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PARTY TIME



Revellers enjoy the street party during the Phuket carnival at Patong last Friday (Dec 16). Photo: Phuket Info Center

PATONG LEADS THE WAY AS TOURISTS RETURN FOR 'HIGH SEASON'

The Phuket News
 editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket's tourism industry is enjoying the best return in the number of tourists to the island since before the COVID-19 pandemic began more than two years ago.

The annual parade making the start of the tourism 'high season' in Phuket brought a splash of colour and vivacity to the Patong beach road last Friday (Dec 16), a road that was

shrouded in darkness and eerily silent during the height of the pandemic.

Floats from major tourist attractions on the island, including the recently opened Carnival Magic and Andamanda Phuket, provided entertainment, with music, dancers and performers enthusing the crowd along the route.

The parade marked the start of the 'Phuket Carnival at Patong 2022' festival, with Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodrumam offici-

ating the formal opening ceremony.

The festival continued through to last Sunday night (Dec 18), featuring a tattoo contest on the beach, sexy jogging and running for exercise, fun on the beach, tie-dye making and fashion shows on the beach, symphony band performances, as well as various bands, concerts and entertainment from EDM [electronic dance music] DJs and spectacular night fireworks as well as food stalls and vendors selling many other products.

In overseeing the installation of the stages and other areas to be used during the festival, Patong Mayor Chalerm Sak Maneesri noted that this year marked the 36th year that the festival had been held.

As part of the festivities in Patong marking the official start of the tourism high season last Friday was the official full reopening of the Jungceylon shopping centre under the banner 'Welcome back Jungceylon'.

Phuket Vice Governor Anupap...

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Education is more than the right courses



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Messi finally gets his hands on the FIFA World Cup



Season's Greetings from

HeadStart
 International School, Phuket

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News



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Tourists return to the beaches

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...Rodkwan Yodrumam joined the festivities at the popular shopping mall, led by Prawit Janyasittikul, Chief Executive Officer of Phuket Square Co Ltd, which manages Jungceylon.

The reopening festivities included a stage performance titled 'The Flora Fairytale' and a mini-concert by singer 'Bow Melada Susri'.

"Over the years, it can be seen that no matter what problems Phuket faces, the people, the public sector and the private sector in the province have worked together overcome all obstacles, helping the provincial economy to recover quickly and continuously so things can begin to return to normal," Vice Governor Anupap said.

"This can be seen from the Amazing Thailand 10 Million Celebrations held recently on the occasion of the arrival of 10 millionth foreign tourist arrival to Thailand. It's a good sign that tourism in Thailand has returned to be an important mechanism for the country's economic and social development," he added.

Mr Prawit explained that the grand reopening of the mall marked only Phase 1 of the it's reopening to commerce in full.

"At the moment, we are ready to open the first phase of service, including shops in the Botanica zone on all three floors, shops in the Jungle zone on the first floor and shops around The Bay zone multi-purpose hall in the middle of the shopping centre," he said.



Tourists are starting to return to Patong Beach in numbers. Photo: Phuket Info Center

"The plan in the future will gradually open more stores inside the Jungle zone more and we will open for service in the basement area during January and the area on the second floor in February 2023. Stores in other zones are expected to undergo a major renovation and will be complete and we will be ready for full service throughout the whole shopping center by December 2023 for sure," he said.

Mr Prawit pointed out that his company had allocated a budget of more than B15 million for promotional activities and campaigns to announce Jungceylon as the 'Shop-

ping Destination in Patong'.

The current promotions to mark the reopening of the mall will see B1mn in gift vouchers and prizes to be given away from Dec 16 to Jan 1, he added.

CASHING IN

Phuket has emerged as the tourist destination raking in the highest earnings this year in Thailand, collecting at least B127 billion in tourism revenue in the first 10 months of 2022, said government spokeswoman Tipanan Sirichana.

According to Ms Tipanan, Chon Buri ranked second with B13bn

while Surat Thani placed third with B7bn in tourism income, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

Phuket also ranked first in terms of most foreign visitors, with nearly 2.4 million international tourists arriving on the island from January to October, followed by Chon Buri (975,026 visitors), and Surat Thani (606,812 visitors).

The poll showed that most tourists visiting Thailand this year came from Malaysia, India, Singapore, Laos and Vietnam, respectively.

"The country, led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, recently welcomed its 10 millionth foreign

visitor at Suvarnabhumi airport," said Ms Tipanan. "According to this online survey, people can sense our success from the Sandbox scheme as they see more tourists choosing Thailand as their [holiday] destination."

"The government has also put in place measures encouraging movie productions to use the country as one of their scouting locations. It has also implemented extension-of-stay measures for expats to assist with the recovery of tourism, similar to the Sandbox scheme," she said.

TAKING FLIGHT

At least 20mn people are expected to visit Thailand next year, according to Ms Tipanan.

In other news, Thailand's aviation industry has devised a survival strategy to support the country's rapidly reviving, and growing, tourism industry.

Suvadhana Sibunruang, the acting CEO of Thai Airways (THAI), said the airline plans to recruit at least 1,000 more ground staff to help improve passenger service times.

He said passengers should receive their luggage within 30 minutes over the New Year holiday.

Meanwhile, the international airport in Chiang Mai will welcome four new direct routes from three carriers next year, according to Natthawut Ta-inta, the airport's deputy director of operations, last Thursday (Dec 15).

Chiang Mai International Airport welcomed 21,000 to 23,000 passengers a day this year.

Chalong-Patong road hits 80% complete

THE DUAL CARRIAGEWAY under construction from Chalong to Patong is 80% complete, reports the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO).

The confirmation came through a brief report of PPAO President Rewat Areerob inspecting the site on Dec 13.

The purpose of Mr Rewat's visit was "to follow up on the operation and encourage the staff", said the report.

Joining Mr Rewat for the inspection was PPAO Deputy President Thiwat Seedokkub.

Machinery to "adjust the road area" was being brought to the site. "Drain-

age pipes and soil surface treatment are now being laid to prevent future slides," the report noted.

"The operation has progressed to 80%," the report concluded.

No other details were provided.

The report included the hashtag "#Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation takes care of the people."

The announcement broke the silence of more than a month since the most recent progress report on the completion of the road. The PPAO announced on Nov 12 that the project was 73% complete.

The construction of the road, some 3.5 kilometres long, was initially announced in October to be only a small

"temporary road" over the hills from behind the Klong Kata reservoir in Chalong (often referred to as "behind Luang Phu Supha Temple") to 50 Pi Rd in Patong.

The construction of the temporary road, announced in the aftermath of the landslide on Patong Hill on Oct 19, was expected to take only two weeks.

Of note, before the landslide on Patong Hill, repeated requests for decades to build the road from Chalong to Patong had been denied as it passes through protected forest.

However, just seven days after announcing that the road would be "temporary only", PPAO President Rewat on Oct 31 announced that an

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was already underway by the Department of Rural Roads to determine "the feasibility" of making the Chalong-Patong road permanent.

At that time, construction of the road had already cleared large swathes of areas to make way for a much larger road than the previously announced temporary version.

Plans for the expanded road included widening the road, creating large drainage ditches on either side "to prevent people from taking advantage of the new road either by illegal logging or illegal excavation", Mr Rewat said at the time.

The permanent road is to be 12 metres wide, and include



Photo: PPAO

bicycle lanes, he added.

Fences are to run along each side of the road to help prevent wildlife from straying onto the road. Small tunnels will be built to allow wildlife to cross from one side to the other without risking crossing the surface of the road, he said.

How much the project to build the expanded road will cost has never been revealed.

To date, a final date for the scheduled completion of the road has also not yet been revealed.

The Phuket News

Schools targeted in visa crackdown

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A total of 605 visas and permits to stay have been revoked as Phuket Immigration enforces its crackdown on foreigners abusing education visas as a way of staying in the country.

The revelation came at a press conference held on Dec 15, with Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong, Phuket immigration Chief Col Thanet Sukchai and Lt Col Ekachai Siri of the Phuket Tourist Police all in attendance to present the results of their efforts.

Also present for the report was Vladimir V. Sosnov, Consul General of the Russian Federation for Phuket.

Col Thanet led the presentation, explaining that the crackdown was a proactive measure under the 'Phuket Crime - Free' campaign "for the peace of the people".

From Dec 1-15, Phuket immigration had enforced six arrests and levied 117 fines for overstay. Eight landlords and hotel managers had faced action for not reporting foreigners staying at their accommodations, Col Thanet reported.

From inspections related to those cases, one foreigner was charged with working



Photo: PR Phuket

illegally, in breach of the visa conditions for permitting stay in the country, he added.

Tourist Police, targeting foreigners working as tour guides or travel agents, reported arresting foreigners related to three cases for working without a work permit or working beyond their right to do so.

However, the key concern was an "influential mafia gang" attempting to hide on the island by requesting to stay as students enrolled at private schools, Col Thanet explained.

There are currently 28 private schools registered on the island, Col Thanet said.

During the COVID-19 travel shutdown, each school was required to report their location, details of the students enrolled and the maximum number of students each school could accommodate, he added.

"We confirmed that Phuket does not have an overflowing

student situation, and there 605 cases of visa refusals and cancellations," he said.

Mr Sosnov, Consul of the Russian Federation Phuket Province, confirmed that "there are currently no influential people in Phuket", noted an official report of the press conference.

Col Thanet said many foreigners had been duped by visa agents fraudulently offering visa extension services. Officers had taken action in 15 "cases", with 11 cases processed by Muang Phuket Police, two cases processed by Patong Police and two cases processed by Chalong Police.

The names of the visa agents caught fraudulently offering to provide visa extension services, and the penalties they faced, were not reported.

Col Thanet noted that Phuket Immigration had set up a service point to help foreigners caught out by the visa agents' actions.



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Police nab Chinese woman for overstaying 1,316 days

POLICE HAVE TRACKED DOWN and charged a Chinese woman in Phuket for illegally staying in the country for more than three years.

Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong, Commander of the Phuket Provincial Police, ordered officers to take action after a post on TikTok by "Noom_Boriphan" warned people of the Chinese woman repeatedly soliciting money from people by saying she needed the money to pay for petrol.

The post showed images of the woman, later identified by police as Fan Yang, 47, repeatedly approaching people to ask for, and receiving money, from good-natured people. The images were captured at the PTT petrol station on the bypass road.

The woman told her victims that she would repay the money later through her online banking transfer.

Officers tracked the woman to The Trees Club Resort Phuket in Moo 5, Kamala, where she was staying, reported Phuket Provincial Police.

After checking her passport, officers confirmed that Fan had overstayed by 1,316 days. She was taken to Kamala Police Sta-



tion and charged with illegally staying in the country, police confirmed.

Under the 'Good guys in, Bad guys out' policy brought into effect in 2016, which immigration officers have recently started vigilantly reinforcing, foreigners caught and arrested for overstay of more than one year face a fine of B500 a day overstay, up to a maximum of B20,000 – and face deportation and being blacklisted from re-entering the country for 10 years.

In their report, police made no mention of action against the resort where she was staying for having a foreign guest who was illegally staying in the country.

The Phuket News

The Phuket News

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Accidents spur urgent call for blood

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Rewat Areerob, President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO), has made an urgent call for foreigners to donate blood following a slew of road accidents in Phuket involving foreigners.

There is currently a "Massive shortage of Rh Negative Blood" on the island, Mr Rewat noted in a notice posted online last Friday (Dec 16).

Despite continuing and ongoing blood-donation drives organised by the Phuket Red Cross, Rh negative is not overly common among Asian peoples, including Thais.

The dwindling number of donations of Rh negative blood leaves the much-needed blood type in short supply when the number of foreigners, including tourists, need blood during hospital treatment begins to rise.

"The shortage of Rh negative blood is due to the increasing number of foreigners who suffer from accidents in Phuket", Mr Rewat noted in his appeal. "We would like to invite all foreign residents and expats to donate blood," he said.



The remains of a motorbike that was struck by an 18-wheeled truck near Wat Chalong last Friday night (Dec 16). The 50-year-old woman rider was killed in the impact. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

To aid the drive for donations of Rh negative blood, Immigration officers together with Vachira Phuket Hospital, the main government hospital on the island, were to hold a special blood donation drive at the Central Floresta shopping mall on Dec 22.

Mr Rewat's appeal for blood donations followed several accidents reported to *The Phuket News*, but not reported by any officials on the island. According to the national Thailand Road Safety Committee (ThaiRSC), as of last Saturday (Dec 17) Phuket had already suffered eight road deaths this month. At that time 103 people had

died on Phuket's roads this year, with a further 16,365 injured. By Monday, that figures held at 103 deaths but with 16,503 injured.

The appeal came before a 50-year-old woman was crushed under the wheels of an 18-wheeled truck and truck near Wat Chalong last Friday night (Dec 16).

It also came before the driver of a six-wheeled delivery truck from Phang Nga fell asleep at the wheel and struck a power pole. The truck spun out of control and hit several support poles at the front of a local resident's house opposite Wat Srisoonthorn,

Moo 5, Srisoonthorn, at 4:35am last Friday. The driver escaped with an injured hand.

However, the appeal did come after five people were injured when a pickup slid out of control in front of Kathu Wittaya School on Wichit Songkran Rd, Kathu, at 4.30pm on Dec 15. The pickup spun and rolled across a median strip and into the oncoming lane, where it was struck by another pickup travelling in the opposite direction. All five were rushed to hospital.

Both drivers were unable to give police statements at the scene. At last report police said they were still investigating the accident.

Vachira Phuket Hospital will hold a blood donation clinic at the PEA Thalang office from midday to 6pm on Dec 27. The Phuket Red Cross will hold blood donation drives at – Dec 26: Chermg Talay OrBorTor (10am-3pm), Robinson Lifestyle (Heroines Monument (10am-6pm); Dec 27: Central Festival (12pm-6pm), Porto de Phuket (2pm-6pm); Dec 28: Lotus Extra Samkong (12pm-6pm), HomePro Village Chalong (12pm-4pm).

Additional reporting by
Eakkapop Thongtub

Bangla nightlife drug tests continue

EIGHTY-FIVE STAFFERS at nightlife venues on Bangla Rd, Patong, all tested negative for drug use during a "random" sweep for drugs on Dec 13, report Phuket officials.

The tests were conducted at three venues, which remained unnamed by officials.

The tests, called "random" by officials, were carried out by personnel from the Kathu branch of the Volunteer Defense Corps (OrSor), under orders from Kathu District Chief Siwat Rawangkul.

The ongoing "random" drug testing of people who work on Bangla Rd, which began last month, are conducted without prior notice as part of the 'War on Drugs', said an official report of the drug tests.

The target groups singled out for mandatory drug tests are those in "occupations that are characterised by risk groups", the report noted.

Such people "strictly must not be involved in drugs, according to government policies", the report added.

According to state news agency NNT, the government has ordered the beefing up of safety and security measures for tourists as the number of foreign visitors to Thailand continues to climb.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Deputy Government Spokesperson Traisuree Taisaranakul last week reported that Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha had urged relevant agencies and tour operators to enhance security measures at all locations and ensure public health and safety.

The spokesperson further noted that ensuring the safety of both Thai and foreign tourists during the high season is crucial to maintaining their confidence in traveling in the kingdom.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) celebrated Thailand welcoming its 10 millionth international tourist arrival on Dec 10.

According to Ministry of Tourism and Sports data, the tally – far below a peak of nearly 40 million tourist arrivals in 2019 – improved significantly from 6.7mn registered in 2021. *The Phuket News*

Russians assaulted in armed extortion, robbed of US\$45k in cash, crypto

TWO RUSSIANS WORKING with the virtual currency Cryptus team in Phuket have been attacked and robbed of US\$20,000 in cash and a crypto wallet reported to be carrying US\$25,000 in cryptocurrency.

The attack occurred in Soi Chermg Talay 16 at about 1am on Dec 11, noted the report to police.

The report, received by Capt Yanapat Malai, deputy inspector at Chermg Talay Police, was submitted at 5:52pm that day.

The report confirmed the amounts stolen, and that both victims said they did not know the assailants.

The copy of the police report presented to *The Phuket News* had obscured the names of the two people attacked, but confirmed they were both Russian nationals.

A medical report by MISSION Hospital Phuket issued on Sunday (Dec 11) confirmed that one of the two people attacked was 27 years old and had suffered bruises and abrasions in the attack.

News of the attack and armed extortion became public after "Leo | Cryptus", introducing himself as co-creator of the virtual currency Cryptus, on Monday (Dec 12) posted in Russian language on the web platform Telegram.

"Leo" urged people to help pub-



licise news of the attack.

"Now my team and I live in Phuket. An armed robbery took place 2 days ago, kidnapping my partners. At this stage, we have written a statement to the police and passed on information about the gunman and the alleged organiser of the abduction," Leo wrote.

The attackers were Russian speakers, he confirmed.

"Kidnappers of my partners threatened with guns and knives, tied hands," Leo reported. "As a result, \$25,000 was stolen by extortion."

"We are now preparing a press release for the media with a detailed account of the situation, a recording of the conversation with the gunman and photographs of the [damage done by the] beatings," Leo continued.

The complaint filed with police marked that the victims asked police to pursue their investigation to the full extent of the law. *The Phuket News*

Phuket joins prayers for Princess Bajrakitiyabha

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Governor Narong Woon-ciew joined a prayer ceremony on Dec 16 for the recovery of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendiradebyavati, the daughter of His Majesty the King.

The prayer ceremony at Wat Charoen Samanakit (Wat Lang San), near Toh Sae Hill in Phuket Town, began at 6:30pm.

Joining the mass were leading Phuket officials, business people and members of the public, along with Vice Admiral Apakorn Youkongkaew, Commander of the Third Area Command of the Royal Thai Navy, based at Cape Panwa.

Mass prayers in Phuket for Princess Bajrakitiyabha's recovery began at Wat Mongkol Nimit, on Thepkasattri Rd on the north side of Phuket Town, earlier that day, at 5:30pm.

The mass prayers were led by Phra Metta Phirom, Abbot of Wat Mongkol Nimit and the senior abbot for Phuket Province.

Joining the prayers at Wat Mongkol Nimit were Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan and other leading provincial figures.

Prayers for Princess Bajrakitiyabha continued to be held across Phuket through the week.

Large groups of people and organisations nationwide have been praying for



Photo: PR Phuket

blessings and sending their best wishes for the recovery of Princess Bajrakitiyabha, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

Princess Bajrakitiyabha was admitted to King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok after passing out because of a heart problem, the Royal Household Bureau announced on Dec 15.

The princess had passed out due to heart problems while training her pet dogs in Nakhon Ratchasima on Wednesday, the Royal Household Bureau explained.

Princess Bajrakitiyabha, 44, was taking part in the Thailand Working Dog Championship sponsored by the Royal Thai Army, at the Military Working Dogs Battalion in Pak Chong district of the northeastern province.

After receiving first aid, the princess was transported by helicopter to King

Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok for treatment.

The Department of Religious Affairs on Friday organised prayers and told religious organisations to conduct similar ceremonies to pray for the princess's good health.

The Royal Household Bureau has also invited people to send their best wishes online for the good health of the princess through wellwishes.royaloffice.th.

Their Majesties the King and Queen visited the princess at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital last Friday. Large crowds of people were on hand to greet Their Majesties there.

Dignitaries and members of the public have been turning up in large numbers to offer their best wishes for the princess's recovery.



Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn will visit Phuket from Dec 28 - Jan 2. Photo: PRD

HRH Sirindhorn to arrive for New Year

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS Maha Chakri Sirindhorn will visit Phuket from Dec 28 - Jan 2 to officiate the foundation stone laying ceremony for a new 'Thai Marine Life Museum' at Cape Panwa in honour of His Majesty the King.

The ceremony will be held at the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) Research Center for the Upper Andaman Coast on Wednesday, Dec 28, Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan announced on Dec 15.

The ceremony will begin at 4pm, he said.

Speaking at a meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall, Vice Governor Amnuay called on the heads of all government offices, agencies, police and military installations on the

island to prepare for the royal visit.

"All agencies will perform their duties with prudence, with an emphasis on maximum security, and we ask all local administrative organisations [OrBorTor and municipalities] to focus on maintaining cleanliness in all areas.

"They are also to ensure decorations and the Royal standard are orderly, beautiful and honorable along the way that HRH Princess Sirindhorn will pass," Vice Governor Amnuay said.

HRH Princess Sirindhorn was last in Phuket in 2019 to formally dedicate a new building at the Srinagarindra the Princess Mother School, Phuket, located near Saphan Hin. *The Phuket News*

Phuket Red Cross receives B1.5mn in fundraising push

THE PHUKET CHAPTER of the Red Cross Society of Thailand has received donations totalling B1.5 million ahead of its annual fundraising fair, to be held at Saphan Hin from Dec 28 - Jan 5.

The donations were received at a mass presentation ceremony at the old Phuket Provincial Hall last Thursday (Dec 15). Some 30-odd individuals, businesses, local organisations and community groups made separate donations ranging from B5,000 to B310,000, with two donors pledging the donation of a motorbike each.

The annual fair, for years now in Phuket called the 'Dee Phuket Fair', will feature all the attractions of a large-scale Thai-style fair, with live music and cultural performances each night along with hundreds of vendors selling local food and other products.

A key traditional attraction for the fair are the lucky draw prizes that are raffled



Photo: PR Phuket

off to raise funds for community outreach and support projects conducted by the Phuket Red Cross throughout the year.

The lucky draws in years past have included major prizes such as a B2.29 million townhouse, cars and motorbikes, and small gold ingots.

At time of press, details

about the fundraising activities and any raffles to be held at the fair this year had yet to be announced.

The funds raised are used to carry out local Red Cross community projects across the island and to support flood and drought disaster victims elsewhere in Thailand.

The Phuket News



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'Gold Wing' big bike riders bring B14mn tourism boost

MORE THAN 200 HONDA Gold wing riders from 12 countries last Saturday (Dec 17) brought to an end a three-day event in Phuket that raised some B14 million for the island.

The big bike enthusiasts hailed from Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, China, Hong Kong, Sweden, Italy and the United States.

The three-day, two-night "Wingers Camaraderie Ride 2022" event held Dec 16-18 concluded with a dinner at Boat Lagoon Resort in Koh Kaew.

Newly installed Phuket Vice Governor Danai Sunantarod presided over the event.

Mr Danai previously served with the Office of the Inspector General, working as Chief Inspector General at the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning (DPT). He replaces previous Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong, who now serves as Inspector General at the Office of the Permanent Secretary.



Photo: PR Phuket

Joining the event, Rachadaporn Oin, Director of the Phuket office of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, and Thiwat Seedobub, Deputy president of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO).

The aim of the event was to highlight the attraction of big bike road trips through the provinces along the Andaman coast, especially what has been designated the "Andaman Romantic Route", noted an official report of the event.

"The event promotes tourism for groups of people who love to ride big bikes to experience natural routes, traditions and cultures, as well as open up new perspectives and experiences, a new dimension of tourism," the report said.

The Phuket News

Grab banking on Phuket tuk-tuks in the new year

Bangkok Post

Super-app Grab has launched 'GrabTukTuk' service in Phuket, aiming to capture tourists flocking to the southern island following the country's reopening.

Some 100 tuk-tuk drivers are expected to join the platform to provide the service in early 2023, said Grab Thailand.

Ride-hailing or mobility service is one of three businesses Grab is focusing on in Thailand. The others are delivery of food, groceries or express services and financial services.

Its mobility service received stronger footing after the Department of Land Transport granted a ride-hailing operator licence to Grab in September.

"After inbound travel restrictions were eased, we have seen positive signals from the recovery of the tourism industry," said Worachat Luxkanalode, country head of Grab Thailand.

Thailand has attracted more than 10 million foreign arrivals this year, with Phuket among the top tourist destinations.

"Ride-hailing apps are one of the preferred travel options among foreign tourists, as they offer convenience and safety standards," said Mr Worachat.

"Grab's mobility service can support not only Phuket's tourism sector, but also the province's economy by offering income opportunities for local



Phuket tuk-tuk drivers stand at the ready. Photo: Grab Thailand

communities."

Phuket has long faced complaints about overpriced taxi charges.

"As a leading platform, Grab is committed to raising the bar for ride-hailing services in Phuket, in terms of service quality, reasonable price and safety," he said.

"We have encouraged public transport service providers, such as tuk-tuk drivers, to use the Grab app as another channel to reach passengers and increase income opportunities."

According to Mr Worachat, Grab also worked with government agencies and

partners to organise a string of activities to ensure efficient preparation for the service launch, building confidence among Grab drivers with a goal of improving service standards to create favourable impressions and travel experiences for foreign tourists.

NOTE: As of June 13 this year, JustGrab (operated by GrabTaxi), is allowed to pick up and drop off passengers in only two areas in Phuket: 1) Phuket Town, 2) Patong-Karon.

JustGrab drivers in Phuket are not allowed to pick up or drop off passengers anywhere outside of the two zones.

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT
Phuket Town

New Year's Eve

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Search on for missing crew after naval vessel sinks

**PRACHUAP
KHIRI KHAN**

AFP

Rescuers in helicopters scoured the Gulf of Thailand on Tuesday (Dec 20) for dozens of sailors who went missing when their naval vessel sank, hoping life jackets had helped them survive two nights in the choppy waters.

Seventy-six sailors from the HTMS *Sukhothai* were hauled from the sea after the vessel went down late Sunday in the Gulf of Thailand, roughly 22 miles off the southeastern coast.

Thai warship the HTMS *Kraburi* left port to resume the search early Tuesday, scanning the turbulent waters for 31 missing sailors alongside other naval vessels and two Seahawk helicopters.

Efforts to find the missing crew were focused on aerial searches, with the Royal Thai airforce assisting the operation.

HTMS *Kraburi* commander Kraiwit Kornraweepapitch said slightly improved weather would help the search.



HTMS *Sukhothai* lies on its side before sinking last Sunday night (Dec 18). Photo: Royal Thai Navy

"The format of searching is still the same, which is a joint operation with helicopters," he said.

His ship and 176-strong crew will join the HTMS *Angthong*, HTMS *Naresuan* and HTMS *Bhumibol Adulyadej* in scanning an area roughly 30 miles by 30 miles stretching from Prachuap Khiri Khan to upper Chumphon.

"Now, we are just surveilling the situation using the helicopter," naval diver Prawit Gongnak said at the pier in Prachuap Khiri Khan town. Prawit, who was moni-

toring the bright if blustery weather conditions, said he was among 29 divers on standby. "We haven't been commanded to dive yet," he added.

Sahachart Limcharoenphakdee, a member of the National Institute for Emergency Medicine, said they were working with naval personnel to help those plucked from the waters.

Late Monday, naval commander Pichai Lorchusakul told reporters that they remained focused on finding survivors.

"Our main priority is searching [for] and rescuing as many as we can," he said, adding that this was the "first time" that the Thai navy had lost a ship this way.

ELECTRICAL FAULT

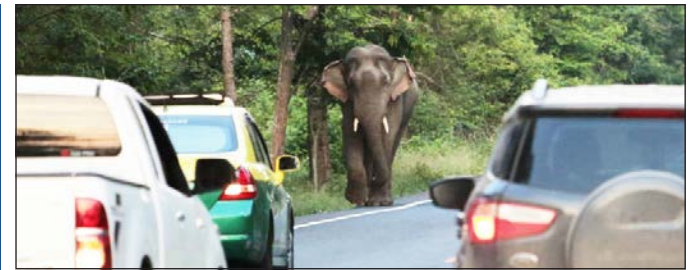
The vessel – a corvette, the smallest type of military warship – is believed to have run into trouble after its electronics system was damaged, according to the navy.

"The ship's operating systems stopped working, causing the ship to lose control," a spokesperson said.

Parts of southern Thailand have been hit by storms and flooding in recent days.

A warning from the Thai meteorological office remained in place on Tuesday, with strong winds causing rough conditions in the Gulf of Thailand, cautioning seafarers to proceed with caution and small boats to stay ashore.

The HTMS *Sukhothai* was commissioned in 1987 and built in the United States by the now-defunct Tacoma Boatbuilding Company, according to the US Naval Institute.



A wild elephant crosses a road through the Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary. Photo: Wichan Charoenkiatpakul

Hungry wild elephants 'knock' on villagers' doors

BANGKOK

VILLAGERS IN A PRACHIN Buri community awoke to the sounds of wild elephants knocking on their doors and rooting in their gardens early last Saturday (Dec 17), likely due to hunger.

Residents of Nong Pradu Moo 7 village reported that some elephants from the Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary in the neighbouring province of Chachoengsao had found their way into their community and "knocked" on the doors of three homes between 1am and 2am.

They said the elephants were likely searching for food as there have been recent reports of the animals crossing into Prachin Buri forests to find sustenance after their sanctuary was hit by drought.

The large mammals re-

mained in the village for several hours, according to the residents who said they were too terrified to leave their homes.

Chamras Sroichampa, a 58-year-old resident, said he was alerted to the elephants by his barking dog around 1am. Looking out his window, he saw a large creature in the darkness feeding from his banana trees. Inspecting his garden after the pachyderms moved on, he found they had eaten a considerable number of bananas and potatoes.

Two more residents reported similar experiences, with the elephants looking for food in their gardens.

Village elders have cautioned the residents against venturing too far from their homes, as trackers have been dispatched to locate the elephants.

Bangkok Post

Night venue hours 'won't be extended'

BANGKOK

PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER ANUTIN Charnvirakul moved to assure concerned civic groups on Monday (Dec 19), saying the ministry is firmly opposed to the proposal that would see the opening hours of night entertainment venues extended by two hours.

Anutin gave his assurances to about 50 representatives of various civic groups who came to Government House to thank the ministry for prioritising the public's health and safety as the debate on extending the operating hours of bars and clubs across the country continues.

He said the ministry is against unrestricted access to alcohol, adding all senior public health officials share the concerns of temperance advocates that the longer opening hours will encourage binge drinking and drunk driving, which will in turn, drive up road accidents.

"Please be assured that public health officials are with [the civic groups] on the issue, and they will stand by this policy when I leave office," he said.

While it will help generate income for businesses, the public health minister said extending the operating hours of night entertainment venues is not a sustainable way of stimulating the economy before urging businesses to find an approach which won't harm public health.

At present, bars, clubs and other entertainment venues are allowed to operate



Revellers on Khao San Road, Bangkok. Photo: Wichan Charoenkiatpakul

only until 2am. Businesses located in areas popular with foreign tourists have been calling on the government to allow them to stay open until 4am – a push that is also backed by the Tourism and Sports Ministry.

The push, however, has been slammed by various temperance advocates, as well as government agencies – most recently, the Alcoholic Beverage Control Committee, which rejected the proposal citing the potential increase in road accidents due to increased alcohol consumption.

The committee said after reviewing all possible impacts on health, society, and the economy, it suggested against extending the period of alcohol sales.

The proposal was set to be reviewed by the National Alcoholic Beverage Policy Committee headed by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha yesterday (Dec 22).

Bangkok Post



*Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!*



Consider the Casuarina



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

When it comes to tropical trees, the mangrove is top of the pops for environmentalists. Rightly so. It not only protects all our silt-laden and sandy coastlines from erosion, it is a nursery for a pullulating array of marine life.

The fry of 170 species of fish seek sanctuary in its labyrinthine root systems, protected from all the predators that view them as a tasty snack. Able to survive and thrive in low-oxygen, saturated conditions, mangrove swamps are crucial to our planet's well-being: significant carbon sinks, they sequester carbon and water-borne pollutants at a much higher rate than terrestrial forests.

In short, mangroves are indispensable.

But the casuarina, rarely given prominence in ecological dispatches, is also important in the ongoing struggle to preserve our natural heritage. You might be forgiven for asking: What on earth is a casuarina? To give it its full botanical name – *casuarinas equisetifolia* – it is a tropical conifer, a cone-bearing, single-bole, evergreen tree which grows to 100 feet or more (over 30 metres).

Its name derives from the perceived similarity between its grey-green, needle-like foliage and the plumage of the cassowary bird (*kasuari* in Malay). While it is a small genus, consisting of 17 species, it is found everywhere in Southern Asia – from India to Australia.

That the casuarina is so important is because it is one of the very few tropical trees that can thrive in the inhospitable environment of the ocean littoral, sharing with the stilt pine and sea almond, the ability to grow



Towering casuarina trees adorn the park at Nai Harn Lake. Photo: Patrick Campbell

– and grow rapidly – in hot, sandy, salt laden soil. Its serpentine roots snake out in all directions, often visible like giant ribs, but so extensively grounded that the tree will withstand the buffeting of waves and tempests.

In the aftermath of the tsunami of 2004, when billions of tons of water crashed into Phuket's shores, reducing the beachside scene to a breaker's yard, those roots still clung tenaciously to life. Today, the trees line the upper slopes of most sea-side areas, sometimes self-sown, often planted by local communities, both a wind-break and protection against nature's excesses, and a source of shade and verdancy in an otherwise hostile environment.

Happily, the local Thai population is still aware of their value. A few years ago, a plan was hatched to create a movie museum at a prime location in Phuket. The selected site was a world-renowned beach, set in a sweeping bay and backed by maybe 400m of mature casuarinas. Had the decision to build gone ahead, many trees would have been sacrificed to Mammon. Instead, there were local protests, letters to the press, and many of the tree trunks were garlanded with swatches of orange material. The project never went ahead. *Vox populi...*

Is there a downside? Yes, as is so often the case: if the species is introduced to new and perhaps unsuitable habitats. Because of its adaptability and rapid growth, it will compete aggressively with other plants and trees. It requires little moisture at its roots. Moreover, the discarded needles, in the form of leaf litter, contain chemicals which act as a herbicide and suppress the germination and growth of understorey plants. Beneath the grove of casuarinas at Nai Harn Beach in Phuket, there is little or no vegetation.

Having said that, and left to its own devices in its proper environment, the tree has massive value. Indeed, it is being increasingly employed in local contexts, both as an addition to highways (where it will require regular pruning) or as a pleasant addition to open spaces. Near my house is a large plot, once neglected, but now planted with casuarinas. Three years on, they have flourished mightily; now graceful trees 25-feet tall, they dominate the area. I am not sure if the landowner intended an aesthetic resolution, or planted the casuarinas as a way of avoiding land tax. Either way, the result is pleasing and positive.

There is one further benefit for the horticulturalists among you. Casuarinas, like the entire family of legumes (peas, beans, cassias, etc.) produce root nodules. These 'fix' nitrogen in the soil, a key nutrient often in short supply. So their presence can actually contribute to soil fertility. Not that I recommend growing casuarinas in your average-sized garden; they would take over the place in no time...

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



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AT KRUA TALAD YAI

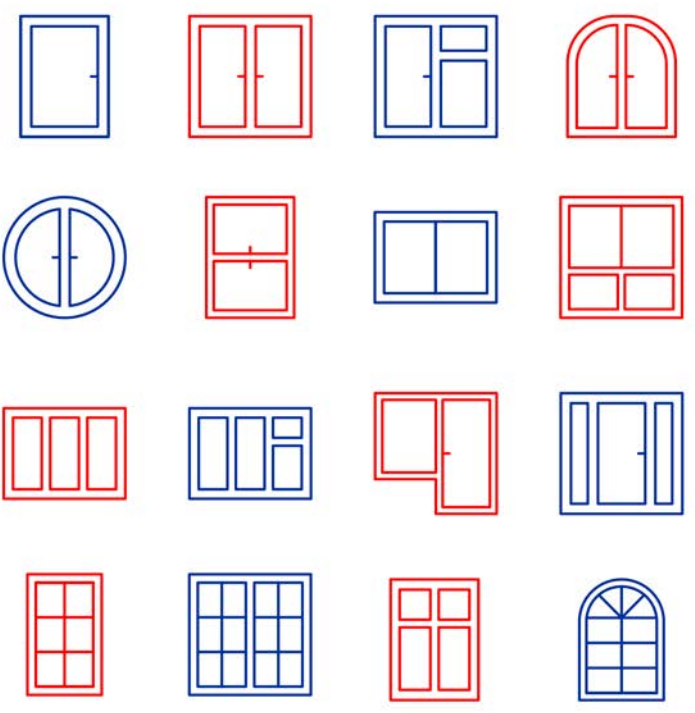
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A celebration of learning

The role of leisure activities in student recruitment, success

ON CAMPUS

Dr Richard L. Carhart

In retrospect, and irrespective of any assignment or job title, it seems I've spent my entire career in international education, as I learned early on that what is commonly called comprehensive internationalism in academe is really an integral component of any dynamic and proactive educational environment.

Integrating a global perspective into the teaching, research and service missions of higher education is critical to the viability of the institution and to the core learning it provides its students. The presence of international students on campus facilitates the exchange of people and ideas while serving to enrich the overall learning environment in which we all participate.

Choice of College or University

Factors that typically influence a student's choice of a college or university include the perceived reputation/academic quality of the institution, the international dynamic of the institution, the availability of the desired programme of study, the individual student's potential for success and job placement, the availability of extracurricular and recreational opportunities (including sports, leisure and athletic facilities, student clubs, etc), and the overall affordability of the institution.

There are also a variety of outside influences which affect a student's choice. These include the perspective of parents, the advice of close friends and peer influence, school location and the perceived quality of teaching.



Photo: Pexels

The factors influencing a student's choice are remarkably similar for international students, with the addition of distance from the student's home country and the perceived safety of the institution, differing only in priority of importance. For international students, the recommendation of close friends, overall cost and transportation expenses, the availability of recreational/leisure activities on campus or nearby, and institutional reputation typically impact the choice of a college or university.

Student Satisfaction

The factors influencing student satisfaction are many and diverse, including campus climate/campus life, the availability/accessibility of co-curricular leisure activities, support services available on campus, the quality of academic advice, the approachability of faculty members, the perceived quality of instruction, and campus security and safety.

Often overlooked in the many empirical studies of university student satisfaction is the importance of the environment in which the institution is located. The rigours, demands, and stress inherent in university study bespeak a complementary and supportive environment that is designed to provide opportunities for students to relax, engage in recreational activities and find enjoyment outside of the classroom. The research in this area is overwhelmingly conclusive – an environment that includes these components positively correlated with student satisfaction, student persistence, academic completion and overall student success.

A Celebration of Learning

A lot of the accepted research on student satisfaction, student recruitment, student retention (and yes, student attrition) was based on the late Dr Ernest Boyer's book 'College: The Undergraduate Experience in America'. He often said that our colleges and universities should emulate what he called a celebratory environment... which he concluded would do much to positively impact both college satisfaction and student success.

In this context, I often wondered where it is written that university studies (and student learning) should be onerous, difficult and even at times painful? Perhaps a good litmus test of how well we are doing is directly related to whether students are benefitting, and yes, enjoying, our efforts on their behalf both in the classroom and in the extra-curricular recreational opportunities we provide for them.

This article was featured in 'The Phuket Collegiate Magazine', the university magazine published by Milla Budiarto at PSU Phuket. For more information, visit <https://www.phuket.psu.ac.th/en/magazine> or email milla.budiarto@gmail.com.



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POP QUIZ

1. The plant 'Russian thistle' is better known by cowboys as what?
2. Which Turkish city has the name of a cartoon superhero?
3. What is the national animal of China?
4. Which is the noisiest city in the world?
5. What is the name of the desert area in Mexico?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Legal prefix
5. Hospital directive
9. Gaelic language
13. "I'm working ___!"
14. Bikini, for one
15. Indian bread
16. Vegas robbers?
19. "Go, hounds!"
20. Aries or Taurus
21. ___ particle
22. Extol
24. Greenhouse gas
26. 50 Cent piece
29. Remnant
31. Rural sight
32. Category of arachnids
34. Line up
36. Schmaltz
39. Driving maneuvers
43. Drop the ball
44. Suit
45. Former prime minister
46. G8 member
48. Wild ox
50. Myrna of "The Thin Man"
51. River to the Atlantic
55. Commoner
57. Detachable container

58. Same: Fr.

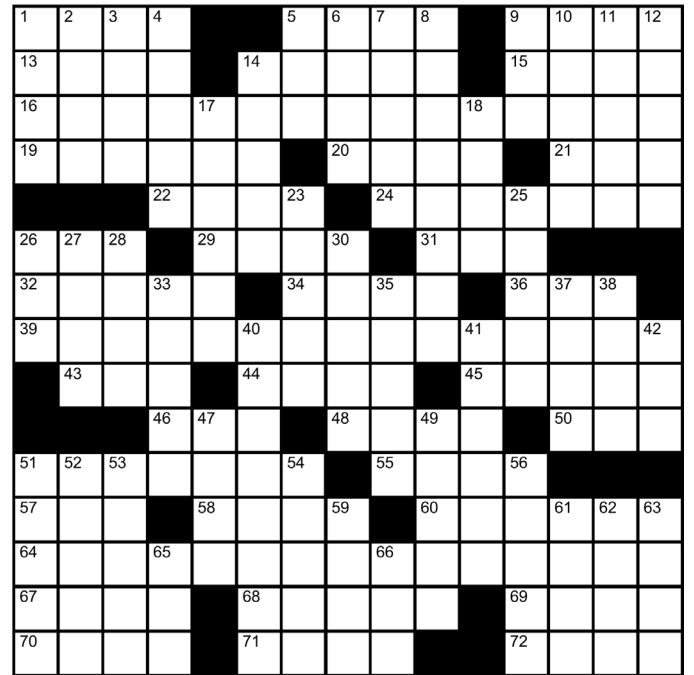
60. Sartre novel
64. Moving company
67. Indolent
68. Film company sans studio, informally
69. "Frasier" actress Gilpin
70. Dermatologist's concern
71. Brush against
72. Flabbergast

Down

1. "Fiddlesticks!"
2. Magnani of "The Rose Tattoo"
3. Cambodian money
4. Ever
5. Took the cake, say
6. Fountain order
7. Vinyl collectible
8. Blood component
9. Maze goal
10. New Delhi salad
11. "Paradise Lost" character
12. Follow
14. French romance
17. Amp hauler
18. Do, say
23. Dry out, informally
25. Court site, with "The"
26. Blackguard
27. Pain
28. Henry VIII's last wife
30. "Holberg Suite" composer
33. Summer TV offering
35. Open, as a bottle
37. Kind of agreement
38. "I'm ___ your tricks!"
40. Dove
41. Menace
42. Diffident
47. A portion
49. Arm bones
51. Kind of nerve
52. Obstreperous
53. Some reality show winners
54. Mideasterner
56. Eructations
59. Bounds
61. Cooking fat
62. Alternative to nude
63. Analogous
65. Bumped into
66. Bad-mouth

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Tumbleweeds; 2) Batman; 3) Giant panda; 4) Dhaka, Bangladesh; 5) Sonora



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

7

is the world record for stacking M&M'S one on top of another, achieved by Ibrahim Sadeq In April 2022. He used four greens, two browns and a red.

900

AD is when the oldest still-functioning pub – Sean's Bar, in Westmeath, Ireland – opened.

1911

is when a baseball team of death-row prisoners had their executions delayed if they kept winning.

10,000

dollars is what Mike Tyson offered a zookeeper in the 1980s to let him punch a gorilla he believed was bullying other primates.

38 trillion

bacterial cells are in the human body, about the same number as human body cells. Their combined weight is about seven ounces (198.4 grammes).

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



The coffee tree, Karon Beach. Photo by Giulio Sterchele

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

This week in history

December 23, 1954

In an operation lasting 5½ half hours, J. Hartwell Harrison and Joseph Murray perform the first successful kidney transplant on identical twins Richard and Ronald Herrick.

December 24, 1914

World War I: The 'Christmas truce' begins. Widespread unofficial ceasefires are held along the Western Front.

December 25, 336

First documentary sign of Christmas celebration in Rome.

December 26, 2004

The 9.1–9.3 Mw Indian Ocean earthquake shakes northern Sumatra with a maximum Mercalli intensity of IX (Violent). One of the largest observed tsunamis follows, affecting the coastal areas of Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Indo-



Image: *Illustrated London News*

nesia; death toll is estimated at 227,898.

December 27, 1949

The Netherlands officially recognises Indonesian independence officially marking the

End of the Dutch East Indies.

December 28, 1768

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

December 29, 1997

Hong Kong begins to kill all the city's 1.25 million chickens to stop the spread of a potentially deadly influenza strain after four citizens infected die.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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Christmas SERVICE SCHEDULE		
16 24 DECEMBER 05:00 AM Srimang Galt (Miss De Gault)	24 DECEMBER 08:30 PM Presentation: A Christmas Story 09:00 PM Christmas Eve Mass	25 DECEMBER 09:00 AM Christmas Day Mass 10:30 AM Presentation: A Christmas Story 11:00 AM Christmas Day Mass

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All welcome to attend the following - Dec 16 - 24 - 5am - Simang Gabi; Dec 24 - 8:30am - Presentation: A Christmas Story, 9am - Christmas Eve Mass; Dec 25 - 9am Christmas Day Mass, 10:30am - Presentation: A Christmas Story, 11am - Christmas Day Mass. damian@electrical-marine.com. St Joseph Church Phuket.

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UFE PHUKET MONTHLY NETWORKING EVENT - DECEMBER 2023

The last meeting of the year for the French-speaking community group UFE Phuket was held on Tuesday December 13 at the Pickleball Phuket Club in Kathu. Everyone was welcome, even non-French-speaking guests, for a casual networking event. UFE Phuket is a non-profit organisation. UFE members can participate in social and charitable events, dinners or events and get to know a network of French business people in Phuket.



SKAL PHUKET - DECEMBER NETWORKING EVENT

Skal International Phuket enjoyed its final dinner of 2022 at Club Med at Kata Beach on December 15. Guests at the all "all white" attire evening enjoyed traditional spectacular Club Med entertainment and cuisine. Club Med GM Vincent David announced a major refurbishment of the resort next year. AA Insurance Brokers sponsored the Skala event.



THE 7TH KATA ROCKS SUPERYACHT RENDEZVOUS (KRSR) & POKER RUN

The 007 James Bond Party was a fitting highlight to a fantastic few days both on the water and at Kata Rocks and Carpe Diem Beach Club. A distinct level of friendly 'Miami Vice' vibes is always part of the Poker Run with the focus on a day of fun out on the water. The event concluded with a relaxed BBQ at Kata Rocks and presentation of the trophy to the winner, "Noh Rules". Richard Pope, CEO of Kata Rocks said, "Despite some difficult sea conditions, the KRSR and Poker Run have once again proved to be a fantastic few days of partying on and off the water. We'd very much like to thank all our sponsors who helped make it such an enjoyable few days for all involved."



HILTON GARDEN INN CELEBRATES ONE YEAR

The 17th of December marked the first anniversary of Hilton Garden Inn Phuket Bang Tao, and to commemorate the occasion guests were invited to attend the celebration on the rooftop of the hotel. Guests enjoyed entertainment from a saxophone player and a contemporary dance show, accompanied by drinks and canapes.



Dechawat. Photo: AFP

O'Sullivan hails Thailand's 'Mr Bean' snooker star

SNOOKER

WORLD NUMBER ONE Ronnie O'Sullivan described Dechawat Poomjaeng as snooker's "Mr Bean" after defeating the Thai player at the English Open on Dec 14.

World No. 130 Dechawat, returning to the professional arena after a five-year absence, saw a two-frame lead eaten up by seven-time world champion O'Sullivan to lose 4-2.

However, the 44-year-old Thai did enough to leave an impression on the Englishman who likened him to Rowan Atkinson's famous TV character. "I thought there was no point just trying to play straightforward snooker, let's just have a laugh," O'Sullivan, who made a break of 104 in the penultimate frame, told wst.tv afterwards.

"I went for some doubles and trebles, some of them went

in, crazy things can happen when you go for it.

"He's like a Mr Bean type character, he pulls these funny faces and his mannerisms – he should go into comedy, he'd be a great character."

O'Sullivan was then defeated 4-1 on Dec 15 by compatriot Martin Gould. "He played great, he played too good for me. Nothing I could do today," said a gracious O'Sullivan in defeat.

The championship has been overshadowed after seven Chinese players were banned as the result of a probe into match-fixing.

Lu Ning, Li Hang, Zhao Jianbo, Bai Langning, Chang Bingyu and 2021 Masters champion Yan Bingtao were all banned on Dec 12.

A seventh player, Liang Wenbo, was suspended in October pending a "domestic misconduct" investigation.

AFP

Phuket to host Mini X Games tournament

X GAMES

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket hosts a Mini X Games tournament tomorrow (Dec 24) where youngsters will compete across three sports for a total prize pot of B35,000.

Taking place at Limelight Avenue shopping Mall in Phuket Town, participants will contest in Balance Bike, Inline Speed Roller Skating and Skateboarding.

Starting at 1pm on level two of the mall, the Balance Bike competition will be split into five separate age groups for male and female competitors, ranging from two to seven years of age. The top four finishers in each category will receive a trophy with B1,000 going to the winner, B800 to second, B500 to third and B400 to fourth. All entrants will receive an official certificate marking their participation.

The Inline Skating and Skateboard competitions will run from 4-7pm in the mall's carpark, otherwise known as the flea market area. Both disciplines will be judged on highest jump achieved and best tricks performed, with the skateboarding also incorporating a specific game based on minimal mistakes made.

Allocated prize money in both disciplines is to be B2,000 for the winner,



B1,500 for second and B1,000 for third. There was no mention of age limitation from the official information shared by the organisers.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew will preside over the opening ceremony on level two of the Limelight Avenue mall and also distribute prizes once all competition is concluded.

In organising the event the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports Office has joined with the Sports Authority of Thailand, the Phuket Tourist Association, the Sports Association of Phuket, Limelight Avenue Phuket, K Park Phuket and the Phuket X-Treme Club.

The event is being held under the 'One Province One Sport' initiative driven by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to help promote sports tourism and boost

the local economy in Phuket which was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the event strives to encourage youngsters to become active and engage in sports to promote a healthier lifestyle. Organisers explained in a pre-event press release that all three sports can be enjoyed either indoors or outdoors and are all fun for children to engage in, hoping that others can be encouraged to participate in future.

There will be stalls at the event offering sporting goods and refreshments, a performance from the South Timez Dance Academy and a concert from the winning band from the Advice Music Contest held in October.

Further information is available from the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports Office on 076-217-054.

LIV Golf announces Spain, Singapore, Mexico events

GOLF

THE SAUDI-BACKED LIV Golf series has announced three new venues for their 14-event tour for 2023 with tournaments in Mexico, Singapore and Spain.

The circuit, which completed its first season in October, will play at Mayakoba's El Camaleon Golf Course in February, Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore in April and Real Club Valderrama in Spain in June.

LIV Golf, bankrolled by oil-rich Saudi's giant Public Investment Fund (PIF) had already announced that it would hold an event in Adelaide, Australia in April.

"These venues have played host to signature moments in golf, and we're excited to build new traditions for the sport while delivering a first-class fan experience at some of the world's best courses," LIV Golf CEO and Commissioner Greg Norman said in a statement.



Greg Norman. Photo: AFP

Golf has been bitterly divided after LIV lured major winners including Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, Brooks Koepka and Cameron Smith to sign lucrative deals with the heavily financed tour.

The circuit features 54-hole no-cut tournaments with fields of 48 strokeplay competitors, who can also earn prize money as part of teams.

The US PGA Tour has banned more than 30 players who have teed off in LIV tournaments, a move that prompted 11 players to file an anti-trust lawsuit against the PGA Tour in August.

In September, the PGA Tour filed a countersuit against LIV Golf, accusing it of interfering with its contracts with players and several other lawsuits under way. AFP

Thousands join 25th Kathu Half Marathon

RUNNING

APPROXIMATELY 3,000 runners from more than 15 countries took part in the 25th Kathu Half Marathon on Dec 11, competing for over 390 trophies and an overall prize pot of B80,000.

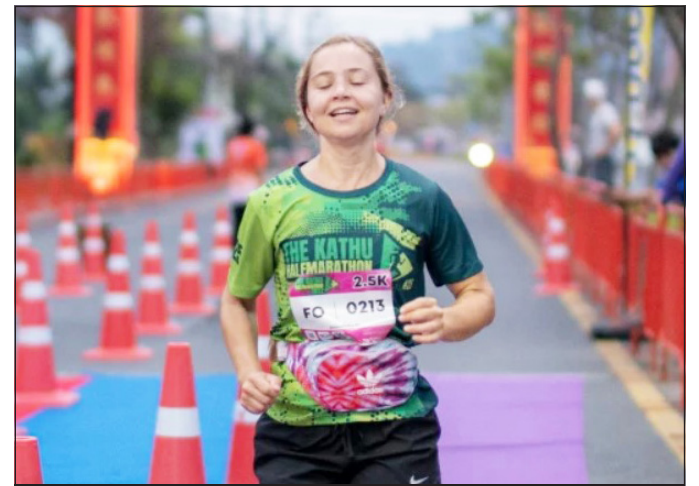
Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan presided over the opening ceremony for the anniversary competition, joined by Kathu Mayor Chai-anan Suthikul and other VIP guests from all sectors.

The various races over the course of the morning included a 2.5-kilometre health walk open to all ages, a 6km fun run, a 10km mini marathon and a 21km half marathon.

Winners of the 6km, 10km and 21km races in different age groups were awarded with cash prizes and trophies for their effort. There was also a special reward for any former race winner who was able to break his or her previous personal best record.

To emphasise the inclusivity of running organisers also gave away special prizes for the youngest and oldest winning runners and awards for those participating in fancy dress.

Overall winners of the



Runners of all ages participated. Photo: Kathu Municipality

21km race among men were Mud Chaison, Erik Bohm and Anuwat Bunmak. Best, with Sabine Claudia Egger-Weickhardt, Emma Marsh and Wandee Kruas finishing in the top three in the women's category.

The top three male runners in the 10km race were Nattapong Buachay, Kittiku Lankhantod and Ratchaphon Daengudom, with Anong Piriya-phrut, Thimakorn Ratchasang and Siriyaporn Kamlai the top finishers among the female participants.

In the 6km competition the top three male runners were Ratthanant Lamanee, Narongrit Phumphuag and Tanawat Simvised; Aksara-

phak Sengraksa, Porntipa Mulikbutr and Chiara Jessica Egger ended as the top female ranked athletes.

Mayor Chai-anan pointed out before the event that Kathu is an area perfectly suited to running competitions, including world-class events, which can attract top athletes from all around the world. Kathu is ready to welcome them all, he said.

The marathon was also aimed at uniting the local community, encouraging a healthier lifestyle for all, promoting sports tourism and rejuvenising the local economy still recovering from the impact of COVID-19.

The Phuket News

Premier League resumes after World Cup break

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

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With the Qatar 2022 World Cup now concluded attention turns back to the domestic football world as the Premier League season resumes on Monday (Dec 26).

Never before has there been such a protracted mid-season break and observers are curious how players, teams and managers will respond to the uncustomary pause in play.

Players returning from World Cup duty will have little time to reflect as they are thrown back into the blood and thunder pressure cooker of English football's top flight, with the likes Tottenham's Hugo Lloris and Manchester United's Raphael Varane, both beaten finalists with France, eager to move on from their disappointment.

Conversely, three teams welcome back World Cup winners after Tottenham's Cristian Romero, Aston Villa's Emiliano Martinez and Brighton's



Man City's Erling Haaland is rested and raring to go. Photo: AFP

Alexis Mac Allister were all instrumental in Argentina's campaign, culminating in triumph last Sunday (Dec 18).

For those not involved with their countries, the break has served as a sort of unconventional pre-season and many will be champing at the bit for the resumption of play. Chief among this group will be Manchester City's superstar striker Erling Haaland who demonstrated in just 14 league games exactly what a talent he is. No doubt opposition teams will be wary

of what is to come from the Norwegian after a period of rest and integrated training.

Haaland and his teammates will be looking to claw back the five-point deficit on leaders Arsenal as they chase a third successive championship. The Gunners performed remarkably well up until the break, losing only once and demonstrating that they have the capabilities to deliver a first title since 2003-04. However, the World Cup robbed them of a key component as their striker Gabriel Jesus sustained

an injury with Brazil and is expected to be absent for another two months – don't be surprised if the Gunners enter the transfer market for a replacement once the window opens on Jan 1.

Manchester United will resume their campaign without the services of Cristiano Ronaldo after his outspoken comments lambasting the hierarchy and management saw his contract terminated on the eve of the World Cup. Currently in fifth place, Erik Ten Haag's team will be looking to put aside all distractions as they chase a top-four finish.

Likewise Liverpool, a place behind their northwest rivals, and with a fully rested and focused Mohamed Salah looking to help drive his team forward.

It is tight at the bottom with the likes of Wolves, Nottingham Forest, Southampton and Everton all eager to restart on the right note to help pull away from the relegation trap door.

The Premier League season resumes at 7:30pm Phuket time on Monday as Brentford host Tottenham.



Southgate: Staying put. Photo: AFP

Southgate to stay on as England manager

FOOTBALL

GARETH SOUTHGATE WILL remain as England manager despite the crushing disappointment of their quarter-final exit at the World Cup, the English Football Association confirmed last Sunday (Dec 18).

The 52-year-old said after the defeat to defending champions France in Qatar on Dec 10 that he would take his time before making a decision over his future.

But he is now set to stay at the helm until after the 2024 European Championship.

"We are delighted to confirm that Gareth Southgate is continuing as England manager and will lead our Euro 2024 campaign," said FA chief executive Mark Bullingham.

"Gareth and [assistant coach] Steve Holland have

always had our full support and our planning for the Euros starts now."

England have not won a major trophy since their World Cup victory in 1966 but under Southgate they reached the semi-finals of the 2018 tournament and the final of last year's European Championship. His current deal runs until December 2024.

England's latest bid to end their long wait for a major trophy ended in a defeat to France, who went on to reach the final against Argentina.

Harry Kane blazed over from the penalty spot when handed a chance to equalise late in the game, having earlier scored from the spot.

England's first Euro 2024 qualifier is against Italy on Mar 23. Ukraine, North Macedonia and Malta are also in the same group.

AFP

England's new rugby boss Borthwick wants to revive Twickenham 'roar'

RUGBY

STEVE BORTHWICK VOWED TO GET Twickenham "roaring" after being appointed head coach of the England rugby team on Monday (Dec 19) with just nine months to revive their flagging fortunes until the 2023 World Cup.

Former England captain Borthwick, previously in charge of Premiership champions Leicester, succeeded veteran coach Eddie Jones who was sacked following England's worst year of results since 2008, with only five wins from 12 games.

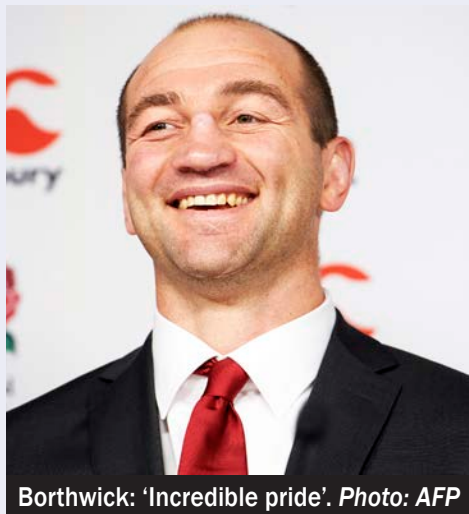
"To be appointed to this role fills me with incredible pride and I'm honoured to take on this job," Borthwick, told the Twickenham news conference.

"Now I know that pride will count for nothing if we don't deliver," added Borthwick, who spent five years as an England assistant coach under Jones.

Borthwick said he wanted the team to reconnect with their fans after Jones' last match in charge, a 27-13 defeat to world champions South Africa, ended with England booed off the pitch at Twickenham.

"The stadium has changed a bit," said the 43-year-old Borthwick, who made his Test debut in 2001. "But from that day the thing that will always stick in my mind is as you stepped outside the tunnel, the noise that hits you in this stadium."

Borthwick's first game is the Six Nations



Borthwick: 'Incredible pride'. Photo: AFP

opener against Scotland at Twickenham on Feb 4.

"It's not very long before we play Scotland here and when this team walks out of that tunnel, I want to hear that roar louder than ever," he said.

"Our job as a team, my job as a coach in helping prepare that team, is to give our supporters plenty to roar about. We have a lot of work to do, but first and foremost we have to be brilliant at the basics come that first game in 47 days' time."

Borthwick, who played as a lock for Bath and Saracens and won 57 caps for England, said he spoke to coaching mentor Jones last week, adding: "I'm grateful for everything Eddie has done throughout my coaching career to support me."

AFP



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Sport

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England Rugby confirm new coach > p15

MAGIC MESSI



Talisman leads Argentina to glory in dramatic World Cup Final

Lionel Messi (centre) celebrates with teammates as he lifts the World Cup trophy after Argentina's penalty shootout win against France last Sunday (Dec 18). Photo: AFP

FOOTBALL

AFP

Lionel Messi led Argentina to World Cup glory by scoring twice against France in one of the all-time great finals last Sunday (Dec 18) with the South Americans holding their nerve to triumph in a penalty shootout.

Messi finally crowned his record-breaking career by claiming football's biggest prize with a performance that will go down in World Cup history, scoring a first-half penalty and netting again in extra time.

France had fought back from 2-0 down in the last 10 minutes as Kylian Mbappe scored twice to equalise and

force extra time in a pulsating match watched by an 89,000 crowd in Lusail Stadium.

Messi seemed to have decided the match in extra time with his second goal of the game before his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Mbappe completed only the second World Cup final hat-trick to bring the score to 3-3 and force penalties.

Gonzalo Montiel swept home the decisive spot kick to win the shootout 4-2 for Argentina – but this was Messi's moment.

He had tasted bitter defeat in the 2014 final against Germany but in his fifth and final World Cup, the 35-year-old finally emulated Argentina idol Diego Maradona by leading his nation to World Cup glory for the first time since

Maradona's victory in Mexico City in 1986.

Tens of thousands of blue and white-shirted Argentina fans rose to salute Messi as he told them "we're champions of the world!" on the stadium microphone.

Later he told Argentine television: "Obviously I wanted to finish my career with this. I can't ask for any more."

"My career is coming to end because these are my final years. What more could there be after this?"

But he said he would continue with the Argentina squad. "I want to keep experiencing a few more matches as world champion," he added.

MERCURIAL

FIFA will be delighted with a pulsating final that capped

one of the most controversial World Cups in history, with the Qatari organisers having to face persistent questions about the country's treatment of migrant workers and its laws on homosexuality.

Neutrals will be happy that Messi has finally won a World Cup. However, with his hat-trick – and the Golden Boot for top scorer at the tournament with eight goals – Mbappe surely showed he is ready to inherit the mantle of the world's best player.

Argentina, now three-time world champions, dominated the first half of the final as Messi scored a 23rd minute penalty after Ousmane Dembele tripped Angel Di Maria.

The mercurial Messi was then part of a superb move that led to Di Maria sweeping

home Argentina's second goal after 36 minutes.

They appeared to be cruising to a straightforward victory as France, who had battled a virus in their camp in the past few days, were completely overrun.

But the defending champions finally got back into the game in the second half as Randal Kolo Muani was dragged down by Nicolas Otamendi in the penalty area and Mbappe converted from the spot with only 10 minutes left.

A minute later, Mbappe scored a superb volley to bring France level.

In extra time, Messi forced a diving save from French keeper Hugo Lloris in the final minutes and Lautaro Martinez could have put Argentina ahead but Dayot Upamecano

superbly intervened to snuff out the danger.

Messi knocked in the rebound when Lloris parried Martinez's saved shot in the 108th minute to give Argentina the lead once again.

But when Mbappe's shot hit Montiel's outstretched arm, the referee pointed to the penalty spot to the Argentinians' disgust and Mbappe stroked it home to become the first player to score a World Cup hat-trick since England's Geoff Hurst in 1966.

A superb match went to penalties and Montiel scored the decisive spot kick to win the shootout 4-2.

Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, who saved Kingsley Coman's attempt in the shootout, said the victory was "destiny".

Aussie Rules Football returns to Phuket shores

AFL

AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL (AFL) made a welcome return to the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang on Dec 10 after a couple of years in the COVID wilderness.

The Thailand Tigers brought down a talented line-up from Bangkok to contest the 2022 Pacific Health Insurance AFL Andaman Cup against the Phuket Power.

Phuket got first hands on the footy all day thanks to 2-metre-tall half-Thai, half-giant Eric who was

outstanding in his first game of AFL, winning many ruck taps and getting the ball moving forward for the Power.

The speed and polish of the younger Tigers saw them hold a 3-goal lead at quarter time, with Jeff Hills and J-Mac kicking majors for the Tigers. At the other end, 16-year-old Alex Dupont nearly kicked the opening goal for the Power and evergreen forward pocket's Kevin Mansfield and Peter Jones were unlucky not to join the goal kicking list.

Pez, Manny, Cicco and Gunny

continued to outrun the local players and drive the Tigers forward in the second term and Kade Robertson competed hard in the back half for the Power.

Local Muay Thai coach Sandz Kittisak deflected a number of Tigers attacks in his first game of AFL, with Matt Stenning finding space but failing to capitalise before Matthew Sandery finally found the big sticks just before half-time.

The Power fought back in the third quarter as Matthew Sandery went into the middle and found plenty of the ball, with 'Muppet'

kicking two quick goals and Craig Morgan adding another with a great individual effort.

Both teams found plenty of space in the last quarter and the Power kept coming until the final siren but couldn't overcome the Tigers as the trophy headed north after a final score of Thailand Tigers 8.8 (56) Phuket Power 6.7 (43).

An outstanding effort by all involved, with Eric winning the Lady Pie best indigenous player, Jeff Hills winning the Aussie Divers goal kicking award and Andrew McMillan claiming the Legends



Getting stuck in. Photo: Supplied

Sports Bar best player award.

The Phuket News is delighted to sponsor the growth of AFL in Phuket and the organisers would like to thank all sponsors, supporters and volunteers for creating such a great occasion.

The Phuket News