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POX MANIA



Tourists arrive from Korea on July 22, two days before the elevated screening measures were ordered by Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul

MONKEYPOX SCREENING AT AIRPORT TO BE ELEVATED AS NEW MEASURES ROLLED OUT

The Phuket News
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Health officials on alert for monkeypox are to elevate screening measures at Phuket International Airport as part of the new protection measures announced by Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who also serves as the Public Health Minister.

The move follows the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring

monkeypox “A Public Health Emergency of International Concern” last Saturday (July 23) and issuing a list of “Temporary Recommendations” for member countries.

The WHO urged member countries to ready health systems and personnel to prevent widespread infections and also urged them to find effective methods that do not stigmatise target groups.

In response, Thailand is considering raising further its health alert for

monkeypox by listing it as a “serious communicable disease”, Anutin told the press last Sunday night (July 24) after chairing an urgent meeting with health authorities.

Disease control and immigration checkpoints throughout the country as a precaution have been ordered to ramp up screening for monkeypox, particularly among visitors coming from countries with a high risk of the disease, he said.

However, he also confirmed that

no curbs on travel arrivals would be brought into effect at this stage.

Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), on Monday announced the general measures to be rolled out in the hope of preventing the spread of monkeypox on the island.

“There has been an order for disease control checkpoints across the country to coordinate with the Immigration Police to be extra vigilant of people traveling from high-risk countries,” he said.

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Annissa ready to defend titles at Kata Beach



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First monkeypox case flees

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“The Ministry of Public Health is preparing guidelines for surveillance of monkeypox with the the Department of Disease Control upgrading the Emergency Operations Centers protocols for medical and public health issues,” he added.

“As for the monkeypox vaccines, the Government Pharmaceutical Organization have kept as standard the same vaccine developed about 40 years ago. The Department of Medical Sciences has tested it and found that it was still of good quality and can be used if necessary,” Dr Kusak noted.

“There is no specific treatment for this disease. Therefore we can only treat the symptoms. Most patients will heal on their own. Every hospital can provide the necessary care There is no need for the patient to be placed in a negative pressure room,” he said.

FIRST CASE FLEES

The move to ramp up monkeypox measures follows Nigerian national Osmond Chihazirim Nzerem, 27, testing positive for the disease, becoming the first person in the country recognised by officials as infected with monkeypox.

A manhunt for Nzerem, who had been staying in Patong, ensued after he failed to



After his arrest in Phnom Penh, Nzerem was taken to a local health centre in the Cambodian capital. Photo: Phuket Info Center

present himself for a doctor's appointment at Vachira Phuket Hospital on July 19. He was later arrested by Cambodian officials in Phnom Penh.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong on July 22 confirmed that Nzerem arrived in Thailand at Suvarnabhumi airport on Oct 21 last year. He had entered Thailand on a Non-Immigrant Education visa. His visa allowed him to stay until Jan 18. Nzerem told officials he was going to

study in Chiang Mai, but came to Phuket instead, where he stayed at a dCondo project in Kathu.

Nzerem presented himself at Bangkok Hospital Phuket on July 16 due to blisters on the skin and genitals. He was treated as an outpatient and told to return to his accommodation and self-quarantine, said the PPHO Patient Investigation Report.

On July 18, police went to visit the man dCondo in Kathu, but found he was no

longer staying there. He had left the condo at about 7pm to go to Patong.

By the next day, attempts to contact him failed as his phone was switched off. He was last seen in Phuket at the Patong Princess Hotel on July 20, where he entered a white sedan, presumed to be a taxi at about 9pm.

Nzerem was arrested in Phnom Penh last Saturday night (July 23) and taken into care by public health officials.

Mr Nzere was wanted by

health officials in Thailand, and by Thai Immigration for overstaying his visa during his stay in Thailand. Speaking last Sunday, Deputy Prime Minister Anutin said there were no plans to request that he be returned to Thailand.

Anutin said that he expected the patient to receive treatment in Cambodia. “It's good to see him treated there,” he said, adding he expected his condition would improve.

PATONG ALL CLEAR

At time of press, Phuket health officials had identified 142 people at entertainment venues in Patong who came into close contact with Mr Nzerem. All 142 had tested negative for the disease, PPHO Chief Dr Kusak announced last Sunday (July 24).

Nzerem was known to have visited five entertainment venues in Patong during the period when he was likely to have become infected.

“Of the close contacts identified, five had a fever, a cough and a sore throat, but no rash... Regardless, samples were collected for laboratory testing, and all five of them tested negative,” Dr Kusak said.

“But in order to ensure the prevention and control measures, the PPHO staff advised everyone to observe their symptoms. If they develop a fever, they are to see

a doctor,” he added.

Of the initial 19 high-risk exposures found, all 19 had PCR tests and tested negative for monkeypox, Dr Kusak confirmed on Monday (July 25).

The close contacts had been asked to self-quarantine for 21 days, Dr Kusak explained.

“Medical staff are to ask them about symptoms after seven days, 14 days and 21 days, and after 21 days of quarantine, samples will be collected for laboratory testing one more time,” he said.

“We ask everyone to not panic. Monkeypox is not easily contagious, and not as easily contracted as COVID-19,” he said.

“Contact must be through close contact. through direct skin contact with an infected person, from direct contact with blood, secretions, pus or pustules,” Dr Kusak noted.

“Contracting monkeypox can be prevented by wearing a mask. washing your hands often, avoiding touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth with your hands. Watch out for animal bites or scratches. Do not share items with others,” he said.

“Do not come in close contact with monkeypox patients, and this should leave tourists and people still able to travel to Phuket as usual,” he concluded.

Tsunami evacuation drills ‘a success’, declares DDPM chief

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE TOOK part in tsunami evacuation drills held in four locations across Phuket on July 20, with disaster officials declaring the safety exercise a success.

The tsunami-warning alerts were not sounded at all 19 tsunami-warning towers on the island, Udomporn Kan, Chief of the Phuket Provincial office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket), confirmed on July 20.

Officials were concerned of the effect doing so may have had on unsuspecting people, Mr Udomporn said.

Instead, the sounding of the warnings was simulated through sound trucks.

Evacuation drills were held at



Photo: Sakhu OrBoTor

Saphan Hin, Karon, Nai Yang and Ao Yon. Notably, no evacuation drills were held in the major tourist

areas of Patong, Kamala, Cherng Talay and Nai Harn – all areas heavily affected by the tsunami in 2004.

Mr Udomporn joined the evacuation drill at Saphan Hin, where he said many tourists come to relax each day.

Efforts at the Saphan Hin drill were relaxed, with people taking part allowed to leave the area following a designated evacuation route. Students taking part were assembled at one of the main gymnasium buildings in the area.

The exercises held at Nai Yang Beach, Ao Yon Beach and in Karon were treated more seriously, with emergency medical teams on hand to treat “victims”, that is people who had volunteered to play the part of being injured in the simulated disaster.

Mr Udomporn noted that the primary purpose of the evacuation drills today was to raise awareness of what to do in case of such an

emergency, for both members of the public, local officials and emergency response teams.

He also pointed out that the evacuation drills were organised in response to the series of underwater earthquakes off the Nicobar Islands earlier this month, which he noted registered on average 4 to 5 Magnitude in strength. “Not enough to cause an actual tsunami,” Mr Udomporn said.

Mr Udomporn also played down the importance of sounding the actual tsunami warnings through the tsunami-warning towers.

“They are tested at 8am every day anyway,” he said.

“But we must remain vigilant and ready to deal with real situations that may arise,” Mr Udomporn cautioned.

The Phuket News

BIE team arrives for World Expo inspection

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The delegation from the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) arrived in Bangkok last Sunday (July 24), ahead of their week-long inspection of Phuket following Thailand's bid for Phuket to host the World Specialised Expo 2028.

Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew was on hand to welcome the delegation at the Capella Bangkok hotel and at a formal welcome reception at Chakrabongse Palace.

Joining him were representatives from the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), which supported the bid, along with Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPHO) President Rewat Areerob and representatives from Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The delegation were scheduled to conduct their inspection from Tuesday through today (July 26-29) to assess Phuket in its bid to host Expo 2028.

Phuket officially entered its



Governor Narong (right) welcomes a BIE delegation member in Bangkok last Sunday (July 24). Photo: PIC

bid, under the theme "Future of Life: Living in Harmony, Sharing Prosperity", in Paris late last month. The bid was presented by a delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who also serves as the Minister of Public Health.

The bid was entered as a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Public Health, the TCEB and Phuket provincial officials, with Governor Narong present in Paris to enter Phuket's bid.

Governor Narong has since called on all people on the island to prepare for the inspection visit, and presented details of the bid to local consuls on the island as a form of opportunity for investment from abroad.

BIG CLEANUP

Local municipalities last week conducted major cleanups of key areas across the island as part of the preparations for an inspection visit by the BIE.

An estimated 500 govern-

ment officers and volunteers joined the Big Cleaning Day event in Mai Khao last Friday (July 22).

The focus of the cleanup was the 141 rai site where, if Thailand's bid for Phuket to host the World Specialised Expo 2028 is successful, a major convention centre will be built and later used as an "international medical centre".

Present to lead the cleanup was Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Pinsuwan, joined by Thalang District Chief Bancha Thanu-in.

In Phuket Town, cleanup efforts focused on the Old Town area, including Soi Rommanee, Thalang Rd and Yaowarat Rd.

"Cleanliness and tidiness of the city are important... The big cleaning includes scrubbing and cleaning of the footpaths, as well as collecting garbage and discarded unused items from people's homes to dispose of," said Phuket City Deputy Mayor Orapailin Trakulpriphon

"Everyone is invited to welcome the BIE committee as a good host," she said.

Phuket needs more public rubbish bins, says consul

SWISS HONORARY CONSUL for Phuket Andrea Kotas Tammathin has called on local government agencies and municipalities across Phuket to provide more rubbish bins for the public to use in the hope of reducing the volume of litter found strewn across the island.

Ms Tammathin spoke out about Phuket's trash problem in a video shared online earlier this month by the Phuket office of the Public Relations Department (PR Phuket).

In the video, Ms Tammathin first speaks in English, then repeats her message in very clear spoken Thai.

"I live in Phuket and I go for walks all the time. One thing that really upsets me very much is the garbage I see everywhere," Ms Tammathin said in English.

"One of the problems is that there are no garbage cans. So if Phuket could invest in more garbage cans, maybe the people would use them," she added.

Speaking in Thai, Ms Tammathin was strong in her message, with moments of exasperation with the problem clearly understood in her expression.



Phuket needs more public rubbish bins, says Swiss Honorary Consul for Phuket Andrea Kotas Tammathin. Screenshot: PR Phuket

"I like very much to take nature walks in the hills of Karon-Kata. It is very beautiful, but one thing I do not like very much is the garbage. There are Thais and foreigners alike who just throw it on the ground. They don't care, even if it is plastic," she said.

In Thai, Ms Tammathin urged the government to invest in having more garbage cans installed in public areas for people to use. She also encouraged Thai people to challenge fellow Thais they see throwing trash on the ground, and to ask them whether they loved their country.

Ms Tammathin also noted how important it was for children to learn from the behaviour of their parents.

The Phuket News

BA 2.75 in Phuket no cause for alarm

PHUKET PROVINCIAL PUBLIC Health Office (PPHO) Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon has assured that there is no cause for alarm after a 53-year-old man tested positive for the BA 2.75 strain of COVID-19 after returning to Trang after meeting with foreigners on the island.

The assurance was announced through a report posted by Radio Thailand Phuket on July 21. Dr Kusak's message came only after a report released by the Ministry of Public Health confirmed the news.

Dr Supakit Sirilak, Director-General of the Department of Medical Sciences, noted in his report that the man experienced light symptoms of infection and tested positive twice by ATK (antigen test kit). An RT-PCR test confirmed the infection, he said.

"The hospital sent samples for strain testing at the Medical Sciences Center in Trang to confirm the strain, which was confirmed to be Omicron subspecies BA 2.75," Dr Supakit said.

"The Department of Medical Sciences therefore submitted the information to be published on the international database GISAID on July 18 and GISAID has reviewed and announced the system on July 19," Dr Supakit noted in the release.

Dr Supakit noted there was not enough information yet to confirm the speed of the spread of infection, but also noted how light the severity of infection was.

"It shouldn't be too much of a concern," Dr Supakit said.

PPHO Chief Dr Kusak echoed Dr Supakit's understanding of the spread of



PPHO Chief Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon. Photo: Radio Thailand Phuket

BA 2.75, though only after Dr Supakit's report had been released.

"In Phuket we randomly detect subspecies all the time, but there have been no big clusters in the past month, and those who were found to be infected with strains of BA 2.75 had a history of receiving three doses of COVID-19 vaccine and had no severe symptoms," he said.

Dr Kusak also called on people to continue to wear face masks where appropriate.

"Even though wearing a mask is not compulsory, we would like people to carry a hygienic mask with them to enter areas that are considered risky," he said.

"There are many gatherings in crowded areas. A mask can be worn for immediate protection," he added.

The Phuket News

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PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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FRI JULY 29

High: +30°
Low: +27°
Wind 11 m/s

SAT JULY 30

High: +31°
Low: +27°
Wind 11 m/s

SUN JULY 31

High: +31°
Low: +27°
Wind 11 m/s

MON AUGUST 1

High: +31°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

TUE AUGUST 2

High: +32°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

WED AUGUST 3

High: +30°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

THU AUGUST 4

High: +30°
Low: +27°
Wind 4 m/s

New MG a bane for expat

The Phuket News
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A retired Phuket expat will have to sue MG Thailand to recover costs and lost time for an MG HS he bought brand-new in 2020, but has since had to return for repairs more than 40 times.

The expat, who has asked not to be named, bought his MG HS i-SMART from MG Phuket Co Ltd on Thepkra-sattri Rd, in Tambon Thepkrasattri, Thalang, in July 2020.

Yet after spending B1,069,000 on a new car, the problems were so extensive that the dealer agreed to replace the main computer unit after only three months.

The problems, nearly all electronic, have continued; some consistent, others irregular but recurring. The huge assortment of electronic problems each individually could be considered minor problems, but collectively they make the “benefits” of paying extra for the model more than worthless.

On the display panel, the time is often incorrect, the language keeps reverting to Thai for the weather (despite English still selected as the default setting), the windshield wiper delays stops working, calls are dropped, the screen goes entirely blank, the radio returns to scan mode on starting the car, and so on. This list of examples is far from exhaustive.

Worse, the crash warning system gives alerts for phantom vehicles that are not there but there was not a beep when a truck cut across in front of the car in Bangkok. The car even issues false crash warnings when pulling up at traffic lights.

The rear hatch keeps popping open and the brake discs have already been skimmed to ensure they grip properly after they started to fade early.

Every now and then the music starts playing at a very high volume



Passion Drives: The MG HS with all the problems. Photo: The Phuket News

without any warning. One such episode happened while the expat was driving along a highway at night while returning from Bangkok from yet another service at an MG service centre in the capital. The incident gave him such a fright he had to pull over immediately.

After months of initially dealing with the dealer in Thalang, the expat was later referred to Phuket Piya MG Co Ltd in Rassada, and the problems continued. Updates were repeatedly run on the main computer unit, with staff believing that was the problem. Five times the procedure was repeated within six weeks – and yet, the electronic system still repeatedly has critical issues.

“I have been in MG repair shops over four days of my life now, more than 96 hours for a broken car,” the expat told *The Phuket News*.

He also can prove it. He has kept a detailed record of all the issues, and the attempts to repair them. All his trials and tribulations with the “new” car have been extensively documented, complete with print outs of repeated services performed on the car and even videos proving the faults. The expat has a binder full of documents, images and reports confirming all the problems he has experienced, which

remain unresolved.

He has asked for a replacement new car since November 2020, which MG Thailand have consistently refused. Now he has to pay out of his own pocket to start legal proceedings for any compensation for all the time and out of pocket expenses to try and get his car fixed.

Only after the expat filed a formal complaint with the Office of Consumer Protection at the new government building complex in Phuket Town, now home to the new Provincial Hall, did MG Sales (Thailand) take an active interest in resolving the problems.

However, with local attempts failing to fix the problems, and after MG Thailand failed to uphold a promise to send a qualified technician to Phuket, the expat agreed to take the car to a main service centre in Bangkok. A trip he had to make twice.

In getting to Bangkok on one trip, the service centre had the car for eight days, after which the expat was told that the car was “100% fixed”. Yet even on the drive leaving the service centre the problems started recurring even before he left the city.

While the car has been returned for repairs more than 40 times in total so far, 30 of those times were within one year. Tiresome has been

the runaround. Just to have the driver's side rear-view mirror repaired, which had stopped retracting, took four separate trips to the shop in Phuket to be finally fixed.

After three meetings chaired by senior figures at the Phuket Consumer Protection office, and attended by MG Thailand representatives from Bangkok, the expat has now been told that they can do nothing for him.

MG Thailand has been cagey about the ongoing issues with the car becoming public. At the third and final meeting last month, an MG representative from Bangkok requested *The Phuket News* to leave the room before they would even start the meeting.

MG Thailand are still refusing to replace the car with a fully functioning version. All the repairs so far have been performed under warranty, and that is being understood by MG Thailand as upholding their end of the deal.

“I thought it would be the last car I would buy in my life,” the expat told *The Phuket News*.

“I bought this car because I thought it was a good car. I waited two years to settle on buying this model. It was everything I was looking for, and affordable,” he said.

“I bought it so I could travel around Thailand, but I have not been able to do that while the car keeps having to go back in the shop for repairs. I never thought it would be such a lemon,” he added.

Similar problems have been reported openly online by other MG HS owners, but nowhere to the same extent that the expat has suffered here in Phuket.

Of note, at the meeting at the Consumer Protection office in Phuket Town in June, another meeting was held between a customer and MG representatives, though details of that meeting have yet to become public.

Police arrest Phuket Town necklace snatch thief

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED a man wanted for snatching a necklace worth about B35,000 from a woman's neck while she was still riding her motorbike in Phuket Town at night last week.

The theft-in-motion happened on Yaowarat Rd in Samkong just after 8pm on July 20. Lt Paweenuch Kongsuth, Deputy Inspector-General of Investigation at Phuket City Police, was informed of the theft at 8:20pm.

The victim, named only

as Ms Kawisara (family name withheld), 25, explained that the necklace stolen was gold and had a pendant, which together were worth B35,000.

Ms Kawisara said she was riding her Yamaha Fino motorbike along Yaowarat Rd, heading towards the Sam Kong Intersection (on the bypass road), when she was attacked.

Just after she had crossed the bridge near Bangkok Hospital Phuket, a man rode up behind her on a green-gold Honda Wave motorbike. The

man beeped his horn. Concerned, Ms Kawisara slowed down, allowing the man to ride up close to her, snatch the necklace from around her neck and speed off.

Ms Kawisara was unable to remember the licence plate of the culprit's motorbike, but described the man as tall and thin, with dark skin.

An investigation led by Lt Paweenuch tracked down the thief, named by police only as “Mr Pakphum” (family name withheld) and arrested him at his home in Khok

Kloi, Takua Thung District, in Phang Nga province, just north of Phuket, last Saturday (July 23).

Mr Pakphum was taken into custody under an arrest warrant issued by Phuket Provincial Court that same day. He reportedly confessed to committing the theft, police noted in their arrest report.

Mr Pakphum was taken to Phuket City Police Station and charged with using a vehicle to commit a crime and flee the scene at night.

Eakkapong Thongtub



The suspect, Mr Pakphum, was arrested at his home in Khok Kloi. Photo: Phuket Provincial Police

PPAO garners support for B250mn 'Sky Walk'

The Phuket News
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The proposal to spend up to B250 million on an elevated lookout to be built at Promthep Cape received support from local residents in Rawai at a meeting held to receive public opinion feedback last week.

The lookout, currently branded as the "Sky Walk Khao Daeng", was first proposed by, Phuket Provincial Administration Organisation (PPAO) President Rewat Areerob last year as a way of attracting more tourists to Phuket.

The recent forum, held on July 20, was organised by the PPAO and Rawai Municipality to gauge public opinion on the project. The concept was well received.

The PPAO is pushing for two key attractions to be built: a "Glass Bridge" in the Khao Daeng hills overlooking Promthep Cape at the southern end of the island, and a "Glass Terrace" at Surin Beach, on Phuket's central west coast, Mr Rewat explained.



Image: PPAO

"The PPAO has hired a consulting company to study and design the details of the projects, and formally requested the use of public areas from the Phuket Provincial Office and the Royal Forest Department. This will be completed within August. The designs will be completed within November, according to the contract," he said.

At a PPAO budget meeting last year, Mr Rewat noted, "The amount of B7,890,750 is to be spent on the design and other actions for the skywalk at Promthep Cape in Rawai,

and B6,313,088 is to be spent on the glass terrace at Surin Beach in Cherg Talay."

At the meeting last week, Mr Rewat explained that initial estimates of the investment needed for the construction of the 'Glass Bridge' in Rawai were about B200mn. Estimates for the completed project ranged up to B250mn.

"I believe that when this project is completed it will become a landmark that draws tourists to Phuket. This will generate income in Rawai and other Phuket areas, because this glass bridge will be de-

signed to be beautiful, exciting and scary, while overlooking the beautiful sea," he said.

Natchat Heungwattanukul, designated project manager of the design of the Glass Bridge, explained that the structure will extend about 10 metres from the side of a cliff.

Three styles of design, including a Sino-Portuguese design, were currently under development, he said.

"The 'bridge' will connect to an elevated viewing platform that will be even more frightening, and will be able to accommodate about 50 people at a time," Mr Natchat said.

The project as a whole will also feature meeting and conference rooms, an activity area, community spaces and various tourist service areas, he added.

"It is expected that the investment budget is approximately B250mn. All designs will be completed and the work will be delivered to the PPAO within the month of November 2022," Mr Natchat assured.

All suggestions will be taken into consideration in finalising the design, he said.

Phuket bikers ready to 'Ride for Mom'

A 'RIDE FOR MOM' motorbike rally and concert event in Phuket organised to celebrate Mother's Day on Aug 12 is hoped to attract some 1,500 attendees. Proceeds from the event, which includes a concert by legendary Thai folk rock band Carabao, will go towards buying heart surgery medical equipment for Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The event was announced by joint organisers Phuket Bike Week Association, the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation (PPAO) and Phuket Boat Lagoon on Friday (July 22).

Present for the occasion were PPAO Deputy President Thiwat Sidokbub, on behalf of Pae Sudsakorn Limited Partnership, along with Phuket Boat Lagoon Chairman Boon Yongsakul.

Also present were Phuket Bike Week Association President Amarin Saranyasakul and former president Wittaya Singkhala.

Iconic Thai rock singer Ad Carabao will be leading the motorcade, which will start at Phuket Check Point at the northern tip of the island and make its way 30 kilometres



Photo: PR Phuket

down the island to the main event site Phuket Boat Lagoon.

The event will also feature a fashion show of Thai fabrics presented by models and a grand dinner party where participants can bring their mothers, explained Mr Thiwat.

"There will be a concert celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Carabao band, and special collectibles on auction. Proceeds from this event will be given to Vachira Phuket Hospital to fund the purchase of a heart surgery machine," he said.

The event is being held to commemorate the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, The Queen Mother, on Aug 12. The auspicious birthday of Queen Sirikit, mother of His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn (Rama X), is celebrated throughout the country as Mother's Day.

The Phuket News

MoTS calls for more stimulus

The Phuket News
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Tourism revenue this year may total B1.2 trillion, below the government's target of B1.5trn, if there are no additional support or stimulus schemes as the fiscal budget for tourism in 2023 has been heavily cut, according to Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakan.

Mr Phiphat said the proposed stimulus packages comprise a B1-billion project called "Booster Shot" under the supervision of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and a B1bn sport tourism project that aims to promote international and local sporting events around the nation, reported the *Bangkok Post*.

The ministry and private sector proposed the Booster Shot to the prime minister this week and the agenda is being reviewed by the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), determining whether to use the central budget or the emergency loan decree.

He said the NESDC has not made a decision.

"Without additional budg-



Tourism Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakan addresses business leaders at La Flora Khao Lak resort in Phang Nga last Sunday (July 24). Photo: MoTS

et, we must admit revenue this year is more likely to tally B1.2trn, B300bn below the target," said Mr Phiphat. "The TAT was allocated a limited budget of around B2.2bn in fiscal 2023, much lower than B5-6bn during pre-pandemic years."

Despite tourism's contribution to GDP reaching 18% before the pandemic, he said during the past two years the ministry proposed a number of measures to help tourism

operators, but most were rejected.

Mr Phiphat said the Booster Shot programme is urgently needed by the industry to stimulate demand and strengthen tourism stakeholders.

The TAT is expected to cooperate with airlines to increase capacity to at least 50% of pre-pandemic levels and help tourism operators, such as tour buses that suffered from a lack of Chinese customers, to carry more local

tour groups.

For the sports tourism projects, which will use the budget from the National Sports Development Fund, the ministry aims to promote three international events: MotoGP 2022 in September, followed by two trail running events in Chiang Mai. They comprise the inaugural "Amazing Thailand World Mountain & Trail Running Championships" in November, which was postponed from

last year, and Doi Inthanon Thailand By UTMB 2022 in December.

"We already secured those events for Thailand. With more active marketing and promotions, we can draw more foreign athletes and audiences to the country, along with creating more sports events around Thailand to attract local tourists," he said.

NEW PLAN

The TAT has announced the marketing plan for 2023 that aims to continue the revitalisation and transformation of Thai tourism initiated this year, reports state news agency TAT.

Recently, the TAT hosted its annual TAT Action Plan for 2023 conference to discuss post-COVID tourism strategies.

During the conference, TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn stated that the agency has already outlined a marketing strategy for the upcoming year that adheres to the TAT's Corporate Plan 2023-2027 to strengthen the TAT's position as the strategic leader in driving Thailand toward experience-based and sustainable tourism.

The TAT will continue to utilise "Visit Thailand Year 2022-2023: Amazing New Chapters" as its international communication strategy. Under the 'From A to Z: Amazing Thailand Has It All' slogan, Thailand will continue to be marketed as a world-class destination with something for everyone. This will be displayed alongside the Kingdom's 5F and 4M soft-power foundations, explained the report.

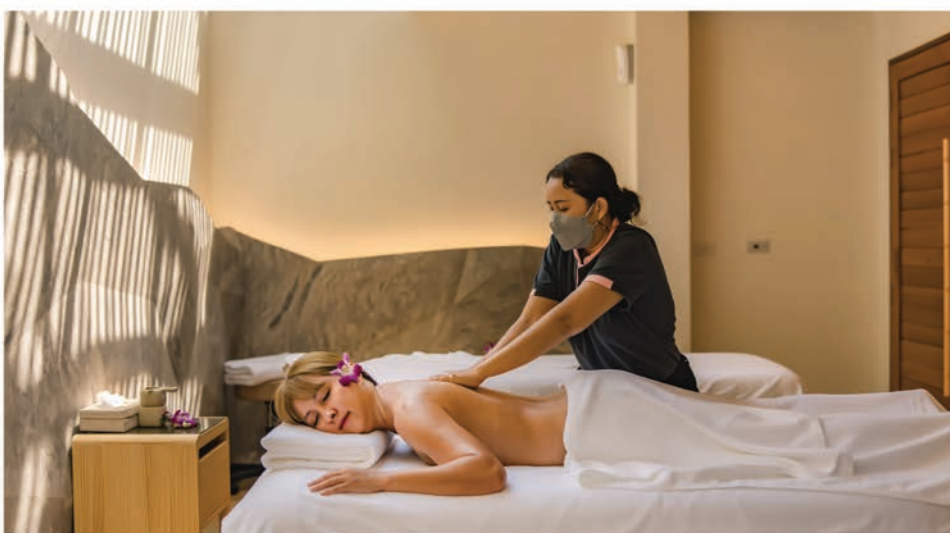
According to Mr Yuthasak, the TAT and airlines will form additional collaborative partnerships to promote international tourism. By promoting Thailand as a year-round destination, emphasis will also be placed on increasing domestic tourists' travel frequency, he said.

The TAT marketing plan is consistent with the Bio-Circular-Green or BCG Economy Model, which conforms to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, he noted.

Additionally, the agency will use the Thailand Tourism Virtual Mart as the primary online B2B platform for Thai tourism businesses and international tourism operators.



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Phuket Town businesses welcome Indian tourists

BUSINESS OPERATORS in Phuket Town, especially the old Town area, are welcoming Indian tourists, who have proved to be the most popular tourist group shopping in the district since the Thailand Pass scheme was cancelled.

Somyot Pathan, President of Phuket Old Town Tourism Community Enterprise, explained that more than 72,000 tourists from India had arrived since May 1.

The number of tourists arriving from the subcontinent had continued its upward trend with the removal of the Thailand Pass registration requirement on July 1, he said.

"Most of them love marine activities, and come to admire the architecture of Phuket Old Town," Mr Somyot said.

"After the government cancelled the Thailand Pass system, tourists, especially from India, have travelled to Phuket in large numbers. It is expected that this will stimulate Thailand's tourism



Photo: PR Phuket

in the long term," he added.

Indian tourists are interested in entertainment activities, including walking and shopping at various shops in the old town district of Phuket, Mr Somyot said.

"This is helping to stimulate trade in the Old Town as well. Often Indian tourists can be seen taking pictures of the architectural buildings, and buying souvenirs," he said.

Mr Somyot urged shop owners to tailor their stores to cater to Indian tourists.

"If people in the area can learn the likes and preferences of Indian tourists, it will be more beneficial and

help create more opportunities from the arrival of Indian tourists in the future," he said.

Phuket tour guide Pornan Reusakdeesri agreed, but added that Indian tourists' interests expanded far beyond just shopping and sightseeing.

"Indian tourists are interested in activities such as go-karting, zip-line and also love the nature of Phuket with its rich sea and forests. Phuket can definitely extend its appeal to Indian tourists while responding to Thailand's long-term economic stimulation," she said.

The Phuket News

Point-cut system aims to curb dangerous driving

BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Royal Thai Police plan to launch a so-called traffic point-cutting system early next year, a form of electronic traffic ticketing aimed at improving driving discipline and curbing road accidents, after having already raised punishments for traffic violations.

From Jan 9, every driving licence holder will be given 12 points, which will be reduced if they are caught violating traffic rules, Pol Maj Gen Ekkarat Limsangkat, chief of the Highway Police Division said last Wednesday (July 20).

Breaking the speed limit, failing to stop for pedestrians at zebra crossings, eschewing a safety helmet, not fastening a seat belt, and speaking on the phone while driving are examples of misconduct that can lead to a one-point deduction, he said.

Running red lights or intentionally driving in the wrong direction – for example on one-way streets – will cause



Thailand has the ninth-highest rate of road fatalities in the world. Photo: Saichon Srinuanchan

two points to be deducted, while illegal racing on a public street will lead to three points being cut.

The maximum penalty of four points is tied to serious violations such as drink driving, Gen Ekkarat confirmed.

A loss of all 12 points will result in the driver having their licence suspended for 90 days, he confirmed, adding the deducted points will be restored 12 months from the time they are removed.

More details can be found

at <https://ptm.police.go.th/eTicket> or via the government e-wallet application called Pao Tang.

Prior to the launch of the new electronic ticketing system, a new regulation resulting in an automatic 90-day suspension of driving licence took effect on July 13.

Such suspensions will apply for violations that pose a serious risk of danger to the public, or when violators attempt to flee after causing damage to others or public

property during a road accident, confirmed Gen Ekkarat.

Driving without a licence, meanwhile, could lead to a three-month jail term and a maximum fine of B10,000, he said.

The prison term for repeat offenders caught driving under the influence, for example, has been increased to two years, with the fine raised from B50,000 to B100,000, he concluded.

The news comes after Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on May 25 confirmed the government had set an ambitious goal of slashing road fatalities by almost two-thirds within five years.

Thailand has the ninth-highest rate of road fatalities in the world with 32.7 deaths per 100,000 people, according to the World Health Organization.

Fifty-nine people aged 15-19 are injured from riding motorcycles daily on average, many often neglecting to wear helmets. Deaths from speeding have risen by 4% in recent times while fatalities connected to drink driving during holidays are also up.

Doctors want immediate suspension of cannabis decriminalisation policy

BANGKOK

MORE THAN 800 DOCTORS from Ramathibodi Hospital have called for the immediate suspension of the policy of decriminalisation of cannabis pending implementation of adequate controls to protect the young.

The move was announced on Monday (July 25) by the president of the Forensic Physicians Association of Thailand, Dr Smith Srisont.

He posted on his Facebook account that 851 doctors, lecturers and alumni of the faculty of medicine Ramathibodi Hospital at Mahidol University had issued a statement seeking the immediate suspension of cannabis decriminalisation.

According to the statement, cannabis decriminalisation without adequate measures and policies for safe use led to the widespread recreational use of the drug and its access by young people, amid clear and considerable scientific evidence that cannabis has negative effects on the bodies and brains of the young.

The situation was differ-



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, right, listens to a presentation on the medical use of cannabis at Government House last month. Photo: Government House

ent from the government's intention to increase people's access to the medical use of cannabis.

"The present situation is a real threat to the health system and public health, in both the short and long term," the statement said.

The doctors urged the government to immediately suspend the policy until laws were in place to protect young people from cannabis abuse and ensure proper use of cannabis, to minimise its impact on the general public.

Bangkok Post

DMS says four decades old smallpox vaccine still effective against monkeypox

BANGKOK

DESPITE THERE BEING NO DEDICATED vaccine for monkeypox currently available, health authorities in Thailand have said smallpox vaccines that are decades old may be used instead.

The Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO) confirmed on Monday (July 25) that Thailand possesses a stockpile of a smallpox vaccine which is 85% effective at protecting against monkeypox.

It also confirmed that the smallpox vaccines have been kept in storage for more than 40 years.

Although based on old technology, this vaccine provides Thailand with a backup option if newer types cannot be procured, health officials said.

Department of Medical Sciences (DMS) Director-General Supakit Sirilak revealed the vaccine doses were stored in powder form at 2-8°C. The doses were from a total of 13 production batches and were manufactured in 1979 and 1980. There are 10,000 vials in total, each containing 50 doses of the vaccine. The GPO stockpile, therefore, amounts to 500,000 doses.

Dr Supakit said that all of the doses were of the live vaccine type. The DMS has inspected the quality of the vaccine and did not find any issues with acidity or basicity, neither were any contaminations detected, he confirmed.



DMS Director-General Supakit Sirilak. Photo: NNT

The vaccine's efficacy remains at a good level and conforms with World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Dr Supakit said the vaccine is 85% effective at preventing monkeypox.

The DMS is currently cultivating the monkeypox virus in its laboratory. If successful, it will discuss the potential production of a monkeypox vaccine with relevant agencies.

Dr Supakit further explained there are three types of smallpox vaccines currently recommended by the WHO. These include second generation and third generation vaccines produced in the United States and fourth generation vaccines made in Japan.

He added that the third generation vaccines are most likely to be put into use if the monkeypox situation globally necessitates it. NNT

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Transporting passengers down the mountain in the Thoed Thai Hospital truck, Chiang Rai, June 1988.



Student housing for my Public Health (MPH) summer research project in Alaska, USA. Photo: Jeff Schultz

The Road Less Travelled

The Phuket News
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

Long-term Phuket expat Jim Mielke has just released the second installment of his trilogy subtitled “Adventures in International Living, Self-Discovery, and a Life of Meaning”, with the hope of inspiring people to travel off the beaten track and help local communities while they’re there.

Such journeys force people to face experiences through which they ultimately learn much more about themselves, says Jim. Following on from his first book, “Have Bag - Will Travel”, the second book is titled “The Warlord’s Hospital and Other Stories”.

Drawing on over 45 years of personal journal entries, the series chronicles some of his experiences living and working in developing countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region, as well as low-cost adventure travel to exotic destinations on every continent except Antarctica.

Ten percent of proceeds from book purchases are donated to charitable organisations in the developing world.

Originally from Buffalo, New York, Jim grew up as a pastor’s son. Following years of pain, depression and suffering with Crohn’s disease, Jim at age 19 was fitted with an external pouch. Almost immediately after receiving the ‘bag’, which alleviated the pain and misery, he felt strong and exhilarated and was catapulted into a whole new energised life. For the first time in years, he was free to enjoy all that life offers and that freedom continues now, 45 years later.

Over the years, Jim has spoken to college students, members of voluntary organisations and other interested groups about world service work and other options for international experiences – just as someone spoke to him



James Cameron Mielke

45 years ago, when he was a summer employee at the YMCA.

Jim has lived and worked in over 20 countries of the Asia-Pacific region. In that time, he completed his Master’s and Doctoral degrees in Public Health at the University of Hawaii. This was funded by a State of Hawaii academic award and a US Government grant administered by the East-West Center research institute in Honolulu, whose mission is to “promote better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue”.

Jim first learned about YMCA overseas volunteer opportunities when he was a college student working a summer job at Silver Bay YMCA on Lake George, New York. After graduating in 1982, he was soon off to Sri Lanka for a six-week internship with the Colombo YMCA, where he led outdoor recreation and life skills programs for disadvantaged youth. He ended up staying for six months.

After Sri Lanka, and his subsequent postings with the YMCAs in Western Samoa and Fiji Islands, Jim was hooked on the thrill of international living. For the next eight years, he worked with voluntary organisations in developing countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

An experienced expat, Jim has been to more than 60 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America and the Pacific. He currently works as an international health and development consultant for various humanitarian aid agencies, and he is also an internationally certified classical yoga and meditation teacher and teaches both as a seasonal volunteer at YMCAs in the US and abroad.

Having survived these adventures, Jim still travels, and lives in a peaceful seaside setting in Ao Por. Jim first made his way to Phuket on a fishing boat from the South in the early 1980s, after staying at a bungalow owned by a local family on the “back side” of Phi Phi Island. Like so many other people, he joined the aid efforts in the aftermath of the tsunami in 2004, after which he made the permanent move to Phuket.

For Jim, joining aid efforts abroad is the key way to gain genuine life-impacting experiences through travel, the types of experiences that go beyond the popular tourist destinations and give real real meaning and purpose to one’s travels. During his seasonal returns as a volunteer at the YMCA, he meets many young people who are happy to travel across the United States, but stop there.

“They are too apprehensive about

travelling abroad, which is the one thing that will truly deliver what they are looking for: genuine life experiences that will broaden their understanding of the world,” he says.

Money is not the issue. Jim’s first trip abroad to Sri Lanka was paid for with money from his paper route.

For Jim, his latest book offers inspiration to any people looking to finally take the plunge to travel abroad. “Many young people are eager for an overseas experience, and are searching for direction, but for various reasons, never get there. In a world of increasing global interdependence, the lasting benefits of international travel and cross-cultural service experiences are truly priceless,” he says.

“The books will resonate with anyone who has desired to travel and live overseas. The stories demonstrate how anyone can experience genuine fulfilment and self-discovery through different, freer ways of living, no matter what your budget,” he adds.

“It will stoke the fires of adventure, especially among young people. It will inspire and encourage those seeking something beyond their national borders, beyond the mainstream tourist destinations, superficial material lifestyles and empty career paths. The discovery early in life of the deeper meaning and potential derived from international and cross-cultural perspectives might even save 30 years of meaningless work later.

“It [such travel] reveals that you grow when you give back. Giving back to the world in return for all that has been given, and expanding one’s horizons through travel, leads to immense personal growth,” he adds.

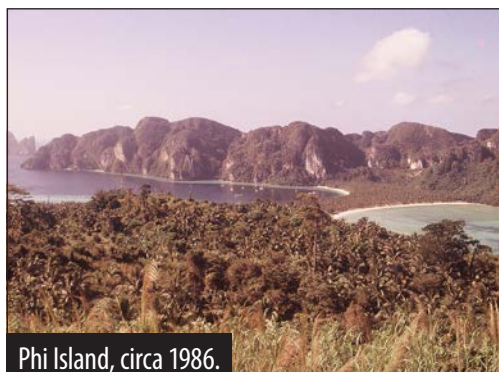
The book demonstrates perseverance with a positive mindset. “After years of suffering, it gave me back my health, my freedom – and 45 years on, life keeps getting better all the time,” Jim says.

“This story encourages readers to be accepting, flexible and to learn to roll with the flow. If you’ve been bumped off the track, the next adventure is about to begin! Find the silver lining that transforms negatives into positives, and new doors open.”

Both Jim’s books are available on Amazon. The Kindle version of each costs just US\$3.99. Jim is currently in the final stages of writing the third instalment.



Jim and Samoan sister Manono (1984).



Phi Island, circa 1986.



Jim relaxing at Home.

Big screen gets 'Official Competition'

David Griffiths

Actors are vain humans who are all about themselves and directors are strange individuals who will do anything, no matter how crazy, in order to bring their artistic dream alive. It seems strange that that would be the point that a film is trying to make yet that is exactly what we find with Mariano Cohn (*The Man Next Door*) and Gaston Duprat's (*The Artist*) brand-new film *Official Competition*.

The film which recently stole the show at the Venice Film Festival follows the events that unfold when rich Spanish businessman Humberto Suarez (Jose Luis Gomez – *The Skin I Live In*) decides that he wants to leave a legacy – an award-winning film that will be long remembered.

His first decision is to buy the rights to 'the world's most popular novel' and then hire award-winning director/screenwriter Lola Cuevas (Penelope Cruz – *Vanilla Sky*) to turn it into the film that he dreams of producing. What she decides to do has the makings of a stunning film but leads to an interesting path to get there.

She immediately hires blockbuster star Felix Rivero (Antonio Banderas – *Puss In Boots*) to star alongside classic auteur actor Ivan Torres (Oscar Martinez – *Wild Tales*). The two men's acting styles and personalities clash from day one and soon it looks like the



Photo: IMDb

film might never get off the ground.

As far as filmmaking goes, *Official Competition* is a pretty brave film. While some may just see this as a comical film with a funny storyline others will watch this film and know that the screenwriting team have written this film about personal experiences they have faced in the film industry. The fact that the film also managed to attract three of Spain's biggest stars for its leading roles shows that perhaps this is the time that the film industry admits that things have been 'over the top' in the industry for a while.

The key to this film working so well is the humour that the script contains. This film is unlike most comedies

released into cinemas – while most Hollywood comedies these days look for the over-the-top moments and lines to get the audience laughing, *Official Competition* instead takes a subtle approach. Lengthy scenes, drawn out monologues and obscure moments of visual humour all pull together to create a film that is alternative in nature but nonetheless is crowd-pleasing.

With the film's offbeat nature when it comes to humour, audiences should also be warned that not all the humour here might be considered politically correct. There is a lengthy running gag about cancer but at the same time the film does have a serious side as it deals with serious topics like the role of

women in the film industry. The film also takes a serious twist for the last quarter of the film that nobody will see coming.

Bringing this brilliant screenplay to life is the amazing work of the three leads. Penelope Cruz is in award-winning form with her portrayal of an unhinged yet talented director, while watching Banderas and Martinez go to head-to-head a number of times throughout the film is some genuine cinematic magic. Both men put in brilliant performances that mix both drama and comedy seamlessly and their performances here make this film a must see for those who love serious cinema.

Normally films like *Official Competition* are hidden away in arthouse theatres because the industry doesn't like being laughed at, but it is hard to hide this film away because of the star power that comes with it. If you don't mind a comedy on the alternative side and are willing to embrace a film that is a little left of centre, then this is the film for you. Check it out and have a laugh.

Official Competition is currently screening in Phuket and is rated 15. 3.5/5 Stars.

David Griffiths has been working as a film and music reviewer for over 20 years. That time has seen him work in radio, television and in print. You can follow him at www.facebook.com/subcultureentertainmentaus

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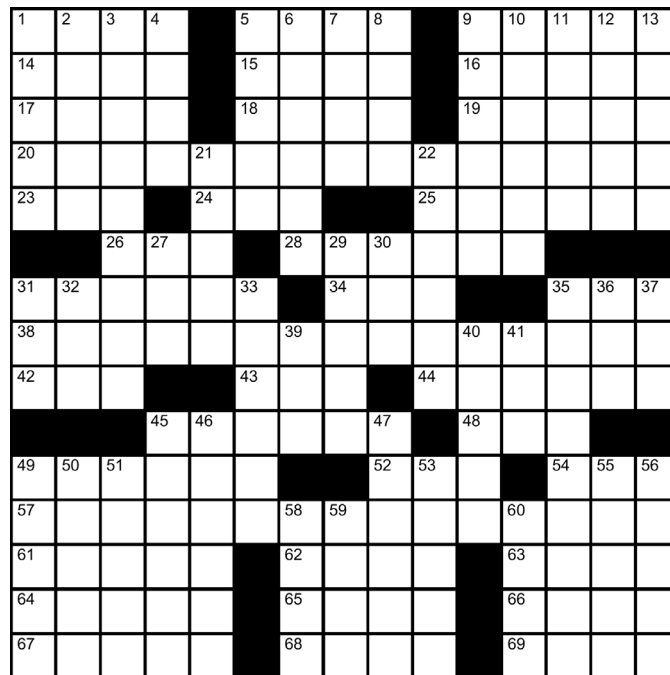
POP QUIZ

1. How tall is Phuket's Big Buddha statue?
2. The Polka Tulk Blues Band was the original name of which band?
3. The new UK prime minister Boris Johnson makes models of what in his spare time?
4. Goat meat is the most consumed meat per capita worldwide. True or false?
5. Which animal is Bagheera in *The Jungle Book*?

Answers below, centre

Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Across</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stylish gown 5. Merganser 9. Impact sound 14. Invidia 15. Dry riverbed 16. Dennis the Menace's mother 17. Aim 18. Anthologies 19. Toil 20. Some homeowners 23. Word on a Ouija board 24. "So that's it!" 25. Always, poetically 26. Try 28. Nonentity, Brit. 31. Aversion 34. Recognition response 35. Favoring 38. Dotage 42. Octopus's defense 43. The Righteous Brothers, e.g. 44. Poised to take a fall 45. Once in a blue moon 48. Venom carrier | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 49. Mainstay 52. Mouth, slangily 54. Furniture wood 57. Severe injury 61. Cliff nest 62. Eviscerates 63. Lost 64. Editorial commands 65. Northern capital 66. Croatia, e.g. 67. Verb with thou 68. Put one's foot down 69. MacLachlan of "Twin Peaks" <p>Down</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apotheose 2. Kind of rock 3. Buy too much 4. Shag rugs 5. Lawn mower's path 6. Cassava 7. Gouda alternative 8. Owl-ish? 9. Honor 10. ___ piano 11. Phloem 12. ___ squash | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Not windy 21. Marvel Comics superhero 22. Interest 27. Blood letters 29. Whoop 30. Key opener? 31. See 30-Down 32. Setter 33. See 63-Across 35. With pretention 36. Kind of deer 37. Curious 39. Partly digested food 40. Cover, in a way 41. Secures 45. Sailboat poles 46. Firstborn 47. Periwinkle 49. Hiding place 50. Letter before iota 51. Shown 53. Man of morals 55. Relating to a district 56. Scoundrel 58. Self-images 59. Heavy blow 60. Savor victory |
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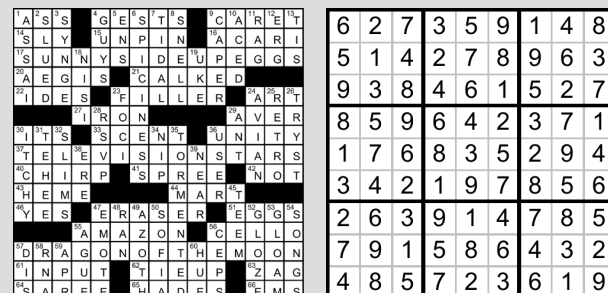
Easy

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			1	7			9	

Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

- 1) 45 metres; 2) Black Sabbath; 3) Buses; 4) True; 5) A black panther

Solutions to last week's puzzles:



GOT YOUR NUMBER

7

percent of men suffer from paruresis, an anxiety disorder that makes it impossible to urinate if other people are nearby.

43

years is how old the world's oldest spider lived to be. Her name was No 16, and she died after being stung by a wasp.

215,000

babies are born every day.

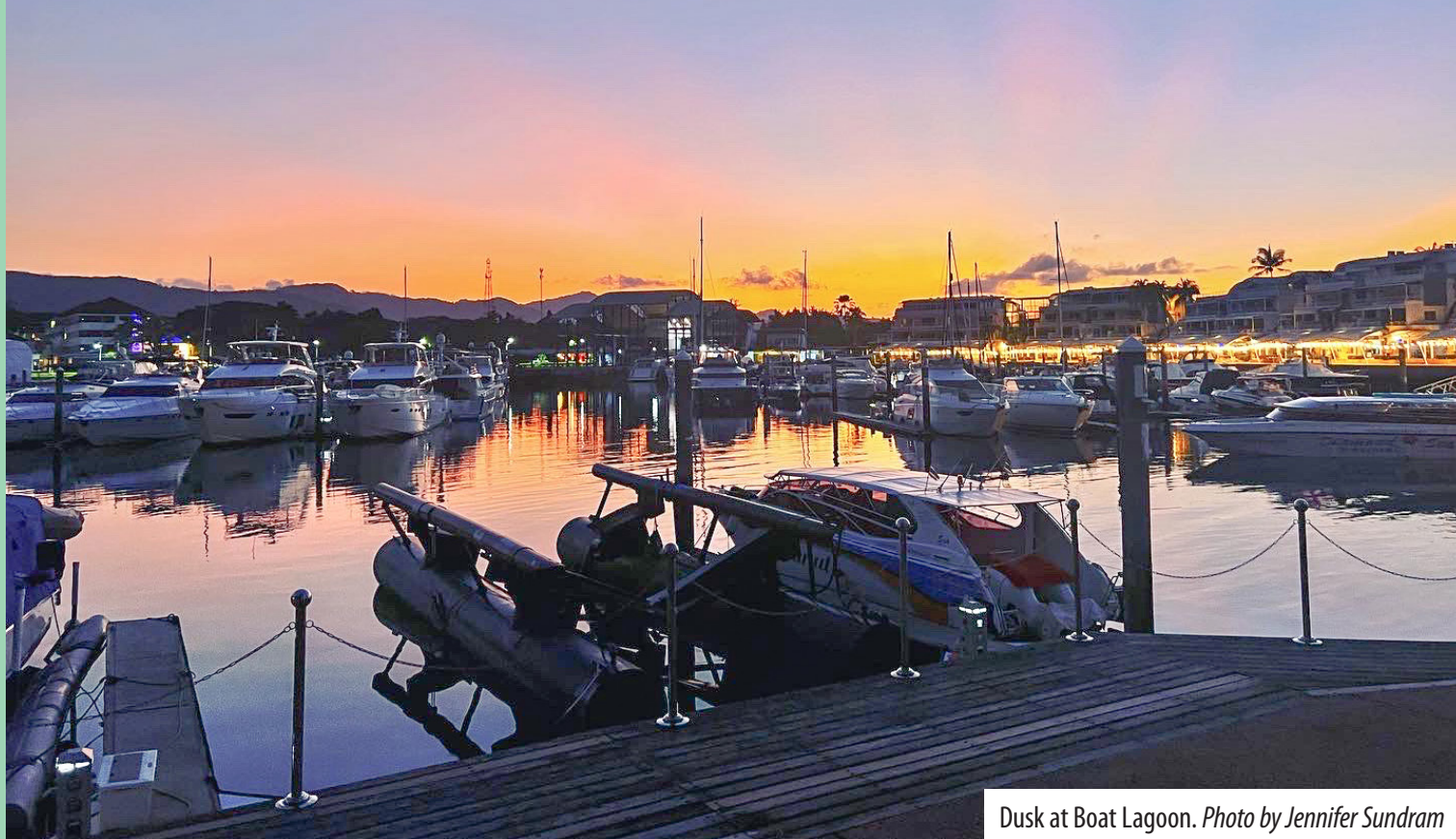
40,000

species are currently threatened with extinction, according to the Red List of Threatened Species compiled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

21.6 billion

US dollars is how much Americans spent on drunk purchases online in 2020, down from US\$44.9bn in 2019.
Source: Uberfacts

ISLAND VIEW



Dusk at Boat Lagoon. Photo by Jennifer Sundram

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

This week in history

July 29, 1981
A worldwide television audience of over 700 million people watch the wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

July 30, 1974
Watergate scandal: US President Richard Nixon releases subpoenaed White House recordings after being ordered to do so by the Supreme Court. On Aug 9, he resigns

in the face of almost certain impeachment – the only time a US president has done so.

July 31, 781
The oldest recorded eruption of Mount Fuji. The most recent eruption was 1707.

August 1, 1992
Thai Airways International Flight 311 travelling from Bangkok to Nepal crashes into a mountain in Nepal killing all 113 people on board.



Richard Nixon campaigns in 1968.

August 2, 1990
Iraq invades Kuwait, eventually leading to the Gulf War.

August 3, 1492
Christopher Columbus sets sail from Palos de la Frontera, Spain, starting his first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.

August 4, 1944
The Holocaust: A tip from a Dutch informer leads the Gestapo to a sealed-off area in an Amsterdam warehouse, where they find and arrest Jewish diarist Anne Frank, her family and four others.
Source: Wikipedia

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FRI 5 AUG



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THU 11 AUG

JOINT CHAMBERS PHUKET SUNDOWNERS
Thursday 11 August 2022
18:00 - 21:00 hrs.
500 THB for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members.
900 THB for non-members.

Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners hosted by AustCham

Join us for a wonderful night of making new con-

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JOINT CHAMBERS PHUKET BUSINESS BRIEFING
Thursday 11 August 2022
17:00 - 18:00 hrs.
Free of charge for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members.

Joint Chambers Phuket Sundowners - Business Briefing

AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with partner Chambers, invite you to attend a business briefing on "Moving Forward with Yacht Charters". Join us for a discussion on the current charter status for foreign registered yachts and general business considerations in light of current developments. Free of charge for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members. For registration code for Australian Alumni members, please contact AustCham team at 02 109 9616 or email to office@austchamthailand.com Please register in advance, as walk-ins are not allowed for this event. Limited spaces, please book early to avoid disappointment

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Photo: Bangkok Post

Spartan Thailand to attract bumper field

FITNESS

AROUND 4,000 PARTICIPANTS from more than 30 countries are expected to take part in the Spartan Thailand 2022 Chiang Mai from Aug 12-14, organisers have confirmed.

Founded in 2007, Spartan Race is a series of obstacle races of varying distance and difficulty ranging from 3 miles to marathon distances. It is said to be the world's largest obstacle and endurance race.

The Chiang Mai tournament, part of the Spartan's Southeast Asian series, will feature two categories – the Spartan Super (10km, 25 obstacles) and Spartan Spring (5km, 20 obstacles).

Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said the event would help promote the country and generate more than B300

million in revenue.

"The event will definitely help promote sports tourism and benefit many sectors as some 4,000 participants from more than 30 countries are expected to participate in the event," he told a press conference on July 14.

"They will not only join the weekend competition but also travel to see Chiang Mai and nearby provinces. It is expected to generate more than B300mn in income.

"Importantly, it will show to the world that Thailand is ready to reopen the country and host world-class sporting events."

COVID-19 forced the Chiang Mai event to be postponed in both 2020 and 2021. Those who registered for these previous races will be able to use their deferment codes to sign up for the same race type and category. *Bangkok Post*

Verstappen extends championship lead

FORMULA ONE

Michael Lamonato
michael@boxofneutrals.com

Max Verstappen increased his championship lead to 63 points with a victory at the French Grand Prix last Sunday (July 24) after Charles Leclerc crashed out from the lead in an embarrassing driver error.

Polesitter Leclerc held the lead off the line but had to spend the opening stint of the race defending actively against Verstappen, whose Red Bull Racing car was rapid in a straight line.

It took him 10 laps to break the assault, and shortly afterwards the Dutchman changed tack by diving into pits to commit to an alternative strategy.

It left Leclerc in the lead to manage his own pace, but on lap 18 his car snapped from beneath him through the fast turn 11, spinning him into the barrier.

It was a strange crash, particularly given the Monégasque was managing his



An ecstatic Max Verstappen celebrates after winning the French Grand Prix last Sunday (July 24). *Photo: AFP*

pace at the time, but Leclerc admitted afterwards that it was a simple case of driver error.

"It's unacceptable," he said. "I need to get on top of those things."

With Leclerc out of the picture, Verstappen inherited the lead without competition, and he was able to cruise to an easy 10-second victory to dramatically extend his title lead.

"I think we had a really good pace from the start," he said. "I just did my race, lived

up to the tyres."

Lewis Hamilton took second place, with teammate George Russell in third to complete Mercedes's first double podium of the year.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez finished a dissatisfied fourth, having been off the pace all weekend, but Carlos Sainz in fifth had more reason to be unhappy, having had a possible podium shot undone by yet another questionable Ferrari strategy.

The Spaniard had started 19th with an engine penalty but rose rapidly through the pack until he was battling Perez for third late in the race.

The team, however, was concerned his medium tyres wouldn't last the distance and convinced him to pit just after he'd relieved Perez of his podium position and had started to pull away.

The stop dropped him to ninth, and though he was substantially quicker on fresh rubber, he could only recover to fifth, albeit with a bonus point for fastest lap.

Sainz refused to criticise the team afterwards, though he said he felt it was worth a shot at the podium to stay out.

Fernando Alonso topped the midfield for Alpine at the team's home race, defeating Lando Norris to ensure the French marque moved ahead of McLaren in the constructors standings.

Esteban Ocon did likewise over Daniel Ricciardo in eighth and ninth, the Frenchman scoring his first ever points on home soil.

Vingegaard seals Tour de France glory

CYCLING

DENMARK'S JONAS VINGEGAARD won the Tour de France last Sunday (July 24), ending the reign of two-time defending champion Tadej Pogacar after a gruelling three weeks and 3,350km of relentless struggle.

The 25-year-old former fish-market worker Vingegaard claimed his first Tour de France a year after his break-out performance when he came second to Pogacar in 2021.

Vingegaard and his Jumbo-Visma teammates produced a brilliant collective effort with six stage wins, the green sprint jersey and the red combativity jersey for Wout van Aert and the polka dot mountains jersey for Vingegaard as well as the overall title and yellow jersey.

After a relentless struggle over peaks and plains in a crushing heatwave, Vingegaard assured his win on Saturday's time-trial having taken the lead in the Alps and extended it in the Pyrenees.

Defeated champion Pogacar finished second but won the best under-25s jersey for the third time and leaves this Tour with his reputation intact after attacking Vingegaard to the bitter end.

Geraint Thomas, the 2018 champion, was third after the veteran raced largely at his own pace, silencing doubters who thought that at 36, the affable Welshman was past his best.

Vingegaard survived the "heart attack" of a near fall on Saturday's individual time-



Jonas Vingegaard celebrates on the podium after his triumph. *Photo: AFP*

trial to virtually wrap up the Tour.

The two main protagonists had fought each other from start to finish, with Vingegaard dethroning Slovenian Pogacar with a pair of soaring performances in the high mountains.

But the stars aligned against Pogacar when he lost teammates to COVID and injury. He is also a man known to dislike intense heat and temperatures hit 40 degrees during the final week of the race.

Vingegaard took the yellow jersey from Pogacar on stage 11 and, while the UAE man refused stubbornly to give up, he lost further ground on stage 18.

Their epic struggle was highlighted by a moment of sportsmanship when Pogacar fell at high speed and Vingegaard waited for him to catch up, the pair clasp hands briefly in a memorable image from one of the best modern editions of the Tour. *AFP*



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Stenson stripped of Ryder Cup captaincy

GOLF

AFP

Henrik Stenson said last Wednesday (July 20) he is signing up for the rebel Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, just hours after he was axed as Europe's Ryder Cup captain.

"After much consideration, I have decided to join several of my fellow professionals and play in the LIV invitational series," the 46-year-old Swede said in a statement.

Stenson said he was "hugely disappointed" not to be able to maintain his role as captain for the next Ryder Cup to be played in Italy next year.

"It is a shame to witness the significant uncertainty surrounding the Ryder Cup and who will be eligible to play, etc. I hope a resolution between the tours and its members is reached soon," he added.

"Clearly a part of my decision to play in LIV golf events has been commercially driven but the format, schedule



Henrik Stenson during the recent British Open. Photo: AFP

and calibre of players were also significant factors," said Stenson.

The move to strip Stenson of the captaincy will deepen the rifts in the sport, with a growing number of big stars defecting to the cash-rich new circuit in defiance of the established tours.

Ryder Cup Europe said in a statement that Stenson's tenure as skipper for the bien-

nial competition against the United States in Rome had been brought to an end "with immediate effect".

"In light of decisions made by Henrik in relation to his personal circumstances, it has become clear that he will not be able to fulfil certain contractual obligations to Ryder Cup Europe," it said.

The statement added that confirmation of a new captain

for the 2023 tournament would be made in "due course".

Stenson has now joined fellow Ryder Cup stars Lee Westwood, Ian Poulter and Sergio Garcia in jumping ship to the LIV series.

The US team next year looks likely to be without players of the calibre of Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau, who have all been hit with indefinite bans by the PGA Tour and will therefore be ineligible to play.

Stenson, the 2016 British Open champion, reached a career high of number two in the world but has since slumped to 171 in the rankings.

European players must be members of the DP World Tour, formerly known as the European Tour, to be eligible to compete for Team Europe in the Ryder Cup.

The tour last month banned members who played in the inaugural LIV event in England for three tournaments and hit them with a heavy fine while the US PGA Tour banned those who made the jump.



Photo: Bangkok Post

BAT signs MoU with Chinese counterpart

BADMINTON

THE BADMINTON Association of Thailand (BAT) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Chinese Badminton Association to promote cooperation in various fields and strengthen Thai national badminton teams to achieve excellence at the international level.

The MoU was co-signed by Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul, president of the Badminton Association of Thailand and Zhang Jun, president of the Chinese Badminton Association at the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok on July 14.

The signing ceremony was attended by Chinese ambassador to Thailand Han Zhiqiang.

Khunying Patama who is also a member of the In-

ternational Olympic Committee (IOC) said the MoU covers various cooperations, including training of players, trainers and judges, promoting competitions at junior and senior levels and improving the competition system.

"Chinese players are one of the very best. The cooperation with the Chinese Badminton Association will help improve the skills and standards of Thai squads," she said.

"Thai national players need strong fundamentals to improve their skills to be at the world's top level," she added.

Three days later Thailand's mixed doubles badminton stars Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai won the BWF Singapore Open when they beat world number four-ranked Chinese pair Wang Yilye and Huang Dongping.

Bangkok Post

China to host Asian Games in 2023 after COVID postponement

ASIAN GAMES

CHINA WILL HOST THE 2022 ASIAN Games in Hangzhou in autumn 2023, organisers confirmed on July 19.

The Games were originally scheduled for September this year, but organisers postponed them in May as China tried to stamp out a large COVID resurgence in several parts of the country.

The event will now be held in Hangzhou from Sept 23 to Oct 8, 2023, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said.

The OCA said that the new dates were chosen to avoid "conflict with other major international sporting events".

The Hangzhou organising committee vowed to "present a wonderful and marvelous sports and cultural event with Chinese characteristics", in a statement confirming the new dates.

China is the last major economy committed to stamping out domestic spread of the virus through harsh lockdowns, mass testing and strict controls on international travel.

But that has hurt the country's international sporting ambitions, with the world's most populous nation cancelling or postponing almost all events since the start of the pandemic, with the exception of this year's Winter Olympics in Beijing.

The World University Games, scheduled to begin in June in Chengdu and already



Photo: AFP

delayed from last year, have also been postponed again, until 2023.

The Asian Games typically attract over 10,000 athletes from across the region.

Organisers said in April that Hangzhou, a city of 12 million in eastern China, had finished constructing 56 competition venues for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games.

Some events are also expected to be held in other provincial cities including Ningbo, Wenzhou, Huzhou, Shaoxing and Jinhua.

Almost all international sport has ground to a halt in China since COVID emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

The Beijing Olympics was an exception but was held in a "closed loop" with everyone inside it – including athletes, staff, volunteers and media – taking daily COVID tests and not allowed to venture into the wider city or have contact with the public. AFP

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Sport



Great Dane wins Tour de France > p14

RIDING THE CREST

Annissa to defend surf titles at Kata Beach contest



Annissa Flynn will be defending her women's longboard and shortboard titles at the upcoming Kata Beach event. Photo: KataSurfing.com

SURFING

Ben Tirebuck
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Local surfing sensation Annissa Flynn will be defending both her women's shortboard and longboard titles next week at the 'Thailand Surfing Championship' at Kata Beach.

The 23-year-old Phuket native currently holds both titles and is looking forward to the five-day competition starting on Wednesday (Aug 3).

"I'm really looking forward to it and am very excited because the waves have been so good lately – I really hope they stay that way for the

competition," Annissa told *The Phuket News*.

"I'm seeing more and more women and girls surfing in the water which is what it is all about – having a go and enjoying the water and sunshine.

"It's also a great opportunity to educate people and increase their knowledge about the power and potential danger of the water and the rips on these beaches during the monsoon season," she added.

The competition is being organised by the Thailand Surfing Federation (TSF) which has joined forces with the Surfboard Sports Association and the Phuket Tourist Association.

TSF President Chanin

Aiyarak said the five-day competition, running from Wednesday (Aug 3) to Sunday (Aug 7), is expected to attract over 100 local and national surfers to Phuket to compete across a variety of categories.

Mr Chanin confirmed that, whereas the competition is only open to Thai nationals, an international event known as the 'Phuket Beach Festival International Surfing Contest 2022' will be staged between Aug 23-28, at the same location.

The competition categories for next week's competition include men's and women's general shortboard models, longboard models and stand-up paddleboarding, one of the

fastest growing activities on the water otherwise known as SUP. There are no age restrictions on any of the categories.

The first two days of the competition will be dedicated to practice, while qualification rounds and the finals will take place during the remaining three days. Organisers confirmed the schedule is subject to change dependent on weather conditions and whether they allow for safe and appropriate competition.

Teams will be permitted to enter four athletes for the men's and women's shortboard and longboard contests, while two male or female athletes per team will be permitted for the SUP competition.

No prize money is on offer, although trophies and certificates will be given to the top three in each category. Mr Chanin also confirmed that the top four winners in the male and female long- and shortboard contests will be granted the opportunity to compete with surfers from around the world at the international competition on Aug 23-28 without any cost.

It is the second time the competition has been hosted at Kata Beach, a destination considered ideal due to the waves the ocean generates which are suitable for surfing competition. Kata is also widely regarded as a well known tourist destination

with an idyllic beach.

In addition to the actual competition the Phuket Tourist Association has confirmed there will be surfing clinics, skating lessons, beach yoga and live musical performances running concurrently. It is hoped the event can help stimulate tourism and boost the local economy, which is still reeling from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the tourism industry.

The event is also being supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Sports Authority of Thailand, the National Sports Development Fund and Karon Subdistrict Municipality.

Over 3,000 turn out for 'Run for Phuket Expo 2028'

RUNNING

MORE THAN 3,000 PEOPLE turned out to take part in the 'Run for Phuket Expo 2028' fun run on Sunday (July 24), held to support Thailand's bid for Phuket to host the World Specialised Expo.

The event featured a 6.3km fun run and a 12.6km 'mini marathon'.

The fun run, organised by government officials, was held just one day before representatives of the

Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) landed on the island for a week-long inspection visit.

The event, held at Bang Wad Reservoir in Kathu, drew a host of officials, including Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn and Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, joined by all three Phuket Vice Governors: Pichet Panaphong, Amnuay Pinsuwan and Anupap Rodkwan Yodrabam.

Phuket Tourist Association President Bhumikitti Ruktaengam

was also present to hand over a donation B902,028 raised from the event to go towards supporting the neonatal intensive care unit at Vachira Phuket Hospital. Present to receive the donation was Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Weerasak Lorthongkham.

The donation was recognised as in line with the theme of the bid for Phuket to host the Expo: "Future of Life: Living in Harmony, Sharing Prosperity".

"We therefore ask for the co-

operation from all of you, which is of great importance in making Thailand and Phuket a success in hosting the Specialised Expo," Mr Phiphat said.

"And if Thailand is selected to host EXPO 2028, it will be the first time in Southeast Asia," he added.

"All countries are ready to develop together, and this Expo will be a platform for all countries to lead a bright future together," concluded Mr Phiphat.

The Phuket News



Photo: Thailand Ministry of Tourism and Sports / Facebook