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WARNED

PHUKET IMMIGRATION ISSUES 'YELLOW CARDS' TO THAI LANDLORDS

Phuket Immigration Chief Col Thanet Sukchai addresses an assembly of officers earlier this week. Photo: Phuket Immigration

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Immigration Chief Col Thanet Sukchai has ramped up pressure on Thai nationals to report foreigners staying at their rental accommodations and has issued 'yellow cards' to three Thais for allowing foreigners found breaking the law to stay at their rented premises.

Confirmation came through the report posted by Phuket Immigra-

tion on Apr 17, titled "Statistics of Foreigners/Householders Committing Offenses and Receiving Warnings". Of note, no foreigners were issued any yellow or red cards during the period.

The report, for the period Apr 1-15, also confirmed that six people had been fined for breach of Section 38 of the Immigration Act, which mandates: "House owners, heads of household, landlords or managers of hotels who accommodate foreign nationals on a temporary basis who

stay in the kingdom legally, must notify the local immigration authorities within 24 hours from the time of arrival of the foreign national."

"It is actually a warning that we gave to the Thai householders who own the places where foreigners are found guilty of crimes," Col Thanet told *The Phuket News*.

"When we arrest foreigners that commit crimes, we call the householders to the Immigration Office and issue them a warning while we

are proceeding with deportation of their tenant," he said.

While the Thai landlords are at the Immigration office, officers educate them in relevant immigration laws and information, he added.

"Only receiving a warning already freaks them out because they do business and they are afraid that it will affect their business," Col Thanet said.

The three Thai landlords that received the yellow cards had foreign tenants who overstayed their visa and...

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Tour boats keep breaking safety speed limits



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Growing local goodies in your back yard



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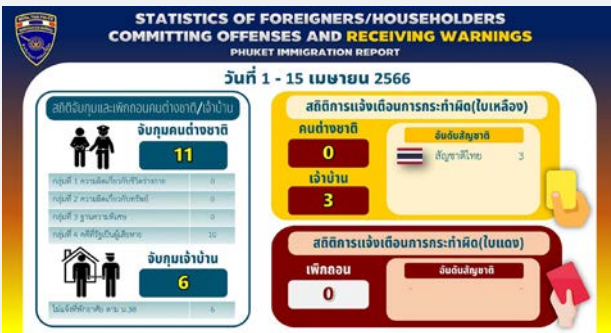
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News



Haze will
take time
to lift > p5



The report issued by Phuket Immigration on Apr 17.
Image: Phuket Immigration

Warnings for landlords

Continued from page 1

...were illegal migrants, he added.

"If the householders do not help to monitor and let criminals live in their place, it is like they only care about their business without thinking about Phuket.. This puts extra work on the immigration officers," said.

Col Thanet noted that under the policy 'Good Guys In, Bad Guys Out', he does not want the good foreigners to be in a bad environment.

"When people come to Phuket legally, which are the 'good guys', and they stay in a bad environment, such as a place where drugs are sold, they can easily turn into one of the bad guys," he said.

"When in Rome, do what Romans do. When foreigners are in Thailand, they have to respect our laws and the people who can help monitor them are the householders," he added.

"To make the tourism industry sustainable, Phuket has to be a safe city," Col Thanet concluded.

Phuket Immigration on Monday (Apr 24) issued an updated report of the number of international arrivals arriving at Phuket International Airport for the period Apr 1-23.

A total of 228,903 international arrivals had passed through Phuket airport during the period, with the top five being Russians (52,583), Chinese (30,527), Australians (18,986), Indians (18,477) and UK nationals (14,816).

A total of 284,684 foreigners had been registered with immigration through the Section 38 requirement, with a graph showing the number of tourists and the number of Section 38 registrations approaching congruence.

The report, now in a new standard format, now includes the warning – in Thai: "The host, the owner, the occupier of the dwelling, the hotel manager, when a foreigner stays, has a duty to inform the immigration officer within 24 hours. Violation is punishable under section 38 of the Immigration Act B.E. 2522."

People asked to conserve water use as a precaution

Chutharat Plerin
thai@classactmedia.co.th

The Director of the Phuket Irrigation Office, the government office responsible for maintaining the island's public water reserves, has called for people to conserve water use to help guarantee that water reserves are enough to last through the dry season.

Phuket has had "less than average" rainfall this dry season, Phuket Irrigation Office Director Krirksak Leenanon told *The Phuket News*' Thai-language sister newspaper *Khao Phuket* last week.

Mr Krirksak also confirmed that Bang Wad Reservoir in Kathu had 4.79mn cubic meters of water (about 46.9% full), Bang Neow Dum Reservoir in Srisoonthorn had 4.87mn cubic meters of water (about 67.8% full) and Klong Kata Reservoir in Chalong had 2.14mn cubic meters of water (51.7% full).

"The Phuket Irrigation Office confirms that the amount of water [in the reservoirs] is sufficient to supply the Phuket Provincial Waterworks Authority [PWA] and Phuket City Municipality through to the end of May for sure," Mr Krirksak said.

However, he added, "This year, the amount of rainfall has been less, and lower than the average, meaning less water flowing into the reservoirs to replenish the water reserves."



Bang Wad Reservoir pictured on Apr 17. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

"Meanwhile, there has been an increase in water consumption due to more tourists on the island [than in recent previous years], causing the water reserves to decrease."

"In May, it is expected that there will be more rain," he said.

Mr Krirksak said that concerns had been raised over the Phuket Irrigation Office ceasing to provide water supply to the PWA and Phuket City Municipality in May, in accordance with a decision made previously by the provincial water management committee.

In May, when the annual southwest monsoon rains

usually return, the PWA and Phuket City Municipality will use smaller local water sources instead, while the Phuket Irrigation Office uses its own sources to start replenishing the water levels in the three main reservoirs, he explained.

"The aim is to have all three main reservoirs replenished to full by the time the next dry season comes," Mr Krirksak said.

In the meantime, he called on island residents and tourists to help use water more economically, to help reduce water usage and conserve the water reserves already in store, as a precaution in case the annual southwest monsoon rains are late to arrive.

Mr Krirksak noted that communities across the island designated as at risk of suffering water outages had been identified and measures had been taken to ensure that immediate action is taken if the need arises.

"If there is a water shortage in any area, you can call the Royal Irrigation Department hotline 1460 for officials to help, or coordinate directly with relevant agencies to help solve the problem," he said.

"The Royal Irrigation Department will support water trucks in case water distribution is needed in areas where there is insufficient water supply for consumption," Mr Krirksak assured.

Phuket selects 'Outstanding Woman of the Year'

AUTHORITIES HAVE revealed their selection for "Outstanding Woman of the Year" from Phuket province.

Pranee Manachit, 78, from Talat Nuea in Phuket Town will receive a plaque of honour from the National Women's Association Council under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen as part of national celebrations for National Women's Day in Bangkok on Aug 1.

Mrs Pranee's selection

was revealed at a meeting conducted at Provincial Hall on Apr 20, presided over by Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan and representatives of the Phuket Women's Association. Mrs Pranee was selected from a short-list of six candidates overall.

Mr Amnuay explained the criteria and qualifications required in order for a candidate to be selected, that were assessed by him and the members of the Phuket Women's Association, namely:

1. The candidate has to be

a Thai woman aged 40 and above that the board consider as demonstrating good conduct, diligence and honesty who is considered a role model within their family and the wider community

2. The candidate has demonstrated effective and consistent application to helping develop their local community to create a positive image

3. The candidate has, or still does, demonstrate a successful career in a role that has benefited the local community

4. The candidate has demonstrated leadership qualities that are respected by residents of the local community

5. The candidate has demonstrated an ability to promote "Thainess" whereby she has promoted, supported and preserved local arts and culture

6. The candidate must have been domiciled as a resident in their province for at least one year

7. The candidate has never been nominated for the honour previously

Mr Amnuay revealed that Mrs Pranee was proposed by

the Phuket Women's Association as she successfully meets all the criteria, emphasising that she has demonstrated excellent leadership and personality skills by conducting various volunteer projects that have earned the trust of residents in the local community.

Additionally, she operates a hugely popular and successful YouTube channel called "Jee Pek Song Mae and Son Kuo Krua" which has over 100,000 followers and has received over 50 million views, Mr Amnuay said. Mrs Pranee's channel



Mrs Pranee Manachit.
Photo: PR Phuket

has also received an official shield of recognition from YouTube for its popularity, he added.

The Phuket News

Speeding tour boats still break safety rules

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The issue of tour speedboats speeding dangerously has reared its head again, with yet another injury from a “close pass” by a speedboat estimated to be travelling at about 25 knots in the approach to the channel leading to Royal Phuket Marina and Phuket Boat Lagoon.

The ‘close pass’ resulted in a leg injury which required a private yacht passenger to be taken to hospital from Royal Phuket Marina by ambulance.

The speed limit in the approach to the channel, as marked by sign posts, is just five knots.

The ‘near miss’ happened at 5:15pm on Apr 3, with the injured passenger reporting several speedboats speeding through the channel, which is marked by posts to indicate safe passage into the channel.

The tide was just coming in, meaning the water depth in the channel was only 1.5 metres. The wake of several speedboats passing rocked the



One of the tour speedboats speeding in the approach to the channel. Photo: Supplied

private motor yacht, but one speedboat in particular passed close by at an estimated 25 knots, the passenger told *The Phuket News*.

The wake from the speedboat rocked the motor yacht enough to cause a passenger to fall, seriously injuring his leg. Unable to walk, the passenger was taken from Royal Phuket Marina to hos-

pital by ambulance. Doctors confirmed that no bones were broken in the fall, but the passenger still has great difficulty walking, and has undergone continuing physical therapy.

Of note, at 76-feet long (23m), the motor yacht affected by the passing speedboat is not small, and even sports a fly-bridge and four cabins.

The failure of speedboats

to navigate the channel and its approach safely continues following a 12-year-old boy and a 9-year-old girl being killed in a tour speedboat collision in the channel in 2020.

Royal Phuket Marina and Phuket Boat Lagoon, from where most of the tour boats using the channel operate, were notified of the injury within days of the incident.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

GPS glance sends minibus off road

FIVE TOURISTS WERE taken to hospital on Monday morning (Apr 24) after the driver of their minibus ran off the road while switching on the GPS on his phone.

Pol Lt Wuttichai Chanfai of the Wichit Police said officers were informed of the accident, on Route 4010, the road between Chao Fa West Rd and the Prince of Songkla University Phuket campus, at about 8:25am.

At the scene police and rescue workers from the Phuket Ruamjai Rescue Foundation (“Ruamjai Kupai”) arrived to find a blue-white Bangkok-registered minibus in a ditch by the side of the road. Painted on the side of the minibus was the name of tour company ‘Pathumwan Auto (1993)’.

Six of the tourist passengers suffered minor injuries in the accident. Five of them – four Indian nationals and one Pakistani – were taken

to Dibuk Hospital. One of the injured tourists refused to go.

The tourists were treated for scratches and abrasions. X-rays confirmed no broken bones.

The tour company representative present assured all medical bills were covered by the tour company’s insurance.

The minibus driver, Anon Khamnarong, 30, told police that he picked up the tourists from Patong. They were en route to Ratsada Pier, but he was concerned he had taken a wrong turn.

The bus accidentally veered off the road when he went to switch on the GPS on his phone.

Wichit Police said Mr Anon had tested negative for alcohol.

Mr Anon and the minibus were taken to Wichit Police Station while officers said they were continuing their investigation. *Eakkapop Thongtub*

COVID jabs still available, while Omicron XBB catagion spreads

VACHIRA PHUKET HOSPITAL DIRECTOR Dr Weerasak Lorthongkam has assured that COVID-19 vaccinations for “citizens and tourists” are available at Vachira Phuket Hospital, the main government hospital on the island.

Dr Weerasak said that many new infections had spread following the Songkran Festival, reported state news agency NNT.

“The Ministry of Public Health has found an increase in the number of patients with COVID-19 in new in many areas of Thailand,” he said.

Dr Weerasak said that the Ministry of Public Health was emphasising that people “must comply” with three main measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19: receiving the annual COVID-19 vaccination, wearing a mask in public, and taking an ATK test when they are sick.

“Vachira Phuket Hospital is ready to take care of people and tourists. We have vaccination services for citizens and tourists who need a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, especially those who received their last dose of vaccine more than four months ago,” he said.

People can be vaccinated at Vachira Phuket Hospital by either walk-in or calling to make an appointment in advance at number 076-361234, said the report.

“However, we still ask people not to be careless,” Dr Weerasak said, urging people to continue to wear face masks to help prevent the spread of infections.

Phuket officials have yet to release any figures confirming the spread of the latest



Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Weerasak Lorthongkam. Photo: NNT

variant of COVID-19 across the island.

According to the Centre for Medical Genomics, about 52% of new COVID-19 cases in Thailand are being caused by the XBB sub-strain of the Omicron variant, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

Sub-strains of the XBB variant have been blamed for the recent spikes of COVID-19 cases across the globe, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to reclassify the XBB.1.16 sub-substrain from a “variant under monitoring” to “variant of interest”.

In Thailand, there are 34 current cases caused by the XBB.1.15 sub-strain, or about 15% of all COVID-19 cases in the country, according to Ramathibodi Hospital’s Centre for Medical Genomics. According to the centre’s genomic analysis of XBB.1.16, the sub-variant will become the dominant sub-strain in Thailand in the next few months.

Yong Poovorawan, head of the Centre of Excellence in Clinical Virology at Chulalongkorn University, said that COVID-19 vaccinations should be given annually, similar to influenza shots.

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CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

PURIYA BEAVAN
Editor**CHRIS HUSTED**
Executive Editor
084 307 7408
executive@classactmedia.co.th**BEN TIREBUCK**
News / Sport Editor
061 806 8132
editor3@classactmedia.co.th**CHUTHARAT 'UM' PLERIN**
Thai Editor
088 766 1615
thai@classactmedia.co.th**JASON BEAVAN**
General Manager
086 479 7471
gm@classactmedia.co.th**SIRIPORN (NOK) SEANGMAS**
Sales Support
086 479 7470
sales@classactmedia.co.th**NIRAVIT 'MOS' VORAVANITCHA**
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SAT APRIL 29



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Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

SUN APRIL 30



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 11 m/s

MON MAY 1



High: +31°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

TUE MAY 2



High: +32°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

WED MAY 3



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s

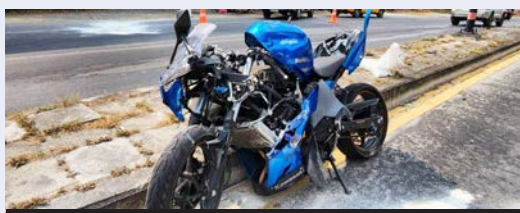
THU MAY 4



High: +30°

Low: +27°

Wind 4 m/s



Vlad Kalaev, 27, lost control of his Kawasaki Ninja on Wiset Rd. Photo: Chalong Police

Russian man succumbs to motorbike accident

RUSSIAN NATIONAL VLAD KALAEV, who suffered severe injuries in a road crash in Rawai during the seven days of intense traffic control, has passed away. Mr Kalaev's family announced that his body was cremated at a funeral service on Apr 20.

Mr Kalaev, 27, lost control of his blue Kawasaki Ninja sportbike while riding from Chalong Circle towards Rawai Pier at around 4.30pm on Apr 15, *Novosti Phuket, The Phuket News*' sister-paper in Russian language, reported at the time.

The accident happened at the notorious curve near Vijitt Resort, a place known as one of Phuket's road-accident black spots. Mr Kalaev's bike hit the median strip, sending the rider flying across the road where he hit an Isuzu pickup truck moving towards Chalong Circle.

Photos from the scene show the Russian man having severely injured legs yet conscious. He was taken to Chalong Hospital and later transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital, where he succumbed to his wounds.

The Isuzu driver, named in the reports as Charin Polsongkram, 51, sustained multiple cuts from a broken windshield and was taken to Chalong Hospital as well. No update has been provided on his condition so far.

Mr Kalaev's family confirmed his death in a publication on social media on Apr 18 and asked for help with the hospital bill which totaled B276,129. *The Phuket News*

Resident complaints spur monkey neutering in Ratsada

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Public complaints about the incessant disturbance from wild monkeys in Ratsada have pushed local officials to resume their catch-and-neuter campaign on the eastern outskirts of Phuket Town.

The new round of the campaign started on Apr 20 when wildlife officials came to Soi King Kaew 9 in Ratsada to install traps and catch at least some of the local pigtail macaques known in Thai as Ling Kai Tai, or just 'southern monkeys'.

Local wildlife officials were led by Pongchart Choueorm, Chief of the Nature and Wildlife Education Centre at Khao Phra Thaew, who had been overseeing the previous rounds of the mass sterilisation campaign continuing since 2018.

Joining Mr Pongchart and his team were wildlife experts from Phanthai Norasing Non-Hunting Area in Samut Sakhon Province, Mr Pongchart explained in a publication on Facebook.

Mr Pongchart said that Soi King Kaew residents had been complaining of macaques "continuously coming to annoy people and demolish property of the villagers in many small alleys of the King Kaew Uthit community."

Previously Mr Pongchart had already listed the said community



Wild monkeys to be caught and neutered in Ratsada. Photo: Pongchart Choueorm

among the seven key areas where big groups of monkeys are found in Phuket. They were named as follows: Khao Rang Hill, Khao Toh Sae (Monkey Hill), Soi Thachean, King Kaew Soi 9, Koh Siray, Bang Rong Pier and Yamu Village.

"This mass sterilisation is a project by the Phuket Provincial Administrative Office [PPAO, or OrBorJor] in order to reduce the number of wild monkeys and to protect local people and tourists from problems that could be made by monkeys and communicable disease from monkeys to humans," Mr Pongchart also added during the 2020 round of the campaign. Mr Pongchart didn't elaborate

on how long the current offensive on Phuket macaques will last, or how many animals the officials are aiming to catch and neuter.

The most recent round of the campaign in 2020 saw nearly 200 macaques trapped, neutered and released back into the wild at the Khao Phra Thaew nature reserve in Thalang in just three days (Sept 19-21).

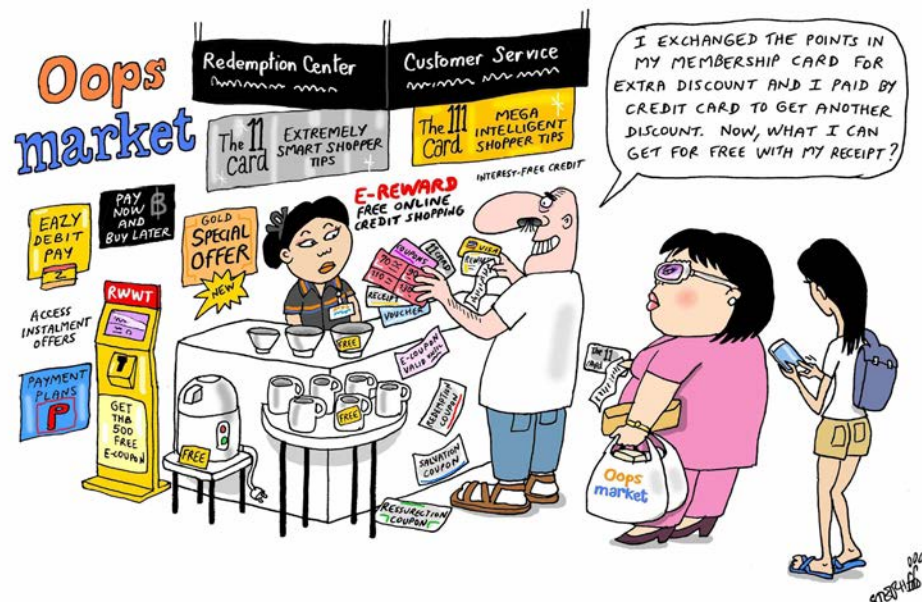
However, the most well known episode in the ongoing money wars in Phuket took place in 2018 when two whole troupes of neutered monkeys were relocated to the uninhabited islands of Koh Thanan and Koh Payu, both off Phuket's east coast. Nothing has been reported about them since.

FARANG AFFAIRS

By Stephff

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Police nab motorbike thief

PATONG POLICE HAVE managed to successfully track down a man who stole a motorcycle from the popular nightlife location before arresting him.

The incident happened on Apr 18 after it was reported a red Yamaha motorbike had been stolen, although police failed to provide details of where exactly the actual theft occurred.

Patong Police Station Chief Col Sujin Nilbadi was joined by Deputy Superintendents Pol Lt Col Naruebodin Panglesen and Pol Lt Col Suchart Chum-Phusaeng to lead the investigation.

Using CCTV footage of the theft they managed to track the Bangkok-registered bike, license plate 6KorPor-4569, to an address in Rawai where

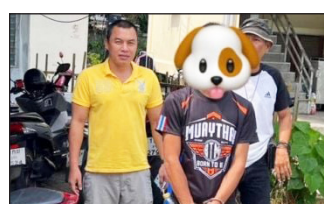


Photo: Patong Police / Facebook

they identified a 30-year-old only known as Chanchai (family name withheld) from Songkhla province as being the person responsible for the crime.

Police confirmed that Chanchai was wearing the same clothes as when the theft of the motorbike was committed.

Chanchai was later taken to Patong Police Station, where he was to face charges of theft, officers confirmed.

The Phuket News

the Phuket News

Seeing through the haze

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

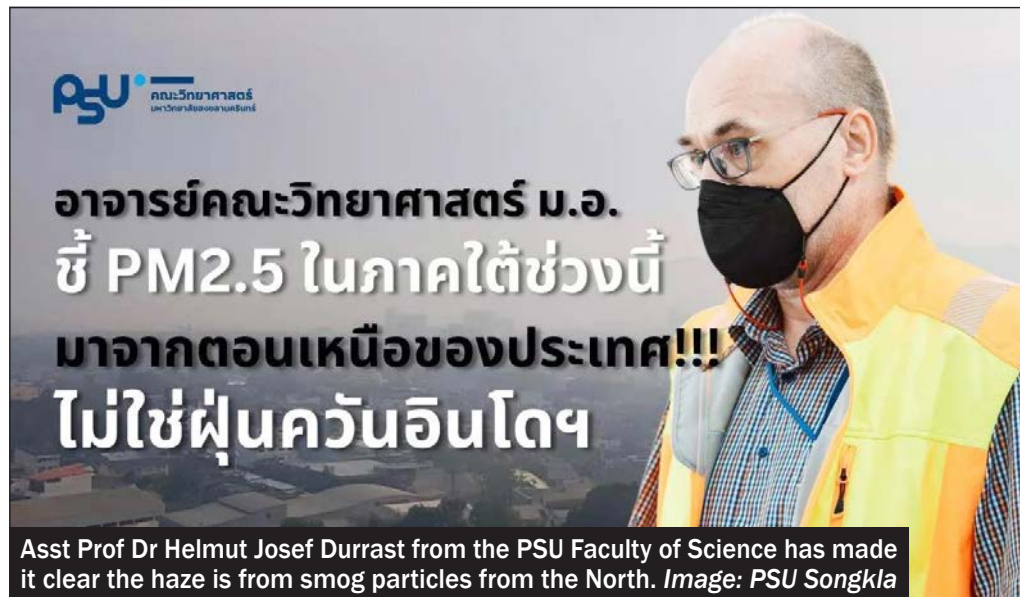
A meteorologist with 17 years experience with the Belgian air force has come forward with his understanding of the “natural phenomenon” of haze that plagued Phuket earlier this month.

Frédéric Pierson has been living in Phuket for 13 years, and the haze “phenomenon”, as officials like to call it, has been an annual event, with some years much more noticeable than others.

“It is not a natural phenomenon,” Frédéric said plainly. “It is from human causes.”

The smog is the result of human-caused pollutants, namely heavy burning in the north, along with all the usual air-polluting activities by humans, including vehicle emissions and factory pollution, he said.

The part that is natural, and which is the only part that Phuket officials have admitted, is that wind patterns and a weak northeast monsoon is what had left the haze smothering not only Phuket, but the whole region, for more than a week.



“The area affected is larger than the island. It’s all over Southeast Asia, all over Thailand,” Frédéric said.

“The PM 2.5 readings were very high last week in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Bangkok. The northeast monsoon that brings this to Phuket has been weak, while the weather has been very warm,” he added.

“So the accumulation of the burn particles and smog cannot evacuate, and that is why we have had this heavy smog over Phuket. Last week there was no wind and all the [wind] patterns stayed the same, causing the pollution

to stay in the same place,” Frédéric explained.

Frederick pointed to a report published by the Environmental Research Institute at Chulalongkorn University that he said was well documented and also explained very well how the “phenomenon” of warm weather and weak prevailing winds exacerbates the problem of air pollution to the extent that people see today.

The report, called “Stay Safe In the PM 2.5”, noted, “PM 2.5 level increase usually occurs during transition between winter to summer season. Approaching the end

of winter, high pressure areas or a cold air mass spreads from China to Thailand, resulting in strong monsoons covering the Northeast part of Thailand.

“At this time, the upper part of Thailand will experience lower temperatures, ranging from cool to cold, and potentially very cold in some areas. However, this may not occur if high pressure covering the area becomes less, which in effect will reduce the northeast monsoon season to a calm wind.

“Temperature inversions in the lower parts of the atmosphere result in floating dust

and distribution at a low level with poor air circulation and ventilation contributing to the accumulation of dust, smog and smoke in the atmosphere.”

While that may explain why the PM 2.5 pollution is in higher concentrations during this time of year, the fact remains that the AQI (air quality index) for Phuket during the peak period over the past week has been four times the recommended maximum set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Frédéric noted.

“In Europe, several days of PM 2.5 readings of 25-30 would automatically trigger health warnings. But not here... I am concerned when I cannot see the hills in Phuket Town from Saphan Hin, where I go for a run, and I can feel the rasp in my breath,” he added.

The fact remains that it is pollution that is being trapped over Phuket by the wind, and there is very little people in Phuket can do about it as it is generated more than 1,000km from here.

“They know the problem. We all know what the causes of pollution are,” Frédéric said.

“The government is not tackling the real issue. There

are no real measures to reduce PM 2.5 and PM 10 particle pollution. They know what they need to do, but they are not doing it,” he concluded.

PSU ADDS VOICE

Asst Prof Dr Helmut Josef Durrast at the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) Faculty of Science said he had monitored satellite images of the haze caused by agriculture and forest fires, which he said are the sources of smog in Thailand and other regions.

It was found that the current PM2.5 smog situation in Southern Thailand was influenced by the burning of agricultural and forestry areas in the north and north-western regions of Southeast Asia, including Thailand and neighboring countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

“If the smog were from Indonesia, this could only be caused by the southwest monsoon winds, but there is no southwest monsoon at present,” Prof Durrast said.

“The wind is not blowing strong. So it is expected that the southern area will still experience haze for a while,” he said.

Rain will clear the haze, says Phuket weather office chief

AS LOCAL PHUKET officials last week continued their campaign to assure island residents and tourists that the air quality in Phuket was fine, Wiroj Lewchareonsap, Director of the Southern Western Meteorological Center based at Phuket airport, came forward to say that the air “will get better” as the rains start to return.

Mr Wiroj admitted that the AQI (air quality index) “was higher”, but noted that it was “expected to return to normal soon”, said an official report posted on Apr 18.

According to Mr Wiroj, the Pollution Control Department readings marked that the air quality was still in the range of “normal criteria”.

“Although in the past some areas of Phuket have been covered with smog, resulting in hot weather and haze during the day,” he said.

“The dust value is in the ‘medium quality criteria’, in the yellow scale. This is caused by the weather in the transition period from the dry season to the rainy



Mr Wiroj. Photo: PR Phuket

season, causing a dry hazy appearance,” he said, repeating the government’s explanation without offering any further details.

“After this, the weather in Phuket will be better accordingly. It can be clearly seen at this stage that the appearance of rain clouds has already occurred in many areas. And after this there will be more rain cloud formation every day. Although the amount of distribution is not much but enough to start to rain which will make the

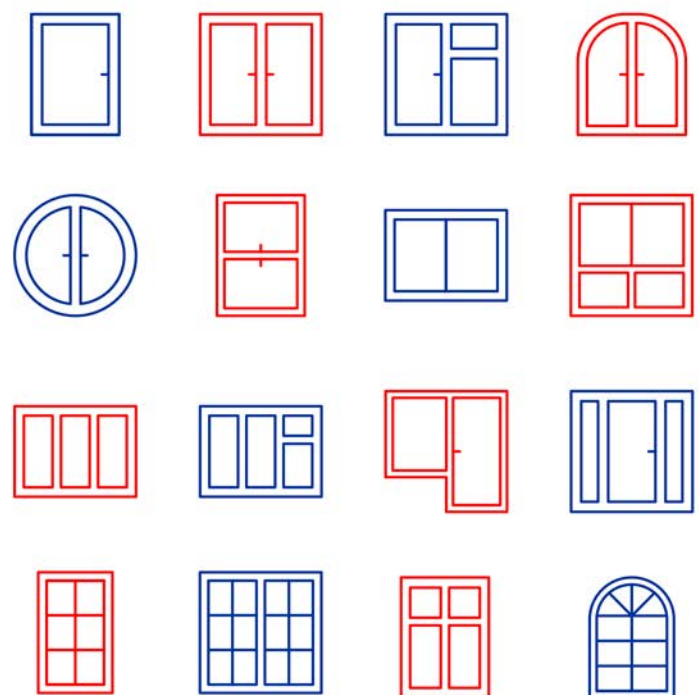
dust less,” he said.

“The southern part of the west coast, including Phuket, will start to enter its rainy season around mid-May. But after April 20, it will start to rain in some areas and there will be quite a lot of rain,” Mr Wiroj continued.

“From May 15 on, the amount of rain will reach normal standards. In two to three days the weather conditions and the smog situation in the Phuket area will get better respectively,” he said. *The Phuket News*



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Tourists visit the Lard Yai walking street in the Phuket Old Town. Photo: Achadhaya Chuenniran / Bangkok Post

Post-Songkran occupancy forecast to hold at 60%

HOTEL OCCUPANCY in Phuket after Songkran is expected to be around 60% with more Chinese arrivals even though the low season is approaching, say industry executives.

In the first quarter of this year, Phuket saw hotel bookings at 86% of occupancy. During the Songkran festival, bookings were about 80%, said Sueksit Suvunditkul, president of the southern chapter of the Thai Hotels Association.

"After Songkran, hotel bookings are expected to be 60% because Phuket is entering the low tourism season, starting from June," he said on Apr 18.

"It's the rainy season. But there will be international travellers from other markets such as Australia and the Middle East. Tour-

ists from the European market will drop while tourists from the Chinese market will start to enter Phuket."

The number of travellers from China is expected to be surpassed only by those from Russia. More Chinese arrivals are expected by mid-year, he said.

During the low tourism season, visitors from Australia, the Middle East, China, India, Malaysia and Singapore are expected to enter the province.

Russia led all arrivals to Phuket from Apr 1-15 with 36,999 tourists, the Phuket immigration office reported on Tuesday. They were followed by visitors from China (19,695), Australia (13,410), India (11,614) and England (11,462).

Bangkok Post

Haze not affecting tourism, says hotelier

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

The Deputy Director of Sales at the Royal Phuket City Hotel in the heart of Phuket Town has come forward to say that the haze that plagued Phuket earlier this month is not affecting tourism, according to a local government report.

Anyaporn Sawangwongseree said that the "weather" in the Phuket area which has a "haze-like sky" as experienced in the past two to three years "does not affect the tourism aspect of Phuket", said a report posted by Radio Thailand Phuket, which operates under the Public Relations Department.

"Especially tourists who come to dine at Twist restaurant located on the 19th floor of the Royal Phuket City Hotel, which offers a panoramic view of Phuket city, while watching the sunset in the evening as well as enjoying the natural atmosphere of Phuket Town, and both city and sea views," the government report quoted her as saying.

Apparently, from talking to customers who are both Thai and foreign tourists who come to use the hotel restaurant, "there was no concern or doubt about the weather conditions in any way", the report, posted late on Apr 19, continued.

"And we can see that it is normal for the weather to change from summer to rainy season. It is not caused by dust or PM 2.5. People still go about their lives as normal and a lot come to use the service at the hotel every evening into



Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

the night," Ms Anyaporn said.

In a section of text that was not clear whether it was Ms Anyaporn talking or the government officials' understanding of the situation, the report said, "According to data from the Air4Thai application, the situation and air quality in the Talad Yai Subdistrict area [in Phuket Town] reports for Apr 19 show particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size (PM2.5) with a value of 37 micrograms per cubic meter. It is good air quality criteria and people can do outdoor activities and travel normally.

"People can accurately check the air quality, which is the actual data of the area, at the Air4Thai application because there is an air quality measurement station located in the actual area not a prediction. Therefore, it is correct information," said the government report.

Unfortunately for Ms Anyaporn, the

photos taken to accompany the report showed an empty restaurant during the day with clear views of haze over the town.

Further, regarding the reliability of the Thai government-regulated Air4Thai air quality monitoring app, the Phuket Info Center, which operates under Phuket branch of the Ministry of Interior, earlier this week itself said it was reporting the situation using the Swiss-based IQAir platform as it showed "results more consistent with the actual situation in Phuket".

The report also made no mention of any effect the haze has had on short-term advance bookings. Local tourism officials have remained silent on that also, choosing instead to focus on the longer term when Chinese tourists are expected to return in greater numbers in the months coming.

The BCG Agenda: Sustainable or Green Sheen?

THERE HAS BEEN criticism of Thailand's recent proposal to promote the country's Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economic model, with some arguing that it primarily benefits domestic conglomerates rather than driving economic development for the benefit of all citizens. There are also concerns that the exclusion of environmental advocates and conservationists from BCG committees suggests that the government and big businesses may be using the initiative for their "greenwashing" process to appear environmentally conscious.

The BCG model aims to utilise Thailand's biodiversity and cultural richness for economic gain by leveraging cutting-edge technology and innovation. However, some have expressed concerns that the current BCG framework may lead to the exploitation of natural biodiversity by the govern-

ment and private sectors for their own interests, potentially resulting in conflicts with local communities, conservation groups, and farmers.

Despite the criticisms, there have also been statements of support. Trade-related ministers within APEC recognized and commended ongoing efforts to promote the BCG Economy as a viable means of achieving inclusive, balanced, and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. The BCG model has also been viewed as a long-term solution to achieve economic growth, as well as environmental and climate objectives. Forestry ministers have encouraged the application of a more synergized approach to biodiversity, such as the application of the BCG Economy, in the forest sector. Not to be outdone, during last year's APEC meeting in Thailand, the organisers highlighted the BCG economy through Women's Empowerment, despite there being no obvious links between the



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha in Phuket last month joins an event to promote building a BCG economy. Photo: PR Phuket

two themes.

The debate over the BCG raises questions about whether it is a worthy initiative or just a politically-motivated 'green sheen.' The success of any BCG as well as any ESG initiative depends on how well it can be measured and whether it truly benefits all stakeholders, rather than just a select few.

BIODIVERSITY HAS GONE MAINSTREAM

One aspect of the BCG directly impacting ESG investing

is its focus on biodiversity. In just two months, a new category of ESG funds targeting biodiversity protection has experienced a significant surge in assets, growing by 15%. This is not surprising given the increasing emphasis on biodiversity as a crucial ESG objective post-COP15. Despite the absence of standardised data, the industry is rapidly expanding its biodiversity market offerings, with the number of funds offering biodiversity strategies growing by 150% over the past year, although

their combined assets remain relatively small compared to the broader ESG market.

The majority of these ESG funds are actively managed and based in Europe, where biodiversity regulations are most advanced. Axa Investment Managers and Lombard Odier Investment Managers were among the first players to enter this market, and they continue to be leading players.

The COP15 agreement has compelled the finance industry to focus on biodiversity, with the Global Biodiversity Framework calling for banks, insurers, and asset managers to mobilise at least US\$200 billion annually to protect the natural world.

However, like many areas of ESG, the lack of reliable biodiversity data poses a significant obstacle. "Black box calculations" could mislead firms, contrasting with established methodologies for measuring carbon emissions. The Partnership for Biodiversity Accounting

Financials (PBAF) has identified significant disparities among providers' approaches to biodiversity data, highlighting the need for standardisation.

Firms must grasp the intricacies before making ESG claims, given the regulatory risk of being accused of "greenwashing". While biodiversity is an essential element to consider while investing or promoting an ESG-focused fund, it must be supported by reliable, definitive, and credible data to make it an effective tool for achieving ESG objectives.

Paul Crosio is a Partner at Silk Legal & founding partner of Silk Advisory. He is a practising Australian lawyer with over two decades of corporate experience in turn-around management in Thailand and abroad. For more information, contact info@silklegal.com.

Dr Paul Crosio

National COVID rates surge after Songkran

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The number of COVID-19 inpatients and COVID-related deaths rose by 150% last week over the previous seven days in the wake of the Songkran celebrations ending on Apr 15, authorities confirmed on Monday (Apr 24).

The Department of Disease Control reported 1,088 COVID-19 inpatients from Apr 16 to 22, compared with 435 from Apr 9 to 15.

Related fatalities rose from two to five during those periods. Inpatients with lung inflammation numbered 73, increasing by 143% from 30, and those dependent on ventilators went up 84%, from 19 to 35.

Dr Atthapol Kaewsamrit, deputy director-general of the Health Department, said events where people gathered over Songkran, increased the risk of COVID-19 transmissions.

Dr Tares Krassana-irawiwong, chief of the Department of Disease Control,



Revellers are sprayed with water during Songkran celebrations in Bangkok on April 15. Photo: Bangkok Post

said the department is greatly concerned about the 2-million-plus senior citizens still unvaccinated for COVID-19.

Dr Tares said that they should immediately be vaccinated to prevent the risk of death or severe sickness from the disease. He said four of the five deaths over Apr 16-22 were unvaccinated senior citizens.

"We have strongly recommended that people get the vaccine, including booster doses. They should come to get both the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines simultane-

ously without any side effects," he said. "We have original, or bivalent typed vaccines to respond to their needs."

Dr Manoon Leechawengwongs, a pulmonologist at Vichaiyut Hospital, also revealed that another COVID-19 patient had developed pink eye and sticky eye mucus from the Omicron sub-variant XBB.1.16, which is expected to become the dominant sub-strain in Thailand in the next few months.

Reported to have been infected with COVID-19 abroad on Apr 13, the 42-year-old man

had flu-like systems, but only after being back in Thailand on Apr 16 did he develop eye mucus and pink eye.

Dr Manoon said the man did not have a lung infection, and after seven days of taking antiviral pills, he recovered.

Meanwhile, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is working on reopening vaccine distribution centres in the capital after the rise in cases. Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt said there might be a million unvaccinated people in the city.

Vaccine distribution in the capital will focus on people in the "608" vulnerable group, which includes senior citizens and those with underlying diseases, as well as medical personnel and frontline workers, he said.

Elsewhere, Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Weerasak Lorthongkam has assured that COVID-19 vaccinations for "citizens and tourists" are available at Vachira Phuket Hospital, either by walk-in or calling to make an appointment in advance on 076-361234.

China envoy lauds Belt and Road push

BANGKOK

CHINESE AMBASSADOR Han Zhiqiang on Monday (Apr 24) expressed confidence that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would promote mutual growth and bring benefits to Thailand and China.

Delivering a keynote speech at a seminar on "Contemporary China with the World: An exchange of a new generation between Thailand and China", Han said the BRI, which was intended to promote joint development, played a role in guiding and advancing bilateral relations and created a new open and inclusive system for development.

Han discussed how Thailand's 20-year strategic plan and Thailand 4.0 policy with a focus on the Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model (BCG) was in accordance with China's BRI and how both countries had comprehensive development policies.

He said the Chinese-Thai rail development project, the second phase of which is scheduled to begin in 2024 before completion in 2028, is a symbol of cooperation in



Han Zhiqiang. Photo: Bangkok Post

connectivity and infrastructure development.

Once completed, it would inject vitality into economic development and help lower the cost of transporting goods between Thailand, Laos and China.

Promoting bilateral trade is also essential to making the BRI beneficial to the people of both countries.

China invested in 158 projects in 2022, making it the largest foreign investor in Thailand, while the Rayong Thai-Chinese industrial estate attracted more than 180 Chinese firms and created more than 45,000 jobs.

People-to-people connection has also laid strong foundations for cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative, Han said as he discussed the two countries' cooperation in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Bangkok Post

Democrats push for sex toy legalisation

BANGKOK

THE DEMOCRAT PARTY HAS PLEDGED to push for legalising sex toys, saying it will bring more benefits beyond sexual pleasure.

The party made clear its stance towards supporting establishing a sex toy industry in Thailand, with the primary aim of making sex toys safe products for consumers, deputy government spokeswoman Rachada Dhnadirek, in her capacity as an executive of the party, said on Monday (Apr 24).

She said that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Thai Industrial Standards Institute (TISI) would control these products' quality and safety standards if they become legal.

In legalising sex toys, these products will be reclassified as controlled goods and regulated instead of being classified as prohibited under Section 287 of the Criminal Code as they are now, Ms Rachada said.

If sex toys become controlled products, consumers aged 18 and above can buy them freely, she said.

Sex toys are recognised as legal products in many countries such as Japan, Singapore, Germany and the Czech Republic, which can help generate substantial income, she said.

In Thailand, a previous proposal to legalise sex toys stirred debate between supporters and opponents, she said.

While sex toys are currently illegal in Thailand, they are being smuggled into the country due to demand, Ms Rachada said, adding that this means the state is losing a



The Customs Department examines sex toys and contraband goods in Bangkok. Photo: Bangkok Post

chance to collect taxes while some corrupt state officials demand bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye.

Sex toys are also believed to help reduce sex crime cases and save some married couples from considering divorce over an imbalance in sexual desires between them, she said.

About 4,000 rape cases are recorded each year, while the actual number of rapes is believed to be around 30,000 annually, she said, citing official statistics and results of a study which found 87% of rapes aren't reported to the authorities.

The global sex toy market has grown 7% annually since 2019, generating more than B300 billion annually, she said, citing a UK study. Bangkok Post



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Growing goodies in the garden



GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

In Thailand one is spoilt for choice when it comes to choosing edible plants to grow. If you can be bothered to count the number of different fruits and vegetables in any fresh market in Phuket, you will find at least 50 different species on display. And nearly all of them are cultivated in Thailand.

The fruits come mainly from fast-growing trees, so when I planned my garden many years ago, I had to be forward-looking. Indeed, most of my trees now grow on a separate plot of land where, unencumbered, they can spread their expansive roots and branches.

Nonetheless, I opted for a mango – surely one of the world's most succulent fruits – and a feature, often as a door tree, of most Thai properties – and a pomegranate. Mangoes are extremely vigorous and hardy, pomegranates less so. In fact, the pomegranate has long since died back, but has recently shown signs of life. I also put in a jackfruit – and though I doubted I would see the massive fruits in my lifetime, they duly put in a hefty appearance. The tree, replete with large glossy foliage, is now about five metres tall, and regularly produces three-kilogramme monsters.

I added a guava, a rose-apple, a longan, a mangosteen, a couple of avo-



Two favourites: mangos and chillies.
Photos by Shaun Parker and Dustin Humes

cados from seed, and of course, a kaffir lime and Thai lemon. The latter died, a victim of the grey mould that can affect so many plants here, but has since been replaced. One avocado flourished mightily, but never cropped. On the other hand, two robust and disease-free growers, a banana and a papaya bore fruit rapidly. The latter is a great asset to any tropical garden with its pleasant foliage and its propensity to crop heavily, even in poor soil. This fecund tree produced at least 20 fruit – all within the space of one year – before expiring.

Thai cuisine is based on both strong and subtle flavours, so spices and herbs were bound to be central to anyone's thinking. Thus the ubiquitous chilli was the first to be planted. I had grown so many in my previous garden that the neighbours made daily sorties to pick them.



Indispensable and attractive to boot, with its glossy red or green seed pods, the chilli hails from Mexico; one wonders how Thais coped before it arrived on these shores. Moreover, its spicy ingredient, capsicum, is beneficial in cases of heart conditions and high blood pressure.

I also planted the fleshy rhizomes of ginger, another root which is not only used extensively in cooking soups and fish dishes, but also makes a spicy, refreshing hot drink which is frequently sold in local markets, and its relative, galangal. Both varieties – which require plenty of water – are key ingredients in many stir-fry dishes and soups as well as in herbalist remedies and cures, especially as 'carminatives'.

Lemon or citronella grass, another on the 'wanted' list, was next to arrive. Its bushy growth habit, similar to that

of pampas grass, gives a bit of variety to the kitchen garden. More importantly, it is one of the signature flavours in tom yum soup. A pepper plant went in, next to the acacia tree, so it could indulge its inclination to climb and enjoy some moist shade.

Regarded by Italians as the "queen of herbs", the basis for pesto sauce and a frequent ingredient in pizzas, basil is used widely in Thailand and grows here like a weed.

About three of the arrivals, I have to confess my ignorance. They are shrubs – or more properly small trees – whose leaves are used in this household in the following ways. One, a fast growing tree (yot sa-om) with fern-like fronds, is both eaten raw as an accompaniment to cooked food and included in omelettes; the second, a small tree (lep krus) with dense crinkly leaves is added to soups; the third shrub (pak waan) is a tall, spindly shrub with dark green leaves which taste a bit like spinach when boiled.

So I have a small problem: I do not know their English or Latin names since they all came from other Thai gardens. But they taste good...

Patrick Campbell's book *'The Tropic Gardener'*, described in one Bangkok review as the best book on Thai gardening for 50 years, 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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The April 08 LEGENDARY NIGHT OF MUSIC & CHARITY ***was a huge Success.***

The Rotary Club of Patong Beach is deeply grateful to all our charitable Guests on the night who celebrated in the Fun-raising on April 08. The wonderful food and drinks were delicious & well served. The world class quality of Blues/Rock music was legendary.

Mighty thanks to the talented artists and the peerless production team.

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Rotary
Club of Patong Beach

POP QUIZ

1. What does the acronym NASA stand for?
2. Classic novel 'Little Women' was first published in which year?
3. Which English architect is best known for rebuilding the Houses of Parliament?
4. A tablespoon measure in the UK contains a volume of exactly how many millilitres?
5. To help with stage-shyness who invented the alter-ego Sasha Fierce?

Answers below, centre

SUDOKU

Hard

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Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
1. Marine tunicate
 6. Ruler until 1917
 10. Sorcerer
 14. Cover
 15. Intoxicating
 16. Bonanza finds
 17. Indifference
 20. Goes down
 21. Embarkation location
 22. Pronouncement
 23. Middle Eastern tree
 24. Large fruit
 25. Villain
 29. Ballad
 30. Remote
 31. Over ____
 34. Fill the bill?
 37. Sitting out the game
 41. Grazing land, var.
 42. S-curve
 43. Unrivaled
 44. Back
 46. Like some angels
 47. Feminist Lucy
 50. Sour
 53. Geosphere
 54. Ruhr Valley city
 55. ____ up
 59. Warmth givers
- Down**
1. Thecae
 2. ____ ferox
 3. Bounce
 4. ____ the bill
 5. Volcano output
 6. Literary alias
 7. Traffic stopper
 8. Bone cavities
 9. Kind of flour
 10. 60's dance
 11. Of a neighborhood
 12. Bas-relief medium
 13. Krupp Works city
 18. Old weapon
 19. Russian assembly
 23. LP player
 25. Yawp
 26. Wings
 27. Small boat
- 28. DeLuise**
- 29. Lixivium**
- 31. Baby carrier?**
- 32. Dug into**
- 33. "____ Cried" (1962 hit)**
- 34. Form of ether**
- 35. Unpopular spots**
- 36. Accordingly**
- 38. "Hardly!"**
- 39. Jezebel's idol**
- 40. Wright wing**
- 44. Defense against charges**
- 45. Greek cheese**
- 46. Pastry dough, var.**
- 47. Pronunciation symbol**
- 48. March**
- 49. Gonzo**
- 50. Apply butter**
- 51. Anorak**
- 52. Round trip?**
- 55. Military award**
- 56. Hipbones**
- 57. Energy**
- 58. Punta del ____**
- 60. Medicinal amt.**
- 61. Wee hour**

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

(1) National Aeronautics and Space Administration; (2) 1868; (3) Sir Charles Barry; (4) 15ml; (5) Beyonce

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 62 | | | | | | 63 | | | | 64 | | |
| 65 | | | | | | 66 | | | | 67 | | |

Visit: www.ilovecrosswords.com

Solutions to last week's puzzles:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| W | H | A | T | T | H | U | S | S | P | L | A | T |
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| E | T | N | A | P | U | L | P | E | A | R | E | D |
| T | H | U | N | D | E | R | I | S | L | A | N | D |
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| 7 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 2 |
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| 6 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| 2 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 4 |

GOT YOUR NUMBER

5

to seven adults are reported to police as missing in Las Vegas every day.

18

percent of mothers in the UK regret the names they picked for their children, according to a recent UK survey.

600

minutes is the minimum length of time obese people generally sit for each day.

14,000

years ago, cave lions roamed the forests in England and Scotland. Today, Scottish wildcats are the only species of wild felines in the British Isles.

25 billion

US dollars is how much the 'Harry Potter' franchise is estimated to be worth.

Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Low-tide sunset looking west from Khao Khad View Point on Cape Panwa. Photo by Marco Capriz

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

This week in history

April 28, 1986

High levels of radiation resulting from the Chernobyl disaster are detected at a nuclear power plant in Sweden, leading Soviet authorities to publicly announce the accident. In response to international reports, the city is evacuated six days later.

April 29, 1992

Riots in Los Angeles follow the acquittal of police officers charged with excessive force

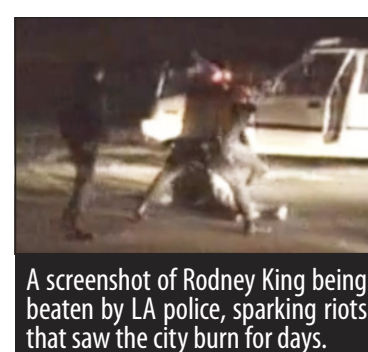
in the beating of Rodney King. Over the next three days 63 people are killed and hundreds of buildings are destroyed.

April 30, 1975

Fall of Saigon: Communist forces gain control of Saigon. The Vietnam War formally ends with the unconditional surrender of South Vietnamese president Duong Van Min.

May 1, 1776

Establishment of the Illu-



A screenshot of Rodney King being beaten by LA police, sparking riots that saw the city burn for days.

minati in Ingolstadt (Upper Bavaria), by Jesuit-taught Adam Weishaupt.

May 2, 2008

Cyclone Nargis makes landfall in Myanmar, killing over 138,000 and leaving millions homeless.

May 3, 1921

The Government of Ireland Act 1920 is passed, dividing Ireland into Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland.

May 4, 1260

Kublai Khan becomes ruler of the Mongol Empire.

Source: Wikipedia

Trades & Services

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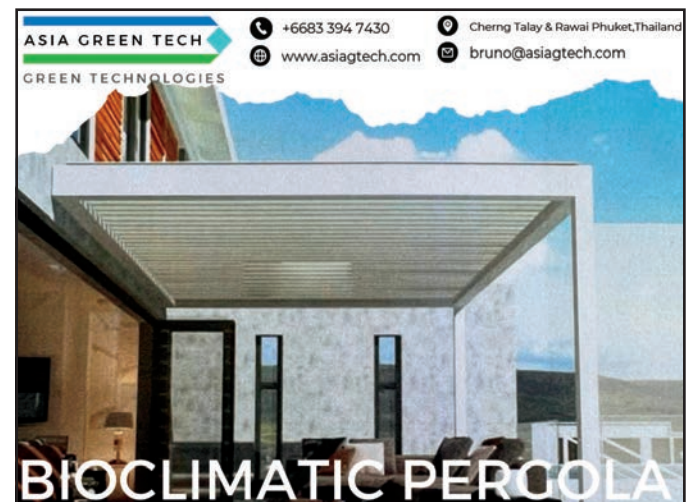
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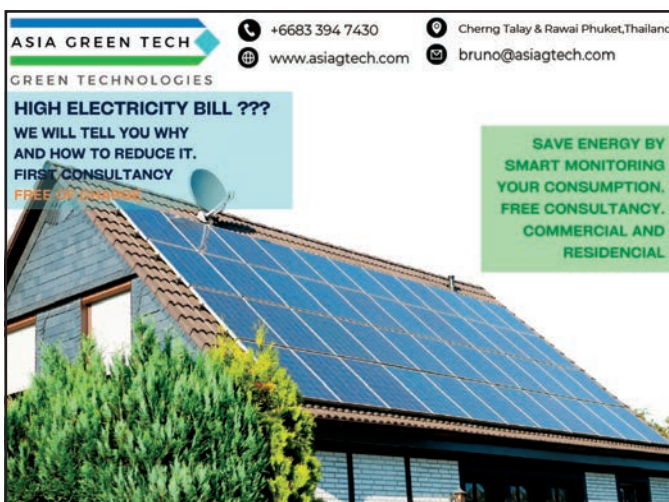
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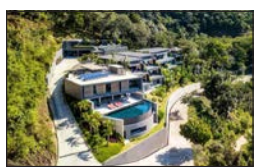
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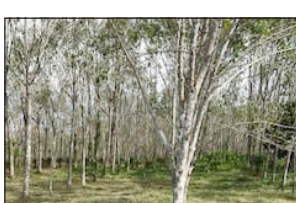
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SKAL INTERNATIONAL PHUKET APRIL NETWORKING

It was all aboard the Sunset Traveler, on Friday April 21, for a quick run out to catch the sunset and view one of the five eco-friendly catamarans from WAWA Creations for the Oceans For All Foundation's Licence To Clean project. These are built from recyclable plastic, and cruise slowly around Phuket capturing the floating plastic in a net. The trash is sorted on board and sent to a local recycling plant. Each boat collects around 300 litres of trash every week.

Peter from Disabled Sailing Thailand gave a short presentation on how they are helping everyone get out sailing. Once back at Royal Phuket Marina a fantastic meal was served from the team at Isola Ristorante with a beverage tasting from Blackbird Group added to another fantastic event.



Azerbaijan F1 sees new format

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

A brand-new format that will dramatically reduce practice time in favour of more qualifying and racing will be introduced to F1 this weekend (Apr 28-30) at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

The Baku race was selected as one of six sprint rounds this season, for which qualifying is moved to Friday evening and sets the grid for a 100-kilometre sprint race on Saturday. The sprint results form the grid for the usual Sunday grand prix.

The sprint has been on trial for two seasons already, and while it's proved generally popular among fans for featuring for more racing, the sprint races themselves have tended to be tepid, with drivers unwilling to race too hard lest they jeopardise their Sunday starting position with a crash or car damage.

But F1 is hoping a relatively minor tweak could lead to big results.

Under format changes presented by F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali, Friday would comprise one hour of practice followed by qualifying, which would set the grid for Sunday's race.

Saturday would then become a standalone sprint day featuring its own qualifying session in the afternoon before the 100km sprint



Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc during practice for last year's Azerbaijan Grand Prix. Photo: AFP

race in the evening.

F1 hopes the new format will achieve the two key aims. The first is to improve the sprint spectacle by incentivising drivers to race harder knowing that mistakes won't be punished on Sunday. The second is to reduce practice running with competitive sessions.

The teams agreed to the changes during the long break after the Australian Grand Prix at the start of the month, and the FIA World Motorsport Council was expected to rubber stamp

the changes in a meeting earlier this week. If approved, the format will be adopted for all six sprint rounds of the year, starting in Azerbaijan this weekend.

'LUDICROUS'

Baku is an ambitious pick for a sprint round given its reputation for big crashes.

The Baku City Circuit boasts a unique layout that challenges teams and drivers. The flat-out blast out of the final sector and down the front

straight to the first turn is one of the longest on the calendar and generates top speeds above 345kph.

But the middle of the track is one of the narrowest and slowest ribbons of road in the sport, with cars tip-toeing around the UNESCO-listed Baku fortress at less than 100kph.

It's a difficult compromise to strike when setting up the car, and resultantly drivers are forced into mistakes – and crashes in Baku are never small.

Red Bull Racing boss Christian

Horner said he was braced for a messy weekend.

"It's absolutely ludicrous to be doing the first sprint race of the year in a street race like Azerbaijan," he said. "From a cost cap perspective, all you can do is trash your car and it costs a lot of money around there."

"One race is enough in Baku. The fact that we've got two – yeah, there could well be some action there."

But even Horner admitted that the new format is likely to deliver for the sport.

"I think from a spectacle point of view, from a fan point of view, is probably going to be one of the most exciting sprint races of the year," he said.

"That's part of the challenge and it's part of the task that we've got. Hopefully we can tidy up the format for the sprint races coming up, they are a bit more dynamic."

After three rounds it is unlikely even the extreme demands of Baku will trip up Horner's dominant Red Bull Racing team, with the only question remaining being whether street-specialist Sergio Pérez can hit back against teammate Max Verstappen to keep up in the championship battle.

But with a new format likely in play that leaves almost no room for error, you wouldn't want to write off Azerbaijan producing an unexpected result.

Thai sports stars honoured

ALL SPORTS

Continued from page 15

Teenage sprinter Puripol Boonson took the Swat's best male youth athlete award for winning three gold medals in the men's 100 metre, 200m and 4x100m relay at the SEA Games.

The best female youth athlete was taekwondo exponent Natthakamol Vassana thanks to her gold medal winning performances at the world youth championships and Asian championships.

Chalamdam Nayokat-hasala received the best Muay Thai athlete trophy, with seven wins in as many fights last year.

The best team (sport) award went to the national women's volleyball squad who finished eighth for their best ever result in the Nations League.

The best team (event) were table tennis duo Suthasini Sawettabut and Orawan Paranang who won the women's doubles gold medal at the SEA Games.

Football club Buriram United were the best pro-



Athaya Thitikul. Photo: AFP

fessional team (sport) after they won the Thai League 1, League Cup and FA Cup titles.

Mixed doubles shuttlers Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattana-chai were the best team (event) with three titles at the Japan, Singapore and German Opens.

Athletics coach Supavanat Ariyamongkol received

the best amateur coach award, while badminton coach Tesana Panvisvas was the best professional coach.

The Badminton Association of Thailand was chosen as the best association.

Boccia player Witsanu Huadpradit and table tennis star Wijittra Jaion were the men's and women's disabled athletes of the year respectively. *Bangkok Post*

Kiptum and Hassan triumph in astounding London Marathon

MARATHON

KENYA'S KELVIN KIPTUM won the men's London Marathon race in the second-fastest time in history last Sunday (Apr 23), breaking the course record with an astonishing time of 2 hours, 1 minute and 27 seconds.

Having broken clear of the field, 23-year-old Kiptum – who ran the third-fastest marathon time in Valencia in December – faded towards the finish and missed out on Eliud Kipchoge's world record by 18 seconds.

Geoffrey Kamworor made it a Kenyan one-two, finishing second in 2:04:23, with Ethiopia's Tamirat Tola third in 2:04:59.

"I am so happy with the result," Kiptum told the BBC. "I don't know what to say right now, I am just grateful!"

"The course felt good. There was a bit of rain around halfway but it was OK."

"I enjoy doing the marathons... I am very happy," he added.

Commentating for the BBC, the 1500 metre world



Kiptum breaks the tape to win the 2023 London Marathon Men's race. Photo: AFP

champion in 1983 Steve Cram said: "We have never seen anything like this before on the streets of London and Kelvin Kiptum has put in the performance of his life."

"He blew the field apart."

DEBUT DELIGHT

Sifan Hassan staged a remarkable rally to win the women's race, the first for the Olympic track champion over full marathon distance.

It looked as if Hassan's debut marathon would end in disappointment when the 5,000m and 10,000m Olympic gold medallist from the COVID-delayed 2020 Tokyo Games was dropped from the leading group and left holding her side after the hour mark.

It would have been impressive enough had the Ethiopian-born Dutch runner, a Muslim

who had been fasting due to Ramadan, just completed the course on the rainswept streets of the British capital, with Hassan then grabbing her hip and stopping to stretch off the injury.

Hassan, however, recovered to rejoin the leaders with three miles to go.

Despite making a mess of collecting a drink from a water station and almost being hit by a race motorcycle, the 30-year-old recovered and even offered rival Yalemzerf Yehualaw, last year's winner, a swig from her bottle.

Hassan, 30, then burst clear in a sprint finish to win in a time of 2 hours, 18 minutes and 33 seconds.

"It was just amazing. I never thought I would finish a marathon and here I am winning it!" Hassan told the BBC.

Hassan, 28 seconds behind the leaders at the 25km (15.5 miles) mark, added: "I can't believe it. I was going to stop at 25km."

Ethiopia's Alemu Megertu was second in 2:18:37, with Kenya's Peres Jepchirchir, the Olympic champion, third in 2:18:38. *AFP*

United hope to deny City treble

FOOTBALL

AFP

Erik ten Hag vowed Manchester United would “give everything” to prevent Manchester City from matching his club’s treasured treble after they beat Brighton to set up the first ever all-Manchester FA Cup final on Jun 3 against their fierce rivals.

United won 7-6 on penalties at Wembley last Sunday (Apr 23) after the game finished goalless, with defender Victor Lindelof scoring the decisive spot-kick.

City had overcome Championship side Sheffield United 3-0 a day earlier thanks to a hat-trick from Riyad Mahrez, leaving Pep Guardiola’s side on target for the treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup.

City are favourites to win all three trophies after moving up through the gears in recent weeks. At time of press they were due to host Premier League leaders Arsenal on Wednesday (Apr 26), with the winner widely expected to ultimately clinch the title.

However, United remain the only English club to have



Manchester United players celebrate their penalty shootout win against Brighton in the FA Cup semi-final. Photo: AFP

won the treble, completing the feat under former manager Alex Ferguson in 1999. They stopped Liverpool from winning all three trophies in 1977, winning the FA Cup final that year.

This season they are still chasing a domestic double after winning the League Cup in February to end a six-year silverware drought.

United manager Erik Ten Hag said he understood United fans’ feelings about their unique achievement, issuing a defiant rallying call.

“We will do everything

to give them it, to give them the second trophy, everything that I have, everything that the team have, the staff have,” he said. “We will give everything to get that done.

“We can do it because we have proved it. It’s not an easy job. It’s a great team but we also have a great team and great players and we can beat them.”

TORN APART

Meanwhile, Arsenal went into the midweek showdown at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday having suffered a damaging

3-3 draw with Southampton last Friday (Apr 21) that swung the balance in City’s favour.

With relentless City breathing down their necks, the Gunners drew for a third successive game, recovering from 3-1 down with just two minutes to go against bottom placed Saints to earn a point that ultimately felt more like a defeat.

Going into Wednesday’s game Arsenal had a five-point lead over City, but the champions have two games in hand and defeat could prove fatal.

Elsewhere, Arsenal’s North London neighbours Tottenham

were torn apart 6-1 by Newcastle on Sunday, with Eddie Howe’s Magpies storming to a 5-0 lead within just 21 minutes.

Many disgruntled Spurs fans left at the 21-minute mark, with it looking increasingly likely the side will miss out on Champions League football next season. Spurs then sacked interim manager Cristian Stellini on Monday after only three games in charge.

Sitting six points behind fourth placed Manchester United at time of press and having played two games more, it appears it will take a miracle

for fifth placed Tottenham to get into the top four.

Leicester beat Wolves and West Ham overcame Bournemouth to earn valuable victories and boost their survival bids, leaving Southampton, Nottingham Forest and Everton in the relegation zone.

Leicester’s first victory in 10 league games was Dean Smith’s maiden three points since he replaced the sacked Brendan Rodgers. Timothy Castagne’s first goal since August gave the Foxes a 2-1 win as they climbed out of the bottom three.

“It means nothing, we need to keep climbing out of there and separate ourselves as much as we can,” Smith said after the win. Leicester face fellow strugglers Everton on Monday (May 1).

West Ham’s 4-0 rout of Bournemouth lifted them six points clear of the relegation zone thanks to goals from Michail Antonio, Lucas Paqueta, Declan Rice and Pablo Fornals.

Everton drew 0-0 at Crystal Palace last Saturday, while second bottom Nottingham Forest were beaten 3-2 at Liverpool.

Fulham beat Leeds United 2-1 while Brentford and Aston Villa drew 1-1.

Wrexham follow Hollywood script to reach the Football League

FOOTBALL

HOLLYWOOD STARS Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney cried tears of joy as they watched Wrexham reach the English Football League for the first time in 15 years last Saturday (Apr 22).

Reynolds and McElhenney, who bought the club in 2020, were joined in their box at the Racecourse Ground by fellow actor Paul Rudd to watch a 3-1 win over Boreham Wood that secured the Welsh side’s passage to the fourth-tier of the English football pyramid.

“I think we can hear what it feels to the town. It’s a moment of catharsis for them and celebration. For us to be welcomed into their community and be welcomed to this experience, has been the honour of my life,” said McElhenney, most famous for his role in comedy series *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*.

Wrexham have garnered global appeal since *Deadpool* star Reynolds and McElhenney took control from



McElhenney (left) and Reynolds. Photo: AFP

a supporters trust with an initial £2 million (B85mn) investment.

A Disney+ documentary series *Welcome to Wrexham* has captured the highs and lows of the team and their celebrity owners and a huge investment in transfer fees and player wages for non-league level now has its reward.

“I am not sure I can process what happened tonight. I am still a little speechless,” said Reynolds.

“People said at the beginning ‘why Wrexham?’. This is exactly why Wrexham. This happening, right now, is why.”

Wrexham boast a proud history as the third-oldest

professional football club in the world, with past glories including a FA Cup win over Arsenal and a European Cup Winners’ Cup triumph against Porto.

But they had fallen on hard times as financial problems saw an 87-year stay in the Football League come to an end in 2008.

Now they are back in circumstances a Hollywood script writer would struggle to match.

Before lining up in League Two next season, glamour friendlies against Manchester United and Chelsea await in the United States thanks to the club’s new-found American following. AFP





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Man City in the hunt for treble > p15



Heritage Cricketers retain Sixes title at ACG

The Heritage Cricketers team celebrate after winning the Phuket International Cricket Sixes tournament last Sunday (Apr 23). Photo: Supplied

CRICKET

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Bangladesh's Heritage Cricketers side retained their title as the Asian Cricket Sixes Tournament (ACST) Phuket International Cricket Sixes returned to the island last weekend.

It was the first time the event had been staged in Phuket since 2019 after the COVID-19 pandemic forced travel restrictions and strict regulations, which resulted in repeated cancellations.

A total of 14 teams from a variety of countries took to the field at the Alan Cooke Ground (ACG) in Thalang for the four-day tournament from Thursday (Apr 20) to Sunday (Apr 23). While some

spectacular cricket action was witnessed throughout, it was also an opportunity for old friendships to be reacquainted and new friendships to be forged, on and off the pitch.

Heritage Cricketers, the side from Dhaka, proved too strong in the cup final showdown on Sunday as they ran out winners by 31 runs, despite a valiant performance from local side Blue Tree Cricket.

While Heritage batted brilliantly throughout the entire four days, the Player of the Match award in the final went to Syed Shahed who claimed highly impressive figures of 2-4 in the final over with the ball. It crowned another superb performance from a team who continue to be great ambassadors, playing the game in exactly the right way.

The Bowl match, played between the two losing cup semi-finalists,

saw Gauhati Town Club chase down a target of 62 to overcome Mumbai Strikers and lift the trophy in what was an all Indian encounter. Deep Borah, who had a fine tournament, was named Player of the Match for his retirement on 32. Earlier the Strikers had been dismantled by Heritage, with Town Club finding Blue Tree a formidable act in the other semi-final.

REMARKABLE WIN

The third tier Plate match saw House of Cricket fall 6 runs short of the 70-2 posted by eventual winners Cricket Club of Dibrugarh in a thrilling finish. The side from Skema in South Africa looked set for victory until an incredible 3-3 in the final over from Player of the Match, Pankaj Saikia pulled off a remarkable win for the team from

Assam in India's northeast.

In the earlier Plate semi-finals, Dibrugarh disposed of Hong Kong side Lamma CC, while Calcutta Swimming Club, whose form over the four days was up and down like the Andaman waves, were beaten by House of Cricket.

The Spoon play-off saw a 3-team round robin in which 91 Yards Club ended top of the tree to collect the spoils after defeating both CBB CC and Incredible 7. The adjudicating panel gave the Player of the Group award to Imdad Hussain who scored 33 off 10 balls in the decisive game.

The Player of the Tournament award was presented to Manoj Yadav of Heritage Cricketers for his total 204 tournament runs and 7 wickets in a superb all-round display, while the prestigious Spirit of Cricket Accolade went to umpire

Clive Howard.

"To see so many friends old and new back playing in Phuket, where the ACST first staged a tournament back in 2004, has been tremendous," commented a delighted ACST Chairman Michael Maher at the conclusion of the presentations.

"The cricket has been of a fantastic standard, as has the camaraderie and sportsmanship between all participants.

"I would like to thank the locals at the ACG for the use of the ground, as well as my ACST partners, all the officials, our sponsors and the tournament hotels for their loyal support," he added.

For further details about the ACST please contact Chairman Michael 'Cat' Maher at mmaher.padmira@bigpond.com or on (+61) 407 385 481.

Kunlavut, Puripol and Panipak receive top honours

ALL SPORTS

BADMINTON STAR KUNLAVUT Vitidsarn and taekwondo fighter Panipak Wongpattanakit were named the best male and female amateur athletes of 2022 respectively by the Sports Writers Association of Thailand (Swat) on Apr 19.

It is the third successive year that Panipak has won the award and the second time for Kunlavut, who first won in 2021.

Motorcycle racer Somkiat Chanttra won the best men's professional award while golfer Atthaya Thitikul took the women's title. Young sprint

sensation Puripol Boonson claimed the best male youth athlete award, with taekwondo fighter Natthakamol Vassana winning the best female youth athlete award.

All the athletes were honoured at a ceremony presided over by Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn.

Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), was chairwoman of the event's organising panel.

Kunlavut, 21, was runner-up at the BWF World Championships 2022 in Tokyo last August after losing to world No.1 Viktor Axelsen of

Denmark in the men's singles final.

He claimed his maiden Super 750 title after winning the BWF India Open in New Delhi on Jan 22 and also won two gold medals in the men's singles and team events at the SEA Games in Vietnam in May last year.

Competing in the 49kg weight division, Panipak, 25, won the Spanish Open, SEA Games gold medal and three World Grand Prix titles.

The 2020 Olympic champion also took bronze at the world championships.

Somkiat raced to a historic maiden Moto2 victory at the Indonesian Grand Prix. With the win,

Somkiat, of Idemitsu Honda Team Asia, became the first Thai rider to win any class of grand prix racing.

Somkiat, 24, also claimed three other podium finishes last season. He finished second in Austria and Argentina and third at Le Mans, and was 10th in the 2022 world championship standings.

In her rookie season on the LPGA Tour, Atthaya, then 19, won two tournaments – the JTBC Classic and the NW Arkansas Championship.

The Ratchaburi native claimed the LPGA Rookie of the Year award to become the third Thai to get the honours after Patty Tavatanakit



Puripol (left), Panipak and Kunlavut. Photo: Bangkok Post

(2021) and Moriya Jutanugarn (2013).

She also became the second-youngest world No.1 in women's golf history after New Zealand's Lydia Ko, and the second Thai to reach the top of the world rankings after Ariya Jutanugarn.

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