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METH MODE

VAN DRIVER TRAVELS 10KM AT SPEED WITHOUT FRONT TYRE

Pichai Klomsanoh drove 10km along Thepkasattri Rd without a front left tyre before he was finally stopped. Photo: Tha Chatchai Police via Eakkapop Thongtub

Eakkapop Thongtub
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A 29-year-old Phuket passenger van driver high on methamphetamine (ya bah) has had his driving licence revoked after he drove 10 kilometres along Thepkasattri Rd, Phuket's busiest highway, before being stopped by police last Friday (Jan 13).

The driver, Koh Kaew resident Pichai Klomsanoh, was finally brought to a halt at a checkpoint specifically

set up in Mai Khao by Tha Chatchai Police to apprehend him. There were no passengers in the van at the time of the incident.

As attested by witness reports, Pichai had driven 10km along the busy road without a front left tyre, with sparks streaming out from where the wheel hub scraped along the road.

Pichai was oblivious to the van, a Phuket-registered Toyota Commuter fitted with public transport license plates, missing the tyre. He had no idea where it went, though witnesses

noted that the stream of sparks was first noticed at about 9am while the van was travelling northbound out of Thalang town.

After police finally managed to get Pichai to stop, officers searched him and found him in possession of 12 ya bah pills. The drugs were in his pockets, and Pichai admitted that the pills belonged to him.

The public transport driver also confessed to taking three other pills earlier in the morning, two hours prior to his igniting ride.

Mr Pichai was taken to the Phuket Check Point, the gateway by road onto and off the island, where he tested positive for drugs.

He was then placed under arrest at Tha Chatchai Police Station, located next to Phuket Check Point, on charges of driving under influence of drugs and illegal possession of a Category 1 narcotic (methamphetamine).

Police made no mention of any other charges, such as reckless driving, which would add to Pichai suffering more demerit points being deducted...

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arrested as
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against Vietnam



Lile-itTM

PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

exeditor@classactmedia.co.th

News



Phuket Town raises lanterns for Chinese New Year > p5



Photo: via Phuket Info Center

Russian woman revived on Patong Beach

A RUSSIAN WOMAN was rushed to hospital following what has been reported as a drowning incident on Patong Beach late afternoon on Jan 11.

The woman was pulled from the water by tourists at the beach near the Bangla Police Box at about 4:50pm, officials reported.

Once aware of the situation, lifeguards rushed to assist, and found that the woman was unconscious.

Lifeguards, with the assistance of a tourist who was a doctor, provided

emergency CPR until a pulse had been found and the woman was once again responsive, officials reported.

She was then transported to Patong Hospital by a rescue foundation ambulance.

The woman's condition was not reported, yet officials praised all the people who provided assistance throughout the incident, with special thanks to tourists who helped at the scene.

The Phuket News

Chalong-Patong road inches ahead

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The new permanent road under construction from Chalong to Patong is moving ahead and "will be able to officially open to the public soon", the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) has reported.

The announcement came through a brief report of PPAO President Rewat Areerob inspecting the site in person last Thursday and Friday (Jan 12-13).

Mr Rewat was accompanied at the site by PPAO Deputy President Tiwat Seedokbub who had been traveling to the jungle "behind Luang Pu Supha Temple" at least twice a month before January and now does it even more often.

The reports by PPAO are never rich in detail and lack, for instance, the projected date of completion. Photos from the site indicate stable progress in construction. still as of now the road does not look like a 12-metre-wide



The Chalong-Patong road on Jan 12-13. Photo: PPAO

carriageway touted in late October.

According to the most recent report by PPAO, the workers are now using crushed stones which are sprayed with water and compacted to become a firm road surface suitable for all vehicles, not only heavy machinery, 4x4 pickup trucks and enduro motorcycles.

The Chalong-Patong road traverses steep hills for a total length of 3.5 kilometres, from

behind the Klong Kata reservoir in Chalong to 50 Pi Rd in Patong. Before the current ongoing roadworks, which began Oct 24, the road was little more than a dirt track.

Attempts to have the track officially designated to become a permanent road had been repeatedly proposed for more than a decade, but were denied as the road passes through a protected forest area. That hurdle was instantly dismissed as officials

scrambled for alternative routes to Patong following the Patong Hill landslide on Oct 19.

At the time the project began, it was estimated to take two weeks to complete, giving a target deadline of opening a temporary road to traffic in early November.

The plans were then changed in favour of a 12-metre-wide road. Since then no specific dates of completion have been announced.

'Marco Polo' found adrift near Indonesian waters

MARCO CEFERIN, OWNER OF THE missing yacht 'Marco Polo', has confirmed that the 40-foot catamaran has been found adrift near Indonesian waters, some 300km southwest of Phuket.

"Yes, it's true, and I'm a happy man again, because my lady is back," Mr Ceferin told *The Phuket News* in a brief message on Monday (Jan 16).

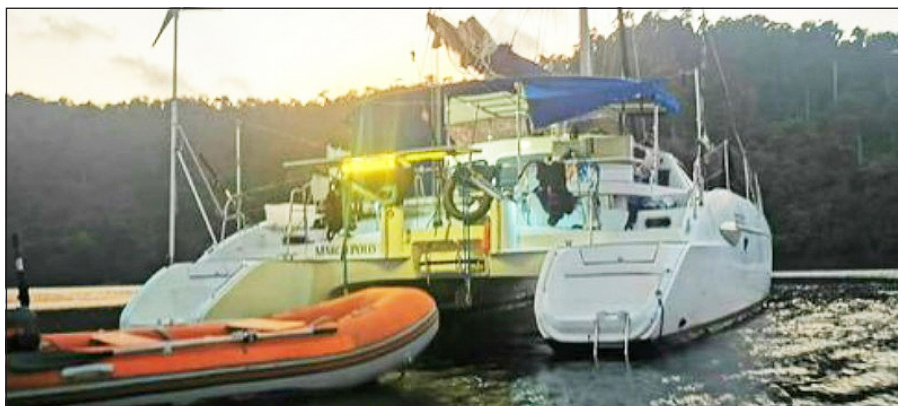
"A lot of things are missing by the fishermen, but [it] doesn't matter," he added.

Phuket Info Center broke the news locally last Friday afternoon (Jan 13), citing a report by MGROnline.

The 'Marco Polo' was found unmanned in Indonesian waters. Efforts were underway to bring the boat, with an estimated value of about US\$300,000 (about B10 million), back to Phuket, said the report.

According to MGROnline, the Phuket office of the Marine Department was notified at about 8am on Friday that the yacht had been found. The Phuket Marine Office as of today still has yet to publicly confirm the news. Mr Ceferin confirmed the report himself directly on Monday.

Nattida Niamnak, manager of fishing vessel Sor Lap Chollada 32, reported



The 'Marco Polo', a Fountaine Pajot Lavezzi 40, was found unmanned in Indonesian waters, and is currently underway back to Phuket. Photo: via Radio Thailand Phuket / file

the finding of the yacht, explaining that Chaitong Wongpin on board the boat had spotted two sailboats floating near the boundary for entering Indonesian territorial waters. Both yachts appeared to be adrift, which seemed unusual and worth reporting, said the report.

Acting on instructions from his operator, Capt Chaitong inspected the two yachts and 'tied up' to them so they would not float away. The 'Marco Polo' was confirmed to be one of the two yachts.

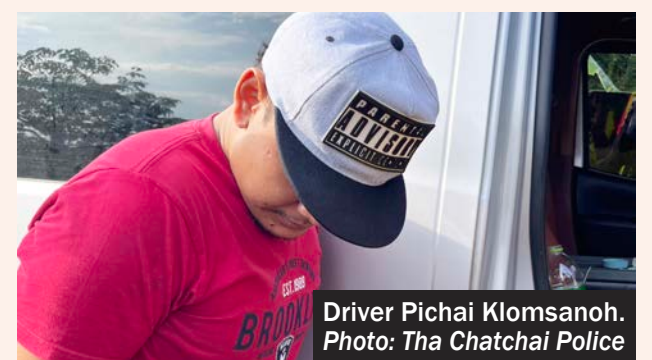
Phuket Marin Chief Mr Nachaphong said that the Phuket Governor had been

informed and the 'Marco Polo' was on its way back to Phuket, the report said.

The finding of the yacht followed Mr Ceferin appealing to the Phuket Provincial Fisheries Office to publicise information seeking help in finding the missing yacht.

A reward was being offered for information that led directly to the recovery of the missing yacht, Phuket Fisheries Chief Sitthipol Muangsang said.

Mr Ceferin had been searching for his yacht after it was discovered missing, possibly stolen, from Nai Harn on Dec 28. *The Phuket News*



Driver Pichai Klomsanoh. Photo: Tha Chatchai Police

Van driver loses licence over meth

Continued from page 1

...from his driver's licence under the new nationwide scheme launched only four days earlier (Jan 9).

However, the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), which oversees everything related to public transport, recognised the incident through its official Facebook page late last Friday, and confirmed that the PLTO will revoke Pichai's driving licence.

The PLTO will also investigate the issue of Pichai operating a public transport vehicle while under the influence of a narcotic, which is illegal under Section 102 (3) of the Land Transport Act, the office noted.

"The PLTO will notify the transport operator to clarify the facts. If found guilty, [he] will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," the PLTO said.

Fraudsters nabbed

Eakkapop Thongtub
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Two people wanted for mass fraud and one wanted for conspiracy to commit fraud were arrested in Phuket in the past week.

Immigration officers at Phuket International Airport on Monday (Jan 16) confirmed they had taken into custody Daryl Yonggyui Cai, better known simply as Daryl Cai, and his girlfriend Italian-Thai model Sarah Casinghini.

The couple were wanted by the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) for their involvement in the notorious 'Forex-3D' Ponzi scam.

Cai and Casinghini were wanted on an arrest warrant issued by the Criminal Court for special case No. 273/2565. Cai was wanted for actively participating in the scheme. Casinghini was wanted for conspiracy to commit fraud, reported the DSI.

The notorious Forex-3D scheme defrauded at least 8,436 people of more than B2 billion, the DSI has previously reported. Other reports claim that more than 14,000 people were defrauded in the scheme.

In 2019, officials reported seizing more than B743 million



American national Peter Coker Jr was arrested in Phuket in connection with the US\$100 million 'New Jersey deli scheme'. Photo: CSD

in assets as they continued to make arrests in the case. In 2021, officials arrested the alleged key offender, Apirak Kotethi. In placing Apirak under arrest officers seized a Lamborghini Huracan LP610-4, alone worth an estimated B24mn.

Cai and Casinghini have now been handed over to the DSI for further questioning and legal action.

The DSI in its most recent report noted that it was still pursuing 16 alleged suspects for the Forex-3D fraud scheme.

NEW YORK HUSTLE
The Central Investigation

Bureau (CIB) and the Crime Suppression Division (CSD) of the Royal Thai Police jointly arrested US national Peter Coker Jr, 54, at a hotel near Surin Beach, the CSD announced last Saturday (Jan 14).

He was wanted in the US for "orchestrating a large-scale market manipulation scheme" and wanted on a US arrest warrant listed on Interpol's red list since late last year.

His father Peter Coker Sr and business partner James Patten had been arrested in the US before that for securities fraud in what CNBC called the "100 million USD New Jersey deli scheme".

Patong floating beach club told to wait for approval

'YONA BEACH CLUB', THE OPERATOR of the floating beach club barge that was anchored in Patong Bay, has been ordered to suspend operations until it has been granted full approval to operate.

Natchaphong Pranit, Director of Phuket Office of the Marine Department, handed down the order at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Jan 10.

Mr Natchaphong, following his announcement only the previous Friday (Jan 6), again pointed out that the boat operator had been fined B10,000 for operating the vessel, called the 'Swasadee', with an expired registration permit.

The beach club vessel also has yet to be inspected, for a third time, and granted official permission to operate, he added, noted an official report of the meeting.

"At this time, the ship will have to suspend service until the legal action is taken by the officers of the Regional Harbor Office, Phuket branch, to inspect the general structural condition, as well as notifying the shipowner to take legal action in the relevant areas," Mr Natchaphong said.

According to the official report, Mr Natchaphong specified that the boat operator had yet to apply to change the boat license from the type of passenger transport to a type of passenger transport with food and beverage service. The boat's horn signal needed to be made operational, and a fire extinguishing control system had to be installed and fully operational. The boat operator also had to obtain approval for its waste management



Photo: PR Phuket

system on board, said the report.

However, even according to the previous announcement by Mr Natchaphong's office only days earlier, the boat operator has already applied to the Marine Department's Bureau of Ship Standards in Bangkok to change the registered "type of ship" in order to meet the intended purpose. The request is currently under consideration, Phuket marine officials themselves noted.

The boat owner has also already presented a letter of approval to drop anchor in Patong Bay issued by the Phuket Marine Resources Conservation Center, including a certificate of transport and approval for its solid waste management system. Patong Municipality has also issued the operator a "certificate of sound use" for the boat, an official report also confirmed. An inspection by officials also showed the boat had two fire hose stations on board and six life rafts attached to the stern.

Regardless, in the latest official report, Mr Natchaphong said: "In the event that this type of boat will come to service around Patong Beach or in any area, it must be approved by the area by the authorised person, namely the provincial working group." *The Phuket News*



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The Phuket News

CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

PURIYA BEAVAN
EditorCHRIS HUSTED
Executive Editor
084 307 7408
executive@classactmedia.co.thBEN TIREBUCK
News / Sport Editor
061 806 8132
editor3@classactmedia.co.thCHUTHARAT 'UM' PLERIN
Thai Editor
088 766 1615
thai@classactmedia.co.thJASON BEAVAN
General Manager
086 479 7471
gm@classactmedia.co.thSIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS
Sales Support
086 479 7470
sales@classactmedia.co.thNIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA
THANAPONG 'OAK' KHAO-AMPHAIHAN
Graphic designersThe Phuket News
@thephuketnews

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 4 m/s

WED JANUARY 25

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THU JANUARY 26

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Russian woman appeals for protection

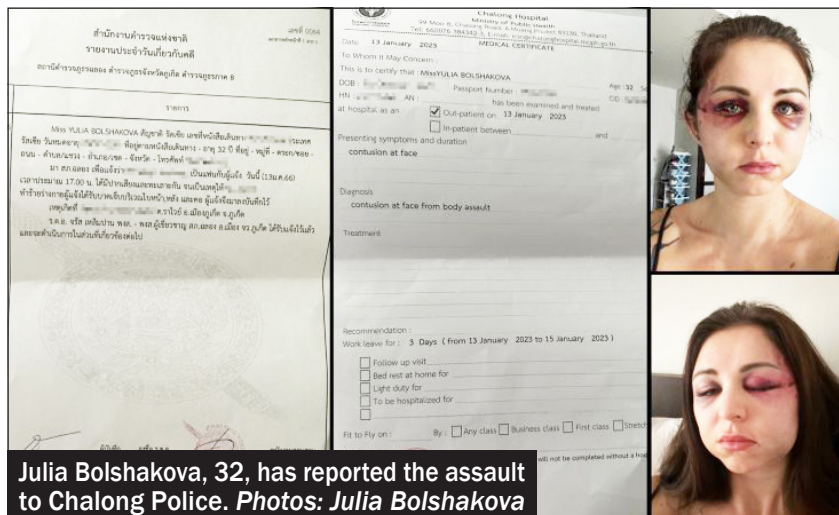
Anton Makhrov
russian@classactmedia.co.th

A Russian woman has appealed for help and protection after being beaten by her ex-boyfriend, who continues to threaten her despite the woman filing an official report of the attack with Chalong Police.

Julia Bolshakova, 32, filed her report with Chalong Police at 11:57pm last Friday (Jan 13), immediately after leaving Chalong Hospital following the attack.

A copy of the report supplied to *Novosti Phuketa*, the Russian-language sister newspaper to *The Phuket News*, is marked as being received by Pol LCpl Nattapong Thongwun, with Pol Capt Jarat Lempan as the investigating officer.

Also received by *Novosti Phuketa* were a copy of the medical report by Chalong Hospital confirming multiple contusions from where the ex-boyfriend punched her in the face and head, along with photos of her injuries and an audio recording of the



Julia Bolshakova, 32, has reported the assault to Chalong Police. Photos: Julia Bolshakova

threats made against her.

Ms Bolshakova appealed to police and provincial authorities for protection after the man arrived repeatedly at her home last Saturday and Sunday (Jan 14-15) to continue to threaten her.

"January 13 is not the end of the story. January 15 afternoon I was waiting for a friend at home, the door was not locked. He came in, began to threaten me again, forced me to write a receipt for the money he spent on

me, then crumpled it up and wanted me to eat it," Ms Bolshakova told *Novosti Phuketa*.

"Then I wrote another receipt under pain of reprisals and he took it away, along with my Russian passport. He said that if I didn't stop, there would be consequences. I was saved by the fact that half an hour after his appearance, a friend came and he left, with my passport," she added.

Ms Bolshakova first posted her

appeal on social media, along with a photo showing her battered face.

"I am reaching out to officials through the media because I fear for my life as I continue to receive threats. On January 13, the story did not end," she told *Novosti Phuketa* on Monday (Jan 16).

Ms Bolshakova explained in her post online that she and the man who attacked her were previously in a relationship. However, at the time of the attack, they were no longer together. It is the breakup that occurred that she calls the reason for the beating.

The man, who she named in her report to police and online, threatened her to retract her report to police "or there will be consequences".

Apparently before she filed her complaint the man bragged that he was not worried about her informing the police as he claimed to have enough "influence" with local officers.

According to Ms Bolshakova, her ex-boyfriend lives in Phuket and works illegally as a masseur at a well-known resort on the island.

Cambodian nabbed over e-cigs

PHUKET ADMINISTRATION officers have arrested a Cambodian man for selling e-cigarettes to tourists at Kata Beach.

Danai Jaikuek, the Chief Administrative Office (Palad) for Security at the Mueang Phuket District Office reported that the Cambodian man was arrested in the car park next to Karon Municipality at about 5pm on Jan 11.

Acting on complaints posted online, a team of officials from the Mueang Phuket District Office, accompanied by personnel from the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor), arrived at Kata Beach and observed him selling e-cigarettes to foreign tourists on sunbeds on the beach.

The officers then followed him up to the car park, where one of the officers presented himself to 44-year-old Cambodian national Mon Man and identified himself as an official.

Mr Man was found with 79 e-cigarettes (43 large, 26 medium and 10 small) in his brown shoulder bag. Officers also seized the B4,360 cash Mr Man had on him,



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

presumed from selling the e-cigarettes.

Mr Danai said that the circumstances of the arrest were due to complaints that there are aliens (sic) patrolling and selling e-cigarettes along Kata-Karon beach, "causing a lot of annoyance to tourists".

Mr Mon was very cooperative with officials, Mr Danai said. He openly admitted that he sold e-cigarettes to tourists. He added that he had been living in Thailand for 15 years.

Regardless, Mr Mon was taken to Karon Police Station and charged under the Customs Act for selling products prohibited from being imported into the country. He was also charged specifically for selling e-cigarettes under a regulation by the Consumer Protection Board.

Mr Mon was also charged with working illegally in Thailand, and for entering and staying in the Kingdom illegally. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

Don't buy fake driving licenses online

THE PHUKET LAND TRANSPORT Office (PLTO) has posted yet another clarification stating that the Department of Land Transport (DLT) is the only authority issuing genuine driving licenses in Thailand.

The agency has warned against buying driving licenses online amid growing numbers of such offers for foreigners on social media.

"The Department of Land Transport warns!!! People should not be fooled into making fake driving licenses online. We repeat, all steps must be performed by the applicant in person and at the transport office only" the PLTO warned on Jan 12.

The warning was posted along a digital leaflet repeating the same main point and providing some additional information, including current fees for licenses.

The PLTO reminded that in order to get a genuine Thai driving license for a car or a motorcycle the applicant should pass a physical fitness test, watch an educational video and have their photos taken, which can be done only in person at the PLTO.

If the driving license is not "converted" from a foreign one but received "from zero", the process also includes passing a theory test and a practical driving test. A medical certificate and a Residence Certificate / Work Permit should be provided in all cases.

The process of issuing a driving license also includes adding corresponding information to the online database, which providers of fake driving licenses cannot do, the DLT says.

Thai authorities have been fighting the sale and use of fake driving licenses for years, but until recently the campaign has



Thai officials warn against buying fake driving licenses. The illegal service is still widely advertised online. Image: PLTO

been aimed mostly at Thai people and is still conducted in Thai language only.

Meanwhile, since Thailand's reopening for tourism in 2022, the criminal service is being widely advertised to foreigners and commonly marketed as "assistance" in getting a Thai driving license, but without having to pass any tests and even visit a DLT office (PLTO for Phuket).

In 2022, the DLT had posted several announcements "clarifying fake news" about various options to get a driving license without the need to follow all the prescribed steps. Yet, the DLT is yet to report a single arrest of a fake driving license provider or a fake driving license user. People with relevant information are asked to call the 1584 hotline.

Current fees for driving licenses, as per the PLTO's most recent announcement, are as follows: Private motorcycle – B105 (temporary), B255 (permanent); Private car/pickup – B205 (temporary), B505 (permanent).

"People who need to renew their existing licenses can do their theoretical training in advance via the e-Learning system on www.dlt-elearning.com and bring evidence with them when coming to the DLT to proceed 'into action' immediately," the DLT says.

The Phuket News

Phuket Town readies for Chinese New Year

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The annual festival to adorn the streets of Phuket Town with red lanterns is officially underway, with Chinese New Year to be celebrated on Sunday (Jan 22).

Phuket City Mayor Saroj Angkhanapilas led a ceremony to officially launch the 'Phuket Lantern Festival 2023' at the small green area at the Chartered Bank Intersection in the heart of the Phuket Old Town last Sunday night (Jan 15).

Joining him were other leading council members of Phuket City Municipality along with local community leaders and members of the general public.

Mayor Saroj earlier last Sunday joined another event to mark the beginning of the festival at the commercial Limelight Shopping Mall in Phuket Town, joined by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office Director Nanthasiri Ronnasiri.

Also present at the shopping center for the launch were Don Limnaphisit,



Photo: PR Phuket

President of Phuket Old Town Community, and Prasert Fakthongphon, President of Am Phuket Andaman Club.

At the official launch event, Mayor Saroj explained that the festival marked a period starting on the 15th day of the Chinese lunar calendar which ethnic Chinese commemorate by undertaking activities to invoke blessings to bring joy and happiness to the family during the festive season.

"The festival preserves the traditions of life and the good cultural identity of the local area as well as create a

colourful tourism [attraction] in the Phuket City area," he said.

Phuket City Municipality and the local resident ethnic Chinese community have already been preparing for the festive period, he added.

Before the festival begins each year, local ethnic Chinese prepare for the period by cleaning their homes and discarding any unwanted items.

Phuket City Municipality has already assisted with this by organising its special pickup services under the name 'Sweeping the house to

welcome Chinese New Year', whereby municipality workers collect any large items left in front of houses, he said.

Mayor Saroj also marked the economic benefit brought to Phuket Town during the festival.

"The economic stimulus generates income for the local community. During this period, Chinese-Thai people in Phuket will buy decorative items to usher in the New Year, such as by adorning red lanterns to bring good luck, longevity, wealth and happiness," he explained.

"For today's activities, the municipality has decorated urban attractions during the Lantern Festival around this Chartered Bank Intersection and throughout the town to create an atmosphere and the image of Phuket tourism and to preserve the good culture of Phuket," he continued.

"In this regard, everyone is invited, including tourists, to experience and see the atmosphere during the Lantern Festival in Phuket at night from Jan 15 to Feb 5, 2023," he said.



A special preview screening of 'Sarasin Bridge Love 2216' and mini-concert was held at the Phang Nga side of the bridge last night (Jan 15). Photo: PR Phang Nga

Sarasin Bridge legend revived in new film

THE TALE OF THE LOVE tragedy that ended with two young lovers leaping to their deaths from the Sarasin Bridge has been brought back to life in a new film titled, 'Sarasin Bridge Love 2216'.

Ekarat Leesen, the recently arrived Governor of Phang Nga, replacing the previous Governor, Chamroen Tipayapongtada, led a mass preview screening of the new film on the Phang Nga side of the bridge last Sunday night (Jan 15).

A temporary stage was set up at the side for performances of the key soundtrack songs from the movie by famous Thai artists including Luang Kai, Ekkachai Srivichai, Singha and Nino, with the movie theme song by Paisan and Nong Fah.

The new film echoes the classic tale of a simple songth-

aw driver, Ko, who falls in love with one of his regular passengers, Kiw, a student from an upper-class family.

Despite their feelings for each other, the couple are trapped in a world where social status will keep them apart, and they together decide to take a fateful 'leap of love' from the famed bridge joining Phuket with the mainland.

The true story of the couple's fate is still remembered and honoured by people in Phuket, with the bridge itself becoming a popular attraction for Thais throughout the country to visit in person.

The bridge also remains a sad beacon for those disenchanted with their lives.

'Sarasin Bridge Love' was to be released in theatres throughout the country on Thursday (Jan 19).

The Phuket News

Flood-prevention powered by prisoners

A MAJOR DRAIN DREDGING PROJECT is underway where selected inmates from Phuket prison will work on alleviating potential future flooding issues in the Phuket Town area.

Phuket City Municipality officials confirmed on Jan 11 that budget approval of B500,000 had been approved and they are joining forces with Phuket Provincial Prison on a project to dredge a number of drains and sewers in the area. The aim, officials said, is to prevent any future repeat of the damaging floods that were experienced late last year across the entire island after a period of particularly heavy rainfall.

The Jan 11 meeting at Provincial Hall was chaired by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw, who was joined by Phuket City Deputy Mayor Supachok Laongpetch, Phuket Deputy Governors Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam and Danai Sunantarod, Phuket Provincial Chief Administration Officer (Palad) Somprat Prapongkram, Phuket Provincial Prison Commander Krit Na Thipayachan, plus other relevant agency officials.

Mr Supachok recalled how damaging the floods had been during a four-month period from August to November last year, highlighting the detrimental impact to property, business, tourism and the economy in general. The floods were described as the worst to hit Phuket in 30 years.

Flooding in Patong made national headlines, while residents in Phuket Town were issued a flood warning on Oct 19 as the Bang Yai Canal, which runs right through the heart of the Phuket Old Town area, was close to overflowing. There were countless other examples of how the deluge of rain caused



Photo: PR Phuket

major disruption and damage islandwide, including a raft of landslides, most notably on the road over Patong Hill.

Focusing specifically on the area of Phuket Town, Mr Supachok further explained how it was important that drains and sewers were cleared appropriately to allow the water flow to pass effectively. He detailed how a build up of mud and garbage had caused numerous blockages and bottlenecks which exacerbated the problem.

The project, therefore, would see selected inmates from Phuket Provincial Prison effectively give back to society by clearing a number of specific areas including Poonphon Rd (681 metres), Nakhon Rd (792m), Chumphon Rd (802m), Soi Ton Pho (1,420m)

Suthat Rd Soi 2 (1,566m) and Damrong Rd (3,274m), among others.

It was not confirmed whether similar projects would focus on other areas of the island in future, nor whether this project is part of the B113 million public works projects aimed at preventing and alleviating damage caused by floods that officials announced on Dec 17.

The Phuket News

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TAT targets B2.38trn in tourism revenue

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has released its 2023 strategic direction, launching its “Visit Thailand Year 2023” campaign to attract more tourists and boost the country’s revenue to up to B2.38 trillion.

“Despite global uncertainties, TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn is confident that this campaign will help stimulate the tourism industry,” state news agency NNT reported.

The campaign, which was initially planned for 2021-2023, has been shifted to this year due to a number of problems in 2022, said the report.

Of the B2.38trn, 65% is projected to come from the international market and 35% from the domestic market, said the report.

The TAT itself detailed the breakdown as B1.5trn from international tourism and B670-880 billion from domestic tourism.

The TAT has outlined three directions for tourism supply development: experience-based tourism, enhancing safety and service standards, and building a



Photo: TAT

smart tourism ecosystem.

The agency has also asked the government to extend the 45-day stay for tourist visas until the end of 2023.

According to TAT, the short-haul market, which accounted for 67.6% of 11.8 million foreign arrivals last year, is expected to be key to the tourism recovery. The agency will focus on two strategic markets: China and countries with the potential to have more than 1mn visitors, such as Malaysia, South Korea and India.

TAT is also planning to assist operators to increase chartered flights from secondary cities or regions that do not have direct flights to lure pent-up demand after the

pandemic, the NNT report concluded.

TAT Governor Yuthasak announced the revised targets at a launch event in Bangkok on Jan 12.

“The 2023 target is a result of a carefully planned strategy to continue the milestone achievement of 2022. The ‘Visit Thailand Year 2023: Amazing New Chapters’ campaign represents a commitment from TAT and all stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as well as the Thai people to maintain tourists’ confidence in Thailand as a preferred tourist destination,” he said.

Through the “Visit Thailand Year 2023: Amazing New Chapters” campaign, the TAT

is placing emphasis on the promotion and development of high value and sustainable tourism in Thailand, the TAT reported through its own release.

“This includes elevating the tourism supply (Shape Supply) with an aim to offer experience-based tourism, and leveraging the kingdom’s 5F soft-power foundations – Food, Film, Festival, Fight and Fashion – to offer meaningful travel experiences in Thailand,” it added.

Among the main strategies for attracting international tourists under the TAT’s ‘Great Resumption Episode II’ policy is the ‘China is back’ initiative, placing focus on tapping emerging segments and en-

hancing cooperation with the airlines to increase air access flights to cater to the increasing demands and promoting new modes of travelling, such as an overland border.

The ‘7 Digits Target’ will focus on rapidly growing markets, such as China, Malaysia, India, and South Korea, as well as cooperating with partner agents and airlines, and the ‘Responsible Tourism’ initiative will support CSR and responsible tourism projects, such as ‘Reborn the Nature’ to advocate tourism sustainability.

The ‘2 Tier, Second to None’ plan is to encourage visitors to visit the emerging destinations, while sourcing new tourist segments from secondary cities in South Korea, China, India, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

For long-haul markets, TAT is adopting the ‘A-B-C-D Fast Forward’ strategy: ‘A – Airline Focus’ to continue collaboration with leading airlines such as, Qatar Airways, Etihad and Oman Air to expand new routes and increase the frequency of direct flights; ‘B – Big Cities and Beyond’ to penetrate new markets in major and secondary cities; such as Bucharest in Romania,

and Sofia in Bulgaria; and ‘C – Collaboration is Key’ to work with new partners including airlines such as Delta Airlines, Air Canada, FlyDubai, and Aeroflot, and online travel agencies such as Almosafer and SAGA Holidays. The ‘D – Destination for All’ aspect is to promote Thailand as an “All-year round Destination” to meet the demand for visitors regardless of seasons and with all segments including family, medical and wellness in the Middle East or the LGBTQ+ in Europe and America.

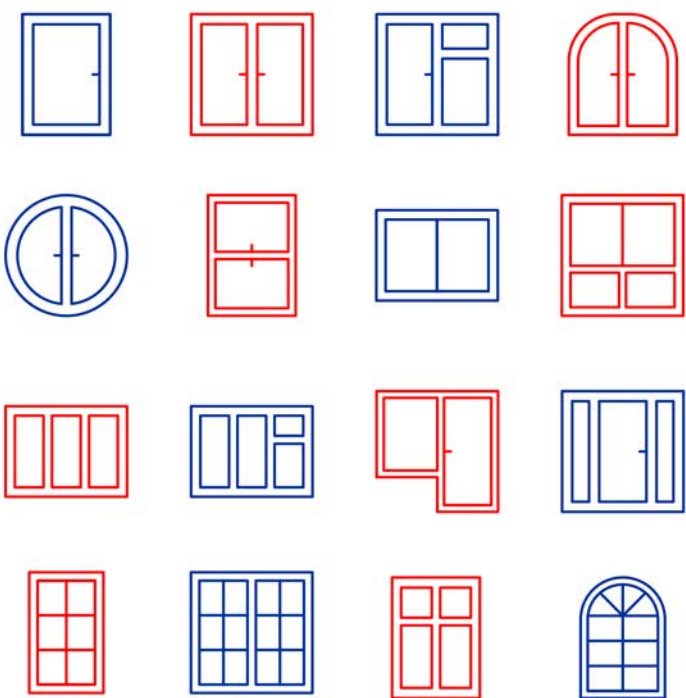
For the Domestic Market the TAT is placing focus on ‘Value over Volume’ under the new ‘Travel Thailand in Limited Edition’ concept highlighting the 5F Soft Powers to cater to the various needs of domestic travellers.

Various events are being planned for 2023 to inspire domestic travel, including Travel 365 days in Amazing Thailand, Vilit Thailand 2023, and Amazing Thailand Festival Experience 2023.

TAT is also continuing its efforts to encourage domestic travellers to visit emerging destinations during weekdays to expand the expenditure and balance the capacity of the destinations.



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China tour packages record 20% price hike

TOUR PACKAGES TO THAILAND FOR Chinese visitors surged in price by 20% because of few tours and high demand, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

Chuwit Sirivejkul, TAT regional director for marketing in East Asia, said with pent-up demand from the Chinese market, most tourists will opt for independent travel as the Chinese government still does not allow tour operators to conduct outbound group tours.

The limited amount of tour packages is a result of fewer flight connections between the countries and unprepared tour agents in China, he said. The price of packages is 20% higher on average than the rate before the pandemic, said Mr Chuwit.

He said many airlines are working to increase flights in the first quarter.

At present, there are 344,446 confirmed seats with an 85% load factor on each flight from China, which could help carry 320,397 Chinese tourists to Thailand by March, said Mr Chuwit.

He said tourism operators in secondary cities could benefit from Chinese tourists, particularly repeat visitors who would seek unique destinations they never visited.

Mr Chuwit said challenges remain regarding preparedness, such as developing a good attitude towards Chinese tourists, Chinese language skills and online payment platforms compatible for users from China.

“Today is a good opportunity to develop our supply ahead of competitors,” he said.

The TAT plans to launch a tourism campaign called “China is back” to lure more tourists with high purchasing power.

The agency also wants to work with



Chinese tourists arrive at Suvarnabhumi airport. Photo: MoTS

popular Chinese travel platforms such as Trip.com, Fliggy and Qunar to stimulate the market, said Mr Chuwit.

Speaking at an online conference hosted by the Thai Hotels Association, the TAT urged Thai hotels to prepare by using Chinese social media for direct sales, including WeChat and Douyin, and enable online payment services such as Alipay, UnionPay and WeChatPay.

Nonglux Yooyendee, director of TAT’s Shanghai office, said more Chinese tourists are looking for inclusive packages that combine local experiences with accommodation and flights.

Boonrapee Damrongrat, director of TAT’s Guangzhou office, said hotels have to redesign their services to match individual demand, particularly the family segment, such as developing hotel apps that can customise services for each guest, preparing activities like game rooms and children’s playgrounds.

Rungtip Bookkhuntod, director of TAT’s Kunming office, said a number of Chinese travellers are also expected to visit by land and sea via caravan tours, river cruises and high-speed trains. Bangkok Post

Free COVID-19 tests for ill visitors, says Anutin

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The government is offering free COVID-19 tests to ill visitors and will vaccinate foreign tourists who request the service at “reasonable prices”, according to Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

Either antigen or PCR tests for COVID-19 would be done on visitors with respiratory symptoms as part of normal disease surveillance measures, Anutin said after chairing a meeting of the National Communicable Diseases Committee on Jan 12.

Dr Tares Krassanairawiwong, director-general of the Department of Disease Control (DDC), said the COVID-19 tests for ill visitors would be free.

“Officials at communicable disease control checkpoints will randomly check if visitors have the health insurance,” he said. “Those who have no health insurance documents must buy health insurance before entering the country.”



Tourists from China arrive at Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok on Jan 9. Photo: Varuth Hirunyatheb

Because visitors from China and India are required them to show proof that they are COVID-free on their return, Anutin said they need to have health insurance coverage of at least US\$10,000 (B330,000) to cover their possible treatment if they test positive while in Thailand.

The health minister also said that COVID-19 vaccines for foreign tourists would be available on a voluntary basis at reasonable prices at specified locations. Initially the vaccinations will be offered at designated locations in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chon Buri and Phuket.

The estimated cost is B800 for a shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine and B1,000 for the Pfizer vaccine.

Offering vaccines to foreign tourists would not affect COVID-19 vaccine availability for Thai people, Anutin said.

Dr Tares said more than 20 million doses were currently available for Thai people and visitors who want the shots. Most foreign tourists have already been vaccinated, he

said. Locally, more than 77% of the population have had at least two shots, according to the DDC.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) found that some foreign tourists wanted the vaccinations, he said.

The DDC also stated that the arrival of more Chinese tourists in Thailand is unlikely to trigger a spike in the number of new COVID-19 infections.

At present, the average caseload is 900 per day, with the number of COVID-19 patients in critical condition and requiring a respirator dropping, Dr Tares said.

The country is now seeing eight deaths a day from the virus on average and the number of cases after the New Year holidays has turned out to be lower than expected, he added. The department said it plans to assess the situation regarding coronavirus infections towards the end of the month.

Some 300,000 Chinese tourists are expected to arrive in the next three months, representing about 5% of international arrivals, Dr Tares said.

Navy apologises after helicopter incident

CHANTHABURI

THE NAVY APOLOGISED for an incident that injured eight people – mostly children – when a helicopter flew above marquee tents, causing them to collapse onto a crowd in Chanthaburi province last Saturday (Jan 14).

The incident happened during a National Children's Day event in the Tha Chang municipality in Muang district. A navy helicopter flew directly above three giant tents, sending powerful downdrafts that collapsed the structures.

Eight people were injured, including five children. Two injured adults and five children were treated and discharged from hospital shortly afterwards. A 58-year-old woman suffered a cut in her head and a broken neck.

Radm Therdkiat Jitkaew, deputy commander of the Chanthaburi and Trat Border Defence Command, apologised for the injuries.

Navy spokesman Adm Pokkrong Monthatpalin said navy commander-in-chief Adm Choengchai Chomchoengpaet was sorry about the incident and ordered the Chanthaburi



Photo: Bangkok Post

and Trat Border Defence Command to offer financial aid and medical care to the injured people.

Earlier the Tha Chang municipal office asked the navy's Chanthaburi and Trat Border Defence Command to produce a helicopter show above the event venue.

On Monday the Navy rejected claims that had appeared on social media suggesting the pilot of the helicopter was drunk.

Adm Pokkrong said the crewman mentioned in the post was not a pilot but a member of the aircraft's maintenance department.

He was not drunk nor was he flying on the helicopter when the incident occurred, Adm Pokkrong added.

Bangkok Post

Foreigners 'must follow visa rules'

BANGKOK

THE ROYAL THAI POLICE has instructed all relevant authorities, including the Immigration Bureau (IB) and Tourist Police, to ensure all foreign residents do not violate their visa conditions during their stay in the country.

Monday's (Jan 16) instruction followed a complaint made by a food vendor on Bangkok's Yaowarat Rd about Chinese tourists running businesses using local nominees, which is a violation of the kingdom's laws.

Under current rules, foreign citizens on a tourist visa are not allowed to work in Thailand. Furthermore, there are certain jobs which expatriates are barred from taking up, which include tour guides and street food vendors.

RTP spokesman Pol Maj Gen Atchayon Kraithong said Chinese citizens can get a tourist visa on arrival, which allows them to stay in the country for no longer than 30 days. Those who are found to be violating



Atchayon: Warns of tough penalties. Photo: Bangkok Post

the conditions of their stay will be deported and barred from re-entering the country, he said.

“The RTP and other relevant agencies will work to ensure these [visa] conditions are followed,” Pol Maj Gen Atchayon said.

Separately, deputy government spokeswoman Rachada Dhnadirek said the government will continue to monitor and crack down on foreign residents using Thai nominees to run businesses in Thailand.

Foreigners who wish to run a food and beverage business in the country

must acquire the required permit from the Department of Business Development. Any Thai co-investor in the business is also required to show proof that they have the means to invest in such a business.

“Thai citizens who are foreigners' nominees face up to three years' imprisonment and/or a fine between B100,000-1 million,” said Ms Ratchada.

She added that officials from DBD and the Labour Ministry regularly inspect foreign-owned businesses to ensure their compliance.

Bangkok Post



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Bizarre trees bear strange fruit



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

You don't expect to find trees with bizarre labels such as the "pong-pong", sausage or cannonball tree, but all these species, alive and well here in Phuket, are so named on account of their strange fruit.

Of these odd-balls, the one you are most likely to encounter is the "pong-pong", or *cerbera odollam*. A hardy native of Malaysia, this member of the *apocynaceae* genus grows to a height of about 10 metres, and is frequently cultivated in tropical gardens on account of its glossy leaves and continuous display of fragrant clusters of white flowers with yellow centers which open at branch tips.

I know several resorts on the island where the "pong-pong" has been planted at the edges of car parks or other open spaces. There are several, probably self-sown, decorating the road from Chalong Circle as it begins its serpentine progress upwards towards Kata.

But its real appeal for many gardeners lies in its large globose fruit – glossy, green spheres that look most attractive on the tree. If you are contemplating a shady presence, this is definitely one to consider, since the dense crown has layered, evergreen foliage. Moreover, it can be propagated from seed or cuttings and begins flowering after a couple of years. Just remember that in common with most members of the family, both fruits and milky sap are poisonous.

Another species, *C. manghas* grows in the wild and may be easier to cultivate. A smaller tree, it crops up in coastal swamps and thickets behind beaches, though, like the mangrove, it is a much diminished presence.

It may keep company there with the sea grape or *coccoloba*. Not an Asian native, the sea grape may



Cannonball tree. Photo: Michel Chauvet

now be found growing wild along Phuket's shore-line, or employed as an emerald hedge in resorts as a salt-resistant ornamental plant.

Also drought proof, it is a small tree or shrub, with stiff, prominently veined leaves which are bright green in colour. Almost round, they look very attractive. Hence the once popular name the platter leaf tree. The flowers are fragrant and appear in racemes up to eight inches long, but it is the long bunches of small, berry-like fruit – reminiscent of peppers – that sometimes steal the show.

Used locally for making jellies, these green to red clusters give the tree its common name of sea grape. A most desirable plant for windy, saline conditions, it is being used more and more by knowledgeable landscapers around the island as well as doing service as a dune stabiliser. Give it full sun and well drained conditions.

If you think the sea grape and "pong-pong" are odd, how much more bizarre is the sausage tree (*kigelia pinnata*). Grown less for its visual appeal than for its novelty value, it is a medium-sized tree from the

jungles of West Africa and bears dark red flowers. Produced in panicles, they are waxy, bell-shaped and stick straight out from their stems. Unfortunately, they possess a pungent smell. But again it is the inedible fruit, seedy, mildly poisonous and powerfully purgative, that is the main attraction: in this case, sausage-shaped oddities that may be 50cm long and weigh several kilogrammes. A rival to other monsters such as durian and jackfruit, it is now available as an extract – a fashionable addition to the ranks of skin and breast enhancers.

The cannonball tree is another oddball – if you will pardon the pun. As with *kigelia pinnata*, you are much more likely to encounter *couroupita guianensis* in a private park or botanic garden than in your neighbour's patch. For instance, there is a particularly fine specimen at the Six Senses Resort.

Essentially a majestic jungle tree with large elliptical leaves which are shed twice a year, it has arrived here, like the rubber tree, from South America. But what makes it so odd are two peculiarities: one, the deep pink or scarlet, waxy, scented flowers are not borne on branches but grow directly from the trunk below the crown; two, they are followed by large globular fruit that look like huge rusty cannonballs as they dangle on long stems from leafless branches, spectacular objects that can remain on the tree for many months.

Used traditionally both for medicinal purposes and feed for livestock, the cannonball is not for the table – or for the small garden.

But what a sensational addition to your tropical estate.

Patrick Campbell's book 'The Tropic Gardener', described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, is available for B500 (half price) to personal callers from 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13 in Rawai (Tel: 076-61227 or 085-7827551).

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Where will the children play?

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Good Shepherd Phuket Town (GSPT) is appealing for donations to fund the purchase of the land adjacent to their school that is currently being used as their school playground.

When the GSPT charity built their school in 2013, they were able to purchase the land where the main school building sits but not the adjacent land. As the number of students at the school increased from 150 to 320, the adjacent used land started to be used as a play area.

The owners of the land have graciously allowed the Good Shepherd to use the land, rent-free, for the past nine years. However, the school was recently informed that the owners now have plans to develop the land. They have kindly offered the school the option to purchase the land and the school is desperate to secure the land before the offer expires.

The GSPT School in Phuket Town solely runs on donations. It provides 320 underprivileged children with the opportunity to have an education and break the vicious cycle of poverty that affects so many of the poor on the island. For many students, their school lunch is their main meal of the day.

Every break time, the playground is filled with the sound of shrieks of



The children's playground is a vital part of GSPT in bringing joy to hundreds of underprivileged kids. Photo: GSPT

laughter and joy from the students. Many of the children at the school live in abject poverty in the slum areas of the Rassada Port area, with no safe open space to run around or play. The school playground therefore provides a vital part of their wellbeing. Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Children states that "every child has the right to engage in play and recreational activities".

Some of the most joyous occasions at the school are when the children rehearse and showcase their singing and dancing on the small, simple stage. Last Christmas, all the volunteers that support the school through charity events were treated to a full day of entertainment from every one of the classes. The students had practised for weeks in preparation, so they could show their appreciation of all the efforts

of the amazing volunteers.

GSPT was founded in 2010 and now runs a variety of Volunteer Programs for people to give back to the community. People with a skill or teaching experience can support a school class for one to two hours a week. There are afternoon slots available to oversee their Charity Shops "Pre-Loved" at Blue Tree or "Pre-Loved Too" at the Rawai Art Village. Quality second-hand items can be dropped off to both locations and everything is either re-used, recycled or up-purposed.

Fundraising is the key goal to keep the school running. Last year, volunteers organised a Charity Gala Ball at the Courtyard by Marriott, Phuket Town in the presence of the British Ambassador. They also held two Christmas Pantomime Shows and a Christmas Market.

Kind donors such as Peppers Sports Bar also hold weekly Quiz Nights to support their endeavours. Volunteers who recently took part in the Christmas Pantomime remarked that taking part in the shows "have been some of most rewarding experiences of living in Phuket".

With regard to the playground land, the GSPT have only a few more weeks to secure the land which is roughly 123 square wah (492 square metres) in the heart of Phuket Town. The cost of the land and transfer is approximately B7.4 million, which includes the playground, lunch area and stage.

Through the kindness of donors, the GSPT has raised around B1mn in donations and has a loan pledge of B2mn. They desperately need to raise another B4.4mn.

Should you wish to support this worthy cause, donors can transfer directly to the bank account below:

Bank: Kasikorn Bank

Account: 054-8-34745-9

Name: Good Shepherd Home Foundation

Swift Code: KASITHBK

Please email a screenshot of your bank transfer to: goodshepherdphuket@gmail.com so the funds can be allocated correctly.

Should you have a couple of hours spare weekly and would like to give back to the community, please email phuketcharity@gmail.com or visit their website www.goodshepherdphuketown.com

Thank you for helping GSPT to save their playground.



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POP QUIZ

1. How much does a 10-baht coin weigh?
2. Who was the first wife of King Henry VIII?
3. Who is the godmother to Elton John and David Furnish's two children?
4. What Italian word for 'Scratched Drawing' can be found on walls all over the world?
5. Which boxer was nicknamed 'The Dark Destroyer'?

Answers below, centre

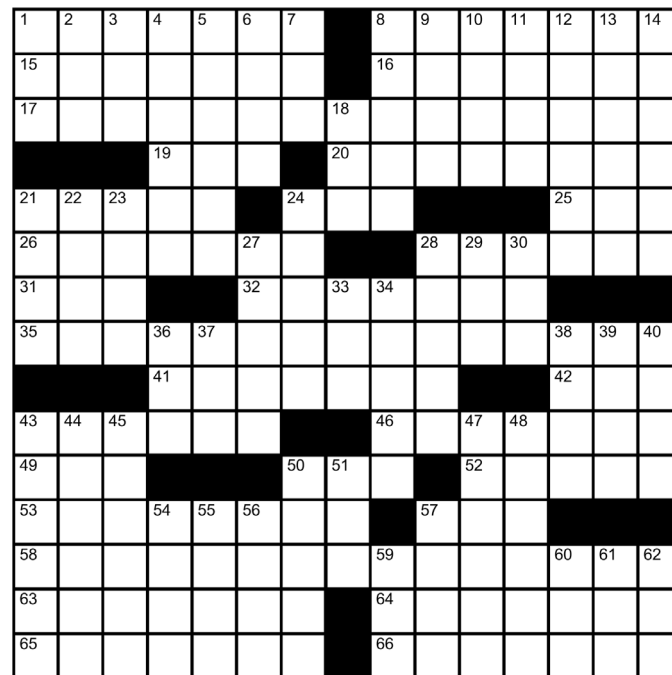
SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Secular ones
 8. Type of bar
 15. Clear
 16. French composer and pianist
 17. Statement with at least two clauses
 19. Bit of paronomasia
 20. Says no
 21. Eye sores
 24. Saturn, for one
 25. Previously
 26. Regarding that
 28. Come-ons
 31. Dot-com's address
 32. Eye guy
 35. Two-floor dwelling unit
 41. Under debate
 42. Moo ___ gai pan
 43. Mason supplier
 46. Thong
 49. Eur. land
 50. Dashboard inits.
 52. Honey bunch?
 53. Wane
 57. Sushi selection
 58. Weather-resistant sheet
- Down
1. Fond du ___, Wis.
 2. Blood-typing letters
 3. Any doctrine
 4. High hat
 5. Maltreat
 6. Fifty-fifty
 7. Driver's license datum
 8. Asparagus unit
 9. Charged particles
 10. Loco
 11. Delight
 12. Devices used by 32-Across
 13. "More!"
 14. Spectacles
 18. Marienbad, for one
 21. Fastener
 22. Like some streets
 23. Canine cry
 24. Imogene and family
27. Venom
 28. Flags
 29. Approx.
 30. Bank letters
 33. Good times
 34. Express mirth
 36. Break out
 37. LAX info
 38. Sponsorship
 39. Bar ___
 40. Get-up
 43. Thick-skinned animals
 44. Threatening words
 45. Execrate
 47. Fearful
 48. Alabama city
 50. Some slippers
 51. School org.
 54. Leave
 55. Side dish
 56. Eye up and down
 57. Latin I word
 59. Dupe
 60. Nonexistent
 61. Pilothouse abbr.
 62. Conducted



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

A	L	M	S	C	H	A	M	P	V	O	L	E		
L	I	E	N	R	A	T	E	L	I	R	O	N		
U	N	T	O	A	R	O	M	A	R	E	N	D		
M	E	A	T	A	N	D	P	O	T	A	T	O	E	S
N	A	B	B	E	Y	F	E	L	U					
A	L	O	H	A	S	N	O	B	O	C	T			
L	A	C	F	O	U	R	P	U	P	A				
B	R	I	C	K	S	A	N	D	M	O	R	T	A	R
B	A	S	K	T	I	N	E	M	A	R				
C	W	M	A	E	R	Y	C	A	N	A	H	S		
O	R	E												
H	A	M	M	E	R	A	N	D	S	I	C	K	L	E
O	B	O	E	A	M	I	R	S	R	I	L	L		
D	U	N	G	G	E	N	O	A	E	N	O	L		
S	T	O	A	E	N	E	M	Y	E	G	O	S		

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

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) 8.5 grams; 2) Catherine of Aragon; 3) Lady Gaga; 4) Graffiti; 5) Nigel Benn

GOT YOUR NUMBER

7

photos a day is the average a cat owner takes of their pet every day.

27

seconds is all it takes for a person to make a first impression.

70

percent of the Earth's oxygen comes from marine plants in the ocean.

-89.2

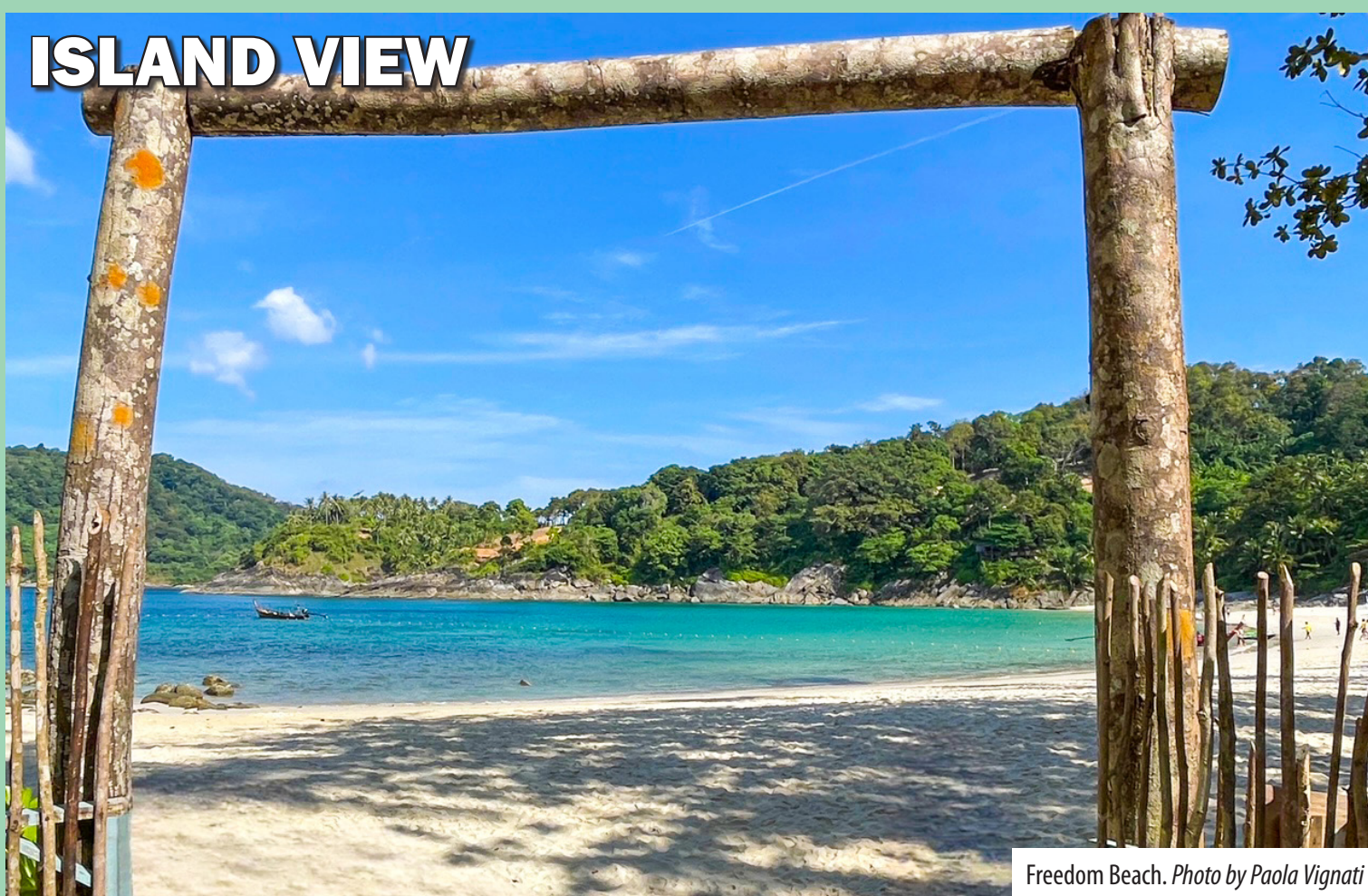
degrees Celsius is the coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth.

1,431.2 billion

cubic kilometres is the volume of Jupiter, about 1,321 times that of Earth.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Freedom Beach. Photo by Paola Vignati

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

This week in history

January 20, 1265

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 called the 'Houses of Parliament'.

January 21, 1911

The first Monte Carlo Rally takes place. The historic race, held annually since, was won by Henri Rougier and the victorious 25Hp Turcat-Méry.

January 22, 1957

The New York City 'Mad Bomber', George P. Metesky, is arrested in Waterbury, Connecticut, and charged with planting more than 30 bombs.

January 23, 1556

The deadliest earthquake in history, the Shaanxi earthquake in China. The death toll may have been as high as 830,000.

January 24, 1972

Japanese Sgt Shoichi Yokoi is



Shoichi Yokoi.

found hiding in a Guam jungle, where he had been since the end of World War II.

January 25, 1995

The Norwegian rocket inci-

dent: Russia almost launches a nuclear attack after it mistakes Black Brant XII, a Norwegian research rocket, for a US Trident missile.

January 26, 1788

The British First Fleet, led by Arthur Phillip, sails into Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour) to establish Sydney, the first permanent European settlement on Australia. The day is commemorated as Australia Day.

Source: Wikipedia

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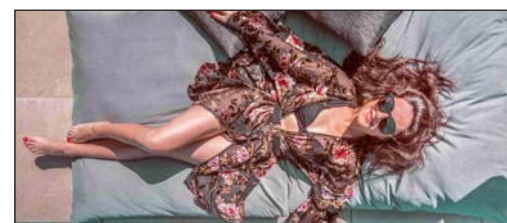
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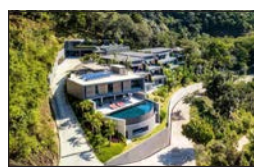
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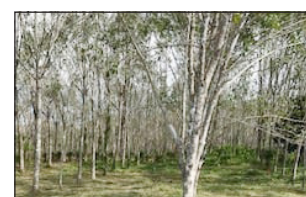
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UFE PHUKET JANUARY NETWORKING EVENT

The French community of Phuket gathered on January 10 at Pickelball Phuket Club Kathu for a relaxed evening of networking and discussions on the year ahead.



OLD GAZETTE GET-TOGETHER

Former staff of the Phuket Gazette gathered for an informal reunion at the 'Gin Reu Yung' ('Have you eaten yet?') restaurant at Phuket Villa 3 last Saturday (Jan 14). More than 20 of the former staffers who turned out enjoyed a fun night of reminiscing and catching up, followed by a sortie to Warm Bar in Phuket Town.



THAILAND INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW 2023

A successful first Thailand International Boat Show A Luxury Lifestyle Event 2023 with over 5,000 visitors over four days, from Jan 12 - 15, held at Royal Phuket Marina. Exhibitors and visitors were treated to on-water and land displays, plus food and beverage outlets and nightly entertainment.



Family fun run at Saphan Hin Park

RUNNING

PHUKET OFFICIALS have announced that the Phuket Grand Run 2023 will take place on Saturday, Jan 28, at Saphan Hin Park.

The family themed fun run is a night event that will start at 6pm and includes races to be contested over two separate distances of 5km and 10km.

There are currently early bird entrance fees available, with the 5km run reduced from B399 to B299 and the 10km run reduced from B599 to B499.

As an additional incentive to choosing whichever distance they prefer, those who opt to purchase VIP entry tickets will be afforded a meet and greet

with both Miss Grand International and Miss Grand Thailand 2022 and be provided with special T-shirts that can be signed. The entry fee for VIP registrants is B999.

The early bird offer to secure discounted entry is open until tomorrow (Jan 21).

Part of the proceeds raised from the occasion will be donated to the Phuket Red Cross, organisers confirmed in an official press release.

Applications can be made online at: <https://soft.events/run/phuket-grand-run-2023>

For more information please contact 080-5262121 or visit the Phuket Grand Run Facebook page.

The Phuket News

Jones back with Wallabies, targets World Cup triumph

RUGBY

AFP

Former England boss Eddie Jones was appointed the new Australia coach on Monday (Jan 16) following Dave Rennie's sacking and immediately vowed to steer them to World Cup glory in France this year.

It will be the veteran's second stint in charge after his 2001-2005 spell during which he took the Wallabies to the 2003 World Cup final, where they lost to England.

New Zealander Rennie, who took over from Michael Cheika at the end of 2019, was shown the door just eight months out from the global showpiece after only five wins from 14 Tests last year.

Jones, who was dumped by England in December, will start on Jan 29 on a contract that will take him through until the 2027 World Cup in Australia and which includes a home British and Irish Lions series in 2025.

In what Rugby Australia called a world-first, he will also head up the national



Jones returns for his second stint in charge of Australia. Photo: AFP

Wallaroos program as the governing body pushes towards a professional future for the women's game.

Jones said his immediate aim was to win the World Cup this year.

"It is a wonderful opportunity for me to be able to come home to Australia and lead my nation to a rugby World Cup," said the 62-year-old.

"It is going to be an immense period for Australian rugby – as a proud Australian, it is a great honour to be able to come home and lead the national team during these years.

"The Wallabies squad is a

really talented group of players with good depth.

"If we can have everyone fit and healthy going into the World Cup this year, I am confident that we can go to France and break the 24-year drought of winning the rugby World Cup.

"I am really looking forward to getting back home and getting stuck in."

Jones was axed by England after presiding over their worst year since 2008, with the team losing six out of 12 Tests, with five wins and a draw.

He was reportedly also being chased by other Test

nations, including Japan and the United States.

Rugby Australia chairman Hamish McLennan said it was a "major coup" to entice Jones home.

"Eddie's deep understanding of our rugby system and knowledge of our player group and pathways will lift the team to the next level," he added.

"Eddie instinctively understands the Australian way of playing rugby – this represents an opportunity to secure a coach of immense expertise and experience at the biggest competitions, and we did not want to miss it."

Ruthless Axelsen defends his title at Malaysia Open

BADMINTON

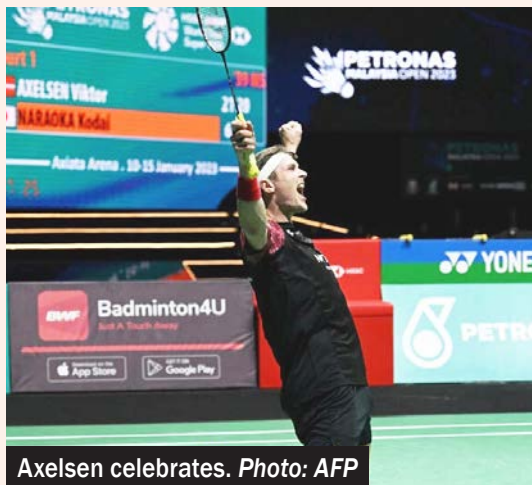
DANISH ACE VIKTOR Axelsen stormed to victory in the men's singles final of the Malaysia Open last Sunday (Jan 15), successfully defending his title by outgunning Japan's Kodai Naraoka.

The world number one only needed 40 minutes in Kuala Lumpur to secure his first trophy of the year, displaying top form to walk away with the match 21-6, 21-15.

Wasting no time in the first game, Axelsen immediately went on the offensive, raining his signature pinpoint smashes on a defenceless Naraoka.

He then kept up the pressure in the second game against a visibly exhausted opponent to clinch the win.

Axelsen conceded fatigue may have been a factor in the match,



Axelsen celebrates. Photo: AFP

with Naraoka having played a mammoth 113-minute semi-final just a day earlier against Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn.

"He looked stiff-legged due to the long matches he's played. For me, that was a good thing," Axelsen told reporters.

Naraoka, who played 362 minutes in the tournament before his showdown with Axelsen, said the run had taken a toll on his body.

"I did feel tired

coming into this game, but I still did my best. But he used his height well, and his smashes were too powerful for me," said the world number seven.

Their match-up followed a hard-fought semi-final between the two at the World Tour Finals last month.

In the women's final, Japan's Akane Yamaguchi took the title by beating South Korea's An Se-young 12-21, 21-19, 21-11.

AFP

Australia pull the plug on Afghan cricket series over Taliban crackdown on women

CRICKET

AUSTRALIA HAS PULLED out of an upcoming cricket series against Afghanistan in the United Arab Emirates, citing Taliban moves to further restrict women's rights.

The men's team were due to face their Afghan counterparts in three ODI games in March following a tour to India.

The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) in Kabul described Australia's decision on Jan 12 as "pathetic".

"The decision to withdraw... is unfair and unexpected and will have a negative impact," the ACB said in a statement, which did not mention the shrinking of women's rights in Afghanistan nor the Taliban's ban on female sport.

The ACB said it would contact the International Cricket Council and was considering withdrawing its players from Australia's domestic Big Bash League in retaliation.

Cricket Australia (CA) said their decision was taken after talks with concerned parties that included the Australian government.

"This decision follows the recent announcement by the Taliban of further restrictions on women's and girls' education and employment opportunities and their ability to access parks and gyms,"



Australia's David Warner (right) embraces Afghanistan's Rashid Khan. Photo: AFP

it said in a statement.

"CA is committed to supporting growing the game for women and men around the world, including in Afghanistan.

"(We) will continue to engage with the Afghanistan Cricket Board in anticipation of improved conditions for women and girls in the country," it said.

The games against Afghanistan were part of the ICC Super League.

Australia will forfeit 30 competition points for the series, which go towards World Cup qualification.

However, they have already secured automatic qualification for the 50-over tournament in India later this year.

Afghan ODI and Test captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said "fans and people of Afghanistan who have suffered immensely due to conflict... don't want politics brought into sports".

"Cricket is the most loved sport in the country and one of the main sources of happiness," he said on Twitter, asking CA to reconsider its decision.

The Taliban regained control of Kabul in August 2021 and quickly began placing restrictions on women's participation in sport.

The hardline Islamists initially promised a softer approach than their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, a period notorious for rights abuses that included public executions and floggings.

They have gradually reintroduced an extreme interpretation of Islamic law, or sharia, and women have seen rights evaporate as they are squeezed out of public life. This includes bans on attending secondary schools and universities, working for NGOs, travelling without a male relative and from entering parks, funfairs, gyms and public baths. *AFP*

Classy Gunners stroll to derby win

FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal moved eight points clear at the top of the Premier League with a 2-0 win over Tottenham in the north London derby last Sunday (Jan 15).

The Gunners will take some stopping if they are to be denied a first league title since Arsene Wenger's "Invincibles" in 2003/04 after a first league win away to Tottenham in nine years.

A dominant first-half display from the visitors did the damage as Hugo Lloris palmed Bukayo Saka's cross into his own net before Martin Odegaard's long-range effort found the bottom corner.

Aaron Ramsdale denied Spurs their customary comeback from two goals down this season after the break with saves from Harry Kane and Ryan Sessegnon.

"I think today we went another step," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. "We won last season in big stadiums, but the way we won today was really pleasing."

"I loved the way we played and the courage we showed. Everything we ask, they are



Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard celebrates the win at Spurs with teammates. Photo: AFP

so willing to try. They are a terrific group of players."

A fourth home defeat in five league games leaves Tottenham five points adrift of the top four.

The result came after second placed Manchester City dropped points in the Manchester derby on Saturday as United came from a goal

down to win 2-1.

However, United's equalising goal from Bruno Fernandes was shrouded in controversy after VAR deemed Marcus Rashford not offside.

Rashford did not touch the ball and was deemed by VAR not to have interfered with play, but City were adamant the England forward clearly

distracted the defenders and goalkeeper Ederson.

"The first goal is a joke that it can be allowed," City defender Manuel Akanji said.

"He runs for 30 metres, he's chasing the ball. In the situation, I played him [Rashford] offside. I understand he doesn't touch the ball, but for me it is clearly offside."

Rashford then popped up to score the winner with just eight minutes remaining, moving United to just a point behind their city rivals.

Newcastle United kept up the pressure with a late winner from substitute and club-record signing Alexander Isak against Fulham to remain in third place, level on points with Manchester United but ahead on goal difference.

DIRE STRAITS

Elsewhere Chelsea eased the pressure on boss Graham Potter as Kai Havertz's second-half goal was enough to see off Crystal Palace in a 1-0 win.

However, Liverpool's woes continue after they crashed to a deserved 3-0 defeat at Brighton.

Jurgen Klopp's team are languishing in ninth place, seven points adrift of the top four, and look a shadow of the team that nearly won the quadruple last term.

"Bad. Really bad. I can't remember a worse game. It was a very organised team against a not very organised team," Klopp said.

Brighton thoroughly deserved their win after dominating the game from the outset, with goals from Solly March

(2) and Danny Welbeck capping a fine performance.

Liverpool's Merseyside rivals Everton are in even more dire straits after Southampton's 2-1 win at Goodison Park.

Everton have won only one of their last 13 matches in all competitions and banners calling for owner Farhad Moshiri to sell up were unfurled before kick-off.

Amadou Onana gave Frank Lampard's men the lead, but James Ward-Prowse struck twice for Southampton and thousands of Everton fans staged a sit-in protest after the final whistle.

The Saints remain bottom of the table but they are now behind second bottom Everton only on goal difference.

"It's clear in football that sometimes if you aren't winning games it can become contagious in terms of confidence and we know we are in that spot," Lampard said.

West Ham fill the final place in the bottom three after a 1-0 defeat at Wolves that saw the hosts move above the hapless Hammers.

Nottingham Forest beat Leicester 2-0, Brentford defeated fourth bottom Bournemouth 2-0, while Aston Villa defeated Leeds 2-1.

Russia and Belarus flags banned at Australian Open

TENNIS

RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN flags at the Australian Open were officially banned by Tennis Australia on Tuesday (Jan 17) after Ukraine's ambassador demanded action when one was sighted among the crowd.

The red, white and blue stripes of Russia were seen amongst the crowd on Monday's opening day of the tournament during a first-round clash between Ukraine's Kateryna Baindl and Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova.

"Flags from Russia and Belarus are banned onsite at the Australian Open," Tennis Australia said in a statement.

"Our initial policy was that fans could bring them in but could not use them to cause disruption. Yesterday, we had an incident where a flag was placed courtside."

"The ban is effective immediately. We will continue to work with the players and our fans to ensure the best



A fan holds a Russian flag during the game between Kateryna Baindl and Kamilla Rakhimova. Photo: AFP

possible environment to enjoy the tennis."

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, tennis players from the country have competed under a neutral flag, as is the case at the Australian Open.

Ukraine's ambassador to Australia and New Zealand, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, called on Tennis Australia to take action late on Monday.

"I strongly condemn the public display of the Russian flag during the game of the Ukrainian tennis player Kateryna Baindl at the Australian Open," he tweeted.

"I call on Tennis Australia to immediately enforce

its 'neutral flag' policy."

Baindl won the match 7-5, 6-7, (8/10), 6-1 and will face American Caty McNally in the second round.

Myroshnychenko last week urged the Australian Open to ban Russian and Belarusian players entirely – the latter due to Belarus' support of Vladimir Putin's invasion.

Wimbledon went down that route last year, with players from Russia and Belarus barred, which led to the tournament being stripped of its ranking points by tennis's governing bodies. AFP



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Sport



Jones returns as Wallabies coach > p14

SEVEN UP



War Elephants secure record AFF Cup title

Theerathon Bunmathan (centre) raises the trophy as the Thai team celebrates winning the AFF Cup final on Monday (Jan 16). Photo: AFP

FOOTBALL

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Thailand secured a record seventh Asean Football Federation (AFF) Cup trophy on Monday (Jan 16), seeing off a poor Vietnam side 1-0 in the second leg of the final to cement their status as the leading force in Southeast Asian football.

The victory at Thammasat Stadium in Bangkok came courtesy of a spectacular strike from distance in the 24th minute from Thai captain Theerathorn Bunmathan.

It meant Mano Polking's side emerged as 3-2 aggregate winners over the two-legged final following a 2-2 draw in Hanoi last Friday (Jan 13).

The win also ensured a second

successive AFF Cup title for the War Elephants after they defeated Indonesia in Singapore last year in a tournament that had been delayed by 12 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the victory means they have successfully defended the title on three separate occasions overall.

With the away goal advantage rule in effect, Polking's side went into the second leg encounter on Monday in Bangkok as favourites and, despite a scrappy 90 minutes overall, were by far the better team.

Theerathorn and Peeradol Chamrasamee effortlessly controlled the centre of the park for Thailand, leaving 2018 winners Vietnam chasing shadows for much of the match that was played under the watchful eye of FIFA supremo Gianni Infantino.

Without the full-throated support

of the crowd they enjoyed in the first leg in Hanoi, Vietnam struggled to repeat the spirited performance that saw them scrape a 2-2 draw.

Theerathorn's 24th minute goal was the fruit of patient build-up play through the midfield, as Vietnam hung ever further back.

After a string of passes, lively number nine Adisak Kraisorn – a thorn in Vietnam's side all evening – laid the ball off as Theerathorn arrived at pace, took a touch and unleashed a ferocious shot past Vietnam's goalkeeper Dang Van Lam into the bottom corner from 25 yards.

The goal capped a fine tournament for the 32-year-old Theerathorn, a midfielder for Thai League 1 heavyweights Buriram United, who has shone throughout the competition as the War Elephants' best player.

RATTLED

The goal rattled Vietnam, who shed what little cohesion they had shown and almost lost their heads, flying into rash tackles as the first half closed.

In the second half Vietnam rarely threatened Thailand's goal, Pham Tuan Hai going closest with an effort from distance.

Despite Vietnam's lack of discipline following the goal it was the hosts and defending champions who ended the match a man short as Peeradol received a second caution in injury time.

However, it could not take the gloss off a famous evening as the full-time whistle sounded and rapturous celebrations ensued.

Brazilian-born coach Polking admitted it was not a "beautiful" performance but praised the professionalism shown by his team to get the job done over the two legs.

"All credit to the players – they did a fantastic job," he said after Monday's game.

The real hard work was done by his team in the first leg in Hanoi, which was a much more keenly contested affair.

Vietnam had opened the scoring in the 24th minute when Nguyen Tien Linh fired the hosts in front, only for Poramet Arjvirai and Sarach Yooyen to reply and put Thailand in control.

Just when it seemed that the tie was leaning decisively in Thailand's favour, substitute Vu Van Thanh struck in the 88th minute to set up a mouth-watering second leg.

Monday's game may have transpired to be somewhat of a damp squib but that did not temper celebrations as Thailand secured their seventh title, well clear of their closest rivals Singapore on four.

Additional reporting by AFP

Phuket hosts regional trials for elite football academy

FOOTBALL

ASPIRING FOOTBALLERS IN Phuket have the chance to take part in an award-winning program being held on the island later this month which offers the chance of being selected for an elite academy.

The 'Know You Can' Football Youth (U15) Academy is organised by Krungthai-AXA Life (KTAXA) as part of an official partnership with English Premier League giants Liverpool, which strives to provide resources to enhance health and

fitness among young Thais while elevating their onfield skills.

The third season of the hugely popular program was launched in December last year and focuses on four regions, namely Chiang Mai, Nong Bua Lumpoo, Pathum Thani and Phuket. Targeting players between 13 to 15 years of age, the Southern Region trials in Phuket will take place on Jan 28 at the Kathu Municipal Stadium.

The academy estimates over 1,600 boys and girls will participate across the four training camps, with an estimated 40% of participants

from underprivileged communities.

At each of the camps there will be a coach from either the Thai national team or Thai League 1 who will serve as chief scout. A total of 20 youngsters will then be selected by these scouts to join the KTAXA 'Know You Can' Football Youth (U15) Camp. Additionally, they will receive a cash prize of B5,000 and a gift voucher worth B8,000 which can be used on sports equipment.

"We were absolutely thrilled with the success of the first two season's academy, where over 3,000 boys & girls joined the activities,"

Krungthai-AXA Life CEO Sally O'Hara said on the company's website. "I firmly believe sport has the power to enrich lives and KTAXA is very proud to be part of a program that helps to raise the standard of international football in Thailand and supports our children to fulfil their dreams by embracing our 'Know You Can' philosophy," she added.

"Children across our nation have had a very challenging couple of years and been so restricted due to the [COVID-19] pandemic. The football academy aims to promote a positive message and encourage



Photo: Krungthai-AXA Life

children to go out, have fun and feel confident again," Mrs O'Hara said.

For further information call 095-347-1888 or 1159 or contact via LINE @ktaxa-u15. *The Phuket News*