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GREEN LIGHT



Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul speaks to the press at Phuket Provincial Hall last Saturday (May 15). Photo: PR Phuket

DEPUTY PM ANUTIN, TOURISM MINISTER PHIPHAT ASSURE JULY 1 REOPENING

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul and Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn in Phuket last Saturday (May 15) delivered a message of support from Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha confirming that Phuket will open to fully vaccinated international tourists from July 1.

Speaking at a special meeting convened at Phuket Provincial Hall early this afternoon “to prepare for

the opening of the ‘Phuket Sandbox 1 July’ policy”, Mr Anutin brought good tidings from Prime Minister Prayut, who did not attend, despite the announcement the night before that he was coming to the island.

Present to receive the message at Provincial Hall were Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, the island’s three Vice Governors, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or *Or Bor Jor*) Rewat Areerob along with a host of officials from relevant government departments on the island as well as representatives from Phuket’s private sector.

“All stakeholders who are frontline warriors working to solve the problem of the COVID-19 epidemic situation have earned the goodwill and concern from General Prayut Chan-o-cha, who also believes that Phuket is ready to prepare for the opening of the Phuket Tourism Sandbox on July 1 for sure,” Mr Anutin said.

“Phuket will be a pilot province that will bring the economy back up. In the past, Phuket Province generated several hundreds of billions of baht of income for the country per year and Thailand relies heavily on tourism income.

“Phuket is therefore an outpost to revive the economy for whatever country the government can support [in receiving international tourists from]. The government is ready to act as soon as possible. This has been clearly proved, such as by the large number of vaccine doses that Phuket has been allocated to vaccinate the people in the area to cover all groups and be as safe as possible as the ‘Phuket Model’,” he added.

Mr Anutin reiterated that all people should be patient and persevere, saying that he believed that through vaccines “it will be game over”...

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Crackdown on meeting friends bites hard



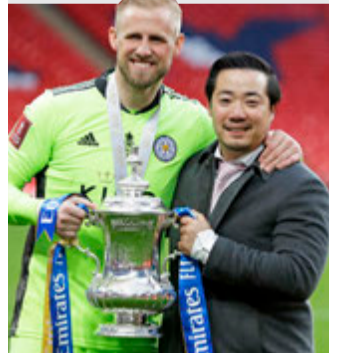
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Expats rally to support police shooting victim



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AstraZeneca to arrive in June

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"When the economy is good, everyone gets better, so use patience to believe that good things will follow," he said.

As part of his visit, Mr Anutin handed over 100,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine 'CoronaVac' to Phuket officials in order to continue the mass-vaccination campaign on the island.

Another 100,000 doses of Sinovac vaccine arrived in Phuket on Tuesday (May 18) and the mass-vaccination campaign also resumed on Tuesday.

Speaking to the press last Friday night, Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Chalermpong Sukontapol said, "I would say it is our good luck to receive the number of vaccines to accomplish our Phuket Sandbox plan. We receive vaccine doses faster than other provinces.

"We will start administering the vaccine doses from May 18-28," Dr Chalermpong said.

"We will receive doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine in early June to give to elders. The vaccine will be given to those who are older than 60 years old and to those who have dangerous diseases [medical conditions] over three days, from



The mass vaccinations resumed on Tuesday (May 18). Photo: PPHO

June 7-9," he explained.

"Then we will administer a further 140,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to people from June 10-16," he continued.

"After that, we will give the second injection of the Sinovac vaccine to those who received their first injection in May. That will complete our 300,000 people vaccinated with Sinovac.

"For the 140,000 people who will get the AstraZeneca vaccine, they will develop immunity after two weeks. They will get the second

injection in August," he said.

"So, that will be 440,000 people in Phuket vaccinated for the virus; 300,000 people will be fully vaccinated with Sinovac and 140,000 will have had their first jab of AstraZeneca. That means we will be able to open on July 1," Dr Chalermpong assured.

"For foreigners, migrant workers, or expats working in Phuket, we will arrange the vaccine doses and give them to you before the end of June for sure," Dr Chalermpong said.

"We are living and working in

Phuket together. We will achieve herd immunity together," he added.

VACCINATING FOREIGNERS

The Phuket Provincial Public Health Office has confirmed that they are now receiving registrations of foreigners working in tourism-related businesses to be vaccinated under the state campaign.

The registrations opened Tuesday last week (May 11), but only for foreigners working in tourism-related businesses.

The confirmation came from a member of the task force that was assigned to oversee the operation of the 'Phuket Must Win' web portal.

The foreigners must be registered to receive the state-provided vaccine by a business or organisation that is registered with a Phuket address.

Expats and migrant workers must be full-time staff or a business owner and must have a valid passport and visa, a work permit that has been valid at least six months, and a valid mobile phone number.

The registration is subject to approval by the PPHO. Approval notification will be sent by SMS.

After being approved, registrants

will be allowed to book the location, date and time to be vaccinated.

"Vaccination will start from June, and the vaccine to be injected will be AstraZeneca only," the PPHO assured.

The member of the 'Phuket Must Win' web portal task force that *The Phuket News* spoke to confirmed that "tourism-related businesses" included: Hotels and resorts; travel agencies, tour operator and destination management company (DMC); transportation and airline; restaurant; shopping malls and department store; souvenir shops; theme park; entertainment venue; spa and health massage businesses; theatres; beauty clinics and salons; hospitals and clinics; fitness, sport clubs and golf courses; and schools.

"Foreigners working in other businesses will be in the next phase," the task force member said.

"Please calm down and wait. Every person will get vaccinated for sure," the administrator added.

"At this moment, the registration site for tourism-related businesses will have a button to register foreign workers, while the button will not appear for other businesses," the task force member explained.

Restriction on restaurants' opening hours lifted

THE BAN ON PHUKET restaurants having dine in patrons after 9pm has been lifted, but the ban on the sale of alcohol in restaurants and the consumption of alcohol on the premises remains following yet another provincial order issued on Monday night (May 17).

The new order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew came just five days after the latest order imposing COVID-18 restrictions came into effect last Thursday (May 13).

The order issued on Monday night was marked as in effect from Monday (May 17), but the order itself was published after 9pm.

Phuket Vice Governor Piyapong Choowong told *The Phuket News* on Tuesday, "From the order, we just follow the CCSA's [the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration in Bangkok] approval."

"Before this, all restaurants in Phuket as one of the red zone provinces could open

for services until only 9pm, but now the measure has been lifted, but alcohol cannot be served," he said.

The CCSA last Friday yet again revised its classification of provinces in accordance with the impact each province was currently being affected by COVID-19 infections.

Under the system, Phuket is no longer a "red zone" province, but instead now an "orange zone" province where restrictions on restaurant opening times have been lifted.

According to the national authorities, including the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), public gatherings in orange zone provinces are limited to 50 people and markets and convenience stores are now allowed to open for their usual hours.

However, Phuket officials have not yet confirmed that these measures have been relaxed in Phuket. The order issued Monday night made no mention of them.

Meanwhile, the order issued on Monday night did confirm that schools and other "educational institutions" can use their buildings for studying, testing, training and other activities as long as the relevant COVID-19 prevention measures were in effect.

"I would like to inform the public that the CCSA has allowed to open the international schools and the private schools, which is not under control of the Ministry of Education," Vice Governor Piyapong explained on Tuesday.

"The provincial order about this will come later, in about five days," he said.

"The international schools



Governor Narong. Photo: PR Phuket

will be able to open next Monday [May 24], but the government schools will be open on June 1 as ordered previously," he added.

The easing of some restrictions comes as Phuket on Tuesday enjoyed its third consecutive day with the daily number of new infections remaining in the single-digits.

The Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) reported just four new cases of people in Phuket infected with COVID-19 for Monday (May 17).

The PPHO has reported a total of just 10 new cases over the three days since the arrival of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul and

Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn in Phuket last Saturday (May 15): four on Saturday, two on Sunday and four on Monday.

The four new cases on Monday brought to 608 the total number of people in Phuket officially recognised as infected with COVID-19 since Apr 3, said the PPHO report.

Of the 608 cases so far, 468 have been discharged from medical care.

So far Phuket has suffered one death directly related to COVID-19 since the 'Third Wave' of infections began on the island on Apr 3 – that of a 71-year-old man who was already suffering from emphysema. *The Phuket News*

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Meeting friends now illegal

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The lack of clarity over the law being laid down directly at foreigners over whether or not they may meet any friends at their homes, even just one, whether with or without alcohol being consumed, has left the island in disarray over the past week.

The saga began on May 9 after two foreigners were fined B6,000 each for holding what was deemed to be a party of just six people in Cherng Talay.

The raid, arrests and fines came at a time when provincial officials had not clarified any rule other than it was illegal to hold a party not approved by officials, who have been announcing that only events that cannot be postponed – such as funerals and weddings – may be held, but only if less than 30 people congregate and only if official permission had been granted.

The “party” at Cherng Talay involved six adults sitting around a poolside table at a private home. At least one child was also at the home, but there was no evidence to



The 12 arrested have swab tests taken at Phuket City Police Station. Photo: PR Phuket

suggest the so-called “event” was any form of a “party”.

Three days later (May 12), Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw issued a new provincial order, No 2553/2564, which came into effect on May 13, and is to remain in effect until at least May 31 (see page 2).

The next day (May 13), four days after the arrests in Cherng Talay, the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket) posted an updated version of their notice of COVID restrictions in English, which said that no friends were allowed

to gather at any home where they are not staying.

In addition to the logos of five government offices on the island, the notice issued also bore a clear warning beside the Royal Thai Police Immigration Bureau logo, saying: “If you witness any risky behaviour that could lead to disease transmission, please call 191, available 24 hours a day.

“Foreign offenders could be deported and lose their permission to stay in Thailand, according to the violation under the Immigration Act.”

The notice made clear, “No house party, no friends gathering in the residence.”

The notice specifically warned: “If they are not the family members who already live together in the same house - NOT allowed”.

The order issued on May 12 mandates that it is prohibited for people who are not members of the family staying in the house to join the family for eating together or for drinking alcohol.

The notice issued on May 13 did not clarify for which purpose, if any, any number

of friends may gather at any one house.

Also not clarified was whether or not visits by friends where eating or drinking is not conducted were permitted.

Visits by other family members not staying in the house were not mentioned at all.

At the time of going to press, Phuket officials and police had yet to be publicly reported as enforcing the same provisions to the same extent on any Thai families across the island.

Phuket officials did report Patong Police arresting 11 people – reported as three Thai ladyboys, five Thai women and three foreign men for sitting and drinking together on the Patong beachfront last Friday night (May 14).

Officers arrested the dozen perpetrators for illegally gathering in contravention of the provincial order issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19 across the island and for drinking alcohol in a public area – both provisions that have never been unclear.

The group were taken to Phuket City Police Station in Phuket Town, where

they underwent testing for COVID-19.

Present to oversee the swab sample collection procedure performed by medical staff from Vachira Phuket Hospital were Phuket Vice Governors Vikrom Jakthee and Piyapong Choowong.

Vice Governor Vikrom explained that the provincial government had set the number of people allowed to sit together drinking alcohol to just two.

“Do not have a group and drink together comp [comprising more than two people]. This is because before there was a cluster before among a group of people involving alcohol that caused infections among more than 20 people.”

However, the order issued by Governor Narong included a provision expressly banning any people from visiting any other person’s home for the purpose of gathering. The new order does not stipulate how many people gathering at a private home was to be deemed illegal.

Adding to the confusion, provincial officials have since declared that groups of up to four people may sit together in a restaurant.

Charges progress against venue operators of Phuket mass parties

PATONG POLICE CHIEF Col Sujin Nilabodi has confirmed that the managers of the three venues where the mass parties were held in Phuket last month, marking the beginning of the ‘Third Wave’ infections on the island, will face charges under the Emergency Decree.

The “parties” were organised by Kolour beachside, at Cafe Del Mar Phuket in Kamala, Illuzion nightclub on Bangla Rd and at the Shelter Phuket Dance & Night Club, also in Patong.

The parties were held on Apr 2-3.

On Apr 7, Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon confirmed that Phuket had recorded eight new cases of people being infected with COVID-19.

At least four of those cases had attended the parties, he also confirmed.

Before Apr 7, Phuket had enjoyed 103 days without any new infections.

“We just filed the case report to the [public] prosecutor yesterday,” Col Sujin



A screenshot taken from a video of one of the three parties held in Phuket last month. Screenshot: via Eakkapop Thongtub

told *The Phuket News* on May 13.

Police are proceeding with charges against three people, he said.

“We are proceeding with charges against the managing director [one person] and the manager [one person] of the Shelter and Illuzion nightclubs [both clubs are under the same management], and the manager of Café Del Mar,” Col Sujin said.

“All three are charged with breaching the Emergency Decree,” he confirmed.

“But the managing director and the manager of Shelter are both also facing a charge of operating an entertainment venue without a license,” he added.

Section 9 of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation B.E. 2548 mandates that any person found guilty of breaching the Emergency Decree shall be liable to up to two years’ imprisonment or a fine of up to B40,000 or both.

Section 26 of the Entertainment Place Act B.E. 2509 (1966) mandates that any person found guilty of operating an entertainment venue without a licence shall be liable to up to one year imprisonment or a fine of up to B60,000 or to both.

Col Sujin explained that the delay in filing the charges with the Phuket Public Prosecutor’s Office followed Region 8 Police Commander Lt Gen Kitrat Panpetch ordering a special investigation committee be set up to oversee the investigation.

The investigation committee included officers from Region 8 Police, Phuket Provincial Police, Patong Police and Kamala Police, Col Sujin added.

The Phuket News

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SAT MAY 22



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Wind 11 m/s

MON MAY 24



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Wind 11 m/s

TUE MAY 25



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Wind 11 m/s

WED MAY 26



High: +32°
Low: +27°

Wind 18 m/s

THU MAY 27



High: +32°
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Wind 11 m/s

Immigration opens Cherng Talay office

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Immigration opened a new office at Blue Tree Phuket in Cherng Talay on May 11 to provide services to foreigners living in Thalang.

The office is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 3pm, but closed during lunchtime from midday to 1pm. The office is closed on public holidays.

The office, which is currently staffed by just two officers, is located at Unit 9 on the third floor of the Lifestyle Village at Blue Tree Phuket, located on Srisoonthorn Rd.

At this stage, the office is open for only two services: 90-day reports and a 'Certification of residence for foreigners'.

An officer at the new Cherng Talay Immigration office – who declined to give his real name and asked to be called only "Inspector Joe"



The new Immigration office at Blue Tree Phuket in Cherng Talay. Photo: Phuket Immigration

– told *The Phuket News* on May 11 that the new office was opened to help reduce congestion at the main office in Phuket Town "as well as reduce the risk of people being infected with COVID-19."

"Additionally, we know that there are a lot of foreigners living in Cherng Talay and other areas of Thalang District. This office will help them save time instead of

going to the main office [in Phuket Town]," he said.

"We will work transparently as our commander has ordered by installing a sign explaining how much it costs for each service, so that foreigners can know that we do not overcharge them," Inspector Joe added.

"The sign has not been installed, but it will be soon," he said.

The confirmation that a sign will be posted at the Cherng Talay office explaining the costs of different services follows *The Phuket News* confirming that a foreigner at the main Phuket Immigration Office in Phuket Town last week was asked to pay B300 for a formal notice confirming the foreigner's address, so that the foreigner could renew his driver's licence.

An officer at the main Phuket Immigration Office yet again confirmed to *The Phuket News* that the request for payment was a "misunderstanding" and that the confirmation of address was to be issued for free.

The request for B300 payment for the confirmation of registered address by officers at Phuket Immigration appears to be a recurring problem. The same issue was raised not even 12 months ago.

Meanwhile, 'Inspector

Joe' at Cherng Talay said, "For these first two weeks, the office is like a 'soft opening', as the office is not 100% ready to open. We will review our work and solve any problems happening with providing the services."

"We may provide more services, such re-entry permits and tourist visa extensions, next month," he said.

"Right now, we have only two officers standing by at the office. Foreigners who want to come to receive the two services do not have to make any booking in advance," he added.

"Foreigners can walk in, but they will need to take a queue card at the front of the office. We also have some staff from Blue Tree to facilitate foreigners for queuing," he said.

"Today was the first day, and we have already had 20 foreigners come to the office," he noted.

Motorbike rider jumps for his life as car hits pole

A 35-YEAR-OLD MAN escaped serious injuries as the car he was driving slammed into a power pole north of Phuket Town last Saturday afternoon (May 15), as did a young man who leapt to safety as downed power lines came crashing down onto his motorbike while he was riding past.

Phuket City Police officers and Kusoldharm rescue workers were called to the scene, near the Ministry of Finance office on Trang Rd in Rassada, at 2:10pm.

The officers arrived to find a white Nissan Juke sedan crunched into a power pole by the side of the road.

The power pole had snapped from the force of the impact, bringing down nine other power poles connected to it.

The broken section of the power pole and high-voltage cables still connected to it were strewn across the bonnet and roof of the car.

The power supply had to be shut off before the driver, Rassada resident Apichet Kandit, 35, could be safely removed from the car. He was confirmed



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

to have suffered no serious injuries.

Nearby was an orange-and-black motorbike, smothered by high-voltage cables.

The rider of the motorbike, a young adult male, told rescue workers that he heard a loud noise and saw the power pole and cables coming down, and literally jumped off the motorbike to safety.

A local woman selling noodles nearby also narrowly escaped having the power cables coming down on her stall.

No serious injuries were suffered by any people at the scene.

At the time of going to press, police had yet to confirm what charges, if any, Mr Apichet will face for the accident.

Eakkapop Thongtub

'I am not a COVID-infected prostitute'

AT THE TIME OF GOING TO press, police had yet to treat seriously a formal complaint filed by a local woman who was accused online by a man claiming that she was a prostitute who worked in Phoonpon Soi 11, now a centre of a COVID infections cluster; that she had slept with 20 customers in three days; and that she was now infected with COVID-19.

Phuket native Rungaroon Siela, 29, appealed to the media last Friday (May 14) asking for help in bringing attention to her case after she filed a formal police complaint, but no action had been taken.

Ms Rung-aroon explained that the accusations were posted through a Facebook account named "Art Poopsex" on the preceding Wednesday (May 12).

The man had sent her messages, inviting her to have sex with him, she said.

"I refused his invitation and blocked his account. Then he got mad at me and sent messages to another of my accounts, but I have not replied to him," she said.

"On the same day, a friend sent me a screenshot of a post made by the account on a group named 'Khon Sode Phuket (Mai)' [Single People Phuket (New)], which used my photo and posted false information about me.

The post wrote: "Reminder, those who are customers of Anny@Soi 11. Please take a test quickly. Anny has confessed to a doctor that she had slept with 20 customers in three days. You may be one of them. Go take a test".

"After that I sent him a message



Phuket native Rungaroon Siela, 29. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

and called him many times to ask why he posted that. He replied once, 'Already deleted, done', but I still see the false information shared through the Line app," Ms Rungaroon said.

"On Wednesday evening, I went to Phuket City Police Station and filed a formal complaint. After filing the complaint, I returned home," she said.

Ms Rungaroon said that she later found the man's true identity through a search online. "I went to the police station again yesterday to tell the police, but an officer on duty at the time told me that I must tell the officer who accepted the formal complaint from me," she said.

"I returned home and went back to the police station again later to see the officer who received my formal complaint, and the officer told me that she was busy clearing other documents and that she would call me later," Ms Rungaroon continued.

"I have not received any calls from police so far, so I have to ask the media to help me because I have been accused of being a prostitute. My family and I have been wrongfully shamed, and we must tell the public," she said. Eakkapop Thongtub

Quarantine mess for road arrivals

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

People wanting to enter Phuket who are not fully vaccinated or cannot prove they have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of arriving must serve a 14-day quarantine if they want to enter the province.

Phuket Vice Governor Piyapong Choowong confirmed the policy through the live broadcast online at 8pm Monday night (May 17) following the meeting of the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee.

Another official order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, confirming the policy that was already mandated by a provincial order, was posted publicly at 10pm Monday night.

Vice Governor Piyapong explained that until last Saturday (May 15) people were allowed to enter Phuket even if they were not fully vaccinated and could not prove they had tested negative for the virus within 72 hours of arriving if they passed a rapid antigen test on arrival.

The rapid antigen tests were free for Thais, paid for by the National Health Security Office (NHSO) until May 15, V/Gov Piyapong also explained.

Not explained was that foreigners were charged B500 for each test.



Photo: Tha Chatchai Police

However, due to massive tailbacks at the one checkpoint onto the island, officials had continued to provide the rapid antigen tests for people arriving by road throughout Sunday and Monday (May 16-17), V/Gov Piyapong admitted.

"We do not have the budget to provide the test for arrivals and on May 16 many arrivals were unable to meet our requirements [for entering Phuket]," he said.

"So our medical staff provided the rapid test on May 16 and today [May 17], which arrivals had to pay by themselves. The test cost was B450," he added.

The B450 fee for the procedure was applied to both Thais and foreigners, V/Gov Piyapong noted. At no point previously had any

Phuket officials publicly admitted the tests were being continued so that people could still enter the province by means of passing a rapid antigen test, a measure that was discontinued on May 15 by provincial order.

Not explained by V/Gov Piyapong was that much of the problem stemmed from truck drivers delivering fresh produce and goods onto the island, who are required to comply with the entry requirements.

Also directly affected were people living in Phuket or Phang Nga who relied on regular travel across the bridge for work or other business purposes.

Without the rapid antigen tests available, each truck driver and other person needing to cross the

bridge would be required to prove they had undergone a COVID test at a hospital, a procedure that costs around B3,000 per time.

Of note, while truck drivers remained stuck at the checkpoint onto Phuket, prices of fresh produce at markets in Phuket Town have been rising.

V/Gov Piyapong did admit on Monday, "Some hospitals in other provinces such as Phang Nga can provide only 100 COVID tests a day. That is not enough for what the arrivals need."

However, V/Gov Piyapong announced plainly on Monday evening, "From today on, no rapid tests anymore. Arrivals without any documents must get the quarantine order at the checkpoint."

"From the meeting today, the committee altogether agreed to order arrivals without the one of the two documents to do quarantine for 14 days from May 18.

"If you stay in Phuket shorter than 14 days, then you will be in quarantine as long as you stay on the island," he said.

"Staff from the Phuket Public Health Office [PPHO] will stand by at the checkpoint and give arrivals a quarantine order which will be copied and sent to Emergency Operation Center (EOC) in each subdistrict," he said.

"Then the EOC staff will go to

follow up your quarantine at your homes or hotels," he added.

"However, the checkpoint is closed from 11pm to 5am, the PPHO staff will provide the quarantine orders [only] from 8:30am to 8:30pm," he said.

V/Gov Piyapong did point out that day-trippers to Phuket were exempt from any of the entry requirements.

They do not have to be fully vaccinated, they do not have to prove they have tested negative for the virus within 72 hours of arriving, there is no longer the option to take a rapid antigen test, and no quarantine period will be applied.

"For day-trippers, they are allowed to come, do their thing and leave," he said.

"We will come up with something that people will require later. This is all we [the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee] have agreed so far," he said.

Of note, for people arriving in Phuket at the airport, V/Gov Piyapong would only say, "For arrivals who come by plane, we still keep the same measure. Only arrivals who are fully vaccinated or tested negative within 72 hours are allowed to come."

V/Gov Piyapong made no mention of whether any quarantine periods will be allowed for people arriving by plane. That point remains unclear.

Thai Navy divers safely recover space junk fuel tank off Phuket

OFFICERS FROM THE Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command successfully recovered a metal sphere from the seabed off Phuket on Monday (May 17) that has now been confirmed to be a discarded fuel tank for a rocket, satellite or other object heading for, or already in, orbit.

Vice Admiral Chergchai Chomcherngpat, Commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command, explained to the press on Monday that local fisherman first spotted the object in the shallows off 'Koh Ael' earlier this month.

"The Third Regional Operation Center of the Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Center [ThaiMECC3] was informed by local fishermen on May 1 that they found a suspicious object which looked like a bomb near Koh Ael," he said.

"Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) officers went to examine and assured that the item was not a bomb or contained toxic substances," he added.



Photo: Royal Thai Navy

"The EOD officers sent photos [of the object] to the Naval Ordnance Department, which later confirmed that the item is a part of a space shuttle.

"Later, ThaiMECC3 sent photos of the object to the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency [GISTDA] to check, and they confirmed that the item is a fuel tank for an object heading for space."

The fuel tank was believed to have previously contained hydrazine (NH₂NH₂).

"GISTDA staff and officers of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources have examined the

tank and found that all of the hydrazine (NH₂NH₂) had been used. The tank has not had any effect on the natural resources in the surrounding area," V/Adm Chergchai said.

"While collecting the tank, all officers wore proper suits and equipment, so I am sure that the work [salvage operation] had no effect on the sea. We care about our officers and the impact on the marine environment," he added.

"The tank will be examined again for studying and displayed in the museum of GISTDA," V/Adm Chergchai said.

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'Smart bus' to save B15.2bn

Driverless buses under review to replace light rail mass transit

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob has ordered an in-depth analysis of a proposal to dump the Phuket light-rail project in favour of a 'smart bus' system that would reduce the cost of launching a mass transport option on the island by some B15.2 billion.

The order came on May 13 during a teleconference Mr Saksayam held to follow up the progress of transport projects in regional main provinces, reported state news agency MCOT.

Mr Saksayam explained that the Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (MRTA) has proposed to change the type of transport system to be rolled out in Phuket from light rail to a bus-based operation.

The MRTA, which has been officially assigned the task of implementing the Phuket mass transit project, which up until now has been focussed purely on building a light-rail system, had already conducted a preliminary in-



Image: MRTA

vestigation into the proposal, he said.

"The 'smart bus without driver', or automated rapid transit (ART), will reduce the budget of the project by about B15.289 billion. Additionally, the time required for construction will also be

shorter by about nine months, which will allow us to set lower fares for passengers," he said.

"At this stage, we have a concept to set three different rates of fare according to service areas: within Phuket Town, outside of Phuket Town,

and travelling between Phuket Town and outside areas.

"For construction, the option that requires the least time to complete will be chosen, such as using precast concrete and launching gantries," he added.

Mr Saksayam also ex-

plained that the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP) had discussed with the MRTA and the Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) how construction of the project would affect traffic across the island.

To resolve the issue, the agencies suggested delaying the launch of the Phuket mass transit system until 2030.

"If we work on the construction of the public transport project and the Patong tunnel project, which are currently planned to open in 2026 and 2028 respectively, at the same time, the construction will affect the traffic on the island very much," he said.

"However, if we postpone the construction of the public transport project to open in 2030, this can help reduce the effect on traffic," he added.

"I ordered the MRTA and EXAT to present the action plans and timeline for the two choices within two weeks," Mr Saksayam said.

"After the COVID-19 outbreak has been resolved, representatives from the two agencies will go to Phuket to conduct a public hearing," he noted.

"At this stage, Phuket City Municipality has approved the MRTA to work on the public transport project on Thepkasattri Rd and Phuket Rd," he said.

Govt readies to reopen skies

THE TRANSPORT MINISTRY is gearing up for the resumption of air travel in November.

Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob said after a meeting between the members of the Civil Aviation Board that he had asked the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand to collaborate with public health agencies, airlines and airport authorities to lay out measures to prepare for the country's reopening to international visitors later this year.

The measures, however, should align with other coun-



Travellers at Suvarnabhumi airport. Photo: Bangkok Post

tries, Mr Saksayam said, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

Thailand plans to wave its mandatory quarantine for vaccinated visitors to the capital Bangkok and top tourist destinations from October, he said.

The new plan could draw 3.5 million tourists this year, generating B298 billion in revenue, said Traisree Taisarakul, deputy government spokesperson, in a statement.

She said at least 70% of residents in each of the 10 provinces planned for the reopening must first be inoculated.

The board's meeting last Friday (May 14) also acknowledged Thailand's progress in improving its civil aviation sector in line with international standards.

Bangkok Post

Cabinet allows tax break on software-related expenses

THE CABINET HAS APPROVED a measure to allow small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to use their software or computer program-related expenses as a deductible against corporate income tax due, at the rate of two times the expense in some cases.

Revenue Department Director-General Dr Ekniti Nitithanprapas said the approval is aimed at encouraging SMEs to deploy digital technology to upgrade their operations, reported state news agency NNT.

This new tax measure will be applied to SME accounting periods for 2021 and 2022, the report added.

The three eligible expenses include the purchase of software or computer programs from software firms, payment for the hiring of developers to create software or fees paid to software service providers. All these software firms, developers or software service providers must be registered with the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA).

The new tax measure means that, besides depreciation,



Photo: NNT

SMEs can also use the cost of a new computer for a tax deduction, not exceeding B100,000. When hiring software developers or using software services, SMEs can book the tax deduction at the rate of two times the cost, not exceeding B100,000.

The tax break follows the Labour Ministry confirming that the law does allow employees of event organisation businesses, forced to suspend their operations because of the COVID-19 crisis, to claim compensation from the Social Security Fund (SSF), noted NNT in a separate report.

Labour Minister Suchart Chomklin said operators of such firms are desperate, as conferences and functions have been cancelled and the firms' activities have ground to a halt, due to bans on large

gatherings, and they can no longer shoulder the expenses.

He explained that the prime minister earlier ordered the Social Security Office to review the law and find out if these employees qualify for compensatory assistance. Now, the Labor Ministry can confirm that employees of event organizers are eligible for compensation from the fund.

Last week, the Event Management Association urged relevant agencies to implement measures, including the government's 50% co-payment subsidy, for the monthly salaries of their employees for the next 4-6 months, or until their businesses return to normal, and for the deferment of social security contributions from employers and workers for six months. *NNT*

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Moderna vaccine approved by FDA, available October

Bangkok Post

The national Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given emergency use authorisation for Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, an FDA official said last Thursday (May 13).

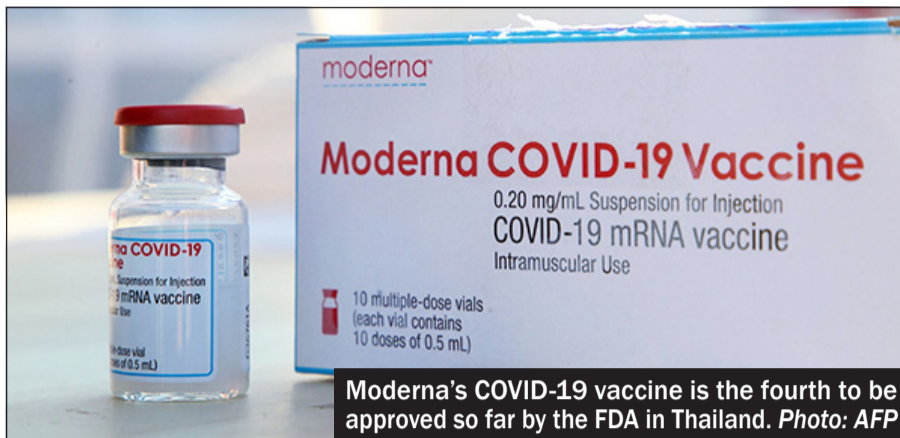
The vaccine is the fourth coronavirus vaccine approved so far in the country. Its use is valid for one year from May 13, said Paisan Dankhu, the secretary general of the FDA.

The approval will allow commercial vaccinations by private hospitals, who have been given a green light to give COVID shots made by Thai FDA-approved manufacturers other than Sinovac Biotech (CoronaVac), AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria, Covishield), Pfizer (Comirnaty), Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) and Gamaleya (Sputnik V). The first two are being given to people in Thailand while the other three are being imported for free vaccinations by the government.

Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, which will be offered as an alternative to AstraZeneca and Sinovac, is expected to be available in Thailand by October.

Paiboon Aeksaengsri, secretary-general of the Private Hospital Association, said the association is coordinating with Zuellig Pharma Co, which is authorised to export the vaccine. He expects 5-6 million doses will be shipped to Thailand in the second half of this year.

He added that association member



Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine is the fourth to be approved so far by the FDA in Thailand. Photo: AFP

hospitals would charge a standard price of not more than B3,000 per person. The price is for two shots, including insurance and value-added tax.

Mr Paiboon said the price of Moderna shots will be set by the Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO) which will act as the middle man to import the vaccines since most vaccine manufacturers do not sell directly to companies.

Uachart Kanchanapitak, chairman of Ramkhamhaeng Hospital, said private hospitals are surveying demand for the alternative vaccine and will inform the GPO. He said demand ranges from 10,000 doses to 1 million doses.

However, he advised people to get their shots as soon as possible so the country can achieve herd immunity.

He also cited research findings that after people are fully vaccinated, their third or booster shot can come from any

manufacturer. He likened it to vaccines against influenza which require a booster shot every year.

Meanwhile, GPO deputy director Sirinuch Cheewanpisalnakul said last Saturday (May 15) a total of 4.5 million doses of Sinovac's vaccine have been delivered to Thailand, including 500,000 doses donated by China that arrived on Friday.

She said the GPO received another 500,000 doses of the Chinese-made vaccine on Saturday and another 1.5 million doses will be delivered later this month.

The first batch of 200,000 doses of Sinovac's vaccine arrived in February, followed by 800,000 doses on March 22, 1.5 million doses on April 10, and two million doses this month so far.

As of last Friday, a total of 2,218,420 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given to select people across the country.

Kids get free internet for studying at home

THE MINISTRY OF DIGITAL Economy and Society has joined forces with the Education Ministry to arrange free internet to support online remote learning for Thai students during the pandemic.

Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaiwit Thanakhamanusorn said on Monday (May 17) the ministry will provide a free unlimited internet package, powered by Thailand's major mobile and internet operators including AIS, True, Dtac and the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission, to help students move their studies online.

Mr Chaiwit added the ministry will also fit out as many schools as possible with fibre-optic high-speed broadband to facilitate the broadcasting of lectures and seminars.

The two ministries will also set up a joint committee to manage online education with work already begun on a four-point strategy to minimise the impact on children.

Where possible on-site teaching will continue under strict provisions, on-air education via TV broadcasts is being prepared, the avail-



A kindergarten pupil takes an online class at home. Photo: Bangkok Post

ability of on-demand learning materials is being increased and so is the production and distribution of workbooks and other collateral that students can use at home.

The Education Ministry will survey the number of students in need of online classes, while the Digital Economy and Society Ministry will open 30 community digital hubs for use as smart classrooms in communities across the country.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Basic Education Commission will hold admission exams for Mathayom 1 and 4 students on May 22-23.

Students, teachers and parents will have to follow relevant sanitation instructions at each venue and all tests will have to be wrapped up during a 9am – 12pm window each day. Bangkok Post

Vaccine booking app for foreigners coming soon

THE GOVERNMENT IS DEVELOPING a vaccination registration app especially for foreign residents, who will also be eligible for walk-in service as soon as it is available, a spokesman said last Saturday (May 15).

Mass vaccinations could start earlier than anticipated, said Natapanu Nopakun, the deputy spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his daily English-language briefing on the coronavirus response.

He did not specify which vaccine brands were available or the quantities delivered. However, the programme would move ahead quickly once supplies were available, he indicated.

"The efficiency of vaccine jabs is not an issue for Thailand," he said. "We can give doses very fast once we have the vaccines in hand."

The government has said that all residents of Thailand – including expats, migrant workers and other foreigners – would be eligible for free vaccinations. However, there has been confusion about the registration process.

The current Mor Prom ("doctors ready") mobile app and Line account is in Thai only, and a Thai ID number is required to register. However, some expats who hold so-called pink ID cards, which come with a Thai ID number, reported being able to book vaccination times.

The Ministry of Public Health subsequently said the app was not intended to be used by foreigners.



The Mor Prom app will be available for foreigners soon. Photo: Bangkok Post

Mr Natapanu clarified last Saturday that a new app especially for foreigners was in development.

"As soon as the Mor Prom application is ready for foreign nationals, we will let you know," he said.

Even if they do not make bookings using an app, foreigners will be eligible to use walk-in vaccination services as soon as they are officially opened, he added.

"For walk-in vaccination services, any provinces that are ready to provide the vaccines can commence operations immediately."

However, authorities would like to make services to foreigners available in English and other languages if possible. "To ensure official facilitation and prevent any language miscommunication, separate facilities for foreign nationals are being discussed," he said.

As of last Friday, the spokesman said, authorities had delivered 2.2 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine, including 800,000 second doses. Bangkok Post



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Aroon Thongplab with his wife Kulthida Chananan and children in happier times. Photo: Supplied



Aroon Thongplab is currently in hospital after being shot by a drunken off-duty Phuket police officer on Bangla Rd. Photo: Eric Smulders

Compassion in need

Ben Tirebuck
& Eakkapop Thongtub
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Local expat Eric Smulders has launched a campaign urging people to support the wife of the noodle vendor shot by a drunken off-duty Phuket police officer on Bangla Rd earlier this year.

Kulthida Chananan, 26, told *The Phuket News* last Wednesday (May 12) that so far she has received just B20,000 from the Royal Thai Police after Cpl Pornthep Chananarong, an officer with the Phuket Provincial Police at the time, shot her husband Aroon Thongplab while drunk

on Patong's main nightlife entertainment street in the early hours of Feb 23.

Pornthep, who has been stripped of his rank and dismissed from the police force, shot noodle vendor Mr Aroon, 25, just before 6am while Mr Aroon was returning from collecting a noodle bowl from a customer down the street.

During the unprovoked attack, after shooting Mr Aroon in the stomach, Pornthep continued his abuse by taunting and kicking Mr Aroon.

Pornthep has been charged with attempted murder, carrying a firearm in a public area without necessary reason, and firing a weapon in a public area.

Mr Aroon survived the gunshot wound and woke from a coma after be-

ing rushed to Vachira Phuket Hospital, but was left paralysed as the bullet had hit his spine.

He will not walk again.

"I am glad he is now out of the ICU," Ms Kultida said at Vachira Phuket Hospital last Wednesday.

Mr Aroon is now under care in a recovery wing at the hospital, she added.

"His condition has improved a lot overall. He is able to move his arms and his hands, and he can scoop up rice and feed himself, but he still needs a tube in his throat [to remove sputum]," Ms Kulthida explained.

"He is unable to move any parts of his lower body. The doctors' latest concern is a blood clot that he has in his left leg," she said.

Ms Kulthida explained that the hospital has yet to present any bills for treatment.

"There is still more to come, as my husband still has physical therapy to go through... If his condition improves, he will be able to come home," Ms Kulthida said.

To cope with living expenses Ms Kulthida has so far received B20,000 handed over by the commander of the Region 8 Police. No other support has been forthcoming, she confirmed.

"The case is still in process at the Phuket Provincial Court. As for any compensation, there have been no contributions from the perpetrator. Until today, we still have not heard anything from them about this," she said.

Moved by Ms Kulthida's plight, Mr Smulders, who runs the Soul of Asia galleries at Surin Plaza and Porto de Phuket, reached out to her to see what support could be provided.

"This man's life and that of his wonderful family have been destroyed and he will need help for a long time," Mr Smulders told *The Phuket News*.

"Even when he gets out of the hospital maybe in a few weeks when he can sit by himself he needs at least an adjustable electric hospital bed with a mattress, a suction device and suction equipment, gloves, medication, and so on," he said.

Mr Smulders presently estimates that the family, the couple have one young daughter and a baby boy, will need at least B25,000 per month, much of that just for rent.

"The family needs to rent a larger room as where they currently stay is just too small. They also need to pay for medical supplies, diapers, regular nursing care, and more," he said.

"Before this horrible incident, Mr Aroon looked after his wonderful family with great love and care. He has two children: one daughter and a young son of six months. His wife is now basically looking after her husband 24 hours a day in the hospital whilst the children are with the grandmother with no visitors allowed at present due to COVID," Mr Smulders pointed out.

Ms Kulthida is overwhelmed in her current situation, Mr Smulders noted.

Her words to him were, "I do not know how to handle this horrible calamity that hit our little family: we were happy and content with our simple food stall business where I helped him [husband Aroon] wherever I could, with the grandmother looking after the children.

"Due to COVID Soi Bangla is closed and so is our mee [noodle] business, which before provided us with sufficient income. I cannot face all the expenses as we need to move to a larger room to accommodate my family, my grandmother and the medical needs of my husband," Ms Kulthida said.

"I am desperate for help until at least we can restart the food stall. Then with the help of the whole family we can hopefully provide for ourselves again, hopefully with my husband also helping from a wheelchair or looking after the kids," she said.

Through his lawyer Jaruwan 'Tum' Kavindechatorn, Mr Smulders has arranged for people to be able to make donations directly to support Ms Kulthida.

Ms Jaruwan owns and operates accounting company AC Consulting Group Co Ltd and AC Legal Advisors Co Ltd, both in Phuket Town (at 561/10 Phuket Rd, T. Taladyai A. Muang-Phuket 83000, Tel: 076-250599, Mobile: 081-8931647).

"The owner of AC Legal Advisors, Khun Tum, has agreed to report regularly on the use of the funds and on further news of Khun Aroon," Mr Smulders said.

Mr Smulders also confirmed that he would very kindly double any donations up to B100,000 maximum in total.

Contributions can be made directly to: Account Name: Ms Kuntita Chananan Account Number: 674 0397010 Bank Name: Bangkok Bank Swift Code: BKKBTBKK

"After you make the transfer please inform me via email tum@aclegaladvisors.com, by LINE ID [tum_jaruwan](https://www.line.me/tum_jaruwan) or by mobile: 081 8931647," Ms Jaruwan noted.

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In co-operation with thephuketnews.com The Phuket News

Rock Salt, out of its shell



THE CULINARY DETECTIVE

Chris Watson
chriswatsonth@gmail.com

All the restaurants across the globe have many distinct differences, but the truly successful ones always have one standout factor: consistently delivering excellence. It is what singles out the exceptional. Rock Salt is undoubtedly one of these exalted few. From the first time I dined here, nearly five years ago, my expectations have always been exceeded.

I can count on one hand the number of restaurants that have earned this rarely awarded “Watson” accolade. The location does play a small part, idyllically perched overlooking the bay, however as a seasoned gourmand, I am no longer influenced by stunning seascapes. Consistent excellence is not about standing still. It is about continually evolving, retaining the best of the past, signature dishes, creations that exemplify everything Rock Salt represents, whilst passionately developing new plates to excite the palate. Rock Salt does this in spades.

This article is about Rock Salt’s recent fifth anniversary. However, one must acknowledge the truly unique property that is its parent and “raison d’être”, the landmark luxury hotel The Nai Harn at which Rock Salt is located. Often compared architecturally to Santorini and certainly worthy of membership in The Leading Hotels of the World, this hotel continues to enhance its reputation as an icon in Phuket and indeed in Thailand.

It also would be remiss not to mention the sadly temporarily closed Prime. Whilst Rock Salt receives my praise, Prime was yet another level, literally, located above Rock Salt, I fondly recall dishes I ate there, prior to closure. I do miss it.



Moules Marinière.

Back to Rock Salt and it is ultimately all about the food. The fifth anniversary dinner I was invited to enjoy with a lucky chosen few included a menu of Rock Salt’s treasured signature dishes.

We begin with the always perfectly executed breads and dips, followed by a number of appetisers, including a crunchy “fritto misto”, including mussels, prawns and day boat caught local fish, grilled juicy lamb kofta spiced with mint and cumin and my personal favourite, yellowfin tuna tartare, vibrant and refreshingly zingy.

Main courses continue to delight with the finger-licking, number-one selling Piri Piri chicken, which I am told can never leave the menu as this act would inevitably lead to a diner revolt.

Next up a wood-fired-oven-roasted whole local red snapper, best summed up as complex simplicity – a chef’s ability to make the complex appear simple, a technique that singles out the best of the best. The last main dish, Moules Marinières, organic Port Philip Bay mussels classically steamed with white wine, shallots, garlic and finished with a dash of cream and Italian parsley.

The evening is completed with an innovative new dessert of iced coconut parfait with textures of mango, puffed rice, peanut and a stellar black sesame wafer.

Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed my evening of rekindling my memories of Rock Salt’s signature dishes, Rock Salt for me is also about other dishes which have made brief but impactful appearances. I recall a carpaccio of 150-day aged grain fed tenderloin, dressed with piment d’espelette mayonnaise and ingeniously topped with crisp dried anchovies and a blue swimmer crab risotto in crab bisque.

I also must acknowledge a newly added dessert of Spaghetti Eis, which is well worth experiencing for both the engaging story and the vanilla and strawberry combination.

At the heart of all great restaurants is the people. Chef Mark Jones’ attention to detail in execution has always singled out all culinary offerings at The Nai Harn and, of course, his talented home-grown team deserve recognition. Our host for the evening, the ever-charming General Manager of The Nai Harn, Frank Grassmann is undoubtedly both ‘un vrai hotelier’ and raconteur.

Also, no restaurant is successful without a welcoming and efficient service team led by Khun Goong who never fails to recognise their regular clientele, despite my somewhat infrequent visits.

Rock Salt is always a part of my schedule in Phuket; occasionally dining alone, a simple but exquisitely executed tuna tartare followed by an Angus steak of any description, accompanied by one of Chef Mark’s stellar sauces. One of life’s simple but oh so welcome pleasures. Happy Birthday Rock Salt!

Chris is a former Michelin Guide Inspector who following an international career in hospitality spanning 30 years in both the Middle East and Asia, has now settled in Thailand and contributes a regular hotel and restaurant column.



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POP QUIZ

1. What name is given to the pollen-producing reproductive organ of a flower composed of an anther and filament?
2. What is famous actor Will Smith's real first name?
3. Which Indian public holiday is also known as the 'Festival of Lights'?
4. Name the three main classes of rock.
5. Which Russian city was renamed Petrograd during World War I?

Answers below, centre

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

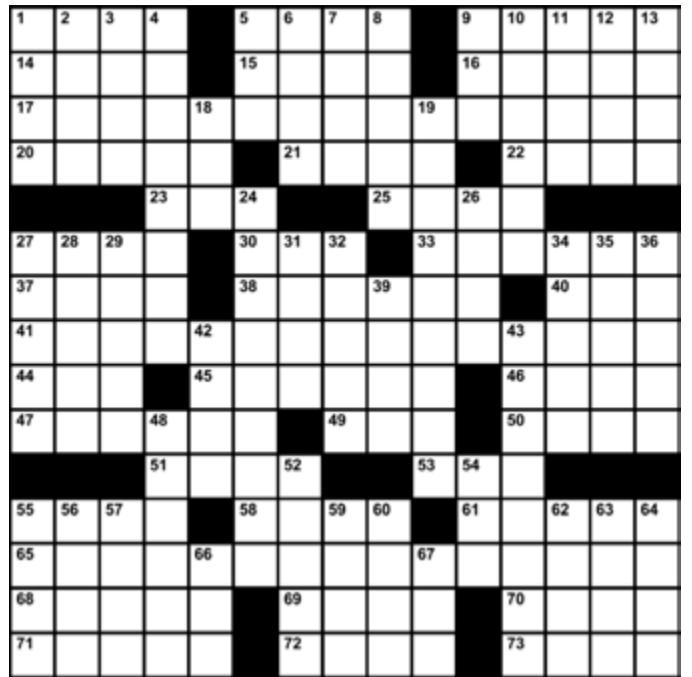
Across

1. Aug. follower
5. Some Olympians, nowadays
9. Foreword, for short
14. "Aquarius" musical
15. Hair colorer
16. Apple gizmo
17. Blame unjustly
20. Clipped
21. "Felicity" star, familiarly
22. "What are the ___?"
23. Islam's global gathering
25. Inner: Prefix
27. Seth's father
30. Georgian, for one
33. Lots
37. ___ Strip
38. Flowering shrubs
40. ___ grass
41. Arrogant and inflexible
44. Moistening flax
45. Eurasian grass
46. Freshman, probably
47. Guru's pad
49. "To Autumn," e.g.
50. Home of Vigeland Park
51. Arabic for "commander"

Down

1. Word with "up" or "out"
2. "___ on Down the Road"
3. Dock
4. Collector of detritus
5. School grp.
6. Classic board game
7. Fraction of thrice
8. Gawk
9. "Rocks"
10. Shot
11. Put one's foot down?
12. Go through
13. Crumbs
18. Caribbean, e.g.
19. 40-point melds

24. Kentucky county
26. Brit's "Baloney!"
27. Ancient assembly area
28. Copenhageners
29. Alchemical solvent
31. Essen basin
32. Kind of group, in chemistry
34. Traditions
35. Atelier item
36. Court figure
39. Ancient
42. ___ cheese
43. Medical device
48. Nickelodeon staples
52. Chopper blade
54. An end to sex?
55. Arctic native
56. "Cast Away" setting
57. Band with the hit "Barbie Girl"
59. Be different
60. Fishing, perhaps
62. Archaeological site
63. Fungal spore sacs
64. "Beowulf" beverage
66. Mamie's man
67. Balaam's mount



SUDOKU

Medium

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

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) Sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous; (2) St Petersburg
(3) Stamen; (4) Diwali; (5) Willard; (6) Diwali

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

ADAMS	GABS	ACTS
GRIOT	UGLY	DUAL
HANDED	NOON	HORSE
ATTILA	WCO	ATE
SALADS	MOTET	
FECHER	KEY	IDO
ALL	HIM	ANORAK
CLASSE	ENERGY	RISE
TAMPER	ROE	AIL
SAT	OIL	DELFT
NEHRU	STEREO	
ARE	PEP	ECLATS
BALL	STRUNG	LIGHT
OSLO	NEST	ATRIA
BEST	AYAH	WHANG

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

mile per hour is the average speed of the Greenland shark, *Somniosus microcephalus*.

17

times to Pluto and back is how far all the DNA in your body could stretch, if uncoiled.

35

percent of the world's population has 20/20 vision.

43

percent of Americans say they have assigned seats in their living rooms.

1

million

Mexicans were deported from the US during the Great Depression. An estimated 60% of them were US citizens.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Shimmering sunset at Karon Beach. Photo by Cathy Bacorro

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This week in history

May 21, 1998

President Suharto of Indonesia resigns following the killing of students from Trisakti University earlier that week by security forces and growing mass protests in Jakarta against his ongoing corrupt rule.



Royal Thai Army Chief Prayut Chan-o-cha, 2014.

May 22, 2014

General Prayut Chan-o-cha becomes interim leader of Thailand in a military coup d'état, following six months of political turmoil.

May 23, 1934

Infamous American bank robbers Bonnie and Clyde are ambushed by police and killed in Bienville Parish, Louisiana.

May 24, 1992

The ethnic cleansing in Kozarac, Bosnia and Herzegovina begins when Serbian militia and police forces enter the town.

May 25, 1925

Scopes Trial: John T. Scopes is indicted for teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in Tennessee.

May 26, 1897

Dracula, a novel by Irish author Bram Stoker, is published.

May 27, 1907

Bubonic plague breaks out in San Francisco. Source: Wikipedia

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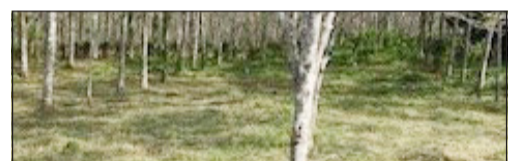
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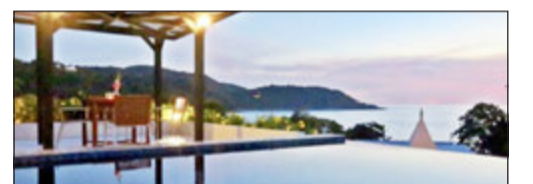
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Red Bull need Monte Carlo win

Monaco's tight street circuit offers chance to rein in Mercedes

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

The most famous race of them all, the Monaco Grand Prix, returns to the Formula 1 calendar this weekend for the first time since the pandemic struck, and no-one will be happier to see it back than Max Verstappen and Red Bull Racing (RBR).

The Dutchman and the energy drinks manufacturer are 14 and 29 points behind respectively in the championship stakes, and though the 23-race season is only four rounds old, Lewis Hamilton's control of the Spanish Grand Prix gave a sense that Mercedes is beginning to swing the momentum in the title fight.

Mercedes has ruthlessly capitalised on a string of minor but costly errors from RBR to take three wins and three poles from four weekends with arguably the slower car for much of that time. And with the seven-time constructors champion growing only stronger as it betters its understanding of its car, there's a risk RBR has missed its opportunity to strike.

The Monaco Grand Prix, held around the famously tight and twisty



Max Verstappen and Red Bull Racing will be looking for victory on the streets of Monaco this weekend as the Grand Prix returns to the principality for the first time in two years. Photo: AFP

streets of Monte Carlo, presents Verstappen and his team with a golden chance to stem the bleeding and reassert control.

The super slow speed city circuit has historically been a RBR stronghold, even if the headline stats – four wins in a decade, 2010–12 and 2018, to Mercedes' five – suggest little different from standard transmission.

In 2016 the race was there for the taking after Daniel Ricciardo took pole, but a series of pit stop blunders dropped him to a distraught second

place behind eventual winner Lewis Hamilton.

In 2013 too RBR clearly had the faster race car but fractionally missed pole, forcing Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber to cruise to the flag behind the sluggish Nico Rosberg given the dearth of overtaking opportunities.

In all but one of the remaining four grands prix at least one RBR driver finished within 10 seconds of the leader, and in two of those events one of the Austrian-branded

cars took the fastest lap of the race.

Even in the team's fallow seasons the RBR aerodynamic philosophy has played well in slow corners, loading up the car with downforce other chassis struggle to generate at such a relatively pedestrian pace. In 2021, when the car is an overall match for Mercedes in 2021 rather than just a street circuit specialist, logic would suggest the team should have a decisive upper hand in Monte Carlo.

There's a small hint to be gleaned

from the otherwise dissimilar Spanish Grand Prix, whose circuit features an unusually slow and clumsy final sector comprising a tight chicane that demands a well-behaved car with good traction.

Unsurprisingly RBR topped the time sheet for that sector ahead of Mercedes. More interesting still is that the team trialled but ultimately didn't race in its highest downforce specification in Spain, suggesting there's even more performance to come at a circuit that requires grip above all else.

But there is another crucial element to be considered and that is the uniquely punishing circuit itself.

The Monte Carlo layout is the least forgiving in Formula 1, its walls omnipresent and ready to snap suspension or shatter wings for even the smallest of mistakes, sometimes ending a weekend on the spot.

After a two-year pandemic hiatus the drivers and teams will need to reacclimatise to the sport's biggest adrenaline rush, and it will be the most level headed, not necessarily the outright fastest, who will prevail.

On the evidence of the season to date the calmest heads have rested on Mercedes-clad shoulders. In Monaco it's up to Max Verstappen and RBR to prove they're equal to the fight.

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McGregor tops athlete rich list

MMA

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS superstar Conor McGregor was the sporting world's highest-paid athlete in 2020, raking in around US\$180 million (B5.6 billion) with earnings boosted by commercial ventures, according to a May 12 *Forbes* report.

The 32-year-old Irishman only fought once in 2020, earning around \$22 million from his victory over Donald Cerrone in January.

The bulk of the former



Conor McGregor. Photo: AFP

plumber's pay packet came via his successful business activities, which included the sale of his Proper Twelve whiskey brand.

McGregor was one of only four athletes to earn more than \$100 million in 2020, according to the report.

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi was second on the list with \$130 million in earnings, followed by Juventus idol Cristiano Ronaldo with \$120 million.

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott was ranked fourth on the list with \$107.5 million followed by LeBron James with \$96.5 million after a year that saw him lead the Los Angeles Lakers to the NBA Finals crown. *AFP*



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Goalkeeper Alisson turns hero goalscorer to rescue Liverpool

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

For a player who is tasked with keeping out goals and the attacking threat of opposition players, Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker demonstrated an incredible ability at the other end of the pitch last Sunday (May 16) when he registered an invaluable strike for his team.

Alisson's goal in the 95th minute was remarkable in several ways, not least of all because it was the winner in a tightly-contested game against already relegated West Brom at the Hawthorns.

The 2-1 victory was crucial for the current league champions as it keeps them in touch with a possible top-four finish and therefore qualification for next season's champions league – a key deliverable for all connected with the club.

The manner in which the 28-year-old Brazilian registered his crucial strike was impressive.

With only seconds left on the clock, already deep into



Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker celebrates scoring Liverpool's winning goal against West Bromwich Albion last Sunday (May 16) with teammates. Photo: AFP

injury time, the 'keeper ventured forward for a Liverpool corner. It is witnessed often when a team is desperately chasing a result but very rarely does anything positive transpire. It literally is last chance saloon, throwing everything but the kitchen sink at the challenge.

Trent Alexander-Arnold's delivery was decent but Alisson still had much to do. In an example of impeccable timing he showed fantastic technique to rise, arch his body and glance a deft header

precisely into the top corner of the net to send his teammates into wild delirium. It was a goal that any outfield player, any centre-forward of renown, would have been very proud of.

Whereas Alisson became the sixth goalkeeper in Premier League history to score, it was the first occasion in which a goalkeeper has scored a competitive goal for Liverpool in their entire history, dating back to 1892.

"I just tried to run into a good place and be there to try

and help my players, to bring a defender, but no one followed me and I am lucky and blessed," a beaming Alisson told *Sky Sports* post-match.

"You can't explain a lot of things in my life, the only reason is God and he put his hand on my head today and I'm feeling very blessed," he added.

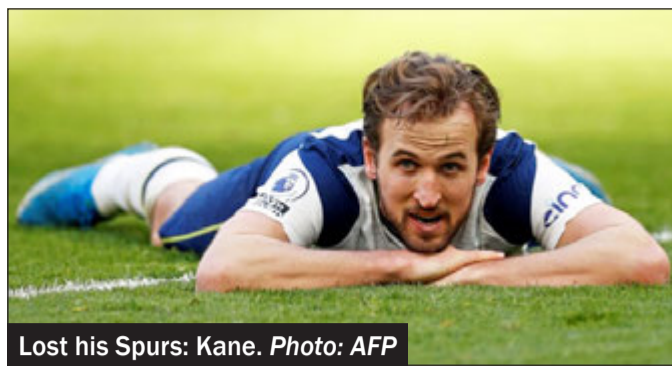
"It's an unbelievable header, I've never seen anything like that, good technique. I wasn't sure what I was seeing," commented Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp.

Alisson dedicated the achievement and paid an emotional tribute to his late father who tragically drowned aged 57 in Brazil in February.

"I'm too emotional, this last month for everything that has happened with me and my family, but football is my life, I played since I can remember with my father.

"I hope he was here to see it, I'm sure he is celebrating with God at his side."

Should the goals dry up in future for their attacking trio of Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane at least Liverpool now know who to turn to!



Lost his Spurs: Kane. Photo: AFP

Kane wants to leave Spurs

FOOTBALL

TOTTENHAM STRIKER Harry Kane has told the club he wants to leave at the end of the season, according to reports last Monday (May 17).

Kane is unhappy at Tottenham's lack of progress this season and is willing to leave after 12 years with the north London side, according to *Sky Sports*.

The England captain reportedly wants his future resolved before the delayed Euro 2020 starts on June 11.

Kane's contract with Tottenham has another three years to run and chairman Daniel Levy is known to be a tough negotiator, which could ruin the 27-year-old's hopes of a quick resolution.

Tottenham refused to be drawn into debating Kane's future in public as they focus on their final two Premier

League games, with Europa League qualification in their sights.

Premier League champions Manchester City, Manchester United and Champions League finalists Chelsea have all been mooted as likely suitors for Kane, who has scored 32 goals in all competitions this term.

Paris Saint-Germain, managed by Kane's former Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino, and Spanish giants Real Madrid have also been linked with the striker.

Kane, a product of the club's youth academy, has scored 220 goals in 334 total appearances for Tottenham, establishing himself as one of the world's best forwards.

He has regularly spoken about his desire to win trophies, but is yet to land one with Tottenham, who are without major silverware since the 2008 League Cup. *AFP*

Fury-Joshua fight in jeopardy

BOXING

TYSON FURY'S HEAVY-weight unification fight with Anthony Joshua could be put on hold after an independent arbitrator ruled that the WBC heavyweight champion must face former champion Deontay Wilder in a rematch, US reports said on Monday (May 17).

ESPN and The Athletic website said retired judge Daniel Weinstein upheld a claim lodged by Wilder that Fury must face him in a third fight by September 15 following their February 2020 title battle.

While the arbitrator's ruling is not a formal court order, it would be deemed enforceable by courts if Wilder and Fury are unable to reach agreement, reports said.

Monday's ruling comes just a day after Fury announced he had agreed to fight Joshua in Saudi Arabia on August 14 where the WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight belts will be up for grabs.

"Massive announce-



The fight between Joshua (left) and Fury could be suspended. Photo: AFP

ment FURY VS JOSHUA IS ON AUGUST 14 in The kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The worlds (sic) biggest sporting event all eyes on us," Fury wrote on Twitter, describing the bout as "100 percent on."

Monday's ruling does not necessarily torpedo the money-spinning all-British Joshua-Fury fight in the Middle East.

Wilder could yet agree to waive his right to a third meeting with Fury – for a lucrative step-aside fee – or seek to obtain a commitment from the Fury and Joshua camps that he will fight the winner of the Saudi Arabia showdown.

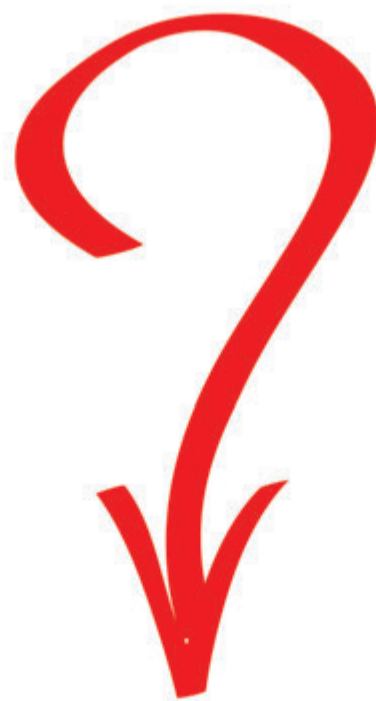
Weinstein's ruling on Monday did not grant Wilder any monetary damages and also said an extension to the September 15 deadline was permissible if both the Wilder and Fury camps could reach agreement.

Neither Fury nor Wilder have fought since clashing in Las Vegas in February last year, where Fury outclassed the previously unbeaten American to win via a seventh-round technical knockout.

The two fighters had previously clashed at the Staples Center in Los Angeles in 2018, battling to an epic draw after Fury survived a 12th round knockdown. *AFP*



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Sport

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F1 returns to the streets of Monaco > p14



Leicester City players celebrate their FA Cup final win against Chelsea last Saturday (May 15) at Wembley stadium. Photo: AFP

FANTASTIC FOXES WIN FA CUP

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Leicester City fans were on cloud nine last Saturday (May 15) as their team won the FA Cup for the first time by defeating Chelsea 1-0 at Wembley.

Belgian Youri Tielemans's sensational strike from 25 yards in the second half turned out to be the winner, sending Foxes fans into raptures as they recorded their first final win at the fifth time of asking.

In saturated conditions the game itself was relatively incident free until the 63rd minute goal then a dramatic finale when Kasper Schmeichel produced two outstanding saves to preserve his team's lead before the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) intervened to overrule what Chelsea thought was a last gasp equaliser.

"It is such an amazing feeling, in particular as a British coach," Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers told the BBC post-match.

"I have grown up watching this all my life and to eventually be here and be a winner in

the FA Cup is special."

The victory was extra poignant for the club's Thai owners. Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, founder of the King Power Group, bought the club in 2010 and set the goals of winning the Premier League and FA Cup, the two titles they had never achieved at the time.

The Foxes created history in 2016 when they won the Premier League at odds of 5000-1. In October 2018 Vichai was tragically killed in a helicopter crash outside Leicester's home ground.

"I know this was a dream of Khun Vichai's, so to be able to deliver that today is a good feeling," Rodgers said on the club's website, dedicating the win to the late Thai owner.

FAIR COMPETITION

Saturday's final provided cheer and optimism far beyond just elated Foxes' fans. The occasion took on a more significant meaning given the challenging times of late and seemed very much as a victory for the game of football itself.

After a long, hard season that often felt so soulless due to the lack of fans in stadia, ongoing issues and controversy



TOP MAN: Leicester City's chairman Aiyawatt 'Top' Srivaddhanaprabha with the FA Cup. Photo: AFP

with technology being fused into the game and the overt greed of clubs connected to the European Super League (ESL), this final seemed almost cathartic in many ways.

It was the first major sporting event that permitted fans to attend since the COVID-19 pandemic struck 14 months ago with 22,000 spectators creating an atmosphere more akin to three or four times that. Hearing and seeing fan involvement reminded one exactly how soulless any sport is without it and it was a delight to behold.

One thing that Leicester's triumph certainly achieved was a shot across the bows of

those advocating the recently ill-fated ESL.

Chelsea were among the clubs to sign up to the failed project last month that would have created a closed shop for the elite with no chance of fair competition for others via a promotion or relegation system.

Leicester epitomised why such a structure is so important with their league win in 2016 and again on Saturday. They are very much upsetting the usual order of the "big six" clubs in England, sitting third in the Premier League at time of press and on course to qualify for Champions League football next season.

"The success of this team and club is getting to positions like this and competing," commented Rodgers.

"The so-called bigger clubs are expected to win but our success is competing and if we can perform like today we can go and win," he added.

"After everything that has happened this year, I'm sure there were people hoping from a neutral perspective that we could go on and upset the odds."

That they certainly did. It is what makes the beautiful game so special, in particular the FA Cup where the unexpected often happens. It may not have been a David versus Goliath match-up but it did reiterate the notion of competition where the win is attainable for all.

It also demonstrated the special bond the Leicester owners have with the club. Current club chairman Aiyawatt 'Top' Srivaddhanaprabha, son of the late Vichai, joined in celebrations on the pitch and the warmth and respect between him, players, management and fans was clear for all to see. It was heartwarming and a dynamic

that much maligned owners from the likes of Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal can only dream of.

VAR PROBLEMS

One issue that remained on Saturday was the effectiveness of VAR, something that has been frustratingly disruptive and divisive all season.

The decision to overrule what Chelsea believed to be a late equaliser was correct as Ben Chilwell was indeed offside, even if only by a hair's breadth. Previously that would have stood meaning an unfair outcome could have materialised.

However, an enraged Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel felt VAR's lack of intervention was crucial when a clear Ayoze Perez handball in the build up to Tielemans' wonder strike went unpunished proving there is still work to be done on the VAR front.

Ultimately, it may not have been the greatest game in the competition's history but the occasion and what it stood for was fantastic, a day when we collectively remembered why football matters and why it is loved so much by so many.