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Broken pavement sits in front of a resort that is open to tourists in Patong. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

IN NEED OF HELP

'PHUKET RECOVERY FUND' SOUGHT WHILE 80% OF ISLAND BUSINESSES FIGHT TO SURVIVE

The Phuket News
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Phuket Tourism Council President Thanet Tantipiriyakit has appealed for the government to set up a B5 billion 'recovery fund' for Phuket businesses without cash flow and mired in debt so they can start operating again in order to help support the Phuket Sandbox scheme.

The setting up of such a fund will allow business operators who have been unable to secure any funding from the host of projects launched by the central government to finally be

able to reopen, and restart Phuket's tourism industry, Mr Thanet told Deputy Prime Minister Supattana-pong Punmeechaow during a video conference last Saturday (Aug 21).

Present for the conference call were Phuket Governor Narong Wo-onciew along with key members of the Phuket Communicable Disease Committee, leading tourism business figures and heads of local municipalities, including mayors, of key tourism areas across Phuket.

The recovery fund is necessary to support any further growth in the Phuket Sandbox scheme, which

so far has seen 23,700 people arrive in Thailand via Phuket, Mr Thanet explained.

"During the video conference meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Supattana-pong Punmeechaow, we presented to him the idea of setting up a fund to help Phuket's tourism industry to recover, so that the Phuket Sandbox scheme can continue," he said.

"To continue the scheme, access to funds is the most important thing, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that provide transport or spa services. They cannot

access any funding from the government," he said.

"We can see that only B10bn, or about 4%, has been allowed to be borrowed from the existing 'recovery fund', which was set up with B250bn – 4% is very low," Mr Thanet highlighted.

"So if we want to continue the Sandbox scheme, operators must be able to actually access funds to help them solve their problems. Many operators do not meet the criteria set out by the government because they are already in debt and are unable to show any cash flow in their bank...

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Keeping Sandbox scheme alive

New order eases rules for suspending Sandbox scheme

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A new provincial order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew has revised the conditions required for determining whether or not officials are to suspend the Phuket Sandbox scheme in light of the current high number of COVID-19 infections across the island.

The revised conditions came in Phuket Provincial Order No. 4781/2564 issued last Friday (Aug 20), which was introduced with immediate effect.

The order was announced during a major meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall in Phuket Town, to which the presidents and mayors of all major municipalities across the island were called to attend.

The order, posted online by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket), was labelled as introducing the requirements of entry to Phuket for tourists arriving under the 'Sandbox 7+7' scheme, which allows fully vaccinated tourists to travel to other 'Sandbox' areas, including Khao Lak, Phi Phi Island and Samui, after spending only seven nights on Phuket, instead of the previ-



Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew (left) at the meeting at Provincial Hall last Friday (Aug 20). Photo: PPHO

ously required 14 nights.

The requirements brought into effect for Sandbox 7+7 tourists were no different than already announced by national tourism figures and agencies, including the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

However, buried in the six-page order was Article 3, "The Phuket Provincial Public Health Office response plan and a plan to delay or cancel the project."

No longer are the criteria set out in announcing the "response" plan" and consideration for introducing stricter measures or even suspending the Phuket Sandbox scheme

the same as those originally announced.

The 90 infections in one week requirement has been removed, the issue of infections in three districts and infections in at least six subdistricts have also been removed.

Also removed is the 80% hospital bed occupancy limit.

Instead, the new criteria for deciding whether to "consider adjusting measures" for the Phuket Sandbox scheme to continue under the order issued last Friday are listed as three points:

- Readiness to accommodate new infected Sandbox tourists, to be estimated from

the total bed occupancy rate of hospitals that accept tourists.

- Readiness to support new infected local people, to be estimated from the rate of bed occupancy per total number of beds in hospitals receiving all types of infections.

- Characteristics of the epidemiology of COVID-19 in the area, the level of the situation and the resources for disease control investigations.

While rewriting the criteria for considering what measures are to be taken regarding a COVID outbreak, the response measures remain the same:

- Reduce activities for tourists, such as limiting places

to visit. Reduce activities that come into contact with service providers, for example by starting to reduce activities when one of the criteria is met.

- Sealed Route by organising a travel system to have a specific group of vehicles and set travel routes without having to have close contact with people in the area, by starting to have tourists follow a Sealed Route when traveling. The Sealed Route measure is to come into effect when two or more criteria are met.

- Hotel Bubble by allowing tourists to stay in hotels only, and able to do activities and not in close contact with service providers or people in the area. This is to be done by starting to have tourists remain in a Hotel Bubble when two or more criteria are met.

- Stop accepting new tourists when the outbreak is widespread and uncontrollable, by accepting only tourists who are already registered in the [Sandbox] project and who have received a COE [Certificate of Entry], and have tourists who already entered the country [Phuket] by allowing them to stay in their hotel only until the 14 day quarantine period has been completed.

Under the order the Phuket Communicable Disease Com-

mittee is to review the COVID-infection situation on the island on a daily basis and assess the situation according to the guidelines every one to two weeks.

The Phuket Communicable Disease Committee is to take action by "adjusting the measures for tourists" according to two scenarios.

First, if the COVID situation meets any of the three criteria, response measure No 1 listed above ("Reduce activities") is to be implemented for at least two weeks and then re-evaluated.

If the situation does not change, the "reduced activities" measure is to be maintained and if the situation improves the stricter measures may be eased – but if the situation becomes worse, even stricter measures are to be implemented.

However, if the COVID situation in Phuket meets two of the criteria, the committee is to observe the situation for at least two weeks and then re-evaluate what measures have been implemented. There are now no prescribed measures of action for any level of infection across the island. The committee is to decide which action is appropriate as the situation unfolds.

Tourism businesses plea for help in ensuring Sandbox success

Continued from page 1

...statements. Some operators have a very high amount of debt or are having great difficulty obtaining permission to re-open," he said.

"We, the private sector, want to push to have a fund to help our SMEs. Initially, we will divide business operators into three groups. The first group is small hotel operators who may not have permission to re-open, so they can get the money to develop their business so they can legally re-open," Mr Thanet explained.

"The second group is transport operators, for both land and sea, as we all know that taxi operators are struggling with negotiations

with banks. The fund may help them very well," he said.

"The last group is manufacturers who supply products used in hotels, spa operators and other operators in the tourism industry," he added.

"We have a concept for the Phuket Sandbox scheme, which is 'Phuket Happy for All'. Every person must be happy, so I want to see the fund develop our community tourism, local products and new tourist attractions. I want to see the fund spent on solving the problems that are affecting the success of the Phuket Sandbox project," Mr Thanet noted.

"To get the fund set up, we have some ideas. It could be a loan from the Bank of Thailand or it could be in



Deputy Prime Minister Supattana Pongmanee received the request to set up the fund directly during a video conference last Saturday (Aug 21). Photo: PR Phuket

the form of a 'Phuket bond' created for investors. Or we may need to have an entry fee for some natural tourist attractions, or it could be a combination of these ideas.

"I believe that the Deputy

PM [Mr Supattana Pongmanee, who also currently serves as the Minister for Energy] is very good at business management, so he must have some good ideas and suggestions. We may have the Ministry of

Tourism and Sports and other relevant ministries to buy our ['Phuket'] bond to launch the initial fund," he added.

"In our most recent meeting between officials and businesses from the private sector, through research we found that Phuket needs a fund of about B3bn to help operators, so [to look beyond that] we hope to have a fund set up of about B5bn," Mr Thanet said.

"We really need the fund to help businesses on the island recover because right now over 80% of all businesses on the island are continually opening and then closing again. If we do not have a fund to keep businesses operating, they may need to shut down permanently," he noted.

"From our research, such

operators are the majority on the island. We have about 270,000 employees and operators in our system [Phuket Tourism Council], representing about 71% of all tourism industry businesses on the island. If this group cannot get help, it will be even worse for the island," he said.

"Right now, we can see the [positive] movement for only about 20% of businesses on the island. For the island to recover, we not only need to have tourists, but operators must also be ready to serve them. Capital is critical at this stage, and if the fund can be set up very quickly, businesses in Phuket will be able to get better and recover," he said.

Former city police chief caught for COVID fraud

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Region 8 Police Deputy Commander Col Sompong Thiparpakul, one of the highest-ranking police officers on the island, has been discharged from the Royal Thai Police after being found swindling police allowances for extra work performed in battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lt Gen Kitrat Panpetch, Commander of Region 8 Police, based at the north end of the island, issued the order discharging Sompong from the Royal Thai Police on Aug 19. Sompong had previously served as Chief of the Phuket City Police.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission will send a formal recommendation to the Office of the Attorney General to proceed with criminal charges, the order noted.

The recommendation follows Sompong being found falsely receiving funds dedicated as allowances for officers performing extra duties in response to the COVID-19 pandemic while he was serving as Chief of the Thung Song Police in Nakhon Sri Thammarat. The order did not mark when Sompong was fulfilling that position.

"The National Anti-Corruption Commission has resolved to point out that when being in the position of Thung Song Police Chief, Col Sompong wrongfully



Former Phuket City Police Chief, and now former Region 8 Police Deputy Commander, Col Sompong Thiparpakul is facing corruption charges. Photo: The Phuket News / file

exercised his duties under the Section 157 of the Criminal Code by deducting allowances from the COVID-19 budget of the Thung Song Police Station," the order said.

"Thung Song Police Station received B6,046,299 from the Thai Royal Police to be spent on working and providing police officers allowances. The amount of money was divided into three parts – B5,478,300 for officers' allowances, B225,999 for COVID-19 protective equipment and B342,000 for petrol costs," the order explained.

"According to the Royal Thai Police, officers received an allowance of B60

per hour when they were assigned to work outside their station or police box. The allowance was provided depending on the length of time worked, but not more than seven hours per day – for both on official working days and on holidays," Lt Gen Kitrat explained in his dismissal.

"However, Col Sompong ordered all officers at Thung Song Police Station who received allowances in excess of B15,000 baht to donate the extra money back to the Thung Song Police Station so it could be allocated to officers who received less funds 'for equality and unity' [sic]," he said.



Photo: Phuket Commerce Office

Officials crack down on price gouging

THE PHUKET GOVERNMENT has called on officials to be extra diligent in checking product prices in shops across the island in order to protect against any possible overpricing during the period of economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong repeated on Aug 17 that the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic has affected many people in many different ways and that the provincial government is aware overpricing of products is a possibility.

"To guard against this I have ordered officials from the Phuket Commerce office to examine shops and check the product prices," he said. The initial warning against overpricing came just days earlier, on Aug 13.

"We acknowledge there have recently been some chal-

lenges importing products from the mainland due to restrictions under the provincial order but I also want to ask operators of retail shops for cooperation and to be fair to customers by not overpricing essential products.

"I want every shop to install clear price tags on products which will, in turn, boost confidence among customers," he said.

As part of the order, Phuket Commerce officers visited a series of pharmacies earlier this week to specifically check on the price of andrographis paniculata capsules which have recently become popular as certain doctors have advocated them in the treatment of COVID-19.

Of the pharmacies visited, officers found that most have clear price tags relating to their products and that they are selling the medicine at fair prices.

The Phuket News

German couple rescued as kayak blown off Phuket

TWO GERMAN TOURISTS were safely rescued and brought back to Phuket after they were blown offshore by a passing storm while kayaking off Phuket's east coast last Sunday (Aug 22).

The couple managed to land on a beach on Koh Thanan, located some 1.7 kilometres from Ao Yon Beach in Wichit, where they began their journey.

Lt Col Eakkachai Siri of the Phuket Tourist Police reported that his officers were informed at about 1:20pm that the couple had gone kayaking and were unable to make it back to Phuket.

One of the tourists had called the hotel where they were staying to report their predicament. The hotel notified the Tourist Police via the Tourist Police hotline 1155. Tourist Police then contacted the tourists directly, Lt Col Eakkachai explained.

Tourist Police along with "assistants" quickly boarded a boat to recover the tourists from the island. As the boat neared the beach they could



The couple were rescued from Koh Thanan, just offshore from Ao Yon Beach. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

see the German couple – Benedikt Niklas Martin Hoppe, 22, and Franziska Marie Drews-von Ruckteschell, 22 – waving at them.

Mr Hoppe told police that while they were kayaking a small storm passed through, bringing heavy rain, large waves and strong gusts of wind that pushed them to the island. They were unable to make their way back to Phuket.

Lt Col Eakkachai confirmed that both tourists had not suffered any injuries. They were brought back to Phuket safely and escorted back to the hotel where they are staying in Wichit.

The tourists arrived in

Phuket under the Phuket Sandbox scheme on July 24. This is their first trip to Thailand, he added.

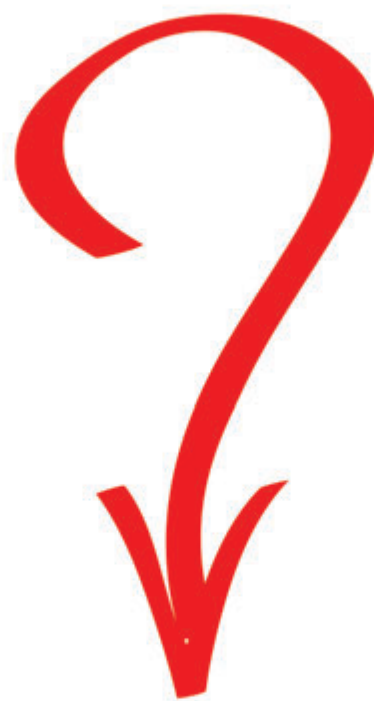
The dangers of being blown offshore while kayaking off Phuket has previously made international headlines following the disappearance of Polish tourist Mateusz Juskiewicz, 26, and Werakan Siriprakon, 23, from Nakhon Sawan, in December 2019.

The couple were last seen kayaking off Yanui Beach, on Phuket's south-west coast.

Despite days of searching by air and sea rescue teams, the couple were never found. Eakkapop Thongtub



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Swiss tourist killer will not file for bail

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The relatives of Teerawat Thothip, charged for the murder of 57-year-old Phuket Sandbox tourist Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf, will not file a request for bail, Region 8 Police Commander Lt Gen Kitrat Panpetch has confirmed.

Lt Gen Kitrat revealed the news during a brief update while at the Phuket Check Point last week.

Teerawat, a 27-year-old resident of Pa Khlok on Phuket's east coast, during a press conference broadcast live nationwide on Aug 8 confessed to choking Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf unconscious in order to rob her but denied intention to kill her and denied any attempt to rape her.

When Ms Sauvain-Weisskopf's body was discovered on Aug 5, it was found face down in a stream near the Ao Yon Waterfall, on Phuket's east coast. Her body was naked from the waist down and covered with a dark tarpaulin weighed down by rocks. Her denim shorts, Nike trainers and small backpack were found amid the undergrowth nearby.



Region 8 Police Commander Lt Gen Kitrat Panpetch speaking at the Phuket Check Point on Aug 17. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

"Right now the suspect is in the Phuket Provincial Prison. We are still waiting for the autopsy report from forensic police [in Bangkok]. We do not rush them because we understand that the work takes time, and officers need to work thoroughly," Lt Gen Kitrat said at the checkpoint on Aug 16.

The autopsy results are expected

to help police determine whether Teerawat will face additional charges.

"At this stage, we have the confession of the suspect and evidence which is enough for prosecution. There are no problems with this issue, nothing to worry about," he told his subordinate officers and the press.

"The suspect's wife and relatives have accepted that the suspect killed

the tourist and will not file a request for bail," he said.

"Regarding tourists' safety, the national police commissioner-general has ordered Region 8 Police to create safety measures for local people and tourists in the provinces under our responsibility," he added.

"I have ordered police in the provinces to patrol and share information with the provincial government in order to create safety measures for tourists. I have also ordered them to investigate risk locations in their provinces and create measures to make the places safer," he said.

Region 8 Police is responsible for all police in the Upper Southern Thailand Provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, Ranong, Chumphon, Surat Thani and Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

Lt Gen Kitrat gave his brief update on the murder case while at the Phuket Check Point to hand over smart card readers and smartphones that he paid for out of his own pocket so that officers will be able to scan Thai ID cards of Thai nationals wanting to enter Phuket to make sure they are not wanted on any outstanding arrest warrants.



Phuket City Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas pays his respects at a shrine in Phuket Town. Photo: Phuket City Municipality

Por Tor Festival underway

THE ANNUAL POR TOR FESTIVAL is being celebrated this year without street processions in order to protect people from COVID-19. The festival started last Friday (Aug 20) and will conclude tomorrow (Aug 28).

The Por Tor Festival, also known as the "Hungry Ghosts Festival", is held in the seventh lunar month in the Chinese calendar, which is believed to be when the gates of Hell open and spirits are allowed to wander the Earth and revisit homes.

During the festival, people bring food and decorated fruits to offer to the God of the Demons, Por Tor Kong, for him to pass along to the spirits. An essential offering for the

festival is a red turtle-shaped cake called Ang Ku, which come in various sizes and are made from wheat flour and sugar. Turtles, to many Chinese, symbolise longevity. Yet there will be no street parades this year because of the COVID-19 situation.

Events to honour the festival were held at Joh Ong Shrine on Krabi Rd on Monday (Aug 23).

Por Tor Kong Shrine (Bang Niew Shrine) began its festivities yesterday (Aug 26) and will conclude them on Sept 6.

Thai Hua Museum on Krabi Rd is hosting its festival activities today (Aug 27), while the Ao Ke Community on Phoonpon Rd will hold their festivities tomorrow (Aug 28). *The Phuket News*

Police net Chinese loan shark

A CHINESE MAN HAS BEEN arrested in Koh Kaew for illegally offering loans with high interest rates that have attracted more than 20,000 debtors.

Speaking at a press conference at the Immigration Bureau headquarters in Bangkok on Aug 19, Immigration Bureau Commissioner Pol Lt Gen Sompong Chingduang confirmed that the 27-year-old Chinese national who he identified only as "Mr Liaw" has been apprehended although he did not give specifics on the time or date of the arrest.

Liaw was wanted for operating a debt collection business without permission, specifically the 'Plutus Cat Pro' application, possessing the personal details of people's credit cards and debit cards that could be manipulated to their detriment, and working in the Kingdom without work permit.

The arrest came after officers from the Center for the Suppression of Migrants and Illegal Immigration under the Immigration Bureau investigated the loan provision network in Bangkok and discovered that some members of the network had moved to Phuket.

"The network had been contacting their debtors who had received a loan through the app," Lt Gen Sompong said. "Police investigated this further until it became clear they had an office presence in Koh Kaew. We then



Photo: Supplied

filed a request to the Phuket Provincial Court to issue a search warrant.

"Officers went to the premises where they found Liaw being supported by 19 staff members. Officers seized a total of 43 items as evidence, comprising debtor lists, SIM cards, mobile phones, and laptops," Lt Gen Sompong added.

"From checking Liaw's personal laptop, officers retrieved more than 20,000 names recorded as his debtors.

"After questioning, staff confirmed to officers they were instructed to call between 10-15 debtors per day. The staff confirmed they received a salary of between B10,000-15,000 per month with an additional B8 commission per debtor successfully secured. They added that the debtors had to transfer their money to Liaw through the staff's bank accounts."

Lt Gen Sompong confirmed that Liaw was taken to Phuket City Police station where he was charged.

The Phuket News

Car park 'COVID care center'

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The parking lot building of the still-incomplete new Phuket Provincial Hall is planned to be the second "COVID-19 Care Center" (CCC) for migrant workers in Muang District, as the first one at the old Phuket Prison is likely to meet full capacity soon, Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong revealed last week.

"Right now, our CCC [at Phuket Prison] has a full capacity for 420 people, and 260 people are now staying there. We have space left for only 160 more people to be quarantined at the centre," V/ Gov Pichet said during a live broadcast from the Phuket Sandbox Emergency Operation Center (EOC), located at the Phuket Provincial Police headquarters in Phuket Town, on Aug 18.

"We have no idea how many more people will test positive," he added.

The old Phuket Prison in Phuket Town, more than 100 years old, is one of four "COVID-19 Care Centers" set up across the island where people who have tested posi-



PPAO workers sanitise areas at the old Phuket Prison in Phuket Town where last week more than 260 asymptomatic COVID-infected people were being held. Photo: PPAO

tive for COVID-19 only by an antigen test kit (ATK) and are not presenting any signs of infection are being held, following a new policy launched earlier this month.

"So, the Phuket Governor has planned to set up the three-story building for car parking at the Provincial Hall to be another CCC and assigned the PPAO [Phuket

Provincial Administrative Organisation, or OrBorJor] to set up the building [for use as a CCC]," Vice Gov Pichet said.

Also present at the broadcast on Aug 18 were Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPAO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon, PPAO Deputy President Thiwat Sidokbuab, and other high-level officials.

"Yesterday [Aug 17], we tested 47 people – 12 Thais and 35 migrants – on a fishing boat, and 16 people tested positive by antigen test kits – 4 Thais and 12 migrant workers. We usually find that 30-40% of the target group we test are infected," Dr Kusak said.

"Last week, we tested workers on three boats and

found 95 people infected. However, I would like to mark that 99% of the 95 people are still healthy and do not have any symptoms of the disease," he added.

"The 95 people have quarantined on their boats, and our health officers frequently go to check them and provide medicine for those who have light symptoms. They may be happier with quarantine on boats than being in our field hospitals," he said.

"People staying at the CCC [at Phuket Prison] are mostly healthy. They even play football and table tennis together," he added.

"However, the CCC has a full capacity of 460, but right now some parts of the venue are not ready to open yet, so the full capacity right now is 420 people," Dr Kusak said.

"We have 260 people staying there, and 31 people have been discharged. We have space left for 160 more people. I believe that if we test migrant workers from two to three boats more at the fishing ports, we will reach full capacity soon," he said.

"We will need people to quarantine on their boats to help us lighten the load of

people staying at the CCC, and right now we have two to three workers' camps under a 'Bubble and Seal' [isolation] measures across the island," he noted.

PPAO Deputy President Mr Thiwat said that PPAO staff will continue their efforts to complete readying the yet-to-open areas at the old prison in Phuket Town so that more asymptomatic patients can be held there.

"Today, we will develop the yet-to-open parts of the CCC, which are two buildings and toilets," he said.

"I would like to explain that for the water used for showers at the CCC, health officers test the water before it is released into the public water drains, so there will be no virus released into our community by the water for sure," Mr Thiwat said.

Since confirmation of the car park at the still-incomplete Provincial Hall compound on the south side of Phuket Town was announced last week, the number of people testing positive by ATKs quickly climbed into the hundreds. As of Monday this week (Aug 23), a total of 447 people were being held at the 'care centres'.

ATKs identify more than 500 cases

MORE THAN 12,000 PEOPLE across Phuket were tested by antigen test kits (ATKs) in the first three weeks of this month, leading to more than 500 COVID infections confirmed, Phuket Public Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon has revealed.

Dr Kusak announced the figures last Friday (Aug 20) in response to a deluge of queries over the rising number of COVID infections being confirmed. The number of daily new cases in Phuket from Aug 18-22 all exceeded 100, but at the time of going to press 131 last Thursday (Aug 19) remained the highest number of new cases confirmed on one day.

"High-risk contacts are staying in the local quarantine venues, on boats, in workers' camps, and some are at home. People who are observing their quarantine at home can be divided into two groups: 1. Bedridden patients who have caretakers; and 2. People who are waiting to move to a local quarantine venue," Dr Kusak said.

"Most of the newfound



PPHO Chief Dr Kusak. Photo: PR Phuket

cases do not have any symptoms. So far this month, we have conducted proactive screening 47 times in different areas [across the island]. We tested 12,391 people, and 519 people, or 4.2%, tested positive," Dr Kusak confirmed.

"Right now we are fighting the Delta variant of the virus, which is more infectious than before. We have conducted proactive screening more often, and the test kits are more accessible," he said.

"Before this, we conducted RT-PCR tests only, for which we needed to wait for 1½ to two days for the results, and each test cost B2,000-3,000. Right now,

we are using ATKs, which need only 15 minutes to see the results and costs only B200-300 a time," he continued.

"Right now, 70-80% of new infected people have no symptoms or only light symptoms. They just need to do quarantine in the COVID-19 Care Centers, local quarantine venues and field hospitals," he added.

Vice Governor Piyapong recognised that people may buy ATKs and test themselves for infection. "If you test negative, do not underestimate the virus. There is still a 20% error rate among the test kits. False negatives can happen," he said.

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Domestic flights are set to resume to Phuket next month.
Photo: Bangkok Post / file

Domestic flights to resume

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS catering to Phuket Sandbox travellers will be allowed at Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports starting next month, says a source at the Transport Ministry.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) issued a ban on commercial domestic flights to destinations in provinces hardest-hit by COVID-19, the so-called dark red zones, on July 21.

According to the source, CAAT is prepared to relax the flight ban at Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports to cater to the Sandbox visitors.

Sandbox arrivals are required to complete a 14-day stay on the island if they want to travel from Phuket to Bangkok or other provinces. However, non-Sandbox passengers will be allowed to transit/transfer via Bangkok, as long as they do not leave the airport and must transit within 24 hours.

Meanwhile, Thai Airways International (THAI) said it

has adjusted flight operations to accommodate changes in air travel demand and COVID-19 restrictions.

According to THAI executive Nont Kalintha, the carrier will operate two domestic flights between Bangkok and Phuket per week until October.

Phuket-bound TG922 will leave every Thursday while Bangkok-bound TG916 will leave Phuket on Fridays. Flights are expected to start in September in line with the CAAT announcement.

The airline also plans one return flight on the Bangkok-Phuket-Frankfurt route leaving Bangkok every Thursday and one return flight on the Bangkok-Phuket-London route leaving Bangkok every Friday.

The carrier also plans to offer two routes – Bangkok-Paris-Phuket-Bangkok and Bangkok-Zurich-Phuket-Bangkok – per week leaving Bangkok every Thursday and Friday respectively.

Bangkok Post

Boutique hotel operators plea for amnesty extension

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A total of 20 members of the Phuket Boutique Accommodation Consortium (BAC) last week filed a formal request pleading for the government to extend the amnesty to upgrade their hotels in order to be registered under the Hotels Act.

The amnesty, initially brought into effect by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) in 2016 was extended three years ago, and finally expired on Aug 18.

That same day, Pachara Luelamai, President of BAC Phuket, and other members submitted to Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew and Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO, or *Or Bor Jor*) President Rewat Areerob at Provincial Hall their formal request to have the amnesty extended.

“We want officers to present this problem to the Cabinet to issue another announcement to extend the easing of some parts of the Hotel Act 2004 for three more years,” Mr Pachara said.



The boutique hotel operators submitted their plea for the amnesty to be extended on Aug 18. Photo: PR Dept

The amnesty was issued so that small hotels would have time to upgrade their premises to comply with the “Ministerial Regulation Prescribing Category of Other Types of Building Used for Hotel Business Operation B.E. 2564 (2021)”, Mr Pracha explained.

“Right now, the regulation is in the process of being drafted under the Ministerial Regulations of the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning under the Ministry of Interior. The ministerial regulation will give operators some time to make improvements to their buildings according to the criteria of the new law while

the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand continues,” he said.

“The amnesty was in effect only until today [Aug 18], which means the permission for these small hotels to open will expire. As a result of the economic crisis from COVID-19 pandemic, some hotels have needed to temporarily close for nearly two years,” he explained.

“The closure has affected the liquidity of funds and created the inability to access both public and private funding sources, so we have not had the opportunity to develop hotel buildings to enter the correct system. We also have problems with various limitations of the Building

Control Act 1979, Land Allocation Act, Town Planning Act, Environment Act, Hotel Act, Ministerial Regulations and Local Ordinances,” Mr Pracha said.

“Members of the BAC are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which have together helped the island’s economy to move forward and have been good hosts to welcome tourists under the Phuket Sandbox.

“The end of the amnesty will push some hotel operators to face further problems because they will not be able to meet the SHA+ requirements in terms of health and safety measures,” he added.

“Even though there is the Ministerial Regulation Prescribing Category of Other Types of Building Used for Hotel Business Operation B.E. 2564 (2021), which extends the enforcement of the ministerial regulation issued in 2016 for three years, all members still have the same limitations with our inability to improve our hotel buildings to meet the requirement of the Hotel Act and the laws mentioned,” he concluded.

Fishing port shuts down

THE PHUKET FISHING PORT ON Koh Siray, east of Phuket Town, has been shut down for 14 days to have all operators and fishing crews operating out of the port tested for COVID-19 following a spate of infections on board fishing boats using the port.

Somyot Wongbunyakul, President of the Phuket Fishermen’s Association, made the request on Aug 18 for the port to close and mass testing to be conducted. The port closed last Friday (Aug 20).

Mr Somyot said that most of the fishermen working out of the port are healthy and more than 90% of the fishermen at the port have completed two vaccination injections.

“However, last week there was [south-west] monsoon weather and the boats were unable to go fishing. About 40 boats stopped fishing temporarily for about seven to eight days because of the weather,” Mr Somyot said.

“This caused the fishermen to disembark from the boats and come ashore, and come in contact with those infected with COVID-19 in the community. They then returned to the boats, leading to infections on the boats,” he explained.

“In the past, there had never been any infections on the boats,” Mr Somyot said. Commercial fishing boat operators suggested that the port close for 14 days so that all people working at the port and on the boats could be tested.

“Any people found infected could then receive treatment and any high risk contacts



The Phuket Fishing Port has been closed for 14 days to clamp down on COVID infections spreading throughout the fleet. Photo: PR Phuket

can observe quarantine on board the boats,” Mr Somyot said.

Eliminating COVID from the commercial fishing fleet will take time, Mr Somyot noted.

“Because more than 90% of the fleet are trawlers, most of the work requires them to be at sea for at least 10 days at a time, and from discussions with operators measures have been put in place so that when the boat enters the harbour, all crews are strictly prohibited from leaving the harbour. This had previously been announced,” he said.

“Along with efforts by officials at the port, an intercepting checkpoint has been set up to prevent any crewmen from leaving the port,” he said. *The Phuket News*

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CCSA to debate reopening plan as COVID cases fall

BANGKOK
Bangkok Post

The government's plan to reopen the country before the end of the year is seemingly still on track as Thailand's COVID-19 outbreak is showing signs of slowing down.

It will soon be considered by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) after 17,491 new cases were logged on Monday (Aug 23), the lowest since July 30.

In light of this, the National Communicable Disease Committee (NCDC) will ask the CCSA to consider reopening some areas of the country, in line with the pledge made in June by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to do so in 120 days.

During a live TV broadcast to the nation on June 16, Gen Prayut said his government planned to reopen the country within the next 120 days. The statement was made despite the risk of a rise in COVID-19 infections.

Speaking after the committee meeting on Monday, Opas Karnkawinpong, director-general of the Department of Disease Control (DDC), said the committee agreed on four issues that will be presented to the CCSA for consideration.

One of the issues involves preparing for a safe reopening of the country under disease control measures known as "Smart Control and Living with



A woman receives an RT-PCR test in Bangkok. Photo: Varuth Hirunyatheb

COVID-19", which aim to contain the pandemic so new cases will not overwhelm the public health system, he said.

"We will now have to learn to live with COVID-19 with the knowledge that [COVID-19] will be an endemic disease, confined to a particular country," Dr Opas said.

One key strategy involves vaccinating at-risk groups, such as the elderly and those with underlying health problems; developing new vaccines; taking preventive measures and precautions at all times; and stepping up the work of COVID-19 comprehensive response teams (CCRT) visiting communities, Dr Opas said.

The committee also agreed with the planned bubble-and-seal approach for factories where clusters of COVID-19 infections were detected to curb trans-

missions, he said.

If more than 10% of workers are found to have COVID-19, they will be isolated at field hospitals, while the rest of the employees will be allowed to continue to work on the premises under close surveillance, Dr Opas said.

After 28 days, they will be tested for immunity, he said. If they pass the test, they will be allowed to return to work and go back home, he said. As a result, the factories will not be closed, workers will get their pay and the economy will move on, Dr Opas said.

Dr Opas said current lockdown measures will expire on Aug 31 and the government will make an assessment of whether to reopen then. He added that the pledge made by the prime minister in June did not mean the whole country would reopen within 120 days.

'Ice berg' off Trang

TRANG


The fertiliser sacks containing the drugs. Photo: Trang Marine Police.

MARINE POLICE HAVE seized 650 kilogrammes of crystal methamphetamine, or "ice", from the sea off the coast of Kantang district in the southern province of Trang.

The drugs were packed in fertiliser sacks tied to barrels floating in the sea, presumably intended to be picked up by traffickers.

Crewmen on board a marine generator vessel alerted authorities to suspicious objects floating in the waters between Koh Laoliang and Koh Libong last Friday (Aug 20).

A team of marine and local police dispatched to the site found three barrels floating in the water with a total of 32 fertiliser sacks tied to them. An inspection of the sacks on board the patrol boat found packs of crystal methamphetamine inside them.

The haul was taken to the marine police station in Kantang district.

All told, officers recovered 650kg of crystal meth, with an estimated value of

B1 million per kilogramme, police said at a briefing on Saturday (Aug 21).

Trang governor Khajornsak Charoensopha said smuggling gangs were increasingly choosing to use the sea as a transit route for drugs.

The investigation would be extended to find those involved, said Pol Col Jatunrawit Kotchanuam, superintendent of Marine Police Division 9.

Elsewhere, police in Hat Yai seized 1,000kg of crystal methamphetamine on Aug 15 with an estimated street value of B300mn.

Pol Maj Gen Atthawut Onsap, commander of the southern border provinces police headquarters, confirmed five suspects were arrested while preparing to traffic the drug to a neighbouring country.

Bangkok Post

Red-shirt bosses to lead 'car mob' protest

BANGKOK

RED-SHIRT ACTIVIST SOMBAT Boonngam-anong and Nattawut Saikuar will lead a car mob rally on Sunday (Aug 29) to keep up the pressure on Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha ahead of the planned no-confidence debate in parliament.

The plan was the result of a meeting between Mr Sombat and Mr Nattawut over the planned protest on Sunday, which will be held in front of Thai PBS's office on Vibhavadi Rangsit Road at 2pm, Mr Sombat said on Facebook.

He said the car mob rally is planned ahead of the vote of no-confidence, which will be held in less than a month by the opposition in parliament against the government.

More rallies will be held during the debate, he said.

"It doesn't matter how the MPs vote, the people will cast their vote of no confidence. If you don't resign, this is what we'll do," he wrote, calling on Gen Prayut to step down.

The last car mob which took place on Aug 15 resulted in a clash between young demonstrators and riot police at Din Daeng intersection.

Separately, the police said 42 protesters have been arrested in relation to the violent clash at Din Daeng intersection last Sunday (Aug 22), from which 35 ping-pong bombs were seized along with several firearms.

Pol Maj Gen Piya Tawichai, deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police



'Car mob' anti-government protesters in Bangkok on Aug 10. Photo: Bangkok Post

Bureau (MPB), said the protesters, who are a part of a group calling themselves "Mob Thalu Gas", are facing several charges, including unlawful gathering to incite chaos, violating the Emergency Decree and COVID-19 restrictions, and illegal possession of firearms.

He said police are also considering taking legal action against the parents of underage protesters for failing to control their children's behaviour, in accordance with the child protection law.

He said the parents face a maximum jail term of three months and/or a maximum fine of B30,000.

Meanwhile, the mother of prominent activist Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak has asked Justice Minister Somsak Thepsutin to transfer her son from a prison hospital to Thammasat University Hospital so he can receive treatment of COVID-19 and other ailments.

She said the treatment and care currently being given to her son was inadequate.

Bangkok Post

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Life in the COVID lane



EXPAT LIFE

Ged Hogg

Sawasdee Krab. Who would have thought the old adage “I wouldn’t touch them with a six-foot pole” would become a national policy, but here we are 16 months into the coronavirus and so it seems.

I hate this coronavirus as much as the next person as I didn’t come to Thailand to spend my golden years moping around in my condo, and not even being allowed to swim in the swimming pool or go to the in-house gym and it is making me lethargic, slightly tubby and lazy. My mum always told me I would not accomplish anything by lazing around all day, but look at me now mum I’m saving the world.

Having said that my life over the past year has not been all doom and gloom. In between the first and second waves of the coronavirus, although I couldn’t travel overseas I was able to travel in both northern and southern Thailand on a few occasions and loved every minute of it, which is how it should be when you’re retired.

Also, because of the coronavirus my British/Australian pension has stretched a lot further than it normally would as I have been unable to go out to the bars and restaurants that I usually frequent, much to the disappointment of the many ladies who have missed out on their usual lady-drinks. My travels around Southeast Asia also have been put on hold, so I have saved a small fortune by staying home.

Another bonus is that the Thai baht exchange rate to the Australian dollar has come back down to an acceptable level. When the pandemic is finally over and the world opens up again, I

can use the money that I have saved by staying home to explore Thailand and the world again... and buy the lady-drinks that I owe.

I think that the pandemic is taking its toll on many people’s mental health, which is why the world needs to try to get back to where we were 16 months ago. Today when I was leaving my condo for my early morning beach walk, I saw one of my neighbours talking to her cat and it was obvious that she thought her cat understood every word she said. I said good morning to her and I walked on thinking that the poor lady must be going stir crazy because of having to stay home with no one to talk to. During my walk I saw a couple of soi dogs, so I sat down with them and told them about my neighbour talking to her cat and we all had a good laugh about it.

Most Brits when in adversity try to “Always look on the bright side of life”, as we believe that if you don’t laugh you will probably end up crying. I know on a personal level that catching the coronavirus isn’t funny. In early March 2020 I was staying in the coastal town of Bang Saray in Chonburi near Pattaya while doing some research for a book that I was planning on writing.

On my second morning at the hotel two coach loads of Chinese tourists, about 80 in total, checked into the hotel and stayed for two nights. I would sit with them at breakfast and as it was a buffet breakfast everyone congregated around the serveries, piling their plates with food, coughing, spluttering and breathing over the food and each other. The day after they left, I checked out of the hotel and while driving home I started to feel hot and sweaty and later on the journey a tickle in my throat became a full-on chesty cough.

On arriving home, I felt sick like I did when living in England when I would often catch the flu in the cold north-eastern winters. The next morn-



Ged walking the streets of Hua Hin, where the businesses on the Walking Street have closed. Image: YouTube / Ged Hogg, Retiring Disgracefully In Thailand

ing, I had a high temperature and felt quite ill so I went to my local clinic and though they did not have a COVID test in those days, when I told the doctor about where I had been for the past few days he told me that there was a good chance that I had COVID-19 and for me to go home and rest and quarantine for 14 days.

I never even gave it a thought that it could have been COVID as not much was being said about it in Thailand at that time; in fact the Prime Minister said that everything was under control and there was nothing to be concerned about. I felt better within the first week but I stayed home for the full two weeks and for me it was just like a bad dose of the flu, but for many people around the world they were not going to be so lucky.

Over the past 16 months the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the world and has changed the way that we live our lives probably forever as once governments take away our basic freedoms, they are not inclined to give them back without a fight. The UK where I am originally from has had some 6.3 million cases of the coronavirus resulting in 131,000 deaths, with the UK having a population of 68mn, which is virtually the same population as Thailand.

However, more than 47mn or over half of the population of the UK have had at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, and more than 40mn have had their second dose, in the biggest inoculation programme the country has ever seen. Thailand to date has recorded over one million cases resulting in over 8,732 deaths, with 19.1mn people having received the first dose of vaccine, 5.5mn being fully vaccinated and a further 519,600 who have received a third-dose ‘booster injection’ – so they have a long way to go before the country will be fully vaccinated. Credit where credit is due, Thailand has done a lot better than most countries when it comes to restricting the spread of the virus but the past few months has seen a third wave and a spike in the reported cases and it is imperative that the vaccine programme becomes number one priority to get the country back working again.

In 2019, 40mn tourists entered Thailand. Unfortunately with the arrival of the pandemic that came to an abrupt halt from March last year with only 7mn tourists coming in 2020,

with a huge majority of them coming to Thailand in the first three months of the year.

At the beginning of this year most people breathed a tentative sigh of relief when they thought they could see light at the end of the dark tunnel, but then came the second wave of the virus and now we are into the third wave, so it now looks like this year will also be a write-off for tourism again.

Hopefully when the country starts to overcome this third wave, and if there is not a fourth wave, we should see tourists start to trickle back into Thailand by the end of this year or early 2022, and hopefully the numbers will increase to acceptable figures by the start of the usual peak season in November 2022.

This will give Phuket a good 12 months to try to rise again and rebuild its devastated tourism industry, but they can’t do it alone. I hope that the government can loosen its purse strings and help those struggling to keep their businesses open and those who will have to try to re-open their businesses, as without financial help many will struggle to rise from the ashes and be able to rebuild their businesses and their lives.

Maybe the government will finally shelve the B22.5-billion submarines they have ordered for at least another year and put the money into the vaccine programme and re-vitalising the tourism industry.

Laew Jer Gan Krab
Ged.

Originally from the UK, Ged retired to Thailand in 2017. He has written two books in the ‘Thai Died’ series of books, ‘Thai Died... Murder in Paradise’ and ‘Thai Died... Bar-Girl’, as well as five books in his ‘Retirees Travel Guide Series’. His first book in the series, ‘The Retire in Thailand Handbook’, was released by London publishers Austin Macauley in 2019.

Ged has also written his biography, ‘You Will Never Amount to Anything’, and an historical novel about the first-time fingerprints were used to gain a murder conviction in the UK in 1905... ‘The Deptford Mask Murders’.

All of his books are available on Amazon. See Gerald’s Thailand blog at www.retireinthailand.asia and his YouTube channel ‘Ged Hogg, Retiring Disgracefully In Thailand’.



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Going for Gold: the Allamanda



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

After the rain has gone and we are well into the dry season in Phuket, all the flowering shrubs show off their wares. Often as I look out from my study, I can see a mass of golden blooms festooning the front wall of the garden. Nothing unusual about that, you may say. And you would be right; After all, the island is not short of spectacular yellow shrubs. But what is surprising about this one – allamanda cathartica – is that once it starts, it never stops flowering. Come rain, come shine, the blooms appear every day, and unless there are high winds or torrential storms to knock them to the ground, they are produced in great profusion.

The allamanda is the quintessential tropical shrub, colourful, flamboyant and even a tad sinister. A member of the dogbane or apocynaceae family, its stems contain a milky and poisonous latex. Technically a vine, its large, glossy, evergreen leaves are the perfect foil for flowers which are a burnished golden yellow, a colour that is even more intense at the heart of the blooms. Unsurprisingly, one of its names is the buttercup flower.

Up to 15 centimeters wide and seven centimeters long, these huge floral trumpets have a widely flared throat with five overlapping petals. They appear in clusters at the end of new shoots. Less pendulous than brugmansia bells which hang vertically down from brittle horizontal branches, allamanda flowers have stronger stems and look you straight in the eye from amid the shiny foliage. There are usually several lush ochrous yellow buds on a single stem, each one waiting to enjoy its day in the sun as the previ-



Allamanda, a climber to treasure. No tropical garden should be without one. Photo: Sheba

ous flower fades. The show never stops...

Allamandas are native to Central and South America where they grow so vigorously that they have become naturalised. In some corners of the globe, notably parts of Queensland, they have been declared invasive. In the wild, they are usually found near river banks, since they have a predilection for water. That is one cultural requirement you cannot ignore: the shrub does not like to dry out completely, but once established, it sends down deep tap roots that will withstand most periods of drought. Not one for a container though...

A real sun-worshipper, the allamanda moreover does not like full shade or, for that matter, strongly alkaline soil conditions. While the shrub can be propagated from seeds, most cultivars are sterile and do not produce the characteristic prickly seed pods. So your best bet is to propagate from cuttings. They take amazingly well.

Talking of cultivars, the allamanda has been extensively hybridized, especially in the southern United States where apricot, white (alba) and orange varieties exist. A double yellow variety known as flore pleno is also available in some garden centers.

A common inhabitant of Phuket gardens is the rose pink blanchetti, which has pale greenish-grey leaves. It is a less profuse bloomer, and grows less vigorously than cathartica, with a tendency to become straggly if deprived of full sun. Some gardeners train it into a standard form. "Chocolate Cherry" and "Chocolate Swirl" have distinctive purple-brown throats.

While cathartica is a rapid grower – it has been known to reach 15 metres in height – it will not do so unsupported. After all, it is basically a tendril-less vine with a heavy superstructure. A wall with some anchor points to which the stems can be tied, is ideal. There it can show off its paces...

Other allamandas are less spectacular but are still useful garden plants. Schottii is a dwarf variety which is especially popular with municipal gardeners here. It has a compact form and has the same capacity as its bigger brother to flower more-or-less all year round. The flowers are smaller but of a similarly intense yellow. It is often used as a hedge since it responds well to pruning. Indeed, it will form a bushy plant if clipped regularly. If not it will become leggy, particularly if the supply of sun is limited. Unlike its bigger brother, the leaves are narrow and relatively insignificant. But it is much tougher, requires little or no maintenance, and will even adapt to life in a pot.

Going for gold? The allamanda is your best bet.

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

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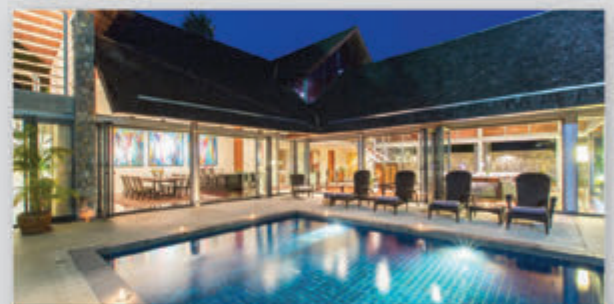
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POP QUIZ

1. Hollywood actor Jason Bateman first starred as a child in which TV series?

2. What is a single strand of spaghetti called?

3. Which UK city earned its famous nickname 'Auld Reekie', for smoke emitted by coal and wood burnt in the city?

4. Which two countries joined the European Union in 1985?

5. In 1975, Japan's Junko Tabai became the first woman to achieve what?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Easy

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

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

Across

1. Credit or tarot follower

5. Dash

8. Bladder, e.g.

11. Organic compound

12. People person, briefly

14. Fodder holder

15. Takes his leave of a lady

18. Nigerian language

19. City in Italy

20. Adult insect

21. Big Bertha's birthplace

22. Lhasa's land

23. Raillery

25. Best seller

26. ___-cochere (carriage entrance)

27. Krypton, e.g.

28. Group of poems

32. TV castaway

36. ___ brat

37. College in Ashland (abbr.)

38. ___-made

39. "Come again?"

40. Rears

42. Birthplace of Little Richard

45. Tracks

46. Caribbean cruise

stop

47. Units of work

48. Protestant denom.

51. Place to find pennies?

54. European language

55. Dead to the world

56. Consequently

57. Home improvement network

58. Rather than

59. Dated oath

Down

1. 27, to 3

2. University in Pakistan

3. Make over

4. "___ Boot"

5. More high-spirited

6. Mischievous

7. Sleep-disturbing legume?

8. ___ of Vicksburg

9. Apportion

10. Mil. rank

12. French commune

13. ___ Columbia

14. Q-Tip

16. Urges onward

17. Give off, as light

21. Admittance

23. 1922 Physics Nobel

24. Jack-in-the-pulpit, e.g.

25. Pilgrim's journey

26. School org.

27. African antelope

28. Decorative jugs

29. Hymn of praise: var.

30. Cutlass, e.g.

31. Arch

33. Salt shaker?

34. Joyful exclamation

35. Threat ender

39. Bindle bearer

40. French existentialist

41. Cheap

42. Native New Zealander

43. Dilettantish

44. Adorable

45. Allude

48. Floater

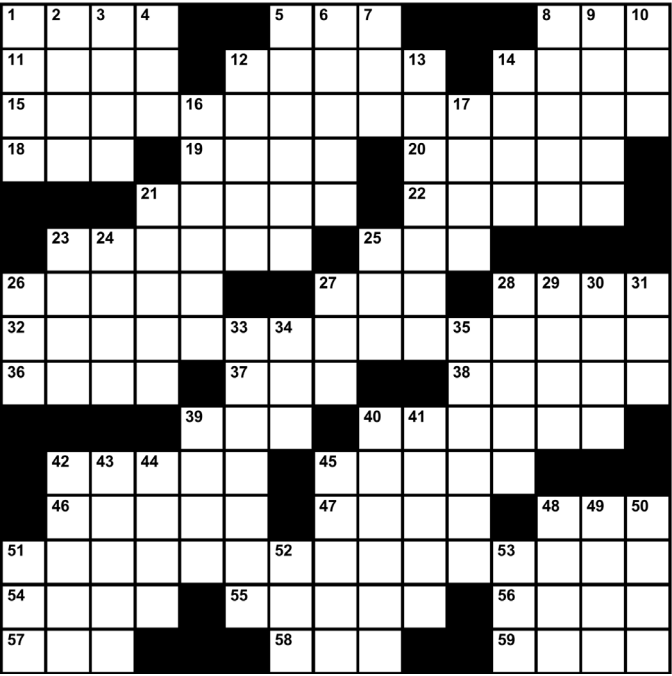
49. Chlorella, e.g.

50. Slog

51. Twin, e.g.

52. Undivided

53. ___ bit



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

AGES USPS DADS
PUSH CLARE ICON
ELSE ONSET ERNI
SPEAKEASYSTREET
FIX SURE
ESP RID PASSE
SHE SOFA LEAL
TAKEITEASYASPIE
WORM SAKI PTA
LEGAL SET YET
OMIT LOG
RESTSEASYDOESIT
ANTI GUILLE CECA
GOOS ENDED KNEW
SLAM STEM ODDS

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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

9

percent only of all plastic ever made has been recycled.

18

percent, nearly one in five, of mothers in the UK regret the name she picked for her child, according to a UK survey.

29

percent of Americans making more than \$150,000 per year before the pandemic had less than \$1,000 in savings.

1,200

times deadlier than cyanide is the poison found in pufferfish, which is served as the popular Japanese cuisine Fugu.

12,800

pounds is the estimated maximum bite force of a Tyrannosaurus rex. Humans have a bite force of about 200 pounds.

24,140

kilometres is how far Marco Polo travelled by land and sea over his 24 years of journeying.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW

Sunset at Nai Yang. Photo by Gemma Clark

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This week in history

Aug 27, 1883

Four enormous explosions destroy the island of Krakatoa and cause years of climate change.

Aug 30, 1918

Fanni Kaplan shoots and seriously injures Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin, prompting the decree for Red Terror.

Aug 31, 1997

Diana, Princess of Wales, her companion Dodi Fayed and driver Henri Paul die in a car crash in Paris.

Aug 28, 1898

American pharmacist Caleb Bradham's beverage 'Brad's Drink' is renamed 'Pepsi-Cola'.

Aug 29, 1997

Netflix is launched as an internet DVD rental service.

Sept 1, 1974

The SR-71 Blackbird sets (and holds) the record for flying from New York to London in 1 hour, 54 minutes and 56.4 seconds at a speed of 1,435.587 miles per hour (2,310.353 km/h).

Sept 2, 1666

The Great Fire of London breaks out and burns for three days, destroying 10,000 buildings including St Paul's Cathedral.

Source: Wikipedia

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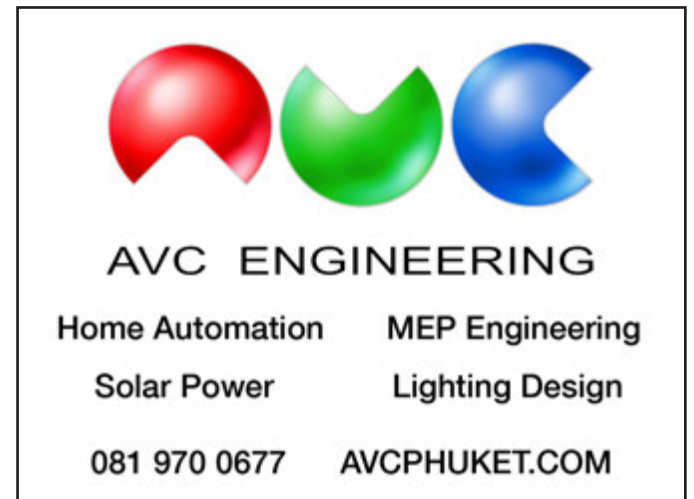
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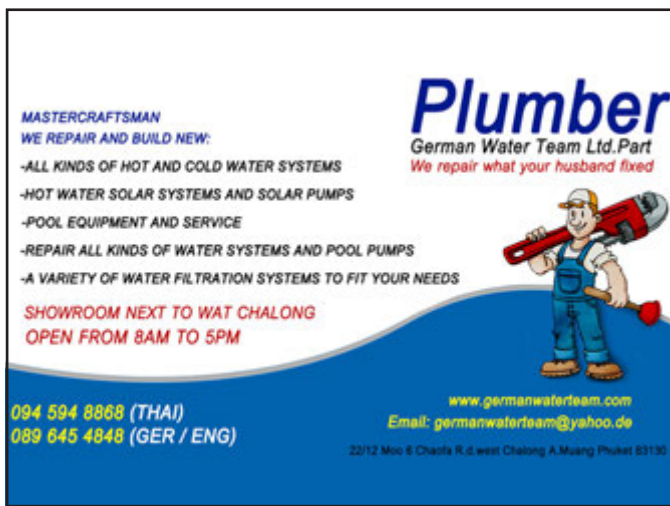


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WINDOW ON PHUKET

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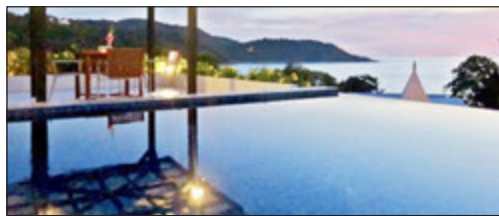
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Japan Paralympic team going for more than gold

PARALYMPICS

JAPAN IS SENDING A record number of athletes to the Paralympics aiming not only for gold medals but also to build a more inclusive society, according to top team official Miki Matheson.

A gold medallist herself at the 1998 Winter Paralympics in Nagano, Matheson serves as one of three deputy chiefs of the Japan team and has high hopes for the Tokyo Games.

"The success of the Paralympics is not just whether athletes hit the mark or win a lot of medals," the sports-woman said.

"The Paralympics won't succeed if we can't feel that (people with disabilities) can go out more comfortably and that people around them can change their way of thinking because of the Paralympics," she added.

Matheson said the Paralympics has a mission that goes beyond sport, and that Japan still has some way to go on making society inclusive.

The 48-year-old is now based in Canada with her family, but is living in her hometown Tokyo temporarily



Miki Matheson. Photo: AFP

while working with the team.

"I'm often treated as a disabled person when I'm back in Japan," said Matheson, who uses a wheelchair.

"In Canada, I live without noticing my disability at all."

She attributes this in part to a lack of opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to work and live together in Japan.

"I think the Paralympics is just one springboard, but it can play a major role in removing barriers," she said.

Japan's Paralympic team will have 254 athletes and will be captained by wheelchair tennis legend Shingo Kunieda. *AFP*

Thais target big medal haul at Paralympics

PARALYMPICS

Bangkok Post

With the country's largest-ever Games contingent, Thailand are hoping for their best-ever Paralympics performance at Tokyo 2020 which began on Tuesday (Aug 24).

There are 74 Thai athletes in 14 sports in Tokyo including wheelchair racing, wheelchair fencing, boccia, table tennis and taekwondo.

Thailand enjoyed their most successful Paralympics at Rio 2016 where they won six gold, six silver and six bronze medals.

Chutinant Bhirombhakdi, president of the Paralympic Committee of Thailand, is confident that his athletes will better their Rio record.

"I am confident that our athletes will do better than the results of all previous Paralympics," he said.

"I believe that our Paralympians will have good performances in Tokyo and better results than Rio."



Thai wheelchair racer Pongsakorn Paeyo (second right) poses with his teammates ahead of the Paralympics in Tokyo. Photo: Bangkok Post

Chutinant said the Thai athletes, aided by better equipment and sports science, had trained for a long time.

While many Thai athletes are veterans, there are also a large number of new faces, he said.

MEDAL HOPEFULS

Meanwhile, the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) has predicted the team will win around four to six golds in

five disciplines at Tokyo 2020.

Among the best hopes are wheelchair racer Pongsakorn Paeyo, boccia star Watcharaphon Vongsa, table tennis athlete Rungroj Thainiyom, archer Anon Aungaphinan, and taekwondo exponent Khwan-suda Phuankitcha.

Pongsakorn won the 400m and 800m T53 events at the 2016 Games and aims to retain both titles.

"My main target is the

400m race," he said. "I hope I can set a new world record after I did it at the Thailand championships earlier this year."

Other medal hopefuls include wheelchair racer Prawat Wahoram, Thailand's most decorated Paralympian with seven golds, wheelchair fencer Saysunee Jana, and badminton player Nipada Saensupa.

Thailand first took part in the Paralympics in 1984 and have since won 19 gold, 24 silver and 26 bronze medals.

Meanwhile, the opening ceremony will include the flag of Afghanistan as a "sign of solidarity" since athletes from the country will not be able to compete against their wishes, a top official said on Monday (Aug 23).

International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons said "it's important to highlight" that having the flag at the ceremony tonight will also be a message of "peace" to the rest of the world, given that Afghan athletes are unable to compete after the Taliban seized control of the country.

English Premier League Predictions

the Phuket News

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Pacquiao hints fighting days could be over

BOXING

MANNY PACQUIAO plans to take his time before deciding on his future but has admitted he may not return to the ring after his upset defeat to Yordenis Ugas last Saturday (Aug 21).

The 42-year-old Filipino boxing superstar indicated he now planned to turn his attention to his political career in the Philippines in the wake of a unanimous points defeat to Ugas.

"In the future you may not see Manny Pacquiao fight in the ring," Pacquiao said after the fight. "I don't know."

"I've done a lot for boxing and boxing has done a lot for me. I look forward to spending time with my family and thinking about my future in boxing."

If Saturday's loss was Pacquiao's final fight, it marks the end of a glittering 26-year professional career that has already ensured the Filipino will go down as one of the all-time greats.

Against Ugas however, age finally appeared to have caught up with Pacquiao as



Manny Pacquiao (left) trades blows with Yordenis Ugas during their title fight in Las Vegas. Photo: AFP

he was outboxed and outfoxed by a skilful, younger opponent.

Although Ugas said he would be willing to give Pacquiao a rematch, it is hard to see how a second fight would pan out any differently.

Pacquiao's veteran trainer Freddie Roach also acknowledged that time might finally have caught up with his friend and protege.

Roach has repeatedly said over the years he will be the first to advise Pacquiao to quit if he believes he has declined – and hinted that time may have come.

"He's the best customer I've ever had, the best guy, and the best fighter," Roach

said. "I'll hate to see the day Manny retires, but this could be it. We'll see what Manny decides."

Pacquiao is now expected to turn his attention to his political career. Already a Philippines Senator, Pacquiao is believed to be mulling a presidential bid.

"There's a lot of things that I need to accomplish to help people and that's my mission. I want to be an inspiration to all the Filipino people inside and outside the ring."

"I look forward to getting back to the Philippines and serving the Filipino people as this pandemic continues to affect millions in the Philippines," he added. *AFP*

Teams on the 'Luk out' as rampaging Romelu returns

FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

This weekend sees the first blockbuster game of the season so far as Liverpool host Chelsea at Anfield tomorrow (Aug 28).

Not only are both sides unbeaten after two games but both have looked comfortably dominant in their respective performances.

Liverpool brushed aside newly-promoted Norwich in the opening game 3-0 then dispatched Burnley 2-0 last weekend with relative ease.

However, tomorrow will be a different proposition altogether as Chelsea bring their West London swagger to Merseyside, spearheaded by the returning Romelu Lukaku.

Against Arsenal last Sunday (Aug 22) Lukaku showed in just 90 minutes exactly what Chelsea were missing last season, despite their European success – an intelligent, robust centre forward who can link play and, most importantly, score goals.

His record of 47 goals in



Romelu Lukaku (right) bullied Arsenal into submission last Sunday (Aug 22) during Chelsea's 2-0 win. Photo: AFP

72 games for previous club Inter Milan, coupled with his hugely impressive 64 goals in 98 international appearances for Belgium, is exactly what Chelsea have been craving in recent years and should add an ominous new dimension to the Blues.

His opener against the Gunners was his first-ever goal for Chelsea, almost a decade after he made his debut as a teenager and it was easy to see why they paid £97.5 million (£4.4 billion) to Inter reacquire his services.

His smart link up play was evident not just for his goal but throughout as he constantly posed problems for a traumatised Arsenal back line. But for a fanatstic save by Bernd Leno, Lukaku could have easily doubled his return.

It was an extremely impressive second debut and will have Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp concerned ahead of their meeting tomorrow, particularly given his outspoken disdain for the physical approach Burnley applied last Saturday.

Klopp criticised Burnley forwards Ashley Barnes and Chris Wood for what he considered an overly aggressive performance where, in all honesty, his defense were just bullied by more robust opponents.

Lukaku is also from the 'up and at them' mould, meaning van Dijk and co will be in for by far their toughest challenge yet. With the creative energy of Kai Havertz and Mason Mount and the guile and craft of N'Golo Kante, Mateo Kovacic and Jorginho supporting, Lukaku will be relishing what lies ahead.

Elsewhere, it doesn't get any easier for Arsenal as they travel to Manchester City in tomorrow's opening fixture.

Two losses on the bounce have increased the pressure on manager Mikel Arteta who will be concerned with the actual nature of the defeats where his team looked toothless and rudderless on both occasions.

Losing against a City side fresh off a 5-0 spanking of Norwich will be no disgrace but will do little to dissuade the critics that Arteta is out of his depth and needs to move on.

Salah denied Pharaohs link up

FOOTBALL

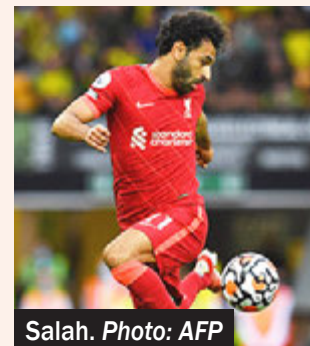
EGYPT'S FOOTBALL association (EFA) said on Monday (Aug 23) Liverpool had refused to release Mohamed Salah for the Pharaohs' upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Angola and Gabon due to UK quarantine regulations.

"The Association was informed by Liverpool of their regret of Mohamed Salah being unable to join the national team in their matches against Angola in Cairo and Gabon in Franceville as part of... the World Cup qualifiers," the EFA said in a statement posted on its social media.

British media reported earlier that the Reds were also refusing to release Fabinho, Roberto Firmino and Alisson Becker for Brazil's three upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

Both Egypt and Brazil and are on the UK Government's 'red list'.

Egypt's governing body said the decision by Liverpool was prompted by "mandatory isolation for 10 days" for travellers returning from those countries.



Salah. Photo: AFP

The EFA said it had urged FIFA to waive quarantine restrictions for international players to ease them joining their national squads for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers.

In the summer, Liverpool refused to allow star striker Salah to play in the Olympics, where Egypt reached the quarter-finals before losing to eventual gold medallists Brazil.

After their title defence last season was torpedoed by a string of injuries, Liverpool have made a solid start to this campaign, winning both their Premier League games.

Salah, 29, became the first player in English Premier League history to score a goal on the opening weekend of five consecutive seasons. AFP

Nualphan vows to regain lost glory

FOOTBALL

NUALPHAN LAMSAM HAS VOWED to steer the War Elephants to the Southeast Asian crown after being appointed manager of the national men's side by the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) on Monday (Aug 23).

Nualphan, chairwoman of Thai League 1 club Port, will take charge of the national men's team and the U23 side, FAT president Somyot Poompunmuang said.

The move came after the War Elephants were eliminated in the qualifying round for the 2022 World Cup, leading to the sacking of coach Akira Nishino.

Somyot said the appointment is aimed at restoring the dignity of Thai football.

Her tasks in the near future include the qualifying round for the 2022 U23 Asian championship, this year's AFF Suzuki Cup and the 2023 Asian Cup, he said.

Nualphan, widely known as "Madam Pang", is a former manager of the Thai women's team who reached the World Cup finals twice in 2015 and 2019 under her management.

She said one of her immediate goals is to guide the senior national team to win the AFF Suzuki Cup, or the Southeast Asian championship, scheduled from Dec 5, 2021 to Jan 1, 2022.

The Asean Football Federation (AFF) wants the 2020 edition, which has been postponed from last year, to be held in one country for the convenience of participating



Nualphan Lamsam has been appointed manager of the national men's football team. Photo: Bangkok Post

countries during the COVID-19 pandemic but has not yet named the host nation.

Nualphan, who has been involved in football for 13 years and is also president and CEO of Muang Thai Insurance Plc, said she has been assigned to look for coaches for the senior national team and the U23 side.

She said football is a tool to unite the country which is hit by several problems. "I alone cannot make changes. The national team belongs to everyone so I want all parties involved including the FAT, government, private sector and fans to unite to help Thai football rise again beginning at becoming the top Asean side and then competing at the Asia and world levels," she said.

She vowed that although she is chairwoman of a football club, there would be no conflict of interest and nepotism in selecting the national team players.

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War Elephants confirm new boss > p15



NO LIMITS

UAE para-cyclist aiming for Tokyo glory with a little help from his Phuket friends

Ahmed Mubarak Al Mutaiwei training in Phuket ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Photo: John Bennett

PARALYMPICS

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

When para-cyclist Ahmed Mubarak Al Mutaiwei takes to the track at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics on September 1st he is hoping a little bit of Phuket magic can help propel him to medal glory.

Ahmed, 40, spent time at Than-yapura in Phuket preparing for the Games, which started on Tuesday (Aug 24) in the Japanese capital. While he was here, by pure chance, he made the acquaintance of John "JJ" Bennett, who himself had recently taken on the "Tour de Phuket" cycle challenge which has so far raised over B500,000 for charity.

"I was out cycling on a Sunday in the rain when I came across a fel-

low cyclist who zipped past me at an incredibly high speed," recalls John.

"When I discovered he was doing so with only one leg I was fascinated. We struck up a conversation and he recognised me from *The Phuket News* story on my Tour de Phuket challenge."

John, a qualified coach and experienced bike-fitter, offered to help assess the performance of Ahmed's trial bike that he will be using in Tokyo and so the duo went on a 60km ride.

"It was clear to me that Ahmed was fighting his bike and just wasn't comfortable – in fact he told me he really didn't like the bike very much at all," John said.

"The next day he came to my lab and we conducted three hours of motion analysis and in-depth discussions on how we could improve Ahmed's comfort and power output. We adjusted his saddle position by

just 2.5mm and fitted some new pads for his arms on his aerobars which increased his comfort and made him more aerodynamic."

The results out on the road the following day were astounding, said John. "He was pushing the same level of power with one leg that I do with two, reaching 62km per hour at one point – he was like a young boy at Christmas, itching for the Tokyo Games to begin!"

'COURAGE, DETERMINATION AND NATURAL TALENT'

Ahmed will compete in road and time trial cycling in Tokyo, the first paralympian cyclist to represent the UAE and one of only 12 athletes participating from the country.

In 1997 the young Emirati was involved in a road accident while driving to work and suffered serious injuries

to his leg. Despite undergoing 32 painful surgeries in places as far afield as Germany and the USA, ultimately the limb was amputated in 1998.

"It's a period of time that I would just like to forget," Ahmed told *Gulf News* back in 2016.

Because his amputation was so high it was impossible to fit a prosthetic meaning Ahmed relied on crutches to walk. However, in 2014 he found a doctor who was able to insert a metal strut into his pelvis which then allowed a prosthetic to be attached, enabling him to walk properly for the first time in 16 years.

The following year Ahmed's wife gave him a mountain bike to help keep him active although it wasn't until two years later that he started training seriously. In no time at all he was competing at international level, winning over 20 medals in events in Europe and Asia, most

notably silver at the 2018 European Cup and silver in Uzbekistan in 2019.

He had to undergo a punishing schedule, travelling and competing at events in 13 different countries, to secure qualification for Tokyo but now he is ready.

"To reach that level in just three years is unbelievable and shows his courage, determination and natural talent," commented John.

"His 17-year-old son, an able-bodied athlete, is representing UAE at the Junior World Track Championships the week after Tokyo, so the sports gene has obviously been passed on," he added with a smile.

"I can count on one hand the athletes who have ever impressed me to the highest level and Ahmed is now one of those. He is also an incredibly humble and nice guy. I wish him the very best for his Tokyo adventure," John concluded, fondly.

Golfers swinging happy as play returns to Blue Canyon

GOLF

WITH PHUKET GENERALLY being deprived of golfing events in recent times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was much excitement in the air last Wednesday (Aug 18) as Golfasian held their Amazing Thailand Expat Golf Tournament at the stunning Blue Canyon Golf Club.

Ensuring the strictest adherence to the latest COVID-19 health and safety protocols was in place,

organiser Chris Watson and the Golfasian team did a tremendous job of hosting the day and making it sure it ran smoothly and safely.

The competition was split into two groups with a bright and breezy 6:30am registration for the morning collective who teed off at 8am.

Despite a deluge of heavy rainfall in the days previous, a combination of a thorough and effective drainage system at Blue Canyon and a smiling mother nature meant the organisers and participants were met with a bright and sunny

day as play got underway, with golfers enjoying dry, fast greens and a longer ball roll on the drives.

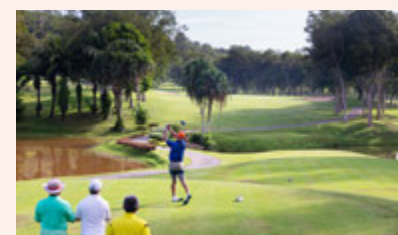
The day was run on a stableford format, with individual and team prizes up for grabs. The overall champion from the morning competition was Reijo Heiskanen with a total of 39 points. He was followed by Oradee Kim Tie who was just one point behind on 38.

The team competition was also a closely fought battle with Live 89.5 Donna Toon's team pipped by one point on hole 18 by event-

ful winners "A Mixed Bag" who registered a combined team total score of 115.

The afternoon competition was equally close with the leaderboard constantly chopping and changing throughout the round. Ultimately, Jim Hamilton came out on top with 41 points, closely followed just one point behind by Brad Edman on 40 points. The team competition was won by "The Wednesday Group" with an impressive 125 points.

Congratulations to Golfasian and all the participants who made



One of the many golfers tees off down the fairway. Photo: Golfasian

the day so fun and spirited. A big thanks goes to all the local sponsors who donated prizes to the competition and to media sponsors Live 89.5. The next Golfasian tournament is scheduled for September 29 at Laguna Golf Course.

The Phuket News