first Southeast Asian member of the International Space Settlement Design Competition (ISSDC).

Never before hosted by an Asean country, the ISSDC is a life-changing, exciting international educational initiative which was designed by NASA in 1983, co-staged by NASA and the Boy Scouts of America in 1984 and has since expanded to 35 countries as one of NASA's most salient legacy educational programs.

On Jan 4, Thailand made history by leading Southeast Asia's most brilliant teenagers into this prestigious space exploration competition.

The ISSDC is aimed at identifying a nation's brightest STEM and aerospace students whilst those students are still in high school, and the stunning event provides an early proving-ground for brilliant young minds by way of creating a realistic outer space industry simulation for student engineers who love the space program.

Through a series of energetic game competitions for high-school student teams ranging in age 14-18, the ISSDC has for decades searched for the most rare high school aerospace talent and has subsequently redirected dozens of brilliant students into some of the world's best universities such as Princeton, MIT, Oxford, Cambridge University, Hong Kong University, and the National University of Singapore, among many other prestigious universities worldwide.

Unlike a typical flight simulator or an interactive museum, the competition puts high-school students squarely into the shoes of the real-life aerospace industry engineers currently designing future settlements in space that would someday be home to more than 10,000 people.

Thai students from all over the Kingdom can form 12-person school teams which then demonstrate the creativity, technical competence, managerial skill, space environment knowledge, teamwork, and presentation techniques that would be needed in real life in order to live on the moon, Mars, or beyond.

Student teams file a proposal much like engineers do in real life and conju-



gate innovative new ideas to solve the unworldly problems that human settlers would most assuredly encounter on an entirely new planet. Brilliant teenagers are connected with both active and retired aerospace engineers and scientists who help guide the students to finding their own unique insights to technical challenges over a period of several months which lead up to the first Thai National Competition, to be held in Bangkok in November this year.

Student teams who win the Thai Nationals will go on to compete in the Asian Regional Finals in India three months later, and any student teams who win there may find themselves competing at the Global Finals, which are once again slated for the Kennedy Center in July of 2022.

The registration fee for a student team is B5,000, so for a team of 12 students that comes to a very affordable B415 per student. Participation fees are not yet established for the first Thai National Competition as lodging arrangements are still pending, but the ISSDC-Thailand is run by caring educators who donate their skills to keep costs low enough that any motivated student team can afford to enroll, no matter where they may be in Thailand. All Thai high schools are welcome to participate and Thai student teams are required to have at least one member who can communicate in English on the IELTS 5.5 level (or equivalent).

The ISSDC of Thailand coordinated by a very talented local Thai committee and overseen by Astrium Competitions Ltd. Astrium Competitions is a new educational service provider committed

to young aerospace talent development in Southeast Asia, and Astrium's mission is to help the Kingdom become a possible future hub for Southeast Asian space exploration, as well as a potential hub for aerospace and STEM development among adolescents and primary students residing throughout Southeast Asia.

Thailand's ISSDC was originally envisioned in 2018 when teams of Thai students started traveling outside the Kingdom to compete in other Asian competitions. Jon Santangelo, Imran Al-Farzal and several representatives of the China ISSDC noticed the rising number of Thai student teams applying elsewhere in Asia. A discussion was

sparked and the ISSDC as a whole was firmly convinced that Thailand should become the first Asean nation to become a full member of the global ISSDC family.

Astrum Competitions Ltd was founded in June 2020 to oversee the construction of Southeast Asia's first ISSDC and is considering 'a universe' of new educational opportunities for Thai youths who hold space exploration deep inside their hearts.

The Thai ISSDC is currently chaired by Jason A. Jellison and co-managed by Operations Manager Oranush Kunatirojana. Dr Ian Reide Ph.D is graciously serving as Vice Chairman and the popular foreign teacher Geraldino Palmes is presently serving as the Secretary of the ISSDC-Thailand.

On Jan 4, Thailand took a very important step for mankind as it became the first Southeast Asian nation to join this prestigious NASA legacy educational initiative for teenage geniuses. Yet, whilst this may be but a modest step in the history of space exploration, it is yet another crucial step towards placing Thai astronauts on the moon, Mars and beyond.

For more information about ISSDC-Thailand visit the website www.thaisssc.org or email info@thaisssc.org. Mr Jellison prefers to be contacted at his personal email address mitnoy@live.com. For Thai-language inquiries, message Oranush Kunatirojana, Operations Manager, at echelonedu@gmail.com

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POP QUIZ

1. In Japanese history, what were Onna-Bugeisha?
2. The board game Trivial Pursuit was invented in which country?
3. Which toy was invented by George Lerner in 1949 and was the first toy advertised on television?
4. How many men were needed to form a Roman cohort?
5. Which country uses juries of 15 people in criminal trials?

Answers below, centre

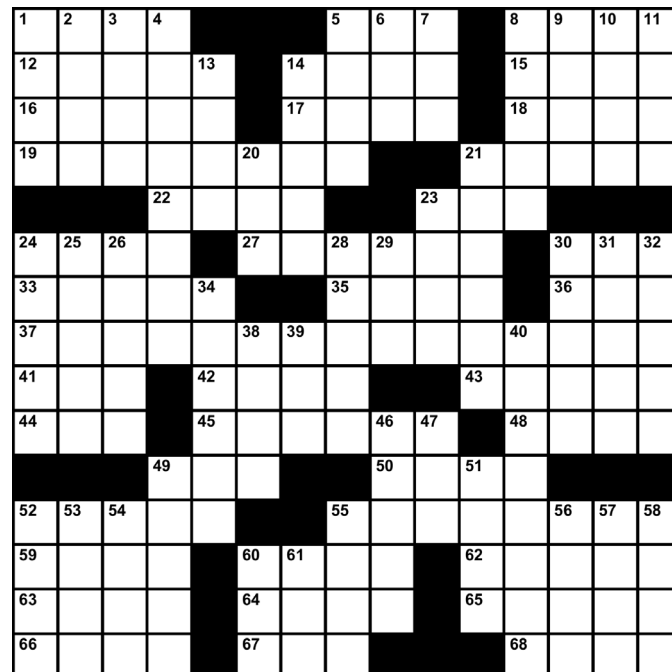
SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

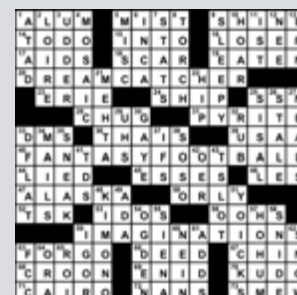
- Across**
1. "Oops!"
 5. Environmental watchdogs, for short
 8. Brewski
 12. Cut down
 14. Saucy
 15. Native American
 16. She does a lot of talking for Amazon
 17. Big furniture retailer
 18. Stare at
 19. Marinara ingredients
 21. What a slicer slices
 22. Global commerce org.
 23. Employer identifying number, for short
 24. African of Dutch descent
 27. Half man half mechanical
 30. Atlanta network (abbr.)
 33. Humerus' neighbors
 35. Dry as a bone
 36. Inexperienced
 37. Dessert choice, goes with 48 across
 41. Elton's john
 42. Desert
 43. Very cold
 44. Night school subj.
 45. Sniff out
 48. See 37 across
 49. "Omigod!"
 50. Wooden bed strip
 52. Common side order
 55. Kitchen staple
 59. "My name is ____"
 60. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" writer
 62. Ryan of "The Beverly Hillbillies"
 63. Pinnacle
 64. Muppet
 65. Piques
 66. Race
 67. Listen in Spanish
 68. Modern bandit
 20. Type of stock
 21. Great Dane is one
 23. Director Rohmer
 24. Summer camp alarm
 25. Margarines
 26. Sign up
 28. Brazilian state
 29. Spanish for gold
 30. Start of a refrain
 31. Colorful Indonesian fabric
 32. Alfred Nobel, for one
 34. Two under pars
 38. Alcove
 39. Toronto media inits.
 40. Speakers' stands
 46. Letter-shaped workbench groove
 47. Gin-maker Whitney
 49. Conger catcher
 51. Rental car agency
 52. Accomplishment
 53. Marathon, for one
 54. Role for Shirley MacLaine
 55. Fiend
 56. Eye, to Pierre
 57. Put ____ words
 58. For fear
 60. Home of "The Sopranos"
 61. One-eighty



Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) Female Samurai; (2) Scotland; (3) Canada; (4) 420; (5) 15

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

teaspoon of honey is actually the lifework of 12 bees.

11.3

kilograms is how much candy the average American eats each year.

25

percent of the world's supply of hazelnuts is used to make Nutella.

38

years old is how long the cat Creme Puff, of Austin, Texas, lived. He remains the longest-living cat on record.

224

million

Netflix subscribers – about 50% – watch a whole season of a TV show in just one week.

890

million

people throughout the world will go to bed hungry tonight.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Rawai Pier. Photo: Yasmin Juan

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This week in history

Jan 15, 2001

Wikipedia goes online.

Jan 16, 27 BC

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus is granted the title Augustus by the Roman Senate, marking the beginning of the Roman Empire.

Jan 17, 1991

Gulf War: Operation Desert Storm begins early in the morning. Iraq fires eight Scud

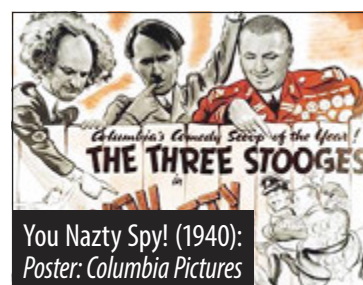
missiles into Israel in an unsuccessful bid to provoke Israeli retaliation.

Jan 18, 1778

James Cook is the first known European to discover the Hawaiian Islands, which he names the "Sandwich Islands".

Jan 19, 1940

You Nazty Spy!, the first Hollywood film of any kind to satirize Adolf Hitler and the Nazis



premieres, starring The Three Stooges, with Moe Howard as the character 'Moe Hailstone' satirizing Hitler.

Jan 20, 1225

The first English parliament to include not only Lords but also representatives of the major towns holds its first meeting in the Palace of Westminster, now commonly known as the "Houses of Parliament".

Jan 21, 1911

Henri Rougier wins the first Monte Carlo Rally in a Turcat-Méry 25 Hp.

Source: Wikipedia

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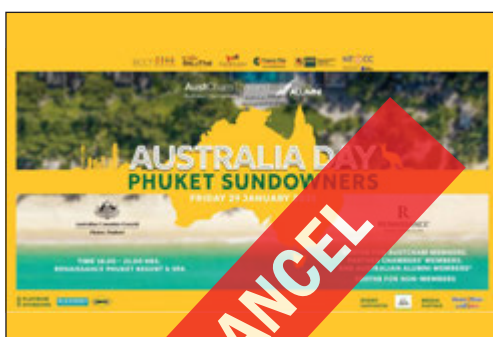
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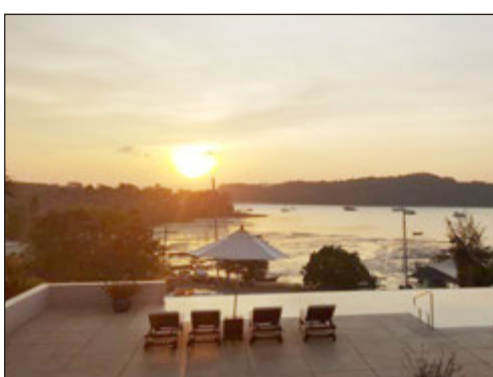
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Bjorn, Ian, Anthony, Paul and Alex.



Paul and Santa's helpers.

CHAINE DES RÔTISSEURS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

It was a beautiful day at Sala Mai Khao when Chaine Des Rôtisseurs met for the traditional Christmas Lunch. The food was delicious and everyone enjoyed a day in good company. As always, the staff of the day got a diploma as a recognition for excellent service. A lovely day to remember.



Lots of smiles.



William, Guzel and Nico.



Coldwell Banker Phuket team.



Gulu, K. Nanthasiri and Jason.

BLUE LIST EXHIBITION SETS SAIL

The Blue List Expedition departed from Royal Phuket Marina on 18th December and spent 3 days 2 nights at the Zeavola Resort Phi Phi Island. The expedition was powered by Yacht Sourcing and presented by JAND Events.

Tokyo Olympics will go ahead

Organisers confident despite Japan declaring state of emergency

OLYMPICS

AFP

Tokyo Olympics organisers have insisted that the coronavirus-postponed Games will still go ahead despite Japan declaring a state of emergency less than 200 days before the opening ceremony.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga last Thursday (Jan 7) announced the month-long measure covering the greater Tokyo area, which took effect the following day, as the country battles a surge in infections.

Tokyo 2020 chiefs have already said that another postponement of the Games – set to begin on July 23 – is out of the question.

And they insisted last Friday that the emergency would not derail plans.

“This declaration of emergency offers an opportunity to get the COVID-19 situation under control and for Tokyo 2020 to plan for a safe and secure Games this summer, and we will proceed with the necessary preparations accordingly,” organisers said in a statement.

When announcing the month-long measures, PM Suga said that Japan is committed to holding a



The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics are scheduled to start on July 23. Photo: AFP

“safe and secure” Olympics, and that he believes public mood will change when the country begins vaccinations, currently scheduled for late next month.

International Olympic Committee member Dick Pound told the *BBC* he could not “be certain” the Games will go ahead, because “the ongoing elephant in the room would be the surges in the virus”.

Pound’s uncertainty appeared to be shared by a cross-section of the

Japanese public who, when polled by the Kyodo news agency, expressed their preference for the Games to be postponed again or canceled outright. Just over 80% of the 1,041 polled said the huge global event should be cancelled or postponed again – a jump of about 60% in a Dec 6 survey by the same outlet.

VACCINE PRIORITY FOR GAMES?

Tokyo recorded 1,219 new infec-

tions on Monday, down from the previous 2,392 logged a day earlier. Still, Japan’s outbreak remains comparatively small, with just over 3,850 deaths overall.

Japan has yet to approve a coronavirus vaccine, with Suga saying he hopes the first jabs can begin in late February. Health workers and the elderly are expected to be first in line.

Pound said this week that athletes should be given high priority

for the vaccine to ensure the Games can go ahead.

“It’s a decision for each country to make,” the Canadian told *Sky Sports*. “And there will be people saying they are jumping the queue, but I think that is the most realistic way of it going ahead.”

International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach said last year that the body would “undertake great efforts” to ensure as many participants and spectators as possible were vaccinated before the Games.

But organisers say they are also not relying on vaccines to move ahead with the Games, and in December unveiled antivirus measures they say will allow the event to happen even if the pandemic has not been brought under control.

The countermeasures and the delay have helped put the Tokyo Olympics on course to become one of the most expensive Summer Games in history, with a final budget of 1.64 trillion yen (B476 billion) unveiled in late December.

The extra costs – up ¥294bn from figures released a year ago – come despite organisers trying to scale back elements of the Games in a bid to save money.



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The FA Cup retains its magic

Upsets and fairytale match-ups prove famous cup is still unique

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Despite the threat of COVID-19 decimating playing squads and cancelling fixtures, the magic of the FA Cup is alive and well after several upsets last weekend saw lower ranked opposition move past their more illustrious opponents.

The pick was Crawley Town who managed to brush aside Premier League Leeds United 3-0 last Sunday (Jan 10).

Crawley, who ply their trade in League Two, the lowest professional league in England, more than matched their higher-ranked opponents and thoroughly deserved their win.

The first goal from Nick Tsaroulla was befitting of a Premier League goal of the month contender, with further strikes from Ashley Nadesan and Jordan Tunnicliffe sealing the win.

Tsaroulla's story epitomises the magic of the competition: released by Spurs as a youngster, he then endured a serious car accident which kept him out the game for a year. Thrown a lifeline by Crawley, he responded with his first goal for the club to kickstart the famous victory. Emotionally overcome by the



Tottenham's Lucas Moura scores their third goal during the FA Cup third-round match against Marine FC. Photo: AFP

occasion, he broke down in his post-match interview.

Elsewhere, non-league Chorley beat Wayne Rooney-managed Championship team Derby County 2-0. Derby admittedly fielded their youth team after COVID ripped through the club and exempted senior professionals from playing but it was still a great result for Chorley.

It was a true team effort and not just from the players as it emerged that groundsman Ben Kay had slept on the pitch under a heated tent the evening before, overseeing the extra heaters brought

in to thaw the frozen field to ensure the game could go ahead.

The finances secured by advancing will ensure Chorley continue to operate for many years to come.

DAVID VS. GOLIATH

West Brom's season staggers from bad to worse as they were beaten by League One Blackpool on penalties after a 2-2 scoreline after extra-time. It mounts the pressure on manager Sam Allardyce who now reverts his attention to the Baggies' Premier league relegation battle.

The lowest ranked team in the competition, Marine FC, were unable to produce what would have been the most astounding result in FA Cup history as they bowed out 0-5 to Tottenham Hotspur but it was still a fantastic occasion representing all that is so unique about the competition.

Marine, from the eighth tier of English football, were always playing David against Spurs' Goliath but, for a group of part-timers to have their day in the sun on a bitterly cold evening in the northwest, was a joy to behold.

Walking the final few hun-

dred yards to the ground as their executive coach was unable to fit in the carpark would have been a first for Spurs' millionaire players as would changing and preparing pre-match in a makeshift pub. For Gareth Bale in particular, the memory of Real Madrid must have felt a million miles off.

Spectators were not permitted but that did not stop fans in the back gardens of homes backing on to one side of the ground making noise throughout. Some climbed trees and scaffolding to get a better view of the action. The sound of air horns was a

constant throughout. Even a cardboard cutout of Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp could be seen peering over one wall.

Spurs manager Jose Mourinho showed Marine the utmost respect by fiedling a strong side with a combined total of 402 international caps. And, of course, it showed as his team's quality ensured they eased to victory.

It wasn't to be the fairytale for Marine that many had hoped for but it illustrated perfectly what the FA Cup is all about and why it is regarded as the most magical cup competition in the world.

Doubts cast on Thai league return

FOOTBALL

THERE IS A STRONG likelihood that the restart of the suspended 2020/2021 Thai football season will be further delayed until the beginning of March.

A new coronavirus outbreak in the country had forced the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) and Thai League Co Ltd to suspend all Thai Leagues 1 and 2 matches scheduled for the month of January to prevent spread of the deadly virus.

Sathit Pitutecha, Thailand's Deputy Public Health Minister, said on Jan 9 the Thai leagues matches "might have to be postponed for two months" to stop coronavirus from spreading further in the country.



Port's Nelson Bonilla vies with Samut Prakan's Suphanan Bureerat. Photo: Bangkok Post

"It is not just the football Thai leagues as it includes the Thai volleyball league as well," Sathit added.

All domestic football activities were suspended from March to September during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bangkok Post

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Sport

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The magic of the FA Cup lives on > p15



Students of the Dojo show off their medals with teachers and family members. Photo: Blue Tree

DOJO SHOWING THE WAY

JIU-JITSU

The Phuket News
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Less than a year after being founded, a Mixed Martial Arts Studio based in Phuket is the talk of the town after an impressive medal haul from a series of recent national competitions.

Set up early last year by Frenchman Alexis Plantard, Dojo, located in the Lifestyle Village at Blue Tree Phuket, competed in the National Jiu-Jitsu championships in Bangkok last November where its students emerged with an incredible 18 medals.

"We won eight gold medals, nine silver medals and one bronze medal," an incredibly proud Alexis said.

This achievement was all the more impressive as the team had only had a few months of practice before competing in the national competition alongside almost 2,000 participants from all over Thailand.

Later in November the team competed at the National Judo Championships in Sakon Nakhon where a further medal was secured.

"We won a bronze medal and one of our students was so very close to becoming a representative of the national

team," said Alexis.

December saw students once again venture to Bangkok to compete in the fourth annual Siam Cup, Thailand's premier Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournament, where they captured four silver medals.

According to their website, the Siam Cup is an internationally recognised platform for Thai and international athletes to gain competitive experience for personal development as well as a springboard for dedicated athletes to compete in the Asian Games, and in International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) amateur and professional tournaments worldwide.

MORAL CODE

Alexis is a 4th-dan black belt in Judo and Jiu-Jitsu with 27 years' experience practising martial arts who achieved 3rd place at both the 2018 World Judo Championships and the World Wrestling Championships in 2019. With the support of Blue Tree he still competes at international events representing his home country, France.

He established the Dojo at Blue Tree in early 2020 and has already developed a strong team of students and champions.

"The objective of the dojo is to develop martial arts values and to create a dynamic

fighter community in the north of Phuket," commented Alexis.

"The moral code of martial arts is to teach kids how to become a good person.

"It's not about actually getting a black belt but more so about how to conduct oneself with honour and respect under the code of a black belt."

The future prospects certainly appear to be bright for the dojo as Alexis confirmed the number of participants has increased everyday since the summer with new students arriving daily.

"For 2021 we have big expectations with the goal

of helping as many of our students as possible have the chance to compete with the national teams of judo, jiu-jitsu and wrestling," said Alexis.

"And for other students the aim is to have fun every day on the mats while developing their technique and hopefully win the maximum number of championships available."

The Blue Tree Dojo is open daily from 10am to 7pm. All levels are welcome with the first session offered as a free trial. For further information please visit the Facebook page or contact: 092 805 8527 or email: dojo@bluetree.fun

Series levelled at ACG to set up decider

CRICKET

LAST SUNDAY (JAN 10) SAW the second match in a tri-series event between an Asia select XI and a Rest of the World (ROW) select XI at the ACG.

Once again it was the pairing of Seemant Raju and Imtiaz Mushtaq who opened the batting for Asia, scoring to 60 by the 11th over.

Mushtaq (24) fell as he was caught by Justin Swart off a Michael Flowers delivery and

the same duo combined three overs later to dismiss Raju (32).

An Asia mid-order collapse then ensued as Curt Livermore took four valuable wickets with the score 177 for 7 in the 25th over.

Sameer Khan stood strong for Asia to reach 52 off 62 before he was caught by Stuart Hamilton off the bowling of Dom Judge, then Swart and Judge finished off the tail for a total of 189.

Jeremy Bootsy and Dan Nicholson opened the batting for ROW with the former claiming two fours

off Pir's bowling in the third over.

After Nicholson fell LBW in the fourth over, Swart joined Bootsy for what resulted in a very solid partnership with the score at 113 for 1 by the 15th over. Bootsy, however, was caught behind one run shy of his half century.

Swart was run out for 64 bringing to the crease the Hamilton and Joe ANinan left-hand right-hand partnership who boosted the run total to 153 by the 22nd over.

Bhattacharya surgically removed Hamilton's off stump, leaving Ninan

(16 not out) and Livermore (17 not out) to seal victory, thus ensuring the series will see a deciding game on Sunday.

Swart earned man-of-the-match with his 64, 1 for 26 off 7 overs and 3 catches. Asia's players of note included Sameer Khan (52 off 62) and Ali Khan (2 for 25 off 5).

Neil Quail
The Asia vs ROW series decider will take place on Sunday (Jan 17) at the ACG from 10am. Cricket training is at the same venue on Fridays from 4-6pm.



Samir Khan goes for another boundary on his way to a 52 against ROW last Sunday at the ACG. Photo: Neil Quail