

**BOCELLI & SON TO HIGHLIGHT NEW YEAR EVENT > PAGE 5**

# FREEDOM WAITS

## AS PHUKET ZOO CLOSES, WFFT BEGINS LARGEST TIGER RESCUE IN THAILAND

Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) will rehome 11 tigers from Phuket Zoo. Photo: Edwin Wiek / WFFT

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

**W**ildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) is carrying out the largest tiger rescue in Thailand's history as the renowned wildlife animal welfare and rescue organisation prepares to take custody of 11 tigers and two bears handed over by Phuket Zoo.

WFFT founder and director Edwin Wiek confirmed the news on Dec 22.

"I am driving back to Phetchaburi today to ensure that the two areas

for the animals are ready. I have two areas set up for them, nine rai and 10 rai, with ponds and trees and space for them to roam," Mr Wiek told *The Phuket News*.

Mr Wiek explained that he and Sangduen "Lek" Chailert, founder of the Elephant Nature Park, discussed the handover of the animals with the Phuket Zoo owners on Dec 22.

The zoo has been hard hit by the financial crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving the facility without tourist visitors for nearly two years.

Despite previous encounters between WFFT and Phuket Zoo over the conditions many of the animals were kept in at the zoo, the parties set aside any animosity in order to determine the safe future for the animals, Mr Wiek noted.

"They were genuinely very concerned about the animals. They said they had refused offers for the animals' skins and bones," he said.

"As WFFT has the facilities and expertise to take care of large carnivores and currently houses more than 30 other bears, it was concluded

that WFFT could provide the best life-long care for these animals which require urgent rehoming," Mr Wiek explained.

Mr Wiek on Monday (Dec 27) was driving back to Phuket to meet with the Phuket Zoo owners and formalise the agreement on Tuesday with the signing of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding).

As of Monday, the WFFT was still waiting on formal approval by Thai authorities to take custody of the animals. "I am hoping to have the animals transported in the first...

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**NEWS** PAGE 2

**Locals under investigation for turtle ride**



**LIFE** PAGE 9

**Grip It! project joins push to feed the hungry**



**SPORT** PAGE 15

**War Elephants seeking record Suzuki Cup win**



**UWC THAILAND**  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**ACADEMICS**

**MINDFULNESS**

**SPORTS**

**SERVICE**

**OUTDOOR**

Experience a transformative education for peace and a sustainable future.

**APPLY TODAY!**

[www.uwcthailand.ac.th](http://www.uwcthailand.ac.th)



execeditor@classactmedia.co.th

# News



**Pair arrested after blazing pickup with bullets > p4**

## Turtle joyride under investigation

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

A local man has come under criticism for posting online a video showing himself and a friend riding on the back of a turtle that had come ashore at Bang Tao Beach.

The video was posted on the Facebook page of Fa Rook Utai at 10:02pm on Dec 22. The page is marked with a URL noting the name Rook Bennington.

One person, a Thai, criticised the behaviour, pointing out that turtles came ashore to nest.

One foreigner posted, "About to get kicked out of Thailand, when the authorities see this!"

The reply posted by Fa Rook Utai was, "Do you know normally people here in some areas eat [turtles], and I don't want to see them being eaten or traded, and at first my friends chased them into the sea, but they were still eating jellyfish. This is why I had to ride on his back, make it feel scared and escape into the sea. (Before commenting, please ask for the reasons for the action. Thank you very much)".

The video itself did not appear to show the men trying to scare off the turtle. Instead, it appears the men were "joyriding" on the turtle's back. One of the men is seen posing while "planking" on his stomach while riding the turtle.

An officer at Sirinath Marine National Park confirmed that no action could be taken by park officers as the incident occurred outside the park's boundaries.

Hiran Kanghae of the Phuket Marine Biological Center told *The Phuket News*, "Riding a turtle is a



The video showed the two men 'joyriding' on the turtle.

serious inappropriate behaviour, a threat that may result in the mother turtle not returning to spawn and possibly dropping her eggs in the sea. It is illegal if the turtle is injured."

The PMBC will look into the incident, Mr Niran said.

"Green sea turtles are protected animals under the Wildlife Preservation and Protection Act 2019," he noted.

PMBC Director Somnuk Boon-yai, after being notified of the incident by Mr Hiran, said, "We are now contacting the man who posted the clip to investigate the facts to consider whether there are any legal offenses."

Officers at Sirinath National Park reported a green turtle coming ashore to lay eggs on the beach in front of the visitor's centre at 4am on Dec 23.

The turtle took 2 hours and 30 minutes to lay 75 eggs and return to the sea.

The park officers deemed the site where they nest was laid as unsafe, due to possible flooding by high tides, and moved the eggs to a protected area in front of the park rangers' office.

The eggs are now under 24-hour surveillance to ensure safekeeping from predators and other disturbances.

It has not been confirmed whether or not it was the same turtle abused by the joyriding.

The turtle joyriding incident occurred at Bang Tao Beach, just 2.6km south of Sirinath National Park's southern boundary, and has seen numerous turtles come ashore over the years.

Prarop Plangngarn, Chief of "Operations Center 2" at Sirinath Marine National Park, last year called for hotels and other beachfront businesses to join a campaign to create turtle preservation zones to protect turtle eggs being laid along west-coast beaches on Phuket's northwest coast.

"Presently, there are only a few areas that are suitable for turtles to lay their eggs because of the continual expansion of human communities and the tourism industry," Mr Prapop told *The Phuket News*.

"The turtles are afraid of humans on shore, so relevant officers must take action to change the environmental factors to help encourage turtles to come ashore to lay their eggs.

"We need to create turtle pro-

tection areas, and we need to do it quickly," he said.

"Turtles have returned to laying eggs in the area. We have not seen this for years. The last time leatherback turtles were spotted returning to Sirinath national park was in 2013," Mr Prarop said.

The areas under consideration include the beaches at Nai Yang as well as Mai Khao Beach – at 14 kilometres long, Phuket's longest beach – all the way to Sai Kaew Beach on the northwestern tip of the island.

However, the zone at this stage does not include areas south of the national park.

"From October through December, turtles came ashore near a luxury resort on the headland just south of the park and laid eight different nests of turtle eggs," Mr Prarop pointed out in January last year.

"The eggs were taken into care by officials from the Phuket Marine Biological Center [PMBC]. We strongly believe more turtles will come back to lay more eggs," he said.

Meanwhile, Sirinath National Park is among six national parks to be proposed for World Heritage status.

The proposal was discussed at a meeting of the Protected Area Committee held at the Sirinath National Park head office led by Phuket Vice Governor Piyapong Choowong last December.

"Officials must first inform local people about the importance and the advantages of being recognised as world heritage sites, so that they can understand and support the proposal," Vice Governor Piyapong said.

## Funds needed to support largest tiger rescue effort in the country

Continued from page 1  
...week of January," Mr Wiek told *The Phuket News*.

The rescue and rehoming of 11 tigers to a sanctuary will be the biggest tiger rescue in Thailand's history. However, due to the financial impact of COVID-19, WFFT must first raise the funds required to rescue these 13 animals. As such WFFT is asking for financial support to undertake this historic rescue, he noted.

"This rescue will be no small feat for WFFT. The financial resources required to rescue and transport 13

large animals from Phuket to WFFT alone will be significant," Mr Wiek said.

The entire rescue will be funded by WFFT, he added.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have received more calls than ever from entertainment venues who cannot afford to feed their animals anymore. We try to help as many as we can. The fact is, though, that without financial support, we cannot help more.

"We are urging our friends in Phuket, in Thailand and around the world to please help with what will be a huge rescue, not only for WFFT,



Photo: Edwin Wiek / WFFT

but for tigers in Thailand," he said.

WFFT is a registered foundation in Thailand.

"In Thailand, like in every country in the world, animals are abused and exploited for profit and human gratification.

There are many examples of animal exploitation within the tourist industry, for example, photo prop animals, animals performing in degrading shows, and elephant camps. Furthermore, there is still a thriving illegal trade in wild animals for pets and medicine," the organisation explains on its website.

The top three major goals of the organisation are:

- To rescue and rehabilitate captive wild animals and provide high-quality care and a safe environment for them to live for the rest of their lives, in a setting as close to nature as possible.

- To campaign against all forms of animal abuse and exploitation in Thailand, work towards ending the illegal pet trade and discourage people from keeping all wild animals as pets. WFFT actively seeks to combat the illegal wildlife trade and to rescue animals from poor conditions or exploitation from human entertainment.

- To provide veterinary assistance to any sick or injured animal; wild or domestic.

To learn more about WFFT visit the official website [www.wfft.org](http://www.wfft.org)



# Ready for the Seven Days

**The Phuket News**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

**P**huket police and disaster officials last week started gearing up for the Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign for the New Year, which began on Wednesday (Dec 29).

Phuket Vice Governor Amnuay Phinsuwan led a meeting joined by Udomporn Kan, Chief of the Phuket office of Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket), at Phuket Provincial Hall on Friday (Dec 24) with leading figures from a host of local government offices in attendance.

The meeting was held to coordinate efforts and enable relevant agencies to take action on the prevention and reduction of road accidents effectively to reduce the loss of lives and property of the people in the “intensive period” of this year’s campaign, from Dec 29 to Jan 4, Vice Governor Amnuay said.

This year's campaign began with the "pre-strict control period" from Dec 22-28, V/Gov Amnuay noted. The period is marked by heavy



**A student receives a helmet from Region 8 Police at a 'Wear a helmet 100%' campaign event on Monday (Dec 27). Photo: PR Phuket**

campaign for road safety, including campaigns against drunk driving.

The “intensified control period”, famed for its police checkpoints, will be from Dec 29-Jan 4, followed by a third period after the “intensive control” from Jan 5-11, he added.

“Throughout Phuket officers will set up main checkpoints and secondary checkpoints, as well as public service points, in order to

reduce accidents during the Phuket New Year's festival," he said.

Meanwhile, Region 8 Police held an assembly at its headquarters at Tha Chatchai to reinforce the “Wear a helmet 100%” campaign to police officers across the island. Under the campaign, officers are to issue a warning only during an “interim period” until early next year, after which officers will start issuing fines.

Of note, police across Phuket have for years consistently fined foreigners for not wearing a helmet while riding a motorbike. The issue of Thai motorists not being fined has never been recognised by local police, other than general statements that police officers are not racist.

Phuket City Municipality launched its attempt to reduce road accidents over the New Year holidays with a campaign starting last Friday (Dec 24).

“This is the period when many people use road vehicles to travel back to their hometowns and just to travel,” Phuket City Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas said at the campaign launch event.

"As a result, there is a large number of vehicles that cause accidents, much higher than normal," he added.

“All parties involved should realise the importance of preventing and solving road accidents and to promote and support the integrated plan of Phuket during the New Year’s festival to reduce road accidents to a minimum,” he said.

“By focusing on reducing risk factors from people, vehicles, roads and the environment, along with raising awareness of road safety among motorists and encouraging local government organisations to play a role in preventing and reducing road accidents according to the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Act,” he continued.

Phuket City Police Chief Col Sarawut Chuprasit said that Phuket City Police have prepared all officers for the New Year holidays.

“The safety of the people is a major concern in Mueang Phuket [District], especially in this kind of economy under COVID-19, when people are suffering greatly, and the Phuket City Police will try to do their best,” he said.

“If there is any problem, you can inform the Phuket City Police, and they will make our brothers and sisters feel most comfortable,” he said in a video interview released on Friday.

“Everyone who travels in Phuket must strictly follow the orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If we all help each other, we can control this disease. It will be good for the overall picture of Phuket and Thailand,” he added.

“For safety, he would like all brothers and sisters to take care of themselves; people should be careful when traveling in isolated places. Police officers are already inspecting places where people go and have put in place strict security measures. There are CCTV cameras in Mueang District that will take care of everyone’s security in case of maximum safety when traveling to Phuket,” he assured.

# 11pm 'last call' for indoor venues on New Year's Eve

ALL INDOOR VENUES MUST STOP serving alcohol and may not allow the consumption of alcohol on the premises after 11pm on New Year's Eve.

The news was confirmed by an order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciw on Monday (Dec 27), detailing the current COVID-prevention measures for all venues and establishments across the island.

The new order confirmed that “service places” such as entertainment venues, pubs, bars and karaoke will remain closed until further notice.

The order also revised previous announcements regarding indoor venues serving alcohol on New Year's Eve.

“The sale of alcoholic beverages indoor venues is prohibited after 11pm to 6am of the next day, except a shop with an outdoor area that can be opened for consumption of alcoholic beverages is available exclusively for the New Year’s Eve festival according to normal business hours on Dec 31 until 1am on Jan 1,” the order said.

“An area with air conditioning can be opened for consumption of alcoholic beverages until 11pm before New Year,” the order added.

The order marked the second time officials had reversed the rules regarding indoor venues serving alcohol on New Year's Eve.

On Dec 24 Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong announced that indoor venues would be allowed to serve alcohol until 1am. That has now changed with the order issued on Monday.

Ms Thitima, an officer at the Phuket



The latest order was issued on Monday (Dec 27). *Image: PR Phuket*

Provincial Administration Office, which is responsible for issuing provincial orders approved by the governor, told *The Phuket News* that the Phuket provincial figures had no choice but to institute the 11pm limit.

“Phuket is a pilot province, so it can have special rules, but since Omicron arrived in Thailand, Phuket must follow the rules issued by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA).

“The last order of Phuket Provincial announced that indoor venues would be allowed to serve alcohol until 1am, but the new order has changed that. The sale of alcoholic beverages at indoor venues must stop from 11pm to 6am the next day.

“An outdoor area can be open for the consumption of alcoholic beverages exclusively for New Year’s Eve celebrations on Dec 31 until 1am on Jan 1. All information of the new order is all correct,” she said.

*The Phuket News*





The Phuket News

## CONTACT US

editor@classactmedia.co.th 076 612 550

**PURIYA BEAVAN**  
Editor**CHRIS HUSTED**  
Executive Editor  
084 307 7408  
executiveeditor@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**  
THANAPONG 'OAK' KHAO-AMPHAIPHAN  
Graphic designersThe Phuket News  
@thephuketnews

## ADVERTISING

ClassAct Media

Phuket News

WINDOW ON PHUKET

Where to eat in PHUKET

Новости Phuket

ข่าวภูเก็ต

NEWS TV

LIVE 89.5

Phuket TICKETMASTER

076 612 550 ext. 605

Fax: 076 612 553

Info@classactmedia.co.th

thephuketnews.com

99/7 Moo 1 (Billion Plaza),  
T. Kathu, A. Kathu, Phuket 83120

## PHUKET SEVEN DAY WEATHER FORECAST

www.foreca.com

FRI DEC 31



High: +33°

Low: +26°

Wind 14 m/s

SAT JAN 1



High: +33°

Low: +26°

Wind 14 m/s

SUN JAN 2



High: +32°

Low: +26°

Wind 11 m/s

MON JAN 3



High: +32°

Low: +25°

Wind 11 m/s

TUE JAN 4



High: +31°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

WED JAN 5



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

THU JAN 6



High: +33°

Low: +25°

Wind 7 m/s

## Two arrested for attempted murder

**Eakkapop Thongtub**  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

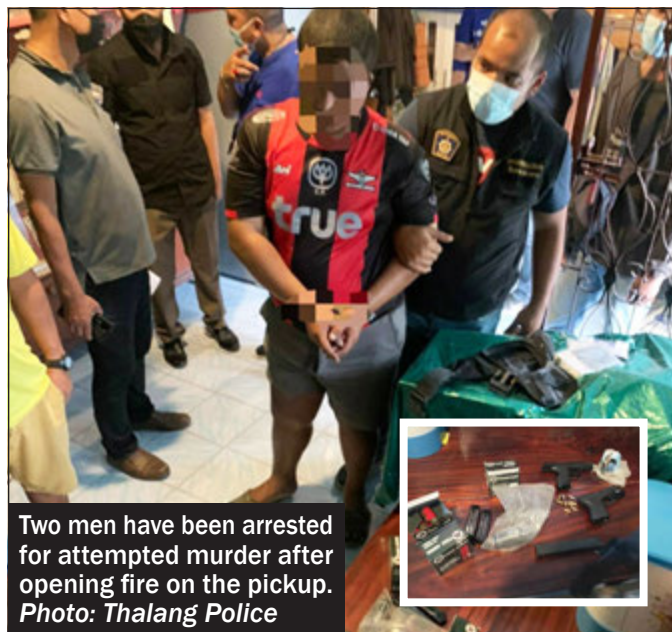
Police have arrested at least two men for their roles in the attempted murder of three men in a pickup near Wat Srisoonthorn, north of the Heroines Monument, early on Dec 19.

Thalang Police Deputy Chief Lt Col Anukul Nuket revealed the arrests on Dec 21 following a video being posted online accusing the police of not investigating the shooting.

Lt Col Anukul dismissed the video simply as, "Not true."

"At about 4am on the day of the incident [Dec 19], Lt Col Niwat Timket, Inspector of Investigation, was on duty at Thalang Police Station," Lt Col Anukul said.

"Prathan Mongkonhong, 28, and other two people came to file a complaint that his vehicle was shot at, with bullets breaking through the windows, by an assailant using an unknown type of firearm while he and the others were sitting in the car at



Two men have been arrested for attempted murder after opening fire on the pickup. Photo: Thalang Police

about 2:30am that same day," he added.

The shooting occurred in a small alley beside Wat Srisoonthorn on Thepkasattri Rd, about 1.38km north of the Heroines Monument, he added.

The vehicle Mr Prathan and his colleagues were sitting in was a black Isuzu pickup truck registered in Bangkok.

"The investigating officer interviewed Mr Prathan and two other people before entering the daily report at 4:20am,"

Lt Col Ankul explained, adding that Mr Prathan returned to give an additional statement at 3pm the next day.

"Forensic police inspected the pickup and gathered evidence of the gunshots, and coordinated with the investigation team who tracked down the culprit, who we now know is Anothai Jindaphon, 27, a resident of Srisoonthorn," Lt Col Anukul said.

Police had already arrested "the people" in connection

with the attack, Lt Col Anukul said.

The arrests were reported by Thalang Police in their daily arrest report for Dec 20, he said.

Lt Col Anukul gave no further information.

The daily arrest report for Dec 20 noted that two men, Thamrong "Toi" Sukmetta and Anothai "Pae" Jindapol, were arrested after they were found in joint possession of a 9mm Glock handgun with two magazines, one of them loaded with 10 bullets; a 9mm Beretta handgun with two magazines; and 30 12-gauge shotgun cartridges.

Also recorded as seized as evidence from the men were two black garbage bags, said the report.

They both face charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. Anothai faces an additional charge of illegal possession of unregistered explosives, the report said.

Listed separately as a "different case" was that Anothai also faces charges under an arrest warrant No. 372/2021

issued by Phuket Provincial Court on Dec 20 for jointly attempting to kill another person, illegal possession of firearms and ammunition and for illegally carrying firearms in a public area.

Also listed separately as a "different case" was that Thamrong faces charges under arrest warrant No. 373/2021 issued on Dec 20 for committing the crime of jointly attempting to kill another person, illegal possession of firearms and ammunition and for illegally carrying firearms in a public area.

Neither the arrest report nor Lt Col Anukul gave any motive for the attack.

Also reported on Dec 20 as arrested and facing charges for committing the crime of jointly attempting to kill another person with premeditation was Ekachai "Eke" Nimla-or, arrested under arrest warrant No. 362/2021 issued on Dec 13.

The fourth arrest reported on Dec 20 was that of a "Mr Deh", full name not reported, for illegal possession of a Category 1 narcotic, specifically amphetamine and crystal meth.

## Man killed as pickup wipes out

A 36-YEAR-OLD MAN died after the pickup truck he was driving slid on a wet road and slammed into a power pole in Srisoonthorn early Monday morning (Dec 27).

Pol Col Kraisorn Boonprasop of Thalang Police was notified of the accident, on Thepkasattri Rd northbound near the pedestrian overpass at Wat Srisoonthorn School, at 00:30am.

Thalang police along with rescue workers from Srisoonthorn Municipality and the Muang Mai branch of the Kusoldharm Foundation arrived at the scene, about 300 metres south of the Baan Lipon U-turn, to find the heavily damaged pickup still wrapped around the pole.

The driver, Songkiad Sukanantapong, 36, from Ao Luek, Krabi, was dead at the scene, his body still trapped in the cab of his

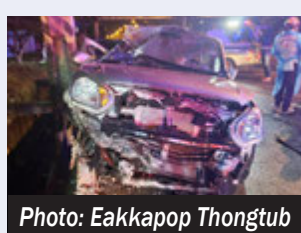


Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Phuket-registered Isuzu D-Max pickup.

Rescue workers used hydraulic equipment to recover Mr Songkiad's body, which they transported to Thalang Hospital.

According to the police investigation, Mr Songkiad was driving home from Phuket Town when the accident happened. He lived at the Karn Keha housing estate in Moo 1, Srisoonthorn, about two kilometres from the scene of the accident.

Mr Songkiad was traveling at speed when he lost control of the pickup and slammed into the power pole. The road was wet from recent rain, said the report.

Eakkapop Thongtub

## More threatening behaviour at Nui Beach

LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE REACHED out to the media asking for help in highlighting rude and dangerous behaviour by fishermen dropping anchor off Nui Beach, on Phuket's west coast.

The local residents, who asked to remain anonymous, said that at about midday last Saturday (Dec 25) a group of men arrived on a small fishing boat, passing dangerously close to buoys marking where divers were underwater to see the coral reef there.

The men then donned masks and went spearfishing. Their prey included several clownfish.

"Everyone knows that it's illegal to drop an anchor on a coral reef, but this group of men ignored that and broke the law. They drove the boat closer to the tourists who were snorkeling, which made foreign tourists alarmed. They also shouted rude words at the tourists," one of the local residents said.

This was not the first time the local residents had witnessed the behaviour by the men.

"We often see this bad behaviour by this group of men, and they always show that they are not afraid of anyone.

"They name several politicians they will claim will threaten people who challenge them," the local resident added.

The local residents said they wanted officials to investigate the behaviour of the men.

"Foreigners also have been fed up with the behaviour of these for a long time. When



The men who regularly return to fish at the reef often swear at and threaten tourists, the local residents said. Photo: Supplied

tourists have criticised them, they immediately shout back, causing the tourists to feel frightened about this group of men.

"Every time these men come to fish, they bring longtail boats to anchor on this reef, which has destroyed the beautiful coral," the local resident said.

Nui Beach has become notorious over the years for price gouging and threatening behaviour by people claiming the beach is theirs.

The illegal beach club, where tourists for years were extorted entry fees and even threatened with violence, was torn down by officials for illegally occupying state forest land last year.

To ensure workers were not threatened while carrying out the demolition, more than 100 officers descended on the site, bolstered by security personnel from the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command and led by the Phuket branch of the Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc). Eakkapop Thongtub



# Matteo Bocelli to join NY event

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Matteo Bocelli will join his world-renowned opera singer father Andrea Bocelli on stage for the Amazing Thailand @Phuket Countdown event for New Year's Eve.

Matteo, 24, is a rising star in classic music crossover with modern songs. His official first single, *Solo*, is produced by Grammy awards winner Jesse Shaktin for Capitol Records. His debut album will be released in 2022 on Capitol Records.

Matteo appears on Andrea Bocelli's worldwide hit *Fall On Me* from the tenor's album *Si*, singing in English and Italian in a heartfelt tribute to each other. Matteo also sings on the album track *Ven a Mi* with his father.

Matteo's attendance was announced last weekend at a press event in Phuket led by Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn. The full title of the event, organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), is "Amazing Thailand Countdown 2022, Amazing new Chapters @ Phuket".



The news was announced last weekend by Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn. Photo: PR Phuket

The effort being put into the event, which has been incessantly promoted by government agencies for the past week, is to help in the economic recovery of Phuket through tourism, Mr Phiphat said.

Present at the press event were TAT Deputy Governor of Domestic Marketing Thapanee Kiatpaiboon, Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew, Phuket Vice Governor Piyapong Choowong, Phuket Provincial

Police Chief Maj Gen Sermphan Sirikong and heads of government agencies involved in the event.

Also present was Dr Kusak Kukiattikoon to explain the current state of infections and to assure of the COVID-prevention measures that will be in force at the event.

In his address to the press, Mr Phiphat highlighted the success of the Phuket Sandbox scheme for tourists to enter Thailand and the ongoing

national effort in the mass vaccination campaign.

The TAT was organising such mega-events for New Year's Eve at five locations in the country, Mr Phiphat said.

"Although the Omicron strain of COVID-19 will see more infections during the New Year, I believe that Thai people will be able to adapt so that activities can be carried out in order to revitalise tourism and the economy," he said.

"The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is trying to promote travel in Thailand to high-end tourists with purchasing power, especially to promote tourism in the community, which will enhance the potential of tourism and expand the income to individual communities.

"If we are successful in attracting tourists, it is expected that in 2022 Thailand will see approximately B1.3-1.8 trillion [nationally] in income from tourism. So we ask for cooperation from everyone to be a good host in welcoming tourists who travel to Thailand," Mr Phiphat said.

Ms Thapanee agreed, saying, "Seeing the readiness of Phuket and the readiness of business operators in the Phuket area, the important thing in organising this event is to show the world that organising happy events and celebrations can be done while protecting people from the spread of COVID-19 at the same time."

The event will also include a cultural performance from Korea and live performances by Thai artists such as Gam Wichayanee, Kit Kittinan, Ann Thitima, Pom Autobahn,

Pu Anchalee, Pan Paiboonkiat, Kob Sao Wanit, Oui Rawiwan, Ann Nantana and Tee Wiwit.

According to the official schedule for the night, Mr Bocelli and his son will take to the stage at 11:51pm and will join the official countdown to the New Year. He will remain on stage until at least 00:03am for the launch of the 20,000-firework show.

The event, to be held at Saphan Hin, is to be attended by people by pre-registration through the QueQ app only. All people at the event must be fully vaccinated and must have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of arriving at the venue. Attendees must be able to provide evidence of both in order to be allowed into the event area.

Preparations for the event are already underway at Saphan Hin. Seating has been organised to maintain social distancing and traffic flow through Saphan Hin will be controlled for the event, including the redirection of one-way streets in the area.

Officers will be at all entrances and exits to the event area to ensure compliance with the COVID-prevention measures.

## Phuket remembers tsunami victims with 'Soul of the Sea' memorial service

HUNDREDS GATHERED AT PATONG Beach on the night of Dec 26 to join the tsunami memorial service, remembering the lives lost in the disaster 17 years ago.

Tourism & Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn led the official event, this year called 'Soul of the Sea', at 7pm.

Following speeches by Mr Phiphat, Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panaphong and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Deputy Governor of Domestic Marketing Thapanee Kiatpaiboon, attendees were invited to place candles in the sand to remember those lost to the waves.

The day's events began with the traditional merit making of giving alms to monks, followed by a series of activities held at Patong Beach to commemorate the anniversary.

Ms Thapanee explained that similar activities were being held in Phuket and Phang Nga to remember the calamity.

As is now tradition, the events were held at Loma Park on the Patong beachfront. Smaller events were held at Chom Lay Market on the Mai Khao beachfront.

In Patong, the activities included a Tsunami Remembrance Exhibition, street music show, a light show, an orchestral performance and the candle-lighting ceremony.

Yuang Upatanon, 77, lost her younger brother, Mr Arom Kungkaew, in the disaster. His body was found three days later, she said.

"That day was a Buddhist holy day. I had prepared food to make merit at Patong Temple. I had not yet offered the food to the monks when all sorts of loud noises were heard," she recalled.



Photo: Eakkapop Thongtub

Ms Yuang was told of the waves sweeping over the Patong Beach, devastating the shops and restaurants along the beachfront.

"While the waves were still receding, I drove my motorcycle along [Rat-U-Thit] 200 Pi Rd. Everywhere I looked, all I could see were ruins and floating debris," she said.

Ms Yuang volunteered to help the wounded, and help recover the dead

"I helped dress more than 100 bodies, most of them foreigners," she recalled.

In Thailand, official government estimates marked 5,078 confirmed dead, another 8,457 injured and 3,716 missing, presumed dead, all lost to the tsunami that struck in the morning on Dec 26, 2004.

While confirmed deaths in Phuket were only 259, another 700 remained listed as missing.

Phang Nga, however, bore the brunt of the tsunami, with 4,163 people confirmed dead and another 2,113 recorded as missing. Records mark that of those killed in Phang Nga by the tsunami 2,213 were foreigners – mostly tourists. Eakkapop Thongtub

## Mastery Learning • American Curriculum Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education



Ensuring success for all by providing education based upon student mastery of all subjects.

Enroll Today!



QSI INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL OF PHUKET

81/4 Moo. 1 Chalemphrakiat Ror. 9 Road Kathu  
www.phuket.qsi.org • 076 304 312



# Praise for keeping Sandbox open

The Phuket News  
editor@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket Tourist Association President Bhumikitti Raktaengam has led a consortium of 16 agencies to say thank you to the government for keeping the Phuket Sandbox scheme open following the suspension of all Test & Go entry to the country.

Present to receive the formal thanks at the new Phuket Provincial Hall on Dec 22 was Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Pananpong.

Phuket remains the only province where tourists may enter the country under the Sandbox scheme following the immediate suspension of the Test & Go entry scheme on Dec 21.

The order to suspend Test & Go arrivals came 24 hours after Thailand marked its first local transmission, in Bangkok, of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, which has brought on severe prevention measures and travel bans across Europe.

"On behalf of the private sector of Phuket, I would like to thank the Prime Minister and all relevant Cabinet members who have decided to trust Phuket to accept tourists in the form of the Phuket Sandbox," Mr Bhumikitti said.

"There are many related official agencies that support Phuket Province, especially in Phuket led by the Governor of Phuket and all Deputy Governors of Phuket, and with special thanks to Airports of Thailand and especially the Director of Phuket Airport for supporting the mission that we have gained confidence in this time," he added.



Photo: PR Phuket

## TEST & GO SUSPENDED

The central government has confirmed that 110,000 visitors who had already been approved entry to Thailand, and issued a QR code via the Thailand Pass application system before entry was suspended, will be allowed to enter Thailand.

However, they will now be required to undergo a second RT-PCR test on Day 5 of their stay – in addition to their first RT-PCR test on landing – to confirm they are not infected. The government has announced that the state will pay the costs of the second test.

These visitors must stay in their hotel rooms until the results of their first test confirm they are not infected. Once the first test results confirm they are not infected, they may leave their hotel rooms. They must also return to their hotel each night until they have passed their second test.

A further 90,000 visitors who had applied but had not yet been approved entry will be allowed to enter the country, Government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana assured.

The decision to suspend the Test & Go entry scheme will be reviewed on Jan 4.

## PHUKET SANDBOX STILL OPEN

In addition to suspending all Test & Go entry to the country, the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) on Dec 21 also suspended all Sandbox entry schemes – except the Phuket Sandbox model.

Under the Phuket Sandbox scheme visitors may land on the island and will be tested for COVID-19 on landing. If they test negative, they are free to go anywhere on the island. They will receive a

second RT-PCR test on Day 5-6.

They must stay on the island for seven days, after which – if they test negative for the virus – visitors may travel freely within the country, pending local restrictions in each province. During the seven days, Phuket Sandbox arrivals must stay at their designated pre-booked hotel. They are not allowed to stay overnight in any other places.

Any arrivals who test positive for COVID-19 will be referred to a healthcare facility for appropriate medical treatment, for which the expenses must be covered by the required insurance, or national healthcare coverage for Thais and eligible foreign expatriates, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) notes in its description of the Sandbox scheme.

## HOLDING ON

Mr Bhumikitti urged people to

remain calm, and to be patient in waiting for the CCSA to review the situation on Jan 4.

To date, Phuket has not marked a local transmission of the Omicron variant, and Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Weerasak Lorthongkham confirmed that all recent local cases of infection have resulted in mild symptoms only.

"We must maintain confidence [in handling the situation], for citizens and tourists, no matter which variant of COVID-19. Not just Omicron, there may be others. I believe that with the cooperation of all of us we will be able to coexist with the COVID-19 pandemic and overcome this crisis," he said on Dec 27.

"During these two weeks Phuket will do our best to reassure the country and tourists around the world that Thailand will continue [to remain open]... and most importantly, thanks to the government, especially the departments of the Ministry of Public Health, including Vachira Phuket Hospital and the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office, which together are an important force that will allow Phuket to move forward," he said.

Mr Bhumikitti noted that the policy shift will no doubt affect tourist arrivals, but said it was too early to tell how much of an effect it will have.

"The suspension of the Test & Go scheme will have an inevitable impact. But it is necessary to keep the economy going," Mr Bhumikitti told the *Bangkok Post*.

Phuket mainly has tourists from Russia and Kazakhstan at present and these countries can still enter via the Phuket Sandbox despite the change in other entry systems, he said.



A passenger disembarking a TUI Fly Nordic flight gives the thumbs-up after landing in Phuket on Nov 29. Photo: AoT Phuket

## TUI confirms still flying to Phuket

EUROPEAN TRAVEL GIANT TUI has confirmed that it will continue with its flights to Phuket throughout the Winter schedule as planned.

The confirmation follows reports on Monday (Dec 27) that TUI had cancelled all flights to Phuket from European cities from December through April next year due to Omicron concerns.

The reports claimed that TUI made the announcement on Christmas Day.

The cancellation of flights was reported to have affected an estimated 30,000 tourists who had booked to fly to Phuket.

"This is completely false," Adam Györki, Communications Manager, Sweden, at the TUI head office in Stockholm told *The Phuket News* by email on Monday night.

"We will continue flying to Phuket for the season from the Nordics," he added.

"TUI has a strong relationship with the Thai people and will continue to safely operate flights to Phuket during this season," Mr Györki noted.

TUI resumed its regular direct flights from Europe to Phuket on Nov 29 with a direct flight from Copenhagen bringing 345 foreigner travellers to the island.

*The Phuket News*

## Creativity, culture to lure domestic tourists

PHUKET CITY MAYOR SAROJ Angkanapilas has launched a campaign to boost cultural tourism to attract more domestic tourists to the Phuket Town area to help local businesses and the island's economy to recover.

"Phuket City Municipality must stimulate the domestic tourism market, especially in the Phuket Town area with its diverse cultural attractions, unique traditions and lifestyles, in order to revitalize the tourism sector and economy of Phuket," Mayor Saroj told the press at the Phuket Creativity & Innovation Centre (CIC) on Dec 21.

Tourist safety was also a key concern, Mayor Saroj added.

"A total of 255 CCTV cameras covering all areas in Phuket City Municipality will be installed, with measures to prevent and mitigate disasters 24 hours a day, to increase the efficiency of crime prevention and suppression, and to increase safety for people and tourists traveling in the Phuket City Municipality area," he said.

Mayor Saroj also announced



Phuket Town needs to target domestic tourists, said Phuket City Mayor Saroj Angkanapilas. Photo: PR Phuket

the winners of the Phuket City Municipality "2022 Photo Contest" created to "promote tourism, stimulate the economy and open up new perspectives".

"People will be able to witness a variety of natural attractions, cultural attractions and lifestyles in various locations through these photos, such as landscape and architecture, which will reflect Phuket's individuality while promoting and fostering creativity," Mayor Saroj said.

At the event, Mayor Saroj presented the winners of the contest, which highlighted 12 photographs

presented under the theme "Looking at the City from a New Angle, Chicer than the Old."

All 12 photographs awarded will be used to make a souvenir calendar for 2022, and will be featured in various media on some occasions to promote tourism in Phuket Town, Mayor Saroj said.

Mayor Saroj also invited people to participate in making merit by providing alms to monks on New Year's Day 2022 at the Phuket Provincial Government Centre on Saturday, Jan 1, 2022 for the start of an auspicious new year.

*The Phuket News*



# Omicron prompts new national COVID-19 alert

## BANGKOK

Bangkok Post

The Public Health Ministry has decided to raise the nation's COVID-19 alert level following a rapid increase in Omicron variant infections, warning that new cases may surge to 30,000 a day early next year unless strict precautions are followed.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Kiattiphum Wongrajit, said at a media briefing that the ministry decided to raise the nation's COVID-19 alert to Level 3 after seeing new cases of the Omicron variant soar from 104 on Dec 22 to 514 on Monday (Dec 27).

In light of the new threat from the Omicron variant, the ministry has come up with three possible scenarios, Dr Kiattiphum said.

In the best-case scenario, the country would see about 10,000 new infections, with fatalities hovering between 60-70 a day as early as late January, Dr Kiattiphum said.

He said that in the second



People queue for their COVID-19 vaccine booster shot at a shopping mall in Pathum Thani province on Dec 24. Photo: Pattarapong Chatpattarasill

scenario, authorities will register 15,000-16,000 new cases per day.

In the worst-case scenario, in which no added precautions against the fast-spreading variant are taken, or if the public refuses to comply with disease control measures, new infections could hit 30,000 daily, with 170-180 deaths per day.

Graphics presented at the briefing showed the daily tally of new Omicron infections peaking in late January or early February in the best and

second-best scenarios.

Dr Kiattiphum said that in the best-case scenario the outbreak would be brought under control in one or two months, while in the second-best scenario the situation will take a little longer to stabilise.

In the worst outlook, new infections would peak in early March before the numbers decline. It would take three to four months for health authorities to control the situation in this scenario, Dr Kiattiphum said.

According to the permanent secretary, the ministry is not expecting to see the fatality rate of the new variant to be as high as the Delta variant.

However, he said, the virus is likely to spread faster, before stressing the need for at-risk groups of people to get vaccinated quickly to prevent the worst effects of the virus.

Out of the 514 Omicron cases detected in Thailand as of Monday, about 90% of the patients exhibited mild or no symptoms at all, Dr Kiattiphum added.

He also assured the public that there are enough beds and medicine to deal with a new surge of infections.

Currently, there are about 170,000 vacant hospital beds for patients and about 15 million favipiravir pills, which will last at least two months.

Dr Kiattiphum said the strict observance of disease control measures and the progress of the national vaccination campaign will ultimately determine the success of the fight against the Omicron variant.

## Thailand vows to assist Myanmar refugees

### BANGKOK

THE THAI GOVERNMENT has promised to look after all Myanmar refugees who flee to Mae Sot district of Tak province amid ongoing fighting between Myanmar's armed forces and ethnic Karen rebels.

Describing the move as a humanitarian gesture, Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha said he has instructed officials to prepare to provide the refugees with medical aid and food supplies.

He noted, however, that no new refugee centres will be set up as all refugees will have to return to Myanmar once the situation improves. Thailand has already seen an influx of 90,000 refugees from the neighbouring country.

Reports also indicate that villages along the Thai-Myanmar border in Mae Sot have been caught in the range of mortar fire during intense clashes between Myanmar security forces and rebel groups.

There are no plans to evacuate Thais from affected areas at this time, as the government works to ensure the conflict does not spill into Thailand.

The Friends Without Bor-



Thailand has already seen an influx of 90,000 refugees from the neighbouring country of Myanmar. Photo: NNT

ders Foundation released a statement urging the Thai government to provide shelter for Myanmar refugees and work with local activists and humanitarian groups to render assistance.

The fighting escalated last Thursday (Dec 23) when Myanmar forces conducted aerial bombardments against villages in Myanmar's Myawaddy province, located across from Ban Don Chai Rim Moei village in Mae Sot district.

Officials in Mae Sot district have since stepped up security measures along the border, as well as dispatched field doctors to help injured refugees under strict disease prevention protocols.

NNT

## Breakout blamed on apps

### BANGKOK

THE FAILURE TO SYNCHRONISE a tourist tracking system is the main reason some tourists have avoided the health screening process, according to the president of the Kata-Karon Hotel Association, Angkana Tanetvisetkul.

Ms Angkana said more than 80% of inbound travellers could not download the MorChana app, which is supposed to be the main tool to track their whereabouts and alert them to take a second COVID test, or when they have had close contact with COVID patients.

She said the country uses three apps, including Thailand Pass, the pre-arrival registration system that should link with COSTE, the surveillance platform the Disease Control Department requires hotels use for all guest bookings and other information.

However, when travellers enter the wrong name or passport number during the process, the apps do not synchronise, resulting in an unsuccessful MorChana download for that individual.

Moreover, the COSTE platform is not able to verify authentication of hotel bookings, unlike the SHA Plus Booking Authentication System hotels in Phuket designed to use during the Sandbox pilot programme in July, which could differentiate fake bookings from real ones.

"As the Omicron variant poses a new threat, state agencies responsible for these



Passengers inside the arrival hall at Suvarnabhumi airport on Dec 20 awaiting instructions. Photo: Varuth Hirunyathab

apps must urgently fix the system so the apps synchronise to strengthen safety measures," said Ms Angkana.

When the system malfunctions, hotels have to put more effort into processing all the data manually, which not every property is willing to do, she said. That can create a loophole in the surveillance scheme.

"An integrated one-stop command centre is essential so hoteliers can submit their problems directly in a timely manner," said Suksit Suvunditkul, Vice President of the Thai Hotels Association's southern chapter.

Hotel workers currently assist tourists case-by-case, which not only prolongs the check-in process to almost an hour, but also increases the risk of getting an infection, said Mr Suksit.

He said hoteliers manually solve problems now instead of capitalising on technology to ensure all guests are tracked and free from disease.

Hotels have to print out QR codes and let guests keep a copy if they are unable to install MorChana, said Mr Suksit.

Bangkok Post

## NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA DINNER

Join us for our Gala Buffet Dinner from 8 pm at Cosmo Restaurant. Festivities will be accompanied by latin sounds from renowned band EKA Soundz all against the amazing backdrop of Naiharn Beach.

COUNTDOWN WHILE WATCHING THE FIREWORKS OVER THE BAY.

### COSMO

**THB 5,555 NET PER PERSON**  
GALA BUFFET DINNER (FOOD ONLY)

**THB 8,888 NET PER PERSON**  
FOOD & BEVERAGE PACKAGE INCLUDING FREE-FLOW SERVED FROM DOUBLE MAGNUMS

CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS EAT FREE  
FROM 2 UP TO 11 YEARS AT 50% OFF

ALL PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF SERVICE CHARGE AND GOVERNMENT TAXES

PLEASE CONTACT US FOR MORE DETAILS AT  
TEL: 076 380 200 | E-MAIL: FBRESERVATION@THENAIHARN.COM

THE NAI HARN PHUKET





The benefits of gardening bear fruit for people of all ages. Photo: Dmitry Dreyer / Unsplash



## GREEN THOUGHTS

Patrick Campbell

If you write about gardening for a publication, you will encounter two different kinds of readers. A few, and fortunately they are few and far between, ask for help, often with no please or thank you, and lack the courtesy to write back after you have spent time in addressing their queries. Fortunately, the commonality of gardeners is a happy one, and the majority of correspondents are genuine enthusiasts, generous

in their response to any advice. They reinforce my conviction that gardening is a beneficial and life-enhancing activity, not only for our floral charges, but also for those of us who cherish them.

The following letter, recently received, is a gracious illustration of this belief. Please pardon my immodesty in quoting from it. Diane writes:

‘You remind me of two people I admire greatly. Gardening is not only great for the soul, it strengthens our physical health. When I was a young law student... I lived in a gorgeous home with an 88-year-old widow who kept perennially young by taking in three boarders. She had a gigantic

English-style garden and my room with terrace overlooked the magnificent garden. This lady did all her own gardening, save for cutting the grass, and she got upset with herself whenever she forgot the Latin name for a flower! She took the tube alone at age 93 to shop for antiques and lived to the great age of 103.

‘My mother is half English and half Scandinavian. Her brother lived well into his nineties and he too was an avid and extremely talented gardener, as well as his English wife. How I adored visiting them and walking about in their garden.’

She concludes by saying: ‘You are certain to live a very long and healthy life.’ Amen to that...

Diana is in exalted company. Since time immemorial, writers from Andrew Marvell in ‘The Garden’ to the Romantic poet William Wordsworth and the American naturalist Henry Thoreau have celebrated the good vibrations that emanate from the natural world.

As for the physical benefits that accrue from communing with nature in the shape of gardening, a recent survey from Michigan State University concluded that not only does gardening reduce the onset of obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and senility, it offers a more pleasurable way of taking exercise. Research showed that gardeners spent more time every week tending their flowers than those who chose walking or biking as their main source of exercise.

And even when we have rested from our labours, benefits can persist. For my own part, I take daily pleasure from imagining all that magical, springing vegetable growth that is taking place, silent and unseen, beyond my bedroom walls: buds opening, leaves unfurling, roots delving, flowers blooming. Come a new day, I will venture out into a kaleidoscopic world, a living tapestry where everything has been subtly transfigured.

It does not stop there. Gardening helps in other, more measurable ways. In our modern concrete jungles, the presence of shrubs and trees in our borders or in nearby parks, enriches the very air we breathe. All green plants absorb potentially harmful carbon dioxide through photosynthesis: they sequester the gas and release life-enhancing oxygen back into the atmosphere. A study recently found that trees prevented nearly a million cases of respiratory diseases. Put an-

other way, trees remove 17 million tons of atmospheric pollution every year.

Moreover, leafy shrubs and trees not only intercept these harmful airborne articulates, but save water, prevent soil erosion and prevent flooding. Quite a list. Yet we continue to destroy everything green from mangrove swamps and equatorial rain forests to individual trees that get in the way of ‘progress’ in the form of new buildings or roads. Do all in your power to grow trees in your garden. An especial treasure.

My daughter is fortunate enough to own a 10-acre bluebell wood as part of her expanded ‘garden’ in rural England. In the spring, the whole area is a blue floral carpet, luminous beneath the budding hornbeam trees. While few of us today have the opportunity to wander in pristine woods or commune with Mother Nature in her sublimer moments, we still may, like Diana’s lady, take pleasure and solace in cultivating a garden. Even a row of container plants on a concrete balcony is better than nothing.

It is not just man who benefits. Gardens are a haven for innumerable species of insects, including bees and butterflies, our chief pollinators. Shrubs and leafy trees provide cover for birds, places where they can nest in safety. Every year, sun-birds and yellow-vented bulbuls raise their young in my cristina bushes; every sunny day, the skinks warm themselves on my pool surrounds.

Since time immemorial, the garden has been a precious microcosm of the natural world. Today, its ecological importance is huge and getting huger. As green spaces vanish, as habitats for wild creatures shrink, and as man is increasingly confined to an unnatural existence in an apartment or condominium, our gardens fulfil a key role – oases of greenery in our desert townscapes.

Tend and nurture your garden In so doing you will be nurturing yourself.

*Dr Patrick Campbell can be contacted at his home Camelot, located at 59/84 Soi Saiyuan 13; Rawai; Phuket 83130. Tel:66 076613227 (landline), 0655012326 or 0857827551 (mobile). His book “The Tropic Gardener”, an indispensable guide to plants and their cultivation in Thailand, is available from Seng Ho bookshop in Phuket Town or Delish in Rawai, or arrange a copy to be delivered by emailing him at drpaccampbell@gmail.com.*



## MACNELS SHIPPING PHUKET

ANY SHIPMENT ANY WHERE

IMPORT AND EXPORT SERVICES, AIR AND SEA FREIGHT

COMMERCIAL CARGO AND PERSONAL GOODS  
INCLUDING HOUSE HOLD RELOCATIONS

- DOOR TO DOOR SERVICES
- CUSTOMS CLEARANCE FORMALITIES
- PROJECT CARGOES INCLUDING BOATS
- WAREHOUSING AND STORAGE
- STRONG AGENCY NETWORK WORLDWIDE
- 20 YEARS STAFF EXPERIENCE IN PHUKET

☎ OFFICE: 076 603907

☎ MOBILE: CALL PETER 0863645862

www.macnellsphuket.com



# GRIP IT - a new initiative doing good

The Phuket News  
editor1@classactmedia.co.th

**G**RIP IT is an initiative that was started by a group of friends living in Phuket. As a team they represent countries from Europe, North America, South America, Africa and Asia.

They prefer to keep things simple by having one goal – help those who cannot afford to help themselves, whether two-legged or four. For those reasons, they've had great success at making and onboarding new friends to the team.

"Phuket is filled with like minded individuals that want what is best for the island and for the country as a whole," explained cofounder Michael Farrell.

Thailand pretty much closed its doors to tourists in 2020 and much like everyone else, they started seeing Phuket's dependency on tourism firsthand: observing in the news and various media outlets that people were struggling to eat and gain access to basic needs.

"Also seeing the amazing help that other groups like 5 Star Marine were doing led to a realisation that more should and could be done. That is where GRIP IT was born, like a rock band out of a garage, friends just trying to get a message out," Michael said.

That message is known as "GRIP IT", which came from Robert, another



A GRIP IT team member looks on as life bags are handed out at the Rawai fishing village. Photo: Thiti New of GRIP IT

cofounder, after learning it from a university friend. They liken it to the times in life when actions were taken and superior results were achieved. Think: rescuing a cat out of a tree or scoring the overtime goal in a football match. Even as simple as buying a stranger a meal or stopping to play with a child. And that's why the initiative is called what it is... because to "GRIP IT" is to take action... and to help others is an ethos for life unto itself.

Since conception, the team has been to many villages around Phuket,

amongst areas spread around Kathu, Koh Siray, Chalong and Rawai, where they have brought hot meals, first aid and hygiene kits and life bags to more than 1,500 families. And by doing so, they have begun to understand the people of Phuket more; to learn what they actually need versus what many people think they do, and that this pandemic has stripped them of many of life's qualities. But also that the people here in Phuket are friendly and happy. "GRIP IT has been humbled," said Michael.

"Further, the team feels fortunate and would like to thank all of the friends that have given their time and means to support this journey. They'd also like to give a special thank you to Khun Kanit Jitumnongpakdee for assisting with the first two food drives and to all of the village heads since, for making the events run smoothly.

"Khun Paiboon, aka Johnny, also gets a special thanks for facilitating so much of what keeps the GRIP IT machine running. A team is nothing without its players," he added.

At the end of November GRIP IT started a clothing campaign with two local gyms, Unit 27 and Alpha, where they will be storing and redistributing clothing for the foreseeable future.

After the success of a clothing drive in the Chalong area, it was clear to them that there is a need for many people to access clothing and that they are in a unique position to provide it.

Anyone reading who wants to donate clothing can contact GRIP IT directly via their Facebook (@gripitforward) and Instagram (@gripit\_forward) pages or by visiting either of the gyms... though they also recommend getting in a sweat.

The holidays are here and GRIP IT has decided to try and help 5,000 children across Thailand. A rather ambitious goal, involving the help of many organisations and volunteers.

So watch them on Instagram and Facebook... it's sure to leave you in the holiday spirit.

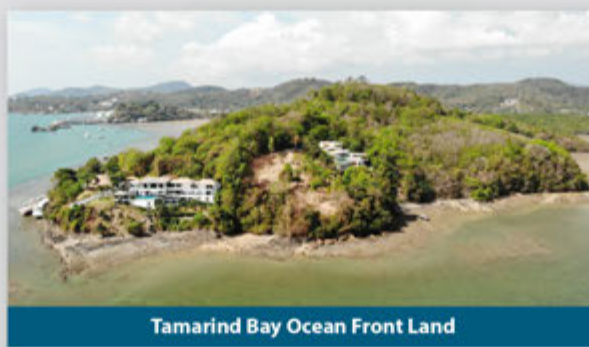
## THAI RESIDENTIAL



Ocean's Edge Panwa Peninsula

- ✓ 5 Bedrooms
- ✓ 5 Bathrooms
- ✓ Thai Freehold
- ✓ Stunning Views
- ✓ 740 sqm Living Area

Reduced to 79 Million THB



Tamarind Bay Ocean Front Land

- ✓ Cape Panwa Land for Sale
- ✓ Stunning Sea Views
- ✓ Ocean Front
- ✓ Private Estate
- ✓ Amazing 5,284 sqm plot

Reduced to 120 Million THB



Villa One Ayara Surin

- ✓ Private Ayara Estate
- ✓ Stunning Sea Views over Surin Bay
- ✓ Recently Modernized 5 Bedrooms
- ✓ Excellent Rental Potential
- ✓ Large Land Plot of 1,452 sqm

Reduced to 99 Million THB



Andara Bay View Residence

- ✓ Luxury Penthouse on Millionaire's Mile
- ✓ Meticulously Maintained 4 Bedrooms 5 Bathrooms
- ✓ Stunning Views over the Andaman Sea
- ✓ Fantastic Rental Potential
- ✓ 845 sqm Built Area

Now 4,888,000 USD



West Sands Beach Front Villa

- ✓ 3 Bedrooms Luxury Villa
- ✓ 3 Ensuite Bathrooms
- ✓ Beachfront Property
- ✓ 4-star resort with gym, restaurant and swimming pool
- ✓ 471 sqm plot

Reduced to 28 Million THB



Walk to the Beach, 6 Bedroom Villa Layan

- ✓ Amazing Beach Side Villa
- ✓ Thai Freehold
- ✓ 6 Bedrooms
- ✓ 7 Bathrooms
- ✓ 800 sqm of built area

Reduced to 60 Million THB

phuket@thairesidential.com | +66 94 8411 918 | www.thairesidential.com | Thai Residential Co., Ltd. 82/37 Sam Pao Courtyard, Moo 4, Patak Road, T. Rawai, Phuket, 83130



## POP QUIZ

- Which island nation is the first to celebrate New Year, each year?
- Up until 1752, when the new Gregorian calendar was adopted, on which day was New Year's Day celebrated in England?
- The ball that drops in Times Square, New York, to mark the New Year is covered with which valuable material?
- The lyrics to 'Auld Lang Syne' were originally from a poem written by which famed Scottish poet?
- The first traveller's cheques were issued on Jan 1 of which year?

Answers below, centre

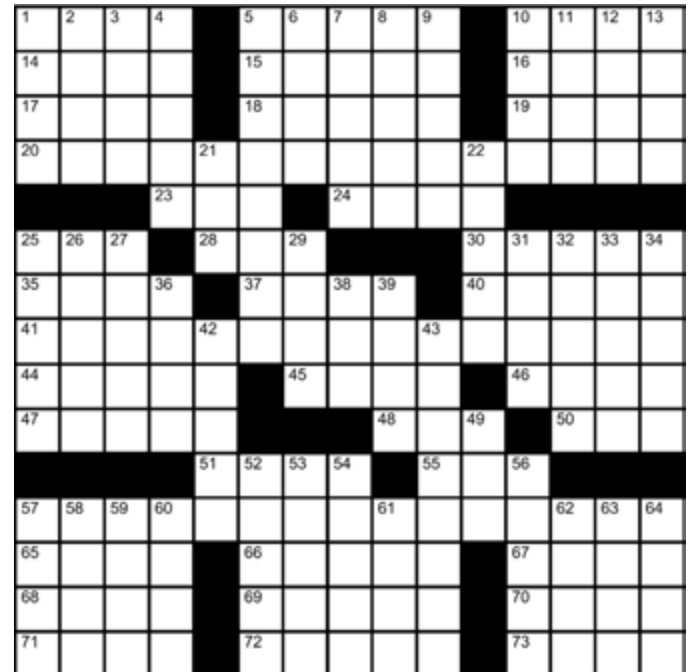
## SUDOKU

Easy

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

## Crossword by Myles Mellor & Sally York

- Across**
- Invites
  - Biblical hill
  - Nanking nanny
  - Advanced
  - Twelfth Night role
  - Vermin
  - House of Lords member
  - "Otherwise..."
  - Nuncupative
  - "Here he is now!"
  - Carry the day
  - Chop finely
  - Queen, maybe
  - Goose egg
  - Drink garnish
  - Lower the \_\_\_
  - Word with bar or color
  - Removes with a dipper
  - Brown thriller
  - Neotropical mammal
  - Tribe of ancient Media
  - Bummed out
  - State in NE India
  - Double curve
  - \_\_\_ kitten
  - Savor enjoyment
  - It has moles: Abbr.
- Down**
- View from Lake Como
  - Escape, in a way
  - Cap site
  - Hat material
  - Electronics science
  - Annoy
  - Time division
  - \_\_\_ Bowl
  - Execrates
  - African flower
  - Ballistic missile sys.
  - Berry
  - Hot spot
  - Connections
- 22. Wild Asian dog**  
**25. Bananalike plant**  
**26. Taboos**  
**27. One-piece garments**  
**29. Good earth**  
**31. Gyro meat**  
**32. Murtis**  
**33. Locus**  
**34. Antique auto**  
**36. Intro to physics?**  
**38. Chain letters?**  
**39. "The \_\_\_ of Night" (old soap)**  
**42. Belafonte dance**  
**43. Strips**  
**49. Kind of tax**  
**52. Behind**  
**53. Mall component**  
**54. Mongol rulers**  
**56. Another time**  
**57. Draped dress**  
**58. Graphical user interface feature**  
**59. Spicy stew**  
**60. Mysterious: Var.**  
**61. Tinker with, in a way**  
**62. Different**  
**63. "Come Back, Little Sheba" wife**  
**64. Galley mark**



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

## Solutions to last week's puzzles:



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

## GOT YOUR NUMBER

1

year is how much the average man will spend of his life simply staring at women.

22

percent of Americans will be asleep before midnight on New Year's Eve.

32,256

LEDs light up the ball that drops at Times Square New York to mark the New Year.

340,733

to 1 is the chance of dying from a fireworks incident.

859

billion

US dollars is expected to be spent by Americans on gifts, decor, travel and more during this holiday season.

Source: *Uberfacts*

## ISLAND VIEW



Morning coffee at sunrise on Koh Yao Yai island. Photo by Brent Devereux

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

## This week in history

**Dec 31, 1759**

Arthur Guinness signs a 9,000-year lease at £45 per annum and starts brewing Guinness.

**Jan 1, 1983**

The ARPANET, developed by the US Department of Defense, officially changes to using the Internet Protocol, creating the Internet.

**Jan 2, 1860**

The discovery of the planet Vulcan, at the time believed to exist between

Mercury and the Sun, is announced at a meeting of the French Academy of Sciences in Paris, France.

**Jan 3, 1990**

United States invasion of Panama: Manuel Noriega, indicted by US federal grand juries on charges of racketeering, drug smuggling and money laundering, surrenders to American forces.

**Jan 4, 1948**

Burma gains its independence from



British governor Hubert Rance and Sao Shwe Thaik at the flag raising ceremony on 4 January 1948 at Stone Pillar.

the United Kingdom, becoming an independent republic named the Union of Burma with Sao Shwe Thaik as its President and

U Nu as its first Prime Minister.

**Jan 5, 1066**

Edward the Confessor, one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England, dies childless, sparking a succession crisis that eventually leads to the Norman conquest of England.

**Jan 6, 1929**

Mother Teresa arrives in Calcutta, India, to begin her work among India's poorest and sick people.

Source: *Wikipedia*



# Trades & Services

 The Phuket News  
 @thephuketnews

## CORPORATE SERVICES



**VERTIGO**  
VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

WE MAKE YOU LOOK GOOD.

VERTIGO VIDEO PRODUCTIONS.COM  
f i t y

## HOME IMPROVEMENT



**Waterproofing & Crack Repair**

20 year WARRANTY

Drone Survey

Pipe Inspection

under yearly checkup plan...

TCM Asia Co., Ltd - quality services since 2003  
office@tcm-asia.com 086-9439834

## HOME IMPROVEMENT



**MN.PAINTING**

German/English: 087 894 8255

No Job too Big  
No Job too small

## HOME IMPROVEMENT



**Lile-it**  
SMART TILES  
Tile Leveling System

Baan Wana - Cherng Talay  
Tel : 076 620168

PHUKET'S QUALITY TILE BOUTIQUE

www.tile-asia.com | letstalk@tile-asia.com

## MARINE SERVICES



**Marine Engineering Specialists**

C & C MARINE®

YANMAR mtu

**C & C Marine (Thailand) Co., Ltd.**  
16/2 Moo 4, Soi Nanai, Thepkasattri Rd., Koh Kaew, Muang, Phuket 83200  
Tel: +66 (0)76 273247 Fax: +66 (0)76 273248 Mob: +66 (0)81 078 4507  
Email: cholmes@candc-marine.com www.candc-marine.com

## MARINE INSURANCE



for any insurance study, please contact:  
christophe.g@poe-ma.com  
+66 92 542 0505

**POE-MA**  
INSURANCES

your marine insurance brokers in South-East Asia

private – charter – commercial  
all flags – extended areas

Sunrise Road, Chalong, Phuket

## PERSONAL SERVICE



**We Clean**  
Phuket.net

Covid-19 Disinfection Service

20% OFF - quote code PN05

081 737 7850  
fb.me/WeCleanPhuketNet.EN  
LINE ID: WeCleanPhuketNet

## OTHER



**Mac-Nels**

**MACNELS SHIPPING PHUKET**

ANY SHIPMENT ANY WHERE

OFFICE: 076 603907

MOBILE: CALL PETER 0863645862

www.macnelsinghuket.com

## OTHER



CARING FOR OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS 24 HOURS PER DAY.

**hugme**

**โรงพยาบาลสัตว์ฮักมี**  
HUGME ANIMAL HOSPITAL

HUGME.ANIMALHOSPITAL 100/16 MOOT SRISUNTHON, THALANG, PHUKET 83110  
076 510 656

**WANT TO TALK TO PHUKET?**

The **Phuket News** Your Island - Your Paper  
 Новости **Пхукета** Твой остров - твои газет  
 ข่าว **ภูเก็ต**

**WINDOW ON PHUKET**

The map of PHUKET English 中文 Русский

Where to eat in PHUKET

**LIVE 89.5** NEWS TV

Contact: gm@classactmedia.co.th



FRI

31 DEC

**STEAK HOUSE & RESTAURANT**  
 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai  
 081 891 4381  
[www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com)  
[shakersphuket@gmail.com](mailto:shakersphuket@gmail.com)  
 FB: shakersphuket

**Friday Mussels night**

6 PM onwards: Belgian style mussels served with French Fries. All you can eat. Your choice, Your style: Mariniere, White wine, Provencale, Garlic & cream, Creamy curry, Blue cheese or Thai style. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 325 baht P.P. [www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com) [www.facebook.com/shakersphuket](http://www.facebook.com/shakersphuket) Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

SAT

1 JAN

**SATURDAY BRUNCH**  
Indulge in a buffet of fresh, chilled seafood and an unlimited selection of delicious a la carte creations from our talented culinary team. Enjoy beverage promotions, full pool access and live music. 1,685 baht per person. Every Saturday. 1pm until 4pm. Free transfers for bookings of 4 guests or more. Sala Phuket, Sala Phuket Maikhao Beach, events@salaphuket.com, 076 338 888

**Saturday Brunch**

Indulge in a buffet of fresh, chilled seafood and an unlimited selection of delicious a la carte creation from our talented culinary team. Enjoy beverage promotions, full pool access and live music. 1,685 baht per person. Every Saturday. 1pm until 4pm. Free transfers for bookings of 4 guests or more. Sala Phuket, Sala Phuket Maikhao Beach, events@salaphuket.com, 076 338 888

listed here?

Reserve your space **NOW!**

076 612 550 [sales@classactmedia.co.th](mailto:sales@classactmedia.co.th)



**New Years Day Grande Indian Brunch at Portosino**

Enjoy New Years day with our Special Grande Indian brunch starting noon, featuring Authentic Indian dishes with global inspiration, celebrate first day of 2022 with beats, bubbles & Grande Vibes! Venue: Portosino Entertainment: DJ, Live Band & much more! Food: Authentic Indian Menu with a Global Twist Availability: Limited tables available, book now to confirm your table! Time: 12:00pm – 4.30pm. Date: 1 Jan, 2022 Brunch Price: THB 1,499++ Brunch with Free Flow: THB 2,022++ Children 6-12 years for THB 699++ Children Under 6 years eat for free when dining with a paying adult. For booking in advance please contact us on ha224-fb1@accor.com or via Facebook Messenger. \*Above prices are per person excluding taxes & service charge

SUN

2 JAN

**STEAK HOUSE & RESTAURANT**  
 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai  
 081 891 4381  
[www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com)  
[shakersphuket@gmail.com](mailto:shakersphuket@gmail.com)  
 FB: shakersphuket

**Sunday roast**

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

MON

3 JAN

**STEAK HOUSE & RESTAURANT**  
 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai  
 081 891 4381  
[www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com)  
[shakersphuket@gmail.com](mailto:shakersphuket@gmail.com)  
 FB: shakersphuket

**Pizza Monday**

12 PM till closing: 20% discount on all our pizzas We have a kid's playground zone. [www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com)

[www.facebook.com/shakersphuket](http://www.facebook.com/shakersphuket) Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

WED

5 JAN

**STEAK HOUSE & RESTAURANT**  
 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai  
 081 891 4381  
[www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com)  
[shakersphuket@gmail.com](mailto:shakersphuket@gmail.com)  
 FB: shakersphuket

**Wednesday BBQ night**

6 PM onwards: All you can eat BBQ buffet cooked to order. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Burgers, Ribs Sausages, Fish, Prawns & Squids, salad buffet and veggies, Choice of potatoes, cold and hot sauces, Bread, Buns & garlic bread. We have a kid's playground zone. Adults: 395 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 195 baht P.P. [www.shakersphuket.com](http://www.shakersphuket.com) [www.facebook.com/shakersphuket](http://www.facebook.com/shakersphuket) Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

FRI

7 JAN



**The Grow Boating Networking Evening for January 2022**

The Grow Boating Networking Evening for January 2022 will be held at the Isola Restaurant, at the Royal Phuket Marina on Friday the 7th of January from 5pm. There will be a light buffet sponsored by the Isola Restaurant and as always all of your favourite beverages will be available. Drinks sponsorship is available for the event. Sponsorship costs 10,000 baht and includes a generous media package from our media partner The Phuket News. Message us for more information. Come and join in the fun, everyone is welcome. There is no entry fee, just drop your business card or register at the bar. We hope to see you there and if you know anyone you think would be interested in coming please invite them along. To join our mailing list please send an email to [growboating-phuket@gmail.com](mailto:growboating-phuket@gmail.com) Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/growboatingphuket/> Grow Boating is kindly supported by our media partner The Phuket News, Live 89.5 radio and Phuket News TV. See [www.thephuketnews.com](http://www.thephuketnews.com)

FRI

28 JAN



**Joint Chambers Australia Day Phuket Sundowners**

AustCham Thailand, in collaboration with Australian Alumni, American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (AMCHAM), British Chamber of Commerce Thailand (BCCT), Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber of Commerce, CanCham Thailand, Franco-Thai Chamber of Commerce (FTCC), German-Thai Chamber of Commerce (GTCC) and the Netherlands-Thai Chamber of Commerce (NTCC), is delighted to invite you to join us for "Australia Day Phuket Sundowners" at JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, on Friday 28 January 2022, from 18.00 - 21.00 hrs. A celebration of all things Australian, join us for your favourite Australian food & beverages, and welcome in the New Year as the first business networking event in Phuket of 2022. Please note that the attendees will be asked for their COVID-19 vaccination or ATK / RT-PCR certification to show on entry to the event. Price: 500 THB for AustCham members, partner Chambers' members, and Australian Alumni Members. 900 THB for non-members.

Listen for

DAILY EVENT UPDATES ON

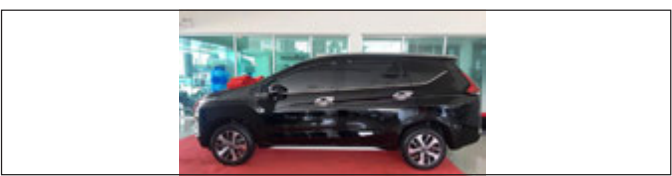
**JOBS**

URGENT

**Urgently seeking Female/Male Massage Therapist**

Urgently looking for a professional massage Therapist to come to work in Dubai for one male fulltime. Visa, health insurance and accommodation included plus other benefits also flight. To be available ASAP. [hr@liatris.ae](mailto:hr@liatris.ae) , 042363432

**CARS, TRUCKS FOR SALE**



**Car rent @ fair covid prices**

Mitsubishi Xpander, top model new car, monthly price B17,000. Car from 400 Bht daily, 8,000 monthly. Toyota Vios top model new, from 10,000 Bht monthly. Call 0848474377. Email: [stigisaan@gmail.com](mailto:stigisaan@gmail.com)

**Alcoholics Anonymous**

If you want to drink that is your business  
 If you want to stop that is ours  
**Daily Meetings**  
 Patong, Chalong, Phuket Town, Bang Tao & Karon  
**CALL**  
**081 895 4763**  
[help@aaphuket.org](mailto:help@aaphuket.org)  
[www.aaphuket.com](http://www.aaphuket.com)

**Australian Visas**  
 Need An Australian Visa or Expert Advice?  
 Have the confidence dealing with an Australian Lawyer and Agent, based right here in Thailand but regulated in Australia.  
 Your application will be prepared and lodged for you, as well as expert advice as to the best visas and approach.  
 We can assist with all visa types, including Tourist, Partner, Work, Study and Family visas.  
 Had a visa refusal - our team specialise in getting you the result you want.  
 Phone: 084 400 9487  
[www.AustralianVisas-Thailand.com](http://www.AustralianVisas-Thailand.com)  
 Migration Agents  
 Registration Number  
 1464995  
[www.mara.gov.au](http://www.mara.gov.au)

**Simpson Marine**  
 Simpson Marine is the exclusive partner with the world's leading yacht brands – Sanlorenzo, Bluegame, Fairline Yachts, Beneteau, Lagoon & Aquila Power Catamarans.  
**Office Administrator & Sales Support (Pattaya Office)**  
 ✓ Female only  
 ✓ Thai nationality  
 ✓ Good computer skill - Program MS Office and good internet searching  
 ✓ Fluent in English, both verbal and written.  
 ✓ Good interpersonal skills and can work under pressure.  
 ✓ Good time management and high responsibilities and working ability to meet the deadline.  
 ✓ Experience in yacht will received special consideration.  
**Thai Technician (Pattaya Office)**  
 ✓ Thai Nationality only  
 ✓ Minimum Thai engineering cert,  
 ✓ Willing to learn, speaks some English,  
 ✓ Punctual at work,  
 ✓ Yacht maintenance, repairs, cleaning and engineering experience.  
 Interested candidates, please email your CV with photo to  
[bee.cummins@simpsonmarine.com](mailto:bee.cummins@simpsonmarine.com) / Mobile: +66 85 350 6149





## XMAS HOSPITALITY GOLF CHALLENGE 2021

A wonderful day out on the course at Laguna Phuket Golf on December 23, 2021. Fantastic F&B on the holes, some good golf and some not so good golf. Lots of stories at the awards dinner, as they say, "There are no pictures on the score card." All in all a fun day raising funds for the Children's First Fund (CFF). Read more about the event on page 15.





# Phuket sets up eSports hub

## ESPORTS

The Phuket News  
editor3@classactmedia.co.th

Phuket is taking a significant step forward in the rapidly progressive world of professional gaming after it was confirmed that an official eSports development centre is being set up on the island.

Leading eSports gaming team NKT are partnering with The Par Phuket Hotel to establish an eSports development centre which will strive to help youngsters better understand professional gaming and provide opportunity to develop their skills to the extent that they are able to compete on the world stage.

The announcement was made at a press conference at the The Par Phuket Hotel in Kathu Tuesday last week (Dec 21) attended by President of the Phuket Sports Association Thammawat Wongchareonyot, Dumrong Chaisena, Phuket Province Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) Director, Pakin Rueksue, owner of The Par Phuket Hotel, and Jumpon Tuitan, CEO and founder of NKT.



League players competing at the AIS eSports Thailand Game Expo 2019. Photo: Bangkok Post

The centre, to be located at The Par Phuket Hotel, will provide opportunities to Thai youths via an academy-style teaching course that provides an understanding on the industry of eSports and how a potentially lucrative career can be forged. It will also provide the opportunity for parents to learn more about the sport and how it can offer their children a professional career while helping promote Thailand and generating in-

come for the country.

"We are delighted to select Phuket as the venue for our first pilot project to teach the basics and focus on career development in eSports," said Mr Jumpon.

"Thailand is beginning to take more notice of the eSports industry and is increasingly encouraging its youth to become a part of it. It is a sector that can offer a very real career for its participants and that can generate significant

income into the country. As the popularity of the sport continues to grow so does the revenue and opportunity attached to it," he added.

"As such, we are committed to building an eSports learning centre to continue to grow the understanding and reputation of the sport while promoting digital innovation and building a team that is truly capable of competing and representing Asia in the global CS:GO (Counter Strike:Global

Offensive) gaming league."

Mr Jumpon added that he hopes the centre can also go some way to helping educate and change people's perception of the sport where its participants are often unfairly tagged as "game addicts".

"We want to create a new image more along the lines of businessman and professional athlete," he said.

"Phuket is our launch venue but we hope to set up similar centres in Bangkok and Chiang Mai in the near future," he added.

NKT has invested more than B140 million in the development of its gaming athletes from all over Asia to compete in the world renowned event of CS:GO, one of the most popular games universally. The majority of its athletes are Thai, many of whom hold top-level degrees from major Universities, although it also has members from Indonesia, Mongolia, South Korea and Singapore. The collective NKT team is ranked number 1 in Southeast Asia and sits in the top three in Asia with an impressive win rate of over 80% and win streak of 13 games in a row.

Global eSports revenues

are expected to exceed US\$1 billion (B33.8bn) this year, according to Newzoo's 2021 Global eSports & Live Streaming Market Report.

The world's richest professional competitive gamer is 28-year-old Johan Sundstein from Denmark, who to date has earned close to US\$7 million since turning professional in 2015.

The top-earning Thai player to date is Anucha Jirawong, who has netted US\$685,188 from his professional gaming career.

Whereas there is widespread criticism that eSports is not strictly a sport, participants claim they train to a similarly intense level as traditional athletes and require exemplary hand-eye coordination, dexterity, teamwork and mental endurance.

There are ongoing calls for eSports to be included in the Olympics but thus far the IOC has rebuffed requests. However, they did lend support this year for the first-ever "Olympic Virtual Series" in the run-up to the Tokyo 2020 games and has intimated that there may be a possibility it is included in the 2028 Games to be staged in Los Angeles.

**English Premier League Predictions**

the Phuket News

QR Code

[thephuketnews.com/predictions.php](http://thephuketnews.com/predictions.php)

## Australia crush England to retain Ashes

### CRICKET

A RELENTLESS AUSTRALIA SPEAR-headed by debutant Scott Boland skittled England for an embarrassing 68 on Tuesday (Dec 28) to win the third Test by an innings and 14 runs and retain the Ashes with two matches still to play.

The tourists resumed in Melbourne on 31 for four, still 51 runs behind, after a disastrous final hour on Monday against some outstanding fast bowling that left their Ashes dreams in tatters.

Their survival rested on skipper Joe Root, but when he fell for 28, it was just a matter of time before the rest followed.

Boland, called up as injury cover, was invincible on his home ground at the MCG, taking 6-7 off four overs, equalling the record for the fastest five-wicket haul in 19 balls.

Mitchell Starc ended with 3-29 as England's misery was complete.

Ben Stokes resumed on two but his poor tour continued when he was clean-bowled by Starc for 11. Jonny Bairstow made five and when Root was out it was all over, with the tailenders quickly following.

England headed to Melbourne knowing they had to win to keep the five-Test series alive after heavy defeats in Brisbane and Adelaide, with Australia only needing a draw to retain the urn as holders.

And they fleetingly hauled themselves into contention on the back of a vintage bowling effort from veteran seamer James Anderson, which restricted Australia to



Australian players celebrate their victory in Melbourne. Photo: AFP

267 in their first innings in reply to the tourists' 185.

But it was only an 82-run lead and any dreams England had of staying in the Test, or even winning it, fell apart in the face of an intense fast bowling blitz from Starc, Cummins and Boland.

In an hour of mayhem, they removed hapless openers Zak Crawley (5), Haseeb Hameed (7), Dawid Malan (0) and Jack Leach (0), leaving England staring into the abyss on 31 for four after another stunning collapse. Root then fell for 28, caught by David Warner at slip off Boland.

"Gutless England batsmen deliver full spectrum of ineptitude," screamed *The Daily Telegraph* while *The Sun* slammed "Clueless England".

The fourth test in Sydney starts tomorrow (Jan 1). AFP



# Young guns fire Arsenal

## FOOTBALL

Ben Tirebuck

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

A Ian Hansen once famously derided Alex Ferguson's decision to trust in youth at Manchester United before the class of '92 went onto achieve greatness at Old Trafford.

Nobody at the Emirates Stadium is getting too carried away yet but there is evidence there could very well be a similar youth revolution occurring at Arsenal.

Last Sunday's (Dec 26) comfortable 5-0 victory against Norwich was the Gunners' fourth Premier League win in a row which saw them, at time of press, in fourth place in the table and going into the daunting contest with leaders Manchester City in confident mood tomorrow (Jan 1).

The results are testament to manager Mikel Arteta's convictions in his team's identity and willingness to trust in youth, which is clearly paying dividends.

Arsenal have had the youngest average starting XI in the English top flight so far this term at 24 years. Goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale is only 23, Gabriel is the oldest player in defence at 24 and 23-year-old Martin Odegaard is finally showing the form that saw him transferred to Real Madrid as a 15-year-old. Next to him is Albert Sambi Lokonga, 22, who has already been compared to Vincent Kompany.



Bukayo Saka wheels away to celebrate after scoring the opening goal against Norwich last Sunday (Dec 26). Photo: AFP

Two academy products, Bukayo Saka, 20, and Emile Smith Rowe, 21, have arguably been the Gunners' best outfield players this term, something not lost on the manager who himself came through the famed La Masia academy at Barcelona.

"What I learned was that internally there was competition but you understand that you have to look after each other. That was a big, big lesson in that period for me. Those relationships are unbreakable," Arteta told *The Guardian*.

Smith-Rowe's rise has been unexpected yet smooth although Saka endured a testing time after his penalty miss saw England lose the Euro 2020 final against Italy and a torrent of unpalatable racial abuse come his way.

"What I see is a young boy with incredible enthusiasm and passion for

this club," Arteta said in reference to Saka. "I see it in others too. They are really willing to bring success and they are dealing with a lot of difficult situations in a great way."

So much so that the absence of captain and senior talisman Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, frozen out by the uncompromising Arteta after a series of disciplinary issues, has not been felt in recent weeks.

Brazilian striker Gabriel Martinelli, 20, has stepped in, performed brilliantly and suggested he has a definite future in the role, whether Aubameyang is welcomed back into the fold or not.

Arteta has confirmed he plans to strengthen during the transfer window but for now is clearly delighted that his young guns are continuing to shine and fire the Gunners up the table.

# War Elephants in Suzuki Cup charge

## FOOTBALL

EXCITEMENT AND confidence were high as Thailand headed into their two-legged Suzuki Cup final against Indonesia this week.

The War Elephants were due to play the first-leg at the Singapore National Stadium on Wednesday (Dec 29) with the second leg to be played at the same venue tomorrow (Jan 1).

The five-time champions progressed to the final with an aggregate 2-0 scoreline after overcoming defending champions Vietnam in their two-legged semi-final. Thailand won the first leg 2-0 last Thursday (Dec 23) thanks to a brace from Chanathip Songkrasin, and followed up with a 0-0 draw in the second leg on Dec 26.

Coach Mano Polking was delighted with his team's defensive "masterclass" in the second leg after they managed to prevent the Golden Star Warriors from scoring.

"I'm unbelievably proud of the efforts that the players



Thailand coach Mano Polking in the semi-final against Vietnam. Photo: AFP

put in defensively, especially in the second half. It was an amazing performance, a masterclass in defending," said the German-Brazilian coach.

It will be Thailand's ninth appearance in the tournament final and the fifth final appearance for opponents Indonesia, who will be looking to secure their first title.

The last time the two teams met in the final was in 2016 when Thailand emerged victorious 3-2.

Football Association of Thailand (FAT) president Somyot Poompunmuang confirmed the team received a B10 million bonus for defeating Vietnam. If they win the tournament they will receive a further B20mn plus B10mn in prize money.

*The Phuket News*

## Xmas Hospitality Golf Challenge 2021

### PRESS RELEASE

A VERY SPECIAL Christmas edition of the Phuket Hospitality Challenge Golf Tournament took place at Laguna Golf Phuket on Thursday (Dec 23). An impressive field of 76 golfers played their merry little hearts out under the beating hot sun, battling for that elusive first place spot and their team's name on the Trophy. The atmosphere was full of joy as everyone enjoyed some very warm welcomes at the Sponsors holes with festive nibbles and drinks being served. Lady Pie, Drinks & Co, Angsana, Cassia, Banyan Tree, Banyan Tree Spa, Churchills, Captains Bar, Bollywood, B Health and The Hole in One bar all played an important part in making it a really enjoyable day out for everyone.

The organiser, Mark Cameron of Asean Events, said, "It was fantastic to see many loyal supporters of the event returning and some new faces too and without their support and the



Winning team - Churchills. Pictured: Jimmy, Blair, Mark, Richard, James and Derek.

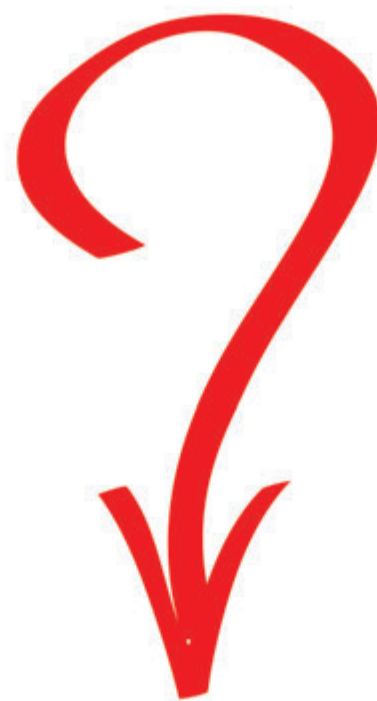
holes sponsors support we wouldn't have an event like this every year. Our charity raffle supporters also need some recognition as without their support we wouldn't raise as much as we do for the charity. Many thanks to the Intercontinental Hotel in Kamala, Aquella Golf Course, Paradise Resort Koh Yao, Pullman Panwa, Four Points Sheraton and all the Laguna Resorts for all their kind donations, which in the end raised 120,000 baht for

the Children's First Fund (CFF). Lastly, a big, big thank you to Jason and his team at *The Phuket News* and *Live 89.5FM* for their ever-lasting media coverage of the event."

To register your team and/or interest in becoming a sponsor for next year's event, please visit [www.lagunagolf.com/phuket](http://www.lagunagolf.com/phuket) or email [golf@lagunaphuket.com](mailto:golf@lagunaphuket.com) or [mark.hio1211@gmail.com](mailto:mark.hio1211@gmail.com) for more information.



THAILAND'S  
PVC WINDOW  
SPECIALISTS  
SINCE 2004



Contact us for the lowest  
prices in Phuket



PROJECT SUPPLIES DIRECT  
Head Office at Tesco Lotus Thalang Phuket  
English +66 87 061 7631 or Thai +66 81 539 2031  
PVC Phuket Nathan Upvc Brown





# Sport

editor3@classactmedia.co.th



**Sorry England humiliated in Ashes > p14**



2022 promises to be an incident-packed year of global sports. Photos: AFP

## BIG YEAR OF SPORT AHEAD

### Controversy threatens Winter Olympics and World Cup as COVID lurks

#### ALL SPORTS

**Ben Tirebuck**

editor3@classactmedia.co.th

As we usher in the New Year we can look forward to an action-packed calendar of sporting events that are certain to thrill enthusiasts throughout 2022.

Sport has taken on even greater significance for many over the past couple of years as the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to wreak havoc, at times serving as a distraction and an invaluable crutch that many have turned to when seeking respite from the daily toil.

The threat of COVID still lingers, of course, but here are some of the key sporting occasions we can look forward to in 2022.

Australia may have already retained the Ashes after their decisive third Test win in Melbourne but the remaining two Tests in January will see a wounded England playing for pride. The fourth test starts tomorrow (Jan 1) in Sydney and the final test is due to take place in Hobart from Jan 14-18.

Elsewhere in January, the Australian Open launches the international tennis calendar on Jan 17. It

remains to be seen whether men's defending champion Novak Djokovic will be on court as the nine-time winner has declined to publicly state his vaccine status, deemed a prerequisite by authorities, leading to assumptions that he will not be there. However, Naomi Osaka will be there to defend her women's singles title. Other tournaments of note throughout the year include the French Open at Roland Garros in May and June, Wimbledon in June and July and the US Open in August and September.

Formula One attracted a wealth of new fans in the 2021 season as the drivers championship went down to the wire with Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen pipping rival Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes to the title on the final lap of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in December. A bumper 23-race calendar starts in Bahrain on March 23 and fans will be delighted if the 2022 season proves anywhere near as exciting as 2021.

#### CONTROVERSY

Two of the biggest global sports events taking place in 2022 are both, unfortunately, clouded in major controversy which have seen the divides between sport and politics

blurred considerably.

Firstly, Beijing hosts the Winter Olympics, running from Feb 4-20, and the Paralympics in March. China has consistently been courting controversy over a range of issues including COVID-19, human rights and territorial disputes, which has soured international relations and affected sentiment towards the Games. The USA, Australia, UK and Japan have all effected diplomatic boycotts although athletes from the respective countries will still participate.

Fans will be barred from attending the Games due to COVID-19 concerns and, bizarrely for a winter-themed event, snow is having to be transported to the venues at great cost and with detrimental environmental consequences.

The FIFA World Cup, to be held in Qatar from Nov 21 to Dec 18, has been dogged with controversy since the tournament was awarded to the tiny Gulf state, a desert nation with baking summer temperatures, no world-class stadiums, little interest in football but lots of money.

Allegations of bribery between the Qatar bid committee and FIFA executives have rumbled on and major questions have been raised about human rights, particularly

regarding the 2 million migrant workers who have been tasked with building venues in extremely testing conditions.

Likewise, Qatar's stance on equality and homosexuality, the latter deemed an illegal act, has raised major concerns, odd as FIFA continually promotes the game as accessible to all, regardless of gender, race, religion and so on.

Critics argue the World Cup is being used as just another cog in the Middle East's sport washing wheel, the practice of an individual, group, corporation or nation-state using a major or prestigious international sport to improve its reputation. Expect major fallout as the tournament nears and takes place.

In the rugby world we have the Six Nations Rugby tournament and the 2021 Rugby League World Cup, postponed due to COVID-19, in England from Oct 15 to Nov 19.

Those of an American Football persuasion will be keeping a keen eye on Super Bowl LVI on Feb 13 in Inglewood, California.

New Zealand hosts Women's Rugby Union World Cup, postponed from 2021, in October and November and the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in March and April.

Domestically Down Under, there is the AFL Grand Final on Sept 24, the NRL Grand Final on Oct 2 and the Melbourne Cup on Nov 1.

Golf fanatics will be focused on the Masters at Augusta in April, the PGA Championship in May, the US Open in June and the Open at St Andrews in Scotland in July.

For running enthusiasts, there is the Tokyo Marathon in March and the Boston and London marathons in April. A date for the New York marathon has yet to be announced.

Hopping on the bike, we have the Giro d'Italia in May, the Vuelta a España in August and September and the Tour de France in July.

There is the 2022 World Athletics Championships in Oregon, USA in July and the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, UK from July 28-Aug 8.

Finally, Thailand will host Badminton's Thomas & Uber Cup finals (May 8-15) with mixed doubles world champions Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai looking to shine on home soil.

Whatever the preference, there are numerous fantastic events that should keep sports fans enthralled throughout 2022 – COVID permitting, of course!