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HARD BLOWS



Bangla Rd remains bereft of any tourists. Photo: The Phuket News

PATONG BARS STILL STRUGGLING SUFFER IN VACCINATION REGISTRATIONS, UNDERHANDED ANTICS

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The head of the Patong Entertainment Business Association (PEBA) has criticised the system for people to register to be vaccinated for COVID-19, calling the system over-complicated and overlooking the need to prioritise entertainment venue workers in the key tourism town.

Initial hiccups in getting people to register saw the association having to repeatedly submit names and details of more than 500 staff and management, PEBA President Weerawit Kreuasombat told *The Phuket News*.

“At first, the Phuket government sent an order to our association instructing us to start a registration service, so we opened a written registration desk in front of Illuzion and very quickly had the names of 554 people working in Bangla,” he said.

“The 554 names are owners and workers in entertainment venues as well as some of their relatives in Patong,” he added.

“After we submitted the list of names, they told us to enter the name into the Excel file. They then explained to us that the team of registration officers had a lot of problems entering the information into the database, so I had to ask all of them to register again

by themselves through the website,” Mr Weerawit explained.

“At this stage, I understand that we do not have enough medical staff because many people have to be vaccinated each day. A lot of people gather at the centres to be vaccinated, especially at Saphan Hin [near Phuket Town] and at Jungceylon shopping mall [in Patong],” he said.

“I think the registration through the website is quite difficult for some people. Most workers know how to do it... but some people are still confused by the conditions for being approved to receive the vaccine, such as their medical history, what is a chronic disease and just the age

requirements,” Mr Weerawit noted.

“I appreciate the effort from everyone and know well that everyone wants to do their best, however, I think we need local municipal officers to open for people to register and enter information into the system for local people, as I think that if each individual enters information by themselves, it will become a mess. Some people may be left behind,” he said.

“Today, they are trying to vaccinate all people, not only the front-line workers in the tourism industry. However, some entertainment venue workers told me that they are still afraid of the side effects of the vaccinations...

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News



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Patong bars' future left in the dark

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"I understand the fear of side effects, but I would say that the registration system is a fail [sic] as it requires people to go through a lot of processes," Mr Weerawit said.

"Some people thought they were already registered just because medical health volunteers had come to their houses and asked for their information," he noted.

Mr Weerawit also pointed out that foreigners working in tourism-related businesses in Patong had been neglected in the initial push to have people register to be vaccinated.

Asked whether the PEBA submitted names and details of foreigners working in Patong, he replied, "Nope, as we knew that the government asked only for only Thai people first."

However, Mr Weerawit quickly pointed out, "For me, I think the government must provide vaccinations to everyone. No matter what nationality the workers are,



Bangla bars open to an empty street. Photo: The Phuket News

they must be vaccinated. I want all of them to be vaccinated, but it is beyond my power to do that.

"At this stage, nationality does not matter, we have to focus on the type of work they do and where they work. However, I understand that for the government, they must focus on the majority of people first," he said.

"I think all business operators who have foreign em-

ployees must provide them vaccinations even if they have to pay for them," he added.

Following the several outbreak clusters of COVID19 emanating from entertainment venues in Bangkok earlier this month, resulting in enforced earlier closing times and heightened anti-COVID measures in the capital, Mr Weerawit pointed out that entertainment venues needed special attention.

In terms of how important it is for Patong entertainment industry workers, both staff and management, to be vaccinated as a priority, Mr Weerawit said, "It is very important because the workers are like those who are welcoming guests in our living room. They are like a connection between tourists and other groups of workers, like tuk-tuk drivers. The workers have close contact with tourists, so

they have to be safe."

However, Mr Weerawit also noted that the feeling on the street was a lesser fear of COVID than the ongoing economic pressure continuing to bring financial hardship for all people in the town.

"Basically, at this stage, we are getting used to COVID-19 news. I don't think I am afraid of the infection as much as before, as the infection depends on how healthy we are and our immunity. The people at risk are only youths and elders. Right now, we also have vaccines, so the fear is becoming less and less," he said.

"To be honest, the most important thing right now is income, the money in our pockets. This is for both venue operators and staff. We have tried everything we can think of. At this stage, we are not afraid of being infected with COVID-19, but of dying with no income.

"Bangla Rd is still quiet. We have a lot of custom-

ers only on the nights when we have concerts by famous singers. Overall, we are still suffering," he said.

Despite the ongoing economic crisis and many ordinary people still unable to pay household bills, underhanded antics are still being practiced in Patong, Mr Weerawit also noted.

"Although business is still very quiet, some officers who make their own benefits from operators keep coming to Bangla Rd. We are dying, as we have no income, but they keep coming to get benefits from us. It is like entertainment operators and workers are being beaten by the officers," he said.

"In normal situations, we understand they do it, as we tend to operate in the grey areas, but for now we hardly have any income which must be spent on paying electricity bills and employees. I want this problem to be highlighted," he said.

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Paralysed by a drunken cop

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The 25-year-old noodle vendor shot by a drunken off-duty police officer on Bangla Rd will never walk again, and only recently underwent surgery to increase his chances of being able to sit up, doctors have told the young man's wife.

The noodle vendor, Aroon Thongplab, was shot in the stomach by Cpl Pornthep Channarong of the Phuket Provincial Police just before 6am on Feb 23 in an unprovoked attack while he was walking along the street after collecting a noodle bowl from a customer.

In less than 24 hours Pornthep was stripped of his rank and discharged from the Royal Thai Police, and now faces charges of attempted murder, carrying a firearm in a public area without necessary reason, and firing a weapon in a public area.

Aroon has been receiving treatment at Vachira Phuket Hospital, where he finally woke from a coma, but remained paralysed as the bullet fired from close range had hit his spine.



Mr Aroon's wife, Ms Kulthida, and their 4-month-old son at Vachira Phuket Hospital the day after her husband was shot (Feb 24). Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Doctors have now told Mr Aroon's wife, Kulthida Chananan, 26, that he husband will not walk again.

"Doctors have confirmed to me that he will not be able walk again because the nerve in his spine was torn apart," Ms Kulthida told *The Phuket News* on Apr 6.

"He cannot feel or move the lower part from his waist. Doctors just gave him spine surgery last week, so that he can sit. However, the doctors cannot assure that the surgery will work. We have to wait to see if his recovery goes well

along with physiotherapy," she said.

"At this stage, he is still in the Intensive Care Unit at Vachira Phuket Hospital. He has not been able to speak because he still has a tube [intubated into his throat] to assist his breathing. His lungs have improved without any internal bleeding. He is conscious and able to move his hands a little bit, but we have to read his mouth to understand what he wants to say," Ms Kulthida explained.

Bringing formal charges against Pornthep have been

slow, Ms Kulthida confirmed.

"I have already asked Patong Police, and they told me that at this stage the report to file [with the public prosecutor] is about 90% complete. I am also waiting for a notice from the court," she said.

"Today [April 6] officers from Region 8 Police came to the hospital to question Aroon, but he has not been able to speak," she added.

"I asked them about the bail conditions, and they told me that the suspect is still in jail," she said.

The Phuket Provincial

Court approved Pornthep to be released on bail on B600,000 surety, despite a request from the Royal Thai Police to deny Pornthep bail privileges.

Ms Kulthida pointed out that without the intense media coverage that ensued in the aftermath of her husband being shot by a drunken police officer, interest in her case by officials had faded.

"On the first day, Region 8 Police gave me flowers and B20,000 cash, and Phuket Provincial Police gave me B10,000. After that some officials contacted me, but I have not received any news from them for a while. I do not know if they are working on my case or not," she said.

"I'm a normal person. I do not know which official to ask for help. My husband's case gained attention for a while, but after that no one contacted me," she added.

Ms Kulthida has been struggling to cope with the burden of dealing with officials while coping with the traumatic situation and already suffering financially.

"Ever since my husband was shot about a month and two weeks ago, my mum and I have not been able to return

to selling noodles because I am busy filing documents with officials and visiting Aroon at the hospital," Ms Kulthida said.

"It's all down to me who is responsible for filing documents with officials, so I have to let my relatives take care of my children," she explained.

Mr Aroon and Ms Kulthida have two children: a 4-year-old daughter and a 4-month-old son.

Asked what assistance high-profile rights lawyer Kerdphol Kaewkerd from Bangkok was continuing to provide, Ms Kulthida said, "He often calls me. He said he is also waiting for a notice from the court. So mostly, he just asks about Aroon's condition."

During talks with Mr Kerdphol on Mar 2, Patong Police Chief Col Sujin Nilabodi promised to help Mr Aroon's family.

However, called by *The Phuket News* on Apr 6, Col Sujin was only willing to say, "Police have already concluded the investigation and will file the report to the public prosecutor next week."

Col Sujin then terminated the conversation, saying that he was busy.

Airport reminds travellers 'gophuget' registration still required for arrivals

PHUKET INTERNATIONAL Airport has reminded travellers that they must still register their intended travel to Phuket through the gophuget.com web portal and have MorChana installed on their phone in order to be cleared to arrive on the island.

People must wear face masks at all times while in the airport area, and all travellers must register their travel details via gophuget.com and install the Mor Chana app, in accordance with a provincial order issued by the Phuket Governor, AoT Phuket noted in an official notice.

Also, no people with body temperatures over 37.3°C will be allowed to enter the airport. All people will have their body temperatures checked when entering airport buildings.

"Cleaning and sanitizing have been stepped up at all touchpoints (escalator handrails and luggage cart handles, etc.), and hand sanitizers have been placed throughout the airport," AoT Phuket also assured.



The announcement followed a visit by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew yesterday (Apr 1) to inspect the mass vaccination efforts now underway at the airport. Photo: AoT Phuket

"Passengers should arrive at the airport at least 1-2 hours before departure time," the airport management advised.

The notice came as AoT Phuket released its full monthly schedule of domestic flights, showing Bangkok Airways, Thai Lion Air, Vietjet, Nok Air and Thai Smile all flying to and from Phuket, for the month of April. However, the airport cautioned that the flight schedule was subject to flight changes or flight times without prior notice.

"Please contact the airline directly before booking

the ticket," the notice said.

People can file complaints with the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), AoT Phuket noted in a separate post.

Meanwhile, the AoT management team responsible for Suvarnabhumi International Airport has issued a reminder that digital capture images and photocopies of boarding passes will not be accepted.

Only e-boarding passes present in an official app or presentation of an email will be accepted, the Suvarnabhumi airport operators confirmed. *The Phuket News*



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Extend COVID visas early to avoid rush

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Immigration Office has called for all foreigners staying on 60-day 'COVID visas' to extend them early to avoid overloading the office with last-minute applications, as experienced during the last days of last month.

The call follows surreal scenes at the main Phuket Immigration Office in Phuket Town on Mar 25, when scores of foreigners arrived en masse to have their 60-day so-called 'COVID visas' extended so they could continue their stay in the country.

The call for foreigners to extend their 60-day visas early also followed Immigration Bureau Commission Lt Gen Somphong Chingduang on Mar 30 issuing a notice to all immigration offices in the country to continue extending 60-day 'COVID visas' until



Photo: The Phuket News

at least May 29.

"Since currently, the Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 pandemic is spreading around the globe while Thailand is facing second waves of the outbreak, affecting the departure from Thailand and the foreigners staying within the Kingdom. Hence, it is approved for an extension of stay in accordance with the notice mentioned above until 29 May 2021," the notice said.

An officer at Phuket Immigration who asked to be called only "Inspector Kratae"

told *The Phuket News*, "The COVID visa can be extended early within 45 days before the expiry date, just like other visas, but I would like people to come only one to two weeks early because we may need a couple of days to process the extension for some foreigners.

"We are worried about making sure their reported address and the address of their current accommodation matches," she said.

"Additionally, foreigners have to check the expiry date on their passport, as we can-

not extend the visa beyond the passport's expiry date. They also have to check if their passports have blank space for the stamp because we cannot extend their visa if their passports are full. They need a new passport," Ms Kratae added.

"We have to face these problems very often, so please check your passport and contact your embassy or consulate to renew as necessary," she explained.

"To prevent congestion at the office, please make a booking through the QueQ app before coming to the office, so you do not have to wait for a long time [to be served]," she said.

In the QueQ app (available via Google Play and the App Store), Phuket Immigration is listed under the "Banks / Service" section.

As there is no "Extend COVID Visa" option available through the booking app,

Ms Kratae advised people to select "Certification or request by an embassy".

"Please confirm your booking when you receive the second alert through the app, otherwise the app will dismiss the queue booking you made," she warned.

"I will ask my commander to add a new option for COVID visa extension later," she said.

Another officer *The Phuket News* spoke to also urged foreigners to not leave their visa renewals to the last-minute, in the hope of getting the maximum number days' stay.

"People should come to renew their visas early, especially people staying on COVID visas. There is no need to panic. The global pandemic situation is still a long way from being resolved, and we will keep issuing these 60-day [COVID] visas until the situation improves," he said.

Municipal election preliminary results released

THE PHUKET OFFICE OF the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) has released the preliminary counts of all votes cast last weekend in the local elections in the 12 municipal areas on the island on Mar 28

More than 230,000 eligible voters turned out to cast their votes for candidates contesting the positions of mayor or as councillors in the 12 municipalities: Phuket City, Patong, Kathu, Wichit, Chalong, Rawai, Rassada, Srisoonthorn, Karon, Cherno Talay, Thepkasattri and Pa Khlok.

However, PEC Chief Passakon Siripakayapon cautioned that the official results of the election might take 30-60 days to announce, giving election officials until May 27 to announce the results.

Staff at the PEC explained that in accordance with election law the PEC will forward the ballots to the Election Commission of Thailand in Bangkok for confirmation of the results, which by law must be announced within 30 days of the election, notwithstanding any complaints filed against candidates.

"The Election Commission will complete the count as soon as possible and announce the election results within 60 days of



Thapanorn Ongsantiphap has been elected Mayor of Chalong, according to preliminary results of the elections on Mar 28. Photo: Chalong Municipality

the election day," a PEC staffer said.

The full list of the preliminary results posted by the PEC are as follows:

PATONG

1 Chalerm Sak Maneesri - 2,924 votes
2 Chalerm Luck Kebsup - 2,811 votes
3 Pakrit Keesin - 2,686 votes
Eligible voters: 13,503
Votes cast: 8,887
Votes deemed valid: 8,421

PHUKET TOWN

1 Sarot Angkanapilat - 12,221 votes
2 Somjai Suwansupana - 9,690 votes
Eligible voters: 47,421
Votes cast: 24,355
Votes deemed valid: 21,911

CHALONG

1 Thapanorn Ongsantiphap - 6,203 votes

2 Samran Jindaphol - 5,099 votes
3 Somchai Thechathaworncharoen - 339 votes
Eligible voters: 19,282
Votes cast: 12,266
Votes deemed valid: 11,641

CHERNG TALAY

1 Suniran Rachatapluk - 2,001 votes
2 Aphisit Nganprasertkit - 828 votes
Eligible voters: 4,124
Votes cast: 2,964
Votes deemed valid: 2,829

RAWAI

1 Aroon Solos - 5,582 votes
Eligible voters: 12,646
Votes cast: 7,327
Votes deemed valid: 5,582

KARON

1 Jadet Wicharasorn - 2,312 votes
2 Ittiphon Sangkaew - 1,370 votes
Eligible voters: 5,572
Votes cast: 3,888
Votes deemed valid: 3,682

KATHU

1 Chaianan Suthikul - 6,319 votes
2 Prasert Khaokitpaisarn - 4,382 votes
3 Srithep Udomlap - 254 votes
Eligible voters: 21,233
Votes cast: 11,762
Votes deemed valid: 10,955

RASSADA

1 Nakarin Yorsaengrat - 12,401 votes
2 Somkit Suphap - 5,325 votes
Eligible voters: 35,217
Votes cast: 20,024
Votes deemed valid: 17,726

SRISOONTHORN

1 Chalermphon Kertsup - 8,410 votes
Eligible voters: 19,209
Votes cast: 10,460
Votes deemed valid: 8,410

THEPKRASATTRI

1 Prasong Trairat - 2,867 votes
2 Wittaya Sinkha - 1,052 votes
Eligible voters: 6,018
Votes cast: 4,192
Votes deemed valid: 3,919

WICHIT

1 Kreetha Chotiwichippan - 12,827 votes
Eligible voters: 38,793
Votes cast: 18,023
Votes deemed valid: 12,827

PA KHLOK

1 Panya Samphaorat - 4,472 votes
2 Athiphong Kongnam - 2,465 votes
3 Sattra Karnkanok - 1,660 votes
Eligible voters: 12,723
Votes cast: 9,172
Votes deemed valid: 8,597

The Phuket News

Government hopes for anti-trafficking upgrade

Bangkok Post

Thailand has submitted a report to the US detailing its anti-human trafficking efforts in the hope of being upgraded from Tier 2 to Tier 1 in Washington's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, due for release in June.

Deputy government spokeswoman Rachada Dhnadirek said the government was aiming for Tier 1 after being ranked in Tier 2 for three consecutive years.

Tier 1 lists countries whose governments fully comply with the minimum standards set out in the US' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), while Tier 2 applies to governments that do not fully comply with the minimum standards, but which are making efforts to bring themselves into compliance.

In 2018, Thailand was upgraded from Tier 2's watch list to Tier 2 in recognition of significant strides made compared to the previous year.

Before that, Thailand was ranked in Tier 3 which is for countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are



Thailand has taken steps to regulate and protect workers in the fishing industry following the fishing slavery scandal several years ago that saw the EU and US pressure the country to improve its human trafficking laws. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

not making significant efforts to do so.

Thailand submitted the 2020 TIP Report on Feb 2 and a report on progress in its anti-human trafficking operations from January to March of this year to the US embassy on April 3, according to Ms Rachada.

This year's submission includes statistics on arrests and punishments for human-trafficking offences as well as the implementation of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. Thailand

is the first Asian country to introduce such a plan, she said.

The country is processing human trafficking cases more quickly by shortening the investigation time from 118 days in 2015 to 70 days in 2020, Ms Rachada added.

The country has also developed procedures to help human-trafficking victims with differing sexualities and set up centres to help migrant workers with work-related problems.

Another important achievement was the use of the PRO-

TECT-U application developed by the Social Development and Human Security Ministry, she said.

Available in seven languages, the app receives complaints from human-trafficking victims and provides them with access to protection.

In the fishing industry, the Third Area Command's Maritime Enforcement Coordination Centre (THAI-MECC Area 3) was established to regulate and enforce laws protecting workers. This came in the wake of the fishing slavery scandal that rocked the Thai fishing industry a handful of years ago and led to Thailand facing dramatic economic punishments from the EU and the US if the country did not improve its efforts to prevent human trafficking.

Ms Rachada said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha thanked all sectors, particularly the civil sector, for working together to prevent and suppress human trafficking in Thailand. Their cooperation had contributed to concrete achievements in the country's anti-human trafficking efforts, she quoted him as saying.

'Unemployed' elephants take 500km walk home

AFTER WAITING IN vain for tourists near Pattaya for more than a year, five elephants and their owners are making the 500 kilometre journey back to their northeastern home province of Surin – on foot.



Five 'unemployed' elephants and their owners begin their walk. Photo: Chaiyot Pupattanapong

Members of five extended families and their five elephants started the journey from Bang Lamung district on April 6, with a pickup truck protecting the group in the front and the back.

Napalai Mai-ngam, 26, said her relatives and their tamed elephants had been working at an elephant resort in tambon Lam Huay Yai for five years. They had made a good living, receiving a monthly salary of B15,000 per elephant plus tips from tourists who enjoyed riding their elephants on nature trails.

COVID-19 stopped everything in January last year. Their employer suspended paying their salaries when the Chinese tourists who formed the majority of their customers disappeared.

With no immediate return of tourists in sight

amid the continuing pandemic, they finally gave up hope and decided to go back to farming in their home province.

The pachyderms would have to walk the 500km distance because the owners could not afford to hire big trucks to carry them. The owners also hoped their elephants could feed themselves by grazing along the way.

Ms Napalai estimated that it would take about two weeks for her group to reach their home district of Tha Tum in Surin and that she was very grateful to villagers who donated fruit, drinking water and food to them as they passed by. Bangkok Post

Cabinet ministers, MPs enter COVID quarantine

SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS AND all Bhumjaithai Party MPs began a 14-day quarantine on April 7 after being in close contact with new COVID-19 cases.

Natreeya Taweewong, adviser to the prime minister, confirmed that the ministers who took the leave were Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam, Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob, Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Chalermchai Sri-on, his deputy Mananya Thaiset, Education Minister Trinuch Thienthong and her deputies Khunying Kalaya Sophonpanich and Kanokwan Vilawan.

Supachai Jaismut, registrar of the coalition Bhumjaithai Party, said Transport Minister Saksayam, the secretary-general, attended a



Prayut: tested negative. Photo: AFP

party anniversary event on April 6 and therefore all Bhumjaithai MPs would also enter 14-day self-quarantine, during which time they would be absent from parliamentary sessions.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said that he had taken another COVID-19 test prior to the Cabinet meeting on April 7 and it returned negative. Bangkok Post

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Science and Conspiracy Theories



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Jewish space lasers, the lizard oligarchy, QAnon, 5G causes COVID-19, the global pandemic is a hoax, Bill Gates is trying to microchip the world, the moon landing was faked, the Earth is flat. Conspiracy theories have always been with us, but mostly they remained on the fringe, with your weird uncle who claimed aliens abducted him. However, today thanks to the Internet and social media they've gone mainstream, but like theoretical physicist Lawrence Krause likes to say, "Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out."

Webster's dictionary defines a conspiracy theory as, "A theory that explains an event or set of circumstances as the result of a secret plot by usually powerful conspirators."

It would be easy to write them off as a harmless distraction, but during a global pandemic people are making life-changing decisions based on conjecture and falsehoods. So why do people believe in things that don't have evidence behind them?

The Three Blind Men

There's an Indian story about a group of blind men who wanted to know what an elephant looked like. So, they in-



Photo: Mika Baumeister / Unsplash

spected it by touch, each of them taking a different part of the animal. The first blind man grabbed the trunk and said, "An elephant is like a gigantic snake." The second grabbed its tusk and proclaimed, "The elephant is like a sharp spear." The third blind man placed his hand on its side and said, "The elephant is like an enormous wall."

We are all a bit like those blind men grasping for our own personal truths, but not understanding the bigger picture.

Why Do People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?

Real conspiracies exist. The United States National Security Agency spied on its citizens and allies. Big tobacco lied about cigarettes being harmless. Big pharma lied about how addictive their opiates were. However, the truth didn't come out because of Internet keyboard warriors jumping to conclusions based on circumstantial evidence. They were discovered because of government investigations, whistleblowers or investigative journalists who had substantial amounts of solid evidence in the form of organization documents and peer-reviewed science to support them.

Our brains are wired to look for explanations even when one isn't readily available and are heavily influenced by cognitive biases and heuristics.

A cognitive bias is an error in how you interpret information. Behavioural economist Daniel Kahneman has identified dozens of these. For example, confirmation bias occurs when you only look for information that supports what you already believe. The Dunning Kruger effect is when you think you are more knowledgeable in a subject than you actually are. This bias can lead to poor decisions.

A cognitive heuristic is when our brains use shortcuts in thinking to

draw conclusions. For example, the stereotype that someone who wears glasses is smarter than someone who doesn't.

Our brains use these strategies because for most of human history we've needed to make quick life or death decisions that didn't allow for a lot of analysis. However, today there is less of a threat of being eaten by a wild animal, but the choices we need to make are infinitely more complex.

Although we have science to address these complex questions, sometimes the answers are complicated and even contradictory because there isn't enough data available to draw a definitive conclusion. People often want a sense of certainty and need simple solutions that will not take much time to understand, so they resort to conspiracies.

It's also easier to spread lies. In a 2018 MIT study published in Science Magazine researchers concluded that false information spreads on average six times faster on social media platforms than the truth does. The primary reasons were that they were novel ideas, designed to evoke powerful emotions like surprise or disgust, so people shared them more often.

How To Spot Fake Conspiracies

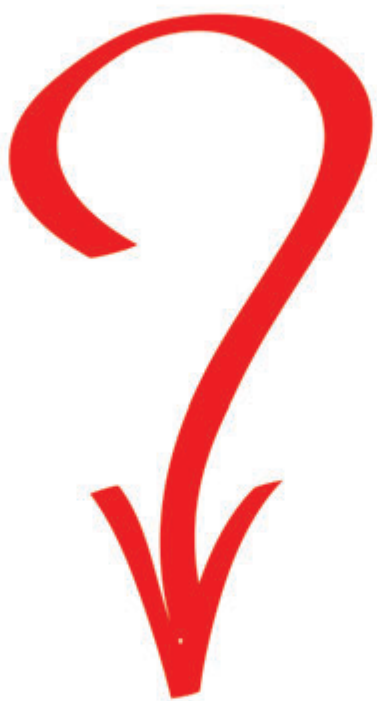
If you want to spot fake conspiracies, it is important to understand the scientific process and to be skeptical about outlandish claims. Behavioural economist Daniel Kahneman recommends thinking systematically to overcome cognitive biases and heuristics. You can begin by asking yourself a series of questions. Who is the source of the information and what are their credentials? Is there empirical evidence, facts or peer reviewed science to support the claim? Is there historical precedence for it? Is the information consistent with your experiences and those around you? Does the source have an agenda and what is it?

Getting to the truth can be a long and complex process, but it is important for making good decisions. To paraphrase philosopher Ayn Rand, "You can deny reality, but you cannot deny the consequences of denying reality."

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



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By Joanna Matlub

After reading over the past few weeks all about the unspoilt beauty of the islands around Phuket to be enjoyed, you might ask, "What more can I add?" Just take a look at this incredible picture and let's leave it there shall we?

Oh OK, go on then, let me talk you through this and some other inspiring experiences you can have while exploring Krabi's hidden island treasures with 5 Star Marine's private speedboats.

Koh Hong Krabi and the smaller Krabi province archipelagos are typically quieter than the more popular Phi Phi or Phang Nga Bay area tours. However, the sheer natural beauty you get to encounter really is something else. This area provides you with everything you could want from a day out with your friends or family – whether it be snorkelling, discovering white sandy private beaches, hiking or sightseeing – there is something to keep everyone happy.

Koh Hong sits in-between the Koh Yao Islands and Krabi mainland, and already had a great name for itself with its stunning lagoon. Entering through a narrow passageway you are greeted by the scenic and mesmerising Koh Hong Lagoon. This striking turquoise body of shallow water is surrounded by high rock walls lined with lush mangroves giving a forgotten world feeling to it. Only accessible by small boat or longtail, some areas are so clear and shallow you can easily see your feet on the underwater sand.

You could even get to enjoy the mystical sense of being in this bright turquoise lagoon with its almost hidden entrance all to yourselves. When things do start to pick up again this lagoon can get quite crowded, however 5 Star Marine have the knowledge



Photo: Sunny Rung

and expertise to miss the rush and give you the most private and memorable time here.

After taking in the vibrant colours of Koh Hong Lagoon, let your adventurous side loose and make your way around to the most recent addition to the island; the breath-taking 360° Viewpoint. This impressive metal staircase structure was built just last year, during COVID, and was designed to give panoramic 360° views of Krabi and the surround-

ing islands. It certainly delivers, and is arguably one of the best seascape views of the Krabi island sets, Phang Nga Bay and surrounding islands in the national park that you can get from anywhere.

The climb is not for the fainthearted as you will need to ascend the metal stairs (all 419 of them apparently, although I cannot profess to have actually counted), and progress along wooden walkways for around 10-15 minutes in the tropical heat, with no shade, before reaching the top viewing platform. Here, your efforts will be greatly rewarded with the most spectacular view. At around 109 metres above sea level, it is definitely a steep climb, but totally doable and worth the exertion to get all the way up to the top to see views of tropical islands and karst limestone mountains jutting out of the emerald waters. This experience is perfect for a group of friends, but is also safe for families with children too; just remember to take shoes, hats and enough water with you.

Once you have had your fill of these stunning panoramic seascapes, make your way back down to shore and catch your breath before heading out to your pick of fantastic snorkelling and island locations nearby. With clear waters, secluded lagoons and abundant marine life in the shallow and deep-water coral reefs; you could even get lucky enough to spot a reef shark on your adventure.

With so much to see and do, the Krabi Islands are a perfect mix for sightseeing, adventure, snorkelling and private white sandy beaches.

Get a group of up to 18 people together and take advantage of the 50% discount which has been extended until the end of April. Plus, if you quote *The Phuket News* when booking your adventure to get FREE round-trip private mini bus transfers.

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POP QUIZ

- Which is bigger: Thailand or the US State of Texas?
- Which World War I flying ace has a Grand Slam tennis stadium named after him?
- What name was given to the Mongol kingdom that ruled much of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, in the 13th and 14th centuries?
- Where were the first Commonwealth Games held?
- What did Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis co-found together in 2003?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

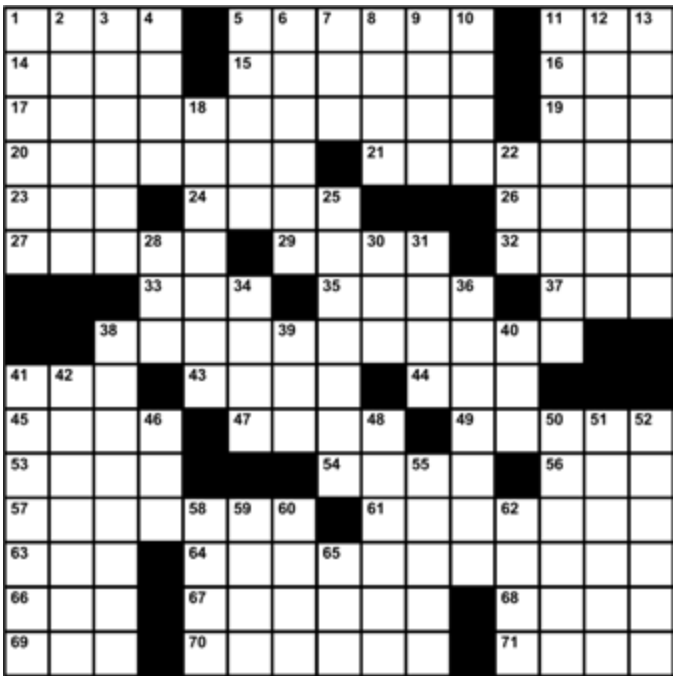
7		6				8		3
	5		6		7		2	
2	3		8		5		4	7
6	7		4		9		5	1
	8		9		1		6	
3		9				1		4

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**

 - Shuttlecock
 - Ho Chi Minh City
 - Calendar abbr.
 - Brother of Jacob
 - Burning
 - Chemical ending
 - Developer
 - Pilot's announcement, briefly
 - Watery motion
 - Watch the bottom
 - Tree under which Buddha was born
 - Storage cylinder
 - Textile designer and printmaker Albers
 - 1545 council site
 - "Cheaper by the dozen" actress, Hilary
 - Kind of room
 - Crumb
 - Plane, e.g.
 - Parked oneself
 - Real estate listing information, often
 - Cow or sow
 - Kind of palm
 - Low card
 - Microscope part
 - Study, say
 - Medieval light
 - Four Corners state
 - Ancient alphabetic character
- Down**

 - Bidding
 - Meteorologist's line
 - Talk aimlessly
 - The Everly Brothers composition
 - Riyadh resident
 - Away from home
 - Under the weather
 - Moves restlessly
 - Foreboding
 - Roman fiddler
 - Gentleness
 - Wave catcher
 - One not wearing rose colored glasses
 - Eating places
 - St. Louis pro
- Before, of yore
 - End of boyish period
 - Potato measurement
 - Track action
 - Commodore's lyric, "She's ____" and home description
 - Be off base
 - Ending
 - Boxer Spinks
 - Jamie Foxx's legend
 - Out of it
 - Sheltered, at sea
 - Alfresco
 - Parent's order
 - FYI part
 - Contractor's measure
 - Ski lift
 - Opposite of sophisticated and advanced
 - All the renters on an estate
 - It may need massaging
 - Jersey call
 - Type of party
 - Greek woman who was a social climber
 - "Quiet!"
 - Clout
 - Fill up the tank again
 - Defoe character
 - Satellite of Saturn
 - A natural juice
 - Clods
 - Life lines?
 - Bond opponent
 - Kind of nut
 - 007 creator Fleming



Solutions to last week's puzzles:

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

- Texas (432,264 sq km, Thailand is 318,838 sq km); (2) Roland Garros; (3) Golden Horde; (4) Hamilton, Canada (1930); (5) Skype

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1.2

miles per hour (1.9km/h) is the average top speed of a mosquito.

17

years is how long the average woman in the UK spends of her life dieting, says one new study.

40

when spelled out is the only number whose letters appear in alphabetical order.

5,000

steps per day and sitting for less than 300 minutes is the norm for people who are fit.

265 million

US dollars is what it cost to create the video game 'Grand Theft Auto V', the largest budget of any video game at the time (in 2013). It made US\$1 billion in the first 72 hours of its release..

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Wat Sin Supharam. Photo: Michael Lee

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

This week in history

April 16, 1457 BC
Likely date of the Battle of Megiddo between Thutmose III and a large Canaanite coalition under the King of Kadesh, the first battle to have been recorded in what is accepted as relatively reliable detail.

April 17, 1961
Bay of Pigs Invasion: A group of Cuban exiles financed and trained by the CIA lands at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba with the aim of ousting Fidel Castro.

April 18, 1930
The BBC announces "there is no news" in their evening report.

April 19, 1984
Advance Australia Fair is proclaimed as Australia's national anthem, and green and gold as the national colours.

April 20, 2010
The Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explodes in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 workers and beginning an oil spill that would last six months.

'City of Bangkok' (1832) by John Crawfurd

April 21, 1782
The city of Rattanakosin, now known internationally as Bangkok, is founded on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya River by King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (Rama I).

April 22, 1529
The Treaty of Zaragoza divides the eastern hemisphere between Spain and Portugal along a line 297.5 leagues or 17° east of the Moluccas.

Source: Wikipedia

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SAT 17 APR



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Sunday roast

12PM – 9PM: All you can eat Sunday Roast Buffet Beef, Pork & Lamb – Cauliflower, Broccoli, Peas, Carrots, Fried mushrooms, Grilled Tomatoes – Yorkshire pudding – Roasted Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes – Gravy, Mushroom sauce, Horse radish, Mint Sauce. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 175 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket



Sunday Brunch at Pine Beach Bar

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Monday BBQ night

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Sausages, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet, Baked potatoes, potato salad & various sauces, Bread, Buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket

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Wednesday Ribs night

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FRI 23 APR



BCCT Multi-Chamber Phuket Networking

BCCT Multi-Chamber Phuket Networking on Friday 23rd April 2021. At Royal Phuket Marina. Cost: THB 700 for BCCT members and participating chambers and THB 900 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. To register in advance please email ban-thita@bccthai.com

FRI 14 MAY



Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners

AustCham Thailand, is delighted to invite you to join us for "Phuket Sundowners" at Hilton Phuket Acadia Resort & Spa, on Friday 14th May 2021, from 18.00-21.00 hrs. Cost: 500 THB for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members. 900 THB for non-members. For registration code for Australian Alumni members, please contact AustCham team at 02 109 9616 or email to office@austchamthailand.com

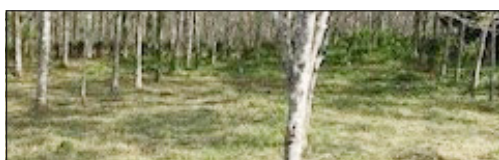
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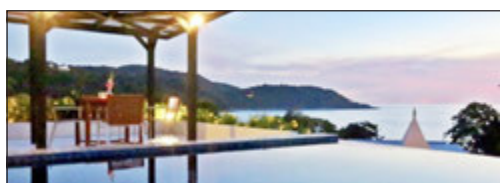
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Ulf retains his singles crown in Kamala heat

BOWLS

Robert Knight

The annual and prestigious Phuket Open Singles Championship took place on Monday, April 5 as 16 bowlers contested the “Blue Riband” trophy, named in honour of Donald Moore, the founder of Kamala bowls club.

Following the recent heavy rains, defending champion Ulf ‘Ue’ Egerstaad and the other players took to the green in steamy, ‘sticky dog’ heat conditions with a random draw and knockout format in place meaning there was no room for slip-ups.

However, first-round casualties included four club stalwarts and three former ‘majors’ champions who had all entered the competition with high hopes.

Ulf and Greg ‘Hollywood’ Holman were the only previous champions remaining and, as they faced off against each other in the quarter-finals, it meant three new faces would advance to the semi-final stage.



Dot and Ulf (left) and Dean and George (right) presented with their trophies by organiser Sammy Sampert (centre). Photo: Robert Knight

Ulf overcame Greg and would meet Ron Blackwood next after he defeated Pat Alim. The other semi-final would be an all-female affair between Dot Barker and Mimi, who was making a long-awaited return to the green after a period attending to maternal duties.

Ulf breezed past Ron with surprising ease 12-2 whilst Dot prevailed against Mimi 10-8 in what was a very tight game.

This meant the defending champ would face a challenger who had managed to make the difficult transition from her

normal crown green bowling game in the UK to the flat green format employed in Phuket.

Ulf took an early lead by sneaking 3 points on the first end but Dot battled back and chipped away to take a 7-5 lead with 3 ends to go. Ulf then claimed a point on end 8 meaning, with 2 ends remaining, it was all up for grabs.

End number 9 was pivotal as Ulf claimed another 3-pointer leaving Dot trailing 7-9 going into the final end where Ulf held his nerve and ultimately triumphed 10-7.

Congratulations to Ulf for retaining his championship and to Dot for her excellent performance.

Additional praise goes to Dot who organised a charity bowls event on April 3 and raised B6000 for orphaned children in Phuket.

In the plate final for first round losers Dean Lambert beat George Sasonow to claim the trophy.

The next competition is the Inter Club annual event when the more senior members of the club take on their junior counterparts in a Ryder Cup style format. This year may see be a few surprise “seasoned veteran” bowlers qualifying for the junior team owing to COVID-related demographic challenges.

Kamala Lawn Bowls Club is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday and everyone is welcome to join. Barefoot bowls is the preferred style. Private parties are available on other days.

For further details please contact the club on 0991307299.

Bellringers win Easter Sunday ding dong

CRICKET

THE ACG SAW A T20 seven-a-side match take place on April 4 in which the Bellringers 7's claimed a narrow 2 wicket victory over the Goan Panthers 7's.

Panthers' captain Mayur Deuskar won the toss with Imtiyaz Mushtaq and Sameer Khan opening the batting cautiously for the Panthers before Justin Swart capitalised on a mix-up in the 5th over that saw Khan stumped for 16.

Danger man Bhanu Pratap was up next although his knock was short lived as ACG debutant Johhanes bowled him for a duck.

Sami Pir joined Mushtaq to advance the score to 77-1 before he was caught by Bootsy for 6 before a succession of wickets fell leaving captain Mayur as the last man standing with 5 overs remaining. A subsequent gallant knock of 58 set the Bellringers a total of 167 to win.

Despite losing Michael Rhys Thomas, Johannes and Dan Nicholson to leave the Bellringers behind on the required run rate with the score at 63-3, Swart (63) and



Panthers captain Mayur Deuskar. Photo: Michael Way

Jeremy Bootsy (66 not out) stepped up to combine for a game clinching partnership.

Mayur, ensuring his team went down fighting, picked up the wickets of Swart and Livermore (2) in the same over although the damage had already been done before Bootsy hit the winning runs in the 19th over to ensure his side ran out 2 wicket victors.

Performances of note included Mayur's 58 runs and 2-8 from 1 over; Swart's 63 runs; Bootsy's 66 not out; Livermore's 4-17 from 3.1 overs. Curt Livermore

Vagabonds Rugby Academy continues to impress

RUGBY

PHUKET VAGABONDS STAGED THEIR third free coaching clinic on Saturday, April 3 at their ACG base in Thalang.

More than 30 youngsters had a great morning out learning the fundamentals of rugby union from 10 coaches who dedicated their time and experience.

Santiago Lopez, the club's youth development officer, again lead the organisation and with a number of new faces, some as young as four years old, the energy and enthusiasm was more than encouraging for the sport's development.

As with previous sessions, four stations were prepared to safely educate the young players in tackling, accurate and timely passing,



The kids going through passing drills at the ACG. Photo: Neil Quail

agility and manoeuvrability, and a game of touch rugby, which was thoroughly enjoyed by young players, coaches and delighted parents.

If you would like to involve your children in future clinics or are interested in becoming a player or sponsor for the Vagabonds youth program, please contact Santiago Lopez via the Phuket Vagabonds Rugby Academy Facebook page. Neil Quail

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Sport



Youth rugby clinic proves big hit > p11

LEST WE FORGET



The line-ups for the last Anzac memorial match between Thailand Tigers and Vietnam Swans in 2009 with POWs Neil MacPherson, Milton 'Snow' Fairclough and Bill Haskell seated centre. Photo: Supaporn Cox

AFL

The Phuket News
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Anzac Day is just around the corner and what better way to honour and respect our fallen soldiers than a trip to Kanchanaburi.

This year's Anzac Day Commemorative Australian Rules Football (AFL) Match will be played at the Visuttharangsi School, Kan-

chanaburi on Saturday, April 24. The game starts at 12pm and will feature the newly formed Phuket Power AFL Club versus Bangkok-based Thailand Tigers AFL Club.

Traditionally, the game has been played against visiting teams from Asia, but this will be the first-ever time the game will be played between two local teams in Thailand.

This year's Phuket team will be led by Club Captain Josh Bartolo and Phuket Club President Andrew McMillan,

supported by players from Australia, Ireland, South Africa, the UK, New Zealand, and two local Thais.

The Power showed excellent spirit in their first game against the Tigers in Thalang four months ago and are looking forward to another hit-out.

The Anzac Day Commemorative match is a landmark event in the Thailand Tigers calendar and one not to be missed. This will be the 18th year the match has been

played in Kanchanaburi, with the first-ever match played in 2004.

The last of the three regular POW attendees, Milton 'Snow' Fairclough, Neil MacPherson and Bill Haskell are no longer with us but the match continues to play an important role in honouring all those who have served for Australia and New Zealand, especially those POWs who worked on the Thai-Burma railway at Kanchanaburi during World War 2.

This year promises to be another uniquely humbling, and rewarding experience for all those attending.

If you are interested in playing AFL football, coming along to watch the game, visiting Hellfire pass to lay wreaths (on the morning of Sunday, April 25), or simply to know more about the weekend then please contact Andrew McMillan.

If you are interested in playing for the Power, please reach out through our Face-

book page and keep an eye on training dates in the coming weeks.

Accommodation and transport to Kanchanaburi are available.

Refreshments such as drinks, burgers, Lady Pies, and vegetarian dishes will be available at the ground. Spectators and new players are welcome!

For further information please contact: Andrew McMillan 085-472-0931 email: phuketpowerafl@gmail.com

Rising BISP star makes pro debut

FOOTBALL

BISP'S MOHAMMED (ADAM) Zamri has made his debut for Perak FC in the Malaysia Premier League, winning his first match with the club's second side 1-0 against Kelantan.

Adam, 18, signed a professional contract with the club after a successful trial in January and has been training with the club's feeder team in the lead up to the premier league competition which began last month.

The versatile attacking player joined the BISP Cruzeiro Football Academy in April 2019 and was part of the BISP Cruzeiro Under-19 side that finished second place in the IBERCUP in Portugal in July 2019.

Last year he was named in the Malaysia Under-19 squad and was due to play in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Under-19 Championship in Uzbekistan in October, but the tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and safety concerns.

"Adam has been a valued mem-

ber of our squad for almost two years and now he is moving up the football ladder playing at a professional level," commented BISP's head football coach Jonathas Candido.

"His proven success in our academy will be a great asset to his new club. His passion and knowledge for the game along with his strong desire to succeed are perfectly aligned with the mission of our football programme.

"It's very difficult to predict what will happen in a footballer's career, but Adam has all the ingredients



Mohammed (Adam) Zamri in action. Photo: BISP Media

to go a long way," Jonathas added.

"I am excited to see him now playing at a high-level and competing among the best players in Malaysia," he concluded.

The Phuket News wishes Adam

all the very best of luck for a successful future career.

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

Lee Blake, BISP