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BATED BREATH



An officer reminds tourists in Phuket Town to wear a face mask at all times while in public areas. Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

TOURISTS, LOCALS ANTICIPATE FURTHER EASING OF COVID RESTRICTIONS

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Tourists and local residents across Phuket reliant on the tourism industry were waiting in anticipation of further easing of COVID restrictions this week after it was announced that the Test & Go entry scheme will resume from next Tuesday (Feb 1) and the alcohol serving time has been extended to 11pm, already in effect since last Monday (Jan 24).

Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) Spokesman Taweessin Visanuyothin announced

in Bangkok on Jan 20 that the CCSA had approved the reinstatement of the Test & Go entry scheme to allow vaccinated international visitors to enter Thailand.

Travellers must obtain a Thailand Pass and submit proof of prepayment for accommodation at a government-approved hotel/s, such as SHA Extra Plus (SHA++), on Day 1 and Day 5, and proof of payment for two RT-PCR tests, one on Day 1 and another on Day 5 of their stay, he said.

The prepayment for Day 1 must include accommodation, a test and a prearranged transfer from the airport to the hotel. Travellers can book two

different hotels for the accommodation on Day 1 and Day 5. However, on both Day 1 and Day 5, they must stay within the room for the RT-PCR test result.

Mr Taweessin also announced that from Jan 24 all “restaurants” serving alcohol in “blue” and “yellow” zones may do so, and allow patrons to consume alcohol on the premises, until 11pm.

“The number of tourism pilot [blue] zones will remain the same, with eight entire provinces and parts of 18 additional provinces included. Bangkok, Kanchanaburi, Krabi, Chon Buri, Nonthaburi, Pathum

Thani, Phang Nga and Phuket are the eight tourist pilot provinces,” Mr Taweessin said.

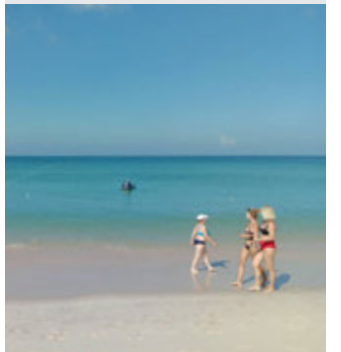
Phuket Governor Narong Woonchiew as of Tuesday (Jan 25) had yet to formalise the extension of the alcohol serving time to 11pm by provincial order, though many licensed venues across the island stayed open until 11pm on Monday night.

As previously reported by *The Phuket News*, the 9pm alcohol curfew came into effect in Phuket on Jan 9 with police ordering all bars to stop serving alcohol, and usually to close. Patrols along Bangla Rd in Patong were conducted each night...

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Reports of croc sightings fail to deter tourists



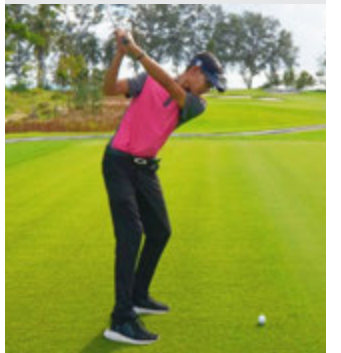
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Aquella delivers Phuket swingers a new challenge



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Phuket holds fast to Omicron policy

The Phuket News

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Phuket Governor Narong Wo-onciew presided over a press conference on Monday (Jan 24) which saw no major changes to any policies regarding tourism and the treatment of people confirmed as infected with Omicron.

Even the Test & Go tourist-entry scheme reopening to applications on Feb 1 was not mentioned at all.

Speaking at the old Phuket Provincial Hall, Governor Narong continued to call on people to follow the COVID-prevention measures and to wear a face mask at all times while in public, wash their hands frequently and to register to receive the fourth-dose 'booster' vaccination injection.

Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), said that the number of new infections in Phuket was falling, both for those infected in Phuket and for foreign tourists arriving on the island.

"Phuket province still has strict measures to prevent and control the disease," Dr Kusak said.

He reminded people who test positive by antigen test kit (ATK) to contact the Aunjai Clinic at 076-254200 to receive instructions and advice on what to do, depending on the severity of their infection.



Governor Narong on Monday (Jan 24) made no announcements to any changes in policy regarding tourism or the treatment of Omicron patients. Photo: PR Phuket

People in Patong who test positive by ATK can call an 'EOC' team ("Emergency Operations Centre") at 089-4741877, he added.

Alternatively, people may contact the Kathu District Public Health or add Line Home Isolate@Patong. People in Thalang District can inform their village headman or other community leaders, or call at 0652059200-1, he said.

"There will be staff to help assess the level of symptoms. For patients with no symptoms or few symptoms and no risk factors such as congenital disease, patients can go to Home Isolation or Community Isolation. Staff will follow up

with enquiries and ongoing care, along with providing medicines and essentials until the patient has recovered," Dr Kusak said.

"Phuket Province currently has 1,874 infected people who are in the Home Isolation system," he added.

Provincial officials are pushing ahead with the mass vaccination 'booster' campaign, and people are encouraged to register for their fourth-dose booster jab through the PhuketMustWin website, he said.

"At present in Phuket the number of people vaccinated with their first dose is over 88%, the second dose is over 85%, the third dose is over 50%, and the fourth dose is about

8%," Dr Kusak noted.

"From vaccinations, Phuket residents have immunity to fight the disease when infected. Most of the patients are asymptomatic and have few symptoms; 95% are Green patients and can self-medicate and self-isolate at home," he said.

Rewat Areerob, President of Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO or OrBorJor), said that the PPAO has proceeded to buy doses of the Moderna vaccine for vaccination injections.

The first delivery of 21,000 doses were to arrive on Tuesday (Jan 25), he said. Details of who the vaccination doses will be provided to as a priority have yet to be announced.

Dr Weerasak Lorthongkham, Director of Vachira Phuket Hospital, said that while 95% of the people currently confirmed as infected COVID, most likely the Omicron variant, 61% of the patient beds at the Field Hospital at the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) Phuket campus in Kathu were occupied, and 37% of the patient beds available at the Field Hospital at Phuket Rajabhat University were also occupied.

Dr Lersak Leenanitikul, Deputy Director of the Secondary and Tertiary Mission Group Vachira Phuket Hospital, pointed out that the country's first electronic medical certificate was now available through Vachira Phuket Hospital,

via the website vachiraphuket.go.th.

Nantasiri Ronnasiri, Director of the Phuket office Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), said that during the 207 days July 1, 2021 to Jan 23, 2022 there were 248,497 tourists coming to Phuket under the Phuket Sandbox project.

Foreign tourists entering Thailand under the Phuket Sandbox scheme stayed on average eight nights, spending on average B55,000 per person. The scheme during that period had generated B13.76 billion in direct income, resulting in B32.61bn in circulating income in the economy, she said.

Patchalee Chaopolkong, of the Phuket Provincial Education Office, reported that the reopening of schools to on-site classes had gone well, with no clusters of infections reported.

Watcharin Rattanachu, Chief of the Phuket Fisheries Office, reported that his officers had investigated the reports of a crocodile sighted off Bang Tao Beach. He confirmed that the sighting was nothing more than a sunken trunk of a coconut tree several hundred metres offshore from the beach.

"Therefore, people should not panic. However, if people see any foreign matter, they can report it to the Provincial Fisheries Office in order to inform the correct officials to investigate and find out the facts about the report," he said.

High hopes for further easing of COVID restrictions for tourism

Continued from page 1

...to enforce the shutdown.

The CCSA's announcement of the easing of COVID restrictions on Jan 20 came the same day that officials in Phuket launched a campaign targeting tourists to ensure they wore face masks while in public areas.

Police began patrolling Bangla Rd, Patong, on Jan 20 to begin enforcing heightened measures to get tourists to wear face masks in public areas.

Patong Police Chief Col Sujin Nonbordee led an assembly of police officers, health officials and officers from Patong Municipality at the police box at the beach end of Bangla Rd at 7pm, where he handed down the order that the initial stage of the campaign is to raise awareness among tourists only.

"By joining together to campaign for people and tourists, both Thais and foreigners, to wear a mask to prevent the

spread of COVID-19 Bangla Rd area," was the aim of the patrols last night, explained Col Sujin.

No fines were to be imposed at this stage, he added.

The patrols were launched "due to reports that some tourists do not comply with Thailand's public health measures, such as refusing to wear a cloth or face mask and gathering together to dine together. This could lead to the spread of the Omicron strain of COVID-19 that is spreading widely in the area now," Col Sujin said.

Joining the assembly and ensuing patrol of Bangla Rd was Patong Mayor Chalerm Sak Manesri and Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan.

The officers spoke with tourists, staff and business operators on Bangla Rd "to clarify and understand the issue of not wearing a mask in public", said a government report of the Bangla Rd campaign.

"In the epidemic situation



Patong Mayor Chalerm Sak Manesri tours Bangla Rd to enforce the face mask campaign on Jan 20. Photo: Patong PR

of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), there will be a penalty of a maximum fine of 20,000 baht under the Communicable Diseases Act B.E. 2558, which tourists understand and are ready to cooperate in good compliance with such measures," the report added.

However, it has long been noted that by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) in Bangkok in late November, that first time offences for not wearing a face mask in public areas is to be no more than B1,000.

Meanwhile, police and other officers launched their own campaign in Phuket Town also on Jan 20 to inform tourists to wear a mask while in public.

Leading the campaign which marched along the streets of the Phuket Old Town area were Phuket Town Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas and Phuket Provincial Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam.

Military officers, police officers and public health officials joined the entourage, which toured popular tourist

streets of Thalang Rd, Yaowarat Rd, Ranong Rd and Phang Nga Rd.

"The campaign is for local residents and tourists, both Thais and foreigners, to wear a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by walking along roads that are tourist attractions in the Old Phuket Town area, said Mayor Saroj.

"Most of the people, and tourists, almost everyone wears a mask, but only some of them don't," he said.

"Officers spoke with tourists, who understand and are cooperating in following [the COVID measures] well," he said.

Mr Anupap noted, "Although the number of infected people in Phuket has decreased lately, there are still some tourists, both Thais and foreigners, who do not wear masks. Therefore, this campaign has been launched for tourists to wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which is the concern

of the provincial governor."

"The governor has already asked for cooperation from the consuls in Phuket to inform tourists to wear masks, as well as asking for cooperation from hotel operators where tourists stay," he added.

The campaign will be rolled out across the island, Mr Anupap said.

"After this we will synchronize with officials in each district and integrate [campaign efforts] with relevant agencies, including the military, police, administrative departments and public health officials, to patrol various areas, especially important tourist attractions of Phuket," he said.

"If you see tourists or other people not wearing masks, the law will be enforced in accordance with the order of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 of Phuket Province," he warned, without clarifying exactly which penalties will be enforced.

'Coconut tree croc' spurs fears

The Phuket News
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People at beaches in the Cherng Talay area were put on high alert last Friday (Jan 21) after local officials mistook the silhouette of a sunken trunk of a coconut tree some 200 metres offshore from Bang Tao Beach to be a crocodile.

Local officials launched a drone to confirm the sighting last Friday and confirmed that the underwater shadow was a crocodile heading towards Surin Beach.

The sighting was reported to Manoch Puchalad, the newly elected Chief of Cherng Talay Tambon Administrative Organization (OrBorTor), who in turn reported the sighting to Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew.

Governor Narong urged tourists on beaches in the area to be careful and to remain vigilant for any danger.

However, the next day tourists and beach-goers were enjoying a dip in the water regardless.

Although lifeguards were on extra vigilant watch at Bang Tao Beach, the warning did not deter groups of carefree



The underwater shadow that was later confirmed to be a sunken coconut tree. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

tourists swimming and playing in the water.

It had initially been reported that the crocodile was first spotted by people on a speedboat who had stopped to fish some 200 metres off Bang Tao Beach.

It later emerged, however, that it was in fact a 48-year-old jet-ski operator Komsorn Hansa who first reported seeing a crocodile earlier last Friday afternoon while he was fishing for squid about five metres from the shore.

He said he saw the crocodile near the buoy attached to the floating rope that segregates swimming areas and those for water sports vehicles

such as jet-skis. He alerted officials immediately who then called for the drone to be actioned.

"It was around 1:30pm that I first saw him," Mr Komsorn told *The Phuket News*.

"I was on my jet-ski about five metres off-shore fishing for squid when the crocodile suddenly emerged in the water close to me. I followed it for a further 10m or so but then it disappeared.

"I came to see if it was still here today but it isn't," Mr Komsorn said last Saturday.

Another witness, 45-year-old Bang Tao beach operator Pracha Manabutr said he saw the crocodile near another



Mr Apichart points to where Ms Orawan said she saw the crocodile. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

buoy further from shore when a jet-ski passed by and hit the crocodile's tail.

The driver off the jet-ski was clearly shocked, Mr Pracha said, heading back to shore immediately. There were a number of tourists that followed by exiting the water to avert any potential danger the crocodile might pose, he added.

A team of officials led by Dr Kongkiat Kittiwattawong, Chief of Phuket Marine Biological Centre (PMBC), Phuket Fisheries Chief Watcharin Rattanachu and Marine Police conducted a search off Bang Tao Beach last Sunday (Jan 23) in the

hopes of locating the reported crocodile.

However, suspicions were raised when another drone sent up showed that the underwater shadow reported on the Friday had not moved.

"The object seen by the drone was still in the same place. if it were a crocodile, it would have moved," Dr Kongkiat said plainly.

A team of divers confirmed that the underwater shadow was nothing more than the trunk of a coconut tree lying on the seabed, Dr Kongkiat added.

However, earlier that same day, at about 8am, local resident Orawan 'Joy' Sombat reported seeing a crocodile

off Koh Pling, about 11km north of Bang Tao by coastal seaward route.

Ms Orawan promptly notified Apichart Prateep Na Thalang, Deputy Chief of Sakhu Tambon Administrative Organisation (OrBorTor), who in turn reported the reported sighting to officers at Sirinath National Park.

"I informed Sirinath National Park to inspect the area since villagers were afraid to fish at that location, and Koh Pling is visited by a lot of tourists as well," Mr Apichart said.

Ms Orawan explained that she was with five friends who were fishing when she saw what she believed to be a crocodile in the water only some 10m from her.

"I was so shocked and I immediately shouted to my friends to flee to shore," she said.

"I've never seen a crocodile in the sea before. I've only seen crocodiles at a crocodile farm," Ms Orawan admitted.

"But today [Jan 23], I am so scared that I do not dare go fishing again. As for the local fishermen, after hearing the news of a crocodile in the area, they have stopped fishing because of fear of it not being unsafe," she said.

Tanker truck driver killed in high-speed wipeout

THE DRIVER OF A tanker truck died on Tuesday morning (Jan 24) after a car suddenly changing lanes struck the truck on its back left wheels.

The impact sent the truck swerving out of control and flipping onto its side before slamming into a power pole beside the entrance to the new Shell petrol station on Wiset Rd in Baan Bang Konthi in Rawai.

According to local CCTV provided by Rawai Mayor Aroon Soros, the accident occurred at 11:35am.

The truck, moving at high speed westbound towards Kata Hill, narrowly missed a motorbike entering the petrol station, as the pole had diverted it from wiping out the motorbike rider.

The driver of the truck, Nikorn Turaphon, 31, suffered critical injuries and was pronounced dead at Vachira Phuket Hospital, said Lt Col Techin of the Chalong Police.

The driver of the white sedan that struck the truck,



The overturned truck slammed into the power pole at speed. Image: Screenshot from CCTV, courtesy of Rawai Mayor Aroon Soros

Rungrueng Jumpathomg, 50, suffered minor injuries in the collision, he added.

At the time of going to press, police had yet to charge Rungrueng for dangerously changing lanes.

Lt Col Techin said that police were waiting to conclude their investigation.

"Preliminary discussions have not been made to the family of the deceased. I have only talked to Mr Nikorn's employer," he said.

"Both sides are expected to be called in for questioning as soon as possible, but it also depends on the readiness of both sides," Lt Col Techin added.

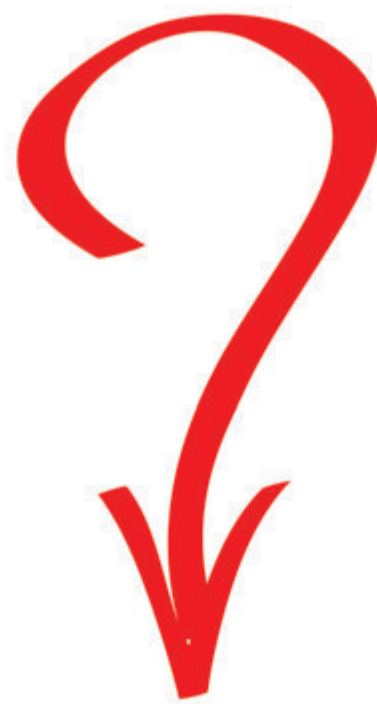
The talks were expected to be held on Tuesday (Jan 25).

"It is expected to be an offence of reckless driving causing death and causing property damage," Lt Col Techin noted.

Eakkapop Thongtub



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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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MON JAN 31



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Wind 11 m/s

TUE FEB 1



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Low: +22°

Wind 7 m/s

WED FEB 2



High: +34°

Low: +24°

Wind 7 m/s

THU FEB 3



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B14bn approved for Patong Tunnel

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Cabinet has approved a budget of B14.67 billion to build the Kathu-Patong Expressway, also commonly called the "Patong Tunnel" project.

Government Spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana announced the news in Bangkok on Jan 18.

"The Kathu-Patong Expressway Project aims to increase travel between the east side of Phuket to Patong Beach for locals and tourists," Mr Thanakorn said.

"The expressway would prevent traffic accidents caused by steep and curving roads and can be used as an evacuation route in the event of a calamity like a tsunami," he said.

The *Phuket News* notes that although the 2004 tsunami caused horrific devastation along the Patong beachfront, due to the concentration of buildings already standing at that time the waves never

The Patong tunnel road will have a toll gate on the Kathu side.
Image: Radio Thailand Phuket

reached Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd at the inland end of Bangla Rd, just under 400 metres from the beach.

However, during the tsunami scare in April 2012 panic sent local residents and tourists fleeing into the hills. The

road over the top of Patong Hill became jammed with vehicles loaded with people trying to evacuate the town.

The Kathu-Patong Expressway Project of the Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) will be operated under the

form of a joint investment between the public and private sectors, Mr Thanakorn explained.

"The EXAT will announce the invitation for private sector participation in May-June, with construction starting in

2023 and service scheduled to start in July 2027," he said.

The expressway will be built as an elevated road construction project, which will be 3.98 kilometres long, with a tunnel through the hills behind the town, Mr Thanakorn said.

The expressway will have four traffic lanes in each direction, he continued.

The road project will connect Phra Metta Rd, which runs behind Jungceylon in Patong, and Kathu, with two elevated sections of road leading up, through and down the hills. A toll gate will be located on the Kathu side, he added.

"The Kathu-Patong Expressway Project is expected to take a total of five years to complete. The locals and tourists will benefit from this route," Mr Thanakorn said.

"It is also the development of the country's transportation infrastructure in line with supporting the development of Phuket Province under the concept of Smart City development," he added.

Officials defend new road in Rawai

OFFICIALS AT RAWAI Municipality have defended a new road being carved through an undisturbed natural area dense with trees in Saiyuan, saying that as the road is being built on private land no permit is required to build it.

The road, which connects to Saiyuan Rd next to the Baan Sai Yuan Resort, already extends more than 570 metres into the natural area.

An officer of the Division of Public Works at Rawai Municipality told *The Phuket News* that the owner of the road had not contacted his office.

The officer, who asked not to be named, did not explain whether his office had made any effort to contact the owner.

However, the officer admitted to apparently already knowing with certainty that the land is privately owned.

He also said that no permission was needed to build a road on private property, despite being shown that the road joins a busy public road.

"The road is being built



The road already extends more than 570 metres into the natural area. Image: Google Maps

in a private area and does not come under the building control laws, so it is not illegal," he said.

The officer gave no indication of any interest as to the purpose of the road, or any interest in future construction along the road for which building permits will be required.

The officer declined to answer any further questions about the development.

"Go check with the Land Office," he said.

No one at Phuket Land Office was willing to comment, saying that only the chief was authorised to speak with the press. The chief, Wisit Chokchai, has been continually unavailable for comment.

The *Phuket News*

First turtle eggs of the year at Ao Sane

A GREEN SEA TURTLE LAID OVER 100 eggs at Ao Sane beach, in the south of the island, late last Friday night (Jan 21).

Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos confirmed it is the first time a turtle has laid her eggs on Phuket shores this year.

The turtle had come ashore around 11pm and was spotted by a witness, Mr Wichai Phonrob, who alerted officials from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources.

The officials soon found the turtle who had crawled further up the beach away from the water to dig a pit in the sand to lay her eggs.

Officials confirmed she started laying her eggs around 9:23pm, concluding the spawning process around 12:28am. Once she had concluded laying the eggs, the mother turtle returned to the ocean although officials did manage to safely take her measurements before she disappeared, confirming a body length of 1.2 metres, a body width of 75cm and a body weight of 100 kilograms.

After checking the nest, officials confirmed that there were a total of 125 fertile eggs which were since relocated to a local research centre for incubation and to afford a greater probability of survival.

Mayor Solos was delighted with the news and successful outcome, posting clips of the incident on social media which many residents shared and commented positively on.

He added that the general condition and health of the environment and natural



Officials keep watch over the turtle and her nest. Photo: Eakkapong Thongtub

resources had drastically improved in the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic with a significant cut in tourist numbers and associated pollution levels.

There were numerous cases of turtles returning to Phuket's shores in the past 18 months to lay their eggs. Eight hatchlings from the first olive ridley turtle nest known to be laid on Mai Khao Beach in 20 years hatched and were released to the sea last April and the case of a "supermum" turtle last February who had laid four separate nests delighted Marine wildlife officers.

There were many other instances during the period where tourism slowed as COVID allowed wildlife a much needed breather.

"Their nesting has improved in the last two years thanks to the absence of tourists, noise and light pollution," Kongkiat Kittiwatanawong, Director of the Phuket Marine Biological Center, told AFP last month.

"We had never seen such a number in 20 years." Eakkapong Thongtub

Welcomed to Phuket with gunshot threats

Eakkapop Thongtub
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Police have charged a man for intimidating a new resident behind the Tha Reua Shrine by confronting him and firing a handgun and a pump-action shotgun into the air reportedly a total of 30 times.

The new resident, Wisa Choo-in, 45, from Phatthalung, reported to Thalang Police on Jan 18 that he was in front of a small house on his lot, in Soi Hua Tha, Moo 3, Srisoonthorn, talking with his new neighbours during the previous night (Jan 17) when a man walked up to the group at about 8:30pm.

He had never seen the man before, Mr Wisa told Thalang Police Station Chief Col Pisit Chuenphet and Deputy Chief Lt Col Krishna Channit.

The man was carrying a handgun and a pump-action shotgun, Mr Wisa said.

"He walked straight up to me and said to me that he is never afraid of anyone, not the village headman [Phu Yai Baan], the Subdistrict Chief [Kamnan] or anyone else," Mr Wisa said.

The man stopped just over metre in front of Mr Wisa.

"He then started firing his guns into the air," Mr Wisa said.

"He fired about 30 shots to threaten me... I was scared to death because he nearly shot my face," he said.



Wisa Choo-in (right), 45, from Phatthalung, reported the incident to Thalang Police on Jan 18. Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Police inspected the scene and recovered 11mm bullet casings and several shotgun cartridges.

Mr Wisa explained that he had recently bought the one-rai plot for B5 million and moved to the site about three months ago. He had recently had a brick wall built around the plot's boundary.

Of note, on the brick wall beside the entrance to the property is a sign announcing that the land is already for sale.

Mr Wisa filed his formal complaint with the Thalang Police at about 10am on Jan 18.

"I was extremely shocked and frightened. I didn't think that a tourist town

like Phuket would have such a barbaric influence," he said.

By 1pm that same day, police reported that the man, who they named only as "Mr Yut", had surrendered to Thalang Police for the incident.

Mr Yut was explained as the caretaker of the area behind the shrine.

No other details about Mr Yut were provided.

Police have yet to give any explanation as to why Mr Yut threatened Mr Wisa.

Police did confirm they were now conducting a criminal background check on Mr Yut and checking whether he has permits for the guns used in the incident.

Hotel visa service for tourists stuck in isolation

PHUKET IMMIGRATION Chief Col Thanet Sukchai is having officers visit hotels to ensure that tourists are not caught out by their permits to stay in Thailand expiring while they are observing the mandatory 10-day Hotel Isolation after testing positive for COVID-19.

Branded as "proactive action on visa extensions for tourists", the move is being promoted as a "convenience that builds trust and takes care of tourists".

"In the overall picture at the moment, Omicron is still spreading abroad quite high, and some of the tourists who travel to Thailand may be carriers," Col Thanet said last Friday (Jan 21).

"But Phuket has a screening system that checks tourists on Day 0 at the airport. If they test negative, the visitors can travel as usual in the Sandbox system [allowed to leave their hotel rooms but not allowed to leave Phuket]," he added.

"But during the second [COVID] test on Day 5 or Day 6 [of their stay] many tourists are testing positive," Col Thanet noted.

"Therefore, they have to be brought under the treatment



Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

process according to public health measures, either in 'Hotel Quarantine' or 'High Risk Contact' quarantine. But during the quarantine period, the tourist visa period may be nearing its expiration and the tourists are unable to travel [to the Phuket Immigration Office] to extend the visa by themselves.

"Therefore, Phuket Immigration is proactive in providing visa extension services, which is convenient for tourists by coordinating with accommodation operators where tourists have been detained for a period of one week," he said.

"This takes care of tourists who are infected and staying under the health system at more than 200 hotels, and includes explaining and clarifying [the measures] to tourists who do not understand the overall picture," he added.

The Phuket News

DISCOVER THE CHARM OF SIRAY



Blended into natural of Phuket's tropical greenery and ocean shore of Siray Bay, Sinae Phuket Luxury Hotel features 64 of the unique hillside ocean-facing studios and pool villas as well as lifestyle 2 to 3 Bedroom Villas, with impressive panorama views of the Andaman and a private pool.

SINAE PHUKET LUXURY HOTEL

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Officials counter rising prices

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Phuket Provincial Commercial Office has launched a series of 10 markets selling red pork, eggs and chicken at reduced cost to help counter rising prices for the fresh produce across the island.

Woranit Aphirattjirawong, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Commercial Office, is also calling on people to report any price gouging in their areas.

The cheap-price markets are being held under the Thong Fah ("Blue Flag") project, coordinated by the Ministry of Commerce's Department of Internal Trade, Ms Woranit explained.

The campaign began after the announcement by Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit, who also serves as a Deputy Prime Minister, on Jan 10, she added.

The markets will continue until at least Jan 31.

Of note, the Cabinet on Jan 18 approved the budget to support broadening the campaign to provide a range of essential household goods at cheap prices through the Blue Flag markets as part of



Local residents flock to take advantage of the cheaper prices. Photo: Department of Internal Trade, Phuket office

the B1.48 billion relief scheme to help those suffering deep financial hardship due to the ongoing economic crisis.

Discounted items will include farm products, chicken, eggs and other essential goods from retail and wholesale suppliers. They will be available at community centres, convenience stores, fresh markets, local department stores, markets, petrol stations and mobile groceries, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said.

In Phuket, local residents

have already been queuing up to take advantage of the markets, where red pork is sold for 150 baht/kg, No 3 size eggs sold for B88 for a tray of 30, and chicken sold at B150 baht/kg.

The markets are open daily only from 10am to 3pm at the following locations:

THALANG DISTRICT:

- Wanida Fresh Pork, Sakhu
- SuperCheap, Laguna branch, Cherng Talay
- Go Na Fresh Pork Shop (New City Market), Thepkasattri

- SuperCheap, Baan Porn, Thepkasattri

KATHU DISTRICT:

- SuperCheap, Nanai Branch, Patong
- Supercheap, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus, Kathu

MUEANG DISTRICT:

- SuperCheap, Main Branch, Raasada
- Phuket Grocery, Phuket Town
- Phuket Provincial Commercial Office, Phuket Town

• The Pork Shop, Rassada

"The Phuket Provincial Commercial Office continues to support the government policy under the Ministry of Commerce and Phuket to stimulate the fundamental economy to help reduce the burden of living expenses and alleviate the suffering of the people during the COVID-19 outbreak," Ms Woranit said on Jan 18.

The Phuket Provincial Commercial Office was also continuing its campaign against price-gouging and rip-offs, she added.

"Any person who sees someone taking advantage of the situation to unfairly increase prices or who have not received a fair trade can report or make a complaint at the Phuket Provincial Commercial Office by calling 076-219586 or or the 24-hour hotline 1569," Ms Woranit said.

The move to ramp up measures to protect Phuket consumers follows Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew announcing on Monday (Jan 24) that he had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with local agencies to do what they can to help relieve poverty across Phuket.

The Phuket Provincial Office had established a "Center for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development of People of All Ages", Governor Narong announced.

The centre is to target three key areas of concern: health, well-being and education; income; and access to government services.

Bank of Thailand Governor Sethaput Suthiwartnarueput has already expressed concern about soaring energy and food prices adding to the cost of living.

The Phuket News last week contacted the Phuket office of the Department of Internal Trade, which is responsible for monitoring Phuket province's consumer price index (CPI), for any information regarding how much consumer prices had risen over the past month. An officer who asked not to be named replied, "That information is not available".

However, the office issued its own report via Facebook showing prices of CPI goods from Jan 13-19, showing that prices either already stabilised or had fallen slightly despite the actions of the office to respond to rising prices.

Transit flights to Phuket start Feb 1

BANGKOK AIRWAYS WILL START operating two special sealed-route flights from Bangkok to Phuket per day for tourists arriving under the Phuket Sandbox scheme from Feb 1.

The first flight, PG5275, departs from Suvarnabhumi Airport at midday and arrives at Phuket International Airport at 2:05pm.

The second flight, PG5279 departs from Suvarnabhumi Airport at 5:10pm and lands in Phuket at 7:15pm.

"Passengers on the flights are required to follow guidelines issued by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), which requires that each passenger entering the kingdom of Thailand must possess the complete set of the relevant documents," said a release from the airline announcing the flights.

The documents required include a Certificate of Entry (COE), medical certificate with a laboratory result indicating that COVID-19 is not detected (done by RT-PCR technique and issued no more than 72 hours before traveling), vaccine certificate or proof of vaccination, travel health insurance (worldwide or including Thailand) covering health care and treatment expenses for COVID-19 disease (or any other guarantee valid throughout their stay in the Kingdom) with a coverage of no less than US\$50,000, said the announcement.

Additionally, all passengers must undergo required COVID-19 tests (RT-PCR method) during their stay in Thailand, the announcement added.

The move to launch the new direct "sealed route" flights follows a notice shared by Phuket officials on Jan 10 confirming that tourists travelling to Phuket were not permitted to transit in Bangkok to Phuket – but were



The flights from Bangkok to Phuket will be operated by an ATR72-600 aircraft. Photo: Bangkok Airways

permitted to transit in Bangkok on flights to Samui, a service exclusively provided by Bangkok Airways.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) confirmed that the Bangkok Airways flights had been approved, but provided no further information as to whether any other airlines will be operating similar sealed route flights from Bangkok to Phuket.

The CAAT has posted a notice explaining the requirements for passengers arriving on transit flights to Sandbox areas, but did not confirm when the requirements came into effect.

The notice marked the following procedures (verbatim):

Transit Flight same Plane: Passengers shall undergo health screening and document check, immigration and custom procedures at the destination airport or SANDBOX airports

Transfer Flight: Passengers shall undergo health screening and document check, immigration procedures at the first airport of entry before continuing their travel to the SANDBOX province in this case, customs clearance will be processed at the destination airport. The Phuket News

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Legalisation of household cannabis for limited use

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has drafted a bill to legalise the household cultivation and consumption of cannabis and its recreational use in some locations.

FDA secretary-general Paisarn Dunkum said on Monday (Jan 24) that his administration had drafted the bill in line with the Public Health Ministry's resolution to exclude cannabis from the narcotics list.

He said the FDA's bill would allow people to grow cannabis for their own consumption on the condition that they must report the cultivation to their respective provincial administrative organisations. Household consumption would be for medical purposes only.

Those who wish to be involved in commercial cultivation, import, export, sales and advertisements of cannabis will need FDA's approval.

Regarding the recreational use of cannabis, Dr Paisarn said it could be done in some



A worker examines cannabis plants being grown in Prachin Buri province in Jan, 2021. Photo: AFP

locations that had yet to be specified.

"Of course, we won't go to the stage of cannabis cafés, but there are different models for its recreational use in other countries. We'll select the best one that suits our social context," the FDA secretary-general said.

A committee of the Public Health Ministry chaired by its permanent secretary would work out the specifications of venues for its recreational use, he added.

The bill set a jail term of three years and/or a fine of

B30,000 for wrongdoers and there would be a public hearing on the new bill next month, Dr Paisarn said.

Monday's news came after the Public Health Ministry confirmed on Jan 19 a proposal to totally delist cannabis from the narcotics list, paving the way for households to grow the plant legally.

Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said the ministry is taking another crucial step in decriminalising the plant now that a sub-committee on narcotic substances has

revised the narcotics list on which cannabis no longer appears as a Category 5 narcotic substance.

The proposal will be forwarded to the Narcotics Control Board chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam for further approval. The revised narcotic list will take effect after he endorses it.

Anutin said it is the ministry's attempt to streamline and facilitate the process although growers are still required to seek permission if they make cannabis products or make cannabis extracts which must have less than 0.2% of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) by weight.

"What we're doing is to allow people to make the most use of cannabis, especially patients who rely on cannabis-based treatment," he said.

Legalising cannabis to allow households to grow up to six plants was a key campaign pledge of the Bhumjaithai Party during the 2019 general election. The party has been criticised for failing to live up to its promise despite overseeing the Public Health Ministry for three years.

Knife attack leaves one Briton dead, one injured

KANCHANABURI

POLICE CHARGED A 22-year-old man with the killing of a Briton and wounding of his compatriot in Muang district of Kanchanaburi last Saturday (Jan 22).

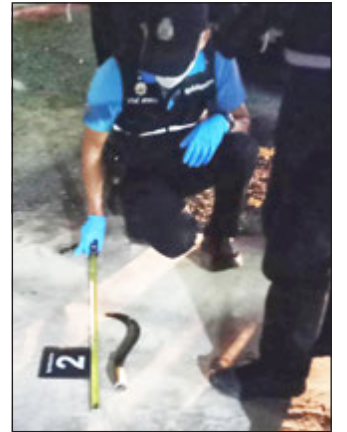
Prasut Thipthep was caught at 8:49am on Saturday while hiding in the room of a relative opposite the house where the two British men were attacked at 3:55am.

Marcus Evans, 49, was found lying face down in a pool of blood with knife wounds to his neck in front of the house and pronounced dead at the scene.

Shaun Kevin Dagnan, 55, sustained serious knife injuries. A sickle and a pair of slippers believed to belong to a male attacker were found at the scene, police said.

The injured victim is out of danger but is still receiving close medical care at Paholpolpayuhasena Hospital.

According to a police investigation, the two Britons had been drinking beer in front of the house and playing loud music late at night. Sometime well after midnight, a man walked towards them and



A forensic officer examines a sickle found at the scene of the knife attack. Photo: Kanchanaburi News

attacked them before fleeing.

A neighbour told police that he heard a loud noise while sleeping. He came out of his house and found the two foreigners who had been attacked.

The suspect lived nearby and had a hospital record of mental health problems, according to local residents and police. He was physically attacked by angry residents and treated at hospital.

Police have charged him with murder and attempted murder. He is being held at the Muang district police station for further interrogation.

Bangkok Post

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Licence to Clean

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Last Sunday (Jan 23) marked a historic day for Phuket, when Thai non-profit organisation Oceans For All launched its eco-friendly catamaran – itself made from materials 100% recyclable – to rid Phuket's shores of plastic.

The boat, named "Licence to Clean 001" was launched at Kamala Beach, in front of the project's major sponsor, the InterContinental Phuket Resort. The resort is committed to creating a positive impact on the local community for a better environment and better lives. To further support Oceans For All, InterContinental Phuket Resort also contributed 15% of the revenue from Pine Charity Sunday Brunch last Sunday.

Over the past few decades, millions of tonnes of plastic have entered

the oceans, damaging ecosystems and disrupting food chains. This type of human interference presents the biggest threat to the oceans. For Phuket, trash washing ashore each year makes headlines, plaguing the tourism industry and the world-renowned beaches along the west coast.

Oceans For All foundation's "coastal cleaner catamaran" is 5.8 metres long and fully built from High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) plastic. It is the first of its kind and the beginning of a series of seven catamarans to be operated at Phuket beaches and marinas to collect floating trash while cruising, thanks to a specifically designed skimming basket between the hulls.

HDPE is the plastic that milk bottles are made from. It is 100% recyclable and very strong. HDPE is classified as a Class 2 recycling material. It is also a plastic that is very often collected during beach cleanups.

The collected plastic will be sent



The initiative by Oceans For All was made possible by support for the Phuket community.

to local partner WongPanit Recycling Center, based in Phuket, to make the project as sustainable as possible.

"Licence to Clean 001's mission is very important for the environment and public awareness," said David Martin, President of Oceans For All foundation.

"Although this ocean cleanup will have a profound effect on the marine ecosystem, it is just part of the solution. We also need to radically change our way of life and consumption habits to move away from single-use plastic," he added.

"InterContinental Phuket Resort and Headstart International School are our first and main partners. I hope they will bring inspiration to other businesses and organisations to support OFA and raise awareness to protect the environment," David said.

Miki Edouard, co-founder of HeadStart International School, Phuket, clearly voiced the school's stance on supporting such projects.

"HeadStart is passionate about sustainability and we intend to impart this ethos to the next generation," she said.

"Besides being 80% powered by the sun, having invested in the largest solar installation of any school in Thailand, we have been honoured to do our part and contribute towards Oceans For All 'Licence to Clean' initiative," Miki added.

The first coastal cleaner "Licence to Clean 001" was designed and built by Claude Petit and Peter Jacobs. Claude is a marine designer from Luxembourg based in Phuket. He designs boats for shipyards in Thailand and Indonesia.

Peter is an accredited CE inspector and expert in ISO regulations for boats. He is a long-time Phuket resident and a key member in creating the Disabled Sailing Thailand initiative.

"Licence to Clean 001" cost roughly B540,000 to build. The project is to have seven eco-friendly coastal cleaner catamarans around Phuket to collect all floating trash. Six of them cruising and cleaning the most popular beaches of Phuket and the last one, a larger version "007", in Phang Nga bay.

To build an exact replica will take approximately two months. The first one took longer due to adjustments to the design and a few technical details.

The first one will patrol Kamala, skippered by a captain for the local Kamala community. The boat will be docked right in front of the InterContinental hotel during the high season and on the east coast during the southwest monsoon (May-Oct) due to the heavy waves during that time of year.

The boat can carry as much trash as needed in a day since it's going back



The boat 'Licence to Clean 001' was launched at Kamala Beach, in front of the project's major sponsor, the InterContinental Phuket Resort, last Sunday (Jan 23).

and forth to the recycling plant, but can carry as much as 120 litres of trash during any one trip.

SUPPORT

Oceans for All is looking for more partners and brands to support the "Licence to Clean" project and the building of more boats in order to clean more beaches and shorelines from floating plastic.

If you are interested in becoming a partner or want your own eco-friendly coastal cleaner, contact: david@oceansforallfoundation.org

"On behalf of the Oceans for All team, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to the Phuket Governor, Kamala Municipality, to our partners InterContinental Phuket Resort and HeadStart International School for the continuous support they displayed to our project 'Licence to Clean'.

"We are also grateful to Layan Green Park Lambert Brothers Insurance Broker(Thailand) Co., Ltd for their support," said OFA President David.

"Thanks to all of you Phuketians for supporting the OFA foundation since the beginning. Thanks also to G&T Boat Yard and Yacht Supply Chandlery and Wawa Creations but also to all OFA's supporters. You rock!" he added.

Donations to support the Licence to Clean' project can be made to the account: Siam Commercial Bank Account Name: Oceans for all foundation Account No. 886-218449-6 Swift Code: SICOTHBK

Scan the attached QR code or contact the Oceans for All foundation for more information. If you want your own boat or any questions you can contact contact@oceansforallfoundation.org



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Soi Dog targets distemper outbreak

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Soi Dog Foundation has held an emergency vaccination drive at the Phuket Stray Dog Shelter in Thalang – also known as the government dog pound – to help stem an outbreak of canine distemper virus.

Transmitted through direct contact and airborne exposure – namely sneezing, coughing and sharing food and water bowls – distemper can spread quickly in a shelter environment, often with deadly consequences. There is no definitive cure for the viral disease, and dogs are instead given supportive care and treated for any secondary infections, Soi Dog explained in a release issued last Friday (Jan 21).

A total of 248 at-risk dogs were vaccinated on-site against the disease, and those already infected were transferred to the Soi Dog shelter in Mai Khao for treatment, the release added.

“As part of Soi Dog’s longstanding commitment to the hundreds of dogs at the Phuket Stray Dog Shelter, a team of their vets, community outreach staff and animal rescue officers visit on a weekly basis to ensure all dogs are neutered, vaccinated, dewormed, protected against ticks and fleas and treated for any other health issues, said the release.

“In the latter half of 2021, the team administered over 3,100 treat-



Soi Dog vet vaccinates a dog with a combo vaccine as well as rabies vaccine. Photo: Soi Dog Foundation



The risk of contagious disease is increased when dogs are rounded up together. Photo: Soi Dog Foundation

ments on-site and admitted 75 dogs to their hospital for intensive care. (The Phuket Stray Dog Shelter was closed to external assistance for the first half of the year.)”

The distemper outbreak at the shelter is one in a string of recent incidents which has led Soi Dog to speak out about the dangers of the unmanaged sheltering of animals.

Just a few months ago, the foundation helped stem a similar outbreak on Koh Kood which originated at a

government shelter and quickly swept through the island’s street dog population, killing over 60% of the dogs at the shelter and many others across the island, the release noted.

More recently, the foundation shut down an illegal shelter in Surat Thani and rescued 17 dying dogs who had been left to languish in a cramped and filthy space with no food or fresh water available. The dogs were extremely malnourished, infested with ticks and fleas and suffering from chronic skin

infections as well as other medical conditions that had been left untreated.

“We at Soi Dog Foundation are against sheltering as a dog population management strategy,” said Soi Dog’s International Director of Animal Welfare Dr Alicja Izydorczyk.

“Not only has it proven to be completely ineffective as such, but because most of these shelters are underfunded, understaffed and lack competent management, they quickly turn into death camps for dogs.”

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POP QUIZ

1. How much does a 10-baht coin weigh?
2. Who is the current US Vice President?
3. Which 1980s band was "Suggs" lead singer of?
4. How many times have the New England Patriots won the Superbowl?
5. Who was the first person born on Antarctica?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Medium

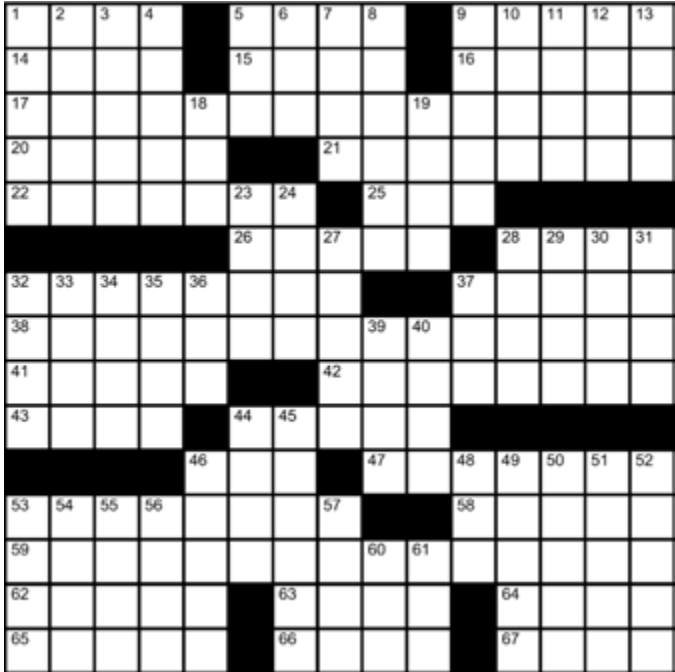
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| | | 1 | | | | | 6 | |
| | | 3 | 6 | | | | 2 | |
| | | | 5 | 9 | | 4 | | 1 |

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across
1. Stopping point
 5. Mischievous god
 9. Regional flora and fauna
 14. Accomplished
 15. Masculine side
 16. ___ management
 17. Gain wealth wrongfully
 20. UK soft drink
 21. Perennial plants
 22. Refines
 25. Clear
 26. Provided relief
 28. Back talk
 32. Conelike structures
 37. Window alternative
 38. Subject of parent-child talk
 41. Alleviated
 42. Some eyes and teeth
 43. "Isn't it a _____," Harrison song
 44. Old Faithful, e.g.
 46. Other side
 47. Italian city
 53. Pristine
 58. Mexican bread
 59. Confess
 62. New World lizard
- Down
1. Drifts
 2. Crosswise, on deck
 3. Grassy plain
 4. Surrender
 5. Burn cause
 6. Galley tool
 7. Turning point?
 8. Slight, in a way
 9. Established
 10. ___ of Court
 11. S-shaped molding
 12. Check
 13. Fine things?
 18. Radioactive
 19. Chisholm Trail town
 23. It grows on you
 24. Young herring
 27. "Rock the Boat" music
 28. Bronx cheer
 29. Brings into play
 30. Bug out
 31. German historian
32. Dance bit
33. Pad ___ (noodle dish)
 34. Leftovers
 35. Mind
 36. Nod, maybe
 37. Pop-ups
 39. Astringent substance
 40. Perceive
 44. Arias, usually
 45. Looked secretly
 46. Manicurist, at times
 48. Place for sweaters?
 49. Perspicacity
 50. Bartender on TV's Pacific Princess
 51. Needle point?
 52. Still
 53. One of seven branches
 54. Supreme Court count
 55. Singer Phoebe
 56. Rake's look
 57. It's just for show
 60. Melody
 61. Blubber

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

1) 8.5 grammes; 2) Kamala Harris; 3) Madness; 4) Five; 5) Emilio Palma (Argentine, born Jan 7, 1978)



Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

GOT YOUR NUMBER

1.7

percent is how much the healthiness of the foods we eat decreases by with every hour that passes in the day.

27

seconds is all it takes for a person to make a first impression.

33

is the age the average millennial starts coming up with a proper plan or understanding of finances.

150,000

US teenagers identify as transgender.

37.4

billion

US dollars is how much marijuana sales reached worldwide last year.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Full moon over Koh Kaew. Photo by Jason Beavan

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

This week in history

Jan 28, 1393

King Charles VI of France is nearly killed when several dancers' costumes catch fire during a masquerade ball.



Jan 29, 1980

The Rubik's Cube makes its international debut at the Ideal Toy Corp. in Earl's Court, London.

Jan 30, 1703

The Forty-seven rōnin, under the command of Ōishi Kuranosuke, avenge the death of their master.

Jan 31, 2012

The Toyota Corolla is known as the best-selling car of all time, selling more than 37.5 million units.

Feb 1, 2012

The Shard in London, standing 309.7 metres (1,016ft) high as the tallest building in the European Union and taking three years to build, is opened to the public.

Feb 2, 1887

In Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the first Groundhog Day is observed. According to Pennsylvania Dutch superstition, if a groundhog emerges from its burrow on this day to see its shadow, winter will persist for six more weeks, and if it does not see its shadow because of cloudiness, spring will arrive early.

Feb 3, 1971

New York Police Officer Frank Serpico is shot during a drug bust in Brooklyn and survives to later testify against police corruption. Source: Wikipedia

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28 JAN

SUN

30 JAN

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www.shakersphuket.com

shakersphuket@gmail.com

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12PM – 9PM: All you can eat Sunday Roast Buffet Beef, Pork, Chicken & Lamb – Cauliflower, Broccoli, Peas, Carrots, Fried mushrooms, Grilled Tomatoes – Yorkshire pudding – Roasted Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes – Apple sauce, Gravy, Mushroom sauce, Horse raddish, Mint Sauce. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 175 baht P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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29 JAN

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MON

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WED

2 FEB

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FRI

4 FEB

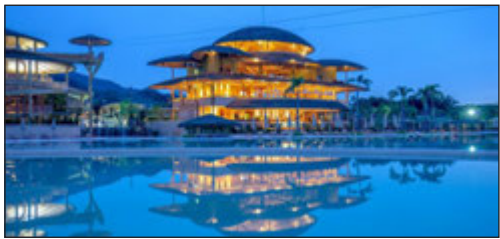


The Grow Boating Networking Evening for February 2022

2022 will be held at the Boardwalk Bistro and Bar, at the Phuket Boat Lagoon on Friday the 4th of February from 5pm. Drinks sponsorship is available for the event. Sponsorship costs 10,000 baht and includes a generous media package from our media partner The Phuket News. Message us for more information. There will be a delicious free burger for all attendees and as always all of your favourite beverages will be available. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee. We hope to see you there and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming please invite them along. To join our mailing list please send an email to growboatingphuket@gmail.com Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/growboatingphuket Grow Boating is kindly supported by our media partner The Phuket News, Live 89.5 radio and Phuket News TV. See www.thephuketnews.com

THU

17 FEB



Skål Phuket Dinner at Blue Tree

Dear Members, Colleagues, & Friends of Skål Phuket You are invited to join us for the 1st Skål Phuket Dinner of 2022 at Blue Tree Phuket on Thursday 17 Feb from 18.00-22.00. Guest speakers include Daniel

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THU

17 MAR



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Thais to compete in Winter Olympics under national flag

WINTER OLYMPICS

FOUR THAI ATHLETES will be able to compete in the Winter Olympics in Beijing next month and fly the national flag, despite the ban imposed by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Gongsak Yodmani, governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand, said last Wednesday (Jan 19) that the anti-doping law was being updated and Thailand would be compliant with the WADA requirements.

The Thai team could compete at the Feb 4-20 Olympics under the national flag – Mark Chanloun and Karen Chanloun in cross-country skiing, and Nicola Zanon and Mida “Fah” Jaiman in the alpine events.

Thailand was declared non-compliant by WADA after failing to fully implement its 2021 anti-doping code, and barred from hosting international events for one year.

Thai athletes can compete at international events but not fly the national flag, except at the Winter and Summer Olympics.

Mr Gongsak said WADA recently sent an email confirming that Thailand was



Thai skiers at the 2018 Winter Olympics. Photo: Supplied / PR

amending the law as required.

The ban would be revoked by the general assembly and lifted in February, the SAT governor said. This would enable Thai athletes to compete under the national flag at international sports events.

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon said recently the draft amendments to Thailand's anti-doping law had been completed, to end the ban imposed by WADA.

Gen Prawit, president of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand, said that passage of the amendments was now up to the parliament.

Bangkok Post

Controversy threatens to overshadow Winter Games

WINTER OLYMPICS

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

We may be living in uncertain times but the controversy surrounding the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Beijing is crystal clear and unabating.

The Games are due to start next Friday (Feb 4) and will run until Feb 20, with the Paralympics scheduled for March 4-13.

However, the build up has been fraught with complications, least of all in relation to COVID-19 and the associated health risks which threaten to seriously undermine China's projected image of the occasion.

Chinese authorities have adopted a “zero-COVID” policy which has seen millions of residents in major cities forced into lockdown, the longest of which saw 13mn people in Xi'an confined to their homes for over a month. Similarly, the city of Yuzhou saw its 1.1mn population forced into total lockdown after just three



Activists have been demanding a boycott for months over concerns about China's human rights record. Photo: AFP

asymptomatic COVID cases were discovered on Jan 4.

China, where the virus first emerged in Dec 2019, is desperate to eradicate any COVID-related threat that may cloud its sports spectacular although actually achieving this seems remote, if not impossible.

In efforts to thwart the spread of infection an impenetrable giant bubble stretching nearly 200 kilometres has been established in the capital that will cocoon thousands of athletes, dignitaries, media, support staff and volunteers,

active until the Paralympics finishes.

Additional concerns have been raised as to whether the tens of thousands of overseas participants will be safe from China's vast array of surveillance tools with the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab stating on Jan 18 a virus-monitoring app all attendees must use was found to have a “simple but devastating” encryption flaw that could allow personal data including health information and voice messages to leak.

Political relations between China and several countries

have become increasingly fractious with COVID-19, human rights abuses, the situations in Hong Kong, Tibet and Taiwan, ongoing agitation and territorial disputes in the South China Sea and the recent treatment of Chinese tennis champion Peng Shuai just a few of the issues that are seemingly pushing ties to near bursting point.

So far the US, Australia, UK, Canada and Japan have confirmed they are employing a political boycott whereby no government ministers or officials will attend the Games. China's Foreign Ministry said such actions had “clearly violated the Olympic spirit” and those boycotting “will pay a price for erroneous actions”, although this was not elaborated on.

Environmental challenges also persist with Beijing warning on Monday (Jan 24) that heavy air pollution is likely during the Games. Likewise many of the outdoor venue sites do not have sufficient snowfall to cater for winter sports meaning Beijing will be the first host to rely completely on man-made powder.

Australian Open to allow Peng Shuai shirts after backlash

TENNIS

FANS AT THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN have been allowed to wear “Where is Peng Shuai?” shirts as long as they are peaceful, tournament chief Craig Tiley said on Tuesday (Jan 25), after a backlash over the Grand Slam's controversial stance.

The about-turn followed video emerging on Sunday of security staff ordering spectators to remove shirts and a banner in support of the Chinese player at Melbourne Park.

It prompted tennis legend Martina Navratilova to brand the move “pathetic”.

Peng, the former doubles world number one, is absent from Melbourne and there are fears for her wellbeing after she alleged online in November that she had been “forced” into sex by a Chinese former vice-premier during a years' long on-and-off relationship.

Her allegation was quickly censored and the 36-year-old was not heard from for nearly three weeks, before reappearing in public in China. But there are still concerns as to whether she is free.

Tennis Australia, which organises the Australian Open, reiterated its long-standing policy on Monday of “not allowing banners, signs or clothing that are commercial or political”.

But with pressure mounting, Tiley said “Where is Peng Shuai?” T-shirts would be permitted as long as those wearing them



Peng Shuai in action at the 2020 Australian Open. Photo: AFP

were peaceful, adding that security would make case-by-case assessments.

A GoFundMe page set up to raise money to print more T-shirts reached its A\$10,000 (B236,000) goal within two days, with activists pledging to make them available to whoever wants to wear them.

Relaxation of the policy came as local media cited human rights experts as saying Tennis Australia's stance could be unlawful.

“There does not appear to be any proper basis for asking an attendee to remove a T-shirt that highlights a human rights issue,” barrister Michael Stanton told *The Age* newspaper.

The Australian government also waded in with Defence Minister Peter Dutton saying: “It's deeply concerning and I think we should be speaking up about these issues.”

“I'd encourage not just celebrities but also tennis organisations, including Tennis Australia,” he told Sky News. “It's a human rights issue about the treatment of a young woman who is claiming that she's been sexually assaulted.” *AFP*

2020/21 PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 2020/21

Premier League CHAMPIONS 2020/21

The Phuket News

English Premier League Predictions

thepuketnews.com/predictions.php

Ranieri the 'Tinkerman' feels the Hornets' sting

FOOTBALL

AFP

Watford manager Claudio Ranieri was sacked on Monday (Jan 24) after only 14 games in charge of the Premier League strugglers.

Ranieri, nicknamed the 'Tinkerman', was hired in October to replace Xisco Munoz after the Spaniard's dismissal.

But the 70-year-old Italian was unable to improve Watford's fortunes, with the Hornets taking just seven points during his brief reign.

Just 112 days after his appointment, Ranieri paid the price for Watford's slump into the relegation zone following last week's 3-0 defeat against relegation rivals Norwich.

Watford are second bottom of the table, two points from safety, after losing seven of their last eight league games. They are without a victory in nine games in all competitions, their longest winless run since 2013.

Watford's owners, the Pozzo family, felt they had



It is the end of the road at Watford for Claudio Ranieri who lasted just 14 games in charge of the Hornets. Photo: AFP

to act now to give the team a chance as they battle to avoid relegation after last season's promotion from the Championship.

Ranieri's Watford reign started ominously after Liverpool thrashed them 5-0 in his first game. Amid talk of player unrest at his methods, Watford's 4-1 win against Manchester United in November was Ranieri's second and final victory with the club.

The former Chelsea boss departed Vicarage Road having lost 11 of his 14 matches, meaning the Hornets are looking for their 15th manager since

the Pozzo family bought the club in 2012.

Watford will hope to have a new manager in place in time for their crucial showdown at fellow strugglers Burnley on Feb 5.

NEW DEAL FOR FRANK

Meanwhile, it was better news at Brentford as their boss Thomas Frank signed a new contract running until 2025, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

The 48-year-old Dane, who was previously assistant head coach under Dean Smith, took

charge at the London club in October 2018.

He guided them to promotion last season via the Championship play-offs and they are currently 14th in the Premier League table.

Frank said in a video message on Brentford's official Twitter feed that he felt privileged to "continue this fantastic journey".

"We created a lot of Brentford history. I'm looking forward to doing my best every single day to try to create some new history with all the fantastic people at the club," he added.

Frank's assistant, Brian Riemer, has also signed a new deal.

"They have been integral to the success that we've shared over recent seasons, culminating in achieving our shared target of playing in the Premier League," said the club's director of football, Phil Giles.

"We want to continue to take Brentford forward, to compete with clubs far bigger than us, and to see how far we can progress."



George Ford. Photo: AFP

England recall Ford to Six Nations squad

RUGBY

GEORGE FORD HAS A chance to revive his international career after being called up on Monday (Jan 25) into England's training squad for the upcoming Six Nations as a replacement for the injured Owen Farrell.

Ford has been in fine form for Premiership leaders Leicester Tigers this season but the fly-half was omitted from England coach Eddie Jones' 36-man squad announced last week.

The 28-year-old did not feature during the November internationals, with Harlequins fly-half Marcus Smith selected as England's No 10.

Ford won the last of his 77 England caps in March, during a 32-18 loss away to Ireland in the 2021 Six Nations.

Jones named Farrell, a childhood friend of Ford, as

England skipper last week, even though the fly-half/centre has not played any rugby since suffering an ankle injury against Australia in November.

But a fresh ankle injury suffered while the 30-year-old trained with club side Saracens has ruled Farrell out of England's tournament opener at Scotland on Feb 5.

England suffered another setback on Monday when wing Jonny May withdrew because of a knee injury.

May's place in the squad has been taken by experienced utility back Elliot Daly, who can play at full-back, on the wing and in the centre.

Courtney Lawes is widely tipped to lead England in Farrell's absence for the Calcutta Cup clash at Murrayfield given he stood-in as captain for England's victories over Tonga and world champions South Africa in November.

AFP

Aquella offers a perfect day's golf

GOLF

Continued from page 16

...I know I've made the right choice. Hole 16, index 3, par 4, is wonly 317 yards from the whites but a daunting 483 from the blacks. With water down the left-hand side, I was happy to walk away with a double bogey.

The carts are unlike any I've experienced before as they have the technological innovation of GPS.

In certain areas of the course, such as over the bridges, the speed is controlled. The carts are also limited as to where they can go.

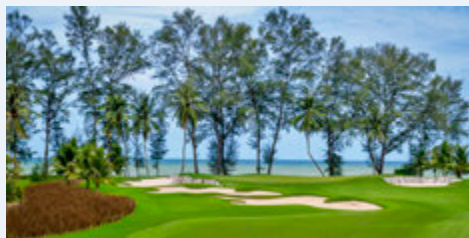
Normally there are signs on the fairways but not so at Aquella. A red box appears on the screen in the cart with a beeping sound and if you ignore the warning and drive too close to the green then the cart stops.

How's the course? Simply put, looks can be deceiving. The fairways are in fantastic condition, with lots of run – the drives I hit straight ran and ran and I hit more straight than not.

The gently rolling fairways, with Paspalum Platinum Grass, are narrow in places which is fine for now but once the trees grow in a little more some of the wayward tee shots I had will not make for easy 2nd shots.

In the interest of research, I zigzagged up most fairways and even revisited a couple of fairways a second time.

I found the rough to be quite playable, mainly due to the fact it had been cut after the Thailand Mixed "Last Chapter of



The par 3 signature hole 11. Photo: Aquella Golf & Country Club

2021" competition held at the course in late December last year.

Hole 11 is the signature hole, a par 3, whites 166, black 185. Opt to go short and you're likely in one of the many bunkers. Go long and you're likely to be off the back of the green, facing a changeling 2-metre chip up back onto the green – I did both and it was my worst hole of the day!

Simon sums it up perfectly: "It is our mission to provide a golf course of the highest standards from a playability standpoint, with our maintenance team working hard on the course's continued development so that our members and guests can enjoy the finest playing conditions throughout the year."

Technology, cashless, GPS carts, all perfectly blended together with the natural environment equals a truly stunning day out. Time to book another tee time.

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Sport

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Controversy clouds Beijing Games > p14

A NEW DRIVE



Photo: Aquella Golf & Country Club

A weekend hacker's review of the new Aquella course

GOLF

Jason Beavan
gm@classactmedia.co.th

There is a new course now open less than 30 minutes drive from Phuket that serves as a fantastic complement to the existing number of world-class courses on or near to the island and

I was fortunate enough to be asked to test it out recently.

Six years ago my desire to play golf returned after nearly 20 years, all thanks to a chance to play three holes with Sir Nick Faldo in Phuket. Has my golf improved in the last six years? A little, although I'm not about to give up my day job any time soon.

On Wednesday, Jan 12, a

picture perfect day with blue skies and a light breeze, I was afforded the opportunity to head north and play at Aquella Golf & Country Club, a new course in the Phuket area, in the Thai Mueang District, Phang Nga.

After a pleasant drive which took no more than one hour from Heroine's Monument in moderate traffic, I'm

entering Aquella. Golf bag dropped, I walk to the reception area. Smiling eyes behind face masks greet me and ask me to sign in and collect my Aquella Passport, which will be used for all purchases at the course, thus ensuring a cashless day.

After a quick change in the locker rooms, with each locker having its own keypad,

I head to the driving range. Consisting of 20 covered bays, with the latest in automated ball dispensers, I warm up but soon give up as I know I'll be swinging enough on the course itself.

The course is walk-able but I opt for the cart, something that is currently included in the green fees. I am soon joined by my caddie, Yaya, and my

playing partners for the day, Simon Mees, General Manager of Aquella Golf & Country Club, and his girlfriend Alice.

We are advised on the yardage and green speed and opt for white tees, as I am told some of the black tees are so far back they are in a different postcode.

When we get to hole 16...

Continued on page 15

Relentless Sadom makes it six in Singapore

GOLF

THAILAND'S SADOM KAEWKANJANA secured the biggest title of his fledgling career last Sunday (Jan 23) when he won the US\$1.25 million (B41.3mn) SMBC Singapore Open at Sentosa Golf Club.

Sadom, the joint-overnight leader, fired a composed bogey-free 69 on the Serapong Course to finish on 13 under and beat Japan's Yuto Katsuragawa and Joohyung Kim from Korea by three strokes.

Katsuragawa returned a 68

while Kim wrapped up the Asian Tour Order of Merit title after signing for 69. Sihwan Kim, who started the day sharing the lead, carded a 73 to take fourth place.

All four players booked their tickets to this year's Open Championship at St Andrews as this week's event is part of the Open Qualifying Series.

Sadom produced another inspired level of golf today that confirmed his status as one of hottest young golfers in the region and a star of the future.

The 23-year-old was never re-

ally challenged on an extremely hot day. After Sihwan Kim made bogey on the first Sadom took the outright lead and did not look back. Birdies on six and seven saw him move three ahead and he calmly parred his way home and enjoyed the comfort of a three-shot lead playing 18.

He picked up a cheque for US\$225,000 and finished the year in second place on the Merit list, with US\$378,972.

The victory continued Sadom's remarkable recent run of form: in the final three months of last year,

he won five times in Thailand, including the Thailand Open.

He's won once before on the Asian Tour, at the 2019 Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open – which saw him become the fastest Qualifying School graduate to win on Tour as it was his first start after graduating.

"This is amazing, it wasn't easy," said Sadom, who was also bogey free on Saturday.

"It has taken a lot of hard work to get here, especially over the last two years. This is a great way to start the year. I hope it's the start



Sadom Kaewkanjana. Photo: Paul Lakatos / SMBC Singapore Open

of a great year."

The tournament's star player, Paul Casey from England produced his best performance of the week by shooting 66 to tie for 16th, while Thailand's 14-year-old amateur sensation Ratchanon Chantanuwat closed with a 71 to finish equal 34th.

The Phuket News