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DIRTY FLOW



Photo: PR Phuket

KARON MAYOR SCRAMBLES TO COUNTER WASTEWATER PROBLEM

The Phuket News
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Karon Mayor Jadet Wicharasorn has announced a project to expand the capacity of the wastewater treatment facility at the Nong Harn Pond by 3,000 cubic metres of wastewater a day.

The announcement came last Saturday (Jan 20) during an inspection of the pond and the canal where excess water from the pond flows across Karon Beach and into the sea, where tourists swim.

The work to expand the wastewater treatment facility will begin in April, and is scheduled to be completed by April 2025, Mayor Jadet said.

Despite his push to increase the facility's capacity to treat wastewater, Mayor Jadet remained adamant that

the black water flowing from the pond and across the beach last week was not wastewater.

"It's not wastewater. It's sediment from the bottom of the canal. It does not affect the health of tourists, who can still play in the water and do water activities at the beach as usual," he said.

Joining Mayor Jadet during his inspection of the pond and canal last Saturday was Sanan Rakdam, Director of Karon Municipality's Engineering Division and Wastewater Treatment Office.

Mayor Jadet also called for reporters to join him during his inspection, during which he conducted water quality tests to prove the water was safe.

The water tested recorded a DO value (dissolved oxygen) of 3.38 parts per million (ppm), which Mayor Jadet

said was considered "normal water". The Pollution Control Department considers DO recordings of less than 2.0 to be wastewater, he said.

"Therefore, it is scientific evidence that the water in the area is normal water and does not appear to be spoiled," he said, five days after disturbing images of black water flowing across the beach went viral on local social media channels.

Of note, Mayor Jadet last Friday explained through a post on Karon Municipality's official Facebook page that to help resolve the problem the municipality had already: dredged the canal to help the water flow from the pond more quickly; installed an aerator "to increase the circulation of water to create air circulation, which prevents stagnant water from spoiling"; and installed a water pump to

remove any overflowing water from the treatment pond.

Mayor Jadet last Saturday refuted accusations that he was complacent over the issue, which was accused of endangering tourists' health.

"I'm not complacent. Executives and members of the Karon Municipality Council along with a team of technicians and related officials went to inspect the area and ordered the use of an excavator to dredge the canal," he said.

"It was found that there was a large amount of black sediment in the canal. They also tested the water quality by collecting water samples. It was found that the water had no odour and did not affect the health of tourists," he added.

"I can confirm that the water flowing into the sea is still of good...

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Ravi Chandran on responsible tourism projects



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Riveting action at Pryder Cup bowls contest





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News



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Saudi tourist arrested on child sex charges

A 41-YEAR-OLD SAUDI Arabian man was apprehended at Phuket airport last Friday (Jan 19) for his alleged involvement in child sex abuse and trafficking in Thailand. Two weeks earlier a Russian national was arrested on identical charges on arrival in Phuket.

The Saudi tourist was taken into custody based on an outstanding warrant issued in Phuket at an undisclosed date. He was subsequently handed over to Patong Police, as reported by the Phuket office of the Immigration Bureau.

The suspect was arrested at around 9am at the International Arrivals Hall of Phuket airport, an off-limit area for anyone except authorised personnel and passengers arriving on international flights.

Prior to the arrest, three direct international flights from the Middle East had landed: EY430 from Abu Dhabi, QR842 from Doha, and WY833 from Muscat. Currently, there are no direct flights from Saudi Arabia to Phuket.

The suspect's identity and the specific details of the arrest warrant were not disclosed. Phuket Immigration limited the information to the age of the wanted person, stating that the Saudi man is 41 years old.

The Phuket office of the Immigration Bureau provided



Photo: Phuket Immigration Checkpoint

the following description of the charges against the suspect: "taking away a minor over 15 years but not yet over 18 years of age from the parent, guardian, or caretaker for obscene actions, even with the consent of the minor".

The charge falls under Section 319 of the Criminal Code, commonly known as "child sex trafficking." The man was reported as taken to Patong Police Station for further legal processing, just as the 61-years-old Russian man arrested on Jan 5 and an unnamed man arrested on May 20 last year on identical charges.

Police have not elaborated whether any of the arrests had any connection to the Velvet Bar raid in Patong in March last year. The operation in Patong, conducted by the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) led to 36 raids by the Royal Thai Police in 10 provinces across Thailand. *The Phuket News*

Cafe del Mar rapped for excessive noise

The Phuket News
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The hugely popular entertainment venue Cafe del Mar has been reprimanded by Kamala Police for causing noise pollution and disturbing local residents.

The volume levels of the music coming from the establishment exceeded acceptable levels, police officers declared on Jan 17, adding that it was consequently causing a major disturbance to local residents in the nearby area.

Superintendent Pol Col Somsak Thongkhang and police inspector Pol Lt Thammarat Pensri, both from Kamala Police Station, were joined by Phiphob Sudkhao from the Kathu District Office, and officials from the Kathu District Public Health office, in a visit to the beach club around 1pm on Jan 17.

It was subsequently revealed to the manager of the venue that they had violated Section 25 of the Public Health Act B.E. 2535 in creating a nuisance and disturbing the peace in an unacceptable manner.

It was not disclosed in police reports whether local residents themselves had



Photo: Phuket Info Center

specifically raised the issue by way of complaint to authorities.

Police did state, however, that the bar's manager, who remained unnamed in their report, admitted to the charge of playing the music too loud which in turn had disturbed local residents.

It was agreed that the mu-

sic would be set to an acceptable level which would not be exceeded moving forward and that the situation would be reviewed over the course of the next seven days. If any further offences were found to have occurred during that time frame, then measures would be proposed to renovate the predominantly outdoor

venue to provide permanent cover and thus minimise the noise levels.

Police also issued a reminder to the bar's manager to prohibit the sale and use of shisha and hookah products on site, although there was no mention that such a discrepancy had occurred prior to the warning to warrant it.

Karon mayor looks to ramp up local wastewater treatment capacity

Continued from page 1

...quality. It does not have an effect that causes tourists to itch or affect the skin. Tourists can still play in the water at the beach as usual and we have not received any complaints from tourists," Mayor Jadet assured.

Oddly, Mayor Jadet added, "However, we are still working on solving problems, and I would like the government and related agencies to help support the budget to solve the problem in a sustainable way in order to build a positive tourism image," he added.

Mr Sanan explained that the wastewater treatment facility at Nong Harn currently has the capacity to treat 14,000 cubic metres of wastewater per day.

"During the time of the incident, it was found that there was a lot of water from wastewater treatment plants. In addition, there was a sea surge causing a large amount of water to push up on the sandbar until it collapsed and a large mass of water carried the sediment and flowed into

the sea, causing the black water," Mr Sanan said.

By dredging the canal, officials had excavated the sediment from the canal and created a small barrier to prevent water carrying sediment from flowing directly onto the beach. The sediment is now trapped behind the barrier, and removed by excavator from there, he said.

Five such 'sediment barriers' have now been created along the canal, Mr Sanan explained.

"Karon Municipality has a long-term plan for hotel operators to bring their wastewater into the system. And in the future, we will make one more 'Monkey Cheek' [weir], which if done, will be able to solve the problem to a certain extent," he added.

"However, what Karon Municipality needs is sustainable wastewater treatment. About 14,000 cubic metres of wastewater enters the system per day. After being treated, it should not be drained into the sea, but should be reused through a recycling system,"



Photo: PR Phuket

Mr Sanan said.

"This will solve the problem sustainably and protect the environment," he added.

MP'D ON

Phuket MP Chalermpong Saengdee inspected the tainted beach water in person last Friday (Jan 19), while black water was still flowing into the sea.

The water had a "fishy smell", and the dark water stretched about 500 metres along the beachfront, Mr Chalermpong said.

The mouth of the canal at that time looked like it had been blocked with

sand by a large machine, he added.

Mr Chalermpong said he believed that the black water was wastewater released from a hotel in Karon. At that time, "no agency has gone to verify it", he said.

"This is the [tourism] high season in Phuket province. It can be assumed that there is illegal wastewater discharge and overflow from municipal wastewater treatment plants. There is not enough capacity to support it [the volume of wastewater]," Mr Chalermpong said.

"I would like to call on the relevant agencies to expedite a solution to the problem, especially the local agencies of the Pollution Control Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment," Mr Chalermpong urged.

Mr Chalermpong also noted that the problems with wastewater flowing into beach water in Phuket does not only occur at Karon Beach, but also at Kamala and Patong.

"Beaches with tourist industries and hotels often have this problem

as well," he said, adding that at a meeting of the House of Representatives he had previously called for a wastewater management system for all of Phuket so the island is worthy of being called a 'world-class tourist city'. However, so far he has received no response.

"Please solve the problem, and let us not see pictures of wastewater flowing into the sea, or pictures of tourists having to wade through polluted water. It's not a beautiful picture and not good for Thailand at all," Mr Chalermpong said.

Phuket is the only province in Thailand that has an announcement from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment that determines measures to take care of the environment, he explained.

"The penalty is that if any hotel is found to release wastewater, they will be fined up to B1 million, but since this announcement I still have yet to see any serious investigation and arrests being carried out," Mr Chalermpong said.

Van driver suspended over road rage

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Phuket passenger van driver Kiattisak Tharaporn, 40, who assaulted another van driver at Phuket International Airport on Jan 16, has had his driver's licence suspended for 180 days.

The suspension was reported by the Phuket Info Center (PIC) on Jan 19. Phuket Provincial Police and the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO), which is responsible for all public transport on the island, at time of press still had yet to publicly recognise the incident.

The branch of Airports of Thailand that operates Phuket airport (AoT Phuket) has reportedly asked the police to press charges of the assault, the PIC report noted.

The report also noted that AoT Phuket had asked the court "to order a ban on entering the area" after finding out that he had a history "of being punished many times before".

Of note, AoT Phuket has full authority on which taxis and passenger vans may enter airport grounds, a point AoT Phuket made very clear when banning taxi app drivers in



Screenshot: Supplied

the name of 'security'.

According to the Phuket Info Center, the driver, Kiattisak Tharaporn, 40, apologised for the assault.

The assault gained attention from local officials only after a video of the incident started to go viral on local social media channels, showing the assault taking place in full view of tourists at the airport.

Police began investigating the assault after the video shared online showed one van driver repeatedly kicking another van driver, prompting the second van driver to flee into the departures terminal. The assault occurred in full view of tourists at the front of the terminal building.

Pol Capt Kornphumphot Pongpaiboon of the Sakhu Police confirmed that he was

informed of the incident at 8:39pm on Jan 16.

Officers arrived and found the two drivers, Kiattisak and his victim, van driver Songsak Gasman, 34. Both were sent to Thalang Hospital for physical examination while police are continuing their investigation, Capt Kornphumphot said.

The video clip showed Mr Songsak pulling up in front of the departures terminal in

a white passenger van. Mr Songsak exited the vehicle to remove luggage from the back of the van.

Kiattisak pulled up in his van, silver in colour, in the next lane. Kiattisak exited the van and directly approached Mr Songsak.

Following a brief exchange of words, Kiattisak kicked Mr Songsak in the stomach. He kicked Mr Songsak a second time, knocking Mr Songsak backward and onto the ground. A third kick was blocked as Mr Songsak backed away.

Kiattisak continued to follow Mr Songsak, with one kick missing his target and landing Kiattisak on the ground by his own efforts, giving Mr Songsak the chance to flee into the terminal building.

Meanwhile, tourists in front of the terminal witnessed the entire assault.

Mr Songsak told reporters on Jan 18 that the incident originated from when the two vans were travelling along in Soi Bang Ma Lao Soi 6, near the entrance to The Slate Hotel.

Kiattisak accused Mr Songsak of cutting him off. Mr Songsak strongly denied the accusation. Kiattisak then

followed Mr Songsak as he drove to the airport.

When Mr Songsak saw Kiattisak pull up at the airport, he thought Kiattisak wanted to continue to just talk about the incident, which was obviously not the case.

THUGS APLENTY

Meanwhile, disparaging comments about the violent nature of Phuket's taxi and van drivers continued online, with yet another incident reported by Phuket Info Center..

A fully legal app taxi dropped off a passenger at a "famous restaurant" in Pasak Soi 8, Cherg Talay, at about 10pm on Jan 18.

A passenger van then blocked the woman's exit from the area while a man from the taxi queue nearby approached the woman's car. The man, presumably a local taxi driver, saw the woman recording on video on her phone, prompting him to threaten her.

The man tried to open the door to the car, but the doors were locked, so the man snapped off a windshield wiper and walked away.

The woman said a formal complaint had been filed with Cherg Talay Police.

Russian man in safe custody after breach at Provincial Hall

A 26-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN man with a history of mental illness was taken into protective custody in hospital after he smashed a glass door to the Phuket Governor's office while trying to evade capture at Phuket Provincial Hall early on Jan 17.

Security personnel from the Phuket branch of the Volunteer Defense Force (OrSor) reported hearing a door alarm sounding near the elevator on the ground floor at about 2:45am.

Upon investigation, the security personnel encountered a shirtless foreign man wearing black shorts, who attempted to evade capture.

One of the security personnel managed to detain him briefly, but the Russian man managed to escape, fleeing to different floors of the building.

Police were alerted to the incident through the 191 emergency response centre, and the incident took a dramatic turn when, around 4:30am, the sound of shattered glass was heard coming from the Governor's room on the fourth floor.

Personnel arrived to discover a broken glass door and



Photo: PR Phuket

bloodstains at the scene. They also found a steel axe used, the kind used for breaking glass in case of emergency, beneath the governor's secretary's desk.

Officials promptly documented the scene, collecting evidence for a thorough investigation.

The same Russian man was later found attempting to steal a car near a convenience store nearby. He was not wearing a shirt, and was visibly injured, with blood flowing from his feet due to the glass cuts.

The man was swiftly taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for treatment, where it was confirmed that he possessed psychiatric patient records. The man's identity remains undisclosed due to his unresponsive state, said a report of the incident by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

CCTV footage revealed the Russian's erratic movements around government buildings before reaching Phuket Provincial Hall. Police suspect he may have been experiencing a psychotic episode or under the influence at the time of his incursion.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat addressed the incident, expressing concern for the mental health of the individual involved. He also emphasised the need for heightened security not only at Phuket Provincial Hall but also at various government buildings across the island.

Legal action will be taken against the Russian man for at least trespassing on government property, the PR Phuket report confirmed.

Authorities are awaiting his recovery for further interrogation, citing the necessity of a comprehensive inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Following the investigation and subsequent legal action, the man may face deportation, PR Phuket noted.

Additional reporting by Eakkapop Thongtub

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Wind 4 m/s

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Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

THU FEBRUARY 1

High: +30°
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Taxi driver probed for sexual advances

Eakkapop Thongtub
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A Phuket taxi driver is facing suspension of 180 days, or worse, after he accosted a 20-year-old female student, inviting her back to his room and offering to be her 'sponsor' with monthly payments, and refusing to stop the taxi when the frightened student asked to get out.

Pol Lt Chittiwa Thanawitwilas of Phuket City Police Station was informed of the incident when the student filed a formal complaint at 7:25pm on Jan 18.

The student had ordered a taxi through the Bolt app at 11:56am that day to pick her up from a location in Pa Khlok and take her to a student dormitory in Ratsada.

A white MG ZS EV with green licence plates arrived. The name of the driver given by the app was Chuen Ochaphon.

While en route, Chuen used inappropriate language and asked inappropriate questions, the student said.

He told her he was about 45 years old. He asked whether she had a boyfriend and said that he "wanted to take care of her". He continued talking in a flirtatious manner, making the student very uncomfortable.

Starting to fear for her safety, the student asked to get out of the



Image: Supplied / Eakkapop Thongtub

taxi. Chuen refused to stop the car. At that time the taxi was travelling along Thepkasattri Rd southbound in Koh Kaew.

The student confirmed that Chuen did not deviate from the route to the student dormitory in Ratsada, but continued his flirtatious and uncomfortable suggestions.

The student's father later explained to reporters that the incident left his daughter frightened and in tears.

Chuen had repeatedly offered to offer his daughter B5,000 a month to "take care of her", he said. Apparently Chuen started his advances as soon as his daughter got in the taxi.

A complaint had also been submit-

ted through the Bolt app, he added.

On arriving at the dormitory, Chuen tried to apologise and followed her to her room. Outside her room Chuen got on his knees and continued to apologise, but in the end left B300 outside the door and left, the father said.

"I'm afraid of my daughter being unsafe on her next trip. I don't want this kind of thing to happen. Right now, my mental health is very bad. Every time I talk about this, I'm shocked... This kind of event should not happen again. I want the perpetrator to think about his own family, whether doing this is appropriate or not," he said.

PLTO ACTION

Kornpitak Atassuwan of the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) told reporters that the driver, Chuen, was under investigation for three offences.

The use of inappropriate language towards a passenger is punishable by a fine of up to B5,000, he said.

Whether the car was being used as a taxi through the proper registration was under investigation. The car is registered as a taxi and had been issued green licence plates, but was being used as a taxi through an online app, Mr Kornpitak noted.

Using the wrong type of vehicle as a taxi was punishable with a fine of up to B2,000, he said.

The third issue was whether Chuen's behaviour "discredited the reputation of the country or the province". If found guilty, Chuen faced having his licence suspended for 180 days, Mr Kornpitak said.

The PLTO was to continue its investigation into the incident this week. "If found guilty of any of the offences, the PLTO will take measures in accordance with the law," Mr Kornpitak said.

"I would like to remind drivers providing taxi services that there are quite a lot of tourists during this period. Please take good care of the tourists, as the owner of the house would, in welcoming tourists to Phuket," Mr Kornpitak concluded.

Passengers alarmed by small snake on island-bound flight

PASSENGERS ON A RECENT flight from Bangkok to Phuket were startled to learn that they had an extra passenger on board – a small non-venomous snake climbing above them.

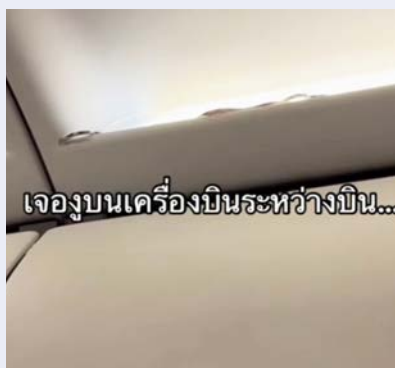
News of the snake on the plane gained publicity after TikTok @wannabnailssalon shared a series of clips documenting the snake on the Jan 13 domestic flight.

The TikTok user was returning from studying in Bangkok. The plane was preparing to land at Phuket Airport, and the captain had issued an announcement for passengers to remain seated, she explained.

The student was napping in her seat when the snake was discovered across the aisle from her, causing commotion among the passengers.

A male flight attendant arrived and tried to get the snake into a small plastic bottle. Failing that, the flight attendant used the plastic bottle to nudge the snake into a plastic bag and safely removed it.

Many viewers of the clips



Screenshot: @wannabnailssalon / TikTok

shared online expressed admiration for the calm demeanor exhibited by both passengers and the flight crew.

However, questions arose about how exactly the snake got on the plane, with speculation ranging from it being a pet brought onboard to it simply making its way onto the plane of its own accord.

The TikTok user did not reveal which airline or the flight number the incident occurred on, despite some people wanting to know in order to use it as a lucky number.

Eakkapop Thongtub



Photo: Phuket City Police

Chinese man arrested for street begging

PHUKET PROVINCIAL POLICE have warned people to beware foreigners begging on the street after a Chinese man was arrested for soliciting donations with claims that the money would help a disabled child.

Acting on a tip-off, officers on Jan 15 arrested a Chinese national named by officers only as "Mr Yang" (not his real name). Police did not disclose the location of his arrest.

Mr Yang was found with documents in English and Thai presenting himself as a deaf-mute volunteer collecting donations on behalf of a child with leukemia who needed a bone-marrow transplant.

He was also found with cash donations he had already collected.

The officers detained him on charges of soliciting money on a

public road and soliciting through print advertising without permission. He was taken to Phuket City Police Station for further legal action.

Police urged people to beware people asking for money on the basis of such claims. "We would like to warn the public not to be fooled or to assist foreigners who appear to be mute or disabled and with documents requesting sympathy," officers noted.

"These people can come in the form of tourists. If you encounter them, please notify the police by calling 191," police said.

In Thailand, begging on the street is illegal unless the person has been issued a permit. Applicants are vetted thoroughly, with permits issued at regular intervals throughout the year.

Eakkapop Thongtub

Phuket touts road safety

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Phuket hosted a two-day road safety initiative involving all 14 southern Thai provinces last week as part of its move to improve road safety. The 6th Southern Region Road Safety Academic Seminar, titled 'Safe Drive, the Southern Region is Safe, No Road Accidents', was launched by Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat at the Phuket Merlin Hotel on Jan 18.

Joining the governor were Dr Siriwat Thiptharadon and Dr Weeraphan Suphanchaimat, both advisors to the Provincial Traffic Accident Prevention Support Plan Committee (OCC), in addition to Dr Anucha Setthasathian from the Committee of the Road Safety Administration Center and Vice Chairman of the Traffic Safety Administration, and Dr Wiwat Seetamanotch, manager of the cooperation program between the Thai government and the World Health Organisation. Officials from 14 southern provinces in Thailand were also present.

Governor Sophon extended praise and congratulations to all network partners, including those from the public and



Photo: PR Phuket

private sectors, volunteers and the Road Safety Administration Center.

He said all such entities help drive towards improving road safety in a diligent and serious manner that is expected to see positive results emerge in time with road related accidents reducing.

He added that local government organisations from the participating districts between 2022 to 2024 have pushed for improved policies and road safety measures to be implemented, such as a specific focus on motorcycle riders wearing helmets 100% of the time to reduce the risk of injury and death.

Governor Sophon also highlighted the national push to reduce road accident deaths

to no more than 12 per 100,000 of the population by 2027.

The seminar was therefore crucial for helping to promote and implement such goals to work towards safer roads, Governor Sophon explained.

Over 150 people attended the event to hear specific lectures and panel discussions on topics such as 'Thailand's Road Accident Situation', 'Moving the Safety Mechanisms of Thailand', 'Driving is safe: Promote the economy and how to travel', while there was also an interactive discussion on the topic of 'Creating a City of Travel' and further session focused on law enforcement.

Officials also held a range of activities across the island last Sunday (Jan 21) to highlight 'Road User Safety Day'.

DEATHS CONTINUE

Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti woman died after a motorbike accident in Kamala early Monday morning (Jan 22).

Pol Capt Atcha Yatiwat of the Kamala Police said that officers at Kamala Police Station were first notified of the accident, along the Kamala-Patong Road, at about 4am, after a passing motorist reported the accident to officers at a police box closest to the scene of the accident at about 3am.

By the time police arrived at the scene, the two people who were travelling on the motorbike had already been rushed to Patong Hospital.

At the scene, officers found a Honda PCX motorcycle in a drainage ditch by the side of the road, and a blue helmet that had been broken by the force of the impact.

Police identified the driver as Kuwaiti national Mohammed Y N M Almesfer, 41, who remained at Patong Hospital. A report of the accident did not detail the extent of his injuries.

His passenger was identified as Athari F M KH M Alfahad, 38, also a Kuwaiti national. Ms Athari had died from her injuries, police confirmed.

HRH Chakri Sirindhorn to open prison library

PREPARATIONS ARE underway for a royal visit to Phuket by HRH Princess Chakri Sirindhorn to officially open a 'Library with Wisdom' at Phuket Provincial Prison in Srisoonthorn in April.

Phuket Governor Sophon Suwannarat chaired a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall last Friday (Jan 19) to begin the preparations.

The meeting was attended by key officials, including Phuket Vice Governor Saththa Thongkham; Thanongsak Thiangsuttisakul, Vice President of the Court of Appeal, Region 8; Phuket Provincial Police Commander Pol Maj Gen Sinlert Sukhum; and Arkom Phusri, Director of Phuket Provincial Prison; among others

The preparations were prompted by a notification from the Phuket branch of the Department of Corrections, which received instructions from the Department of Royal Affairs regarding the impending royal visit.

During the meeting, the agenda focused on the draft schedule for the royal opening ceremony of the 'Library with Wisdom' at Phuket Provincial Prison, including aspects re-



Photo: PR Phuket / file

lated to the enhancement of the library's interior and exterior, exhibition organisation and other logistical matters.

Governor Sophon emphasised the significance of the meeting, marking the first of its kind in the preparations for a 'Library with Wisdom', expressing confidence that subsequent meetings would provide further clarity on readiness.

As the committee strives to meticulously carry out its tasks, the community eagerly anticipates the grand occasion, which promises to be both orderly and reflective of the utmost honour accorded to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, an official report of the meeting noted.

The Phuket News

Srisoonthorn shortcut unveiled

PHUKET GOVERNOR SOPHON SUWANNARAT joined local officials last Sunday (Jan 21) in thanking local landowner Boonrung Bun-Eab for donating land and a road joining behind Wat Tha Reua, south of the Heroines Monument, to Baan Manik in Cherg Talay in the hope of alleviating heavy traffic congestion on Thepkasattri Rd and on Srisoonthorn Rd.

Governor Sophon last Saturday (Jan 20) inspected the road, which was originally 2.5 metres wide but expanded to five metres wide and paved with asphalt to allow two-way traffic.

The inspection last Saturday followed Srisoonthorn Mayor Chalermphon Kerdap along with officials from the Phuket branch of the Department of Rural Roads and from the Thalang branch of the Department of Lands inspecting the road on Jan 17 to review plans for widening the entrance and exits to the road, and have a street lamp posts installed at each end of the road.

In thanking Mr Boonrung, Governor Sophon repeated his call for people to help create secondary roads to alleviate traffic congestion on Phuket's few main roads, especially efforts that would help ease traffic on Phuket's main artery, Thepkasattri Rd (Route 402).

"This road expansion operation is considered a cooperation of the government sector, the local government organisation [Srisoonthorn Municipality] as well as the private sector," Governor Sophon said.

"This shortcut route can be an alternative for local residents and tourists who can



Photo: PR Phuket

use this route to travel to Phuket airport more quickly. It is a solution that helps ease traffic congestion on the main road Route 402," he said.

Meanwhile, Mayor Chalermphon and Srisoonthorn Municipality are currently exploring options in creating another secondary route between Bang Kham Rd and Kuan Ta Thaen 4 and along Bang Kham 7.

Officials have already scouted the route, which is currently mainly undeveloped, with some sections still only a path through vegetation.

The officers, led by municipal councilor Phongsakorn Jinasena and Mani Jitcham-nong from the municipal engineering department, are looking to update their plans for construction of a reinforced concrete road complete with roadside drains along the route through Moo 2 Srisoonthorn.

The Phuket News

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Muay Thai 90-day visas afoot

Bangkok Post

Muay Thai gym operators and foreign Muay Thai enthusiasts in Phuket and Bangkok have welcomed the government's decision to grant a 90-day special visa for foreigners who want to visit Thailand to practise Muay Thai.

Phuket in particular is popular among foreign tourists interested in health tourism, particularly Soi Tai-ad in Chalong, where many Muay Thai gyms and boxing equipment stores have opened.

Janjira Charoenvitthanadet, manager of Apollo Gym, explained that the gym had been open for around three months and customers had steadily increased from three to more than 10 trainees per class.

"I agree with the government's special visa for foreigners who want to learn Muay Thai as it can really push Muay Thai as soft power to spur Thai tourism," she said.

"If foreign trainees stay with us for a long time and complete the course, they may share their experiences and tell more of their friends to learn Muay Thai," she added.

Henry Lee, an American trainer at Yak Yai Muay Thai, said the gym has been open for more than a year and Muay Thai is popular among foreign tourists from Germany, the US, Chile, Spain, South Africa, Peru,



Two foreigners engage in a Muay Thai bout in Phuket. Photo: JP Mestanza

Japan and China.

Mr Lee said that a visa that allows trainees to extend their stay from six months to a year might also be helpful.

90 DAYS 'NOT ENOUGH'

Sathana Songprasert, 40, a partner at the Jitti Gym in Bangkok, said the visa would allow foreigners to complete their course within 90 days. But for professional boxers, more than three months is needed.

"If the visa can be further extended, it would be great for both foreign professional fighters and

foreigners who are really keen," she said.

"Two or three months is not that long... Learning Muay Thai requires consistency and it takes a long time to get professional. So, many people want to stay longer for more practice," Ms Sathana said.

Staff at Jitti Gym have been training only foreign boxers for competitions. The gym recently added an exercise session for tourists who want to experience Muay Thai for a short time.

"We have a lot of foreigners who study with us, especially from

Asia, the Middle East and Europe, including Britain and Scandinavian countries. They joined us for both the exercise sessions and training to be professional boxers," she said.

Alice, 37, an Australian who works for an NGO and has been living in Thailand for over a year, said she had taken Muay Thai courses on and off for the past 10 years.

"I started Muay Thai in 2012, at a training camp in Phuket. I love it so much, I kept coming back for short trips.

"I know Muay Thai because I was a personal trainer, so I used to

look at the different countries and see what exercises they offered," she said.

"Muay Thai is a fun form of fitness. You learn self-defence and it's practical. Muay Thai also builds up my confidence," she added.

Osher, 32, who comes from Israel and has been in Thailand for five weeks, said Muay Thai is popular in his home country and people enjoy watching it. Many Muay Thai gyms have opened there.

"I have been learning Muay Thai for two years now. I like the power, the aggressiveness and the dynamic. I saw Muay Thai for the first time when I was 13 years old in Israel on TV and in the movie 'Ong Bak'," he said.

Back to Alice, from Australia. Asked about the visa issue, she said: "I think it would be really good if the Muay Thai visa is at least up to six months and renewable.

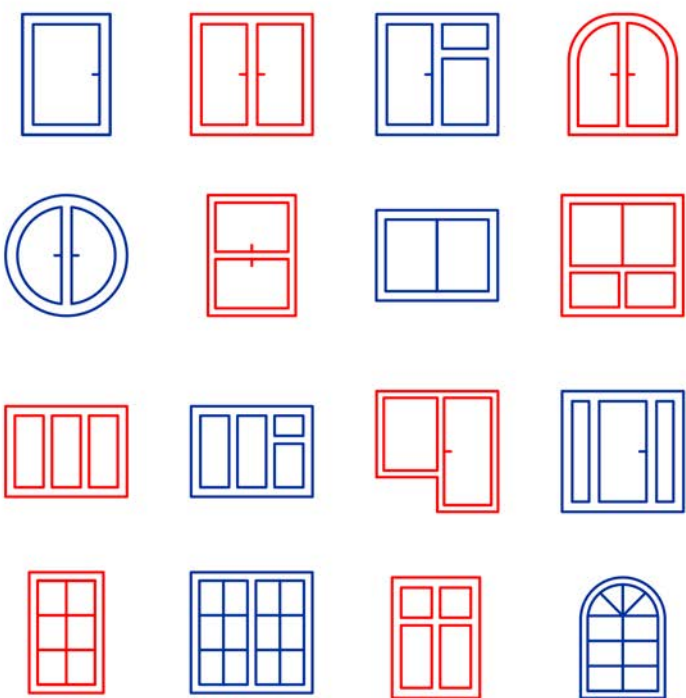
"I know with the language visa that they test you on the language. But for Muay Thai, there is no way to test whether you are actually learning," she said.

"A Muay Thai visa for professionals should be six to 12 months. However, they need to check whether trainees are actually learning Muay Thai when they get the visa."

Officials could check with the gym to ensure they meet minimum standards of attendance, she noted.



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MoTS, TAT reveal strategies to achieve tourism targets

THE TOURISM AND SPORTS Ministry said the target of B3.5 trillion in revenue and 40 million foreign arrivals this year set by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin remains a challenge, but it plans to drive spending and longer stays through soft power products, events and safety measures.

Tourism and Sports Minister Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol said to reach the revenue goal, it would require B2.3trn from 40mn foreign tourists and B1.2trn from 200-220mn domestic trips.

Ms Sudawan said the ministry will focus on increasing the volume of tourists, expenditure and length of stay.

Those could be achieved through events and festivals throughout the year, new tourism routes in second-tier provinces, and soft power products.

Given the situation in the Chinese market, the ministry has targeted at least 8mn tourists to arrive from the country this year, generating over B320 billion in revenue.

This market has shown a positive momentum this year. As of Jan 14, over 186,424 tourists from China had



A group of foreign tourists prepares to visit the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok. Photo: Somchai Poomlard / Bangkok Post

touched down in Thailand, making it the leading inbound market.

She said the ministry and related authorities will cooperate to recover confidence among foreign tourists, ensuring they can travel safely in Thailand.

Ms Sudawan said tourism will also be used as a mechanism to reinforce relationships between Southeast Asian nations as there will be a meeting between regional tourism ministries in Laos later this month. The topic of the discussions will be focused on strengthening transport connections by air, overland and via waterways.

Likewise, the government will implement a permanent

visa-free scheme between China and Thailand, helping drive the market.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Thapanee Kiatphaibool said PM Srettha had instructed the agency to host a roadshow to South Korea to attract high quality tourists as well as investors.

Ms Thapanee said the market showed great potential as witnessed from the number of arrivals recorded last year which edged the Indian market, which has a much larger population. In 2023, the number of South Korean arrivals tallied 1.65mn, while the number of Indian arrivals stood at 1.62mn.

To boost the South Korean market and increase arrivals to 40mn, Thailand needs to present new destinations, including second-tier cities, showcase soft power products, and collaborate with airlines and all stakeholders, said Ms Thapanee.

According to the ministry, Thailand needs to increase the number of chartered flights from new cities that remain untapped, including in China and Russia. Bangkok Post

Record 50-year term for lese-majeste violation

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

A Chiang Rai man is facing 50 years in prison for royal defamation after the Court of Appeal found him guilty on additional counts to those for which he had already been sentenced, it was confirmed on Jan 18.

The sentence against Mongkol 'Busbas' Thirakot is believed to be the longest on record for violations under Section 112 of the Criminal Code, the lese-majeste law, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR) said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

The previous record was set in the case of Anchan Preelert, a former senior Revenue Department official convicted in January 2021. She was originally handed an 87-year jail term on charges of breaking Section 112 and the Computer Crime Act with posts on multiple social media accounts that defamed the monarch. The sentence was reduced to 43 years because she confessed.



A protestor holds a sign referencing article 112, Thailand's lese-majeste royal defamation law, as riot police keep watch during a demonstration in Bangkok on Nov 14, 2021. Photo: AFP

Conviction under Section 112 carries a minimum of three years in prison and a maximum of 15 years for each charge.

Mr Mongkol, a 30-year-old online clothing vendor and activist, is in the process of submitting a bail request to the Supreme Court, his lawyers said.

The Court of Appeal found the defendant guilty of 11 more counts of lese-majeste, on top of the 14 convictions in the Court of First Instance in January 2023, in connection with a total of 27 posts he made on Facebook.

The appeal court sentenced Mr Mongkol to three years on each count, for a total of 33 years. The sentence was reduced by one-third to 22 years because he provided useful information, the judges said.

The Court of First Instance last year handed down a sentence totalling 42 years but reduced it to 28 years. The combined prison terms now total 50 years.

Mr Mongkol was arrested in April 2021 after going on

a hunger strike in Chiang Rai to press for the right to bail for political prisoners in similar cases.

Mongkol's case came a day after the Criminal Court handed down a four-year jail term to activist and lawyer Arnon Nampa for lese-majeste violations.

Prosecutors told the court that Arnon posted three messages on his Facebook account on Jan 1, 2021 in a way that distorted information with the intent to insult the royal institution.

Arnon had previously been sentenced to four years in a separate lese-majeste case involving a rally in 2020.

According to data from TLHR, up to Dec 31 last year, 1,938 people have been prosecuted for political participation and expression since the beginning of the Free Youth protests in July 2020. At least 262 are facing lese-majeste charges under Section 112 and 138 have been charged with sedition under Section 116. Nine cases under Section 116 came before the courts in December and all were dismissed.

Model bought cyanide weeks before her death

BANGKOK



Photo: Bangkok Post

POLICE HAVE CONFIRMED new information timelines lending credence to the theory that 28-year-old motor show model Prawrawee 'Yoko' Sahatthapong did indeed take her own life on Nov 1.

The new information shows the model, who was found dead in her Ekkamai condominium, purchased a bottle of cyanide online in September for B33,000, police said on Jan 16.

Pol Maj Gen Wittawat Chinkham, commander of the Metropolitan Police Division 5, said police now have clear evidence, including her order list history, transaction data and receipt of a parcel.

He said a suicide note was also found addressed to her boyfriend, along with antidepressant medication, and the word "cyanide" was in her phone's search history.

CCTV footage also showed that Prawrawee did not leave her condo prior to her death, and no

one else entered it.

The autopsy showed she died from cyanide poisoning, with at least 1.26 microgrammes per millilitre found in her bloodstream.

"This case is not complicated. We are waiting for all of the evidence, including Prawrawee's movements during the night of Oct 30 and some forensic evidence," Pol Maj Gen Wittawat said.

Police also summoned Prawrawee's boyfriend about a "secret" video clip mentioned by Prawrawee's mother which she believed contained a set of rules meted out by the boyfriend if Prawrawee wanted to stay in the relationship.

The boyfriend admitted to sending the clip on Oct 31, but further details cannot be disclosed, Pol Maj Gen Wittawat said.

Bangkok Post

Police 'torture' led to false confession

BANGKOK

TWO POLICE OFFICERS AT THE Aranyaprathet police station in Sa Kaeo province tortured an alcoholic man into falsely confessing that he killed his wife, according to a preliminary fact-finding investigation by the Royal Thai Police.

The woman was in fact killed by a group of teenagers aged 13 to 16, police said, two of whom were reported to be sons of policemen.

Pol Gen Surachate Hakparn, a deputy national police chief, said that Panya Khongsakham, the 54-year-old husband of the victim, had correctly identified the officer who forced him to strip in a cold, air-conditioned room and the one who wrapped a black plastic rubbish bag over his head.

These acts constituted torture aimed at pressuring Mr Panya to confess to killing his wife, Buaphan Tansu, 47, said Pol Gen Surachate.

Mr Panya, who is now at a government centre for vulnerable people, was shown photos of every officer at the Aranyaprathet station and asked to identify the suspects, he said.

Arrested shortly after the victim's body was found on Jan 12, Mr Panya had confessed to killing his wife. However, security video subsequently showed five youths were responsible for her death.

Audio clips of conversations involving the lead investigator at the Aranyaprathet



Panya Khongsakham being questioned by Sa Kaeo Police. Photo: Bangkok Post



station and his colleagues also indicate that officers knew they had "the wrong guy".


So far, the investigation has determined that the two officers said to have tortured Mr Panya violated the police disciplinary code and Section 157 of the Criminal Code regarding dereliction of duty and malfeasance.

After the investigation is concluded, a panel will hand over all the evidence to Sa Kaeo provincial police who will then pursue further.

The National Human Rights Commission said in a statement that it would petition the Office of the Attorney-General to consider pursuing legal action against the two officers under the anti-torture law.

In a related development, national police chief Torsak Sukvimol said the force would soon forward the findings of a study on lowering the maximum age of juvenile delinquents to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and the Ministry of Justice for consideration. Bangkok Post



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Panthong Loikunnan, Deputy Director-General of the Customs Department, inspects a duty-free store at Suvarnabhumi Airport in 2022 as part of the government's assessment of the impact of taxes and duties on wine and other alcohol products. Photo: Customs Dept

And the winner is... wine

Patrick Campbell

In a long-awaited move, Thailand's Move Forward Party is proposing swinging reductions to the taxes – and there are many – on imported wine. Such measures fly in the face of official thinking which has for decades argued, dinosaur-like, in the following terms: 1) Thais do not drink wine – it is a 'farang' tippie; 2) the imported stuff is ridiculously expensive; 3) its consumption has a deleterious impact on the nation's health; and 4) foreign wine competes directly with Thailand's fledgling wine industry. OK? So let's tax it heavily. At the very least, it thereby provides a hefty source of revenue for the nation's coffers. Billions of baht every year.

All these factors have been used to justify the imposition of punitive taxes in the form of excise duties and import tariffs. Now, in a sensational volte-face, the Move Forward Party has demolished these decades-old regulations by proposing what they call a 'progressive liquor bill' – which has now been approved by Cabinet,

Plotting a route through the existing maze of regulations is not for the faint of heart. The old system is so byzantine that it is difficult for a mere mortal to calculate how much tax is actually paid on an imported bottle of wine. But it is probably close to 300% of its value at source. One retailer's expert assessment is that "there is, on a bottle of (imported) wine sold at B1000, over B700 in tax".

There have been numerous attempts, some more successful than others, to circumvent these draconian regulations. As always, 'Amazing Thailand' has found ways of soothing these irritants. While avoidance of duty by smuggling wine has been widely practised in sea-side Phuket – without, apparently, a single noteworthy arrest since 2005 – the legal expedient adopted by big companies such as Siam Winery has been to market 'wine' that has been either adulterated by the addition of fruit juice, or fermented in Thailand from non-native grape juice.

Designated as "fruit wine", it has in

the past avoided most governmental impositions precisely because it contains these fruity additives. And because it tastes like souped-up Ribena, it is popular with unsophisticated quaffers, especially those new to wine. I know one local bar in Phuket that stopped serving Thailand's number-one selling fruit wine and went for something more up-market. Within weeks, customers were demanding the return of their favourite tippie.

TELLING THE DIFFERENCE

Historically, the appeal of fruit wine was also boosted by the fact that it was cheaper than regular wine, not only because it was subject to less punitive taxes, but because it was mostly marketed as box wine in utilitarian five-litre containers. Providentially, this Australian invention drove down prices for these boxed blends, since the contrivance not only reduced handling and transport costs, but more importantly, allowed the contents to stay potable for up to six weeks. An important consideration for bar owners.

Some of this mixing and matching is undertaken at source, but most is carried out here or in Vietnam, far from the stated country of origin – usually South Africa, Australia, the United States or Chile. The result is a double whammy. Not only are consumers ignorant about what goes into these homemade blends, they are usually unaware of where they are concocted.

Here's where the customs tag helps. An orange label across the bottle or box top signifies a product made in Thailand; a blue tag denotes a product vinified elsewhere and imported into the Kingdom without subsequent adulteration. It is an important distinction, because in such wine-producing countries as Australia, consumer laws demand stringent laboratory analysis and a clear labelling of contents. In 'orange tag' Thailand, there are no such requirements. Once the big boys have become involved in the business of blending and maybe re-fermenting, a cheap and cheerful outcome is assured. Health safeguards are maybe not...

Nonetheless, these fruit wines appear to be losing ground. No longer

allowed to use the appellation "wine", the makers are now required to label their product as "juicy red" or "fruity white". No mention of the "wine" word... And they are obliged to reveal its contents. One such 'wine' is labelled as made from "cabernet sauvignon grapes from South Australia" and is "fruit rich and easy drinking". No give-away there. But remove the inviting packaging, and at the very bottom of the back label is the description: "Imported Australian Wine and *Selected Roselle*", a reference to a native species of hibiscus whose dried flowers and fruits are traditionally made into a vivid red cooling drink.

Moreover, these blends will no longer enjoy the tax breaks which formerly dealt them a trump card in the marketing stakes, but not by a substantial amount. In fact, the new regulations are not reducing the excise tax on "local liquor" (based on volume at B150 per litre for 100 degrees of alcohol content) – an existing category which presumably includes home-produced fruit wine.

THE REAL STUFF

Back to real wine and the good news. Significant changes have just been announced by Lawan Saengsanit, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Finance. These reflect the views of a new prime minister and Cabinet who clearly believe that the times really are a-changing: that Thailand now has a burgeoning middle class exposed to international travel and sophisticated culinary trends as well as increasingly affluent tourists. The signs are all around us. Gourmet meals are invariably accompanied by a glass or two of wine, almost all hi-so restaurants in Phuket display a wine list, specialist wine-selling retailers are opening up everywhere.

Under pressure from this vocal generation of aspiring gourmets, and certainly aware that the lure of affordable wine is a huge shot in the arm for a long suffering tourism industry crippled by COVID, the government is offering substantial changes to the tax structure in the belief that it will enable Thailand to reach its stated goal of 34 million tourists in 2024. Yes, these

measures will reduce revenue from the importation of wine, but such losses will be offset by additional holiday spending on alcohol and especially wine. Or so it goes...

Announced as a New Year gift to the nation and in particular to the tourism industry, the new dispensation will, inter alia, remove for one year the tariff on commercially imported wine, currently assessed at 54% and 60% of declared value. In addition, excise taxes on wine will be reduced from 10% to 5%. And alcoholic beverages of less than 7% will be free from any sales tax.

A complex set of measures (which may also affect VAT and municipal tax), it is difficult at this juncture to estimate the total effect on the wine drinker's pocket. One calculation conjectures that the tax on a typical 75 centilitree (750ml) bottle of imported wine with an alcohol content of 13.5 degrees will be B101. So if the measures are satisfactorily implemented and their benefits passed on in full to the consumer – always imponderables in Thailand – then we can expect to enjoy significant reductions on each and every bottle of imported wine. Especially at the cheaper end...

CORKED

Unsurprisingly, the proposed cuts have already attracted the opprobrium of consumer groups. One non-governmental organisation, in a pronouncement that sounds like a throwback to the past, has stated that "alcoholic drinks are addictive" and can cause problems by "harming the country's health".

And the move has not been entirely welcomed by Thailand's own wineries. One of the nation's leading vineries in Khao Yai is concerned that the new measures will open the floodgates to imported wine at prices it cannot match.

Maybe there is a growing case for a protective subsidy. And it is possible that the purveyors of fruit wine, already experiencing a rougher ride from the taxman than heretofore, may find their products competing less effectively with the real McCoy.

As they say, time will tell...

Ravi Chandran on social impact

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Having retired following 25 years with Banyan Tree Holdings, Ravi Chandran has never been busier. It is not exactly what was planned by the affable former chief executive of Laguna Phuket. But the explosion of growth post-COVID in the hospitality and real estate sectors combined with a savvy business reputation has had his phone ringing off the hook. So, what is he up to these days?

Your name seems to be popping up a lot again these days?

I have always been keen to make a positive contribution to society. This is really what drives me. My father, Cpt Chandran MBE OBE was a passionate campaigner for social housing who spent his life trying to help those in need. Before he passed away, he set up the Chandran Foundation, which was his way of giving back and making a difference to people's lives. Now led by my sister, Chitra, the foundation focuses on the welfare of young people in areas of education, nutrition and family. I have been a Special Project Manager for the Chandran Foundation for the last 15 months, and this has been a very rewarding and fulfilling time in my life.

So why did you step down after 25 years with Banyan Tree Holdings?

I loved my time with Banyan Tree Holdings and it was an honour to work directly with founder KP Ho. But after 25 years and COVID I just wanted to slow down a little and move away from the day-to-day. I enjoyed wonderful years with Banyan Tree and Laguna – and though the last two to three years were tough I am proud that we were central to supporting the “Phuket Sandbox” initiative and helping restart Thailand's tourism industry upon which so many people depend.



Photo: Ravi Chandran

After leading Asia's top integrated resort destination how were you able to relax?

It was a strange experience to start with. After 25 years, I was not used to not working. But I tried to focus on the things I never previously had time for. For six months I travelled, exercised and ate well. I am fortunate to live in Phuket, so I took long early morning walks every day, which helped to refocus. I thought I might be bored, but actually I wasn't – I enjoyed this time immensely and had plenty to keep me busy. Most importantly, I was able to spend time with Waticha Chandran (Chon), my wife, as well as with my cats!

So how and why did you start working again?

Over the years I have been fortunate to make many good friends and it was through this that out of the blue came Urasaya Beachfront Residences, an eco-sensitive project at Sichon Beach in Nakhon Sri Thammarat province. A friend in the music business told me he was planning to develop a collection of high-end beachfront pool villas at Sichon Beach, a stunning sandy strip voted by Lonely Planet last year as one of Thailand's best. Yet no one knows about it. The project is aimed at people who love Thailand, but want an escape from the main tourist areas. He invited me to visit, and I was sold. Sichon has so much potential; it feels like Thailand 30 years ago – peaceful, authentic,

natural. Crucially, the development has coincided with the opening of a new international terminal at Nakhon Sri Thammarat Airport, which paves the way for an exciting new era of sustainable tourism in the province.

How about Phuket, where you live?

Again, things have opened up as a result of friends and family. My wife knows the owners of Amora Hotels & Resorts, a family-run hotel group which operates six properties: three in Thailand and three in Australia. The young owner Earp Siriphatrawan contacted me for some help. We spoke and I quickly realised they share my own values; they value people and invest in their team members, many of whom have been with the group for decades. I have agreed to help them move from a traditional legacy hotel group to a modern hospitality company, with plans for expansion both in Thailand and Australia. This February will be the grand opening of Amora Beach Resort Phuket following a B500 million investment.

I hear you are also working in real estate – advising on a large 73-rai destination-wellness concept.

That's correct. I was contacted by a former colleague who asked me for some help. Gardens of Eden is an interesting project, a nature-inspired concept that blends wellness, luxury and sustainability. Located on Bang Tao Beach, 70% of the total area will be retained as green space, setting a new benchmark for large-scale developments on the island. It is a project that will have a positive impact on Phuket.

So, what's next?

I am happy enjoying what I'm doing at the moment, having the ability to pick and choose which projects to get involved with that are geared to making positive change. Plus of course enjoying family time.

This article was provided by David Johnson, CEO of Delivering Asia Communications.

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POP QUIZ

1. The Android OS for mobile phones and tablets is based on which operating system?
2. YouTube was bought for US\$1.65 billion, in 2006, by which company?
3. What is the UK prime minister's official country residence in Buckinghamshire called?
4. How many feet are in a fathom?
5. Allan Stewart Konigsberg is better known as who?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

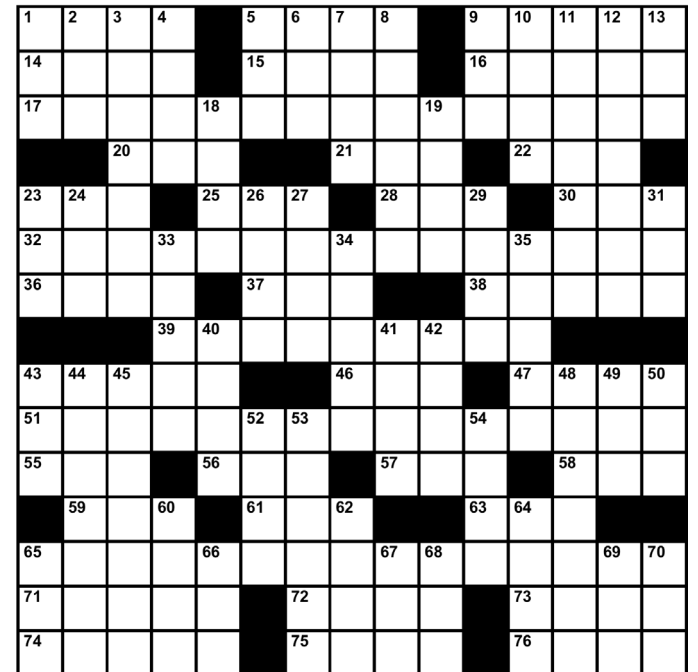
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			2				5	8
	6				8	7		3
8								
		9	3	1		5		

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Rounded end
 5. Garden bloom, informally
 9. Brew
 14. Able to see right through
 15. ___ a soul
 16. Bisect
 17. Not decide
 20. Needlefish
 21. "That feels good!"
 22. Kind of trip
 23. Kind of chart
 25. Go right
 28. Frowning
 30. Kicker's aid
 32. Cooling system
 36. Stead
 37. Like some socks
 38. Division of a long poem
 39. Russian stringed instrument
 43. Rustic digs
 46. Corner piece
 47. Place to be picked up?
 51. Certain weapons
 55. Car protector
 56. Apiece, in scores
 57. Freelancer's enc.
 58. Blame
 59. Giant syllable
 61. Dated
- Down**
1. Campaign pro
 2. Compass reading
 3. Display unit
 4. Bagel stuffer
 5. Animal with curved horns
 6. Race unit
 7. Diva's delivery
 8. Hereditary ruler
 9. "Pipe down!"
 10. Old Chinese money
 11. Fibrous scleroprotein
 12. Clear
 13. Pricing word
 18. "Cogito ___ sum"
 19. Neighbor of a Laotian
 23. Buddy
 24. Son of a son
 26. Chemical compound
 27. Icelandic epic
 29. Curtail
 31. An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others
 33. Biblical measure
 34. Lazybones
 35. Indian breads
 40. Buffalo
 41. Charity
 42. Hip bones
 43. Subway alternative
 44. Cost of flying
 45. Cooks, in a way
 48. "So soon?"
 49. Podded plant
 50. Unproven ability
 52. Burn balm
 53. "Amen!"
 54. Actor Green of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"
 60. Sicilian rumbler
 62. Monopoly equipment
 64. Command to a dog
 65. "Wheels"
 66. Order's partner
 67. Actress, Martin
 68. Carol contraction
 69. Altar avowal
 70. Palillo of "Welcome Back, Kotter"

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1. Linux; 2. Google; 3. Chequers; 4. 1.3; 5. Woody Allen



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
P	I	T	A	E	M	C	E	E	R	C	U	P		
A	N	A	L	Q	U	A	K	Y	F	O	R	A		
C	U	R	I	O	U	S	F	E	E	L	I	N	G	S
T	I	P	G	A	S	E	S	A	N	T	E	S		
S	T	A	T	E	L	Y	O	T	I	O	S	E		
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O	L	L	A	L	O	U	R	S	T	A	I			
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Y	U	C	A	F	R	O	N	T	O	U	R			
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O	D	I	N	S	A	M	B	O	M	A	R	E		
L	O	P	A	R	S	O	N	S	L	E	D			

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

teaspoon of honey is actually the lifework of 12 bees.

3.7

kilograms is how much candy the average American eats each year.

25

percent of the world's supply of hazelnuts is used to make Nutella.

224 million

Netflix subscribers – about 50% – watch a whole season of a TV show in just one week.

828 million

people throughout the world will go to bed hungry tonight.

Source: *Uberfacts*

ISLAND VIEW



Sunset panorama. Photo by Chris Pahlman

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

This week in history

Jan 26, 1808

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

Jan 27, 1967

Apollo program: Astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffee are killed in

a fire during a test of their Apollo 1 spacecraft at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida.

Jan 28, 1941

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

Jan 29, 2020

COVID-19 pandemic: The Trump administration establishes the White House Coronavirus Task Force under Secretary of Health and Hu-



The Apollo 1 crew. Photo: NASA

man Services Alex Azar.

Jan 30, 1703

The 'Forty-seven Ronin', under the command of Ōishi

Kuranosuke, avenge the death of their master.

Jan 31, 2012

The Toyota Corolla becomes the best-selling car of all time, with more than 37.5 million units sold. (1,482,932 units sold in 2019 alone)

Feb 1, 1972

Kuala Lumpur becomes a city by a royal charter granted by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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Phuket Jewelry Fair 2024
31 Jan - 4 Feb 2024
CENTRAL PHUKET

Phuket Jewelry Fair 2024

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

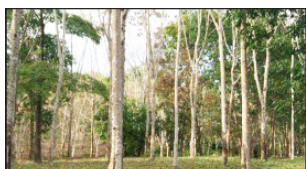
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AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, AMCHAM, BCCT, Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber, CanCham Thailand, FTCC, GTCC, TICC, NTCC, Phuket Chamber and Thai-Swedish Chamber, hosted "Australia Day Phuket Sundowners" at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, on Friday, Jan 19. A celebration of all things Australian, including popular Aussie food & beverages, and a fantastic welcome to the New Year as the first business networking event of 2024.



The March/April 2024 hard copy issue goes to print very soon

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Anntonia and players to exhibit Thai silk dresses

TENNIS

MISS UNIVERSE FIRST runner-up Anntonia Porsild will spearhead a stroll down the catwalk by international tennis stars attired in world-famous Thai silk dresses ahead of this year's Thailand Open in Hua Hin.

The event organisers have invited Anntonia to join the participating players in the Jan 29-Feb 4 tournament in various promotional activities, including giving alms to Buddhist monks.

Former deputy prime minister and honorary chairman of Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand

Suwat Liptapanlop said on Jan 16 that the organisers plan to use the event to promote the country's soft power.

"The Proud Group and Arena Hua Hin as the venue sponsor of the tournament want to promote Hua Hin as a tourism destination besides developing the sport of tennis," said Suwat.

"We have coordinated with the WTA in arranging



Anntonia Porsild. Photo: Bangkok Post

some special events involving the 32 main draw players to help promote tourism in Hua Hin with activities that reflect the Thai culture and also promote the country's soft power.

"The organising committee has invited the players to don Thai silk dresses and stride down the catwalk with 2023 Miss Universe first runner-up Anntonia Porsild joining them in the activity. This is to showcase the beauty of Thai silk.

"Once again, there will be a cooking class for the players in which they will learn to make traditional Thai dishes like tom yam kung, pad Thai, and massaman and fried basil leaf curries."

The event will be televised live by TrueSports 2 and 5 HD channels.

Bangkok Post

Mixed doubles joy for Thai shuttlers at Indian Open

BADMINTON

Bangkok Post

Mixed doubles stars Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai ended their eight-month title drought after winning the US\$850,000 (B30 million) BWF India Open last Sunday (Jan 21).

The sixth-seeded pair defeated fifth seeds Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin of China 21-16, 21-16 to win the World Tour Super 750 event at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi.

The victory was their 17th career title. The pair last won a tournament at the Malaysia Masters in May last year.

The triumph was the Thai pair's third straight win against the Chinese rising stars. Dechapol and Sapsiree won on both occasions when they played Jiang and Wei last year.

After being pushed to three games in their last two matches before Sunday's final, the match against Jiang and Wei was much more straightforward for the world No.7 pair as Dechapol and Sapsiree tamed their Chinese opponents in 46 minutes.

Following their win, Dechapol and Sapsiree returned to Thailand on Monday to prepare for the Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters, which will take place from Jan 30-Feb 4.

In the women's singles decider in



Sapsiree (right) and Dechapol celebrate their final win at the India Open on Jan 21. Photo: Badminton Association of Thailand / Facebook.

New Delhi, fourth seed Tai Tzu-ying of Taiwan defeated second seed Chen Yufei of China 21-16, 21-12 to claim her first title of 2024.

Tai was a finalist at the season-opening Malaysia Open in Kuala Lumpur on Jan 14, losing to top-ranked An Se-Young of South Korea in the title match.

Tai also won the season-ending World Tour Finals in December.

In the women's doubles final, Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara of Japan defeated Zhang Shuxian and Zheng Yu of China 21-12, 21-13.

It was the Japanese duo's first World

Tour title since the 2021 All England Open.

Sixth seed Shi Yuqi of China was crowned the men's singles champion after the sixth seed defeated Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong 23-21, 21-17.

The Chinese veteran also won the Delhi tournament in 2018 when it was a Super 500 event.

He was a runner-up in the Malaysia Open two weeks ago, losing to Denmark's Anders Antonsen in the decider.

Koreans Kang Min-Hyuk and Seo Seung-Jae beat India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty 15-21, 21-11, 21-18 in the men's doubles final.

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Schmidt named new Wallabies coach

RUGBY

FORMER IRELAND COACH JOE Schmidt vowed to "build a way forward" for the Wallabies after he was confirmed as their new coach on Jan 19.

New Zealander Schmidt will coach the Wallabies from Mar 1 until at least the conclusion of the British and Irish Lions Tour in 2025, governing body Rugby Australia (RA) said in a statement.

"I am conscious that the Wallabies have weathered a difficult period, and I am keen to help them build a way forward, with greater alignment and clear direction from RA," Schmidt said.

"The upcoming Test matches against Wales will arrive quickly, post-Super Rugby, and the program through to the British and Irish Lions Tour next year presents plenty of opportunities and challenges – which I am sure will invigorate players and staff," he added.

Last month, long-serving World Rugby administrator Peter Horne was appointed as RA's new director of high-performance.

Horne has a strong relationship with 58-year-old Schmidt, who coached Ireland from 2013 to 2019 and was instrumental in helping them become the number one ranked team in the world.

More recently, Schmidt worked with the All Blacks as an assistant coach at the last World Cup, where they finished runners-up to South Africa.

"It was a unanimous decision to appoint



Joe Schmidt. Photo: AFP

Joe – everyone on the panel was impressed by his demeanour, his calm and logical approach to the game, as well as his communication style," Horne said.

"Throughout his career, Joe has demonstrated an ability to take a leadership role in structural reform while developing a strong culture and world-class players," he added.

Australia have 18 months to prepare for the Lions tour and will host the men's World Cup two years after that. Wales are due to tour Australia in July.

RA said details of coaching staff appointments would be announced later.

Schmidt takes over from Eddie Jones who acrimoniously quit in October after the team's calamitous World Cup campaign, just 10 months into a five-year contract, having won just two from nine Tests and who has since been hired by Japan. AFP

Liverpool stretch their lead

FOOTBALL

AFP

Liverpool shrugged off the absence of Mohamed Salah to move five points clear at the top of the Premier League as Diogo Jota and Darwin Nunez struck twice in a 4-0 win at Bournemouth last Sunday (Jan 21).

Talisman Salah is on African Nations Cup duty for Egypt but Jota and Nunez stood up in his absence to secure a vital win at one of the league's form sides.

Bournemouth had lost just once in their previous nine games to climb comfortably clear of the relegation zone.

However, the Cherries were held at arm's length in the first half before Jurgen Klopp's men turned on the style after the break.

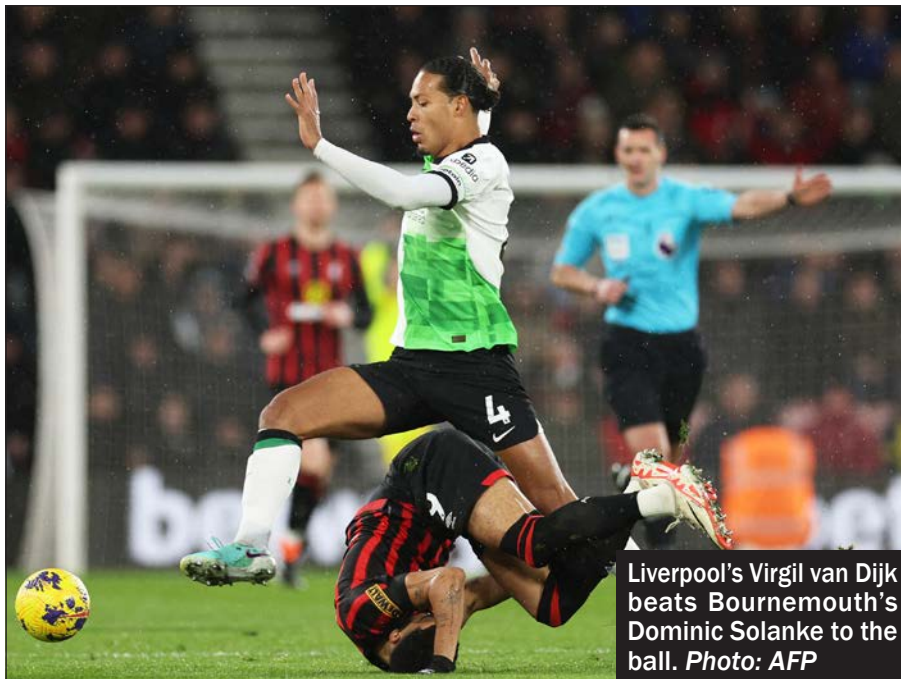
"It was obvious we needed to change something. We did and it worked much better," said Klopp on the turnaround in his side's display between halves.

"Everything was better, we put them really under pressure and we scored some beautiful goals. An impact from the bench again as well so it turned into a pretty good evening."

Manchester City have a game in hand on their title rivals and with it the chance to reduce Liverpool's advantage at the top down to two points.

But after a season in the doldrums saw Klopp's men slip to fifth last year, there is little doubt that they are once again the biggest threat to City's crown as champions.

Meanwhile, Arsenal breathed new



Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk beats Bournemouth's Dominic Solanke to the ball. Photo: AFP

life into their title challenge as a 5-0 win over Crystal Palace got the Gunners back to winning ways last Saturday (Jan 20).

Centre-back Gabriel did most of the damage before half-time as he headed in the opener then forced Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson into an own goal.

Leandro Trossard made it 3-0 on the hour mark before substitute Gabriel Martinelli struck twice in stoppage time.

Victory moves Mikel Arteta's men level with Manchester City and Aston Villa, five points behind leaders Liverpool.

Arsenal had won just once in seven games prior to a two-week winter break.

However, a warm weather training camp in Dubai looked to have refreshed last season's runners-up, even if they did

have very obliging visitors in struggling Palace.

The Eagles have won just once in 12 games to leave them still perilously poised above the relegation zone and pile the pressure on 76-year-old boss Roy Hodgson.

Also on Saturday, Ivan Toney returned from an eight-month ban for breaking gambling rules to score in Brentford's crucial 3-2 win against Nottingham Forest.

Elsewhere there was late drama in the 2-2 draw between Sheffield United and West Ham with both teams having a player sent off and a controversial injury-time penalty rescuing a point for the Blades, while Brighton and Wolves played out a 0-0 draw on Monday.



Dunlap celebrates his win. Photo: AFP

Amateur Dunlap sets new PGA Tour record

GOLF

REIGNING US AMATEUR champion Nick Dunlap became the first amateur since 1991 to win a PGA Tour title, winning a back-nine showdown last Sunday (Jan 21) to capture the American Express tournament.

Dunlap, a 20-year-old at the University of Alabama, sank the winning par putt from just inside six feet at the 18th hole to fire a two-under-par 70 at the Pete Dye Stadium Course.

He finished on 29-under 259 to set a 72-hole record low winning score, breaking the mark of 28-under set by Patrick Reed in 2014.

In doing so Dunlap became the first amateur to win a US PGA Tour event since Phil Mickelson captured the 1991 Northern Telecom Open in Tucson, Arizona.

Dunlap also became the second-youngest PGA Tour winner in the past 90 years, trailing only Jordan Spieth's victory at 19 at the 2013 John Deere Classic.

Despite his victory however, Dunlap will not take home any money from the win.

As an amateur, he is ineligible for the winner's prize of US\$1.51 million (B53.7mn), which goes to runner-up Christiaan Bezuidenhout, who finished on 260 after a closing 65.

However, despite missing out on the winner's cheque, Dunlap will become eligible to take PGA Tour membership at any time in the 2024 PGA campaign.

"Nothing like I have ever felt," Dunlap said after his win.

"It's so cool to be out here and experience this as an amateur." AFP

War Elephants on verge of Asian Cup last 16

FOOTBALL

THAILAND COACH Masatada Ishii said he was "really happy" with a point after his side held a blunt Oman 0-0 last Sunday (Jan 21) to inch closer to the knockout rounds of the 2023 Asian Cup in Qatar.

Sunday's draw followed a 2-0 win for the War Elephants in their opening game against Kyrgyzstan on Jan 16.

It left Ishii's men in second place on four points in Group F behind former tournament champions Saudi Arabia, who they were set to face last night (Jan 25).

The Saudis have already qualified for the next round after wins against Kyrgyzstan and Oman and, at time of press, Thailand stood every chance of progressing with them.

Qualification for the Thais would be all the more impressive given they are the lowest ranked team in Group F.

Last Sunday saw a lively first half in Doha, with Oman seeking to apply



Supachai Chaiced celebrates his second goal in the 2-0 win over Kyrgyzstan on Jan 16. Photo: AFP

pressure after the break, but finding no way through the stubborn Thai defence.

When the final whistle sounded, Thailand's players celebrated and their Japanese coach was more than happy.

"When we went into this match we wanted three points, but as the game went by, we saw what can be done," said Ishii. "We are really happy with one point."

Oman coach Branko Ivanovic acknowledged that "the Thai team was very cohesive", adding that "it was difficult to create opportunities to score".

Thailand's Group F opener against Kyrgyzstan

on Jan 16 saw Supachai Chaiced score both goals as the War Elephants registered their first ever win over their higher-ranked opponents.

Thailand led 1-0 when the Buriram United forward netted the first goal on 26 minutes, adding a second three minutes into the second half at the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha.

The victory was also significant as it was Ishii's first with Thailand in a competitive match since he was appointed in the role of coach by the Football Association of Thailand on Dec 12 last year.

Additional reporting by The Phuket News



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Sport



Thai pair take title at Indian Open > p14

COLONIALS RULE

Kamala Bowls Club nail-biter sees new Pryder Cup champs

The Colonials team celebrate their hard-earned victory. Photo: Rob Knight



BOWLS

Rob Knight

The majors competition series continued at Kamala Lawn Bowls on Jan 12 with the Colonials team taking the Pryder Cup honours after a day of nail-biting action on the green.

A record-breaking 26 bowlers contested the 11th edition of the competition, with the Rest of the World (RoW) team defending their title against the newly-comprised team Colonials, made up of players from countries including the United States, Canada, Australia and Hong Kong.

Many of the Colonials had actually represented the RoW team last year but swapped sides to allow new members to enter the fray from the likes of Thailand, Germany, Sweden and the UK.

This also meant that, despite the name change, the Colonials were in effect defending champions, needing only a draw to retain the trophy, or a minimum 12 points overall.

The Colonials also included all of the Kamala Koalas

touring team, who were most recently in action representing Phuket last September in Pattaya.

This year the RoW team was boosted by the addition of the ultra-competitive and in-form Thai female contingent, boasting Sireeton 'Wan' Sirimuangjan, Nidnoi Waranka and current Phuket and Kamala open champion Sunee 'Aon' Sampert.

'DREAM TEAM'

A total of 24 matches were scheduled to be played, with the scoring system of one point for a win, half for a draw and zero for a loss, the same as golf's esteemed Ryder Cup, from which the Kamala Pryder Cup drew inspiration for its name.

The decided format was three triples and a fours match followed by seven pairs game, rounded off by the usually pivotal 13 singles contests, with team captains picking groupings and selecting lanes and order of play in secret.

This format meant it was important not to succumb to an early deficit, resulting in the captain's having their work

cut out in deciding on specific pairings, lane selection and the possibility of sacrificing the odd game.

With play underway, the Canadian trio of Sammy, Doug and Duncan were comfortable winners over their English counterparts of Dot, Dean and Glenn, while the German team of Peter, Franz and Jürgen went down to Carl, Nobby and Chris G, and the Thai 'dream team' of Aon, Wan and Nidnoi pulled off a miraculous last end victory over their Australian opponents Dean, Rocky and George.

The fours teams were mixed nationalities and, despite holding a seven-shot lead at one point and looking certainities for victory, the Colonials had the win snatched from them at the very last end by the RoW team.

With the overall scores tied at 2-2 it was onto the seven doubles games. Sammy and Duncan continued their fine form on the day to comfortably beat the RoW pairing of Dean and Rob, while Wan and Nidnoi also moved on undefeated to square the match overall.

The rest of the doubles

games were tight affairs with the pick being Carl 'The Mesh' Mesham conjuring a win against the odds to overcome newcomer Chris G.

ALL TO PLAY FOR

Following the round of doubles games the score was 6-5 in favour of the Colonials and, with Nidnoi despatching Gregg 'Hollywood' Holman in an early singles game to square the match at 6-6, it was all to play for in the remaining 12 singles matches, with many of the players on both sides holding perfect 100% records from their two games at that stage.

The strategy of the RoW team at this point was to top load their order of play in the hope of putting the pressure back on to the Colonials, while the latter were clearly happy to hedge their bets and wait for the final outcome.

On paper, the singles draw seemed to favour the RoW team who went into the round full of confidence – but everyone knows the game is played on the grass and not paper and nobody could be discounted to overturn the odds!

After the first round of singles matches the RoW team edged ahead by 8.5 to 7.5, suggesting, perhaps, that the top-loading tactic has worked in their favour.

However, as is often the case in competition, the next four games saw a complete turnaround in fortunes, with the Colonials emerging victorious in three of them.

It meant the final four matches would determine the destiny of the cup this year with the overall scores level at a remarkable 10 wins each.

However, controversy was soon to rear its head and disrupt things. After careful review it transpired that a genuine scoring error demanded a minor score adjustment, leaving the scores at 9.5 to the RoW team and 10.5 to the Colonials, meaning the latter needed 1.5 points from the final four encounters to retain the trophy.

It ultimately all came down to the final two matches between 'Dunkin' Duncan Kennedy and Frank 'Borni' Born and Ross against Joe. Ahead of the games the scores were set at 11.5 to the Colonials and

10.5 to the RoW team, with nerves being seriously tested on both sides.

Joe managed to snatch a draw on his final bowl as 'Dunkin' Duncan, one of the form players of the day, overcame Frank by a score 7-5, resulting in the Colonials winning by an overall score of 13-11 to retain the trophy.

It was nail-biting action for players and spectators alike to enjoy, even when taking into account the scoring altercation!

'Dunkin' Duncan ended up with a perfect record of three out of three victories, as did Sammy Sampert and Nobby for the Colonials, while only reigning Kamala and Phuket Open Aon remained unbeaten on the defeated RoW side.

Kamala Lawn Bowls club is open six days a week and all equipment is provided. Members days are Monday and Friday and beginners day Wednesday from 2:45pm onwards. For more information please contact: Tel 099-130-7255 or 097-173-0221; email: galations1402@gmail.com or Gordonjenkins1963@gmail.com.

Seventh annual Rawai Mini Marathon confirmed

RUNNING

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN for the seventh edition of the hugely popular Rawai Mini Marathon, which will take place this year on Sunday, Feb 18.

Taking place at the customary location of Nong Nam Park at Nai Harn in the island's south, the event will incorporate three separate races, namely a 2-kilometre 'walk

for health'; a 4.5km fun run; and a 12.7km mini marathon.

There are entrance fees attached to all three categories as follows: walk for health B250; fun run B300; and mini marathon B350.

Organisers confirmed that there will be medals distributed to all finishers between first and 10th place in all three race categories on the day, with trophies going to the top three finishers.

Furthermore, cash prizes will

be distributed to finishers in the mini marathon as follows: B1,500 to first place; B1,200 to second place; B1,000 to third place; B800 to fourth place; and B500 to fifth place.

Registration is open now and can be done at: <https://soft.events/run/rawai-mini-marathon-7>.

More information can be accessed at the Education Division at Rawai Municipality office or by calling 076-613-801 ext 109 or 098-392-0779. *The Phuket News*



image: PR Phuket