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FREE SHOTS

All people registered as living in Patong, Chalong and Phuket Town will receive the COVID vaccine for free, including foreigners. Photo: Tanyaluk Sakoot

FREE COVID VACCINATIONS FOR RESIDENTS, INCLUDING FOREIGNERS, IN PATONG, CHALONG, PHUKET TOWN

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The mayors of Phuket Town, Chalong and Patong have all confirmed that they set aside their own budgets to vaccinate all registered residents – Thai and foreign – in their areas for COVID-19 without having to wait for the national government.

The news broke earlier this week when Chalong Mayor Samran Jindapon confirmed to *The Phuket News* that foreigners living in Chalong will be freely vaccinated for COVID-19 once the national government has approved which vaccines may be used in Thailand.

Mayor Samran explained on Mon-

day (Jan 18) that Chalong Municipality had already set aside a budget of B20 million to source a vaccine once they become available.

Chalong Municipality, like any other municipality in the country, must acquire any COVID-19 vaccine from the Ministry of Public Health, Mayor Samran admitted.

However, he added that he wanted there to be no bureaucratic delays in getting the vaccines to people living in Chalong.

“People in Chalong getting fast access to good-quality vaccines is the main idea, so we have already set a budget of about B20mn,” Mayor Samran said.

“Now we are waiting for the Ministry of Public Health to confirm and

announce a safe vaccine for people [See page 7],” he said.

Dr Thanit Sermkaew, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), confirmed to *The Phuket News* on Tuesday (Jan 19) that at this stage his office had yet to receive any clear instructions from the central government on how many doses of a COVID vaccine will be made available to Phuket, or in which order of priority people on the island are to be vaccinated.

“That all depends on when health experts in Bangkok deem which vaccinations are safe to deploy throughout the country,” Dr Thanit said.

“When that decision is made, we will be informed how many doses of the vaccine will be allocated to

Phuket, and how the vaccine should be distributed,” he added.

Chalong Mayor Samran made his policy decision clear, despite going to the polls for re-election on Mar 28.

“I don’t want to wait in the queue to get the vaccine budget. Chalong people deserve to receive vaccines. They do not need to pay,” he said.

Mayor Samran confirmed that COVID vaccines obtained by Chalong Municipality will be freely available to all people registered as living in Chalong Subdistrict, regardless whether the resident is Thai or foreign.

“There are about 20,000 to 30,000 people in Chalong. This includes everyone: Thais, migrant workers and other foreigners registered as living in Chalong, such as retirees...

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Municipal elections slated for Mar 28

CANDIDATES LOOKING to contest the upcoming local municipal elections to be held on Mar 28 can register from Feb 8, the Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) has confirmed.

Registration for candidates will be open Feb 8-12, PEC Director Passakon Siripakayapon told *The Phuket News*.

During the registration week, candidates will be able to register to contest seats on local councils of the 12 municipalities in Phuket, or for the position of mayor where available, he explained.

The news follows the Election Commission of Thailand main office in Bangkok confirming that local municipal elections will be held throughout the country on Mar 28.

"The ECT will issue an official announcement on Feb 1. Then the PEC will formally inform the Local Election Committee at each municipality including Pa Khlok, Cherg Talay, Srisoonthorn, Thepkasattri, Patong, Kathu, Karon, Rawai, Chalong, Wichit, Ras-sada and Phuket Town on March 28," Mr Passakon said.

The election of six Local Administration Organisations (OrBorTor) councils will be held separately. Mr Passakon clarified, "People in Sakhu, Mai Khao, Cherg Talay,



Local municipal elections will be held throughout the country on Mar 28. Photo: Tanyaluk Sakoot

Thepkasattri, Kamala and Koh Kaew OrBorTor areas, have to wait. The elections in those areas are not being held on March 28. The ECT will announce the election date for OrBorTor later."

"Local municipalities will be responsible for providing the budget for holding the elections in their respective areas," Mr Passakon noted.

"The election process will be overseen by the PEC. Other details will be figured out later," he said.

"Candidates and any parties they represent will be allowed to start campaigning on Feb 1. But they must conclude at 6pm on Mar 27," Mr Passakon added.

In accordance with election law, there will be a ban on the sale of alcohol in each area where an election is being held from 6pm on Mar 27 through to 6pm the day of the election (Mar 28). *Tanyaluk Sakoot*

Vaccinations take priority

Continued from page 1

...and foreigners staying here for other reasons.

"They will all receive the vaccine," Mayor Samran said.

"Please do not be worried. Chalong Municipality already has the money in its budget. There is no need to ask for money from the Cabinet," Mayor Samran explained.

"We will start the buying process immediately after the Ministry of Public Health approves the vaccine," he said.

Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana has also confirmed that Phuket City Municipality has already set aside more than B45 million to vaccinate the 79,000-odd people living in Phuket Town.

"We don't want to wait for the government. If we wait for the government, we have no idea when we will have the vaccine," she said.

Mayor Somjai confirmed that only people who were registered as living in Phuket City limits at the end of December would be eligible to receive the vaccine free from Phuket City Municipality.

"This does include Thais and foreigners registered as living in Phuket Town," she said.

PATONG

Chalermluck Ketsup, Mayor of Patong, is also not waiting for the central government



Patong Mayor Chalermluck

to start drawing up plans to provide free vaccinations to residents in the once-bustling tourism town.

Mayor Chlermluck sees free mass vaccination, of both Thais and foreigners registered as living in Patong, as a key step in reviving Patong's tourism industry, which has been devastated by the COVID-19 protection policies.

"The vaccine is being considered for approval right now, so we decided to take this chance. There is no need to wait for the government. We have already set a budget of about B30mn for about 20,000 people registered as living in Patong," Mayor Chalermluck told *The Phuket News* on Monday (Jan 18).

"We want people to get the vaccine as fast as possible, but the vaccine must be safe for our people. We will order the vaccine once they become available from the Ministry

of Public Health, and that is only after the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has confirmed the vaccine is safe.

"Then we will consider which people are to be vaccinated first, in accordance with whatever the Ministry of Public Health determines," she added.

"We deserve to get the vaccine quickly because Phuket is a tourism province, our people depend on tourism," Mayor Chalermluck said.

Fear of contracting COVID-19 amid the latest outbreak has stifled any economic recovery in tourism-dependent Patong, Mayor Chalermluck noted.

The impact has been two-fold: tourists have decided against travel to avoid contracting the disease, and workers in the tourism industry in Phuket are fearful they might contract COVID-19 from a tourist who has just arrived

in the province, she explained.

Of note, as of Tuesday, the PPHO had marked that it had been 26 days since Phuket had any patients confirmed as infected with COVID-19.

"The fear is dominating Phuket people. They do not want to receive visitors from another province as they are worried about the risk of getting COVID-19. They don't want to be infected. So they are worried about taking care of tourists, and that leaves businesses stuck, unable to operate," Mayor Chalermluck said.

"The vaccine is our hope in stopping this fear. If local residents receive the vaccine as quickly as possible, I think people will be more confident in receiving domestic tourists. Then businesses can run," she added.

Phuket Chamber of Commerce President Thanusak Phungdet praised the move by local municipalities to start making plans to mass vaccinate people in their areas for free.

"Provinces that rely on tourism should receive the vaccine before other provinces. For Phuket, it will create more confidence among tourists wanting to travel here. Then businesses can start operating again, and that will help local people earn incomes that they can live on," he said.

Short-stay rules tightened for new arrivals

UNDER A REVISED ORDER ISSUED on the conditions of entry of all visitors arriving in Phuket, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew has mandated that all short-stay visitors must avoid any areas where "gatherings" occur unless the visitors have express permission from an emergency operation center (EOC).

The revised order issued by Governor Narong was publicised last Friday (Jan 15). The order came into effect on Jan 14 and will remain valid until Jan 31 or until any further notice is issued.

Under the order, short-term arrivals from the "highest-risk" areas within the nine 'red zone' provinces must present documents to EOCs and should avoid visiting communal areas, said the order.

EOCs, which have been set up in every local administration area on the island, are responsible for following up on the health of new arrivals in their areas and for making sure quarantine and other requirements are enforced.

Also under the revised order, visitors who came from the "highest-risk" areas within the nine 'red zone' provinces



Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew. Photo: PR Phuket

must be swab tested by EOC staff, as opposed to going to a local hospital. Arrivals with test result documents issued within 72 hours of their arrival can present them to EOC staff to negate any further necessary tests.

Those who visit on a short-term trip for the purpose of running a business or joining a meeting must present documents to EOC staff which have been issued by their employers that outline the reason and necessity of their trip.

In order to receive permission to leave their accommodation visitors must file a request to the EOC which clearly explains why, when and where they intend to go.

Visitors are to avoid going to communal areas or places where there is likely to be a crowded gathering of people.

Hotel staff must check their guests' temperatures and be aware of any potential symptoms and report them to the nearest EOC. Also, all facilities in hotels must be designated for social distancing.

Day-trip visitors are required to register via the Mor Chana app and online via www.gophuket.com.

The revised order comes as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) reports that short-term visitors to Phuket are required to report to the local EOC within 12 hours of arriving. The TAT also states that visitors staying overnight are not allowed to visit community areas, "such as, attractions, entertainment venues and markets".

The Phuket News notes that none of these restrictions for short-term visitors have been published by Phuket officials. *The Phuket News* has requested clarification on these restrictions, but as of Tuesday (Jan 19) had yet to receive a response.

The Phuket News

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Arrivals in quarantine allowed to roam hotels

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People arriving in Phuket placed under a mandatory 14-day quarantine are allowed to roam the hotel where they are staying, and are not confined to their room, the Phuket health chief has confirmed.

However, there will be harsh penalties for any people under quarantine found outside their hotel area, Dr Thanit Sermkaw, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), told *The Phuket News*.

Under a provincial order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, all people arriving in Phuket from the 'highest-risk' provinces must quarantine for 14 days at an Alternative State Quarantine (ASQ) hotel or other appropriate venue after arriving in Phuket.

The only exception are those who are exiting a 14-day quarantine in Bangkok after testing negative for the virus. All such people must travel directly to Phuket immediately after being released from quarantine in Bangkok.

Phuket residents returning home from a 'red zone' area may serve their quarantine at home, but must not leave their property for the quarantine period.

For people observing their quarantine at an ASQ, Dr Thanit said, "It would be great if visitors from the 'red zone' areas



Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panaphong first 'requested' that arrivals not leave their ASQ hotel grounds at the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on Jan 12. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

stay in their hotels [or homes], so we are asking for their cooperation. They do not need to stay only in their room. They are able to do activities within the hotel, such as having meals, swimming, yoga and other activities.

"Please do not go outside the hotel. That would be a good preventative measure in Phuket province," he added.

Dr Thanit pointed out that there are harsh penalties for people caught breaking the COVID-19 requirements, which include being caught outside the quarantine area while still under quarantine.

The confirmation that people under quarantine in Phuket were allowed

outside their rooms follows Phuket Vice Governor Pichet making a "request" for people under quarantine to not leave the hotel grounds.

"Right now Phuket is free from COVID-19 infected people, so our plan is to work with hotel management teams and other relevant people in the private sector to safely re-open to receive visitors from various areas, including the red, orange and yellow zones," he said.

"Phuket officials have asked for co-operation from operators to record the travel moments of guests before they arrive at the hotel and that their guests stay within the hotel area only," he said.



COVID-19 tests are not required for 'extending visas', Phuket Immigration has confirmed. Photo: The Phuket News

No need for COVID-19 tests to extend visas

PHUKET IMMIGRATION has confirmed that evidence of a COVID-19 test proving that a foreigner is not infected with the virus is not required in order to extend a permit-to-stay, a process often referred to as 'extending visas'.

Phuket Immigration Deputy Chief Col Nareuwat Putthawiro told *The Phuket News* on Monday (Jan 18) that his office had not received any such order from the Immigration Bureau main office in Bangkok or from higher-ranking officers at the regional headquarters in Songkhla.

"We do not require any medical documents for an application to renew a visa, because there are few foreigners' movements outside Phuket. Most of them live and work in Phuket, and have done so before the new wave of COVID-19," Col Nareuwat said.

"So they [foreigners] do not have to worry about it. Everything is still the same," he added.

Col Nareuwat also noted that his understanding was that a COVID-19 test was still not required for foreigners to renew their work permits – a formal permit issued by the Employment Office that overlaps with many immigration applications.

"At this stage, they just need a medical certificate only, not a medical document confirming they have tested negative for COVID-19," he said.

"We have not received any notices about COVID-19 requirements for processing applications to renew visas. If we do receive any such orders, we will let the public know," Col Nareuwat assured.

Tanyaluk Sakoot

School dodges charges over illegal teachers

AN INTERNATIONAL school in Rawai will not face any charges over two British teachers being arrested at the school for working without a work permit, Chalong Police have confirmed.

"The case of the two foreign teachers working illegally has already been submitted to the Public Prosecutor's Office, two weeks ago," Chalong Police Chief Col Sarawut Chuprasit told *The Phuket News* late last week.

Col Sarawut declined to give any more information regarding the two teachers, both British nationals, who were arrested at the Palm House International School in a raid by Phuket Immigration officers acting on a tip-off on Nov 4 last year. The case, and the two foreigners arrested, were handed over to Chalong Police to process.

Chalong Police Chief Col Sarawut did confirm that Chalong Police were not pursuing any charges against the operator of the school for illegally hiring foreign workers. "I have no reason to press any charge



Chalong Police Station. Photo: The Phuket News / file

against the school at all. It is not right to accuse the school," he said.

Col Sarawut declined to give any reason for not pursuing charges, especially considering that Chalong Police themselves are pursuing charges against the two British nationals who were arrested at the school. "Let this issue be the prosecutor's responsibility. Please go to ask the prosecutor," he said.

The Phuket Provincial Public Prosecutor's Office told *The Phuket News* last Friday (Jan 15), "We are willing to give an update, but we need the police case number or the suspects' names. Please go to ask the police for this information."

So far Chalong Police have refused to give any information that will allow

further investigation into the case.

As recently as Monday last week (Jan 11), Capt Somkiet Sarasin of the Chalong Police, the leading investigator in the case, declined to explain any further details of the case, and declined to provide the names of the two foreigners arrested.

Chalong Police Col Sarawut told *The Phuket News* that he was unable to remember the foreigners' names, or the case number. "Please ask Capt Somkiet," he said.

Capt Somkiet has continued to decline to give that information.

Capt Somkiet on Nov 24 told *The Phuket News* that the investigation into the school "will take time".

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Low: +23°

Wind 7 m/s

SAT JAN 23



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

SUN JAN 24



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

MON JAN 25



High: +33°

Low: +26°

Wind 11 m/s

TUE JAN 26



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 14 m/s

WED JAN 27



High: +32°

Low: +26°

Wind 18 m/s

THU JAN 28



High: +32°

Low: +25°

Wind 11 m/s

Park officer probed for 'peeping'

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A park officer at Phuket's Sirinath National Park is under investigation for allegedly spying on a woman at a public toilet in the park by climbing the wall separating the men's and women's sections of the restroom.

The woman's boyfriend, 32-year-old Panupong Rungrueng, a resident of Rassada, raised the alarm by reporting the incident at about 5:20pm last Sunday (Jan 17).

Mr Panupong explained in his formal complaint that his girlfriend, 29-year-old Miss Sopita, or 'Ta', went to use the toilet at about 5pm. While Mr Panupong was waiting outside, he saw a man climb onto the wall separating the men's and women's sections of the public restroom, and peer down into the women's area.

Mr Panupong took a photo of the offender, which he later posted on Facebook and gave to officials when filed his formal complaint.



The public toilet is located directly behind the main office at Sirinath National Park. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Sirinath National Park Chief Pramote Kaewnam later confirmed that the man in the photo seen looking down into the women's toilet is park officer Abdulrama Mahaderi, 28.

"The officers tasked with investigating this incident are now in the process of collecting evidence... This is a sensitive matter," Chief Pramote said.

Chief Pramote made no mention of whether his officers will now install a ceiling in the public restroom to prevent further invasions of privacy.

Sirinath National Park said in a public statement released on Monday, "To ensure fairness for both sides, the park chief has appointed an investigative committee. This official has been suspended from duty pending further investigation."

Sirinath National Park also on Monday posted a statement by Mr Abdulrama, in which he explained that he was performing his routine patrol of the park when at about 4:50pm he thought he heard two men's voices coming from inside the

public toilet, which is located directly behind that national park's main office.

Mr Abdulrama said that he smelled smoke, but "not cigarette smoke", leading him to believe that men in the toilet might be "taking drugs".

"So I climbed the wall to try to take a photo to catch the men, but when I climbed up and looked down, there was no one in the men's toilet," he said.

"Then a man and a woman, both tourists, entered the toilets. The man walked into the

men's and the woman walked into the women's toilet.

"The man looked up and saw me and asked if I was spying on his girlfriend. So I climbed down and tried to explain to the man what I was doing – that I thought there were some men in the toilet taking drugs, which I have found before.

"I apologised to the man and explained what I was doing, but the man was still angry – so I left and went back to the office.

"Then I saw the man and woman go to Sakhu Police Station, which is nearby. I left the office and went over to explain to the police what had happened.

"The tourists told me that they did not want to press charges. They just told me that they did not want me to do anything like this again," Mr Abdulrama continued.

"I said thank you. I thought that was the end of it, but when I came to work this morning I was called to see the park chief," Mr Abdulrama said.

Don't worry about air quality, says Phuket health office

THE PHUKET PROVINCIAL Public Health (PPHO) Office on Monday (Jan 18) advised people on the island to not worry about the mild haze over Phuket today, saying that the quality is "healthy".

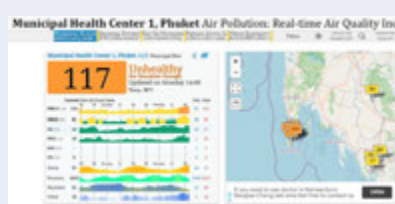
The Air Pollution Real-time Air Quality Index (AQI) on Monday posted on the aqmtai.com website – which uses data provided by the Division of Air Quality Data of the Air Quality and Noise Management Bureau, which operates under Thailand's Pollution Control Department – a PM2.5 reading for Phuket of 112, rising to 117 at 2pm.

The forecast remained at a high of 137 for later Monday night.

According to the PCD, PM2.5 readings of 101-150 are classified as "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups".

The classification comes with the warning, "Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected. Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion."

Kriangkrai Bamrungra, an of-



The air quality reading for Phuket at 2pm Monday (Jan 18). Image: agmthai

ficer at the PPHO, on Monday told *The Phuket News*, "The air quality still is at a good level and we can handle the situation. The big problem that is causing worse air pollution are fires in Indonesia.

"We do advise people to wear a mask to protect themselves from the pollution [in addition to the COVID-19 requirement that all people in Phuket must wear a face mask or else face a fine of up to B20,000]," Mr Kriangkrai said.

"People wear a mask these days because of the COVID-19 situation, so everyone already knows to do this," he said.

"If the air pollution gets worse, there will definitely be a caution issued," Mr Kriangkrai added.

The Phuket News

Heroines Festival reduced to merit-making activities only

FEARS OF COVID SPREADING have seen the annual festival to celebrate the island's two famed Heroines for this year reduced to merit-making activities only.

The annual Heroines Festival, celebrating the defeat of Burmese marauders attempting to take Phuket in 1785, is usually over three weeks, with festivities centred at Thalang Victory Field, the site marked as where the two Heroines, Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn, led the Phuket contingent in repelling the Burmese invasion.

Festivities traditionally include the usual Thai fair stalls of food and live entertainment, including a light and sound show, which has now been cancelled.

This year the festival will feature only merit-making activities, Phuket Vice Governor Piyaphong Chuwong has announced.

V/Gov Piyaphong explained that organisers' primary concern was the spread of COVID-19, leading to the decision to not include any festivities that will lead to large gatherings of people.

"We are thinking of the social risk and safety as our priority," V/Gov Piyaphong said.



The popular stage show recreating the battle of 1785 has been cancelled. Photo: The Phuket News / file

"We will still hold the festival with some religious activities under the New Normal measures, but we will control the number of people allowed to attend each activity," he added.

As such, only two activities involving the blessings of Buddhists monks and the traditional wreath-laying ceremony will be held this year.

A mass ordination of monks to bless the two Heroines will be held at Wat Thepwanaram (Wat Manik), in Baan Manik, Thalang, on Mar 6.

In the morning of Mar 12, merit-making ceremonies will be held at Wat Muang Komanaphat, the temple closest to Thalang Victory Field.

On Mar 13, there will be the annual wreath-laying ceremony and the recitals of praises for Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn at the Heroines Monument on Thepkasattri Rd.

The Phuket News

COVID poor, man tries to sell an eye on Facebook

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A man who has been severely affected by the COVID-19 fallout took to social media in desperation last week offering to sell one of his eyes.

Taweep Mee Phan, 57, from Chalong posted on his Facebook account last Friday (Jan 15) that he was willing to sell his left eye to raise much needed funds to support his family.

Mr Taweep was a bus driver for a Chinese tour company for 15 years before losing his job last February when tourist numbers visiting the island dried up.

Out of desperation he took to social media with the startling offer.

"After the COVID-19 outbreak, there were no tourists and I had to stop driving which meant I lost the means to provide income support for my family," Mr Taweep posted.

"What I want and need now is a fulltime job to bring income in to help my family.

"I am willing to do whatever job is available," he added.

"If someone needs eyes, I am ready to sell one of mine.

"I know that it is illegal but I need to get money in order to take care of my grandchildren, to enable them to study and to look after myself during my final years in my hometown."



Taweep Mee Phan (right), who took to Facebook out of desperation offering to sell one of his eyes, received quick support from Chalong Mayor Samran Jindaphol (centre). Photo: Chalong Municipality

After receiving a call from Phuket Vice Governor Phichet Panapong alerting him to the desperate situation and the subsequent post on Facebook, Chalong Mayor Samran Jindaphol visited Mr Taweep last Sunday (Jan 17).

"Mr Taweep posted on social media out of desperation after not being able to provide income and support his family for so long," Mayor Samran said.

"I reassured him that he did not have

to sell one of his eyes and that we will help," he added.

Mayor Samran confirmed that Mr Taweep was initially given rice to help the burden and that he later managed to secure him work at a private company.

Mr Taweep later took to Facebook to express his sincere thanks to Mayor Samran for his help and for securing him a job.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart," he posted.

Election complaint delays Rewat taking office

NEARLY A MONTH AFTER the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or *OrBorJor*) presidential election was held on Dec 20, Rewat Areerob has yet to take office due to a complaint filed over the election.

The Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) declared Mr Rewat the winner of the election on Dec 21, confirming that he had secured 83,144 votes.

Mr Rewat had bested second-placed contender Jirayut Songyot, who secured 50,914 votes, the PEC reported at the time.

PEC Director Passakon Siripakayapon has yet to provide any explanation for the delay, or describe the complaint that has caused the delay in Mr Rewat taking office.

Mr Rewat so far has also been unavailable for comment on the delay.

In announcing the election results on Dec 21, PEC Director Passakon confirmed, "So far, there have been no formal complaints filed about the local election."

However, Mr Passakon at the time did confirm that the election results had to be verified and approved by



Rewat Areerob

the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) head office in Bangkok.

The ECT has now announced 32 winners of the *OrBorJor* presidential elections in 32 provinces.

The election results for the remaining 44 provinces, including Phuket, have yet to be confirmed as they are "still under investigation".

By election law, the ECT has until Feb 19 to either confirm the candidates under investigation as the winners of their respective elections, or announce that further action is being taken to investigate the election.

The ECT has already declared Somsak Kittitornkul the new *OrBorJor* President for Krabi and Taratip Thongjerm the *OrBorJor* President for Phang Nga. *The Phuket News*

Officials put illegal dumping on the agenda

PHUKET PROVINCIAL officials have put illegal dumping of trash as an eyesore and health concern back on the agenda by highlighting a dumpsite in Cherng Talay.

The Phuket office of the Department of Public Relation (Phuket PR) posted photos of piles of trash in Baan Layan on their official Facebook page last Friday (Jan 15) after receiving complaints from the public.

Local residents had appealed to authorities to take action over rotting garbage from businesses and contractors dumped along Soi Layan 1, in Moo 6, Cherng Talay.

The trash had been dumped in public gardens and private areas, including in front of well-known local hotels and tourist accommodation venues, the residents complained.

"The problem of illegal dumping in many areas is an important issue in Phuket," PR Phuket noted.

The problem has persisted despite efforts by the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or *OrBorJor*) coordinating with local administration organisations, said the government agency.

Public awareness cam-



The illegal dumping along Soi Layan 1 in Cherng Talay was singled out. Photo: via PR Phuket

paigns to separate waste before placing it for collection so that local authorities could dispose of the waste properly has had little effect, PR Phuket also noted.

"The garbage problem continues to happen," they said.

"Although complaints about the rubbish in the area, which caused a rotting stench and disturbed people, have been raised by local residents several times to the authorities, the problem has not been resolved," PR Phuket added.

"Garbage must be managed by a hygienic disposal facility properly to resolve causes of smell pollution and flies in the area. Relevant organisations must inspect and get rid of the trash according to guidelines already set out," it added.

An official at the public relations division of Cherng Talay Tambon Administration

Organisation (*OrBorTor*), which is the local administration responsible for the Soi Layan 1 area, told *The Phuket News* that the office had not received any complaints about the rotting trash.

"At this time, we have not yet received any complaints from local residents about the garbage, but we will have the authorities inspected the area," the officer said.

"Normally, private sectors organisations such as local businesses and hotels hire a private company to collect garbage from them, but the Cherng Talay *OrBorTor* is responsible for collecting garbage from local people's houses," the officer said.

"Those who are affected by trash can come and file a complaint at the *OrBorTor* office," the officer added.

The Phuket News



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What impact did the US 'Capitol Hill' incident have on world democracy?

ADVERTORIAL

Thomas Yang

On January 6, while the U.S. Congress was going through the last part of this presidential election, Trump supporters suddenly broke into the U.S. Capitol, all work was suspended, and four intruders and a guard died in the riot. This three-hour occupation of Congress became “a disgrace to the United States.”

It was the first time that the U.S. Congress has been dusted for nearly two hundred years. The last time it was destroyed was in 1814, during the Anglo-American War, when the British army set fire to part of the building of the United States Congress.

The New York Times reporter Peter Baker called the riot as “the violent end of the Trump era”. Former presidents of the United States have condemned wrongdoing. Scholars from various countries have expressed that political “weird” Trump took advantage of cyber politics to bring “non-centered”, “purposeless”



Protesters gather in front of the U.S. Capitol building before they rioted on Jan 6. Photo: AFP

and “fragmented” trends to modern democracy, turning the peaceful and democratic ideals established by the United States in the last century into dimmed gradually with the “Capitol Hill incident”.

After this battle, Biden's coming to power will be a wa-

tershed in American politics, and the prospects cannot be overly optimistic. BBC North American reporter Anthony Zurcher has analyzed that Biden promised many policies about healthcare, the environment, government reform and the economy during the

campaign. Only when the Democrats gain control of the Senate, or more than half of the seats, can the policies be implemented successfully. The New Yorker columnist Benjamin Wallace-Wells said in a related report that the election result will lead to a split

between politics and reality.

Most other countries are pre-occupied with preventing the COVID-19 epidemic and have lost interest in modern democracy in the United States. American democracy has lost its luster, especially when it is divided from reality.

Thomas Yang is a freelance writer who used to work in the Chinese media, now living in Lijiang, Yunnan, China, currently writing political and historical novels.

The above is the opinion of the writer and is not in any way associated with Class Act Media.

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Tourism fee to help insure foreigners visiting the kingdom

THE NATIONAL TOURISM Policy Committee has approved the proposed guidelines for the collection of a B300 tourism fee from each international visitor for the management of local tourist destinations.

The money will also be used to provide insurance benefits to international tourists visiting the country.

Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said each foreign visitor will be charged US\$10 (B300) per visit. The details of the fee collection will be announced in the Royal Gazette once the policy has taken effect.

According to Mr Phiphat, Thailand expects to receive some 10 million visitors this year.

He said the merit of the B300 tourism fee is that foreign tourists who fall sick or are injured will be taken care of and given adequate medical care.

The ministry will have to discuss the details with the Finance Ministry and the Office of Insurance Commission.



Phiphat: Sector needs to recover. Photo: MoTS

Of the B300 fee, B34 is expected to be used for the insurance coverage, Mr Phiphat said.

The fee collection is in line with the revised National Tourism Policy Act, which authorises the ministry to impose a tourism fee for use in developing local destinations and providing insurance coverage to foreign tourists.

Tourism permanent secretary Chote Trachu last week said the fee collection was initially due to begin last year, but it was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Tourism Policy Committee has assessed the situation and agreed the tourism fee collection should go ahead this year, he said.

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the country had been forecast to close last year with merely 6.7 million international tourists – not much more than the number prior to last year's outbreak of COVID-19 – despite government attempts to activate entry schemes for foreigners via Special Tourist Visas (STVs).

With a second wave of outbreaks gripping many countries around the world, particularly during the winter months, triggering new rounds of lockdowns, Thailand is expected to wait longer – until the second half of this year – to see more visitors return and revive the ailing industry.

While the TAT previously predicted the domestic market would reach 100mn trips last year, the recent spike in local cases led the agency to revise down the target to 95mn trips, a result of the partial lockdowns in some provinces.

Bangkok Post

PM: vaccines must be safe

Prayut insists Thailand will not be used as experiment subject

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has insisted he won't allow Thais to be used as guinea pigs to test the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, saying any jabs rolled out for use in Thailand must be proven to be safe.

On his Facebook page on Sunday (Jan 17), Gen Prayut responded to reports about the side effects following the administration of COVID-19 vaccines in a number of countries.

"We have to wait for experts to determine whether they have anything to do with the vaccines, or whether there were other factors such as underlying health conditions or age," the prime minister wrote.

"Some countries wanted speedy vaccinations and decided to use vaccines whose efficacy and safety have not yet fully tested.

"For Thais, I have decided to avoid taking such a risk.

"I will not allow any hasty move to use vaccines that are not completely tested, and will not let the country be used as



Prime Minister Prayut insists vaccines must be safe and approved before being used on Thais. Photo: AFP

a subject for experiment.

"For the sake of prudence, I have laid down an important policy – that is we need to be sure that vaccines are safe before being used on Thais."

Tanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Department of Disease Control (DDC), said vaccines that have been approved in coun-

tries with strict registration regulations such as the UK and US must have undergone rigorous research and development procedures in laboratories, followed by experiments on animals and then human beings.

It has been said before that vaccines which will be brought in for use in Thailand must at

least be registered with those countries, he said.

"The 26 million doses of vaccines that will be shipped by AstraZeneca have also passed the stage three trials, meaning there is proof that their vaccines are safe, can stimulate immunity and prevent infections," Dr Tanarak said.

The government pre-ordered 26 million doses from AstraZeneca, a British-Swedish company, and recently sought another 35 million doses. It also ordered 2 million shots from Chinese manufacturer Sinovac.

'EMERGENCY USE'

On Tuesday, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said it expected the AstraZeneca vaccine will be approved this week for emergency use in the country and that inoculations will begin next month.

The first vaccines will be given to at-risk groups in the five provinces designated as maximum and strict COVID-19 control zones.

Priority will also be given to people aged 60 or older and those with chronic diseases certified by medical professionals to be particularly prone to contracting the virus that causes COVID-19.

Dr Opas Karnkawinpong, director-general of the Ministry of Public Health's Disease Control Department (DCD) explained the routine is to follow up on people injected

with COVID-19 vaccines for at least four weeks afterwards, during which time all possible allergic reactions or complications are strictly recorded and investigated.

Should anyone die after being injected with a COVID-19 vaccine, the death will be investigated promptly to determine if it is related to the vaccine, said Dr Opas, and only if it is clearly proved to not be associated with the vaccine will its continued use be allowed.

Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul confirmed on Monday that a sub-committee had been tasked with managing the government's COVID-19 vaccination programme to ensure all vaccines were safe before being cleared for use.

Both the FDA and the Department of Medical Sciences are responsible for inspecting any COVID-19 vaccines to ensure their safety before the sub-committee allows them to be used and therefore the administration of the vaccine was still being totally controlled by the government, he said.



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IVA - Prepared For Anything

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

A brand-new association has been formed in Phuket with special focus on military and emergency-service men and women, either serving or veteran, providing a focal point for providing help to those in need, both the members and the community alike.

The International Veterans Association (IVA), now formally launched in Phuket, is the brainchild of British expat Steve Pearce of Heroes bar in Patong. Steve, who serves as the IVA's inaugural president, is a veteran of almost 32 years of military service and security operations in some of the most hostile regions of the world. He is now a Phuket business owner and family man. <http://www.phuketveterans.com/>

Unlike days of yore, when veterans associations provided a venue of mostly ageing ex-servicemen, Steve points out that "veterans" today are much younger, and have a lot to offer.

The IVA aims to provide a social and business networking opportunity, meeting regularly and hosting social get-togethers so that members can share their experiences and explore new ventures, yet among its primary purposes is to provide a 'signpost to professional help' for members, explains Steve.



"The IVA members are veterans or serving members of any nation's armed forces or emergency services. The IVA is self-funding, and in no way attempts to copy or take away the work done by the other veteran charities and groups.

"The IVA is apolitical and non-religious, though members will be encouraged to represent the association at Remembrance and Anzac services," he adds.

"Having a business and social networking group for veterans allows us to

keep an eye on each other too. Mental health issues can arise at any time in a veterans life. We aim to watch out for each other and those around us. At the same time, we can promote each other's services and businesses," says Steve.

Defence Attaché at British Embassy in Bangkok, Col Roger Lewis, who has signed on as Patron of the IVA says plainly in his official letter of support, "It is my distinct honour to be Patron of the International Veterans Association – Phuket, Thailand, and to lend my support to a brilliant idea. Bringing together those that have served, whether in the military or the emergency services, to assist each other and to continue to support the wider community is a noble cause."

"The signpost service will be able to gain legal and visa advice, as well as promote services from other veteran organisations. Veteran or not, nobody seeking help will be turned away," Steve adds.

Yet the IVA is not just about talking. Officially only weeks old, the IVA already has laid the foundation for its own Disaster Relief Teams (DRT) "to exploit the skills that veterans generally arrive with". The IVA's official motto is *In Omnia Paratus*, Latin for 'Prepared For Anything'.

"A Disaster Relief Team (DRT) of volunteers will receive general training and training updates. There have been several disasters and emergen-

cies here since I arrived. The expats always step forward to help. The plan is that we should be able to step up as an organised and lead group, with our capabilities known to the local commanders," explains Steve.

The DRT already has been working with veteran-owned company First Aid Training Phuket on getting first aid training into schools.

"Owners Jon and Lisa have been excellent advisors and instructors on this project," says Steve. "The DRT Chief Instructor [Jon], and his company 'First Aid Training – Phuket', will arrange and run first aid courses and mental health workshop sessions for members starting early March."

However, Steve notes that some safety and humanitarian aid equipment is still needed. "Although we are self-funding, we would like to reach out to anyone who can help fund some of this much-needed equipment for the DRTs' humanitarian aid work," he says.

The IVA is gaining momentum. More than 20 companies have joined the Association Members Support Scheme, and are offering discounts on products and services to members. These include, hotels, restaurants, bars and pubs, car hire, legal advice, dive company, gym, and spa. The list will be expanded upon this year, Steve adds.

On the official front, the initiative has also gained support from Paul Kaye, Consul-General at the British Embassy in Bangkok, and from Col Stephen Fomiatti, Australian Defence Attaché, Thailand.

Locally, the IVA has also received open support from Martin Carpenter, British Honorary Consul for Phuket, and Matthew Barclay, Australian Consul-General for Phuket, as well as Jason Beavan, General Manager of Class Act Media, as Media Sponsor and champion of IVA projects.

"The IVA is an excellent initiative," Mr Barclay noted. "The Australian Consulate-General in Phuket is very proud to support its formation. Phuket is home to an array of veterans (and visiting veterans) from various countries and military operations and having an organisation like this is a natural and welcome step."

For more information about the IVA, visit phuketveterans.com, call +66 (0) 895 870 819 or email contact.us@phuketveterans.com

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Preventing the next pandemic

All the ways we can help save ourselves



SUSTAINABLY YOURS

Palmer Owyong

On January 13, 2020, Thailand had its first reported case of COVID-19 in Bangkok. It was also the first case outside of China, so the pandemic has been with us for about one year.

While it is difficult to determine the exact number of deaths in the middle of a pandemic, the virus hasn't hit Thailand as hard as the US and Europe.

While nobody is exactly sure why, it is likely because of a combination of factors. These include prior exposure to infectious diseases, heat and humidity reducing transmissibility, the culture of not shaking hands, wearing masks because of pollution and government intervention that altogether has helped prevent the spread of the disease from becoming far worse.

Cost of Pandemic

A study published in Science July 2020, by Princeton Professor of Ecology Andrew Dobson estimated the cost of COVID-19 will be around US\$5 trillion. However, this calculation only accounts for lost world GDP, in other words the amount of goods that were not produced. It doesn't consider the human cost.

A recent study estimates that in the United States alone it is closer to US\$16 trillion when the cost of long-term health care for COVID victims, the loss of life, treatment for mental health and loss of GDP over the next 10 years is accounted for.

By comparison, World War 2 cost the US\$4.1 trillion in today's dollars, according to data from the Congressional Research Service.

Preventing the Next Pandemic

Professor Dobson's study estimates that preventing a pandemic would cost about US\$30 billion per year. Which means it would have cost about 500 times less to prevent COVID-19 than it will to deal with the fallout from the virus.

The plan includes reducing deforestation, restricting the trade of wild animals, early detection and monitoring efforts, and prevention of spillover into farm animals.

Two of the largest factors driving emerging pathogens are the destruction of rainforests and the trade in wild animals. Deforestation can take place for several reasons including land expansion for farming, building roads, development, timber, and mining.

The trade in wildlife occurs mainly as a source of food, exotic pets, or as medicine. Most of this trade takes place in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

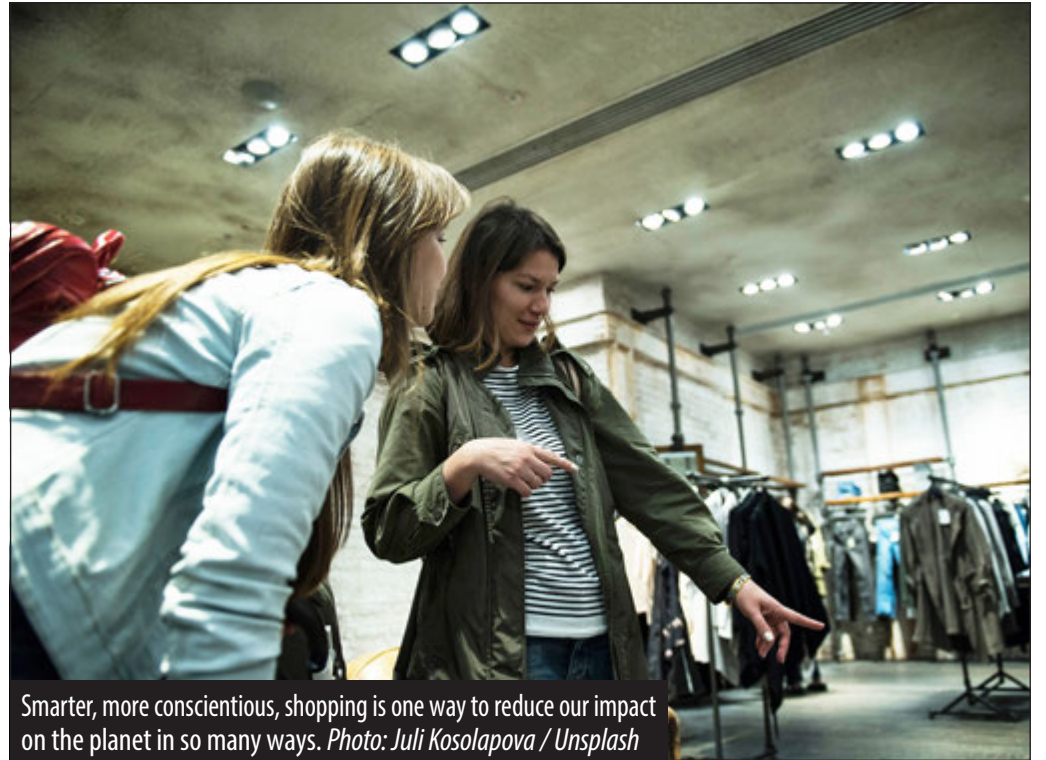
What You Can Do

Don't support the wildlife trade by attending animal shows, having your photos taken with endangered species, or buying exotic pets. Be especially careful about taking traditional Chinese medicine that uses animal parts, which is not scientifically proven to work, and can actually be harmful.

Eat less meat. Domesticated animals are also a risk for disease transfer because we deforest a lot of land to raise them and grow their food. This increases contact with wild animals, which can transfer pathogens to domesticated animals through their feces, then pass them to humans.

Purchase products made with sustainable palm oil. This is the most commonly used vegetable oil in the world and is in everything from food to cosmetics, so it's nearly impossible to avoid. The problem is that rainforests, mostly in Indonesia and Malaysia, are being clear cut so we can grow palm trees for the oil that is derived from the fruit. Sustainable palm oil is produced by using better forest management techniques, not clear cutting, and maintaining biodiversity. You can download the Sustainable Palm Oil Shopping App or check the World Wildlife Fund Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard to see which companies use it. You can find out more at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

Support Rewilding Projects The Half Earth Project is working to create a sustainable and bio-diverse world by rewilding half the world's forests and oceans.



Smarter, more conscientious, shopping is one way to reduce our impact on the planet in so many ways. Photo: Juli Kosolapova / Unsplash

Have fewer children, or if you are on the fence about them, go without. Most studies show that people who don't have children are on average just as happy as those that don't have them.

Buy a smaller home and own less stuff. Everything we buy has a price in terms of the carbon that is released when it is made and the raw materials that it is made from. Computers, smartphones and other gadgets are made from rare earth minerals that

must be mined. They make the cases from plastic, which is derived from oil that we must drill for. We throw away half of all food that is grown, and Americans throw away an average of 81 pounds of clothes per year.

Gandhi said, "Live simply so that others may simply live." Before the pandemic there was already a movement toward minimalism. Some say it makes you happier, freer and less stressed. Now you have one more reason to buy less stuff.

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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!

POP QUIZ

1. Which American state shares its name with a former Soviet Republic?
2. YouTube was bought for US\$1.65 billion, in 2006, by which company?
3. What is the UK prime minister's official country residence in Buckinghamshire called?
4. How many feet are in a fathom?
5. What was Victoria's last name before she married David Beckham?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Tempest in a teapot
 5. Pant fabric
 10. Grps.
 14. Its motto is "Industry"
 15. Polish humanitarian heroine, Sendler
 16. Auto brands
 17. Volcanologist's study
 18. ___ d'Alene, Idaho
 19. It means nothing to the French
 20. Famous writer
 23. Eastern royal
 24. Casual attire
 25. Grade A item
 27. Colonial insect
 28. "Dharma & ___"
 32. Carriage
 34. "Scott & ___" detective show on Netflix
 36. Pad
 37. Famous rock band frontman
 41. Exhausted
 42. On the job
 43. Close to
 46. Renowned isle of exile
 47. D.C. record-keeping org.
 50. Cunning
 51. Minister
 53. Took off
- Down
1. Supports
 2. Salt Lake City inhabitant
 3. Smarty pants
 4. Portion
 5. Cut up
 6. Arrow toter
 7. Lack
 8. People of the Arctic
 9. Dadaist Duchamp
 10. Brute
 11. Brought under control
 12. Loses it
 13. Tax return ID
 21. Permitted
 22. Parrot
 26. Grissom of NASA
 29. Popular vacation spot
55. Famous humorist
60. Word in many soft drink names
61. Ristorante offering
62. Chanel, fashion designer
63. Major-___
64. Fitzgerald and others
65. Ice cream topping, sometimes
66. Clothes closer
67. Abrasive files
68. Fork-tailed flier
30. Wagner heroine
31. "Beau ___" (Gary Cooper classic)
33. Bismarck's state, abbr.
34. ___ Fox (Uncle Remus character)
35. Jolly boat
37. Intimidation
38. Bete noire
39. Famous San Francisco hill
40. Nonsensical chorus
41. CSI evidence
44. It's cold! expression
45. Barker
47. In abundance
48. Chef, at times
49. When many do lunch
52. Member of a string quartet
54. Attraction near Orlando
56. Surmounting extensions
58. Put your hands together
59. Pardner's mount
60. Dentist qualification

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Georgia; 2) Google; 3) Chequers; 4) 13; 5) Adams

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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63							64					65		
66							67					68		

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

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

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

4

out of 10 Americans have never moved from their hometown.

5

minutes is how long the capybara, the world's largest rodent, can stay underwater at a time.

20

pounds (9.07kg) of eggplant contains the same amount of nicotine found in one cigarette.

61

percent is how much a US job applicant's chances can be negatively affected by having a visible tattoo.

111

is how many handbags the average woman in the UK will own in her lifetime.

420,000

people die every year from tainted food.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Yanui Beach. Photo: Jeffrey Ephreim Villanueva Villegas

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

This week in history

Jan 22, 1984

The Apple Macintosh, the first consumer computer to popularize the computer mouse and the graphical user interface, is introduced during a Super Bowl XVIII commercial.

Jan 23, 1556

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

Jan 24, 1972

Japanese Sgt Shoichi Yokoi is found hiding in a Guam jungle, where he had been since the end of World War II.

Jan 25, 1924

The 1924 Winter Olympics opens in Chamonix, in the French Alps, inaugurating the Winter Olympic Games.

Jan 26, 1808

The Rum Rebellion, the only successful (albeit short-lived) armed takeover of the government in Australia, takes hold as New South Wales Governor William Bligh is deposed by the New South Wales Corps under the command of Major George Johnston, working closely with John Macarthur.



The Apollo 1 crew. Photo: NASA

Jan 27, 1967

Apollo program: Astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffee are killed in a fire during a test of their Apollo 1 spacecraft at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida.

Jan 28, 1941

Franco-Thai War: Final air battle of the conflict. A Japanese-mediated armistice goes into effect later in the day.

Source: Wikipedia

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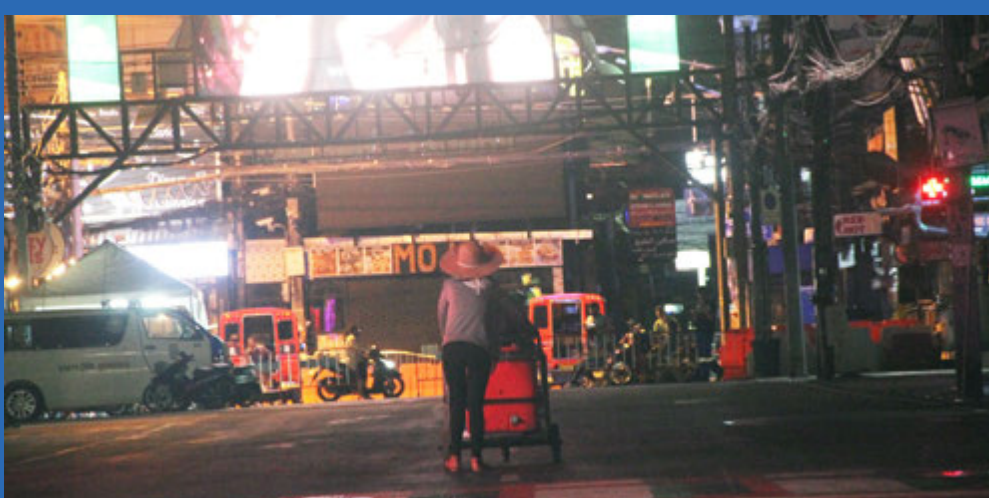
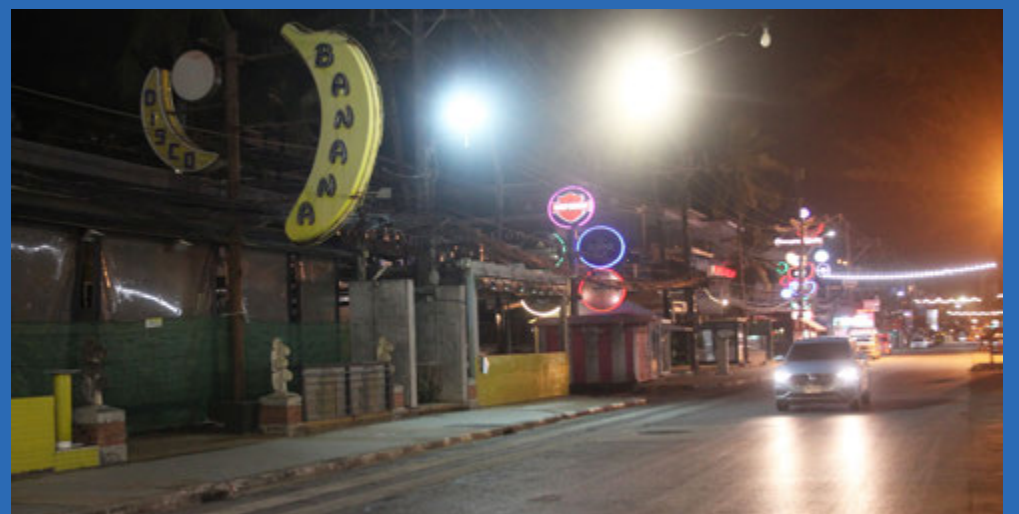
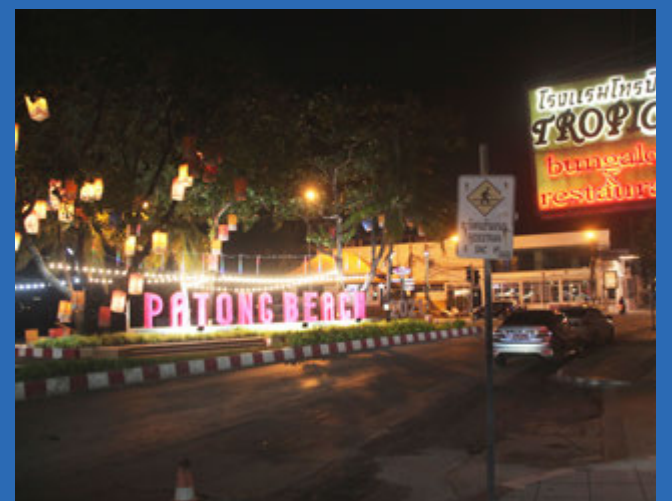
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PATONG - AFTER DARK

Phuket's entertainment area, Bangla Road, normally at this time of year would have thousands of people enjoying life to its fullest, now sits waiting for people to return.



Double delight for shuttlers

Top-seeded Thai pair win maiden title at Yonex Thailand Open

BADMINTON

Bangkok Post

Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai claimed their maiden BWF World Tour Super 1000 title after winning the US\$1 million (B30mn) Yonex Thailand Open at Impact Arena, Muang Thong Thani, last Sunday (Jan 17).

The top-seeded world No.3 pair defeated arch-rivals Praveen Jordan and Melati Daeva Oktavianti of Indonesia in the mixed doubles final 21-3, 20-22, 21-18 in just under an hour, avenging their loss in the 2020 All England Open final last year.

It was the pair's fifth career title after their triumphs in the 2017 Swiss Open (a Grand Prix Gold event), the 2019 Macau Open (Super 300), the Korea Open and the Singapore Open (both Super 500).

"We are very happy to have won the title and make the Thai people proud," said Sapsiree.

"We set a very high goal for ourselves coming into this tournament and we are proud to have accomplished it. We were very focused from the



Dechapol Puavaranukroh (left) and Sapsiree Taerattanachai pose with their mixed doubles gold medals and trophies. Photo: Bangkok Post

beginning and that's how we won the opening game easily."

"We are also thankful to the Thai authorities and the Badminton Association of Thailand [BAT] for setting up this event and allowing

people to enjoy the competition," added the 28-year-old star.

DISAPPOINTING END

However, Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai were unable to

complete a double for the Thai contingent after the seventh seeds lost to Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu, the fifth seeded duo from Indonesia, 15-21, 12-21.

"We did not play what we had planned. We played

their game style not ours, so it was difficult to fight back," said Rawinda.

"It means so much to us to be in the final. It is the first time Thailand has hosted a Super 1000 tournament. We are very proud [of our

achievements] this week."

It was a disappointing end to the campaign for the Thais, who had hoped to make a big impact in the Super 1000 event after players from both China and Japan had earlier pulled out due to coronavirus restrictions.

Meanwhile, fifth seed Carolina Marin upset top seed Tai Tzu-ying to capture the women's singles crown.

The Spanish world No.6 needed just 42 minutes to dispose of the top-ranked Taiwanese in the women's singles decider, winning 21-9, 21-16.

The men's singles crown went to fourth seed Viktor Axelsen of Denmark, who defeated seventh seed Angus Ng Ka Long of Hong Kong 21-14, 21-14.

Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin, the sixth seeded pair from Taiwan, took the men's doubles title following a thrilling 21-16, 21-23, 21-19 win over Goh V Shem and Tan Wee Kiong of Malaysia.

The Toyota Thailand Open, the second event in the Asian leg of the BWF World Tour, started on Tuesday at the same venue. The season will conclude with the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals 2020 from Jan 27-31.

'Knives out' to save crew after spectacular America's Cup capsized

SAILING

THE CREW OF AMERICAN Magic had to cut themselves free in a heart-stopping moment after being trapped beneath the capsized yacht during the America's Cup challenger series in Auckland, skipper Terry Hutchinson revealed on Monday (Jan 18).

The high-tech yacht, es-

timated to be worth US\$80 million (B2.4 billion), was "flying" on its foils at 47 knots while racing Italian entry Luna Rossa on Sunday when it was dramatically hoisted out of the water and slammed back down by a freak wind gust before rolling on its side.

"We ended up with knives out, cutting ourselves out. Fortunately we were all out within a minute. Underneath

the mainsail is unnerving to say the least," Hutchinson said as he relived the ordeal.

The force of the impact tore a hole in the hull and the yacht was taking in water when rescuers rushed to the scene with pumps and flotation devices to prevent it sinking.

The American Magic syndicate are now faced with a race against time to rebuild the yacht and reinstall its

intricate electronic equipment before the Prada Cup regatta semi-finals begin in 11 days.

Hutchinson admitted an appearance in the final two rounds of preliminary racing beginning Jan 22 was unlikely.

"It'll be a big effort to get the boat to go sailing for the semis... we're going to do whatever it takes," he said.

"It's too early to suggest a time when we'll be back out on the water but we know we have a hard deadline of a week from Friday for the semi-final."

There are only three entries in the regatta to determine who will challenge defending champion Team New Zealand for the America's Cup.

The winner of the preliminary round-robin races will go through to the challenger final to meet the winner of a semi-final series between the other two yachts.

INEOS Team UK have made an impeccable start with four wins from four races, ahead of Luna Rossa with two while American Magic are yet to register a point.



The capsized yacht 'American Magic'. Photo: AFP

The luckless Americans appeared certain of their first win when they held a commanding lead over Luna Rossa before disaster struck with a powerful wind gust as helmsman Dean Barker steered the around the final mark.

Hutchinson said they could have made a different manoeuvre but there was no guarantee that would have given them a safe run to the finish.

"Had we taken the right turn and a lazy gybe we probably would've hooked into it

and we wouldn't be having this conversation. But you don't know, and when we make the decision we make the decision and we live and die by those decisions," he said.

"Dean made the correct decision to tack around the left gate, keep us in the pressure and just try to deliver us down to the finish. We got hit by a reasonably big gust."

The winner of the challenger series races Team New Zealand from March 6-21 for the America's Cup. AFP



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Man City finding their stride

Pep Guardiola's team hitting imperious form at the right time

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

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Much resembling a champion race-horse, Manchester City seem to be timing their title challenge in perfect fashion as they manouvered themselves into second place in the table after a 4-0 demolition of Crystal Palace last Sunday (Jan 17).

As Liverpool's form has stuttered of late, City have found their groove – at time of press the first team to record five consecutive victories in the Premier League this term, registering nine clean sheets, their most after 17 games of a single campaign.

It is a far cry from a month ago when they languished below mid-table and critics were labelling the current team as the worst of manager Pep Guardiola's tenure.

One of the key factors for their upturn in fortune is the way Guardiola has modified his team's approach to the game. Renowned as an ag-



Kevin de Bruyne is at the heart of City's resurgence. Photo: AFP.

gressive pressing team, the unusual circumstances of this truncated season has meant a less-energetic approach was required.

"We were running too much," Guardiola said prior to the match with Brighton

on Jan 13. "Without the ball you have to run. But with the football you have to walk, or run much less: stay more in position and let the ball run, not you."

It certainly helps that the player at the centre of the

team and their resurgence is arguably the finest midfielder in the world plying his trade right now.

Kevin de Bruyne is currently operating at a level above and beyond his teammates and opponents, a mod-

ern-day Mozart of the football pitch who orchestrates everything around him, conducting the tempo of play. Equally adept with both feet, his range of passing is exquisite and his razor-sharp football brain enables decision-making capabilities akin to that of a clairvoyant. One suspects he will no doubt make a fine coach one day.

He has now assisted 100 goals in all competitions for City since making his debut, 76 of which have been in the Premier League, which sees him enter the competition's all-time top 10.

In defence, Ruben Dias has been a resounding success since signing in September of last year. For as much as Guardiola likes all of his players to be comfortable on the ball, including his goalkeeper, Dias places the actual art of defending first and foremost as a priority, something the statistics support.

His influence can be seen in how he has galvanised the entire back line, particularly the resurgence of fellow central defender John Stones, who

has gone from the forgotten man of the Etihad to one of the team's most integral components. Nobody ever doubted his ability but many questioned his penchance for over-elaboration and unnecessary risk-taking. Alongside Dias he seems to have matured and is performing admirably, his two goals last Sunday contributing to the team's victory.

Fellow England international Phil Foden, who Guardiola once described as the most talented player he has ever seen, has also progressed impressively of late and is now making it very difficult for his manager to omit him from the starting 11.

Add into the mix talents such as Raheem Sterling, Riyad Mahrez, İlkay Gündoğan, and City's charge looks ominous. Plus all-time record scorer Sergio Aguero is expected back from injury soon.

City are no longer a dark horse, as they were during the first half of the campaign. Expect them to up the ante furthermore as they enter the final straight of the season in their charge for the title.



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Sport



City's title charge takes flight > p15

ASIA WIN THRILLER

CRICKET

Neil Quail

Incredible scenes last Sunday (Jan 17) heralded a remarkable win for an Asia select XI against the Rest of the World (ROW) select XI, a result that was decided only on the very last ball after 70 overs of dramatic play out at the ACG in Thalang.

The result affords Asia a 2-1 lead in a five-series event, while ROW will rue the harrowing statistic of 10 dropped catches that cost them the game. Heartbreakingly, several outstanding individual performances that included a Justin Swart century and a Michael Flowers hat-trick were ultimately negated by the ROW fielding debacle.

Returning to captain ROW, Jason Robertson won the toss and sent out Jeremy Bootsy and Flowers to open the batting with the former hitting 18 runs in the 3rd over including a double brace of fours.

By the 9th over, the ROW partnership was at 71, with Bootsy (40) claiming the lion's share of the runs, when Waseem Musa intervened to aid in despatching both openers in consecutive balls; first, by catching Bootsy at mid-wicket and then immediately running out Flowers (16) with a superb direct hit off the bowling of Imtiyaz Mushtaq.

After the break, Swart was to produce an immaculate batting display through the remaining 20 overs, reaching his century in the 33rd over and eventually reaching an impressive 108 not out. He was ably assisted first by Joe Ninan (11), who eventually succumbed to series debutante Zan Coplestone in the 19th over and by Dan Nicholson who scored 30 not out.



Justin Swart plays a shot on his way to a magnificent century against the Asia select XI at the ACG last Sunday. Photo: Neil Quail

Chasing 257 to win, Asia would need to keep in touch with a run-rate of more than seven per over, but an edgy start saw opener Seemant Raju dropped in the slips twice, before he redeemed himself in the 2nd over, hoisting two lofty sixes off Swart's bowling.

Robertson's next six deliveries reinstated the advantage to ROW

by forcing Mushtaq into defensive mode, while securing the skipper a maiden over. And with the first ball of his 3rd over, Robertson finally made a deserved breakthrough when Dom Judge atoned for earlier putting down Raju, coolly clutching the Asia opener at first slip.

ROW's confounding inability to hold catches returned to haunt

them, however, as both Ali Khan and Mushtaq escaped before Khan was finally caught by wicket-keeper Bootsy off the bowling of Ninan.

That brought Bhanu Pratap to the middle and a partnership with Mushtaq that yielded 109 runs through the next 17 overs to reach 167 for 3 before Pratap fell short of his half-century by six runs, caught

by Bootsy off Flowers' bowling.

Flowers then secured a rare cricketering accolade in achieving a hat-trick when Pir was dismissed before Mushtaq fell just seven runs short of his century in the 31st over.

KNIFE'S EDGE

Captain Shivam Bhattacharaya and Yassir then stepped up and shouldered the responsibility of chasing down 47 runs off just 26 remaining deliveries.

Shots were fired as Bhattacharaya slammed Ninan for four off his first faced ball, and by the end of over 33, Asia needed exactly 20 runs off 12 balls.

Like men possessed, Bhattacharaya (26 not out) and Yassir (25 not out) pounded out 10 runs from the 34th over, but a four from the first ball off Swart's and the game's last over swung the balance of favour quite astoundingly in Asia's direction.

Scrambling another five runs through the next four balls left Yassir on strike for the last ball, the scores dead even and the game on a knife's edge.

As Swart's final delivery was thrashed out to square leg by Yassir for four runs, the Asia bench cleared onto the pitch to celebrate an extraordinary win, while ROW retired to reflect on a litany of missed opportunities.

An unbeaten 108 not out by Swart and a 93 by Mushtaq were the outstanding batting performances, while Robertson's 2 for 29 and Flowers's 4 for 51, including a hat-trick, all added to an exceptional match.

Due to the success and enjoyment of the series, organisers and players have decided to extend to a best-of-five, ensuring at least one more match, which will take place in February.

Laguna Phuket Triathlon date announced

TRIATHLON

LAGUNA PHUKET, ASIA'S premier travel destination and home of the award-winning Laguna Phuket Triathlon (LPT), has announced the 28th addition of the annual event is to take place on Sunday Nov 21, 2021.

The famous event features the signature Triathlon race distance of 1.8km swim, 50km bike and 12km run, Sprint Triathlon distance of

0.5km swim, 20km bike and 6K run and the increasingly popular Duathlon race distance of 4km run, 50km bike and 12km run. All races are held together on the same day, giving everyone the truly memorable event experience.

Southeast Asia's longest running and most successful triathlon event, the Laguna Phuket Triathlon was listed as Top 8 of The World's Greatest Tri Swims by 220 Triathlon Magazine (UK) in 2020. LPT has also been ranked

5th on the 10 Best Triathlons in the World list, by Let's Do This (UK). Laguna Phuket destination has been named an Honourable Contributor in Sports and Exercise, by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports' Department of Physical Education (DPE) in 2019.

Registration is now open at www.lagunaphukettri.com. Athletes are advised to book their slot as soon as possible to enjoy a Super Early Bird discount (available until Jan 31).

The Phuket News



The 28th Laguna Phuket Triathlon date is set. Photo: Laguna Phuket