

INDIA AIRLIFT HOPED TO FUEL ARRIVALS > PAGE 6

ALL NIGHT



People mass at the security checkpoint to enter Bangla Rd. Photo: PR Phuket

4AM CLOSING STARTS SMOOTHLY, OTHER AREAS MAY BE CONSIDERED

The Phuket News
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The 4am closing of nightlife venues in selected areas in Patong went smoothly without incident early last Saturday morning (Dec 16), fuelling hopes that the late closing will be allowed to continue, and may be even expanded further to other areas.

“Everything went smoothly and without incident. By 4am all shops were closed. and we did not find any drunk tourists running rampant or causing any incidents,” said Kathu District Chief Theeraphong Chuaychu after the first night of late trading.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat last Friday night led an

inspection of the security and safety measures in place on Bangla Rd, the heart of the Patong nightlife area, to assess their effectiveness.

“Emphasis has been placed on strict inspections on a daily basis, and to assess the situation on a day-to-day basis. If any defects [in the security measures] are found, we will hurry to improve them urgently,” Governor Sophon said.

“Overall, the measures seem to be effective, but they still need to be evaluated day by day. It’s only the first night, we still do not know the full impact, and there will be strict inspections every night in the future,” he added.

Governor Sophon noted the number of tourists staying on to enjoy the

late closing time. “Tourists are using the extended hours, but it is not yet possible to estimate the actual increase in trade at this early stage,” he said.

However, he noted the potential economic impact the late trading may bring. “Business operators are confident in the various measures. That will help increase confidence among tourists and will make the overall economy better,” he said.

Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum, the new Commander of Phuket Provincial Police, led administrative officials, police, public health officers and other officials on an inspection of the checkpoints set up at each end of Bangla Rd for screening people entering the area.

The inspections also included

several bars and restaurants and a nightclub.

At the checkpoints people entering the area must pass security checks to prevent drugs and weapons from being brought into the area, Maj Gen Sinlert explained.

CCTV cameras along Bangla Rd and also throughout the surrounding area play an important role by using facial recognition technology and for police in tracking and apprehending offenders, he said.

Venue operators themselves will use the ‘Thai ID’ app to confirm that no people younger than 20 years old are in the nightlife venues, he added, explaining that the measure is to help prevent the use of fake IDs.

“More than 30 officers both in...

NEWS PAGE 3

Taxi thugs at Bang Tao finally charged



LIFE PAGE 8

Patrick gets busy with his annual report



SPORT PAGE 15

Ishii named as new coach of War Elephants



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News



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Bangla Rd pilots 4am closing

Continued from page 1

...and out of uniform deployed to patrol the area to take care of the safety of tourists until everyone has left the entertainment venues [after 4am],” Maj Gen Sinlert noted.

“When we asked foreign tourists, most of them said they did not know about the 4am closing, but said they thought it was a good thing,” Maj Gen Sinlert said following the tour of Bangla Rd.

“As for safety, they said they were confident that there are officers to take care of them, so they didn’t have to worry,” he added.

“Preparations have been made in terms of manpower as well as increasing the duration of patrols to be more frequent, especially those who patrol on foot, which will be organised in shifts to ensure continuity and so officers can access the area quickly,” he said.

CARROT AND STICK

Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who also serves as Interior Minister, warned the public that the extended operating hours for night venues can be revoked if operators or customers fail to abide by the law.

“Restaurants can operate until the early morning, but

they are not allowed to sell alcoholic drinks after midnight. Only venues which have a valid licence can sell alcohol after 12am,” he said.

The new regulation allows night entertainment venues to open until 4am in selected areas in Bangkok, Phuket, Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, Koh Samui in Surat Thani, and bars registered in hotels nationwide.

However, the Interior Minister also said that he was ready to consider expanding the zones where entertainment places can open until 4am in order to boost the economy (see page 7).

Operators were complying well with measures to ensure that public safety was not jeopardised by the later closing time, he said last Saturday.

“Operators promise not to sell alcohol to heavily drunk customers... There must be no narcotics, weapons, drink driving or visits by young people aged under 20,” he said.

Asked if the government will expand the zones for entertainment places with extended operating hours, he said that “We are ready to support whatever will boost the economy. [Extending] The operating hours until 4am increases money in circulation, employment and even



Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat (right) is shown the facial recognition system on Bangla Rd. Photo: PR Phuket

the income of taxi drivers.

“This is the intention of the government. But it must be subject to regulations. If it is under control and every party cooperates, we are ready to consider [zone expansion],” he said.

WAR ROOM

Ahead of the official start of late trading in Patong, Kathu District Chief Theeraphong explained that a ‘war room’ had been set up to monitor the effectiveness of measures introduced to make 4am closing of nightlife venues in Patong safe.

“Administrative officials, police and Patong Municipality are jointly making an MOI [sic] to create an operational plan appropriate to the situation toward management that covers all dimensions and bring maximum benefit to the people as well,” he said.

Patong has six zones in which the 4am closing will be in effect, affecting more than 150 establishments, Mr Theeraphong said.

“The venues have prepared procedures according to the plan to take care of the safety of tourists... We are ready to assess the situation and ad-

dress defects to improve and correct the system, including the addition of ‘waiting areas’ by operators in collaboration with Patong Municipality and police officers,” he added.

The ‘waiting areas’ are places where patrons can sober up before heading home in the hope of preventing drunk customers from driving, as ordered by the National Alcohol Beverage Policy Committee only a week before the 4am closing began.

To that effect, Governor Sophon joined a host of other leading officials on Bangla Rd last Friday night to hold up posters saying, “Don’t Drink and Drive”.

ZONES

Patong is the first area in Phuket to introduce 4am closing following each district on the island holding public meetings to determine whether or not 4am closing was appropriate for their areas.

Kathu District held its public meeting on Nov 14, when it was agreed for Kathu District to have six 4am closing zones, all in Patong.

Following its meeting, Muang Phuket District will have two 4am closing zones in Phuket Town: one near the Seahorse Circle on the east

side of town, the other along Kra Rd.

One 4am closing zone will be along Soi Tai Na in Karon, which for years had already been designated an ‘entertainment zone’. The fourth area in Muang District to have a 4am closing zone will be Soi Ta-iad in Chalong.

Rawai failed to have any 4am closing zones receive support.

According to an official report of the meeting, the venue operators agreed that 4am entertainment venues should be allowed to remain open until 4am, but also noted that Muang District area as a whole was “still not ready in many aspects”, including in terms of safety, environmental and economic factors.

The operators were ready and willing to work with officials to “drive forward with stable measures in allowing entertainment venues to open until 4am”, said an official report of the Muang District meeting.

However, the operators also agreed that it would be best to pilot the 4am closing conditions in Patong, the traditional area for late nightlife entertainment, which they said would help to stimulate Phuket’s tourism industry.

Anchalee resigns Democrat party 577

AFTER 31 YEARS AS A Democrat Party member, Anchalee Tephabut, who once served as Secretary-General to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva during his term in office, has resigned from the party.

Ms Anchalee has for decades served as a bulwark figure in Phuket for the Democrats, and served Phuket as a member of Parliament in the House of Representatives.

Ms Anchalee announced her resignation from the Democrat Party through a post on Facebook on Dec 11, saying she was “ashamed” of the party’s current leaders.

‘ความจริง อมตะ วาจา’ (“Truth is indeed the undying word”) is the party slogan, and has been since the party

was founded in 1946,” Ms Anchalee said.

“It is considered a motto that all democrats have always adhered to in their political practice since the founding of the party in 1946. From the first party leader to the eighth.

“I have been a member of the Democrat Party since 1992, more than 31 years, with unshakable stability as a politician, a member of the House of Representatives and President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation [PPAO].

“I have been part of the Democrat Party all my life, as a politician with pride in principles, with an ideology that is honest and always considers the interests of the people and the country as the main focus,” she wrote.

“Every time I tell the peo-

ple that Democrat Party members say that the Democrat Party belongs to the people... it is by the people... for the people.

“That was until Dec 9, 2023, when there was an election for a new leader of the Democrat Party, [a] return to being ‘Disloyal’ in the truth spoken.

“I will stop playing politics for the rest of my life. When party leaders in this era are unable to maintain the party motto, the party’s ideology, and cannot maintain its own truth.

“I therefore wish to resign from being a member of the Democrat Party from now on, because of the shame brought on those who were loyal to the party,” Ms Anchalee announced.

“To friends who share

the ideology of the party, I am ready to thank you, the majority of the Democrat Party members, and friends who share political ideals who have worked together to be steadfast to the party until today.

“Until we meet again, when our nation needs it,” Ms Anchalee concluded.

Chalermchai Sri-on was elected as the Democrats’ ninth leader at a party meeting on Dec 9.

Following the meeting, former Prime Minister and former Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva confirmed that he, too, had resigned from the party.

Mr Abhisit described the Democrat Party’s current status as “beyond crisis”, following a slew of top party figures resigning in the wake of



Image: Anchalee Tephabut / Facebook

controversy after controversy.

Before the coup of 2014, Phuket, along with the rest of Southern Thailand, was a bedrock of Democrat Party support, with Democrats for decades elected to represent the island.

After the coup, previously unknown candidates representing the military-aligned Palang Pracharat Party were somehow elected as Phuket MPs.

In the national election in May this year, Phuket people elected Move Forward Party

candidates to represent them, with Move Forward candidates winning all three MP seats in Phuket by strong margins.

Meanwhile, support for the Democrat Party continues to dwindle. The party now holds just 25 seats in the 500-seat House of Representatives, and just one Democrat in the country currently holds the position of President at a Provincial Administration Organisation (PAO).

The Phuket News

Bang Tao taxi thugs charged

Eakkapop Thongtub
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Cherng Talay Police have confirmed the arrests of two taxi drivers wanted for the assault on a Grab driver in Bang Tao on Dec 2.

The two men are not the same taxi drivers who presented themselves at Cherng Talay Police Station on Dec 4, with one of the men claiming responsibility for the attack.

Cherng Talay Police announced the arrests of the two “actual” assailants on Dec 12, confirming the charges against the men.

The two men were arrested in accordance with arrest warrants issued by Phuket Provincial Court on Dec 12, Cherng Talay Police reported.

Udomchai Pengsut, 49, was arrested on warrant number 635/2023 for “joining together to cause physical harm to others until it causes serious harm to the victim.”

Wutthidet Phromthong, 37, was arrested on warrant number 635/2023 also for “joining together to cause physical harm to others until it causes serious harm to the victim.”

The location of arrest for



Image: Cherng Talay Police



both men was given as at Cherng Talay Police Station.

Police were continuing to proceed with legal action against the men, Cherng Talay Police noted.

Grab taxi driver Teerajet Chukaew, 25, was legally trying to pick up tourists near a venue at Bang Tao Beach who had ordered a Grab taxi late on Dec 2 when he was attacked by the two men, who both worked as taxi drivers at a queue nearby.

Mr Teerajet suffered multiple bruises to his body and a punctured lung in the attack, during which he was beaten

with a piece of wood.

In fear of his safety, after filing the complaint with police, Mr Teerajet returned to his home province of Trang to recover from his injuries in hospital, where he remains.

Within hours of officers from the Cherng Talay Police arriving at the scene on Dec 4 to investigate the attack, two men presented themselves at Cherng Talay Police Station, with one of the men claiming responsibility for the attack.

Kamjorn Kanyacharee, 48, told police that he was the one who had “caused the incident” and carried out the assault.

Bamrung Thipkonglat, 46, said he was a witness to the incident and claimed that he was the one who intervened to dissuade Mr Kamjorn from “the incident”, namely the attack.

Police have yet to explain what charges, if any, will be brought against Kamjorn and Bamrung for presenting false information to police officers conducting an investigation.

In the wake of the attack, more than 200 taxi app drivers in Phuket gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall on Dec 6 to appeal for protection and fairness.



The heavy crane truck rammed several vehicles and brought down a power line. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Runaway crane truck wreaks havoc in Patong

POLICE ARE YET TO disclose the potential cause of chaos on 50 Pi Rd in Patong where a crane failed to ascend a hill and ended up rolling uncontrollably down the slope and crushing cars, bikes and power poles last Saturday (Dec 16).

Lt Col Pairat Chitrapimom of Patong Police received notification of the incident around 10am. On arriving at the scene, police officers and emergency workers found a section of the road in disarray and with a car on fire pinned under the truck.

According to preliminary information from eyewitnesses, a runaway crane, unable to climb the hill, rolled backward, crushing several cars and three motorcycles.

Three power poles were damaged, and one car became trapped under the truck, catching fire. Firefighters took 20 minutes to extinguish the flames.

The crane driver was “detained” and taken to Patong Police Station for questioning. Police have not yet revealed his name or confirmed if he were an employee of the Phuket Crane company, as indicated by the stickers on the vehicle. Nothing has been said about possible charges against the unnamed driver.

According to preliminary reports, one person was taken to Patong Hospital for medical assistance. Patong Police have not provided further details on this matter.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Knife-wielding man taken into safe custody on Soi Ta-iad

POLICE ON MONDAY (Dec 18) took a Russian man into custody on Soi Ta-iad in Chalong after he brandished a nine-inch knife and stormed along the street.

Police arrived at the scene shortly before 4:30pm to find the man, in obvious emotional distress, still walking along the street. Traffic had ground to a standstill as the man had parked his motorbike in the middle of the small soi.

Crowds of onlookers mostly kept a safe distance, though many stood to record the incident unfolding on their mobile phones.

When police had enough numbers to safely take the man into custody, one of the officers pulled out his gun and pointed it at the man and shouted repeatedly, in English, “Get down!”

The man complied, and several officers moved in to disarm him, handcuff him and empty his pockets while he was still on the ground.

Due to the man’s size, five officers had moved in to

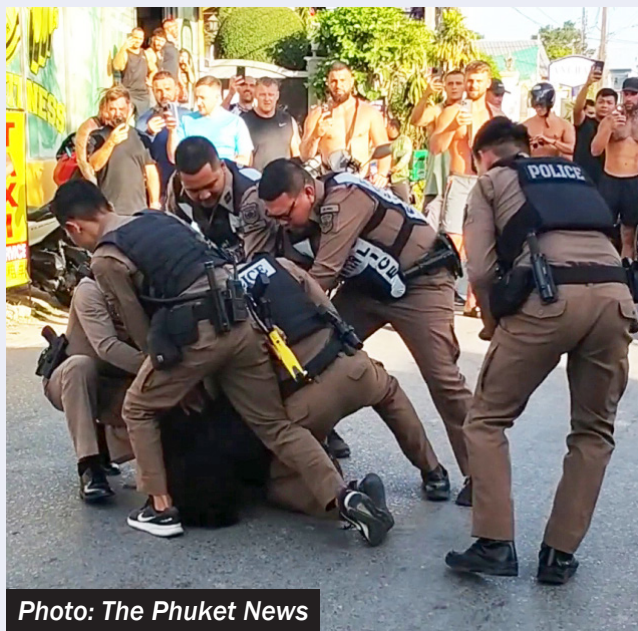


Photo: The Phuket News

take the man into custody.

The man did not resist arrest. He spoke in what some onlookers said was Russian.

At time of press, the reasons for the man’s behaviour had yet to be made clear. The man appeared to be in a heightened state of tearful rage and anguish.

One man who went forward to help translate the man’s words for police

showed sympathy for the man’s condition, and asked onlookers to stop recording videos on their phones.


Police later confirmed that the man, a Russian national, was staying at a guest accommodation off Soi Ta-iad. He had most recently entered the country by boat on Nov 29 a visa entry that allowed him to stay 90 days.

The Phuket News

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High: +30°
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Finns arrested after cop extortion claim

Eakkapop Thongtub
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Two Finnish men have been arrested for overstay after they duped one of the men's parents out of 7,000 euros (about B267,295) by falsely telling them their son had been arrested and needed the money for his release.

Lt Col Ekachai Siri of the Tourist Police reported that officers were informed last Friday (Dec 15) that the parents of 27-year-old Finnish national Aki-Petteri Kristian Varsala had been unable to contact their son and had reported him as "missing".

During the time that their son was "missing", the parents had received a phone call from a person claiming to be a Phuket police officer. The so-called "officer" told the parents that they needed to transfer 7,000 euros to ensure his release.

The parents transferred the money, but still had not heard from their son, prompting them to contact the Tourist Police themselves.

By 3pm last Friday Tourist Police and Patong Police had made their way to the Chang Bar One on Nanai Rd, where



Photo: Phuket Tourist Police

they had been told their "missing person" had been seen.

Staff at the bar told the officers that Mr Varsala had not been to the bar for about two months. They did know that at that time Mr Varsala and his Finnish friend – later named by police as 34-year-old Finnish national 'Silk-louma Joonass Patteri' – were staying at the Coco Resort on Nanai Soi 8.

Officers travelled to the hotel, but were told the two Finnish men had checked out about a month ago. Returning to the bar, the officers learned that one of the staffers still had a way of contacting the men.

The staffer organised to meet the men at the Tops store on Nanai Soi 8 at 7:30pm, when officers also arrived to greet them, and invite them

to Patong Police Station to answer some questions.

Officers discovered that both men had entered the country on tourist visas that allowed them to stay until June 28. Both men extended their stays until July 27, but had not extended their stays further.

Both men were deemed to have stayed in the country illegally 141 days.

During questioning, the two men admitted that they had worked together to create a story that they had been arrested by the police to ask for money from their parents, Lt Col Ekachai said in his report.

Police charged the men for staying in the country illegally, and have informed the parents to let them know that their son was safe, Lt Col Ekachai confirmed.

Man clears traffic for ambulance

A YOUNG MAN IS BEING praised online for clearing vehicles out of the way so that an ambulance carrying a patient could make it through the heavy traffic congestion at the Koh Kaew intersection.

Wisarat Saman, a rescue worker with the Kusoldharm Foundation, on Dec 12 posted a video on TikTok showing the young man clearing traffic on his Honda Click motorbike.

The ambulance was heading along Thepkasattri Rd southbound at night, carrying an emergency patient to hospital, a journey of more than four kilometres, explained Mr Wisut.

"I was shocked. At first I did not notice. I was wondering what this man was doing on his motorbike. Then I noticed what he was doing was very lovely," he wrote.

"Thank you good citizen. driving motorcycle registration number 1Kor 2366 Phuket for helping open the way for an ambulance



Screenshot: Wisarat Saman

transporting an emergency patient to hospital," he added.

"Thank you to everyone who helped. #People who do good things must be admired. #Phuket people are considerate," he added.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Police deputy's BMW destroyed

A BMW BELONGING TO A Deputy Superintendent at Patong Police Station was destroyed after it caught fire while being driven down Patong Hill.

Kathu Municipality Disaster Prevention and Mitigation officers were informed of the fire at 12:10am on Dec 15.

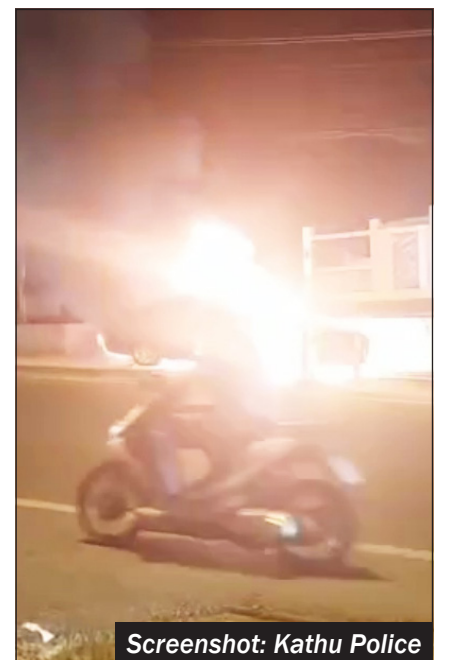
Firefighters and Kathu Police arrived at the scene, on Phra Barami Rd near the PTT petrol station on the Kathu side of the hill, to see the fire burning intensely from the engine bay at the front of the car.

Firefighters doused the vehicle, taking about 10 minutes to extinguish the fire. By that time, however, the car had been gutted by the flames.

While firefighters were putting out the blaze, traffic was prevented from passing for safety reasons.

The driver, described only as a Police Lieutenant Colonel serving as a Deputy Superintendent of the Patong Police Station, was not injured in the incident.

The car was taken to Kathu Police Station for examination.



Screenshot: Kathu Police

The unnamed Police Lieutenant Colonel driver said he was driving home to Phuket Town when he saw smoke coming from the engine compartment, and pulled over, police said.

Police were pretty sure the fire was started by something in the engine bay.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Phuket explores deepening relations with Uzbekistan

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat welcomed Fakhridin Sultanov, Consul General of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and his delegation during a courtesy visit on Dec 14 to introduce themselves and discuss cooperation between Phuket and Uzbekistan in trade, investment and tourism.

At Phuket Provincial Hall, Mr Fakhridin explained that his visit was the 36th time he had come to Phuket.

“I have had the opportunity to live in Thailand for several years. My family and children live in Thailand, so they are very attached to and impressed by Thailand,” he said.

“Personally, I have experience working in aviation before, and I see great importance in the development of tourism and the economy.

“Although Uzbekistan is far from Thailand and Phuket, it is similar in terms of way of life and lifestyle culture, such as how Thai people have a routine of waking up early and are very diligent. I am impressed how very similar our lifestyles are,” he added.

Mr Sultanov highlighted the potential to develop tourism between Phuket and Uzbekistan.

“There is an intention to exchange on many matters, including guidelines



Photo: PR Phuket

for promoting tourism and giving importance to soft power because Thai tourism makes tourists of Uzbekistan happy, enthusiastic and feel that they are quality citizens from tourism,” he said.

“In addition, Uzbekistan views Thailand as the most easily connected business partner in Southeast Asia. We have confidence in the products and services of Thai people, especially tropical fruits such as pineapples. Uzbek people view pineapples as sweet fruits and are often used as a symbol of celebration at the dining table. Therefore there is a great admiration for Phuket pineapples,” Mr Sultanov said.

“Although Islam is the main religion in Uzbekistan, it is not the national religion. Uzbekistan is a country with religious flexibility and has a connection with Buddhism and Christianity in the past as well. Therefore, I would

like to encourage more historical and religious tourism,” he said.

“And there is a plan to create cooperation to research cultural connections with the Fine Arts Department of Thailand in terms of driving the economy and tourism between each other,” he added.

“There is an investment plan to open direct flights to Phuket, including strengthening the sister city relationship between Phuket and Samarkand,” he said.

Although Tashkent is the Uzbekistan capital, Samarkand in southeastern Uzbekistan is one of oldest continuously inhabited cities in Central Asia, and is located on the ancient ‘Silk Road’.

“At present there are more and more Uzbek tourists traveling to Phuket, so it is expected that in the future there will be an opportunity to visit and promote relations, and further consular missions,” Mr Sultanov said.



Photo: Karon Police

Discarded fetus found in Karon side street

THE MOTHER OF A FIVE-month-old fetus found discarded in a vacant lot on a small street in Karon last week has been found and is now in hospital care.

Karon Police were informed by the 191 Provincial Police call centre at about 10:45am on Dec 13 that someone had found the body of a newborn baby dumped beside Soi Green Drinking Water, Karon.

Due to the nature of the incident, Pol Capt Surasak Sudmuang, Deputy Inspector (Investigation), informed Karon Police Chief Pol Col Khundet Na Nongkhai of the discovery.

Officers arrived at the scene with forensic doctors from Vachira Phuket Hospital and investigators from Phuket Provincial Police Forensics

Office to find the fetus beside a power pole on the vacant lot.

The fetus was about five months old, and the umbilical cord and placenta were still attached, officers noted.

The body was handed over to forensics officers for further examination.

Police soon found the mother of the newborn, 20-year-old Myanmar woman Aye Thiri Mon, in a small room nearby.

She was taken to Chalong Hospital for care as she was in a state of exhaustion and had lost a lot of blood, officers reported.

Police will wait until her condition improves before continuing with their investigation and “proceeding according to the law”, officers said.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Future outlined for prison public park

OFFICIALS HELD A public hearing last week to solicit feedback and suggestions on what to do with the public park to be built at the site of the old Phuket Provincial Prison on Damrong Rd in Phuket Town.

Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan chaired the meeting, held at the Phuket Merlin Hotel on Dec 12. Present were Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO), heads of government agencies and members of the public.

Leading the presentation of the construction design project were representatives from Ashram Silp Co Ltd, described in an official report as a “community and environmental architects company”.

The key aim of the project is to develop and conserve the site for public benefit, the report explained.

Phuket Provincial Prison was built 121 years ago, and was one of the oldest prisons in the country.

The prison was built during the period when



Photo: PR Phuket

Phraya Ratsadanupradit Mahitsaraphakdi (Khaw Sim Bee) was Governor of Monthon Phuket. It originally covered a total area of 47 rai 3 ngan 34 square wah: 6 rai 1 ngan within the walls, and 41 rai 2 ngan 34 square wah outside the walls.

The project area for the public park is to cover about 33 rai and 21 square wah, the meeting was told.

In carrying out the project, the design strategy was determined as follows: to be a public space in the heart of the city to promote learning about history, to be a recreational area to promote urban health and be a place of spiritual comfort that promotes local and spiritual activities.

The park is to be flexible in its use and while serving

as an “eco-tourism destination” and a green space for the city, including a forest restoration area, a centre is to be included for people to learn the history of the prison and Phuket Town.

As such, the elements discussed at the meeting included the main entrance, parking, a museum building, an outdoor amphitheatre, a playground, a multi-purpose pavilion, a chedi, a plaza, an open-air museum, an eco-park, a tennis court, Buddha shrine, viewpoints, nature trails, motorcycle parking and indoor exercise areas.

The suggestions and feedback presented at the meeting are to be factored into the final design plan and presented to the public at a later date. *The Phuket News*

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Air India flights fuel arrivals

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat was on hand at Phuket International Airport last week to welcome tourists arriving on the inaugural flight of a new Air India service providing direct flights from New Delhi.

Flight AI378 landed at 7:10am and was welcomed with a water cannon salute as it taxied to its gate where arriving passengers were then greeted by officials and figures as well as Thai traditional dance.

“As Phuket’s high tourism season starts, coupled with the visa exemption, it is fantastic to welcome Air India’s new flights which will allow direct air access for Indian travellers,” Governor Sophon said.

“This famous island resort is already a much-loved destination for Indian travellers with beautiful beaches and a multitude of attractions and activities, including Carnival Magic, Andamanda, and Aquaria. We look forward to welcoming more Indian travellers to Phuket,” he added.

Governor Sophon presided over the welcome ceremony



Photo: PR Phuket

together with officials and figures from TAT as well as Phuket’s public and private sector, including Monchai Tanode, General Manager of Phuket International Airport. The welcoming committee gifted the 128 passengers with souvenirs and gift bags.

Also present at the event was Patsee Permvongsene, TAT Executive Director of ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific Region.

“Air India’s nonstop service will provide a convenient connection between Delhi and the world-famous resort island of Phuket, which is well-established as a favourite

destination for Indian travellers. Now especially is an opportune time for Indian travellers to visit Thailand to take advantage of the temporary tourist visa exemption which is available until May 10, 2024.” Ms Patsee said.

Starting Dec15, Air India will operate the Delhi-Phuket route with four flights per week every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. From January, the service will become a daily operation.

The flight will be operated with an A320 neo aircraft offering 162 seats comprising 150 in Economy and 12 in Business Class. Flight AI

378 will depart from Delhi at 1:10am to arrive in Phuket the same day at 7:10am. The return flight AI 379 will take off from Phuket at 8:10am and land in Delhi at 10:50am on the same day.

Air India currently operates 26 flights to Bangkok per week with daily nonstop flights from Delhi and Mumbai and six flights per week from Kolkata. The new Delhi-Phuket service will provide a convenient air link between the two cities for tourism and trade, while further bolstering Air India’s expansion plans in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

Air India’s latest con-

nection between Delhi and Phuket is part of the 2,438,043 air-seat capacity between Thailand and India in 2023, representing a 77% rebound over the pre-pandemic year in 2019.

Specifically, during the six-month visa exemption period (November 2023-May 2024), the number of flights between Thailand and India will increase by 3.4% to 6,263 flights, while the number of seats will grow about 1.27% to 1,312,649 seats.

TAT expects the visa exemption will stimulate Indian travellers to travel more to Thailand and has rolled out promotional activities to boost interest.

The TAT New Delhi Office is offering a customised subsidy for corporate and incentive groups as well as weddings and celebrations until March 31.

Meanwhile, TAT Mumbai Office will promote special tour packages with partners for revisits and golfers, and at the same time launch various publicity projects to increase the market awareness of Thailand as a wedding destination.

From Jan 1 to Dec 10 this year, Thailand recorded

1,506,287 arrivals from India, making it the fourth largest source of visitors. The number already surpassed TAT’s ‘best case’ scenario projected at 1,425,000 visitors for the entire year.

Fuelled by the visa exemption, TAT expects the number of Indian tourists between November and December 2023 to increase by 4.3% or 70,000 travellers, bringing the total number for the entire year to 1,664,483.

According to statistics publicly posted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports on Dec 4, according to preliminary figures Phuket welcomed 9,114,071 visitors in total from Jan-Oct this year, up 123.03% on last year’s total.

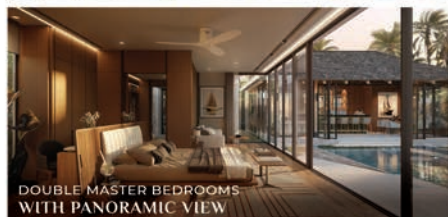
Of the total visitors to Phuket up to the end of October, 6,688,882 (+187.09%) were foreigners, while the remaining 2,425,189 (+38.06%) were Thais.

With occupancy during the period recorded at 76.6% (+45.1%), total revenue from visitors to Phuket during the period totalled B293.829 billion.

Of that amount, revenue from foreign visitors totalled B277.367bn (+116.82%).



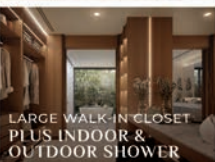
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Roadshows target Middle East

THE PHUKET TOURIST ASSOCIATION will arrange tourist promotion roadshows in Saudi Arabia and Oman after impressive recent growth in tourist numbers from those areas, PTA President Thaneth Tantipiriyakij, said on Dec 12.

The roadshows would be sponsored by the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) as part of the PTA’s overseas market promotion plan.

Mr Thaneth said similar roadshows arranged during this year’s low season targeted mainly Russian and Middle Eastern visitors.

The growth in Saudi Arabian tourists in Phuket was significant, said Mr Thaneth. It was up “thousands of percent” since earlier this year.

Two other markets in which the PTA had strong interest were Kazakhstan and India.

Mr Thaneth said at least 70% of Kazakhstani visitors to Thailand headed to Phuket, which had led to an increase in the number of direct flights from Kazakhstan to the island.

The visa-free scheme offered to Chinese and Kazakhstani visitors in September was a major factor in the 300-400% growth in the number of Kazakh tourists, he said.

Growth was also expected in the Indian market, given its huge population, rapidly recovering economy, and the fact it is only a four-hour flight from Phuket.

Some overlap in Thai and Indian cuisine and other familiar facets of the two cultures also contributed to the close relationship, Mr Thaneth said.

Eyeing the future, Mr Thaneth said PTA planned promotions in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China.

He said Chinese tourists now tended to



Phuket Tourist Association President Thaneth Tantipiriyakij speaking at a local tourism-business promotion event last week. Photo: Phuket Tourist Association

prefer longer stays, but it was not expected their numbers would soon rebound to pre-pandemic levels. It was currently around 30%. He expected this to climb to 60% to 70%.

The announcement came just days before the inaugural Air Arabia flight from Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates landed at Phuket International Airport on Dec 16.

The tourists disembarked Flight G9 687 at the international passenger terminal at 7:55am. The number of passengers is estimated at 215 maximum as the route is serviced by Airbus A321 Neo LR aircraft.

Air Arabia will now operate four direct flights between Phuket and Sharjah every week, said an official report of the arrival issued by AOT Ground Aviation Services Company (AOTGA) of the Airports of Thailand (AOT).

From Jan 1 through Oct 31 this year, arrivals from the UAE reached 117,746 visitors, compared with 51,365 in 2022, according to the latest statistics publicly posted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

Arrivals from the Middle East reached 506,928 guests, compared with 238,347 last year. *The Phuket News*

Government may expand 4am opening after trial

BANGKOK
Bangkok Post

The government is preparing to consider allowing bars, clubs and other entertainment venues in more areas to operate until 4am in an effort to stimulate the economy, according to Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

He made the comment after a late-night inspection of nightspots along Khao San Rd in Bangkok last Saturday (Dec 16), the second night in which bars and clubs along the famous tourist strip were allowed to open until 4am.

Additionally, bars and clubs in Phuket, Chon Buri, Chiang Mai and Koh Samui in Surat Thani, were also allowed to operate until 4am. Venues attached to registered hotels nationwide could also remain open until the same time.

The extended hours are being tested for a limited time, and an extension is possible if the trial proves to be a success, Anutin said.

“We are ready to support any initiative that will boost the economy,” he said.

“The longer hours mean more money in circulation and more jobs. This is our intention... but the hours must be subject to strict regulations.

“If it is under control and every party cooperates, we are ready to consider.”



The popular Khao San Road in Bangkok. Photo: Bangkok Post

He indicated how pub owners and customers behave during the trial period would be considered, and that the government will look at compliance with drink-driving rules in particular.

“Business operators have promised not to sell alcohol to those who are clearly drunk... There must be no narcotics and weapons at the venues, and there must be no patrons under the age of 20,” he said.

It has also been confirmed that places of entertainment will be allowed to remain open all night until 6am for the New Year celebrations on Jan 1.

Government spokesperson Traisuree Taisaranakul said on Dec 11 the temporary extension of the closing time was aimed at promoting tourism and New Year celebrations.

Meanwhile, Polathep Vichitkunakorn,

deputy director of the Centre for Alcohol Studies, said the government has not heeded calls to hold off on extending the operating hours.

This was despite the fact that numerous studies had found that incidences of sexual harassment, physical assault, fights and property damage tend to increase in hours when alcohol can be freely bought and consumed. The road toll could also increase if people were drinking longer.

“Before the end of the year, the government must show that traffic accidents have not risen since the operating hours were extended,” Dr Polathep said, adding the government must publish the results of the trial before making the 4am closing time permanent, notwithstanding its effort to boost the economy.



Tham Luang cave. Photo: Bangkok Post

‘Steep’ Tham Luang cave entry fee explained

CHIANG RAI

THE DEPARTMENT OF National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation has defended what has been criticised as a “steep” fee charged to visitors entering the deeper chambers of the world-famous Tham Luang cave complex in Chiang Rai.

The fee, at B950 per Thai citizen and B1,500 per foreign visitor, allows access to Chambers 2 and 3 of the cave and a glimpse of how the famous rescue mission for the 12 members of the “Wild Boar” football team and their coach, trapped in the cave for 18 days following a heavy downpour five years ago, was carried out.

Entry to Chamber 1, which is about 200 metres long, is free of charge but fees are being imposed on those venturing deeper into the

cave complex with groups of no more than 10 persons for the tour.

Accompanying each tour group will be park officials and two local guides.

The fees exclude the cost of renting protective gear to be worn by visitors, who must also take out life insurance and undergo a health check before entering the cave.

Each tour takes from two to four hours and up to two groups are accepted each day.

National parks department Director-General Attapon Charoenchansa said the prices were set after consultation with various experts who deemed the cave a valuable natural site.

Mr Attapon also explained that not all revenue from the fees would go to the agency’s coffers. The money would be paid to the guides, experts and officials who escort the visitors during the tour. Bangkok Post

Prinn dodges molestation charge

BANGKOK

THE CRIMINAL COURT on Dec 11 acquitted Prinn Panitchpakdi, a former deputy leader of the Democrat Party, in a case in which he was accused of committing an indecent act on a 17-year-old girl in 2018 due to the statute of limitations having expired.

According to the prosecution’s lawsuit, while travelling in a van on Apr 25, 2018, Mr Prinn was accused of holding the girl’s left hand while touching the girl’s thigh with his free hand.

He was charged with committing an indecent act against a minor aged over 15 but less than 18 years old and taking a minor away from her parents for an act of indecency.

The defendant denied the charges and was released on bail.

Following an examination of the evidence presented by the prosecution and defence, the court found the alleged offences took place in a private van fitted with



Prinn Panitchpakdi. Photo: Bangkok Post

curtains and dark films and there was a curtain between the driver’s and passenger compartments.

Therefore, what happened could not be seen by outsiders. Moreover, the statute of limitations in an indecency case is only three months. Since this case took place in 2018, it expired years ago.

As for the charge of taking a minor away from her parents, the court learned that the alleged offence had taken place while the defendant was taking the girl in a van from an office to a condominium.

When the girl asked Mr Prinn to drop her by

the side of the road so she could take an electric train, the defendant agreed to her request. So, there was no evidence to the charge the defendant taking a minor from her parents, the court ruled. The court acquitted him of all charges.

Mr Prinn has been indicted for numerous sexual offences against women.

In one, a court on Sept 29 sentenced him to four years in jail and ordered him to pay B2 million in damages after finding him guilty of sexually assaulting Hathairat “Anna” Vidhyaphum.

He was later released on bail. Bangkok Post

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NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA DINNER 7.30PM-12.30AM 31 DECEMBER 2023 AT SEAFARER POOL	SAILS DINNER BUFFET 6PM-11PM 31 DECEMBER 2023 AT SAILS RESTAURANT
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The Annual Report: Easy on the eye, easy on the pocket

French Marigolds.



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

All gardeners have heard of annuals, biennials and perennials: If pressed, they will tell you that annuals are plants that bloom only once, and will need to be re-planted or re-sown the following year. Biennials, on the other hand, generally flower the year after they have been installed and then give up the ghost, while perennials, in the right conditions, will come back year after year.

If the distinction is sometimes blurred in a tropical garden, it is because many flowering plants here do

not die back completely because the temperature never drops low enough to kill them off. For example, pelargoniums (geraniums), which in Europe are generally grown as annuals because they will not survive winter frosts without protection, enjoy an extended lifecycle in the subtropics and tropics. Nonetheless, general rules of thumb do apply, and most annuals in your Phuket garden will flower for only one season. So why bother with them? After all, shrubs will go on year after year, often with minimal maintenance.

There are plenty of good reasons. Annuals provide a brilliant range of colours, bloom more-or-less continuously during their solitary season, often possess both single and double forms, and generally flower at a manageable height where their striking hues can be fully

appreciated. Add to these virtues their easy cultivation and easy availability as packeted seed, and you have an irresistible case for growing them.

Annuals with a low habit include petunias, impatiens (busy Lizzies), alyssum, gazanias, gerberas, portulacas, pansies and lobelias. Taller plants include rudbeckias (black-eyed Susans), larkspurs, statice and cosmos daisies. Six-footers include sunflowers and hollyhocks. They are normally seen at the back of borders or ranged along a wall.

Personal favourites, because they invariably grow well in Phuket, are African marigolds (tagetes) and gomphrenas, a pretty and good-natured annual that thrives in both containers and in open ground. As with the best annuals, *gomphrena globosa*, also known as bachelor's button, produces its globular, tightly-packed flowers continuously, especially if you dead-head the old bracts. The standard colour is deep magenta, but there is also a russet-red cultivar which can be readily propagated from packeted seed. Since it hails from Central America, it is perfectly at home in a Thai garden.

It would be instructive to hear from readers of this column about gerberas. A spectacular member of the sunflower family, this tender annual can be found in containers in some garden centres, but less often in actual gardens. It is one of the most dazzling of all the daisies, with large flowers – pink, white, red or yellow – that may be as much as 12cm across, and with a striking centre that consists of hundreds of tightly packed florets. Sometimes this centre, or *capitulum*, is a contrasting black. Gerberas require full sun, mildly acidic soil for preference and regular watering in the dry season.

Although they belong to the same family of *asteraceae*, African marigolds are much less fussy about conditions. Moreover, *tagetes erecta* has a happy tendency to self-seed, so last year's crop often reappears, phoenix-like, in the form of seedlings. The large, densely petalled heads are usually chrome yellow or deep orange in colour, and are often used to provide a vivid border for flower beds. They are also one of the most popular components in garlands and leis.

The smaller French marigold has a neater habit and russet red flowers often tipped with yellow. Both have attractive, ferny leaves and both are said to deter certain root-eating critters such as nematodes. When crushed, the leaves exude a pleasant, musky odour. Packets of seeds are widely available, but you may be able to beg, borrow or steal some from a fellow gardener.



Portulacas.



Zinnias.

The zinnia is another annual that does well in Thailand. While it can grow in temperate climes – I used to cultivate them in England – it originates from Mexico and, like the other members of the aster family already alluded to, prefers the sunny climate of Thailand.

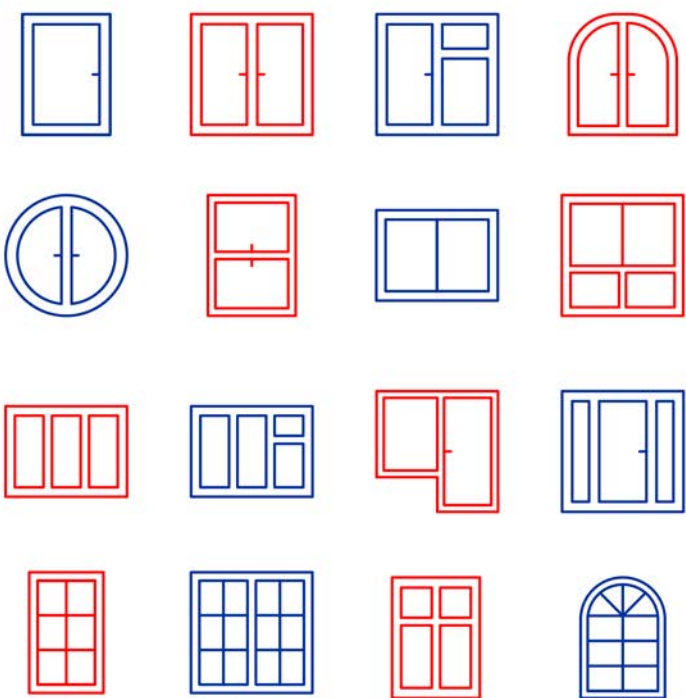
Zinnia elegans is one of the most colourful of plants. Apart from the varied shape of its blooms which range from densely petalled dome to daisy-like, the zinnia has a palette of colours matched by perhaps no other flower: white, yellow, pumpkin, orange, red, purple, lavender and even green. The flowers appear, characteristically, as single dramatic blooms at the end of long, hairy-leaved stems, and are much loved by butterflies. Some gardeners grow them expressly to encourage *lepidoptera*.

But they are a striking flower in their own right, easy to grow from seed, happy in a container, and, like African marigolds, apt to reappear as seedlings in the following year. Two observations: Though they grow in the wild in Central America, they appreciate a moist, humus-rich soil and plenty of sun. Otherwise they will be stunted and produce small flowers. Second, do not expect the re-seeded versions exactly to replicate the colours of their parents. They won't oblige.

Patrick Campbell's book 'The Tropic Gardener', described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, is available for B500 (half price) to personal callers from 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13 in Rawai (Tel: 076-613227 or 085-7827551).



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Campaign targets cervical cancer

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) has launched a 'Phuket Women's Empowerment' cervical cancer screening campaign that will continue through to Aug 12 next year.

The project was officially launched on Dec 7 at the old Provincial Hall on Narisorn Rd in Phuket Town, which now serves as offices for the PPAO.

The campaign technically began on Dec 5, and is promoted as being held "From Father's Day to Mother's Day" in honor of King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great.

Dr Yongyot Thamwut, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health and currently Acting Director-General of the Department of Medical Sciences chaired the opening of the project, which is named in full as "Uniting the Power of Phuket Women Cervical Cancer Screening From Father's Day to Mother's Day".

Agencies taking part in the project include the PPAO, National Health Security Office, Ministry of Health Region 11 branch, Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), Medical Science Center 11/1 Phuket, Vachira Phuket Hospital and MP Group (Thailand) Co Ltd.

"Cervical cancer is one of the major health problems for women around the



world, and screening is an important first step in preventing and treating this disease in a timely manner," Dr Yongyot said.

"In 2020, the National Health Security Office (NHSO) began a policy to provide cervical cancer screening services using HPV DNA testing. It is a national health insurance benefit. Thai female citizens aged 30-60 years are to be tested every five years to replace the pap smear or VIA test," he added.

"HPV DNA testing is highly accurate, rapid and able to identify HPV infection, and able to classify each strain of HPV at high risk of causing cervical cancer. Women can collect samples by themselves (HPV Self-Sampling), which is very efficient. By collecting a sample correctly more than 98% of the results are correct," he noted.

"The Department of Medical Sciences and the network of medical science centers throughout the country are conducting cervical cancer screening from self-collected samples of 14 different strains. The project has been designated as a driving project of the Department of Medical Sciences, targeting 1 million cases nationwide in fiscal year 2024.

"Surveillance and promotion of screening helps as early detection increases the chance of successful treatment. It costs less than treatment in the advanced stages. Having Thai women all healthy, free from cervical cancer, helps to strengthen public health care and promotes a driving force of Thailand's economy.

"Thai women aged 30-60 can inquire about screening details at Medical Science centers nationwide or at the

Subdistrict Health Promoting Hospital or hospital near their homes," he said.

PPAO President Rewat Areerob said that the campaign was in line with the PPAO's vision of a public health service system policy in line with the term "Healthy Cities" of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"There is a good healthcare system for the people and an appropriate medical care service system. In response to the 'Quick Win' policy of the Ministry of Public Health, by upgrading the system for surveillance, prevention and control of disease and health hazards to be modern and timely, therefore recognising the importance of women's health screening, especially in cervical cancer screening," he said.

"Our main goal is to increase awareness and promotion of cervical cancer self-screening. This is an important step in the prevention and timely treatment of this disease. The public's access to the public health system for cervical cancer screening can be increased with the cooperation of all sectors. We are confident we can create meaningful change and reduce incidence rates of cervical cancer in our province of Phuket," said PPHO Chief Dr Kusak Kukkiattikoon.

"Thai women aged 30-60 years in Phuket province can receive service at all Subdistrict Health Promoting Hospitals in the province, and at Vachira Phuket Hospital, Patong Hospital, Thalang Hospital and the Phuket Provincial Hospital," he added.

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POP QUIZ

1. What Xmas product did Sir Henry Cole produce in 1843?
2. In the Christmas film 'Gremlins', what did Billy name the mogwai given to him as a gift?
3. Which traditional Christmas vegetable is a cross between a cabbage and a turnip?
4. According to the song, what did my true love bring to me on the third day of Christmas?
5. Santa originally had only eight reindeer. Which reindeer was created – and added – in 1939?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

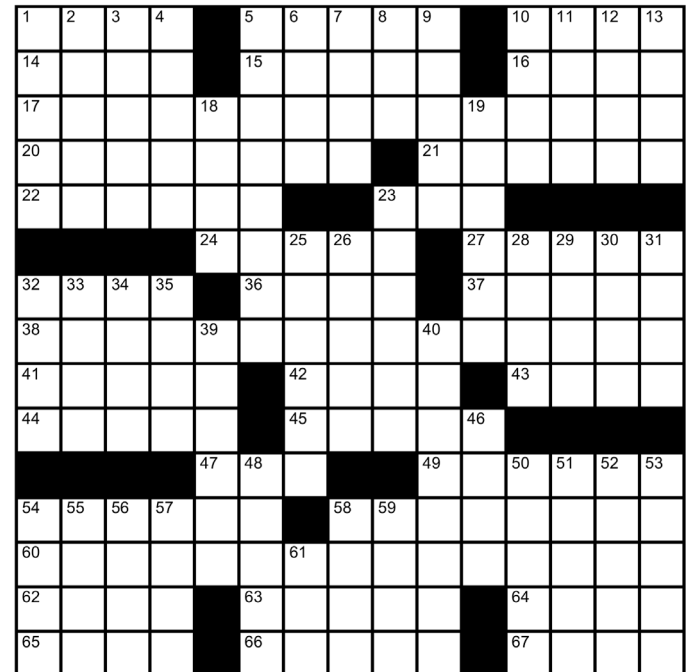
			9	5			
5	6		8	1		4	7
	8					6	
6			5	3			1
		7			4		
9			4	7			5
	3					5	
4	1		2	9		3	8
			7	6			

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Catalog card abbr.
 5. Inferior
 10. West Samoan monetary unit
 14. Canceled
 15. Perpendicular to the keel
 16. Petitions
 17. Federal government part
 20. Mosque towers
 21. Coarse
 22. Reindeer feature
 23. Bend
 24. Money in the bank, say
 27. Asian language branch
 32. Sail holder
 36. Cabbagelike vegetable
 37. Destitute
 38. Noncompetitive events
 41. Wavelike design
 42. Profligate
 43. Announce
 44. Messenger
 45. Fragrant oil
 47. Good name, for short
 49. Anglican cleric
 54. Plunder
 58. Zinc ____
- Down
1. Barium ____
 2. Poison
 3. Deal maker
 4. Nearby
 5. Participate in a summer sport
 6. Life preserver?
 7. Guns
 8. Freelancer's enc.
 9. Fire remnant
 10. Peter, for one
 11. Em, to Dorothy
 12. Poland's Walesa
 13. Gray
 18. Carbamide
 19. In a hurry
 23. Dined in a restaurant
 25. Small-time dictator
 26. "Four Quartets" poet
 28. Certain tide
 29. Audition tape
 30. March time
 31. Skin problem
 32. Same: Fr.
 33. Neural transmitter
 34. Switchblade
 35. Novice
 39. Mediterranean capital
 40. Turkey's locale
 46. Authentic
 48. Swelling
 50. It may be organized
 51. Electric dart shooter
 52. Cousin of a mink
 53. Breathers
 54. Computer list
 55. ____ of Evil
 56. Houston university
 57. Calls upon
 58. Just for men
 59. Josip Broz, familiarly
 61. ____'easter

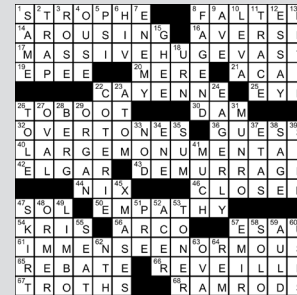
Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Rudolph (first appeared in a booklet by the Montgomery Ward department store)
2) Christmas cards; 3) Gizmo; 4) A swede; 5) Three French Hens;



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

3

days a year – Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter – are when Americans watch the least amount of pornography.

13

nanometers in size is still large enough to be detected by human touch.

15

minutes is how long it took Mariah Carey to write "All I Want For Christmas Is You", which has earned her US\$60 million in royalties.

923

words in the English language break the 'i before e' grammar rule and only 44 words actually abide by it.

237 billion

US dollars (more than B9.305 trillion) is expected to be spent by Americans through shopping this holiday season.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Rawai aglow. Photo by Brian Constable

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

This week in history

Dec 22, 1968

Cultural Revolution: People's Daily posted the instructions of Mao Zedong that "The intellectual youth must go to the country, and will be educated from living in rural poverty."

Dec 23, 2007

An agreement is made for the Kingdom of Nepal to be abolished and the country to become a federal republic with the Prime Minister becoming head of state.

Dec 24, 1826

The Egg nog Riot at the United States Military Academy West Point begins, involving more than one-third of the cadets by the time it ceased on Christmas morning; 20 of them were court-martialed.

Dec 25, 336

First documentary sign of Christmas celebration in Rome.

Dec 26, 1991

The Supreme Soviet of the



Mao Zedong featured on a Cultural Revolution propaganda poster.

Soviet Union meets and formally dissolves the Soviet Union, thus formally ending the Cold War since it began in 1947.

Dec 27, 1845

Ether anesthetic is used for childbirth for the first time by Dr Crawford Long in Jefferson, Georgia. His wife, Caroline nee Swain, was the grateful recipient.

Dec 28, 1768

King Taksin's coronation is achieved through conquest as King of Thailand and Thonburi is established as the capital.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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22 DEC



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25 DEC



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27 DEC



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FRI

19 JAN



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AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, AMCHAM, BCCT, Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber, CanCham Thailand, FTCC, GTCC, TICC, NTCC, Phuket Chamber and Thai-Swedish Chamber, invite you to join us for "Australia Day Phuket Sundowners" at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa,

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WED

31 JAN



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Phuket Chamber of Commerce will host the Phuket Jewelry Fair during 31 January to 4th of February 2024. Held at the Floresta Mini Convention Hall Central Phuket, visitors will enjoy the jewels and gems gallery by the leading Phuket brand jewelry, a Diamonds & Ruby Fashion Show, seminar from The Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand (G.I.T), plus free real gems verification by G.I.T. For more info please visit picphuket.com/phuketjewelryfair

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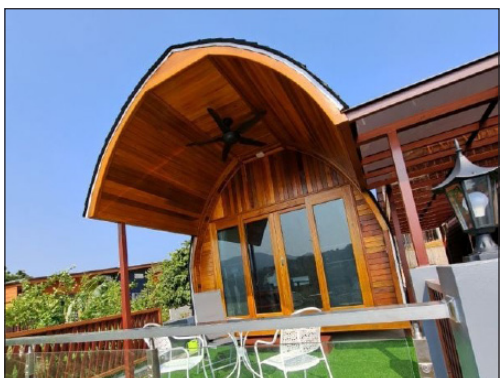
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KAN ENG @ PIER CELEBRATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Kan Eng @ Pier Restaurant celebrated its 50th anniversary on Dec 3 with a lavish dinner and entertainment. Opened for business in 1973, starting with a shop selling tea and dried fruit, sugar, rice, fish, shrimp paste, etc. People in the neighborhood regularly came to enjoy fish, delivered from the fishermen who caught the fish then grilled directly over smoldering coconut shells. Congratulations to K. Walley, her family and team, here's to another 50 years and beyond.



SKÅL INTERNATIONAL PHUKET DINNER - DECEMBER

As the year draws to a close, Skål International Phuket held its grand finale of 2023 on Dec 14 at The Distillery Phuket, Chalong Bay. It was a night of camaraderie, exquisite dining, and a touch of spirit at The Distillery Phuket. This exclusive event was tailor-made for hoteliers, tourism, and travel professionals. A fantastic opportunity to connect, collaborate, and celebrate in an atmosphere that perfectly mirrors the spirit of Skål International. To find out more visit - facebook.com/SkalPhuket

Russia says IOC ruling on athletes is 'mocking'

OLYMPICS

RUSSIA HAS CRITICISED the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for ruling that Russian athletes can only compete in Paris next year as neutral athletes and if they do not back fighting in Ukraine.

Olympic chiefs earlier this month gave the green light to the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes at next year's Games as neutrals, outside of team events and as long as they did not actively support Moscow's large-scale military intervention in Ukraine.

The IOC "announced their readiness to admit Russian and Belarusian athletes to the Paris Olympics, and then immediately mockingly announced how many of them had been admitted," Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) president Stanislav Pozdnyakov said at a press conference on Dec 15.

The IOC said there were currently only eight athletes from Russia and three from Belarus who had qualified as neutral athletes, adding



ROC offices in Moscow. Photo: AFP

none under contract with military or national security agencies would be allowed to compete.

It also said that no Russian and Belarusian flags or symbols would be displayed at the games.

"By inventing criteria and parameters that not only violate, but devalue the Olympic Charter, the IOC has launched a campaign that neutralises our athletes," Pozdnyakov said.

"And those few who managed to slip through are deprived of their national identity," he added.

He called on eligible athletes to "carefully examine" the participation conditions to avoid becoming "hostage to other interests."

More than 60 Ukrainian athletes have qualified for next year's Paris Olympics, the IOC said earlier this month. *AFP*

ONE Championship inks Sky Sports partnership

MMA

Bangkok Post

ONE Championship has announced an exclusive partnership with UK broadcast giant Sky Sports.

It is another coup for the Singapore-based promotion, which has significantly expanded its reach in 2023.

The partnership will start with ONE Fight Night 18: Superlek v Mahmoudi on Jan 18, 2024.

The Sky deal will see ONE events beamed into millions of homes across the UK and Ireland alongside major sporting events like the English Premier League, English Football League, Formula One, and other popular sports such as golf, cricket, tennis and rugby.

After announcing the deal on Dec 14, ONE chairman and CEO Chatri Sityodtong reflected on the milestone.

"For years, our UK fans have been clamouring for ONE to be broadcast on one of the region's major networks," he said.

"Today, I'm excited to announce a new partnership with Sky Sports, the premier broadcaster for live sports in the UK and one of the most well-known sports networks in the world.

"This deal marks an important milestone for the celebration of martial arts and the continued expansion of ONE Championship's global footprint."



ONE chairman Chatri Sityodtong. Photo: Bangkok Post

ONE has a significant roster of fighters from the region, and some of the top stars have welcomed the news.

Two-sport ONE world champion Jonathan "The General" Haggerty is one of the organisation's biggest draws, and he was quick to take to Instagram to express his delight.

"Wow! ONE Championship! Amazing work! The whole team really are making dreams come true. I am so excited to be showcasing my skills on such a massive platform," he wrote.

English superstar Liam "Hitman" Harrison is a Muay Thai pioneer in the UK who plies his trade at ONE.

He may be nearing the end of his time in the ring, but the 38-year-old believes he still has a few more battles in the tank for the promotion and its new British platform.

"I've been waiting my entire career for this," Harrison said.

"It's a shame it's coming at the back end of my career, but hopefully, I'll get a good year or two showcasing my skills on Sky Sports. It's also an incredible incentive for all the up-and-comers."

British Muay Thai star Ellis Badr Barbozais also looking forward to strutting his stuff on Sky Sports.

"Being part of ONE Championship just ahead of their collaboration with Sky Sports is beyond my wildest dreams," he said.

"Sky, the powerhouse sports network, holds a special place in the UK, my home country. It's truly surreal to witness Muay Thai reach this global stage, providing us fighters with a golden opportunity for genuine global recognition in the spotlight."



Stake were already visible as a sponsor on the Alfa Romeo (Sauber) car in 2023. Photo: AFP

Sauber F1 rebrands as Alfa Romeo departs

FORMULA ONE

THE DEPARTURE OF TITLE sponsor Alfa Romeo means the Sauber Formula One team will be rebranded 'Stake F1 Team Kick Sauber' in 2024, according to the official lists released by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) last Friday (Dec 15).

A rebrand was in order following the announcement last month that Alfa Romeo, early pioneers of F1 who came back into the sport in 2018, were once again pulling back.

The exact name for 2024 has yet to be decided by the Swiss team will carry the name of two of its sponsors already visible on the single-seater for the next

two seasons.

Stake is an Australian online casino and sports betting site while Kick is a video streaming service owned by the founders of Stake and boasting 22 million registered users since its launch last year.

"Sauber has always been about innovation, breaking the mould and defying convention," said Sauber Motorsport Team Representative Alessandro Alunni Bravi.

"The partnership with Kick.com is the latest and boldest display of the philosophy that drives us."

Zhou Guanyu and Valtteri Bottas will remain the team's two drivers next year and their cars will continue to be powered by Ferrari until the arrival of Audi in 2026. *AFP*

Guilt-free Jones takes Japan job

RUGBY

EDDIE JONES SAYS HE DOES not "feel any guilt at all" about becoming Japan's head coach, six weeks after he walked out on the Wallabies.

Jones quit his native Australia after leading them to a dismal showing at the Rugby World Cup, and repeatedly denied reports that he was set to take over in Japan.

Australian media had reported that the 63-year-old had interviewed for the job during the Wallabies' World Cup campaign in France.

Jones's appointment on Dec 13 sparked a furious reaction in the Southern Hemisphere, with former All Blacks great Sonny Bill Williams branding the coach "a disgrace".

Jones said he did not regret his actions, telling reporters "it sits well with me".

"I wish Australia all the best," he told a packed press conference in Tokyo.

"I feel terrible about the results, because I wanted to go back and change Australia. But I don't feel any guilt at all about this process."

Jones repeated his claim that he had not interviewed for the Japan job until December.

He said his online meeting with a recruitment company shortly before the World Cup was to "share my experiences of Japan".

Jones said "everyone is entitled



Eddie Jones does not 'feel any guilt at all' about becoming Japan's head coach after recently walking out on Australia. Photo: AFP

to their own opinion" but he did not feel the need to apologise to Australian fans.

"The only thing I can control is what I did, and it sits well with me - I don't have a problem with it," he said.

"If people feel like that, that's their judgement. I can't control that."

Jones quit the Wallabies after two wins from nine Tests since taking over in January, including a worst-ever World Cup performance where they failed to make it out of the pool phase.

His insistence on fast-tracking rookies at the expense of veterans badly backfired in high-pressure games, as did a revolving door of unproven captains.

Jones will officially begin his second stint in charge of Japan on Jan 1.

He previously coached them for three years from 2012 and led them to their historic win over South Africa at the 2015 World Cup.

Under Jones, Japan stunned South Africa 34-32 in a match that became known as the "Miracle of Brighton".

That was only Japan's second win at a World Cup, and they also went on to beat Samoa and the USA that year before exiting at the pool stage.

Elsewhere, Andy Farrell has signed a two-year contract extension too keep him as Ireland head coach until the end of the 2027 Rugby World Cup.

"Coaching Ireland has been a hugely enjoyable experience and I'm proud to extend my association with the Irish Rugby Football Union," Farrell, 48, said on Dec 14.

AFP

Gunners back on top as Liverpool left frustrated

FOOTBALL

AFP

Arsenal moved back to the top of the Premier League last Sunday (Dec 17) when they beat Brighton 2-0 and Liverpool were unable to overcome bitter rivals Manchester United.

Goals from Gabriel Jesus and Kai Havertz were enough to secure the win for the Gunners in a game they thoroughly dominated from start to finish.

At time of press, Arsenal have 39 points, one more than Liverpool who were left frustrated after a 0-0 with bitter rivals United at Anfield.

Jurgen Klopp's men dominated, hogging nearly 70% of possession and had 34 shots to United's six but they could not break down their stubborn opponents.

Flying under the radar, Unai Emery's Aston Villa are level with Liverpool on 38 points after a 2-1 win at Brentford on Sunday thanks to goals from Alex Moreno and Ollie Watkins, the latter scoring the winner against his



Arsenal's Kai Havertz celebrates his goal in the 2-0 win against Brighton last Sunday (Dec 17). Photo: AFP

former club.

Manchester City were cruising towards victory on Saturday against Crystal Palace before conceding two late goals.

Palace have been something of a bogey team for City boss Pep Guardiola since he arrived in England in 2016 – they are one of only three teams to have won at the Etihad more than once, along with Manchester United and Chelsea.

Goals from Jack Grealish and Rico Lewis put City in front and in total control before

Jean-Philippe Mateta pulled one back and Michael Olise lashed home a 95th minute penalty to make it 2-2 as boos rang around the Etihad at the final whistle.

City, who now head to the Club World Cup in Saudi Arabia, have won just one of their past six Premier League games and risk falling off the pace.

Elsewhere, Tottenham beat Nottingham Forest 2-0 and Chelsea defeated bottom club Sheffield United 2-0 to register just their third home league win of the season.

West Ham eased past Wolves 3-0 while Everton's fine recent form continued as they beat struggling Burnley 2-0 to lift themselves seven points clear of the relegation zone – just a month after they were docked 10 points for breaking financial rules.

The weekend's action was overshadowed by a shocking incident at Bournemouth, where Luton captain Tom Lockyer suffered a cardiac arrest.

The Wales international received medical treatment on the pitch before he was carried off to applause. The game was subsequently abandoned.

Luton confirmed Lockyer was responsive before being taken to hospital and was in a "stable" condition "with his family at his bedside." In an update on Sunday the club said he was undergoing tests and scans.

The 29-year-old had heart surgery after collapsing during Luton's Championship play-off final win against Coventry in late May and has made 15 appearances so far in all competitions this season.



Ishii confirmed as War Elephants coach

FOOTBALL

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND (FAT) confirmed Japan's Masatada Ishii as the new national team coach on Dec 12.

The duration of the contract and fee have not been revealed.

Ishii's first assignment will be an away friendly with his native Japan on Jan 1 in Tokyo.

This will be followed by the 2023 AFC Asian Cup finals in Qatar from Jan 12-Feb 10, 2024 and the second stage of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup against South Korea on Mar 21 and 26.

"I wish Masatada Ishii the best of luck and hope that he will bring success to the national team in the Asian Cup and World Cup qualifiers," said FAT president Pol Gen Somyot Poompunmuang.

After signing the contract, Ishii immediately had a meeting with Thai League officials to discuss ways to allow the national team players maximum possible time to train together ahead of their international assignments.

Ishii helped Kashima Antlers win the Luvan Cup in 2015, the J-League title and the Emperor Cup in 2016 and the Japanese Super Cup in 2017.

Under his supervision, Kashima Antlers also finished runners-up in the FIFA Club World Cup in 2016.

In 2019, he coached Samut Prakan City before moving to Buriram United with whom he won all three domestic titles (the Thai League 1, FA Cup and League Cup) twice in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 seasons.

Ishii takes over from Mano Polking who left the position on Nov 22. *Bangkok Post*

'More apples will fall' says LIV chief Norman after Rahm move

GOLF

LIV GOLF CHIEF EXECUTIVE GREG Norman says that Jon Rahm's move to the Saudi-backed circuit will "create a domino effect" of more high-profile players making the lucrative jump.

Reigning Masters champion Rahm joined LIV on Dec 7 in a deal worth hundreds of millions of dollars in a huge coup for the upstart tour.

LIV had already recruited major winners Brooks Koepka, Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Cameron Smith, but Rahm was arguably the biggest name yet to leave the PGA Tour.

Speaking from Saudi Arabia to the BBC's World Business Report on Dec 14, the Australian Norman – the public face of LIV – said there would be "more apples falling from the tree".

"To have Jon on board is critically important to our next steps into the future and what we want to do," Norman said.

"It will create a domino effect, there will be more apples falling from the tree, there's no question about it because LIV continues to grow and develop," he added.

Spain's Rahm had previously ruled out going to LIV, which held its inaugural season in 2022 and triggered a civil war in golf.

He is reportedly set to earn between \$300 million (B10.7 billion) and \$600 million.

"Since Jon signed, less than a week



Reigning Masters champion Jon Rahm. Photo: AFP

ago now, I know my phone is blowing up," Norman added.

"I know we probably have eight to 12 players who are very, very keen to sit down and talk to us about coming on board."

Saudi Arabia's foray into sport has triggered accusations that it is "sportswashing" its human rights record.

Norman, a two-time major winner, said that Saudi Arabia "really cares" about golf.

"If you see the way they're embracing the game of golf, they're investing in the game of golf in their country for their people into the future," he said.

Rahm's move came as the PGA Tour and the Saudi backers of LIV attempt to finalise the details of their bombshell merger announced in June.

A deadline of Dec 31 has been set to agree a framework for the new PGA-LIV joint venture. *AFP*



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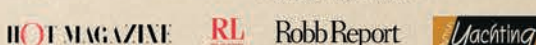
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