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## SAFETY FIRST



Patong firefighters enter the Illuzion nightclub during the mass fire drill on Bangla Rd last week. Photo: PR Phuket

## NIGHTLIFE FIRE SAFETY HITS AGENDA IN PUSH FOR 4AM CLOSING

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Nightlife venue operators along Bangla Rd are working with officials to make sure that fire safety is not an issue that might see Patong overlooked in the current impetus to allow nightclubs to remain open until 4am.

Preechavude 'Prab' Keesin, President of the Pisona Group of companies and founder of the Patong Development Foundation, told *The Phuket News* this week that extending the closing time for entertainment venues was important, but not at the expense of safety for patrons in the venues.

The push to ensure safe night venues follows Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn meeting with operators of entertainment venues on Khao San Rd in Bangkok to discuss extending the closing time to 4am.

According to state news reports, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration is already drafting plans to rezone night entertainment venues in the capital to ensure public safety.

Pol Gen Adis Ngamchitsuksri, advisor to Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt on city and tourism management, said a review on revising zones for night entertainment venues is currently ongoing following two

recent fire incidents within the last two months – the most prominent being the Mountain B nightclub fire disaster in Chon Buri on Aug 5 that killed 20 people and left more than a dozen in hospital with serious injuries.

Regardless, Mr Phiphat said extending the closing time for nightlife venues would not be exclusive to Khao San Rd, as he is looking for potential areas in other provinces to adopt the same regulation. This will, however, require legal assistance from the Ministry of Interior, he said.

In Phuket, officials teamed up with local night venue operators to hold a mass fire drill on Bangla Rd on Aug 18, with hundreds of people

taking part. The drill simulated a fire breaking out at the Illuzion nightclub, with "patrons" leaving the club through the fire exits and fire response teams entering the building to douse the flames.

The simulation included the recovering of 10 "victims" from the scene. A triage tent was set up on Bangla Rd, where medical teams were on hand to treat the "victims", who were also transported to Patong Hospital.

The event was overseen by Phuket Vice Governors Pichet Panapong and Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam, along with Patong Mayor Chalerm Sak Maneesri, police and other officials.

Kathu District Chief Siwat Raw...

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# News



**Officials tackle teen pregnancies > p5**

## Nightclubs rally for late closing

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...angkul explained that the fire drill was organised as a direct result of the Mountain B nightclub fire in Chon Buri on Aug 5.

Of note, the day before the mass fire drill was held marked 10 years since the Tiger Discotheque fire on Bangla Rd that killed four people and injured 11 others in the early hours of Aug 17, 2012.

As with the Mountain B fire, a key factor in the Tiger Discotheque fire was that decorations and foam panelling in the nightclub acted as an accelerant for the fire. Flames spread very quickly throughout the club and thick toxic smoke quickly overpowered many of the people inside.

“Kathu District Office and Patong Municipality, with the cooperation of the nightclub owner, jointly organised this fire drill and fire evacuation drill in order to prevent an incident like the case of Mountain B fire and to campaign for people to be aware of the loss from fire, and thus create safety awareness among people, as well as being prepared to deal with fires that may occur,” Mr Siwat said.

Vice Governor Anupap warned that some fires are unpreventable, and that the general public and business operators must be prepared in case of fire.

Patong was especially important for fire safety, he added.

“This is an important economic area with many buildings, shops and services. To cope with various accidents, in both prevention and response, the government must



Tourism Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn spoke with nightlife operators on Khao San Rd. Photo: MoTS

regularly join with all sectors in campaigning and raising awareness of fire safety.

“We must create a culture of awareness of safety among people in the area as well as to build confidence for tourists to continue,” he said.

Mr Preechavude agreed, noting that the Tiger Disco inferno had resulted in club owners on Bangla Rd upgrading their fire safety measures to international standard.

“This is for the highest safety of service users, operators and all employees,” he said, adding that materials used in entertainment venues on Bangla Rd are difficult to ignite.

“The materials used in the cur-

rent entertainment venues are not like in the days of Tiger, which used the old foam injection decorations. Nowadays, the materials are modern and fire resistant,” Mr Preechavude said.

“Compared to the old Tiger, we hardly have any fuel or easy-to-ignite devices. Even the curtains or any foams used are fire retardant,” Mr. Preechawut said.

“Most service places on Bangla Rd don’t have any flammable equipment at all. All operators cooperate very well with fire safety. In addition, the government is constantly strict in its control of service places to focus on the safety of tourists,” he said.

The fire drill held last week was a clear example of making sure night

venue staff and local emergency response teams are clear on what to do in case of a fire, he added.

### 4AM CLOSING

Regarding Tourism Minister Phiphat’s current efforts to have the closing time of nightlife venues extended, Mr Preechavude expressed his admiration and full support.

“Extending the closing time to 4am is considered the best ‘land management intelligence’, so that we can compete on the global stage,” he said.

“Bangla has been waiting for this for almost 30 years. If it is approved, I think we will be able to adjust easily. I believe that the economy will improve, it will bolster

confidence in safety and help boost investment so we can compete better on a global level, especially with other international tourist cities,” Mr Preechavude said.

Bangla Rd is an ideal area for creating a late-trading zone for nightlife venues, he said.

“It can’t be done in every city, and even in Patong we can only do it in only one area of seven zones. Bangla Rd itself is only a few hundred metres long with an area of less than 1 sq km,” he added.

“The economic value remains to be seen,” he cautioned. “It may still take time to get better again, and it may not be the same as in the pre-COVID era.”

Mr Phiphat last week pointed out that Thailand’s tourism industry had been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since its reopening, the country has now welcomed around 1 million visitors each month, with up to 1.2mn expected in August.

The Tourism Minister added that extending the nightlife closing time, coupled with a concerted push for tourist safety, could generate an extra 20% in tourism revenue.

Mr Phiphat said that he is willing to discuss this matter with those opposing the idea, but was intent on proposing the idea to the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) in September or October.

Meanwhile, Mr Preechavude repeated, “In terms of safety, extending the closing time to 4am is not a critical issue, as long as all parties pay attention to and strictly enforce safety standards.”

## APEC SME meeting in Phuket hailed as great opportunity

WEERAPONG MALAI, Director General of the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP), returned to Phuket on Aug 16 to promote the upcoming 28th Apec SME Ministerial Meeting to be held at the SAii Laguna Phuket resort on Sept 5-10.

Mr Weerapong was last in Phuket on Aug 3 to highlight the upcoming meeting and to coordinate official preparations to host the meeting.

Speaking at the On On Hotel in Phuket Town, and joined by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, Mr Weerapong again highlighted how Phuket hosting the meeting would put Phuket’s attractions as a

tourism destination on show for the ministerial delegates and their media entourages.

He also repeated how Phuket hosting the APEC SME meeting would highlight the Thai government’s intention to follow an “Economic Model for Sustainable Development (BCG Model)”, which “aimed to build engagement with 21 leading economic zones in the Asia-Pacific region”.

“We hope to increase the capacity to expand opportunities for SMEs to enter the global supply chain and prepare for new challenges which will take place in Next Normal with Soft Power of Phuket, showing the potential of Thailand’s readiness to accept tourists and trade and investment that will help add



value to the Thai economy in the near future,” Mr Weerapong said.

Mr Weerapong again highlighted how Phuket as a tourism centre is “a destination for tourists around the world that can generate income from tourism as the second largest after Bangkok”.

In Mr Weerapong’s view, Phuket has already developed

international-standard service innovations, including being a “MICE CITY”.

“Phuket also has development guidelines aimed at creating Soft Power in various areas to reduce dependence on mainstream tourism, thereby fixing weaknesses revealed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,” he added.

“The fact that Phuket has

been chosen as the venue for this APEC SME meeting is a great opportunity as a representative of the Thai economic zone to show our potential and readiness to open our house to welcome delegates from 21 Asia-Pacific economic zones, including delegates in trade, investment, tourism,” he said.

“At the same time, SME entrepreneurs in Phuket, numbering 42,598 and employing more than 224,905 workers, have also shown their potential and readiness and can create opportunities for business operators in Phuket and nearby areas to be recognised internationally. This will be a mechanism to create an economy for the area in the future,” he added.

Mr Weerapong pointed out that the delegates will hail from 21 nations that together create more than half of the world’s GDP.

“The organisation of this meeting is therefore important to promote Thai SMEs with the goal of creating participation in determining attitudes that will preserve the interests of Thais and SMEs in the multilateral cooperation arena. It will also connect Thai SMEs with business partners in the Asia-Pacific region and thus increase our competitiveness and economic opportunity and empower Thai SMEs to enter the global supply chain,” Mr Weerapong said.

The Phuket News



# Bangla shooting cop jailed

## Police officer sentenced 25 years for drunken shooting of vendor

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Disgraced Phuket police officer Pornthep Channaong has been sentenced to 25 years in jail for shooting a 25-year-old noodle vendor on Bangla Rd while drunk off duty in February last year.

The news was announced on Aug 16 by Kerdphol Kaewkerd, a Bangkok-based lawyer assisting Aroon Thongplab with the case for free. Phuket Police have yet to comment on the sentencing.

Pornthep was drunk off-duty when he shot noodle vendor Mr Aroon in the stomach on Bangla Rd in Patong early on Feb 23 last year. He was corporal with the Phuket Provincial Police who had just been transferred to Region 8 Police at the time.

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

Mr Kerdphol said that CCTV footage showing Pornthep shooting Mr Aroon was instrumental in the court handing down the guilty verdict.



Pornthep Channarong on Feb 25 last year carries out for police his re-enactment of the crime on Bangla Rd. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

The CCTV footage showed Pornthep taunting and teasing Mr Aroon after he had shot Mr Aroon in the stomach. Mr Aroon is plainly seen on the ground begging for mercy while Pornthep taunts him.

Pornthep also fired another shot, but missed Mr Aroon due to his drunken state.

Mr Aroon survived the shooting, but was left paralysed from the waist down after surgeons removed

the bullet, which had lodged near his spine.

The shooting left his wife, Kulthida Chananan, to spend her time caring for him, and their two young children.

### CHARGES

Pornthep was found guilty of four charges, including attempted murder, for which the court initially sentenced him to 33 years and four

months imprisonment.

He was also fined B1,000 for carrying a firearm in a public area without due reason, and fined B1,000 for firing a firearm in a public area without due reason.

Added to his sentence was two months imprisonment for drug use – a detail that Phuket police have never admitted was a factor in the incident.

Pornthep had entered a plea of not

### DAMAGES

The family was seeking just B15 million in damages so they could get on with their lives.

However, the court instead ruled that damages totaling B7,992,500 was appropriate, to be paid over 20 years, Mr Kerdphol explained.

In recognition of the shooting, national police chief Pol Gen Suwat Jangyodsuk donated B100,000 to the family. The day after the shooting Region 8 Police donated B20,000 and the Phuket Provincial Police donated B10,000.

Understanding the costs of caring for a disabled person and the physical rehabilitation required, local expat Eric Smulders launched a campaign urging people to support the family.

The campaign raised almost B400,000 in just one week.

## Dutchman nabbed for Phi Phi spearfishing

A DUTCH NATIONAL HAS BEEN brought in for questioning in Phuket over spearfishing illegally in Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park.

The Dutchman, named by police as Roslan Benedia, was tracked down by national park officials to a coffee shop in Soi Ta-ied, Chalong, at 3:30pm on Aug 15, said Lt Col Ekachai Siri of the Phuket Tourist Police.

The national park officers became aware of the incident after Mr Roslan posted a video of his fishing exploits on TikTok, showing Mr Roslan holding two parrotfish, three unknown fish, and stabbing a moray eel in the head with a knife.

The video, which has since been removed from online, spurred outrage among Thai netizens and gained the attention of Natural Resources and Environment Minister Varawut Silpa-archa, who vowed to track down the culprit.

Mr Roslan told park officials that on Aug 9 he rented a boat from Phi Phi Don to Phi Phi Lei with Krishna Thodting as the boat captain.

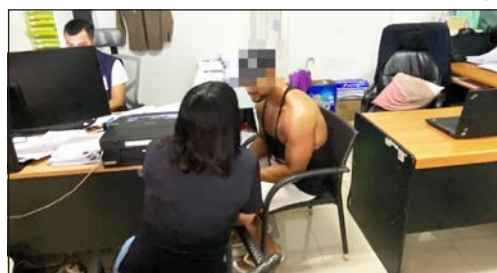
He had rented the speargun from an operator on Phi Phi Don Island. Mr Krishna took him to hunt fish at Phi Phi Lei at about 1pm, he said.

Mr Roslan said that he did not know that the area where he was fishing was a national park area.

Officers at Phi Phi Police Station are gathering evidence with the intent of charging him for fishing illegally in protected national park waters, officers confirmed.

The boat operator, boat captain Mr Krishna charters and the speargun rental provider are all also under investigation.

Lt Col Ekachai said at the time that so far Mr Roslan had been brought in for question-



The Dutchman, Roslan Benedia, was brought in for questioning on Aug 15. Photo: via Top Varawut / Facebook

ing only. At that stage, no charges have been pressed, he said.

At time of press, police had not confirmed any charges against people while they were continuing their investigation.

Marine officials ramped up their efforts to protect marine life in protected areas in 2017, and began to levy heavy fines for transgressions.

Olga Smirnova, a 53-year-old Russian grandmother, spent two nights behind bars at Chalong Police Station after she was caught feeding bread to fish at Racha Yai Island, south of Phuket.

She was eventually released after a 'friend' posted B100,000 bail.

In the end, following the involvement of the Russian Consulate-General in Phuket, Ms Smirnova was fined B1,000 and allowed to go home.

Ms Smirnova's case followed a Chinese tourist being fined B100,000 for having two parrotfish in a plastic bottle at Racha Yai.

Signs have been posted at Racha Yai informing visitors of the consequences of interfering with marine life in protected areas, including coral reefs.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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Wind 4 m/s



## Police warn over driver's licences

POLICE ARE WARNING RENTAL vehicle operators who rent a car or motorbike to a person who does not have the proper licence may face a fine of up to B2,000.

The notice – entitled “Car Rental Suggestion” – was posted on Phuket Tourist Police Facebook page and shared by some of Phuket police stations, including in Patong where many cars and bikes are rented out to tourists.

The notice consists of two parts. The “owner” of the vehicle is warned: “The owner or driver of a motor vehicle who let anyone without a proper driver's license to drive the vehicle will be fined not exceeding B2,000.”

Any “driver” caught operating a vehicle without the proper licence is warned: “Drivers without a valid driver's license shall be imprisoned not exceeding 1 month or will be fined not exceeding B1,000 or to both.”

The notice, with both warnings featured in Thai and English, bears the logos of the Tourist Police and the Phuket Police. *The Phuket News*

The Phuket News  
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Health authorities have voiced their concern about the threat of dengue fever during the current rainy season. The Department of Disease Control (DDC) has indicated the illness is now being increasingly found in the adult population.

DDC Director-General Opas Karnkawinpong said 16,276 dengue fever patients were found in Thailand from Jan 1 to Aug 10. Fourteen of the patients died. The number of deaths among those aged more than 35 years had grown by 2.2 times compared with the same period last year, he said.

The provinces with the highest patient numbers were, in respective order: Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani, Tak and Si Saket, reported state news agency NNT.

For this year, the DDC expects intensified dengue fever outbreaks in accordance with the disease's outbreaks cycle. The department says there is a tendency for a greater prevalence of the disease among adult patients.

Dengue fever entails two to seven days of acute high fever in combination with headaches, body aches, a reddened face, and small, red spots on the skin. Nausea, vomiting, stomach

## Dengue concerns rise



Officials fog residential areas in Chalong last week to eradicate disease-carrying mosquitoes. Photo: Chalong Municipality

ache, and loss of appetite may also occur. Most dengue fever patients do not experience coughs or runny nose. When the fever starts to level off, special care must be exercised to shocks and deaths being commonly observed during this stage.

Dr Opas asked for people to be aware of family members who develop a fever. If a high fever persists for more than two days despite attempts to alleviate the fever, there is cause for dengue fever to be suspected. In this

scenario, aspirin and ibuprofen are to be avoided and the patient should quickly be taken to see a doctor.

Dr Opas encouraged people to remove mosquito breeding grounds around their homes. This can be done by keeping the home tidy, storing all items in and around the home in an orderly manner, and increasing sunlight intake. Lids should be placed on items that contain water and vases should have their water changed every week.



Photo: Kittti Wongratanawut

## Mahout torn in half by elephant

A 32-YEAR-OLD MAHOUT WAS torn in two when he was gored to death in Phang Nga by an elephant that livestock officers said went into a frenzy from hot weather.

Lt Col Sorasak Chandee of the Takua Thung Police was called to the scene, a rubber plantation in 3 Baan Nai Yan in Moo 3, Tambon Tha Yu, at 11:30am on Aug 17.

At the scene, rescue workers and medical staff found the remains of mahout Supachai Wongtwin, 32.

Mr Supachai was the son of Thaworn 'Kaduan' Wongtwin, former Chief of the Khok Charoen Tambon Administrative Organisation in Thap Put District.

Mr Supachai had brought the elephant, 20-year-old Pong Paeng, to the plantation to haul rubber wood, police reported.

However, very hot weather in the morning had caused the elephant to go into a frenzy, using its tusks to attack Mr Supachai, they added.

Livestock officers found Pong Pang some 500 metres from where Mr Supachai's body was found, and used tranquiliser darts to sedate the elephant.

Mr Supachai's remains were recovered in order for funeral arrangements to be made, and the elephant was taken into care.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Truck rear-ended by car, overturns

THALANG POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING a major accident which left Thepkasattri Rd partially blocked and one person hospitalised in the early hours of Aug 18.

Lt Col Thitiwat Asasing of Thalang Police received a report of the accident, on Thepkasattri Rd near Srisoonthorn Municipality, at about 2am.

Police and rescue workers from Kusoldharm Foundation and Srisoonthorn Municipality arrived at the scene to find an overturned Isuzu delivery truck and a Toyota Camry sedan that had crashed into it from behind.

Various goods from the truck were scattered on the road, partially blocking it, leaving rescue personnel to take measures to protect other motorists.

Not far from the two vehicles police officers found a motorcycle and its 30-year-old driver Jiraphon Butsamran who had already crashed into a wheel torn away from the truck in the accident. Rescue workers administered emergency first aid at the scene then took Mr Jiraphon to Thalang Hospital for further treatment.

The driver of the truck, Nattakit



The Toyota Camry rear-ended the Isuzu truck, causing it overturn on Thepkasattri Rd. The driver of the car fled the scene. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Thongplew, 30, was waiting at the scene ready to be questioned by police. The driver of the Camry had fled the scene before officers arrived.

Mr Nattakit explained that he was delivering groceries to a warehouse in Srisoonthorn when the Camry struck his truck from behind. Mr Nattakit lost control of his Isuzu, which jumped over the median strip, overturned, hit a power pole and came to rest on the other side of the road. The Camry followed all the way.

At time of print, police had yet to find and question the driver of the Camry and his passengers, if there were any. *Eakkapop Thongtub*



# Phuket looks to tackle teenage pregnancies

The Phuket News  
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A meeting held last week focused on the issue of adolescent pregnancies in Phuket, detailing its impact and unveiling a draft strategy to help tackle the problem.

The meeting took place on Aug 16 at the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office and was overseen by Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panaphong.

Data from a report shared at the meeting revealed that there have been a total of 3,607 pregnant women in Phuket so far this year and of that total 142 were under the age of 20 years old and 40 required high quality antenatal care. A total of 44 required antenatal care before 12 weeks and 29 experienced premature birth.

The committee at the meeting also reviewed the impact of teenage pregnancy which included the girls dropping out of school early and therefore unable to progress into further education, which can create less opportunity



Photo: PR Phuket

for career advancement and therefore less chance to earn a decent living.

It also highlighted that the tendency for siblings of the teenage mother to also have children when they are young increases and that, in turn, their children were also far more likely to have children when they are also adolescents. Children born to

teenage mothers were far less likely to study hard and would likely struggle at school, resulting in many turning to crime and potentially ending up in prison, the report noted.

The likelihood of the teenage mother failing pregnant again within two years was around 25%, while many babies had unfortunately died before their first birthday.

Finally, the risk of suicide was high among teenage pregnancies and mothers, the report stated.

In response to these findings a draft strategy was unveiled recommending steps to help prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies in the province between 2022-2026.

Unsurprisingly, this centred around better education and access to contraceptives and birth control for teenagers. Similarly, it called for ongoing educational drives where updated information and services are publicised and made easily accessible.

The draft also called for general improvements in the public health service at district and subdistrict levels when dealing with adolescent pregnancies and proposed a coherent support system is introduced and made widely available.

The points suggested in the draft would be in addition to the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Solution Act 2016 and it was proposed a working group be created to help monitor progress.



Image: Supplied

## Phuket Town police hunt beer thief

POLICE ARE TRYING TO track down a man who brazenly walked up to a small grocery shop in Phuket Town and stole a box of beer on Aug 18.

Damrong Damthong, the 45-year-old owner of the shop, called Yu Huat, located on Phuket Rd, reported the theft to Phuket City Police at 2:47pm.

Mr Damrong presented CCTV footage showing the man pulling up on his motorbike about 10 metres from the shop, in order not to be seen, at around 12:15pm.

At the time the one staffer in the shop was arranging products at the back of the store, Mr Damrong explained.

The CCTV footage showed the man first walking past the shop to check whether any staff were present. He then turned around and removed a box of Chang beer from a stack in front of the shop.

The man placed the box

on the ground and carefully placed the price notice back on top of the stack before carrying the box of beer back to his motorbike and speeding off towards the Bang Neaw Intersection.

The shop staffer realised what had happened and ran out of the shop after the man, shouting for him to stop, to no avail.

The box contained 12 bottles of beer, for sale at B638, Mr Damrong said.

The value of the beer stolen was not the issue, Mr Damrong said. It was the theft in principle, and the nature of how the man had conducted the theft.

At last report police were trying to track down the grey Honda Click motorbike the man sped off on. Police were able to identify only the number 3554 on the licence plate from the CCTV footage.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## Flower hawker girl, 13, returned home safe

A 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL HAS BEEN safely reunited with her family after being lured away by a man in order to hawk flowers at Rawai Beach, Phuket Provincial Police have announced.

The man, named only as "Mr Somsak", was arrested at a house in Moo 2, Tambon Khuan Klang, Phipun District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, on Aug 16, Phuket Provincial Police announced through a statement.

In response to a post online asking what had happened to the girl, Phuket Provincial Police explained that police became aware that the girl had gone missing when Somsak himself reported her as missing to Chalong Police at about 10pm on Feb 4.

Somsak, 33, told police that the girl was his daughter. She was selling flowers in the Rawai beach area when she disappeared, he said.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong had ordered Chalong Police Chief Col Ekarat Plaidueng to investigate the girl's disappearance and provide updates regarding the investigation.

Following investigation by police, Phuket Provincial Court on April 7 issued a warrant for Somsak's arrest (arrest warrant No. 123/2565), Phuket Provincial Police explained.

Working with officers from Phipun Police in Nakhon Si Thammarat, police arrested Somsak on Aug 16.

He was brought back to Phuket, where he was taken to Chalong Police Station and charged with "taking away a child under



Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

fifteen years of age from a parent, guardian or guardian without reasonable cause".

Phuket Provincial Police did not explain why Somsak had avoided human trafficking and child labour exploitation charges, as were levied on a gang of four arrested in 2019 for operating a criminal child-exploitation operation in Phuket.

The gang forced children as young as 10 years old, skinny and dressed in rags, to work all night selling coconut water in bars and restaurants – or face being beaten.

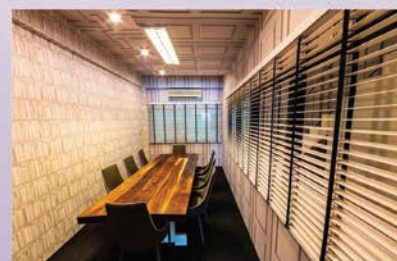
All four suspects in that case were arrested at their homes in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

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A group of Phuket masseuses have filed an official letter of complaint urging authorities to take action against a massage venue offering services two times cheaper than what they believe an honest market price should be.

The business in question is also alleged to be owned by foreigners.

Around 100 masseuses gathered outside Phuket Provincial Hall on Tha Kraeng Rd in Phuket Town last Friday (Aug 19) to ask Phuket officials to protect them from the price-dumping competitor. The group was led by Thornsiwit Klaicha-em, who spoke on behalf of Karon Traditional Thai Massage Community Enterprise Group and other massage operators in Phuket.

The disgruntled masseuses held up placards bearing figures “300” and “150” with B300 being what the group believes to be an honest massage price and 150 being the price offered by the competitor they want action against.

Mr Thornsiwit explained that the group wants “standards and fairness”. Before the pandemic Phuket massage operators agreed to set a standard price of B300 per hour “same for all shops”, he said.

“During the coronavirus outbreak there were almost no tourists in tourist areas. Entrepreneurs were unable



Phuket masseuses gathered in front of Phuket Provincial Hall to protest against price-dumping. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

to bear the costs of keeping parlors open and many Thai massage shops gradually stopped their business,” Mr Thornsiwit said.

“But then the Government implemented measures to solve the problem and contain the spread of the coronavirus to some extent, so Thailand could welcome tourists again. As a result, there arrived travelers who began using Thai massage services again,” he added.

Mr Thornsiwit said that the recovery in the massage industry

is now threatened by 150 Massage By Ked salons, operating in many areas of Phuket and offering “almost all types of massage” for only B150 per hour instead of B300. The parlors lure customers straight from the street and via social media with their low prices, which other venues cannot compete with.

“Thai massage shops cannot operate,” Mr Thornsiwit said.

“The cost of operating a business is higher than the actual income [if the fee is B150]. It is not possible to

offer the service at B150 per hour. It also impacts the confidence about Thai massage as well as the value of wisdom and science behind Thai traditional massage in the eyes of foreign tourists,” he added.

According to Mr Thornsiwit, 150 Massage By Ked is a Thai massage business opened by foreign investors who used Thai nationals to get around the law.

“It appears that 150 Massage By Ked does not operate according to the agreement,” Mr Thornsiwit said.

Appeals to Karon Mayor Jadet Wicharasorn and other local officials had yet to yield any results, he added.

Before the pandemic struck, there were about 10,000 masseuses working in Phuket. Now the business is coming back to life as tourists are returning.

Phuket Vice Governor Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam met the group and joined them for talks in the meeting room of Phuket Damrongtham Center (the provincial ombudsman’s office).

Mr Anupap said that as soon as next week officials would visit the area and negotiate with “massage parlors with lower than usual prices which cause most other parlors to suffer.”

A working group with representatives from Phuket Public Health Office, Phuket Commerce Office, Damrongtham Center, police and related agencies would check the licenses of the establishments in question and other details regarding their functioning, he said.

The working group will report its findings to the provincial authorities, Mr Anupap assured.

In turn, the masseuses expressed satisfaction with authorities being ready to act quickly and resolve the issue. The rally in front of Provincial Hall dispersed immediately after the meeting. No breach of peace and order was reported.

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## TAT expects 7.5mn foreign arrivals in H2

THAI TOURISM IN THE second half is expected to draw 7.5 million foreign arrivals and contribute B403 billion to the economy, according to a market forecast by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

The international market analysis for the second half could see 3.5-times growth from H1 2022, which closed with 2.12mn arrivals in total, as more favourable factors help support demand from every source market, said TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

Of the 7.5mn total, Southeast Asia is forecast to account for 3.13mn tourist arrivals, generating B114bn, followed by Europe with 1.6mn travellers and the highest revenue of around B119bn due to a longer length of stay, expected to be brought on by the length of stay being extended from 30 days to 45 days from Oct 1 through March next year.

Southeast Asia has the most promising outlook as land border checkpoints have fully reopened while most airlines have resumed their routes connecting key cities



Tourists walk past an arrivals and departures board at Suvarnabhumi airport. Photo: Somchai Poomlard / Bangkok Post

in the region.

South Asia, led by India, could see 989,320 tourists arriving, with total spending of B50bn. The tremendous growth of this market derives from flight connectivity which has no shortage like other destinations.

However, Northeast Asia, which previously dominated Thai tourism during the years before COVID-19 with over 10mn tourists from China, would drop to fourth place with 831,900 tourists, generating B42bn, mainly attributed to tight border controls in China and restrictions still in place in Japan.

Meanwhile, the Middle East is poised to generate B40bn in revenue from 449,800 travellers, followed

by the US with 257,420 travellers contributing B19bn in receipts.

Oceania would account for 234,570 tourists generating B18.4bn and another 27,500 tourists are expected from Africa with total spending of B1.8bn.

Mr Yuthasak said the results from the analysis showed that this year Thailand could secure at least 9.62mn travellers in total, which is close to the target of 10mn.

However, there are headwinds that could impact travel sentiment in the second half of the year, led by the Russia-Ukraine war with no end in sight, while tensions between China and Taiwan need close monitoring.

The Phuket News



# COVID declared endemic by October, says government

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The government has confirmed it will declare COVID-19 endemic in October, and the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) will then no longer be the main agency dealing with the disease.

CCSA spokesman Taweessilp Visanuyothin said last Friday (Aug 19) that from October the disease would be under the emergency operations centre of the Public Health Ministry and provincial communicable disease committees, instead of the CCSA chaired by the prime minister. He gave no specific date, however.

From November, the provincial committees would be the sole agencies dealing with it. Infected people would be isolated in line with the guidelines of the Department of Medical Services.

"The goal is for people to be able to coexist safely with COVID-19 and live normal lives," Dr Taweessilp explained.

The decision to declare the



CCSA spokesman Taweessilp Visanuyothin at the meeting last Friday (Aug 19). Photo: Bangkok Post

disease endemic was based on the presently limited number of severe COVID-19 cases and related fatalities.

The present COVID-19 situation is at the green level, with 2,000-3,999 inpatients and 11-39 deaths a day and 201-399 inpatients dependent on ventilators, while clusters of infection are limited, Dr Taweessilp said.

The numbers are not high but new cases are rising due to the spread of the BA.5 sub-variant of the Omicron strain.

Additionally, surveys in April and May showed that more than 90% of people had antibodies to the virus and studies found that three shots of any COVID-19 vaccines reduced the possibility of severe illness and death by more than 90%.

The incidence of COVID-19 would be similar to influenza, and there would be new cases all year long, Dr Taweessilp added.

However, he did not add comment on whether the

CCSA may consider lifting the state of emergency to coincide with the downgrading of COVID-19.

The state of emergency imposed to cope with COVID-19 was earlier extended to the end of September. Officials had time to further monitor the situation before making a decision, Dr Taweessilp said.

Meanwhile, the CCSA has approved longer visas for foreign visitors to the country from Oct 1 until March 31 as part of efforts to revitalise the economy as the pandemic eases.

Those with regular visas will be able to stay for 45 days, up from 30 at present, while the visa on arrival scheme will be extended from 15 to 30 days.

"We are looking to extend their stay as this will help boost tourist spending, revive the economy and reduce the impact of the pandemic," said Dr Taweessilp.

The Tourism and Sports Ministry has projected the number of foreign travellers will hit 10 million this year. From Jan 1 to Aug 16, over 4 million foreign tourists visited Thailand, he said.



Photo: Bangkok Post

## Department softens truck seat belt rule

### BANGKOK

STRICT PUNISHMENT for passengers sitting in a pickup truck's cabin or cargo bed without a seat belt will no longer apply when a new law takes effect on Sept 5, the Department of Land Transport (DLT) said last Sunday (Aug 21).

The DLT was responding to concerns raised over the perceived impracticality of the recently-passed Land Transport Act 2022, as the back-row seats of older trucks and cargo beds are not typically equipped with seat belts.

DLT director-general Jirut Wisanjit said people should not be worried about whether they can no longer ride in the bed of pickup trucks and the Royal Thai Police will issue an announcement to exempt

them from punishment.

The new law, however, will only allow at most three passengers in the back-row seats of a truck's cabin and six people in a cargo bed.

A pickup truck carrying passengers in its cargo bed will, however, be required to cut its travel speed.

The national police are working together with the DLT on the new law.

The announcement will outline details of how the law will be enforced by the police, including who and what will be exempt from the mandate.

A requirement under the law for cars to have proper car seats for children will not take effect on Sept 5 as there is still more work to be done to ensure it does not overly burden consumers, Mr Jirut said. Bangkok Post

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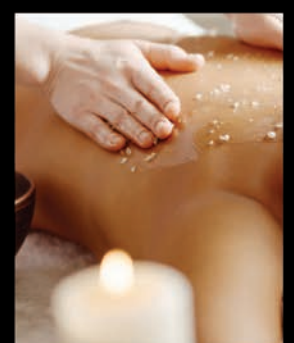
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# Queen on Street

## Nong Fiat starts taking the world by storm

Chutharat Plerin  
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At just 13 years old, Prapapon 'Nong Fiat' Sreemoung is already becoming a singing sensation, impressing Thais and tourists alike on Bangla Rd in Patong and at the Lard Yai Walking Street in Phuket Town on Sundays.

Just one of her performances, Nong

Fiat singing Adele's *Set Fire to the Rain*, sung on the Walking Street in Phuket Town, has gained more than a million views on YouTube. One video alone of Nong Fiat singing Sia's *Unstoppable* has gained more than 5.4mn views. Her popularity on TikTok has also soared to dizzying heights.

Her online channels, under the name 'Queen On Street', are now becoming popular abroad, with Nong Fiat impressing people who have never even

visited Phuket; her powerful voice belting out from the petite youngster with a sweet and charming smile.

Her outstanding talent saw Nong Fiat being invited to join the Young Artists For Ukraine on stage for a UN-HCR project that took place in Sweden in June.

Nong Fiat gives much credit to her father, Khun Fu, who has been alongside her every step of the way for inspiration and support. He helps make every step stronger and is the most important driving force for her to take the next step towards her dream, Nong Fiat says.

Nong Fiat calls herself '100% Thai'. Originally from Lopburi, she moved to Phuket with her father about four years ago and is currently enrolled in Mat-tayom 1 at Kajonkietsuksa School in Kathu.

"At first, I didn't like singing. I used to like listening to music more," Nong Fiat admits. "But my father is already a singer and I always hear my father sing wherever we go. I think I gradually absorbed it from him."

Nong Fiat started taking singing lessons at 8 years old, while she was in Prathom 3 in Bangkok, but those lessons stopped when they moved to Phuket.

"When we first moved to Phuket my singing lessons completely disappeared. I just started singing lessons again about two years ago," Nong Fiat explains.

Her father always accompanies Nong Fiat when she does her street performances, and often the pair perform as a duo. "My father plays the guitar, sometimes I play guitar too," Nong Fiat adds.

Nong Fiat can also play violin. "I used to learn the violin when I was younger, but now I rarely get the chance to play it; same for the piano," she says.

"Now I play electric guitar and I am taking more lessons on the acoustic guitar. As for singing, I am taking lessons from a Swedish singing coach, Johan Jamtberg.

"Teacher Jo has been teaching me online for two years. He Skypes me from Sweden. And when I went to perform at a concert in Sweden, Teacher Jo was the one who helped push me to make the most of my singing. He is also



a producer," Nong Fiat explains.

Nong Fiat and her father had no idea that a friend of Johan's had seen – and heard – Nong Fiat singing in Patong, and told Johan that he should come and see her for himself. Johan flew out to Phuket and realised just how talented Nong Fiat was.

"We didn't even know who he was or that he had come just to see me," Nong Fiat says. "He came every day for 15 days to watch me sing."

"He and my father started talking and we got to know each other, then he volunteered to teach me to sing. One of the people he has coached was a world-class symphony singer," she adds.

Nong Fiat thinks that she did very little to make herself an online star. "People just started posting online videos of me singing. Now these videos have millions of views," she says.

She then created her own online channels on Facebook and YouTube to post videos, but it was on TikTok that her number of viewers skyrocketed into the millions within months. Her 'Queen on Street' TikTok channel has had 15.4mn views.

"Suddenly the videos popped up on their own. They were posted by people who had seen me sing. They took photos and shared them on TikTok," she says.

"Our videos actually don't do that well. In fact, we rarely post on TikTok. Most of them are posted on the Queen On Street Facebook page, which now has about 300,000 followers," she adds.

Nong Fiat understands her age, that she is just at the beginning of her journey, and she looks forward to the next chapter in her singing career.

The Phuket News wishes Nong Fiat the very best in all her future endeavours.

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David Pollicutt

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All of this makes HeadStart's most recent results in English Literature so much more remarkable. Students from diverse backgrounds; wildly varied starting points (40% of the students did not study English Literature at IGCSE level); but united in a shared and mutually supportive drive to succeed, tackled, grappled, wrestled and ultimately triumphed in this course.

Some figures, then: 100% of the cohort achieved A\*- C grades, the third year in a row this has been achieved at HeadStart. What makes this all the more remarkable is that 50% of the cohort achieved either an A grade or, for the first time in the school's history, two students (Sara Bokobza De La Rosa



HeadStart students have excelled in their A Level English Literature results.

and Pailin Frederiksen) achieved the almost unheard of A\*, a grade which required them to achieve over 85% in all the exam essays they wrote over the two-year course. I lack any Nostradamus-esque prescience, but I think there is a very sporting chance we may see a 'Top in Thailand' award here.

The course has been eclectic and demanding; this year alone has seen students contend with the study of 31 poems from the postmodern and elusive poet Sujatha Bhatt; the psychological and social commentary from Bram Stoker and Shelagh Stevenson; and shifting portrayals of 'The Other' in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. This is all on top of the texts they studied – and excelled in their critical

responses to – in Year 12.

English teachers have been equally dedicated. For every essay written by students, the teachers write it alongside them as part of our VIMA assessment and feedback system (6th form: Years 12 and 13 Milestone Assessment). This meant that students had immediate access to top quality, relevant discursive essay models which they could then use to emulate the structure, style and depth of linguistic and contextual analysis. Additionally, this also lent itself to a more dialogic form of assessment whereby students would discuss, deconstruct and then synthesize this feedback, putting it into action in their ensuing directed improvement task. Furthermore, teachers would write and

share whole class and individual student feedback, focused on the individual A Level assessment objectives.

If these VIMAs sound exhausting and exhaustive, that's because they are – for all parties! However, the intellectual rigor and fitness for their purpose is revealed not only in this set of results but also in the anonymous feedback from the students themselves, where students wrote comments such as:

"It simulates the actual exam and gives a sense of how much time we would have in the real exam."

"It is good for time management practice; it's more realistic that way and makes students less stressed with the actual timed exam"

"VIMAs tell me the areas I need to improve (e.g. deeper analysis, using checklist for Unseen paper)"

"I like the feedback on specific ways I can personally improve related to marking schemes to know where to spend more of our time on improving."

Of course, these students have done very well in other subjects too and I would invite you to learn more about them on the school's website or in person. However, I have most 'skin in the game' when it comes to my subject, and as the school's Head of English I can wholeheartedly, unambiguously and sincerely declare my pride in these students and I pass on to them congratulations warmer than the fiery pits of Dante's *Inferno* themselves.

Now, over to the new Year 13s...



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# POP QUIZ

1. How many known species of monitor lizard are there?
2. Arnold George Dorsey MBE is known professionally as who?
3. What were the original five stages of grief, in order?
4. Which classic English author used the pen name Elias Bell?
5. The 48<sup>th</sup> G7 summit was held in which country in June this year?

Answers below, centre

## SUDOKU

Medium

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

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Lacks
6. Reddish-brown gem
10. Basilica area
14. Exterior
15. Turkish official
16. Get-out-of-jail money
17. High school garb
20. Lose resilience
21. Deep black
22. Farmers' association
23. Duck down
25. Gaelic tongue
26. Sea eagles
28. Swell
32. Some holiday gifts?
34. Plane-jumping G.I.
35. Suffix with ideal
38. High school event
42. Poetic paean
43. M.P.'s quarry
44. Provide, as with some quality
45. Missed the alarm
48. Sarah's husband
49. Tent event
51. Deceive
53. Wired
55. Digestion aid

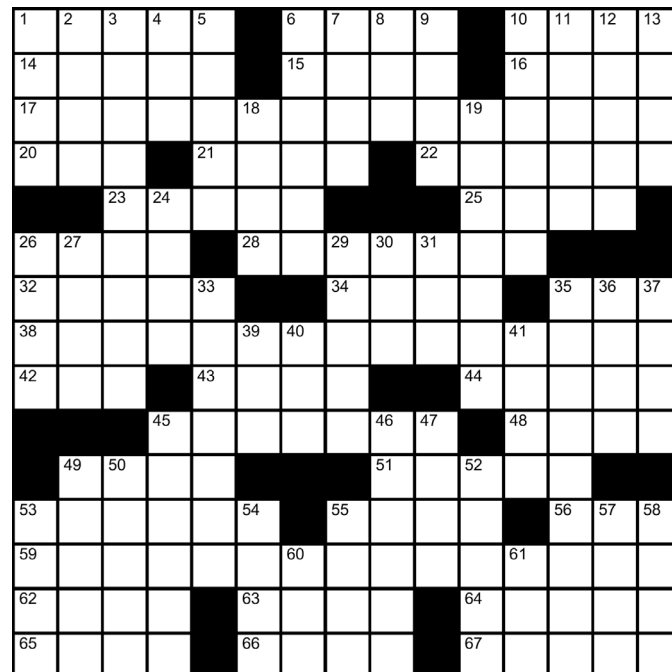
56. Early evictee
59. High school offerings
62. Narrow street
63. Director Reiner
64. Hideouts
65. Squeaked (out)
66. N. Carolina county
67. Kind of pen

Down

1. Bikers' rides
2. Something in the air
3. Sting or Slash, e.g.
4. James Fenimore Cooper's "\_\_\_ Myers"
5. Aligned
6. Folklore creature
7. Not fer
8. Frat letter
9. "Drat!"
10. On base
11. King protectors
12. Burn a bit
13. Ultimatum ender
18. Out, in a way
19. Hand \_\_\_
24. Man, for one
26. Repeat performance?
27. Cross
29. Shed
30. Browning work?
31. Fraction of a joule
33. Like some triangles
35. It comprises 17,508 islands
36. Gulf war missile
37. Recompense
39. See red?
40. Unkempt hair
41. It's just for openers
45. Covered with goo
46. Eave hanger
47. Head
49. \_\_\_ preview
50. Set apart
52. Ardors
53. Eye
54. Leave one's mark on
55. Maryland stadium
57. Green
58. Start of North Carolina's motto
60. Singer Charles
61. Gained a lap

## Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) 80; (2) Engelbert Humperdinck; (3) Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance; (4) Emily Brontë; (5) Germany (Schloss Elmau, Krün, Bavarian Alps)



Visit: [www.ilovecrosswords.com](http://www.ilovecrosswords.com)

## Solutions to last week's puzzles:

C	A	R	A	T	F	L	I	T	G	L	U	M
A	L	I	N	E	A	I	N	U	R	A	G	E
G	I	V	E	A	G	R	E	E	N	L	I	G
E	V	E	N	S	O	F	R	E	U	D		
E	N	T	E	R		U	T		P	E		
S	G	U	M		N	A	I	L	S	U	P	E
H	A	V	E	A	G	R	E	E	N	T	H	U
I	N	U	R	E	A	R	E	A		R	A	Y
P	O	L	E	R	S	S	K	U	A			
S	E	A										
A	T	L	A	S								
B	E	G	R	E	E	N	W	I	T	H	E	N
E	T	U	I		N	A	A	N		A	N	T
D	A	T	A		T	I	P	S		S	T	O

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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

language dies every 14 days. It's thought that, by the next century, nearly half of the world's 7,000 languages will disappear.

40

percent of all classified mammal species are rodents. There are more than 2,200 species of them.

13,000

times faster is NASA's internet connection compared to the average. It reaches speeds of up to 91 gigabits per second.

478,867

people have signed a petition to rename New York's Fifth Avenue, where Trump Tower sits, to "President Barack H. Obama Avenue."

1.5

million

euros were tossed into Rome's Trevi Fountain every year, before the COVID-19 pandemic. The fountain has reopened. The money is collected for charity.

Source: Uberfacts

## ISLAND VIEW



Morning foraging. Photo by Cynthia Tomaszewski

Got an unusual or particularly beautiful picture of Phuket?  
Email it to [execeditor@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:execeditor@classactmedia.co.th)

## This week in history

August 26, 1920

The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the United States Constitution takes effect, giving women the right to vote.

August 27, 1859

Petroleum is discovered in Titusville, Pennsylvania leading to the world's first commercially successful oil well.

August 28, 2003

In "one of the most complicated and bizarre crimes in the annals of the FBI", pizza delivery man Brian Wells dies after becoming involved in a complex plot involving a bank robbery, a scavenger hunt and a homemade explosive neck collar.

August 29, 1966

The Beatles perform their last concert before paying fans at Candlestick Park in San Francisco.

August 30, 1945

The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong comes to an end. British control over Hong Kong is restored.



A Thai Airways Boeing 737-200, similar to the one involved. Photo: Tim Rees / Wikipedia

August 31, 1987

Thai Airways Flight 365 travelling from Hat Yai to Phuket crashes into the Andaman Sea 15 kilometres east of Phuket International Airport, killing all 83 on board.

September 1, 1952

The Old Man and the Sea, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Ernest Hemingway, is first published. He wins the Nobel Prize in Literature two years later.

Source: Wikipedia



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## AUSTCHAM PHUKET BRIEFING & SUNDOWNERS

Held at Boat Lagoon Resort on August 11, the evening started with a members briefing discussing "Moving Forward with Yacht Charters", on the current charter status for foreign-registered yachts and general business considerations in light of current developments. Followed by Sundowners, where over 80 people enjoyed a wonderful night of making new connections and catching up with familiar faces in the Australian-Thai business community. Special thanks to AUSTCHAM corporate sponsors BDO Phuket, who provide outsourced accounting, outsourced admin, outsourced tax accounting, financial advice, and outsourced CFO services for businesses in Phuket. Also thanks to Boat Lagoon Resort, Lady Pie, Captain Hook Smokehouse and Really Good Deli for a great selection of food and beverages.

# WINDOW ON PHUKET

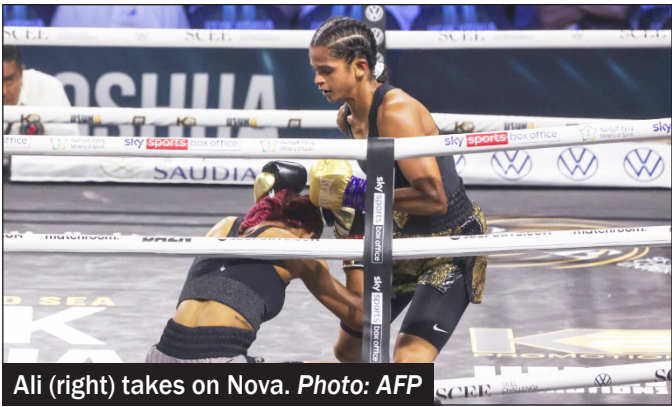
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## Seconds out as Ali wins first Saudi women's boxing match

### BOXING

SOMALI-BORN BRITON Ramla Ali won the first professional women's boxing match held in Saudi Arabia with a spectacular first-round knock-out of Crystal Garcia Nova last Saturday (Aug 20).

Just seconds into the fight, after already connecting with heavy shots to the head and body, Ali sent Nova's gumshield flying with a fierce right that slammed into the Dominican fighter's jaw.

"I feel like I need to go back and do some more pads. I didn't really get out of first gear," said the 32-year-old at King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Ali, a former refugee from war in Somalia and fighting at super-bantamweight, now

stands at 7-0 in her professional career as she moves towards an expected world title attempt.

Before the fight, she said she hoped to be an inspiration in Saudi Arabia as she led a boxing class in Jeddah for Saudi women and girls as young as 15.

"The organisers inviting myself to compete and allowing this fight to go ahead really shows you the cultural shift in the landscape that is happening in the region," she said.

"I hope myself and my opponent, as well as the full card, competing in Saudi Arabia inspires future generations."

Saturday's fight was on the undercard of the world heavyweight clash between Anthony Joshua and defending champion Oleksandr Usyk.

AFP

# Usyk shatters Joshua then targets Fury showdown

### BOXING

AFP

Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk won his rematch against Anthony Joshua by split decision in Saudi Arabia last Saturday (Aug 20) to set up a potential unification bout with Britain's Tyson Fury.

The former cruiserweight world champion, who dismantled the holder in London last year, faced an improved Joshua but outboxed him once again in just his fourth heavyweight bout.

Usyk, now unbeaten at 20-0, immediately called out Fury, who announced his latest retirement earlier this month but has signalled his willingness to resume his career.

Victory over the 6ft 9ins (2.06m) Fury would unite all four heavyweight belts and constitute a crowning glory for the sublime Ukrainian, a former outstanding amateur and Olympic heavyweight champion.

"I'm sure that Tyson Fury is not retired yet," Usyk told the crowd. "I'm convinced he



Usyk (left) connects with Joshua on his way to victory in their heavyweight bout last Saturday (Aug 20). Photo: AFP

wants to fight me. I want to fight him. If I'm not fighting Tyson Fury I'm not fighting at all."

The fight was watched on free-to-air TV by millions of Ukrainians living under the Russian invasion. Usyk signed up to fight for his country before accepting the rematch.

"I give this victory to my country, to my family, to my team and to all the military

who are defending the country," he told the 12,000-seat King Abdullah Sports City Arena in Jeddah.

An angered Joshua hurled down Usyk's belts and peppered his post-fight speech with expletives.

The judges scored it 113-115, 115-113 and 116-112 for Usyk as Joshua narrowed the gap but was still found wanting.

Joshua, the 6ft 6ins two-time world champion, is left staring at an impasse in his career after his third defeat in his 12<sup>th</sup> straight title fight left him with figures of 24-3-0.

Joshua, accused of hesitancy in their first fight in London, was the early aggressor by round two as he repeatedly landed his big right hand.

A heavy right hook stung Usyk in round three and Joshua was continuing to find the jab as the Ukrainian's busy footwork opened up gaps.

A flurry to the body put Usyk back on the ropes in the eighth and Joshua had the Ukrainian hanging on in the ninth after a right-left hook combination as the fight came alive.

But Usyk came storming back after the bell with a succession of clean shots as Joshua took some serious punishment despite landing a massive right of his own.

The mesmerising Usyk increased his control in the closing stages, slipping punches and landing quick combinations as Joshua searched in vain for the knock-down.

## Final roll of the dice for Ferrari to salvage season

### FORMULA ONE

FERRARI'S CHRONIC UNDERPERFORMANCE has put it on the cusp of throwing away both the drivers and constructors titles, but a resurgence at the Belgian Grand Prix after the midseason break could keep its slim hopes alive.

There's no team that needed the midseason break more badly than Ferrari.

To describe the Italian team's season as a roller-coaster would be to understate the violence with which its championship fortunes have changed.

In March and April it rocketed into the position of championship favourite, notching up some dominant victories to establish sizable points leads in both title tallies while Red Bull Racing wallowed with unreliability.

But the equation changed dramatically during May, June and July with engine unreliability and strategic miscalculation costing the team.

The glass-half-empty summary is that Ferrari and lead driver Charles Leclerc – who has committed errors of his own – are throwing away a championship that, if not there for the taking, is at least up for grabs.

But the glass-half-full approach is that the SF-75 in Leclerc's hands is the most competitive car on the grid and that the title isn't yet completely out of reach.



Ferrari mechanics work on Charles Leclerc's car at the Hungarian Grand Prix on July 29. Photo: AFP

The results bear it out: Leclerc's seven poles from 13 races is easily the most of any driver, and Ferrari has double Red Bull Racing's poles for the year. Races aren't won on Saturday, but the speed is clearly there – it's just a matter of wielding it.

Either title is still a long shot, but the team has all the constituent parts for success.

But it must start the ball rolling at this weekend's (Aug 26-28) Belgium Grand Prix – and keep it rolling at speed at the following Dutch and Italian grands prix – to maintain even its outsider hope or wresting back control of the title tables.

It's no exaggeration to say Ferrari's season is on the line in the next three weeks.

Michael Lamonato



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# Stuttering Liverpool still winless

## FOOTBALL

AFP

Three months ago Liverpool stood on the brink of an unprecedented quadruple of trophies. Three games into the new season, they are yet to win a game.

A 2-1 defeat at Old Trafford on Monday (Aug 22) saw Jurgen Klopp's men leapfrogged in the fledgling English Premier League table by a Manchester United side that had spent the past week being ridiculed for losing 4-0 at Brentford.

Liverpool's worst start for a decade leaves the Reds already trailing defending champions Manchester City by five points and early leaders Arsenal by seven.

"It's not the nicest thing to look at, that's clear," said Klopp on his side slipping to 16<sup>th</sup> after three games.

Of even more concern for the German is that there does not appear a quick fix for the issues that have caused such a slow start.

An early season injury crisis meant Thiago Alcantara, Naby Keita, Ibrahima Konate,



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah is outnumbered during his team's loss to Manchester United at Old Trafford on Monday evening (Aug 22). Photo: AFP

Joel Matip and Diogo Jota were among those unavailable for the trip to Old Trafford.

Darwin Nunez was also missing after Liverpool's new £64 million (B2.7 billion) striker served the first of his three-game ban for the red card he received for headbutting Crystal Palace defender Joachim Andersen last week.

Nunez's arrival from

Benfica accounts for most of Liverpool's spend in the transfer window and the decision not to refresh Klopp's midfield options is a growing source of frustration among the Reds' support.

Without Thiago and Keita, the 36-year-old James Milner and Harvey Elliott, 19, lined up either side of captain Jordan Henderson in midfield on Monday.

Klopp admitted before the game that it would be "cool" to have another mid-field option.

### ALEXANDER-ARNOLD TARGETED

That is not the only area of concern for Klopp.

Trent Alexander-Arnold's defensive positioning is being increasingly targeted by the opposition.

Following on from Real Madrid's winner in last season's Champions League final and Fulham's joy on the opening weekend of the season, an attack down Liverpool's right was the source for United's first goal.

Virgil van Dijk has also looked far from the world's best centre-back in recent weeks and was on the receiving end of a telling off from Milner for his role in giving Jadon Sancho the space to slot home the opening goal.

Up front, the loss of Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich is hitting hard with Roberto Firmino looking a spent force as he deputised for Nunez.

Slow starts are also a common theme in Liverpool's recent struggles.

They have now conceded first in their last seven Premier League games stretching back to the end of last season.

"We're giving every team a goal start, we can't keep giving ourselves an uphill battle," said defender Andy Robertson.

"In the warm-up it was the quietest I have heard this stadium and they wanted something to lift them and we gave them it.

"Two points from nine

is not the start we wanted. We need to pick up our performances individually and collectively.

"It is easy to talk about it in the changing room but we have to go out and do it. We can't keep conceding goals. They started better than us today. It needs to change."

A first defeat in 31 games in domestic football stretching back to December is no time for panic.

But City and Liverpool have raised the bar in jousting for the title over the past five years with in excess of 90 points now normally needed to be crowned champions.

To reach those heights again, Klopp's men have no time to waste in awakening from their early-season slumber.

They have a seemingly ideal opportunity to do just that when they take on newly-promoted Bournemouth at Anfield tomorrow (Aug 27).

Scott Parker's side have already shipped seven goals in their opening three games since returning to the top flight and Klopp's team will be eyeing the game as the perfect chance to get their derailed campaign back on track.

## Somyot targets World Cup and Olympics

### FOOTBALL

SOMYOT POOMPUNMUANG, the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) president, is aiming for the national side to win the country's first ever FIFA World Cup berth at the 2026 finals and an Olympic spot for the U23 side at Paris 2024.

The 2026 World Cup, to be held in the USA, Canada and Mexico, will feature an increase in the number of participating teams from 32 to 48.

Thailand will have a higher chance of making their first World Cup appearance as Asia will get 8+1 spots at the 2026 finals, up from 4+1 for the 2022 tournament.

Apart from earning places at the two events, the FAT also has a long-term development plan, Somyot said, explaining that over-age players will no longer be used for the U23 side.

The U23 team will be busy next year with several tournaments including the SEA Games, Asian Games



FAT chief Somyot Poompunmuang. Photo: Bangkok Post

and U23 Asian Cup qualifying round.

As for the senior side, they will play in a four-team friendly tournament in Chiang Mai next month featuring Thailand, Malaysia, Tajikistan and Trinidad and Tobago.

The War Elephants will also defend the Asean title in December. The tournament draw takes place in Bangkok on Tuesday (Aug 30).

Elsewhere, Australia confirmed on Monday (Aug 22) that they have recruited former coach Guus Hiddink to help in their World Cup build-up.

The experienced Dutch tactician, who ended Australia's 32-year World Cup exile by steering them to the

2006 tournament in Germany where they reached the last 16, will work alongside coach Graham Arnold for their final warm-up game against New Zealand in Brisbane on Sept 22.

"I am very delighted to go there (to Australia) because every now and then when I talk about my career with people, I always highlight my experience with the Socceroos," said Hiddink, 75, who will come out of retirement.

He will help out in the absence of Arnold's regular right-hand man Rene Meulensteen, who will be in Europe to scout two of Australia's Group D opponents, France and Denmark.

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# Sport



**Slow Liverpool start concerns Klopp > p15**

## GOLDEN DAYS



### Phuket Dojo students bag big medal haul

The students of Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket show off their medals with their proud families. Photo: Supplied

#### JIU JITSU / JUDO

Ben Tirebuck  
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Young athletes from local Mixed Martial Arts Studio Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket continue to impress after winning a total of 31 medals at two provincial championships held on the island last weekend.

The first tournament was organised by the Phuket Jiu Jitsu Club and took place last Saturday (Aug 20) at Saphan Hin Stadium in Phuket Town.

The second tournament was the Rookie Championships, organised by the Jiu Jitsu Sports Association of Thailand. This was a two-day competition contested on Saturday and Sunday (Aug 20-21) and was also staged at Saphan Hin Stadium.

Although both tournaments were open to boys and girls, Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket only had a team of eight boys competing across the weekend. Both tournaments were geared towards younger competitors considered beginners in the sport who have previously not competed in more than a total of four championships.

The boys from Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket performed expertly across both competitions to claim a total of 14 medals during Saturday's competition and 17 on Sunday, including 16 gold medals, 9 silver medals and 6 bronze medals.

"Every single student fought so well and I am incredibly proud of all the boys," said Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket founder Alexis Plantard.

"An extra big thank you to all the family and friends

who came to support the Blue Tree team and made for an amazing crowd which helped lift the boys," he added.

Alexis and his students now turn their attention to training for the National Jiu Jitsu Championships at Rangsit University in Bangkok on Sept 17-18.

"We will be training hard for this competition and sending a total of 15 students to compete," said Alexis. "It will be a tough test but as a team we are confident."

#### 'HONOUR AND RESPECT'

Located in the Lifestyle Village at Blue Tree Phuket in Cherng Talay, Dojo was founded by Alexis at the start of 2020. By November of that year, his students were competing with over 2,000 athletes from all over Thai-

land at the National Jiu Jitsu Championships in Bangkok where they won an incredible 18-medal haul.

That impressive success rate has continued under Alexis' shrewd stewardship. He is a fourth dan black belt in Judo and Jiu Jitsu with 28 years' experience practising martial arts who has won numerous accolades over the years, including most recently a gold medal in the 90kg class at the US Open Judo Championships in Florida last month.

"The objective of the dojo is to develop martial arts values and to create a dynamic fighter community in the north of Phuket," Alexis told *The Phuket News*.

"The moral code of martial arts is to teach kids how to become a good person. It's not about actually getting a black belt but more so about

how to conduct oneself with honour and respect under the code of a black belt."

Kenneth Thongsong is one such student who is profiting from Alexis' guidance. Kenneth is competing at the Sarajevo World Championship Cadets 2022 tournament in the Under-16 age group in Judo this week.

The tournament, which started on Wednesday (Aug 24) and runs until Sunday (Aug 28), sees close to 500 athletes from 61 countries taking part.

Kenneth has been studying at Dojo Blue Tree Phuket under the tutelage of Alexis for the past three years and is the first athlete from the studio to gain national recognition and represent his country.

Last month Kenneth competed at the Asian Cadet and Junior Judo Championship

2022 in Bangkok, finishing in a hugely credible 9<sup>th</sup> place in his first international competition.

He and Alexis now turn their attention to the even bigger tournament in Sarajevo and both student and teacher are confident.

"We have a three-day training camp once we arrive," Alexis told *The Phuket News* prior to their departure from Phuket.

"Once that is done we start competition and will be fighting to make history and to make Thailand and the family at Dojo at Blue Tree Phuket proud."

The Dojo at Blue Tree is open daily from 10am to 7pm and all levels and ages are welcome. For further information please visit their Facebook page or email [dojo@bluetree.fun](mailto:dojo@bluetree.fun)

## Charity event confirmed to support World Stroke Day

#### FITNESS

PHUKET OFFICIALS HAVE confirmed a one-day event incorporating a charity walk, run and cycle to support a national initiative promoting stroke prevention efforts.

The event, being held in honour of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty Queen, will take place at Bang Wad Dam in Kathu on Sunday, Oct 30 under the name "Thailand without stroke".

Similar events will be held in

provinces nationwide as part of an awareness initiative by the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism and Sports and Siriraj Hospital.

A meeting to announce the Phuket event was held on Aug 11 at Provincial Hall headed by Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam, Vice Governor of Phuket, and Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon.

Mr Anupap explained that four separate events would take place

on Oct 30, the day after World Stroke Day, that will incorporate a 5km walk, a 10km mini marathon, a 21km cycle and a 21km half marathon. The entry fee for the first three activities is B300 per person, while the half marathon is B550 per person. The start time for the activities will be 6am.

Mr Anupap added that the event aims to raise funds and awareness on stroke prevention while simultaneously promoting a healthy lifestyle to Thai people, which can reduce the threat of illness.

He confirmed that awards will be presented for the winners of the activities including His Majesty the King's Cup, Her Majesty Queen Suthida's Cup, Minister of Public Health's Award Plaque, the Minister of the Interior Award Plaque and a trophy from the Minister of Tourism and Sports.

Dr Kusak encouraged the media to raise awareness of the event to attract as many participants as possible while welcoming the people of Phuket to get involved.

Registration is now open and

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