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REWAT WINS



Long-standing Phuket Democrat Rewat Areerob has been elected President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation. Photo: PR Phuket

REWAT AREEROB ELECTED PPAO PRESIDENT IN FIRST LOCAL ELECTION IN SIX YEARS

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Former Phuket Democrat MP Rewat Areerob has been elected President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO, or *OrBorJor*), according to the preliminary count of the election held last Sunday (Dec 20).

The election for the PPAO President and the 24 seats on the PPAO Council was the Phuket version of PAO elections held in every province in the country last Sunday. The elections were the first local elections to

be held since the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), headed by Royal Thai Army General Prayut Chan-o-cha, seized control of the country through a military coup in May 2014.

Mr Rewat, 54, No 2 on the ballot representing the “Phuket Yatdai Party” (“Phuket Trustworthy Party”), secured 83,144 votes, the PEC announced.

The Phuket office of the Election Commission of Thailand (PEC) confirmed its count of the votes at 5am on Monday (Dec 21), posting the official count on a billboard in front of PPAO head office, located

next to Phuket Provincial Hall.

Jirayut Songyot, who contested the election as No 1 on the ballot representing the Khon Baan Rao Party (“People from Our House Party”), secured 50,914 votes.

Sorawut Palimapunt, representing the longstanding Gao Na Party (“Progress Party”), which today calls itself in English the “Phuket Progressive Movement Party”, placed third in the race for PPAO President, garnering 20,073 votes.

Despite earlier reports that 287,374 people in Phuket were eligible to cast votes in the election, the PEC

confirmed on Monday that the actual total number of eligible voters on the island numbered 294,141.

Of those, only 172,709 (58.72%) presented themselves at the 496 polling stations across the island, the PEC reported.

A total of 10,690 of those who presented themselves did not cast a ballot, the PEC announced.

A further 5,388 votes were marked as spoiled ballots, the PEC added.

A very tired PEC Director-General Passakon Siripakayapon, who had yet to get any sleep since the election began, told *The Phuket News* on...

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Life's a Beach, so make the most of it!



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A matter of pride as Euros win bowls cup



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News



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of another
lockdown > p7



The first tourists to land at Phuket International Airport since the COVID-19 lockdown began eight months ago arrived last Friday (Dec 18). Photo: AoT Phuket

Airport welcomes first international tourists in months

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL tourists to land at Phuket International Airport since the COVID-19 lockdown began eight months ago, arrived in Phuket last Friday (Dec 18).

Without any fanfare before the historic event, the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department of Thailand (PR Phuket) announced the news with a Facebook post at 5:49pm last Friday with the headline "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Facilitates Qatar Airlines to Phuket".

The 30 passengers arrived on Qatar Airways Flight QR 978 direct from Doha, touching down in Phuket at 11:45am, said the report.

The 30 passengers comprised 25 foreign tourists and five Thai nationals.

The report noted that the passengers arrived on a "regular flight" (scheduled) and that "all passengers entering the province will go through the quarantine process (ALQ)."

"Previously, the Phuket Passport Office under the Department of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has facilitated the easing of visa measures for foreigners who wish to travel to Phuket to help stimulate and revitalise the Thai economy, especially in tourism, which has been affected by the COVID-19 crisis," the report said.

"There will be other commercial airlines flying directly to Phuket in the near future as well," the post concluded.

The Phuket News

Call to postpone all New Year events

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO) Chief Thanit Sermkaew is calling for all large-scale events planned to be held to celebrate the New Year to be postponed as a health precaution amid the current COVID-19 outbreak emanating from Samut Sakhon, on the outskirts of Bangkok.

"I advise that year-end celebration events for the New Year be delayed for COVID-19 safety," Dr Thanit told *The Phuket News* on Tuesday (Dec 22).

Currently no public 'Countdown' events usually held in Phuket for the New Year, such as the Patong Countdown held on Patong Beach each year or the 'Phuket Countdown' held at Saphan Hin, near Phuket town, have been announced.

Though only last week the Wandee Woonciew, who as wife of the current governor, Narong Woonciew, serves as President of the Thai Red Cross chapter in Phuket, confirmed that the annual Red Cross Fair in Phuket would go ahead at Saphan Hin Park from Dec 26 to Jan 6.

Each year the fair attracts thousands of visitors to enjoy the food stalls, children's rides and take part in the charity lucky prizes that raise funds for the Phuket chapter of the Red Cross.

It has yet to be confirmed whether that event is now going ahead.

Dr Thanit's call for organisers to delay their year-end parties follows growing momentum for Patong Municipality to



Thai singer Palaphol Pholkongseng performs on Patong Beach at the Rim Lay Seafood Festival organised by Patong Municipality. Photo: PR Patong

postpone the annual Patong Countdown event, which each year draws thousands of visitors to enjoy the live performances by local stars.

Leading Patong businessman Preechawude 'Prab' Keesin on Monday (Dec 21) posted online a call to postpone Patong Countdown 2021. "The safety of the country must come first. No Patong Countdown 2021 event due to cooperation in public health during this situation," he posted.

"It's better to prevent the risk of COVID-19. If not, it would be bad if the situation can't be fixed in time.

"Also people do not panic but be aware. Believe me, New Year celebration events do not have to be held at only the one time. We can celebrate it later. As long as we are alive, anything [like this] is not a big deal," he added.

Patong Municipality has yet to officially announce whether or not the Patong Countdown event will go ahead, but crowds have been gathering at the beach to enjoy live concerts by Thai performers, such as Palaphol Pholkongseng performing at the Rim Lay Seafood festival held on Patong Beach on Dec 11.

Dr Thanit on Monday also said that private events can go ahead, but must follow COVID-19 protection protocols – in line with the announcement by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn earlier announced on Tuesday,

"The year-end celebrations in Bangkok will depend on the private sector's decision. If organisers insist on going forward, they have to comply with regulations from the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration [CCSA]," he said.

Rewat makes 'people's agenda' priority

Continued from page 1

...Monday morning, "The next step is for me to submit the election results to the Election Commission of Thailand [ECT] in Bangkok on Wednesday [Dec 23].

"The PPAO President will take office 15 days after the ECT in Bangkok has confirmed the results," he said.

"So far, there have been no formal complaints filed about the local election," Mr Passakorn added.

"Everything went so well yesterday [Dec 20] as everyone followed the COVID-19 prevention measures with observing social distancing, wearing masks and using hand sanitisers provided at each



Rewat Areerob says it's time for change. Photo: Supplied

polling station," he said.

All people attending the polling stations had their temperatures checked as a precaution, he added.

In total, the Phuket Yatai Party secured 20 of the 24 seats available on the PPAO Council, while the Khon Baan Rao Party secured three seats,

and the Gao Na Party secured just the one seat.

In declaring his victory, Mr Rewat, who also currently serves as assistant secretary to Deputy Public Health Minister Satit Pitutecha, on Monday (Dec 21) announced, "After the election results have been confirmed, we will move forward together for the Phuket people.

"I thank you for every vote that has been trusted to Phuket Yatai Party. We will be able to use various policies to drive the economy and society along with other policies, as all policies will be beneficial to all Phuket citizens.

"I give all respect from my honest heart to my Phuket brothers and sisters, as all of you have trusted me and my

team. I will do my best, as I have already announced, such as keeping Phuket clear from infection, disease and risks to safety. In this I will take action immediately.

"Most importantly, the unemployed and people with reduced incomes will be registered to make sure they can receive support from us. This will be done immediately after the election results have been confirmed," he said.

Never one to sit back and wait, Mr Rewat on Tuesday morning (Dec 22) joined a meeting at the Governor's House led by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew regarding preventing the spread of COVID-19 from illegal migrant workers.

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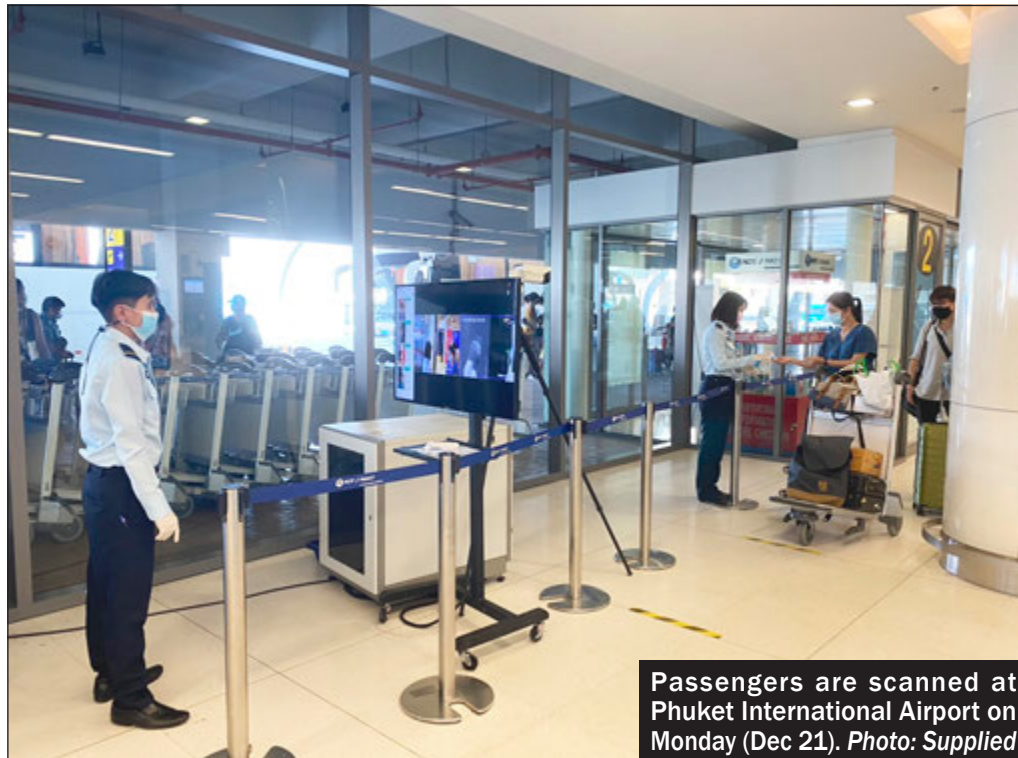
The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Provincial Police Chief Maj Gen Pornsak Nuannoo has ordered for all people arriving in Phuket by road to be screened at the Phuket Check Point for potential carriers of COVID-19.

The order, issued on Monday (Dec 21), followed Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew last Sunday ordering all officials to ramp up efforts to screen for potential carriers of the virus following the outbreak in Samut Sakhon, on the outskirts of Bangkok, where the number of confirmed COVID-19 patients had reached 821 by Monday night. The vast majority – 788 – were migrant workers and the other 33 were Thais (see page 7).

Phuket Police Chief Maj Gen Pornsak said that the Royal Thai Police headquarters had now ordered screening of all people traveling in and out of the province, and that his officers were especially focussing on people travelling inbound into the province.

“Everyone must be screened. The province has



Passengers are scanned at Phuket International Airport on Monday (Dec 21). Photo: Supplied

ordered tight controls on this matter due to the spread of COVID-19 at Samut Sakhon and provinces in the central region, especially among migrant workers in some provinces. Strict preventive measures have been put in place,” Maj Gen Pornsak said.

Police at the Phuket Check Point at Tha Chatchai, the only road onto the island, are working with officers from relevant departments

who are now stationed at the checkpoint, Maj Gen Pornsak noted.

“The screening is being carried out 24 hours a day. If any people from risk groups or people with exceedingly high body temperatures are found, they will be tested accordingly,” he said.

“Phuket Provincial Police will conduct a screening of all vehicles, especially all types of buses, which must

be rigorously screened before entering Phuket,” Maj Gen Pornsak explained.

“This policy will be intensely applied until the situation of the COVID-19 epidemic in the central provinces improves,” he added.

Maj Gen Pornsak also emphasised that all Thai citizens must be carrying their government ID cards when passing through the checkpoint. “And all people must wear a face

mask every time they leave the house,” he said.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew inspected the checkpoint on Monday night to observe the screening in action.

Governor Narong said that rigorous screening of all arrivals at all ports of entry to Phuket must be applied. “Especially all types of buses and vehicles that transport people into the area. All potential carriers must be screened, especially foreign workers who may be entering the area by public transport,” he said.

Meanwhile, health officials have begun sweeping migrant worker camps across the island to check for workers who might have recently arrived from Myanmar, Governor Narong noted.

Member employers of the Phuket Fisheries Association met on Monday to begin identifying any workers who have returned from Samut Sakhon province since Dec 1, he added.

Phuket International Airport General Manager Thanee Chuangchoo confirmed to *The Phuket News* on Monday that screening of all domestic passengers was now being

applied at the airport.

Governor Narong also urged people to report any migrant workers suspected of being smuggled into Phuket by calling 094-593 8876 or the 1567 special hotline set up.

The intensive screening measures were likely to cause delays for people travelling through the checkpoint, Gov Narong admitted.

“I apologise to all people traveling to Phuket at this time. It may be inconvenient, but this is in order to control and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The provincial government therefore has to have an intensive preventive measure to prevent an epidemic in the area,” Governor said.

While Governor Narong has avoided any mention of the possibility of Phuket being placed under lockdown to prevent COVID-19 from reaching the island, Phuket Provincial Health Office Chief Thanit Sermkaew told *The Phuket News*, “There is no need for any lockdown right now. The situation has not reached that stage yet, so please remain calm.”

Additional reporting by Eakkapop Thongtub

New 120km/h speed limit will not apply in Phuket

THE MOVE TO INCREASE THE SPEED limit on roads throughout the country designated as highways to 120km/h will not apply anywhere in Phuket, as none of the major roads on the island satisfy the criteria for the speed limit increase, the Phuket Highways Office has confirmed.

The news follows the Cabinet earlier this month approving the move ‘in principle’ to increase the speed limit on highways to 120km/h, but left the actual implementation of the law change to the Transport Ministry. The speed limit change has yet to come into effect.

Under the conditions of the law change is that it will apply only highways with at least two lanes running in the same direction and traffic islands with barriers, which Phuket has aplenty.

However, the roads must also not have any ground-level U-turns, which all major roads in Phuket have.

“We do not have that type of road in Phuket, so we cannot apply the regulation here,” Phuket Highways Chief Somwang Lohamut told *The Phuket News*.

“In Phuket, we have ground-level U-turns and traffic islands with trees and power poles,” he said.

“At this stage, only one road in the country is eligible for this new regulation and that is Route 32, locally known as ‘Sai Asia Road’ and the ‘Bang Pa-in-Nakhon Sawan road’, which is the main road for traveling from Central Thailand to the North,” Mr Somwang said.



The 120km/h speed limit will not apply to any roads in Phuket. Photo: The Phuket News

“Phuket people still have to follow the Road Traffic Act, B.E. 2522,” Mr Somwang concluded.

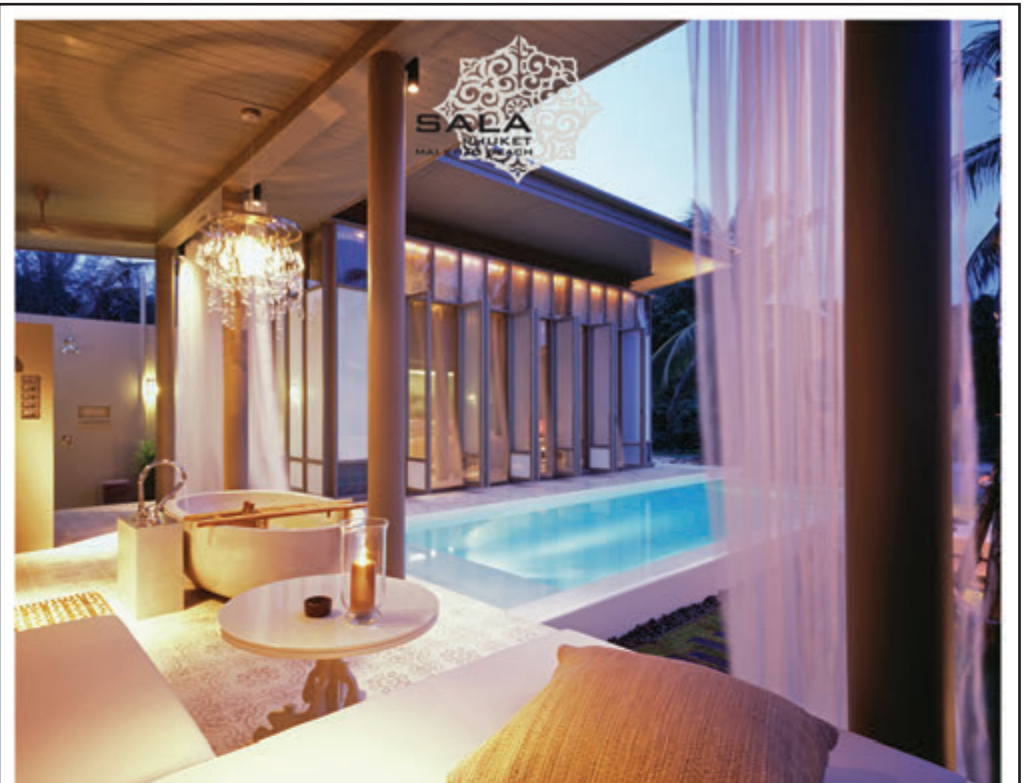
Maj Kritthath Onjan of Phuket Provincial Police confirmed to *The Phuket News* that the fastest speed limit on the island is 90km/h.

“The speed limit will actually be less than 90km/h, depending on the area,” he said.

“The speed limit depends on the type of the road, the location and the type of vehicle. If the road is near a local community, the speed limit will be lowered to about 60km/h. If the vehicle is a truck, then the speed limit will be even lower,” Maj Kritthath explained.

“Whatever the speed limit is set by the sign posted beside the road, please drive slowly and maintain control of your vehicle because there are a lot of accidents on Phuket’s roads,” he said.

“Remember, traffic police will catch and charge drivers for speeding,” Maj Kritthath warned. *The Phuket News*



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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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Wind 4 m/s

WED DEC 30



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Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

THU DEC 31



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Wind 7 m/s

Target: Zero holiday road deaths

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket's leading officials have set zero deaths from road accidents as the goal to be achieved during the Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign this New Year, to be enforced from Dec 29 to Jan 4.

Phuket Vice Governor Vikrom Jakthee announced the zero target at a meeting held on Dec 14 to coordinate all the government agencies in carrying out this year's New Year campaign.

"During the new year holidays, many people like to travel to other provinces, bringing greater risk of road accidents than normal," V/Gov Vikrom said.

"This meeting aims to make a clear understanding and to follow up the preparations from each relevant official, as we



Police checkpoints will be set up across the island from Dec 29 to Jan 4 as officers enforce the Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign for the New Year. Photo: The Phuket News / file

hope to reduce the number of accidents and have no deaths during the long holiday," he added.

"This year we have the slogan 'New Normal Life – Drive safe and no accidents', as we have a goal to make all road users safe and happy during the holiday," V/Gov Vikrom said.

The road-safety campaign for the new Year follows the usual four-stage outline:

- Dec 1 to 21 – Publicising and promoting the campaign
- Dec 22 to 28 – Preparation (for officials)
- Dec 29 to Jan 4 – Intensive control and protection (marked by road checkpoints)

• Jan 5 to 11 – Performance analysis (reviewing the campaign's effectiveness)

"We have already set out our orders for officers to follow to prevent road accidents and sent them to all district offices, municipalities and tambon administrative organisations [OrBorTor] so that all officers work in the same way," V/Gov Vikrom said.

"Our orders follow central government policy and focus on reducing the factors that can cause accidents, especially speeding and drunk driving," he noted.

"Officials must together target dangerous areas and times that they need to pay more attention to. There may be more checkpoints set up in each tambon. Rescue workers and officials must prepare equipment to be ready at all times," V/Gov Vikrom said.

"From statistics of previ-

ous years, the main reason for accidents in Phuket has been drunk driving, followed by speeding. Most accidents have involved motorbikes," he pointed out.

As of Tuesday (Dec 22), 70 people had died from road accidents in Phuket so far this year, the Thai Road Safety Committee (ThaiRSC) reported on its website.

A further 6,788 people suffered injuries requiring hospital treatment in the 5,954 road accidents in Phuket that have been officially recognised from Jan 1 to Dec 22, ThaiRSC also noted.

Nine of those injured this year were left permanently disabled, ThaiRSC reported.

During the meeting, officials stood and observed a minute's silence for those who lost their lives on Phuket's roads.

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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!



The free service is being provided until Jan 1. Photo: Phuket City Municipality

Free sterilisation, rabies vaccinations

PHUKET CITY MUNICIPALITY, the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office and the Soi Dog Foundation together are offering free sterilisation and rabies vaccines for cats and dogs to Phuket Town residents.

The service is available at the Saphan Hin gymnasium, on the outskirts of Phuket Town, until Jan 1.

Officers are providing services from 9am to 4pm, only Monday to Friday.

Sterilisation will be provided to only 20 cats and 20 dogs per day. The pets must not eat or drink anything for at least eight hours before receiving the sterilisation.

To receive the rabies vaccine, pets must be at least three months old.

Phuket Town Municipality asks pet owners to present their ID card or any identification document and pet vaccination history documents to officers at the clinic.

Foreigners can present their passports and a document such as a water or electricity bill to prove that they live in Phuket Town.

To book an appointment and ask for more information, call Phuket City Municipality's Veterinary office at 082-4706796. The Phuket News

The Peaks ordered demolished

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

MP Sira Jenjaka in Phuket in person on Monday (Dec 21) delivered the order from the Supreme Administrative Court for The Peaks Residences condo project in Kata to be demolished as it is illegally occupying state land.

The Peaks owners have 30 days to comply, starting from the date of the court's ruling, which was handed down last Thursday (Dec 17).

The Supreme Administrative Court last week ruled that the *NorSor 3 Kor* land document presented by The Peaks owners had been issued illegally.

MP Sira, who also serves as the Chairman of the House Committee for Law, Justice and Human Rights, today handed a formal "request" for the Phuket Provincial Government to ensure that the Supreme Administrative Court's order is fulfilled.

Present to receive the request was Phuket Vice Governor Piyaphona Chuwong.

Vice Governor Piyaphong explained to the press that MP Sira had already submitted a similar request to Sukon Nuphakdi of the Phuket Land Office, asking the office to revoke any official land documents issued for the project as soon as possible.

MP Sira also delivered a request



MP Sira Jenjaka (left) delivered the order in person in Phuket on Monday (Dec 21). Photo: PR Phuket

for Karon Mayor Tawee Thongcham to abide by the court order to have all construction for The Peaks project demolished as soon as possible.

The project, if completed, was estimated to be worth some B30 billion.

Mayor Tawee was not present. Instead, lawyer Kajorn Huabcharoen received the request on Mayor Tawee's behalf.

MP Sira also requested that Karon Municipality use the B3 million received as "collateral" in case any harm was done to the environment during construction to begin the demolition immediately.

In May this year, after the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) had also independently found that The Peaks project was illegal, MP Sira explained that the construction

permit for the project had also been found unlawful, but Karon Municipality had allowed construction by Kata Beach Co Ltd to proceed.

"They gave B3 million as collateral for the permit and pledged that the company would demolish the buildings and restore the land to its previous natural state if the formal investigation found the project illegal. So far they have refused to do that," he said.

"The Building Control Act does not give authority to local administrative officers to allow such action. The officers' wrongdoing can be considered illegal according to Criminal Code Section 157 as their wrongful exercise of duties," Mr Sira added.

MP Sira on Monday said that by the end of this week he will have submitted further formal requests to the Department of Lands head office in Bangkok, the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to carry out the Supreme Court's orders.

MP Sira also repeated his vow to take action against all officials found to have been involved in illegally issuing official documents related to The Peaks condo project.

"The House Committee for Law, Justice and Human Rights will continue to follow up on the progress of these issues," he said.

Speaking to the press at Parliament House in Bangkok last Friday (Dec 18), Mr Sira said, "Now that the Supreme Administrative Court has upheld the decision to revoke the title deed for the condo project, officers – and especially the Karon Mayor – should be investigated for issuing unlawful documents."

"We should freeze all accounts of the project owners and investigate whether they committed wrongdoing by acting together with officers of Karon Municipality," he said.

Sirinath touted for World Heritage status

THE PHUKET PROVINCIAL Government and officers at Sirinath National Park are preparing to propose six national parks along the Andaman coast to be recognised as UNESCO world heritage sites, including Sirinath National Park in Phuket.

The proposal was discussed at a meeting of the Protected Area Committee held at the Sirinath National Park head office on Dec 14, led by Phuket Vice Governor Piyaphong Chuwong.

In addition to Sirinath National Park in Phuket, the parks also to be nominated for World Heritage status are the Moo Koh Ranong National Park and Laem Son National Park, both in Ranong; as well as the Moo Koh Surin National Park, Moo Koh Similan National Park and the Khao Lampi-Hat Thai Mueang National Park, all in Phang Nga.

The process of submitting the formal proposal may take about two years, V/Gov Piyaphong said.

"Officials must first inform local people about the importance and the advan-



A turtle crosses the sand at Haad Nah on Koh Miang in the Similan Islands National Park. Photo: DNP

tages of being recognised as world heritage sites, so that they can understand and support the proposal," he said.

Also discussed at the meeting was whether or not to change the hours that Sirinath National Park is open to visitors. Visitors' safety was put forward as the reason for considering changing the park's open hours. It was decided to hold a public meeting at a later date in order to receive local feedback on the idea.

Also pointed out at the meeting was that turtles have started to return to

local beaches to lay eggs, with 17 turtle nests being found on beaches in Phuket and Phang Nga since the start of last year.

The government is continuing its monetary rewards for people reporting turtles coming ashore to lay eggs, the meeting also noted.

On Nov 2, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan and Natural Resource Minister Varawut Silpa-archa presented rewards to nine local people who immediately reported to officials turtles they found had come ashore to lay eggs.

The Phuket News

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ALCOHOL MAY BE A HEALTH HAZARD!

PCC facilitates soft loans

THE PHUKET CHAMBER of Commerce (PCC) is urging local business owners to apply for soft loans now made available through the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP) to help businesses struggling amid the ongoing economic crisis.

"This is to help people in need, especially entrepreneurs and people in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi who are in trouble now," PCC President Thanusak Phungdet explained on Dec 17.

The low-interest government loans under the SMEs One' scheme incur only 1% interest over a period of seven years without having to pay any installments for the first 12 months, Mr Thanusak explained.

"Currently, there is only just over B2.4 billion left [of the funds to be provided], and it is for business all throughout the country," Mr Thanusak noted, adding that those who apply first will have their applications processed first.

The 'SMEs One' scheme allows for loans of up to B500,000 for people with only a guarantor provided, and up to B3 million for businesses with the authorised director as guarantor.

Instead of applying directly



PCC President Thanusak urged business owners to apply for the soft loans being provided. Photo: PR Phuket

to the SME Bank, through which the loans are being made available under the "SMEs One" scheme, local business operators can apply through the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, Mr Thanusak explained.

"This is a nationwide push whereby people can apply for the loans through Thai Chamber of Commerce branches through the country," he said.

Other business associations that are also processing applications include the Federation of Thai Industries, the Thai SME Confederation, the Federation of Tourism Industry of Thailand and the National Farmers Council.

Mr Thanusak urged any business operators in Phuket looking to apply for an 'SMEs One' loan to call the Phuket Chamber of Commerce at 076 -217567-8.

The Phuket News

Travel curbs eased to boost tourism

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The government is easing travel restrictions for citizens from 56 countries to boost the country's pandemic-hit tourism industry, though visitors will be required to undergo a mandatory two-week hotel quarantine.

Tourists from countries including Australia, France and the United States can travel without visas, but would need a certificate to show they are free of COVID-19 72 hours before travel and a booking at a quarantine hotel, Taweessilp Visanuyothin, spokesman for the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), said.

Visitors would then be subject to a two-week quarantine period after arriving, he said, adding the normal 30-day visa would be extended to 45 days.

While in quarantine, arrivals would undergo three COVID-19 tests, up from two required previously, Dr Taweessilp said, adding that more testing could potentially lead to shorter quarantine periods in the future.

The revisions come as the tourism-reliant economy struggles to encourage more domestic activity, but an ongoing travel ban continues to keep most foreign tourists away.

Earlier, each arrival was tested twice



The easing of the travel requirements is hoped to boost tourist arrivals to the country. Photo: AOT

during the 14-day quarantine, first three to five days after arrival, and then again on days 11-13.

Each arrival is now tested three times, on day 0-1, day 9-10 and day 13-14, Dr Taweessilp said.

The changed testing process would continue until Dec 31. Health officials would then study the results and assess whether quarantine could be reduced to 10 days, Dr Taweessilp said.

The assessment will begin on Jan 1 and is expected to be finalised by Jan 15, he said.

A shorter quarantine is aimed at attracting foreign tourists, he added.

Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul previously said the scheme would be for

visitors from low-risk countries.

Asked about Christmas and New Year celebrations, Dr Taweessilp said the CCSA was in favour of festivities going ahead and not being banned, as in many Western countries. However, organisers and attendees must follow disease control measures strictly, he said.

He also said the government was ready to consider companies' disease control measures to allow visiting employees to work during quarantine. "The entry of tourists will stimulate the economy," Foreign Affairs spokesman Tanee Sangrat said.

Travellers from other countries not included in the announcement could still be eligible for a 90-day special tourist visa and a certificate of entry.

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TAT hooks up with Tinder

THE TOURISM Authority of Thailand (TAT) has joined together with dating application Tinder and Thai Smile Airways to launch a collection of new 'Single Journey' tours around Thailand specifically targeting single travellers.

"The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has changed travel behaviour and necessitates that we think 'out-of-the-box'. The 'Single Travel Route' targets solo travellers who prefer to travel alone to various destinations in Thailand," TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn said at the launch on Dec 14.

The TAT is preparing nine Single Journey tour routes at destinations around Thailand, including Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai - Chiang Rai, Lop Buri - Saraburi, Si Sa Ket - Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani - Loei, Chumphon - Surat Thani, Phuket, Ayutthaya and Bangkok.

To help launch the new Single Journey tours, the TAT and its partners are organising three pilot tours for interested single travellers, including a beach party on



The 'Single Journey' campaign launched on Dec 14 in conjunction with Tinder and Thai Smile includes a beachside party trip to Koh Khai, off Phuket. Photo: TAT

a small island off Phuket.

The first trip took place last Sunday (Dec 20), free of charge with up to 100 single Thai travellers allowed to attend.

Organised together with Grand Pearl Cruise, the tour cruised along the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok, stopping at nine temples and hosted by renowned fortune teller and Feng Shui expert Chang-Tosaporn Sritula, who shared tips on how to pay homage to Buddha and ask for blessings. The full-day trip included a cruise dinner.

The second trip, to Phuket, is on Jan 9, with seats for 50 single Thais at B222 per person. This tour is being organised in conjunc-

tion with Love Andaman and includes a beachside party concert at Koh Khai off Phuket's east coast.

The third trip is on Jan 23, for up to 50 single Thais and priced at B555 per person, and is an exclusive train tour in cooperation with the State Railway of Thailand to Pa Sak Jolasid Dam in Lop Buri with a meal at the dam included.

Bookings for any of the tours opened on Dec 15.

For more information on Single Journey routes from the TAT and its partners, visit the official LINE @singlejourney account, the TAT official website tourismthailand.org or www.sneaksdeal.com/singlejourney

The Phuket News

Prayut warns of lockdown

Health Ministry on guard should pandemic spiral out of control

Bangkok Post

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has assigned the Public Health Ministry to prepare for a new COVID-19 lockdown in case the pandemic spirals out of control.

Gen Prayut said on Monday (Dec 21) that public health officials were randomly testing migrant workers as far and wide as possible. "Everyone shares the responsibility for this mistake," he said.

The Public Health Ministry has been assigned to draw up clear guidelines for locking down more provinces if the coronavirus outbreak continues to spread.

He said everyone should cooperate with the government and health authorities in containing the spread of COVID-19 among migrant workers "or else a lockdown will become unavoidable".

The prime minister said he wanted to spend seven days to assess the COVID-19 situation to decide whether the New Year countdown should be held or not, as well as Children's Day.

He asked the public not to panic and hoped the situation would improve after seven days adding that the Public Health Ministry had assured him at its morning



Officials interview migrant workers in Bangkok during COVID-19 screening and testing following an outbreak in Samut Sakhon. All migrant workers at the market will be given COVID-19 tests. Photo: Pornprom Satrabhaya

briefing that the situation was still under control.

Dr Taweelap Visanuyothin, spokesman for the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), says the ministry will present its proposals at its next meeting with the premier.

However, Dr Taweelap said it was still impossible to decide

whether New Year celebrations should be called off as part of the effort to contain COVID-19.

Information compiled at the start of week about the outbreak in Samut Sakhon still wasn't sufficient to predict the situation during the upcoming holiday season, he said.

"It will probably take about seven days to tell, around Dec 28,

so, it's very hard to say at this point if celebrations should still be on or not," he added.

The CCSA recorded 427 new infections on Monday, 397 of whom were migrant workers, as health authorities sped up screening migrant workers in Samut Sakhon potentially linked with the province's central shrimp market, a new virus hotspot.

Dr Taweelap said that about 1,000 seafood vendors from 22 provinces were frequent buyers at the market and local health officials were alerted to test them and people in close contact.

The number of infections linked to the Samut Sakhon outbreak had reached 821 by Monday evening and was likely to keep rising, he warned, given the fact that most Myanmar workers lived together in the same apartments. The results of about 2,600 tests are still pending.

Health authorities now aim to test a further 10,300 migrant workers believed to be linked with the infected workers, he said.

The Public Health Ministry has now adopted measures which have proved so successful among migrant workers in Singapore. Apartments where they live are being turned into makeshift quarantine centres. This approach should contain the spread of the virus, said Dr Taweelap.

Samut Sakhon has been put under lockdown with a curfew from 10pm-5am in effect until Jan 3 and people's movements out of the province are also banned.

Additionally, 200 soldiers have been drafted in to boost the authorities' screening and checkpoint capacity.

Patient dies after ambulance obstructed

A DRUNK MOTORIST who obstructed an ambulance rushing to pick up a patient in Samut Prakan on Monday (Dec 21) has been accused of causing the patient's death.

Samrit Maneerit, 38, cut in front of the ambulance in his car then stopped, blocking the lane and obstructing the emergency vehicle, which had its lights and sirens on. He got out and began berating the ambulance crew before driving off.

The ambulance followed him to his home and called the police.



The vehicle that obstructed the ambulance. Photo: Capture from ChannelOne31 TV.

A blood alcohol test on Mr Samrit returned a reading of 190 milligrammes per decilitre of blood, well beyond the legal limit of 50 mg/dl.

Police charged Mr Samrit

with drink-driving and obstructing an ambulance.

Pracha Boribun had suffered a seizure and breathing problems at his home and later died on the way to hospital.

Mr Boribun's family plan to file a complaint against Mr Samrit, charging him with causing death or committing an act intentionally causing death.

Mr Samrit admitted he was in the wrong and apologised. He claimed the ambulance came very close to his car, which angered him.

Bangkok Post

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The spirit of service learning

Neil Crossland

This term at British International School, Phuket (BISP), we have embarked on a food drive to support communities on the island who face the bitter challenge of the COVID-19 crisis. Students across the Primary and Secondary School, as well as our parent community and staff, have reflected upon the needs of others and identified the very real and authentic plight of communities on our doorstep who are suffering from the loss of income or a livelihood dependent on international tourism. This realisation, or identification, is the first step in a process of service learning and leads to further student engagement through action or advocacy.

Since working internationally I have been fortunate enough to work with Kathy Berger-Kay, a world-renowned author and facilitator of service learning programmes in international schools. Kathy promotes equity, social justice, and social and emotional wellbeing through service-learning programmes and experiences across all age groups. Berger-Kay's model of service learning adopts the following developmental sequence*:

Investigation: For this students learn about the issue, 'finding out' about themselves, community strengths and community needs. This typically reveals the authentic need that students will address.

Preparation: Students acquire content knowledge and raise and resolve questions regarding the authentic need. They identify community partners, organise a plan with clarification of roles, responsibilities and timelines, and develop skills needed to successfully carry out the plan.

Action: Students implement their plan through direct service, indirect service, advocacy, and/or further research. Action is planned with partners based on



Photo: BISP

mutual understandings and perspectives and aims for reciprocal benefits for all involved.

Reflection: Reflection is ongoing and occurs as a considered summation of thoughts and feelings regarding essential questions and varied experiences to inform content knowledge, increase self-awareness, and assist in ongoing planning. When students have varying modalities for reflection, they grow to identify their preferred ways to reflect and value the reflective process. This leads to students becoming reflective by choice.

Demonstration: Student demonstration captures the entire service learning experience, beginning with investigation, and includes what has been learned, the process of learning, and the service or contribution accomplished.

(*adapted from Kay 2010. The Complete Guide to Service Learning. 2nd edition. Free Spirit Publishing)

Our 'Food for All' food drive initiative at BISP has exemplified Berger-Kay's service learning model in action and has moved students from a position of passive acceptance to develop an awareness and understanding of the complex social, economic and

political interconnectedness of the world and the impact that changes like COVID-19 can have on others. The annual 'Spirit Week', designed to foster a greater sense of camaraderie and belonging within our school community, has adopted a new purpose and meaning as students extend their 'spirit of generosity' to our wider community.

In one week our food drive raised enough money to feed over 200 families (of four) for one week during these difficult times. Our students continued to purchase, deliver and distribute food items – mainly oils, noodles, rice, sugar and tinned fish – during the remainder of this term.

In the same week in the Secondary School, our Student Leadership team were simultaneously raising awareness of issues related to kindness, healthy sleep habits, and diabetes through public advocacy. Taking action does not always mean standing on the frontline. As children pull through adolescence they get to know their own minds, often an emotional tussle, which can trigger a desire to speak up and speak out over issues that matter most.

Berger-Kay argues that the benefit of service learning is reciprocal between those who give and those who receive. We do not want our students to learn from a singular act of charitable kindness. Service learning is an experiential and relational process where students engage in real-life issues through application and reflection. It is this process that facilitates sustainable intellectual, personal and social growth.

Phuket will take some time to return to normal, and the BISP community will continue to support its recovery. We hope that through this experience and further exposure to the process of service learning, our students will develop a passion to become the generation where giving is more commonplace than receiving.



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Life's a Beach, so just grab it!



BLAZING SADDLES

Baz Daniel
baz_gunner2000@yahoo.com

Water! Where would we be without it? Over 71% of our planet is covered with water and we ourselves are comprised of over 60% of the stuff! In addition, science has discovered that proximity to water is absolutely fundamental to our well-being and even our very happiness. Abundant research now supports the fact that when we exercise, or even sit quietly close to water, we experience an immediate boost to our immune system, our relaxation response, and to levels of our 'happy brain chemicals' such as dopamine and serotonin.



Cutie and bike ready for action.

Why this should happen is a matter of conjecture, but scientists suspect it has a lot to do with our evolutionary history. We are, after all, descended from arbo-real simians who literally 'came down to earth' around six million years ago to adopt an upright, bipedal existence, based on hunting and gathering in tribes. We needed to find water each night to survive and find our food, hydration and safety. It's little wonder, that being close to water is chemically hard-wired into our beings to make us relaxed and happy.

In this COVID-induced time of stress, we are blessed here in the Andaman in having access to abundant water-fringed environments in which we can be outdoors to walk or cycle – a sure-fire way to boost our mental and physical well-being. For anyone feeling a bit low in the current crisis, my advice is to get out of doors to walk and cycle beside water for an immediate boost to mood and well-being.

Deciding to follow my own advice, I recently headed off Phuket in search of some peaceful beside-water cycling and drove to Khao Lak, my mountain bike strapped to the car's bike-rack and my nervous little dog 'Cutie' along for the adventure. I drove less than two hours north and as soon as I'd breasted the hilly, winding road into the main town



Baz and Cutie on Nangthong Beach at sunset.

of Khao Lak, turned left down to the gorgeous Nangthong Bay Resort set right on the beach of the same name. The setting of this lovely escape is one of the best I've found around the Andaman for a beachside stay and the chance to try some cycling by water.

I checked into a lovely, air-conditioned cottage for just B1,200, then swam in the charmingly-situated pool, in order to loosen my body up after the drive. From the resort, I chose to cycle straight north along the hard sand at low tide for almost 10 kilometres to the next headland. Cycling on the hard-packed sand was a bit tiring on the legs, but the sensational vistas of vaulting Casuarina trees, plus the beautiful colours of sunset, made it very worthwhile. On the way back I also discovered the

lovely La Flora Beach Club right on the sands, for that all-important post-ride rewarding drinkie!

If you don't want to do the hard yards of cycling on the beach, exposing your bike to sand and salinity, there are also abundant tracks and little roads running along the beaches up here and nowadays they are quieter and safer than they've ever been!

While life may be a bit of a 'bitch' right now, with a bike, the beach and a little of your own resolve, you have the perfect antidote to the travails that life throws at us!

"Bicycling" Baz Daniel has been penning his Blazing Saddles column, chronicling his cycling adventures in Phuket and beyond, since 2013.

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7PM ONWARDS

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POP QUIZ

1. How many countries have areas that together form Lapland?
2. Which syrup has more calcium than milk?
3. What was the tallest building in London until 1962?
4. Who served as the last President of the Soviet Union?
5. Which king in a deck of standard playing cards does not have a moustache?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Itinerary abbr.
 4. "Kill Bill" weapon
 9. There's a final one, in poker
 14. Ending for west or east
 15. Prohibited thing
 16. The lightning Bolt sprinter at the Olympics
 17. 1999 film, Tobey Maguire starred
 20. Hit Broadway
 21. Three set
 22. Control pill in a test
 26. Forcing back
 31. "___ durn tootin'!"
 32. Hit the road
 34. Accelerated
 35. The Duke of ___, "Rigoletto" role
 37. "___ life!"
 38. Classic sports film with Kevin Costner
 42. Knot in wood
 43. Outbursts
 44. Fit for farming
 47. Asunción assent
 48. Car club
 51. Attacks
 53. Baby blues
 55. Stretches one's budget
 57. Subject of some treaties
 58. One of a dinosaur series
 65. Create a statute
- Down**
1. Duplicate a duplicate
 2. Big hit
 3. Ingratiate oneself
 4. Bering, e.g., abbr.
 5. Comic strip cry
 6. Sale abbreviation
 7. Lopsided score
 8. Gave the prescribed amount to
 9. Root veggie
 10. Tempe sch.
 11. ___ Harbour, Fla.
 12. Golf ball placement
 13. U.S.N. officer
 18. Abbr. at the bottom of a letter
 19. Flubs
 23. "And others," in a bibliography
 24. Link
 25. Words before sight and mind
 27. Gamblers' mecca
 28. Mentioned before
 29. Snack
 30. Student score (abbr.)
- 33. Patriot Putnam of the American Revolution**
- 35. Peach ___ (dessert)**
- 36. Leaking**
- 38. Trappers' pelts**
- 39. Some investments, for short**
- 40. Romantic flower**
- 41. Large lake**
- 42. Farm call**
- 45. Misinforms**
- 46. Some lodge members**
- 48. Eagle nests**
- 49. Multitudes**
- 50. Specify**
- 52. Jason wears one in "The Bourne Identity"**
- 54. Islamabad's country, abbr.**
- 56. Check bar codes**
- 58. Presidential brother**
- 59. Article in "El Sol"**
- 60. Tried for office**
- 61. Duke's grp.**
- 62. S.F. hours**
- 63. Interjection**
- 64. Shoot the breeze**

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) Four (Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia); 2) Maple; 3) St Paul's Cathedral (built 1675-9); 4) Mikhail Gorbachev; 5) King of Hearts

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15				16				
17			18					19				
20						21						
22				23	24	25	26			27	28	29
30												
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44				45	46		47				48	49
50												
51						52		53		54		
				55			56			57		
58	59	60	61					62	63	64		
65							66				67	
68							69				70	

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

F	C	C		D	O	C			Y	E	P							
G	L	A	V		R	N	A		M	E	T	S						
B	E	N	I	M		E	E	L		K	O	L	A	S				
D	A	N	C	I	N	G		S	C	H	O	O	L					
E	R	O	I	C	A			A	R	G	O	'	S					
H	S	T	A	P	R			E	V	E		W	I	T				
				S	C	H	E	E	R		L	E	A	D	E	R	S	
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				I	S	T		N	E	D		E	R	A		U	L	M
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				R	U	S	S	I	A	N		B	A	L	L	E	T	
				G	A	I	N	S		V	I	E		H	A	I	S	E
				Y	A	N	K			E	D	S		N	E	I	L	
				M	A	G				Y	E	T						

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

in 10 Europeans were conceived in IKEA beds.

8

minutes and 20 seconds is how long it takes for sunlight to reach the Earth.

22

years is how long Massachusetts banned Christmas for during the 1600s because people had been drinking too much and crossdressing.

34

years is how long it's been since there has been a full moon on Christmas Day (Dec 25, 2020). The next Christmas full moon will be in 2034.

20 million

US dollars Elon Musk secured from investors in the final hours of Christmas Eve 2008 as Tesla and SpaceX were about to go bankrupt. Two days later, SpaceX secured a deal with NASA worth \$1.6 billion.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Sunset through the trees. Photo: Celina Manaois

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

This week in history

Dec 25, 336

First documentary sign of Christmas celebrations in Rome.

Dec 26, 1991

The Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union meets and formally dissolves the Soviet Union.

Dec 27, 1949

The Netherlands officially recognises Indonesian independence. End of the Dutch East Indies.

Dec 28, 1769

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

Dec 29, 1997

Hong Kong begins to kill all the nation's 1.25 million chickens to stop the spread of a potentially deadly influenza strain.



Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin.

Dec 30, 1916

Russian mystic and advisor to the Tsar Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin is murdered by a loyalist group led by Prince Felix Yusupov. His frozen, partially-trussed body is discovered in a Moscow river three days later.

Dec 31, 1759

Arthur Guinness signs a 9,000-year lease at £45 per annum and starts brewing Guinness.

Source: Wikipedia

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FRI

8 JAN



The Grow Boating Networking Evening for January 2021

The Grow Boating Networking Evening for January 2021 will be held at The Hardstand Cafe at the Phuket Boat Lagoon Marina on Friday the 8th of January 2021 from 5pm onward. There will be a light buffet sponsored by The Hardstand Cafe and as always all of your favourite beverages will be available from the bar. Please contact us if you would like to be our drinks sponsor for the evening. Sponsors receive a generous media package from the Phuket News and can display their products and services on the evening and give a presentation on their company. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome. There is no entry fee, just drop your business card or register at the bar. 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 The Grow Boating Networking Evening is organised by the Thai Yachting Business Association. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/growboating or our Website https://www.thaiyachtingbusinessassociation.com/grow-boating Grow Boating is kindly supported by our media partner The Phuket News, Live 89.5 radio and Phuket News TV. See www.thephuketnews.com

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The fans loved having AFL back in Phuket.



Andrew, Justine and Matt



Jason and Alan

PHUKET POWER - 2020 THAI EXPAT CLUB AFL ANDAMAN CUP

Phuket's inaugural AFL Asia match was played in warm conditions with great local support at the Alan Cooke Ground in Thalang on Dec 5, 2020. The Thailand Tigers AFL side got the better of the Phuket Power. The final score was 1.5 (11) v 22.11 (143) in favour of the Tigers. Special thanks to Andrew McMillan for organising the event in Phuket, and the sponsors including Thai Expat Club (Pacific Cross), The Phuket News, Bench Fitness, AustCham, Lady Pie, the Legends Sports Bar. Many thanks also to Neil and his staff at the ACG Cricket & Sports Facility as well as a host of other people who worked as officials, announcers, umpires and support staff on the day to make this event a success. Many thanks to Khun Wannapa (Nueng) for taking the photos.



All smiles.



Getting into the festive mood.



Gulu, Gren and Wicky



The French connection.

GROW BOATING NETWORKING – DEC 2020

The Grow Boating Networking Evening for December 2020 was held at the Speakeasy Yacht Club and Restaurant, at the Royal Phuket Marina on Friday December 4. A great crowd of people enjoyed the light buffet and a couple rounds of drinks sponsored by the Speakeasy Yacht club and Royal Phuket Marina.



Yachts leaving Sydney harbour at the start of last year's race. Photo: AFP

Sydney to Hobart cancelled

SAILING

AUSTRALIA'S GRUELLING Sydney to Hobart yacht race has been called off for the first time in its 76-year history because of an escalating coronavirus outbreak, organisers said.

The often brutal 628-nautical mile (1,163-kilometre) bluewater classic was due to start on Boxing Day, but with parts of Sydney locked down after a new cluster of COVID-19 cases, it was cancelled last Saturday (Dec 19).

"We are bitterly disappointed to cancel the race this year especially considering the plans and preparations we had put in place to have a COVID safe race," said Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA) commodore Noel Cornish.

The decision to pull the plug came the same day au-

thorities in Hobart announced plans to impose a 14-day quarantine requirement on all travellers from Sydney after a cluster of new coronavirus cases on the city's northern beaches emerged, where many crew members are based.

Cornish said that with the advice unlikely to lift in the immediate future and the immense logistics involved in trying to reorganise a race with around 100 entrants, it was decided to cancel rather than postpone.

"The club has done the right thing in terms of trying to hold the race but if it has to be cancelled so be it," said multiple winner and Ichi Ban skipper Matt Allen told Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*.

"The health of people and not spreading the virus is the main thing, more than the operation of a sporting event," he added. *AFP*

Penguins and Cows schooled at the ACG

CRICKET

Neil Quail

Phuket cricket delighted in a double-header against visiting competition from Bangkok in the form of the Southerners Cricket Club at the ACG last weekend (Dec 19-20).

The Patong Penguins and the Thalang Cows selected what was hoped to be their strongest sides but by Sunday afternoon both Phuket teams had been left trailing in the wake of the Southerners as they departed for the capital.

Against the Penguins on Saturday, it was opener Daniel Jacobs and former Patong player Justin Swart who inflicted the damage with a partnership of 151 after fellow opener Thomas Ward had been bowled for 21 in the 7th over by Shivam Bhattacharya.

Livermore took the wicket of Swart who, following two sixes in the over, hit a tired pre-empted shot that found Michael Flowers in the covers.

Jacobs then unleashed



Southerners' Mukesh Thakur in action against Patong Penguins at the ACG last Saturday (Dec 19). Photo: Tyler Whateley

his arsenal of devastation, pummelling the Penguins bowling in notching up 11 of his dozen sixes, and helping to take the score to 315 for 2 as the teams broke for lunch.

The Penguins sent Andrew McMillan and Flowers to begin the run chase, but it took just nine balls before Wasim Ahmed removed the latter, and just another six balls to end McMillan's efforts, trapped LBW by another former Patong player, Delano Buchner.

Paddy Ledebor and Craig Morgan lifted the score to 71 and captain Jason Robertson hit 27 but with the score at 126 for 6 after the 17th over, any prospect of a Penguins victory had all but ended. Nadeem Youseff was the pick of the bowlers in taking two wickets for just nine runs during his three-over spell.

On Sunday the Cows folded in the 21st over for just 63 runs with Imtiyaz Mushtaq the only batsman to reach double figures on 15 as the

Southerners continued their dominance with a commanding bowling performance

Again, it was Youseff who topped the Southerners' bowling stats, taking three wickets during a six-over spell for another nine runs.

Mukesh rounded off a solid weekend's performance for the visitors with a 31 not out to mercifully end proceedings in the 8th over and return the Southerners home with two commanding wins under their belts.

Red Bull shakeup for next season sees Albon out, Perez in

FORMULA ONE

THAILAND'S ALEX ALBON has been sidelined by Red Bull Racing in favour of Racing Point refugee Sergio Perez for the 2021 Formula One season.

Albon, after just two seasons in the premier class, will be kept on as test and reserve driver. Red Bull Racing principal Christian Horner said the Thai would remain part of his squad's preparation for major regulation changes in 2022.

"Having taken our time to evaluate all the relevant data and performances we have decided that Sergio is the right driver to partner Max [Verstappen] for 2021," he said.

"Alex remains an important part of our team as test and reserve driver with a key focus on 2022 development, and we would like to thank him for his hard work and contribution."

Albon's fall came as rapidly as his rise.

Having abandoned his F1 dreams in 2018, an unexpected vacancy brought him to Red Bull junior team Toro Rosso in 2019, where he turned in an



Albon's fall came as rapidly as his rise. Photo: AFP

impressive six months.

He then earned sudden promotion to Red Bull Racing that August to replace the wilting Pierre Gasly, where he continued his run of solid results.

But he struggled to build on his rookie campaign in 2020. The Red Bull Racing car was unstable to drive near the limit, and while the experienced Verstappen was able to thrash the RB16 into compliance,

Albon couldn't do the same.

It meant Red Bull Racing was in effect fielding one car against Mercedes's two, leaving it strategically hamstrung.

On average around half a second behind Verstappen in qualifying, Albon returned just two podiums and 105 points compared to Verstappen's 11 rostrums and 214 points, including two victories.

With aspirations for a title tilt in 2020, Albon's position in the race team had become untenable, and with several Red Bull-backed juniors set to pressure for F1 drives, his reserve driver role is unlikely to keep him in the frame for a full-time return.

But Albon's loss is Perez's gain.

Perez was at risk of being locked out of the sport when Racing Point made the late decision to rip up his contract to hire four-time champion and ex-Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel, in whom it saw greater value for its 2021 relaunch as Aston Martin.

Ironically Vettel has endured his worst season in Formula One while Perez has had his best. Despite missing two races with COVID, he finished fourth on the championship table behind only the Mercedes drivers and Verstappen and sensationally took a maiden victory at the Sakhir Grand Prix.

In doing so he dominated teammate Lance Stroll, who ended 11th in the standings.

On this season alone he warranted a seat, and Red Bull Racing's unusual decision to sign from outside its driver roster gives him the chance to fulfil his potential in race-winning machinery.

"The opportunity to race for a championship-contending team is something I have waited for since I arrived in Formula One," Perez said. "The team has the same winning mentality as me and I am here to perform well and help the team fight for another title."

There is a risk the one-year deal becomes a poisoned chalice. Few expect the Mexican to match Verstappen on pure pace, and after a career as an established midfield overachiever, a lacklustre season alongside the Dutchman could damage his reputation.

But a strong and consistent year in the notoriously unforgiving Red Bull Racing car – even if just behind Verstappen, which is all the team really wants of him – will be enough to keep him in the conversation for 2022, giving him the chance to compete in what is hoped will be a more competitive era for Formula One.

Michael Lamonato

Reds hit seven in Palace raid

Liverpool top the tree going into Christmas for third straight year

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Liverpool and Manchester United both delivered early Christmas gifts to their absent fans last weekend with resounding victories in the Premier League.

On Saturday (Dec 19) Liverpool recorded their highest ever away win in the top-flight with a clinical 7-0 demolition job over a beleaguered Crystal Palace to stretch their lead at the summit to four points and ensure they occupy top spot on Christmas Day for the third consecutive year.

Japanese international Takumi Minamino opened the floodgates with his first league goal for the club in only the 3rd minute with further efforts coming from Roberto Firmino (2), Sadio Mane, Jordan Henderson and a brace from substitute Mohamed Salah.

It was Jurgen Klopp's 127th victory as Liverpool manager in the Premier League, overtaking Rafael Benitez (126) as the Reds boss with the most wins



'Tis the season to be jolly for Jurgen Klopp and his Liverpool team who sit top of the league going into Christmas for the third consecutive season. Photo: AFP

in Premier League history.

Manchester United managed an even quicker start the following day as two Scott McTominay goals within three minutes set them on their way to a crushing 6-2 win over old rivals Leeds United, the Scot

becoming the first player to score twice inside the first three minutes of a Premier League game.

"This will go down as one of the great Manchester United v Leeds games," commented United manager Ole Gunnar

Solskjaer as his side rose to third spot in the table after further goals from Bruno Fernandes (2), Viktor Lindelof and Dan James.

FOXES SNIFFING
Leicester climbed to second

after a hugely impressive 2-0 win over Tottenham, their first away victory against their London rivals since a 1-0 victory in 2015-16 – the season they won the title.

Talisman Jamie Vardy was once again on the scoresheet to make it 19 goals in his past 19 Premier League away games. He also became the first player to score an away goal against an opponent at three different venues in the competition – White Hart Lane, Wembley and Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

"The players have done great," said manager Brendan Rodgers. "A European campaign, lots of injuries, but they have kept the enthusiasm, spirit and quality, so it is a very pleasing opening third of the season."

Everton's resurgence continued as they heaped even more pressure on under-fire Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta with a 2-1 win to move into fourth place.

"We had chances but the last shot, the last pass is not going our way," said a clearly distressed Arteta post-match.

"It's not an excuse, we keep believing in what we are doing. We need to win matches and that's not happening," he added.

The result leaves the Gunners in 15th place, just four points off the relegation zone and Arteta under no illusions that the outcome of the games over the festive period could well prove critical to his survival.

Sam Allardyce's return to top-flight management proved an unhappy one as his West Brom side were defeated 0-3 by Midlands rivals Aston Villa to leave them one off the bottom.

The Baggies had sacked Slaven Bilic earlier in the week and turned to Allardyce, a manager who has never been relegated with the previous seven top-flight teams he has managed but clearly he has an unenviable task at hand.

Next up is a visit to Anfield on Sunday to meet the champions Liverpool. However, the last time the Reds lost at home in the league was against Crystal Palace in April 2017 – then managed by none other than 'Big Sam' Allardyce...

Thailand Golf Tour unveils 2021 schedule

GOLF

THE ALL THAILAND GOLF TOUR (ATGT) has unveiled its full schedule for the 2021 season, featuring 12 events with a record total purse of B40 million.

The new season will begin with the Boonchu Ruangkit Championship in Nakhon Ratchasima from Jan 14-17, offering a total prize fund of B4mn.

It will be followed by the E-san Open (Feb 11-14) at Singha Park Khon Kaen Golf Club and the Singha Classic (Feb 25-28) at Royal Hills Golf Resort and Spa in Nakhon Nayok.

The Singha Classic will see its total purse increased from B2mn to B3mn.

The Thailand Masters, the oldest and most

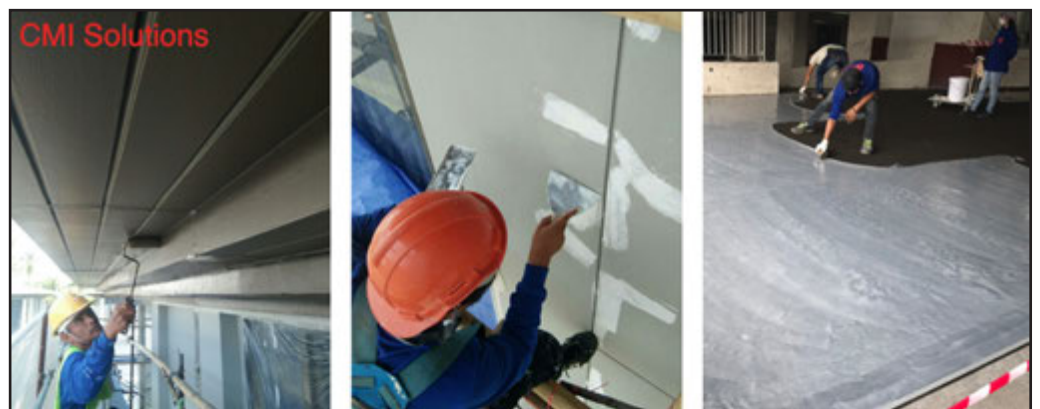


Pavit Tangkamolprasert won the 2020 Boonchu Ruangkit Championship. Photo: Bangkok Post

lucrative event on the tour with a total prize fund of B5mn, will take place at Santiburi Country Club in Chiang Rai from April 1-4.

The date for the Thongchai Jaidee Foundation tournament, one of the most important events on the circuit, will be determined later.

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Sport

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Red Bull F1
clip Albon's
wings > p14

BOWLS THRILLER IN PRYDER CUP

BOWLS

Robert Knight

Monday, Dec 14 saw the 7th edition of the Kamala Lawn Bowls Pryder Cup where defending champions the Europeans (EU) took on the Rest of the World (ROW).

Despite holding an impressive 5-1 winning record to date, the Europeans were this time arguably second favourites on paper. However, as in previous Pryder competitions, what proved to be the crucial factor was the choice of teams and individual lane allocations.

With seven players in each team, the format was one game of fours, a triple, three doubles games and eight singles with one point for a win, a half point for a draw, and zero points for a loss.

The "magic" number needed by the EU to retain the trophy was six and a half



The victorious EU team with the trophy. Photo: Robert Knight

points whilst the ROW needed a minimum of seven points to be victorious. A draw would see the EU team retain the trophy.

The Rest of the World team consisted of players from Australia, Canada and Thailand whilst a certain amount of poetic licence, as seems to be the case in most international sports these days, was

employed in the EU line up; Sweden and England provided most of the players whilst Thai Noon Mslkq qualified through paternal rights and Kunlawo Jaew thanks to her Croatian connections.

The score after the fours was 1 each but following the doubles contest the ROW edged ahead 3 and a half to 2 and a half.

However, this was when the decisions on lane and player allocations became perhaps a crucial factor where the EU team hedged their bets and played two of their stronger players for the first three of the crucial last seven games, saving two other strong players for the following games.

In the authors opinion, the ROW failed to factor this

in and questionably fielded players on lanes they hadn't played before.

The EU team won two of the three games, meaning the scores were once again tied at 4 and a half each heading into the final games and it was all down to the last four singles to decide this year's match.

ROW's Jorada Vunkiri and Rob Knight beat Kunlawo Jaew and Duncan Kennedy respectively with Ken (Sammy) Sampert and EU bowler Glenn Collins sharing a 8-8 draw to leave the overall scores tied at 6-6 going into the final nail-biting match between ROW'S Ray Austin and EU's Pat Ailm.

Coming back from a 0-5 deficit in the early exchanges of the final match, Pat produced great recovery bowls to hold a slender 9-7 lead.

After 1,186 bowls throughout the day, the competition and title rested on the final eight bowls to be delivered by Pat and Ray. Immense pressure on

both guys, which manifested itself in the initial deliveries which were somewhat wide of the mark.

Pat then delivered two exceptional bowls to put the onus on Ray who by the narrowest of margins missed his mark, leaving Pat the victor 11-7 to secure the trophy for the Europeans after an epic contest.

Stand out players on the day were Ulf Egerstaad for the EU team and Sammy Sampert and Ron Blackwood who scored 2 and a half points out of a possible 3 for the ROW and who were both unfortunate to be on the losing side.

Congratulations to the EU team on retaining the Pryder Cup!

Kamala lawn bowls is open three days a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Private parties are welcome to play on other days and all equipment is provided. For further details on Lawn bowls in Phuket contact the club on 099-1307299.

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