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FOOD FIGHTERS



PPAO President Rewat Areerob helps mix a giant pan of Pad Thai at the 'Roi Nat Yad Dai' food festival at Sanam Chai in Phuket Town. Photo: PR Phuket

OFFICIALS HOST SLEW OF FOOD FESTIVALS TO HELP DRIVE TOURISM, LOCAL INCOMES

The Phuket News
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Phuket officials have turned to local food festivals to help drive grassroots tourism to the island and as a means of distributing incomes to vendors still hard hit by the lack of tourists coming to Phuket.

Last weekend saw three food festivals held across the island at the same time, including the 'Roi Rim Lay' seafood festival held in Karon on Mar 18-20, and another 'Roi Rim Lay' food festival held in Kamala on Mar 19-21.

"Holding the Roi Rim Lay events at various locations in Phuket aims to stimulate the economy in the province and [incomes in the] community, and also to let tourists taste various local food and delicacies," Governor Narong said at the launch of the festival in Kamala.

Kamala Mayor Jutha Dumlak said the festival was much welcomed in the area as many people in Kamala had been deeply affected by the COVID-19 impact on tourism.

"It is necessary to encourage people to spend in order to boost household incomes in Kamala, and

to inspire a trend for more tourists to visit Kamala," Mr Jutha said.

"The fair is being held to help boost incomes of local food operators and tourism-related operators. More than 74 vendors will set up stalls at the fair," he added.

Governor Narong also officially opened the 'Roi Nat Yat Dai' food festival at Sanam Chai in Phuket Town last Friday night (Mar 18), held in the hopes of lifting the spirits of the local residents while providing local food vendors with an opportunity to earn some much-needed income.

Present for the occasion was

Rewat Areerob, President of Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or OrBorJor), which organised and funded the event.

"The objective is to restore the economy of Phuket that has been affected by COVID-19. It also opens up a creative space to improve the quality of life in the local area," Mr Rewat said.

"The event strengthens good relations between local residents and tourists. It develops and improves tourism standards by raising awareness of the identity of local food, and the dress culture of Phuket people, as...

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...a medium to present to tourists, which creates a good image for tourists," he added.

"It will also help stimulate the tourism economy, which helps to bring more tourists, create jobs and generate income from tourism," Mr Rewat said.

The PPAO is holding three the 'Roi Nat Yat Dai' food fair three times: at three locations, each time for three days.

The first was held in Patong on Dec 17-19, the second at Sanam Chai located opposite the old Provincial Hall on Narisorn Rd from Mar 18-20. The third edition will be held at Laguna Grove, Cherno Talay, over three days this weekend, from Mar 25-27.

The fair at Sanam Chai featured more than 120 stalls selling freshly produced seafood.

"The PPAO also ensures that the ['Roi Nat Yat Dai'] events are alcohol-free and the vendors do not use styrofoam

packages," Mr Rewat said.

"We also ensure each event is held safely within the COVID free guidelines and that the areas are kept clean," he added.

All vendors must also comply with health and hygiene requirements under the 'Clean Food, Good Taste' standards enforced by the provincial health office, Mr Rewat said.

All the events also feature live performances by local students and other artists each night.

HOLDING ON

The push to hold events that primarily aim to distribute what income is being generated on the island comes as Phuket's tourism industry suffers yet another blow, this time from the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Up until the invasion began on Feb 24, Russian arrivals were the top source market for Phuket tourists with more than 56,000 arriving since Nov 1.



Governor Narong speaks with a tourist at the Roi Rim Lay food festival event held in Karon. Photo: PR Phuket

Since then, Russian arrivals have plummeted.

Meanwhile, despite other countries around the world now removing all COVID-based travel restrictions, the number of arrivals from other source markets have yet to show any real signs of recovery, namely due to the

economic impact in their own countries.

Daily arrivals at Phuket International Airport still have yet to show any significant increase, averaging around 3,000 a day. Last Sunday (Mar 20), the number of arrivals reached only 2,930.

Many key tourism and

business leaders in Thailand have blamed the Thai government for holding onto outdated COVID restrictions for the lack of tourists choosing Thailand as a holiday destination. Tourists are simply choosing to holiday somewhere else without heavy restrictions, they say.

The critics, some harsher than others, have included Thai Hotels Association President Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi, Tourism Council of Thailand President Chamnan Srisawat and Thai Chamber of Commerce Chairman Sanan Angulokul.

Despite questions about timing, the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) regards the plan to declare COVID-19 endemic later this year as the right move to better manage the public health budget and stimulate tourism.

Less fear of COVID-19 will lead to a relaxed atmosphere in the country as the disease causes mild symptoms among many people

and may be categorised as similar to the flu, said Supant Mongkolsuthree, chairman of the FTI.

"Many countries have begun to treat COVID-19 as endemic to help drive their economy," he said.

Mr Supant said the Omicron variant, unlike its virulent Delta predecessor, does not cause severe illness in many vaccinated people.

"Thailand should follow the lead of these countries, with the government educating people on the nature of the disease to build public trust," he said.

Once the government has a good healthcare management structure in place and adequate efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 are defined, it can save budget in that area and allocate more money to fuel an economy reeling from the two-year impact of COVID-19 and higher energy prices triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war, said Mr Supant.

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Elderly jabs for Songkran

THE PHUKET PROVINCIAL HEALTH Office (PPHO) launched an intensive campaign on Monday (Mar 21) to provide vaccination injections to people in Phuket over 60 years old.

The elderly were specifically at greater risk of suffering greater consequences from being infected with COVID-19, PPHO Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon said during a live interview on Mar 16.

He noted that the elderly had always been under close watch by health officials as they were a large segment of the 'Group 608' patients.

'Group 608' has become Phuket officials' preferred term for higher at-risk patients, comprising people over 60 years old along with those suffering from any of the seven recognised medical conditions that place patients at higher risk of developing serious signs of infection, plus women more than 12 weeks pregnant.

Phuket health officials were specifically concerned with the elderly being exposed to greater risk of infection during the upcoming Thai New Year Songkran festival, when many people return to their family homes to visit their elders, Dr Kusak said.

"Of this group [the elderly], 96% have not received a third-dose booster shot," Dr Kusak pointed out.

"Of those, more than 70% have not received any vaccination injections at all," he added.

"This is a very important segment of our community," he added.



An elderly woman receives a vaccination injection at Saphan Hin on Monday (Mar 21). Image: PR Phuket

Dr Kusak pointed out that currently 92.88% of the 539,183 target population of Phuket had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination injection, while 87.48% of the target population had received a second jab.

So far 67.92% of the target population had received a third-dose "booster" injection, he said.

"We are looking to increase that to over 70%," Dr Kusak noted.

However, Dr Kusak made no mention of the fact that the elderly were specifically named as among the first to receive COVID-19 vaccinations under the 'National Vaccination Day' campaign launched on June 1 last year.

Why more than 70% of the elderly in Phuket still had not received any vaccination injections at all was not explained.

The Phuket News

Killer of Swiss tourist gets life imprisonment

The Phuket News
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Teerawat Thothip, a 27-year-old resident of Pa Khlok, has been sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of 57-year-old Swiss tourist Nicole Sauvain-Weiskopf at the Ao Yon Waterfall last August.

Phuket Provincial Court handed down its sentence at 2pm on Mar 15.

Teerawat was facing charges of murder, attempted rape, theft and for taking methamphetamine and marijuana, read a notice issued by the Phuket Provincial Office announcing the sentencing.

The defendant had entered a plea of guilty to the theft and drug charges, the notice said.

The court heard how Teerawat was looking for orchids and other wild plants near the waterfall on Aug 3 last year when at about midday he saw Ms Sauvain-Weiskopf near the popular tourist area. She was wearing a tank top and shorts, and sitting in the water in the stream.

Teerawat quietly ap-



Teerawat Thothip, a 27-year-old resident of Pa Khlok, re-enacts the crime for police at Ao Yon waterfall on Aug 8 last year. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

proached her with the intent of raping her.

He locked his arm across her neck, causing her to choke.

When Ms Sauvain-Weiskopf struggled, Teerawat used his other arm to tighten his lock across her throat, ensuring she would choke.

During the struggle Ms Sauvain-Weiskopf ended up face down in the stream, where Teerawat continued to

choke her and hold her face underwater.

After Ms Sauvain-Weiskopf had stopped struggling, Teerawat dragged her body to the bank of the stream. In the belief that she was only unconscious, he still intended to rape her.

He removed her shorts and underwear, but it was only after he had turned her face up that he saw by her eyes and

her face that she was dead. At that point he no longer wanted to rape his victim.

Teerawat covered her body with a black tarpaulin found nearby and weighed the tarpaulin in place with rocks. For this, he was also found guilty of attempting to conceal the body of a victim of a crime.

Teerawat then searched her bag for belongings and removed B300 from her pockets, then fled.

The court found that Teerawat could foresee that his actions would lead to the death of his victim, and hence found him guilty of causing the death of another person with premeditation.

As Teerawat had confessed to his actions, the court halved his sentences for all charges except for murder, for which he is to serve life imprisonment at one place.

The court dismissed the charge of attempted rape.

The verdict and sentencing was read in the courtroom with husband Mark Emal Soven and his two sons in attendance by video conference from Switzerland.

No water play for Songkran

PHUKET VICE GOVERNOR Pichet Panapong has confirmed that for the third consecutive year no water play will be permitted in Phuket for the upcoming Thai New Year Songkran festivities, in line with the mandate laid down by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) guidelines announced last Friday (Mar 18).

Speaking at Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday, Vice Governor Pichet explained that the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee is to enforce the guidelines set out by the CCSA.

The traditional 'rod nam dam hua' water blessing ceremony may be performed, in pouring water over hands, but people must wear face masks when joining Songkran ceremonies and festivities.

"There will be no splashing of water, and all events are subject to the COVID Free Setting measures and will be strictly regulated. Do not use powder or hold foam parties," he said.

Family gathering activities must be held in well-ventilated or open spaces



Vice Governor Pichet delivered the news last Friday (Mar 18). Photo: PR Phuket

that are not crowded or cramped, he said.

"People must wear a mask at all times and refrain from close contact activities or using shared items. Avoid eating or drinking together for a long time," V/Gov Pichet said.

"Elderly people who have not received all their vaccinations according to the criteria should get their vaccinations before participating in social activities," he added.

"Elderly people should be wary of close contact with younger family members, and of course infected people and high-risk contacts are prohibited from participating in any activities," he said.

The Phuket News

Pre-travel COVID tests to be dumped starting April 1

THE CENTRE FOR COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) last Friday (Mar 18) resolved to discontinue the requirement that visitors pass a pre-travel COVID-19 test, from Apr 1, but testing on arrival will continue.

The change in procedure was announced by CCSA spokesman Taweasilp Visanuyothin.

He said the requirement for pre-travel tests would end for all visitors, whether arriving by Test & Go, Sandbox or quarantine channels.

People who enter the country through Test & Go or Sandbox programmes would be given an RT-PCR test on arrival, and be required to perform an antigen self-test on Day 5 after arrival, monitored at their hotel.

Sandbox visitors would remain in their reception areas for five days. Visitors in the quarantine scheme, including people caught sneaking in, would be kept in isolation for five days



A tourist undergoes a swab test after arriving at Phuket airport. Photo: PR Phuket

and have an RT-PCR test on Day 4 or 5 after arrival.

The CCSA would continue to require visitors to have COVID-19 insurance coverage of at least US\$20,000 (B666,175) but was likely to reduce it later, Dr Taweasilp said.

Also, from Apr 1 people would be able to arrive by land through Satun province in the South, in addition to the already open land border crossings at Nong Khai, Udon Thani and Songkhla.

Arrivals by sea would

be allowed through Surat Thani ports, in addition to the present Phuket and Chon Buri.

By air, the reopening would include Hat Yai airport in addition to the current Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang, Phuket, Krabi, Samui, Chiang Mai and U-tapao airports.

The CCSA hoped to expand the reopening by air to all airports, depending on their readiness, in May, Dr Taweasilp said.

Bangkok Post

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Paralysed for life, seeking B15mn

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The lawyer representing Aroon Thongplab, the young noodle vendor left paralysed after he was shot by a drunk off-duty police officer on Bangla Rd in Patong early on Feb 23 last year, has revealed that the family is seeking just B15 million in damages so they can get on with their lives.

Mr Aroon, 25 years old at the time, was shot in the stomach by Pornthep Channaong, a corporal with the Phuket Provincial Police who had just been transferred to Region 8 Police at the time.

Pornthep was quickly stripped of his rank and discharged from the Royal Thai Police. He is now on trial for attempted murder, carrying a firearm in a public area without necessary reason, and firing a weapon in a public area.

Mr Aroon has been left paralysed from the waist down after surgeons removed the bullet, which had lodged near his spine. His wife, Kulthida Chananan, spends most of her time caring for him, and their two young children.

The trial was first deferred in August last year, and again in September. Finally, Phuket Provincial Court heard witness testimonies



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

last week, with Mr Aroon testifying on Mar 17-18, explained Kerdphol Kaewkerd, a Bangkok-based lawyer assisting Mr Aroon with the case for free.

Mr Kerdphol travelled to Phuket, driving himself from Bangkok, to assist Mr Aroon with the court proceedings.

"In total the court is scheduled to receive testimonies from eight witnesses," Mr Kerdphol said last Saturday (Mar 19).

"As there was not enough time during the two days this week, the court will resume hearing testimonies

on April 7," he said.

Mr Kerdphol said that he was confident of a guilty verdict in the trial, mostly because of the CCTV footage showing Pornthep shooting Mr Aroon.

The CCTV footage also showed Pornthep taunting and teasing Mr Aroon after he had shot Mr Aroon in the stomach. Mr Aroon is plainly seen begging for mercy while Pornthep taunts him. Pornthep also fires another shot, but misses Mr Aroon due to his drunken state.

Mr Kerdphol explained that he is in Phuket to prepare Mr Aroon and

his wife for presenting themselves in court.

Mr Aroon's condition has improved, but he remains paralysed from the waist down, Mr Kerdphol said.

"He is unable to move from his waist to his toes. He is permanently disabled," Mr Kerdphol said.

Mr Aroon is seeking just B15mn in damages, Mr Kerdphol confirmed.

"This was calculated from the income he [Mr Aroon] made when he was in good health [selling noodles], and extrapolated from him working from the time when he was shot, aged 25, to 60 years old," he said.



Australian Joshua Madeira, 31 was brought back to Phuket to face charges. Photo: Phuket City Police

Shoplifting Aussie arrested in Krabi

AUSTRALIAN MAN JOSHUA Aaron Jerome Madeira, 31, has been charged with theft for shoplifting from a snack store in the heart of Phuket Town.

Phuket City Police and Phuket Tourist Police together issued a statement confirming that Madeira was arrested in Krabi on Mar 16.

Madeira was arrested at Ao Nam Mao Pier, located at a small beach between Ao Nang and Krabi Town, at about 10pm.

He was taken into custody under arrest warrant Jor 64/2565 (64/2565) for theft from the 'Kin Fit Fin' snack shop in the Phuket Old Town area on Mar 13, the report said.

Madeira was caught on the

shop's security CCTV stealing two items, together worth B186.

The CCTV footage showed him picking up some snacks and putting them in his trousers, and leaving the shop without paying.

Madeira also stands accused of stealing snacks from the same shop in January, that time stealing snacks worth B228.

Madeira confessed to the thefts, saying that he needed some reprieve from the constant stress in his life. He had been under a lot of stress, said the report.

Madeira was handed over to Phuket City Police for further legal action, the report concluded.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Toddler drowns in hotel pool

A 3-YEAR-OLD BOY HAS drowned in a Phuket hotel pool after wandering out of the hotel room while his parents, on holiday in Phuket, were sleeping, Phuket City Police Chief Col Sarawut Chuprasit has reported.

The tragic incident happened at about 1pm last Sunday (Mar 20), Col Sarawut said in a brief report explaining the child's death.

Lt Col Sittipong Kruehong, the investigative officer on duty, was notified of the death by medical staff at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

At the hospital, medical staff explained to Lt Col Sittipong that they had performed a post-mortem examination and found no evidence of any other trauma. The cause of death was recorded as drowning.

The child was identified as Ratchasri Chuasrisakul, 3, from Pathum Thani.

Ratchasri was with his parents at the Supitcha Hotel in Koh Kaew, Col Sarawut explained in his report.

While his parents were sleeping, Ratchasri opened the door to leave the room and made his way to the swimming pool, he said.

A "good citizen" saw Ratchasri



Photo: Phuket City Police

drowning and rushed to get him out of the pool. Immediate first aid was administered and emergency workers were called to rush him to hospital.

Sadly, efforts to revive Ratchasri failed.

Arrangements had been made to release Ratchasri's body to his parents so they can conduct his funeral, Col Sarawut noted in his report.

The report did not mention whether police were continuing any investigation into Ratchasri's death.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Time to Pass Go

Phuket Monopoly praised for helping to boost tourism

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket officials have praised the launch of the Phuket edition of the world-famous board game Monopoly, saying the move will help raise Phuket's international profile as a tourism destination, and help boost local people's incomes by boosting tourism to the island.

The announcement came at the official launch of 'Monopoly: Phuket Edition' at the Central Phuket shopping mall last Saturday (Mar 19).

The Phuket-focussed edition was created through a collaboration between the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Winning Moves UK, who are the makers of this game under official license from leading game and toy manufacturer Hasbro, creator of the Transformers franchise.

The game features landmark tourist attractions on the island, including Promthep Cape, which occupies the game's most prestigious square, Mayfair, to other leading tourist favourites such as Kata Beach, Naka Market, Phuket Old Town and Coral Island, located off Phuket's southeast coast.

The Phuket News is featured on



The launch of the official Phuket edition of Monopoly has been praised for helping to boost local people's incomes by promoting Phuket as a tourist destination. Photo: PR Phuket

the Community Chest square in the 'Mayfair' area on the board.

"It is the pride of the province that reflects the beauty of the important tourist attractions to the eyes of people around the world and helps drive the country's economy and support tourism to be active again," said a report by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

Jennifer Lau, Custom Games Executive at Winning Moves UK, said at the launch on Saturday, "Winning Moves UK would like to thank all Monopoly supporters and enthusiasts, and for presenting the venues for this official latest version of the board game.

"We sincerely hope that this latest version of the Monopoly board game will be a reflection for everyone to

know that we carefully selected all venues presented in the board game."

Nattakit Tangpoonsintha, Assistant Managing Director of Marketing at Central Pattana Public Co Ltd said, "It is with great pride that Central Phuket has been selected as one of the most important features in a world-class board game together with other famous tourist attractions, and it is also the first and only shopping center in Asia that has been selected in this game.

"The game will jointly push and promote the country's tourism to attract both Thai and foreign tourists, and expat groups who miss the beauty of the Andaman Sea, the charm of local food and service, culture and traditions as well as our role in providing a shopping destination that helps generate money circulating for the country's economy," he said.

"For almost 20 years, the Central shopping mall has been by Phuket's side, to help push Phuket to be known to both Thai and foreign tourists as a must-visit destination and a world-class World-Class Shopping Paradise, responding to all lifestyles from luxury shopping to being a shopping center for the lifestyle of the people," he added.

"Central Pattana continues to strive to create good things. We came to the province under the vision of imagining better futures for all, raising the quality of life of people in every area where we are located.

"We are ready to present local perspectives through various events which have always reflected the local essence and identity of the community, especially events related to helping support the country's tourism to attract tourists from around the world, together to push the Thai economy back to a strong recovery and generate cash flow both at the provincial and national level," Mr Nattakit said.

The board is available from this Monday (Mar 28) at local independent stores such as What the Box, Phuket Card, D6 Wargame, chain and independent stores across Thailand, certain locations around Phuket including: BCIS International School, The British International School Phuket, Utopia, The Nai Harn, COMO Point Yamu, Blue Tree Phuket, Carnival Magic, and will also be widely available through e-commerce channels in the UK (including booghe.co.uk and Amazon.co.uk) and Australia.



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Got a million dollars?

High Net Worth foreigners may now apply for work permits under the new Flexible Plus Programme

LEGAL MATTERS

Dr Paul Crosio

WEalthy foreigners seeking a way to live and work in Thailand will now be able to obtain a work permit under the recently rolled out Flexible Plus Programme which was approved by the Thai Cabinet in October 2021. The programme was conceived as part of the government's effort to promote investment into Thailand's target industries and help with its economic recovery by attracting high net worth investors.

Under the Flexible Plus Programme, qualified foreigners will be able to stay in Thailand under a non-immigrant visa which will allow them to apply for a work permit and legally conduct business activities they would otherwise not be able to perform. Those interested in the programme who already hold certain types of Thailand Privilege Cards or are staying in the country under a Thailand Elite Visa for at least 10 years may qualify depending on their status. They are, nevertheless, advised to seek guidance if they wish to proceed with the application process.



The crux of the programme, however, is that a foreigner needs to have invested at least US\$1 million in the country (approximately B32 million) within a year of the application. This could either be in real estate, the Stock Exchange of Thailand or a Thai limited company. While specific details regarding investments have yet to be announced, it is likely foreign investment approvals from regulatory bodies such as the

Securities and Exchange Commission will be required.

In addition, the Thai government is also considering lifting restrictions on foreign ownership of land to supplement the country's attractiveness as an investment destination. However, this process may take some time and is expected to come with certain limitations. Silk Legal will provide further updates in due course once more information is available.

WHAT IS A THAI ELITE VISA?

Designed primarily for high-net-worth individuals, the requirements for a Thai Elite Visa are minimal and generally only require applicants to pay the fees, which vary according to the length of time they wish to stay in Thailand. Packages and memberships cost anywhere between B600,000 to B2mn and give an applicant a

five- to 20-year multiple-entry visa on top of other privileges such as airport limousine services, shopping privileges and golf club memberships.

Those interested in the Flexible Plus Programme are welcome to contact us for more information. Please reach out to us at info@silklegal.com or by using the contact form on our website.



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Phuket pushes Digital Nomad visa

REWAT AREEROB, PRESIDENT OF Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or OrBorJor) has submitted a formal request to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to create a 'Digital Nomad' visa for international visitors travelling to Phuket.

The request was announced by the Phuket Info Center, operated by the Phuket office of the Ministry of Interior, last Friday (Mar 18).

The PPAO itself and Mr Rewat both have yet to announce that the request has been made.

In the notices posted by the Phuket Info Center, Mr Rewat asked for Phuket to pilot a new visa called "Phuket X Community for Digital NOMADS Visa".

Under the proposed visa, applicants must live in Phuket for six months to one year. They will be issued a work permit automatically, be able to open a savings account and own up to three vehicles, and purchase health insurance while traveling in Thailand.

"Digital NOMADS are foreign tourists working at the world's leading companies in the fields of Digital, IT and Internet. They are a group of people who live, travel and work at the same time, using the Internet as the main tool for earning money," Mr Rewat explained in the notices.

"They may have their own online business, freelance, or work on projects of companies that can work online. For example, programmers, web designers, graphic designers, online marketers, etc," he added.



PPAO President Rewat Areerob has made a direct appeal for Phuket to pilot a special 'Digital Nomad visa'. Photo: PPAO / file

"Most Digital NOMADS will spend a long time in a foreign country with high income and spending power," he pointed out.

"If the Phuket X Community for Digital NOMADS Visa push is successful, we will develop a new source of income for Phuket and help to stimulate tourism and the creative economy.

"It will create new business opportunities for Phuket such as co-working spaces, cafes, restaurants and various activities that NOMADS love," Mr Rewat added.

"This would make a difference for Thailand in the Asean region, and create a form of income for Phuket that does not depend on seasonal tourists or be affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 anymore. These people will spend in the province throughout the year," Mr Rewat said.

The Phuket News

Thailand is 'ready' for Deltacron, says Anutin

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The public health minister says Thailand is prepared to deal with any new variant of the coronavirus including the newly emerged Deltacron that is now being closely watched by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Anutin Charnvirakul, deputy prime minister and public health minister, said his ministry has prepared the necessary medical tools, vaccines and drugs to ensure it can fight the virus no matter how it may mutate.

Anutin said he believed the government's COVID-19 preventive measures – social distancing, mask-wearing, hand washing and so on – are still effective.

"We are not worried about any new strains as long as our people have strictly followed the ministry's guidelines and have not lowered their guard in preventing infection," he said.

Deltacron was first reported earlier this year when it was



Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul meets elderly people at a temporary COVID-19 vaccination station in Nonthaburi on Mar 15. Photo: Pattarapong Chatpattarasill

thought to be a co-infection of the Omicron and Delta variants. On Mar 16, the WHO started tracking Deltacron, but has yet to designate it as a variant of concern – nor has it officially named it. Researchers believe it is a single, hybrid variant that combines genes from Delta and Omicron.

DENGUE CONCERNS

Meanwhile, the Department of Disease Control (DDC) is warning that this year's seasonal outbreak of dengue may be more severe than usual, following three early deaths in

2022 – already half the tally for the whole of 2021.

"Every year the incidence of dengue, along with that of other diseases such as diarrhoea and heat stroke, rises sharply as summer approaches," said Dr Opas Karnkawinpong, director-general of the DDC, on Sunday (Mar 20).

"Last year only six people died because of dengue while this year three dengue deaths have been reported in just the first three months," he said.

These deaths were all among patients who were either recovering from, or

were being actively treated for, COVID-19, he added.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) were found to be a contributing factor in the severity of the mosquito-borne disease in the deaths, he said.

As a result, those who develop a high fever and other flu-like symptoms are being advised to avoid taking NSAIDs and instead take paracetamol.

Even though most patients who catch dengue are children and adolescents, most dengue-related deaths are among the elderly, people living with a chronic disease and the obese, Dr Opas said.

Getting rid of sources of mosquitoes including containers with standing water is one of the most effective ways people can lower the number of mosquitos in their living areas and reduce the incidence of the disease through mosquito bites, he said.

While most people focus on the prevention of COVID-19, the risk of catching dengue fever tends to be overlooked, he said.

Paetongtarn tipped as candidate for PM

BANGKOK



Paetongtarn Shinawatra. Photo: Bangkok Post

ALL EYES ARE ON whether Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the youngest daughter of fugitive ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, will be named as a candidate for prime minister in the next general election after she was put in charge of a campaign aimed at promoting unity in the Pheu Thai Party.

At a party meeting in Udon Thani on Sunday (Mar 20), Ms Paetongtarn, 35, was named as the head of the "Pheu Thai Family" campaign and vowed to help the party win an overwhelming victory in the election and form a government.

The introduction of Ms Paetongtarn fits into Pheu Thai's policy of bringing in someone from the younger generation as a driving force to work with the party's veteran politicians, observers said.

Pheu Thai's latest campaign led by Ms Paetongtarn is another step to assert itself politically and it is

very likely that she will be named as a candidate for prime minister in the next election, said Pichai Ratnatilaka Na Bhuket, a political scientist at the National Institute of Development Administration.

The party's "Pheu Thai family" slogan is designed for a campaign aimed at winning the election by a landslide to form a single-party government, Mr Pichai said. The campaign is also aimed at bringing former party members who broke away or defected to other parties into the party's fold, though the campaign can also be construed as a bid to consolidate the power of the Shinawatra family, he added. Bangkok Post

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PHUKET EDITION

SECRET
REVEALED

BCIS Phuket community celebrates being selected to join the Phuket Edition Monopoly Board Game!

Berda Claude International School



Mr. Monopoly meets BCIS Owner & Founder Mr. Laurent Minguely

The exciting Phuket Edition Monopoly board game is out! Launched on Saturday 19th March 2022 at Central Festival Phuket shopping centre and hosted by Winning Moves Games Inc., the Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Phuket Governor and Phuket authorities.

Honoured and delighted to have been selected as one of the main squares, becoming one of Phuket's landmarks, BCIS Phuket hosted a memorable event in the guest presence of the renowned Mr. Monopoly and Partner Manager of Winning Moves Games Inc., Ms. Jennifer Lau. Freshly arrived from the United Kingdom for the Phuket Edition reveal, she was accompanied by the Deputy Chalong Mayor Khun Thanong Ongsantiapab, the Director of the Phuket Private Education Office Khun Supaporn Yukunthornand, and the appointed French Honorary Consul in Phuket Mr. Alain Faudot.



Produced by Winning Moves under official licence from Hasbro, this version of Monopoly includes 22 prominent tourist destinations in Phuket, including Sarasin Bridge, Kata Beach, Naka Market, Promthep Cap, Phuket Old Town and the beautiful Coral Island, located just outside of Phuket. In all, more than 30 Phuket places and activities feature in the game .. and BCIS Phuket gets to star too on a red square!



On the 21st of March 2022, BCIS Phuket students, parents, teachers and management gathered to celebrate the BCIS Phuket Monopoly square, taking yet another step forward as a community in the school history. Following a speech by Ms Jennifer Lau, the woman behind the Phuket edition, in touch with our school leaders for over two years, BCIS Phuket was surprised by the visit of Mr. Monopoly who rapidly met his match on stage with Josh, the BCIS Phuket Mascot (students' big brother, school helper, good mood carrier)! A 5 x 5m Monopoly Phuket board was then revealed, followed by live 'roll and answer' games on the lifesize board, allowing students to get the **CHANCE**, the opportunity to win a board game to enjoy at home.

A game of generations!



The Parker Brothers' Monopoly is one of the all-time best selling board games, entertaining generations of adults and children. With today's overwhelming dominance in digital games, BCIS Phuket feels very proud to have been given a chance to honour the ultimate family game, highlighting the beauty found in playing together and having fun!



Discover more about BCIS Phuket, meet the team, learn about their two programmes, visit their Chalong based campuses!

Education changes the world



POP QUIZ

1. Who was Apple's first CEO?
2. How many bones are in the adult human body?
3. Which US state flag is the only one to feature an exposed nipple?
4. Horripilation is one of the medical terms for which common temporary condition?
5. English author Eric Arthur Blair is better known by which name?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Recipient
6. Winston Churchill's "___ Country"
10. Be a kvetch
14. Flip
15. Latest thing
16. Carbamide
17. Cross query
20. Misjudge
21. Emolument
22. ___ out a win
23. Not req.
24. City in Central China
25. Stage item
27. It's given on the stand
33. Long bones
34. Flat-bottomed boat
35. Fancy neckwear
36. ___ box
38. Didn't hold
41. 100 kobos
43. Approval
45. No cross allowed for him
50. Furnace button
51. Berry
52. Hotel sign
53. Rel. leader
56. Affect, with "to"
57. Kind of approval
60. Testify out of court

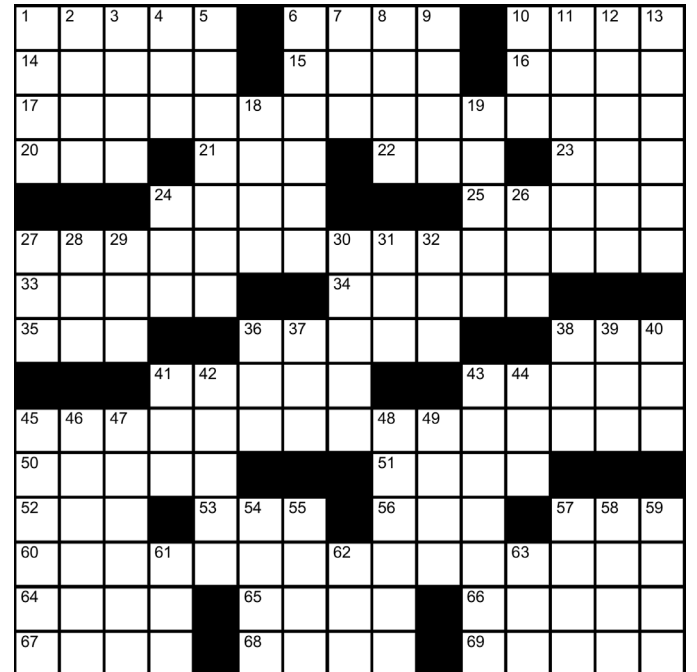
64. Bookkeeping entry
65. Canyon in Utah
66. Young hooter
67. Hollows
68. Swerves at sea
69. Choker

Down

1. Cry softly
2. Takeoff artist
3. Four quarters
4. Word with loose or back
5. Skyscraper, e.g.
6. Silver, in heraldry
7. Query list, for short
8. Fit of fever
9. Need a bath
10. Injured
11. Melodic passage
12. Look into again, as a cold case
13. Buttery
18. Kempt
19. Printing flourish
24. Swell place
26. Global fin. overseer
27. Name
28. U.N. working-conditions agcy.
29. Messenger ___

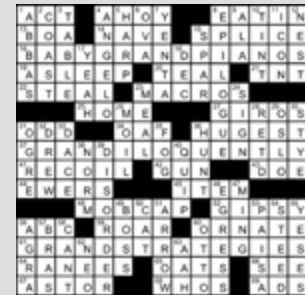
30. Swift work

31. Word with bum or bunny
32. Square one?
36. Central
37. Web browser entry
38. Kvass ingredient
39. Balaam's mount
40. Figs.
41. Watchman ___, Chinese Christian author
42. Bone cavities
43. Booster ___
44. Singer DiFranco
45. Gelid
46. Enumerate
47. Gets revenge
48. Black Marias, e.g.
49. Locks up
54. Irascible
55. A constellation
57. Pastry dough
58. Buck passers?
59. Part of A.M.
61. German spa
62. Nave bench
63. First prime



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Michael Scott; 2) 206 (about 270 at birth); 3. Virginia (male nipple exposed); 4. Goosebumps; 5) George Orwell

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

inch (2.54cm) per year is the rate at which North America and Europe are moving away from each other.

80

percent of the 'Close Door' buttons in elevators don't actually do anything.

75,000

US dollars a year is how an 'experienced' pet food taster – a person who eats pet food for quality control – can make up to.

670,000

US workers are estimated to have been replaced by robots between 1990 and 2007.

300 million

neurons a cat's cerebral cortex contains. Dogs have about 160 million, making cats more capable of more complex problem-solving.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Reflections, Nai Harn Lake. Photo by Peter Parkes

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket?
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This week in history

Mar 25, 1807

The Slave Trade Act becomes law, abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire.

Mar 26, 1971

East Pakistan declares its independence from Pakistan to form Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Liberation War begins.

Mar 27, 1998

The Food and Drug Administration approves Viagra for use as a treatment for male impotence, the first pill to be approved for this condition in the United States.

Mar 28, 2005

An earthquake with a magnitude of 8.6 shakes northern Sumatra, killing more than 1,000 people and leaving more than 1,400 injured.

Mar 29, 845 AD

Paris is sacked by Viking raiders. According to historical reports, the raid was most likely carried out under Ragnar Lodbrok, who collected a huge ransom in exchange for leaving.

Mar 30, 1913

The Vienna Concert Society riots during a performance of modernist music, causing a premature end to the concert due to violence. The concert became known as the Skandalkonzert.



Photo: James Bourne

Mar 31, 1990

Approximately 200,000 protesters take to the streets of London to protest against the newly introduced Poll Tax.

Source: Wikipedia

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FRI 1 APR



Grow Boating Networking Evening - April 2022

The next Grow Boating Networking Evening will be held at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar, at the Phuket Boat Lagoon on Friday the 1st of April from 5pm. We are delighted to announce that our drinks sponsor for the evening will be Lambert Brothers Insurance Brokers who are a leading independent broker with a proud record of serving its clients for more than 60 years. There will be a delicious free burger for all attendees and as always all of your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. We hope to see you there and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming please invite them along. To join our mailing list please send an email to growboatingphuket@gmail.com Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/growboatingphuket Grow Boating is kindly supported by our media partner The Phuket News, Live 89.5 radio and Phuket News TV. See www.thephuketnews.com

THU 21 APR



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Sittichai Jitnatham, Jason Beavan, Ho Kwon Ping, Claire Chiang, Lee Woon Hoe

BANYAN TREE GROUP LAUNCHES FIRST BANYAN TREE VEYA IN PHUKET

Banyan Tree Group launched its new wellbeing brand Banyan Tree Veya within its multi-brand ecosystem on March 18, 2022. The flagship Banyan Tree Veya Phuket is a wellbeing-centered resort that offers bespoke programs with an emphasis on what the brand calls 'embodiment therapies', built on Banyan Tree's proprietary eight pillars of wellbeing.



Chalisa Viravan



Christine Lew, Kim Weller, Sittichai Jitnatham, Lee Woon Hoe, Narathip Vongpattamas



Ramavadee Nakchudtree, Airisa Nakchudtree, Khemupsorn Sirisukha



Gof & Vita S



SKAL PHUKET DINNER AT PIZZA ON FIRE LAGUNA

Pizza on Fire, Canal Village, Laguna, Phuket - Vera Pizza Napoletana was the venue for the Skai International Phuket monthly dinner on March 17, 2022. Skai International Thailand is a professional organisation of leaders from all branches of the travel and tourism industry.

Thai rider Somkiat makes GP history

MOTO GP

SOMKIAT CHANTRA raced to a historic maiden Moto2 victory at the Indonesian Grand Prix at the Mandalika International Street Circuit in Lombok on Sunday (Mar 20) as the sport returned to the Southeast Asian country for the first time since 1997.

Somkiat, of Idemitsu Honda Team Asia, became the first Thai rider to win any class of grand prix racing after he clocked a time of 25 minutes 40.876 seconds, 3.230sec ahead of second-placed Celestino Vietti of Italy.

Somkiat, who was absent from the season-opening race in Qatar due to injury, shot from fourth on the grid to dominate a Moto2 race that was shortened from 25 to 16 laps due to safety concerns over track conditions in the extreme Indonesian heat that hit 43°C.

The Thai collected a maximum 25 points for the victory and moved to



Somkiat celebrates his win. Photo: AFP

fourth place in the world championship standings while VR46 rider Vietti, who won in Qatar, was on 45 points, nine ahead of Pons Racing's Spanish rider Aron Canet, who completed the podium. Marc VDS rider Sam Lowes, of Britain, was third on 29 points.

Pole winner Jake Dixon of Britain went out of contention after he crashed at Turn 10.

In the main MotoGP race Miguel Oliveira finished 2.205 sec ahead of current world champion Fabio Quartararo, of France, who had started from pole position on his Yamaha.

"I promised my daughter I would get a trophy from Indonesia, so this one is for you baby," the emotional Portuguese rider said afterwards. *Bangkok Post*

France lay down World Cup marker with Grand Slam

RUGBY

Guy Jackson

France's first Six Nations title for 12 years showed that Fabien Galthie's impressive team, who beat England in a party atmosphere at the Stade de France last Saturday (Mar 19), will be hard to stop at the World Cup on home soil next year.

With Melvyn Jaminet prolific with the boot, the immense Cameron Woki fast becoming the fulcrum of the team and live-wire World Player of the Year Antoine Dupont wreaking havoc on the England defence, there was only going to be one winner.

France were dominant in the opening 40 minutes with tries from the superb Gael Fickou and Francois Cros. England hit back in the second half thanks to Freddie Steward's converted try, but once Dupont burst through in the 61st minute the Grand Slam was secured and the fireworks could be launched from the stadium roof.

On this form, if the World Cup were starting tomorrow, France would be favourites.

Once the Six Nations trophy had been lifted and his players serenaded for an hour by the 79,000 crowd, Galthie said: "This was an unforgettable experience which is going to make us grow."

All great teams are built on defence



French players celebrate winning the Six Nations title last Saturday (Mar 19), their first in 12 years. Photo: AFP

and English coach Shaun Edwards has instilled a discipline in that department that many previous French sides lacked.

The understated but impressively effective Gael Fickou is the defensive captain and from outside centre has overseen Edwards' approach to stifling opposing teams.

That was supported by the statistics – the French did not receive a single yellow card in five games and their average of nine penalties per match was extremely low.

Galthie has put enormous faith in his players, keeping a settled team with minimal changes. The only change to the starting XV that saw off Wales 13-9 in an attritional battle in Cardiff was Damien Penaud, who had recovered from coronavirus.

France's general manager Raphael

Ibanez had identified the side's first victory for 12 years against New Zealand last November as the moment he realised how much progress they had made.

He will know though that the All Blacks and reigning champions South Africa will be back with a vengeance at the World Cup next year.

"It's our third Six Nations together. We came up just short in the first two. We realised how difficult it can be – each match is difficult, we were able to see that this year," said Dupont.

"Of course this World Cup is in all of our minds. Plenty of people around us are talking about it and we talk a lot about it as well.

"We're going to enjoy this victory, this Grand Slam. We'll project forward after that." *AFP*

Full day of rugby for a good cause

RUGBY

Continued from page 16

...that interest is sure to only increase.

Many of the region's social rugby tournaments now also include a women's division including the annual Bangkok 10s, Pattaya 10s and the Phuket 10s providing excellent opportunities for local teams to get involved. The Phuket Vagabonds have taken up the challenge with local rugby enthusiast Alicia Niemand leading the charge in putting together the first Vagabonds Women's team.

Their initial training session was held prior to the men's game on Saturday under the guidance of coach Dave Walker. It was an excellent introduction to the game's fundamentals and a fantastic foundation to build from. Any ladies interested in joining the team are encouraged to contact the Vagabonds directly for more information.

For the main event, once again the Phuket Vagabonds provided fans with a gripping, physical encounter which has the crowd questioning if these guys really are good mates off the pitch!

The ACF Barbarians however were too good on the day. The return of the always impressive Shaun Kober had the Vagabonds on the back foot early with a strong individual try and numerous midfield runs testing the defense. His on-target cover defense also made it challenging for the Vagabonds speed men to find open space.

It was some smart rugby from the Vagabond Richard Pompilis however, that found the Barbarians napping down the short side of a scrum and set the winger darting for the



Members of the Vagabonds Academy team show off their skills in the curtain raiser game last Saturday. Photo: Neil Quail

try line and to level the scores.

The arm wrestle continued over the next few quarters before sharpshooter Paul Rothwell converted a penalty to give the Bah Bah's some breathing space. Rothwell further extended the score line with a cheeky but brilliant chip and regather putting himself over the line.

A late Vagabonds comeback was let down by some unfortunate handling errors and lack of accuracy at set piece before Rothwell put the game out of reach with another penalty for a final score of 20 – 7.

The real victors of the day however were the kids of the Asia Center Foundation Scholarship fund with the Vagabonds raising over B45,000 in entry donations and raffles for the day. The Vagabonds and the Asia Center Foundation would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all that came out to support and provide an opportunity for the underprivileged.

A final thank you also goes out to the ACG for another excellent event, which has the ground further establishing itself as a home of mixed sport in Phuket.

Anthony Van Sleetuwen

2020/21 PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 2020/21

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Liverpool and City set for FA Cup semi-final clash

FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool and Manchester City's bid for historic trophy-winning hauls will clash in the FA Cup semi-final at Wembley next month after they came through their last eight ties in differing fashion on Sunday (Mar 20).

City finally got the better of Southampton at the third attempt this season with a 4-1 win, while Liverpool needed a late Diogo Jota strike to see off Championship side Nottingham Forest 1-0.

City are aiming to match Manchester United's historic feat in 1998/99 of winning the treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup, while Liverpool, who trail Pep Guardiola's men by one point at the top of the table, are aiming to go one better by adding those three trophies to the League Cup they won in February.

"It was a proper Cup match," said Klopp. "I know they don't get anything for it, but a massive compliment to them, they played a really good game."

With only 11 minutes remaining Jota scored the winner as he stretched to meet Kostas Tsimikas' cross for his 19th goal of the season.

Despite late pressure, Liverpool held on to book a meeting with City when one side's quest for history will come to an end.



Phil Foden (left) scored an emphatic third goal for Manchester City to put the FA Cup tie out of reach of Southampton last Sunday (Mar 20). Photo: AFP

Despite a more resounding scoreline, City struggled for the first hour at St. Mary's as a Southampton side that held the English champions twice in the league this season caused them problems once more.

Raheem Sterling opened the scoring with a cool finish before Aymeric Laporte deflected Mohamed Elyounoussi's cross into his own net for the equaliser.

A second-half Kevin De Bruyne penalty and further strikes from Phil Foden and Riyad Mahrez rounded off City's emphatic win.

Elsewhere, Crystal Palace will face Chelsea in the other semi-final after thrashing struggling Everton 4-0 at Selhurst Park.

Marc Guehi, Jean-Philippe Mateta, Wilfried Zaha and Will Hughes got the goals as the Eagles continued their impressive first season under Patrick Vieira.

"Going to Wembley is fantastic," said Vieira.

"You can hear the atmosphere in the stadium, the fans; this is what they wanted and we wanted to give it to them."

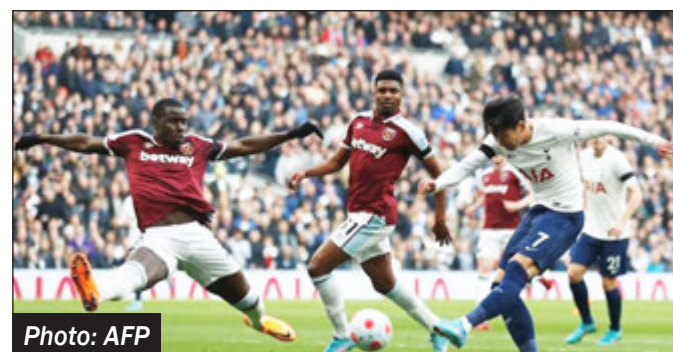


Photo: AFP

Son shines as Spurs boost top four hopes

FOOTBALL

SON HEUNG-MIN FIRED Tottenham to a crucial 3-1 win against West Ham as the South Korean's double lifted his side within three points of the Premier League's top four on Sunday (Mar 20).

Antonio Conte's team went in front through Kurt Zouma's own goal before Son doubled their lead.

Said Benrahma reduced the deficit, but Son struck again in the second half to give Tottenham a fourth victory from their last five league games.

Tottenham moved up to fifth place and sit just three points behind their north London rivals Arsenal in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

Although Tottenham have

played a game more than Arsenal, they are firmly in the hunt with a clash against the Gunners still to come later this season.

"Today we played really well. We dominated the game from the start until the end. I'm very delighted," Conte said.

Arsenal beat Aston Villa 1-0 on Saturday thanks to Bukayo Saka's first-half goal.

"We are there with 10 games to go," said Gunners boss Mikel Arteta. "We have this feeling that we really want it, you can sense it and we're going to give it a go."

A run of 10 wins from their last 13 league games has propelled Arteta's men to the front of the race to join Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea in the top four after getting off to their worst start to a league campaign in 67 years. AFP

Aitsaret banned for three years after vicious attack on opponent

FOOTBALL

AITSAKET NOICHAIBOON HAS BEEN handed a three-year ban by the Football Association of Thailand for a vicious blow to the face of an opponent during a Thai League 3 match on Mar 13.

Former Bangkok FC player Aitsaret has been penalised for a Muay Thai-style elbow strike that left North Bangkok University FC's Supasan Ruangsaphanimit needing 24 stitches on the upper lip.

An investigating panel set up by the FAT unanimously found Aitsaret guilty of breaching the association's code of conduct for professional players.

Pol Lt Gen Amnuay Nimmano, chairman of the FAT disciplinary committee, announced on Sunday (Mar 20) that an order banning Aitsaret for three years had been signed by FAT president Pol Gen Somyot Poompunmuang.

Aitsaret has been barred from taking part in all activities organised by the FAT effective immediately.

A number of Thai football commentators say they have been disappointed by the leniency showed by the FAT as it was widely expected that the ex-Bangkok FC player would be banned for life.

The incident took place when Bangkok FC were trailing 3-0 in their Thai League 3 promotion play-off clash at North Bangkok University.



Aitsaret (right) and Supasan embrace each other. Photo: Bangkok Post

Supasan clipped Aitsaret during the closing stages of the match. Aitsaret reacted by throwing a devastating elbow into his opponent's face, instantly flooring him.

A video of the attack went viral and Bangkok FC terminated Aitsaret's contract on Monday.

The FAT disciplinary committee held a hearing last Thursday (Mar 17) after which Aitsaret hugged Supasan and apologised for the incident.

"I would like to apologise for what I did on that day," the former Bangkok FC player said. "It was an emotional moment and I couldn't control myself."

"I am sorry and I apologise to Supasan, his team and everyone else for the incident."

The incident spread across cyberspace in the days immediately afterwards with one video on Twitter alone attracting 3.5 million views within a matter of days.

Bangkok Post

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FERRARI'S BACK!

Leclerc and Sainz get Scuderia off to a flyer as Formula One returns

Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc celebrates on the podium after winning the Bahrain F1 Grand Prix on Sunday (Mar 20). Photo: AFP



FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
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Ferrari has had no shortage of critics over the last two years of painfully poor results, but after a comprehensive victory in Bahrain it's ready to answer every single one of them. Ferrari is back.

That was the overwhelming feeling as the Italian national anthem rung out from the podium at the Bahrain Grand Prix, the first race of this all-new era of F1.

The victorious Charles Leclerc and runner-up teammate Carlos Sainz towered over the thronging masses of Ferrari mechanics below as they belted out motorsport's

unofficial theme song. They hadn't had a chance to sing it for a red-car victory since Sept 2019 in Singapore, but now the pent-up frustration of two wasted years was finally allowed escape into the warm Bahraini night.

The world's most famous racing team has been through the ringer since that last victory. That too was a one-two result, with Sebastian Vettel leading Leclerc home to complete a rare run of three straight victories.

What Ferrari couldn't have known then was that Singapore would be its last win until last weekend. The Scuderia was about to step into a world of pain.

Its 2019 victory streak had been powered by a suspiciously potent new motor, which at the

end of the year the FIA banned for reasons undisclosed. In 2020 its newly legal engine was badly underpowered, and with a lumbering jolt the team plummeted from potential title contenders to a lowly sixth in the standings. It was a devastating blow for Ferrari, long prone to negative spirals.

Weighing down the atmosphere was Vettel, who the team had knifed in favour of Sainz over the off-season but who had one more year on his contract. Now a marriage of convenience, team and driver struggled through Ferrari's worst season since 1980 counting down the seconds until separation.

In that context little was expected for 2021 other than the perpetuation of a new barren spell. But just as the sport

was about to be reset itself for 2022, so too was Ferrari.

The team broke with its reflexive traditions and instead wrote off 2021 in advance. It committed its full resource to this year's all-new car, built to the biggest change in regulations in generations, in the hope its work might compound itself to drag the team back to the top.

The car it launched earlier this year was unique – a wide, low-bodied and heavily sculpted machine. It was far removed from the super-slim design fielded by Mercedes, the dominant force for nearly a decade, but team principal Mattia Binotto backed his team to deliver.

And now here we are. Pole, fastest lap, race victory, one-two finish. The Italian back

on the podium.

"I'm incredibly happy after the last two years that have been very difficult for the team," Leclerc said. "To finally prove that all the work that we've done in the past two years is paying off feels amazing."

This is a notably different Ferrari from the one that roiled its way through the previous decade. High championship finishes up to 2019 glossed over how sporadically competitive the team had been and made it easy to ignore the problems that ultimately left it falling short against Mercedes.

There had been too much pressure from upper management, too much agitation for immediate results and sweeping changes when they didn't come, and too much focus on

the opposition and not enough on itself.

But management has been renewed, and Mattia Binotto, an increasingly rare engineer turned team principal, has instilled in Ferrari a crucial sense of calm. Over the last 18 months the team has been honed to be hungry for success rather than afraid of failure, and the progress is clear. Its pit stops are better, its strategies are sharper and even late last year its car became quicker. And finally it's back at the top of the podium.

It still has questions to answer to transition from race winner to title challenger against the battle-hardened Red Bull Racing, but after the comprehensive validation of the Bahrain GP, there's no doubt Ferrari is back.

A loss for the Vagabonds, but a victory for local charity

RUGBY

THE PHUKET VAGABONDS may have lost the game last Saturday (Mar 19), but they certainly won the day with an excellent showcase of rugby across age groups and genders.

Despite the ACF Barbarians coming home strong to secure a 20-7 victory off the back of captain Paul Rothwell's kicking boot, Saturday's game at the Alan



Vagabonds and ACF Barbarians with junior vagabonds. Photo: Louis Greeff

Cook Ground (ACG) was a testament to the efforts of the Phuket Vagabonds in recent years with a

Junior Academy exhibition touch game, the first ever Vagabonds Women's team training, a thrilling

encounter between the Vagabonds team and the talented Barbarians and a commendable B45,000 raised for the Asia Center Foundation Scholarship Fund.

The island's future rugby stars put on an excellent show for the crowd, displaying the skills they have been developing across months of Saturday morning Academy sessions. Parents, coaches and players alike were delighted to see the efforts of the early morning sessions come to fruition in a fast

paced and thoroughly entertaining touch contest with a very close final score of 31-26. The strong attendance and support for the curtain raiser event will only encourage the Junior Academy to establish regular competition moving forward.

Women's rugby has been developing at a rate of knots in recent years with professional competitions being established around the world. With a Women's World Cup to be held in New Zealand in October this year,

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