Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has ordered all new applications for tourists to enter the country under the Test & Go scheme to be suspended following Thailand marking its first local transmission of the Omicron COVID-19 variant in Bangkok on Monday (Dec 20).

The shattering news came as Phuket was gearing up for the New Year, with tourist arrivals increasing steadily since the scheme began on Nov 1, after nearly two years of suffering under the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic.

The ban on new arrivals will not affect about 200,000 visitors who had previously registered for the Test & Go scheme, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said. “This is not to shut off tourists but to temporarily suspend arrivals,” he clarified.

The ban on new applications came into effect immediately, without warning.

The decision will be reviewed on Jan 4, Mr Thanakorn said. Leading Phuket officials have called for people to not panic over people arriving on the island from abroad testing positive Omicron. There have been no local transmissions of the COVID variant in Phuket, Dr Kusak Kiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health office (PPHO), said on Monday.

Dr Kusak led a press conference held at the PPHO head office in Phuket Town, joined Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panaphong, Vachira Phuket Hospital Director Dr Weerasak Lorithongkham and Bhummikitti Raknayang, President of the Phuket Tourist Association.

The press conference was held after the PPHO broke the news last Sunday (Dec 19) that five people who had arrived in Phuket on direct flights from abroad last week had tested positive for Omicron.

Phuket Vice Governor Pichet on Monday stressed, “Phuket continues to conduct RT-PCR checks at the airport for the safety of tourists and the public.”

He then explained that of the five...
Call for calm as Omicron arrives

Continued from page 1...cases last Sunday, and despite its notice announcing the five injections of Moderna vaccine said. She arrived in Phuket on Dec 13, as did a 36-year-old Thai national, traveling from Saudi Arabia. The Thai man traveled via Qatar before landing in Phuket. The man had received two injections of Sinovac and one of Pfizer, and was allowed to travel to Pattani to receive treatment, he said. A 32-year-old Tunisian man who arrived from France on Dec 13, as did a 32-year-old German national. The Tunisian man had been vaccinated with two Pfizer injections and is “receiving treatment” in Phuket, he added. Dr Kusak Kiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), announced on Dec 14 that three vaccinated people were designated to be treated in the Phuket area. They have been confirmed not to be infected with Omicron. The Swedish man had now been confirmed not to be infected with Omicron, he said. “There have been no local transmissions of Omicron in the Phuket area. They have only been found among foreign tourists [sic] on Day 6 of their stay, before they were allowed to travel throughout the area,” Dr Kusak said. “Both the infected and the risk group have undergone rigorous treatment and quarantine procedures,” Dr Kusak assured. “We ask people not to panic, to strictly follow the measures to protect themselves, especially by wearing masks, and we invite people to receive their third-dose booster vaccination by registering through PhuketMustWin [web portal] now,” he added. Regarding, “rigorous treatment and quarantine procedures”, the PPHO report posted last Sunday itself marked that four of the five initially identified as infected with Omicron were designated to stay at “hospitals” (hotels with medical staff on site). One of the five was allowed to leave the province to receive treatment in Pattani. Regarding Dr Kasuk’s call for people to receive a third-dose booster vaccination, while officials from Sinovac have been heavily campaigning in Thailand for people to register for their booster jabs of either Pfizer or Moderna, the PhuketMustWin website itself maintains that the current campaign is for Thai nationals only. “Phuket has strict measures to screen people who travel to the area, especially through Phuket airport,” PPHO Chief Dr Kusak assured on Monday. “Everyone must be tested by RT-PCR method, and when [arrivals] are diagnosed with COVID-19, [officials] will enact public health procedures and conduct rigorous testing of both those who are infected and those who have been exposed to high risk contact who have previously tested negative for the virus,” he said. Dr Kusak also said that the PPHO “had only recently” been informed that of the five reported as testing positive, only four had been confirmed as infected with Omicron. “After testing positive for COVID-19, swab samples of all people who have been vaccinated in the Kingdom of Thailand are sent to the Department of Medical Sciences for a thorough examination, which confirmed that not five but four are infected with Omicron,” he said. “After a person tests positive, the sample will be tested for strain isolation at the Phuket officers of the Department of Medical Sciences, which takes at least seven days,” he said. “When the results show that there is high probability of the Omicron strain, it [the sample] will be sent to the Department of Medical Sciences to test again, which takes about two to three days,” Dr Kusak said. While aiming to inspire confidence that Omicron will be detected at the frontline entry point to Phuket, Dr Kusak did not explain why the news was not announced a week ago, or whether any other arrivals since Dec 13 were suspected of carrying the Omicron variant. Accor- ding to the Phuket Reopening Daily Report issued by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), 10,959 arrivals landed in Phuket from abroad from Dec 14-18 alone. Phuket Vice Governor Pichet called for people across Phuket to remain vigilant in protecting themselves from being infected with any form of COVID-19. “Phuket is currently in the economic recovery phase. There are various sporting promotion activities, including sports competitions as well as preparing for New Year’s Eve activities to welcome the new year. “This news coming out may affect the feelings of the people and tourists, but Phuket Province [the provincial gov- ernment] still insists on strictly enforcing its measures to pre- vent and control the spread of COVID-19 while emphasizing that people continue to follow public health measures to pro- tect themselves and uphold their social responsibility,” he said.

Phuket to be first to roll out fourth COVID vaccination jabs

PHUKET RESIDENTS will be the first in the country to receive a fourth COVID-19 vaccination injection as health officials roll out their extended campaign in the new year.

Dr Kusak Kiattikoon, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO), announced on Tuesday (Dec 21) that the mass vaccination push will continue into the new year.

“The first of the Sinovac +Sinovac+AstraZeneca group will complete six months since their last injection in February. Therefore, the fourth vaccination injection campaign in Phuket will occur before anywhere else in Thailand,” Dr Kusak said.

“From January, anyone who has been vaccinated with Sinovac+AstraZeneca can receive a booster vaccination of Pfizer or Moderna during January-February onwards to make Phuket people highly immune to all strains of the coronavirus,” he added.

“This is to confirm that we are working to protect Phuket people further from variants brought into the country, and we are continuing our screening of foreigners to pre- vent infections in Phuket,” he said.

“We have to learn to live with COVID,” Dr Kusak noted. “We used to have more than 100 new cases a day, but yesterday [Dec 20] we recorded 44 new cases, and the day before that just 28. “The number of new cases has fallen, but we must keep our guard up. We cannot let it return to more than 100 new cases a day. “We’re better now,” Dr Kusak added. “As tourists continue to come, the air travel will go on, so we must cooperate from business operators, parents, brothers and sisters, to be careful during the new year when going out to eat or to celebrate and see in the new year,” Dr Kusak said. “I ask everyone to maintain social distancing, and where they can choose to eat outdoors. Cele- brating the new year together still brings risk, but at least by taking precautions we can still allow the atmosphere of Phuket tourist to continue,” he said.
Vaccinations, ATK tests for New Year celebrations

Organisers of large events and parties are looking to the New Year celebrations to be asked to ensure that COVID prevention measures are enforced and that all people attending events have tested negative for COVID-19 before being allowed entry.

“The COVID-19 situation in Phuket is now considered to be improving as the number of people infected is declining, possibly due to higher vaccinations, screenings and better access to health services,” said Vachira Phuket Hospital Deputy Director Dr Witiya Jang-iam.

“As for the New Year’s festival, COVID screening measures in place for entry to beaches such as gatherings with more than 500 people must consider the risk of the event organisation format, such as concerts, parties, etc,” she added.

“The main measure is to screen by ATK [antigen test] for all people attending the event and that everyone behaves according to DMHT [prevention measures],” Dr Witiya said.

“Additionally, in-ground network partners will also be assigned to make sure the crowd is not overcrowded for everyone’s safety,” she added.

In Phuket, the Amazing Thailand Countdown 2022 celebration will be held at the beach area at Saphan Hin. The number of people at the area at any one time will be limited to 1,500 for Dec 27-29, and to 5,000 people for Dec 30-31.

Phuket Vice Governor Pi- chet Panapong said the event will comply with measures mandated by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) in order to permit a crowd in excess of 1,000 people. All participants must show negative COVID-19 test results from an antigen test kit issued within 72 hours prior to the event, along with proof of vaccination and registration via the QueQ app, a step taken in order to limit the number of participants.

The audience immediately in front of the main stage will number approximately 730 people, with an estimated 4,000 people watching on a big screen from the area surrounding the beach at Saphan Hin.

World-renowned Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli has been confirmed to perform at the event, Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprasarn said this week.

Meanwhile, the order issued by Phuket Governor Narong Woonciew last month to allow the sale and consumption of alcohol at venues across the island all through the night of Dec 31 to 6am on Jan 1 has been cancelled.

The cancellation was announced by the Phuket Office, operated by the Phuket office of the Ministry of Interior, on Tuesday (Dec 21).

All food and beverage outlets that are permitted by licence to usually sell alcohol until 11pm were now allowed to sell alcohol and allow the consumption of alcohol on the premises until 1am only on the night of Dec 31.

The notice marked that the rule change was to allow people to enjoy the New Year’s Eve festival.

Dive safety boost in national parks

LARGE COMMERCIAL DIVE TOUR boats are no longer permitted to enter the area immediately surrounding dive sites in national parks following new safety measures introduced by Varawut Silpa-archa, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment.

Large boats must now remain 100-200 metres from the dive site and ferry their dive tourists to the dive site itself by smaller boats.

Minister Varawut has introduced a “three strikes” system of penalties for violating the new measure. A first offence will incur a B5,000 fine and an official warning. A second offence will incur a B20,000 fine and the boat operator’s licence will be suspended for 30 days. A third offence will incur a B100,000 fine and the boat operator’s licence will be revoked.

“Large boats with engine power and a large propeller, in addition to disturbing the creatures that live on the coral reefs, may also be dangerous for other divers as well,” Mr Varawut said.

“Therefore, I would like to inform you that all business operators will be informed, and we invite tourists to travel to scuba dive to see the beauty of the Thai sea during this New Year festival. Please help monitor the behaviour of business operators too,” he added.

The move has been praised as a common sense approach to dive tour safety, removing the possibility of tourists being injured by large boat propellers, and to help protect coral reefs and marine environment.

Kevin Lidureau of Seafarer Divers noted, “Minister Varawut is just reinforcing the IMO [International Maritime Organisation] that all boats must stay at least 50 metres away from any diving activity for safety reasons.

However he added, “For the moment it is only in national parks, but it may be extended for the whole Thailand. This is the best decision so far for people to enjoy safe diving while divers are on decompression stops or surfacing at the end of diving,” Mr Lidureau said.

Using dinghies gives the chance to go to the right place for immersion for a small group of divers. With MV Andaman Seafarer we have been using dinghies, as is done at many marine national parks around the world, since 1985,” he added.

Mr Lidureau called for speedboats to also be banned from entering the area where divers are in the water.

“Speedboats with divers should be made to use dinghies or be banned from dive sites as they have two or three engines, and captains do not have a 360-degree view around the speedboats and below the sea level,” he noted.

The Phuket News

MAYA BAY WILL definitely reopen to tourists on Jan 1

MAYA BEACH WILL definitely reopen to tourists on Jan 1 but swimming will be off-limits, according to the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

The famous tourist attraction in Hat Noppharat Thara Mu Koh Phi Phi Marine National Park in Krabi will begin welcoming a limited number of tourists on New Year’s Day, department director-general Thanya Netithammakul said last Sunday (Dec 19).

Mr Thanya said the number of tourists visiting the beach on Phi Phi Ley Island would be limited to 375 per hour.

However, swimming would definitely not be allowed because the sea around Maya Beach is home to a large number of blacktip reef sharks.

A recent survey found there were 161 blacktip reef sharks in the area, he added. According to Mr Thanya, the department was pondering collecting an additional fee from tourists.

Apart from paying an admission fee to enter the marine national park, tourists would have to pay extra for visiting Maya Beach itself.

The matter was being considered by an advisory committee of the park, he said.

The department closed Maya Bay in June 2018 after it was overwhelmed by tourists, leading to the destruction of reefs and marine ecology in the area.

Although small in size – just 250 metres long and 15 metres wide – the bay has drawn global attention since it featured in the Hollywood movie The Beach, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, filmed there in 1999.

Bangkok Post

Maya Bay, without the hordes of tourists. Photo: DNP

TWIN ISLANDS REOPEN TO TOURISTS ON JANUARY 1

Phuket’s Mu Koh Phi Phi National Park will reopen to 2,000 people to enjoy the New Year’s Day celebrations.

Phuket Governor Naresuan Witsarut confirmed to perform at the event, Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprasarn said this week.

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The notice marked that the rule change was to allow people to enjoy the New Year’s Eve festival.
Phuket chosen for COVID data project

PHUKET HAS BEEN SELECTED as one of five provinces to pilot a project to develop a real-time database so that policy decisions regarding COVID prevention measures can be made quickly, concisely and appropriately for the situation at the time.

"On behalf of Phuket, I would like to thank the National Research Office for choosing Phuket as one of the five pilot provinces of system development to study the COVID-19 epidemic," Phuket Vice Governor Piyapong Chosuwong said at an event held to announce the project on Dec 14.

"Moreover, for giving the fund, the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency to develop the COVID-19 iMap Platform and Dashboard to develop links between agencies and to manage data better," he said.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, Phuket tourism has been the most affected, so managing COVID-19 has been extremely challenging for Phuket," Vice Governor Piyapong said.

"The formulation of measures and the enforcement of measures must be considered from a database of precise facts. Therefore it is important to prepare to link the information from relevant agencies in prompt time," he added.

Kandasri Limpaporn, Deputy Director at Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency, explained, "The COVID-19 iMap Platform was created to be a tool for the Security Emergency Operation Center and Provincial Center for Disease Control by connecting a large amount of geo-informatics data and developing the platform to be data centre.

"The platform aims to assist in the monitoring and analysis of data related to COVID-19 issues and support decision making in managing public health resources, and in recovering from COVID-19 situations by having information for decision-making to manage the situation immediately," Ms Kandasri said. The Phuket News

Army steps in over parking

Phuket chosen for COVID data project

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Motorbike changing lanes after U-turn leaves woman in critical condition

POLICE HAVE YET TO DETER-mine who, if anyone, is at fault in an accident that left a 66-year-old woman on the road and her passenger companion in critical condition with head injuries after the motorbike they were riding was struck by a car.

Theprakasattri Rd on Dec 15. Lt Col Pongpipat Khamchompoo of the Thalang Police was called to the scene, the U-turn near Thai Wat-sadu on Theprakasattri Rd in Moo 3, Srisoonthorn, at about 1pm.

Officers and rescue workers arrived to find a black Honda City sedan, registered in Songkhla, stopped in the middle lane of the road. The car had sustained damage to its front left bumper and its windshield was cracked.

The driver, Chuwit Sae-ng, 23, was at the scene waiting for police.

Just metres away was a grey Honda Wave 125 motorcycle, registered in Phrachuri, lying in the middle of the road.

Its driver, Suda Nooboonmee, 66, was still sitting on the road injured.

She had suffered minor injuries from the collision.

However, her passenger, Wanwisa Pathumwan, also lying in the middle of the road, had suffered serious head injuries.

An ambulance transported both women to Thalang Hospital.

Ms Wanwisa was deemed to be in critical condition and was transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town.

Col Pongpipat noted that from CCTV footage that had recorded the accident it could be seen that Ms Suda had rounded the U-turn and was moving slowly across the lanes.

However, she moved back into the right lane as a bus was coming through in the middle lane. The Honda car being driven by Mr Chuwit, heading northbound, then struck the motorbike from behind.

Col Pongpipat reported that officers were continuing their investigation and had yet to charge any person involved for the accident.

Eakkapop Thongtub

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The Peaks reduced to rubble

The Phuket News

The Peaks Residences, ruled by the Supreme Administrative Court as illegally occupying protected forest land at Kata Noi, on Phuket’s southwest coast, has been demolished.

The demolition began on Sept 13, confirmed Sarayut Wasinanon, an engineer at Karon Municipality.

The court ordered the company to remove all structures and restore the site to its original condition within one year, Mr Sarayut confirmed.

“But the company submitted documents to inform [the municipality] that it will take time, within 180 days. “The demolition is expected to be finished in February 2022,” he said.

“If there are any problems, the company can request to extend the time for the demolition since it is expected to take about one year,” he added.

The demolition has proceeded swiftly. All the major buildings that were under construction at the site have been reduced to rubble, Mr Sarayut confirmed.

The project was promoted to feature 435 units in 23 buildings, though the project masterplan showed that the site was to feature more than 46 separate structures. Unit prices started at B5.5 million apiece, giving the completed project a base value of B2.39 billion.

Previous estimates of the full cost is paid by developer Kata Beach Co Ltd is covering all costs of the buildings.

“The full cost is paid by the company,” he said.

There have been no issues with the demolition of any of the buildings, Mr Sarayut added.

However, he noted that Karon Municipality is responsible for only the removal of the buildings.

The restoration of the area to its original state, including the planting of trees, is the responsibility of the Department of Lands and Royal Forest Department, he said.

Manassanan Nararatthanaweet, CEO of Kata Beach Co Ltd, in February last year went public to assure investors that his company would “take care” of people who have already paid deposits for units.

Mr Manassanan also explained that some buyers had agreed to have their monies transferred to take up units at another project located at Surin Beach.

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The Supreme Administrative Court ruling was handed down in December last year, Bangkok MP Sira Jenjaka, who also serves as the Chairman of the House Committee for Law, Justice and Human Rights, travelled to Phuket to personally hand a formal “request” to the Phuket Provincial Government to ensure that the Supreme Administrative Court’s order is fulfilled.

Present to receive the request was Phuket Vice Governor Piypapong Choowong.

Mr Sira has spearheaded a campaign against construction of The Peaks Residences after he received death threats for conducting a preliminary investigation into the project after receiving a formal complaint from the public.

The investigation into The Peaks began in 2018, when Cheewapap Cheewatham, a former Chief of Sirinath National Park who also defied death threats for acting against illegal occupiers of state land in the national park, received a complaint on behalf of the Royal Forest Department.

That investigation saw Lt Gen Kittisak Boonsuk, Deputy Director of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Operations Coordination Center 4, leading a team of military officers from Bangkok to Phuket in March to inspect the site.

During that visit Gen Kittisak confirmed that Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had ordered an investigation into the project.
The private jet terminal at Phuket International Airport finally formally opened on Dec 15 with an event led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul.

The terminal, called the “SIAM LAND Private Jet Terminal”, aims to serve high-end visitors landing on the island. Present for the occasion were Phuket Governor Narong Woosawan, Treasury Department Director-General Prapas Kong-ised, Airways of Thailand President Ninita Sirisomthukkar, and CP Group Chairman Soopakij Chearavanont.

“The opening of the Siam Land Private Jet Terminal is good for stimulating the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic because Phuket airport is a complete international airport. It is contemporary and roomy,” Anutin said.

“I am sure that after the COVID-19 situation, Thailand will be the leader in the recovery of the world economy and tourism. More tourists will be coming to Phuket,” he said.

“I would like to thank everyone who participated in driving Thailand to be a stable economy and a country of interest. After this, I would like to ask everyone to keep working together to make Thailand more developed in the future,” Anutin concluded.

Kachorn Chiaravanont, Executive Vice Chairman of Siam Land Flying, noted that launch of the five-star service terminal marked another milestone in the company’s business activities.

“We have witnessed a steady increasing trend in the private charter aviation sector, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak,” Mr Kachorn said.

“The private charter business is even more popular among VIP tourists who put safety first. So, private jet is the new option of ‘New Normal travel’ [for VIP tourists], which is reassuring for tourism because it decreases the risk of exposure from congestion within the airport and during the voyage,” he added.

“SIAM LAND Private Jet Terminal also further reinforces confidence among private jet travelers in terms of safety, service that meets international standards, a complete range of comfort, and convenience. “It can also elevate the first impression of a visit to Thailand, especially the important tourist attraction of Phuket, which is a destination that travelers around the world have been waiting to experience,” Mr Kachorn continued.

“It is the pride of Siam Land Flying to contribute to the country’s benefit and we support government policies to expand the Thai tourism market, opening new opportunities from tourist groups with high purchasing power to generate income and shopping within the country as well as creating jobs for people in the area,” he said.

Greg Martin, Chief Executive Officer of Siam Land Flying Co Ltd, noted: “The Private Jet Terminal of Siam Land Flying Phuket is fully equipped to provide a premium service for our VIP guests in a discrete and safe manner. The Private Jet Terminal building situated on a 17-rai area of land in Mai Khao, Our 1,200-square-metre terminal features several VIP lounges and all of the services required for smooth travel both internationally and domestically with Immigration, Customs and Disease Control services available on site.”

“Our comprehensive services and our world-class facilities cement Siam Land Flying’s determination to enhance the very first experience amongst our guests once they reach Thailand. And at the Siam Land Private Jet Terminal we have made significant investments in fully electric ground support equipment including aircraft tow tugs, ground power units and support vehicles. “This helps achieve our sustainability goals as most other facilities around the world use diesel powered equipment,” he added.

The terminal is complemented by approximately 7,000sqm of hangar space and 12,000sqm of apron space to provide safe parking for large-sized private jets, for example up to seven Gulfstream G650s can be accommodated, as well as being able to accommodate ultra-large sized private jets such as the Boeing Business Jet or Airbus Corporate Jet. Maintenance support can be provided by the licensed aircraft engineers who are part of the Siam Land Flying team.

In addition, the terminal provides other services such as a shuttle service, hotel reservation and coordination, tourism and event consultancy, in-flight food and beverage service, VIP lounges for departing and arriving passengers as well as crews.

New year gift basket cheats targeted

OFFICERS FROM THE PHUKET Provincial office of Commercial Affairs are inspecting major retailers across the island to ensure that gift baskets are being sold in full compliance with trading laws, including having their actual prices displayed.

Phuket Commerce Chief Woranit Apicharjawong, joined Phuket Vice Governor Pichet Panapong, led a team to inspect the Makro store in Kathu on Dec 15.

Gift baskets are very popular items before the Christmas and New Year holidays, Ms Woranit explained.

The inspections are being carried out to ensure retailers are not taking unfair advantage by not displaying accurate prices, or using gift baskets as a way of clearing out old stock, she said.

The inspection at Makro found no infringements.

Price tags on the products were clearly displayed in line with the criteria set by the Ministry of Commerce,” Vice Governor Pichet said.

Officials from the Ministry of Public Health also inspected the quality of the products packed in the gift baskets, which must be in accordance with the criteria set by the Ministry of Public Health. The important thing is that the products included in the gift basket must have expiration dates of more than six months,” he added.

Joining the inspection was Sommuk Hasem, an officer at the Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO).

“The PPHO has campaigned for people to give baskets that focus on health. We should choose products that have less sugar, oil, salt and campaign to reduce obesity and prevent chronic, non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, high blood fat, etc,” Mr Sommuk said.

Ms Woranit explained that in order to prevent the taking advantage of consumers during the Christmas and New Year holidays, merchants must comply with the law.

Gift basket sets must be labelled to show the retail price of the product and each item in the basket, including each product’s size, unit weight, packing quantity, and the price of each item and the cost of the basket itself.

The list showing the prices of such goods must be font size 16 or equivalent size. The items in the basket must have expiration dates of more than six months.

The price tags at the point of sale or at the gift basket sets must be accurate and clear so that people can compare the quality, type, quantity, and price of the product, she said.

If any business operators break these laws, they will be liable to fines of up to B10,000, Ms Woranit added.

The Phuket News
The Government announced on Tuesday (Dec 21) that mandatory quarantine measures for overseas visitors will be reinstated due to concerns over the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

A Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) meeting chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha confirmed a suspension of quarantine-free entry for overseas visitors as of Tuesday until Jan 4.

The decision will be reviewed again on Jan 4, confirmed Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmartchuwon.

This will result in the “Test & Go” initiative, which allowed tourists from 67 approved countries, being scrapped and visitors having to undergo hotel quarantine between 7-10 days.

“Sandbox” programmes will also cease nationwide aside from in Phuket, confirmed deputy government spokeswoman Rachada Dhanadirek.

“Aftr Dec 21, there will be no new registrations for “Test & Go”, only quarantine or Phuket Sandbox,” she said.

The news came weeks after the country reopened to fully vaccinated tourists on Nov 1 and a day after the first confirmed case of local transmission of the Omicron variant.

Government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said that visitors who had previously received approval on their quarantine waiver and Sandbox program, estimated at around 300,000, will still be eligible and that roughly 110,000 had already arrived.

However, they would need to undergo two PCR tests while in the country, one on arrival and another on day seven of their stay.

“This is not to shut off tourists but to temporarily suspend arrivals,” Thana-korn said.

Public Health Permanent Secretary Dr Kiattiphum Wongchatr, said that the last group of previously approved arrivals via “Test & Go” and “Sandbox” would arrive on or before Jan 4.

Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul claimed reintroducing a complete lockdown would be a last resort.

“We are prepared for the situation and will respond promptly so there will be no need to worry about closing businesses,” he said.

“We will protect as much as possible and we must make Thailand safe.”

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BA suspends UK flights to Bangkok

BA has confirmed that British Airways has suspended all direct flights from the UK to Bangkok until October 2022.

The decision came after a sharp decline in the demand for travel during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Routes had been circulating on various online forums for the past few weeks and it was officially confirmed by the airline last Friday (Dec 17).

“We apologise to customers whose travel plans are disrupted,” commented a spokesperson for the airline.

“Where a customer’s flight is cancelled, we always contact them to offer options including a full refund. Customers who are unable to travel, or choose not to, can also continue to change their flights or request a voucher for future use as part of our Book with Confidence policy, which has been available since the beginning of the pandemic.”

The airline had announced earlier this month that over 2,000 scheduled flights were being dropped including domestic UK flights in addition to short haul and long haul travel.

Passengers immediately affected by any cancellations are advised to consult the BA website or customer service channels for the status of their bookings.

One initial alternative for passengers booked to travel to Bangkok was the offer of flights to Doha with Qatar Airlines and to then take a connecting flight onto the Thai capital.

Any passengers scheduled to travel prior to Aug 31, 2022 were informed they can apply for a voucher which will be valid until Sept 30, 2023.
Living Waters Phuket has been providing financial grants and completing projects investing in sustainable community solutions across Phuket and the surrounding islands. Living Waters Phuket is a brand new Foundation which was set up to build brighter futures for communities in need. This Foundation provides financial grants to projects around essential relief areas including sustainable food security, education requirements, renewable energy and environmental issues. It was established to help registered charities, foundations, private companies and government organisations by funding community projects.

Grants are currently and continuously being awarded to community groups, charities, Not-For-Profit organisations (NFPs) and individuals who want to help the community by finding solutions to the aforementioned challenges in Phuket and the surrounding areas. The independent board of advisors at Living Waters Phuket reviews each grant application they receive objectively, fairly and impartially. With financial grants being awarded each week, there are a lot of exciting opportunities to help the communities in need, here in Phuket and beyond.

**Sustainable Farming Project**

The Foundation was involved from the start in supporting a Sustainable Education on Farming and Food Production programme for the Kathu Wittaya School. This long-term initiative was designed around teaching almost 1,000 children about the process of producing and harvesting food, and came to fruition due to funding from Living Waters Phuket Foundation.

This project is the first of its kind in Phuket, and teaches students how to farm the land using proven Thai techniques and processes. It truly is a full circle sustainable farming initiative and something that the Foundation is extremely proud to support.

These types of initiatives aim to give disadvantaged children the lifelong skills to be self-sufficient, and take this knowledge back to their communities in the hope of a better and more sustainable future.

With the Sustainable Education on Farming and Food Production project complete, Living Waters Phuket are now providing grants for Phase 2: the construction of buildings to store produce and a shopfront from which to sell from.

**Education Assistance for Disadvantaged Children**

Living Waters Phuket Foundation funded and provided brand new IT equipment for over 500 disadvantaged children at the Phuket Has Been Good To Us (PHBGTU) School. This project was funded in order for teachers, volunteers and administrators to be able to deliver their English classes more effectively and efficiently. The previous equipment was old, unreliable and often shut down mid lesson making classes increasingly difficult to hold. The newly installed equipment will help teachers deliver higher quality lessons, printed materials and content. This initiative aims to help students progress further with their education, giving them a brighter future for employment options, thus helping their families and communities also.

The grant to provide new IT equipment for teachers, volunteers and administrators for this children’s charity has been completed, and all IT equipment has been funded, delivered and set up.

**Clean Energy Project**

Living Waters Phuket has recently completed the installation of solar panels for the Good Shepherd Phuket Town (GSPT) Learning Centre.

Living Waters Phuket is based around finding and funding sustainable solutions to food security, education and environmental issues. So, solar energy for this charity organisation sits well with their funding criteria.

This initiative will allow the Learning Centre to save money by removing the high electricity costs they were paying previously to run the centre. This completed project now uses a clean and sustainable energy solution that the Foundation is proud to have been able to provide for funding.

**Living Waters Phuket Foundation – Building Brighter Futures**

“Phuket has needed a well thought out Foundation for a long time, and I am excited to see many positive initiatives get the opportunity to come to fruition in such a short space of time. Living Waters Phuket is open for grant applications and much needed donations to carry on our work. We look forward to being able to continue to support the community by providing funding for sustainable solutions not only to food security but in areas of education and environmental issues,” said Shaun Stenning (CEO and Founder of 5 Star Marine).

**Donations**

You can donate to the Foundation’s Weeboon page to help fund more sustainable, community projects where you will also find weekly updates on initiatives. Please go to weeboon.com and search for ‘Living Waters Phuket’.

See also LivingWatersPhuket on Facebook and Instagram.
It is always hard to gauge a Marvel movie by going on the company’s promises. Every time a new Marvel movie is coming out they promise that it is bigger and better than the last one. Like all repeated promises, sometimes they deliver and sometimes they don’t, but believe me you have to believe the hype when it comes to Spider-Man: No Way Home. Not only does the film deliver a new level of being epic, this is one film that is guaranteed to become a fan favourite… perhaps Marvel have finally found the way to create a film that true fans are going to love while still making that elusive cinema buck.

Directed by Jon Watts (Cop Car), the film picks up in the very seconds after the ending of Spider-Man: Far From Home. Peter Parker’s (Tom Holland – The Impossible) identity has been exposed to the world by Mysterio (Jake Gyllenhaal – Nightcrawler) and online journalist J. Jonah Jameson (J.K. Simmons – Whiplash). Not only that but Peter Parker finds himself being investigated for the death of Mysterio and it seems like the world is turning against him. He turns to his support network of Aunt May (Marisa Tomei – The Wrestler) and Happy Hogan (Jon Favreau – Chef) for support, but when the impact of the investigation affects him, his girlfriend MJ (Zendaya – Dune) and best friend Ned (Jacob Batalon – Spider-Man: Homecoming) in a major way, he decides that something needs to be done. Peter then turns to Doctor Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch – The Power of the Dog) for help but the resulting spell that is cast has catastrophic ramifications. Suddenly Peter and his crew find themselves in a battle as foes from the multi-verse land in New York led by Doc Ock (Alfred Molina – Boogie Nights), Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe – The Card Counter) and Electro (Jamie Foxx – Horrible Bosses).

What Jon Watts has created here is a very special film for comic-book fans. If you are a casual Marvel movie fan then you are going to like this film, but if you are a die-hard Spider-Man fan then you are going to LOVE this film because this is something so special that the only one to describe it is that it is a once in a generation film. There are some very special moments in this film for true Spider-Man fans, we will leave that at that so there are no spoilers, but it is how everything else that comes together in this film that takes it to the next level.

Somehow Watts and screenwriters Chris McKenna (Ant-Man and the Wasp) and Erik Sommers (Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle) manage to pack a lot of things into this film without making it feel crowded or letting it run past its welcome. They also bring the right blend of things to the film – nostalgia, epic action sequences, characterisation and just the right amount of humour. They have pretty much made the perfect comic-book movie.

The result is a film that makes Spider-fans gasp at times throughout the film – and in the screening we were in there were even rounds of applause and screams during some of the film’s big revelations, and that is something that you rarely see in modern-day cinema. It also feels like the actors here know they are acting in something special. We have known that Tom Holland is something special ever since his performance in The Impossible, but here he takes his acting to a whole new level. He almost has to as Willem Dafoe comes into the film bringing his A-Game.

There are too many special moments in this film to mention and many of them would be spoilers so the best thing to say is that this is a film that Spider-Man fans are going to truly embrace and adore. This is the one time that Marvel has delivered something very special indeed for comic book fans everywhere. Spider-Man: No Way Home opens in cinemas in Phuket on Dec 23 and has yet to be classified.

5/5 Stars
 populiz

 1. Christmas cards; 2) Gizmo; 3) A swede; 4) Three French Hens; 5) Rudolph (First Reindeer). Answers below, center

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Answers to this week's Pop Quiz:

Across
1. Like some columns
2. Map
3. Further
4. Eluding an officer
5. Strike
6. Cheerless
7. Sixth day of Christmas
8. Maintenance
9. Not fine
10. Acquisition method
11. Snubbing
12. Third day of Christmas
13. A swede
14. Electricity
15. Rudolph
16. Gizmo
17. Paella pot
18. Snobbing
19. Cabbage
20. A turnip
21. New Yorker
22. Magic
23. Farm call
24. Fabric
25. Snubbing
26. A swede
27. West Indian folk
28. A swede
29. Feeder filler
30. Catalog
31. Magic
32. Map
33. Cheery
34. Ism
35. Legal org.
36. Literary work
37. Bakery buy
38. Extreme suffix
39. Foofaraw
40. Feeder filler
41. Catalog
42. Map
43. Legal org.
44. Ism
45. Foofaraw
46. Snubbing
47. Cabbage
48. A turnip
49. Acquisition method
50. Snubbing
51. A swede
52. Map
53. Legal org.
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57. Cabbage
58. A turnip
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92. A turnip
93. Snubbing
94. Cabbage
95. A turnip
96. Snubbing
97. Cabbage
98. A turnip
99. Snubbing
100. Cabbage

Down
1. Place
2. Pineapples
3. Eyelid woe
4. Leavings
5. Abreast of
6. Rudolph
7. Ways of firewood
8. Map
9. Sixth day of Christmas
10. Snobbing
11. A swede
12. A swede
13. A swede
14. A swede
15. A swede
16. Rudolph
17. English alphabet
18. Exceedingly
19. Cause
20. Review
21. Time
22. Further
23. Fifth feature
24. Rudolph
25. A swede
26. A swede
27. A swede
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93. Rudolph
94. Rudolph
95. Rudolph
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97. Rudolph
98. Rudolph
99. Rudolph
100. Rudolph

Answers to last week's puzzles:

Across
1. Cries at fireworks
2. Old Icelandic literary work
3. Further
4. Cat
5. Strike
6. Cheerless
7. Sixth day of Christmas
8. Maintenance
9. Not fine
10. Acquisition method
11. Snubbing
12. Third day of Christmas
13. A swede
14. Electricity
15. Rudolph
16. Gizmo
17. Paella pot
18. Snobbing
19. Cabbage
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This week in history

1191 Dec 29, 1191 Mongolian independent from the Qing dynasty, enthroning the 9th Jebtsundamba Khutughtu as Khagan of Mongolia.
1916 Dec 20, 1916 Grigorii Yefimovich Rasputin, Russian mystic and advisor to the Tsar, is murdered by a loyalist group led by Prince Felix Yusupov. His frozen, partially-trussed body was discovered in a Moscow river three days later. Source: Wikipedia
1826 Dec 24, 1826 The Eggnog Riot at the United States Military Academy West Point begins, involving more than one-third of the cadets by the time it ceased on Christmas morning; 20 of them were court-martialed.
1939 Dec 25, 1939 King Taksin’s coronation is established as the capital.
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 kids playground zone. Adults: 320 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver, Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

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 kids playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 175 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver. Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

Bottomless Boxing Day Grande Indian Brunch
Enjoy Boxing day with our Special Bottomless Grande Indian brunch starting at 11:30am. Featuring Authentic Indian dishes with global inspiration, celebrated 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. Timings: 11:30am – 3:30 pm. Date: 26 Dec 2021 Brunch Price: THB 699++ with Free Flow: THB 1,599++ Children 6-12 years for THB 499++ 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

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. 11AM – 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 kids playground zone. Adults: 350 baht P.P. Kids under 12 years old: 175 baht P.P. www.shakersphuket.com www.facebook.com/shakersphuket Oliver. Shakers restaurant 98/18 Vises Road, Rawai 83130, 081 891 4381

Christmas Gala dinner at Cosmo
Enjoy the magic of Christmas whilst taking in the stunning view across Nai Harn Bay, over a sumptuous Deluxe Buffet Dinner complete with all the trimmings at 50% off. Reservation, Cosmo at The Nai Harn Phuket, fbreservation@thenaiharn.com, 076 380 200

New Years Day Grande Indian Brunch at Portosino
Enjoy New Years day with our Special Bottomless 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. Timings: 12:00noon – 4.30pm. Date: 1 Jan, 2022 Brunch Price: THB 1,499++ 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

Pizza Monday
12 PM till closing. 20% discount on all our pizzas. We have a kid’s playground zone. www.shakersphuket.com

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: stigaaan@gmail.com

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 to 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.

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Valued Skål Phuket member, Eric Weber, GM The Boathouse and his F&B team, put together a superb menu for an enjoyable afternoon on Thursday Dec 16, 2021. Funds raised, by donations from members, went to support Phuket Sunshine Village.

Francois Laing, President Skål Phuket, welcomed new members - Gilbert Melki, Bruno Lespurque, Khun Ampapon Sakampee, Thomas Powell, Holcio De Melo and Khun Sukij Thipatima as the latest members of Skål Phuket.
Girl power rules in Kamala Open Singles Championship

History was made at the Kamala Lawn Bowls Club on Dec 13 as the final of the Open Singles Championship was an all female affair for the very first time with Nidnoi Worada and Dot Barker contesting a game of the highest calibre for the title.

With the afternoon sun blazing down, 16 hopefuls took to the green for a straight forward sudden death knock-out format which saw five former champions perish in the first round.

Dot and Nidnoi managed to navigate their respective quarter-final ties to set up a semi-final line-up that was dubbed “battle of the sexes” with Dot facing Phuket Powerboat 2021 champion Ulf (U) Egerstad and Nidnoi facing Geoff “Sharpy” Sharp.

After falling behind 4-1 early in her match, Dot responded with a crucial 4 pointer to sneak ahead and then claimed the spoils in the ensuing 4 ends to move into an unassailable 13-5 lead.

In the other semi-final Nidnoi and Sharpy were also tied after 5 ends before Nidnoi managed to pull away to win 9-5.

The standard of bowling by both Dot and Nidnoi was nothing short of sensational and meant it set an historic and momentous occasion with the first ever all female final!

After 7 ends the score was tied at 5-5 before Nidnoi edged into a 7-5 lead leading into the critical final end.

Dot knew that she needed to score 2 points to take the match into extra time or 3 points for victory and with her final 4 balls she managed to serve up two superb “touchers” to level the game.

Nidnoi’s third bowl out of four was an accurate forced drive that split Dot’s two touchers and left the Thai holding the shot. With her other bowls scattered, Dot’s only chance was to bowl another two “touchers”. However, it was not to be on this occasion as Nidnoi added a further 2 shots on that end to deservingly win her first major tournament with a 9-5 score.

It was a fantastic final of the highest calibre played in the best of sporting spirit, something evident at the climax by the rousing round of applause from the spectators and fellow competitors.

Glenn Collins took the photo competition between the first-round losers with a comprehensive 11-2 victory over Dean Lambert. Glenn’s victory ensured it was a clean sweep on the day and the trophies were kept in the family as he is, in his own words, Nidnoi’s “insignificant other half!”

Kamala lawn bowls is open five days a week from Monday to Friday. All are welcome to have a go at this cheap and enjoyable sport and all equipment is provided.

For further details contact the club on 0991307299.

Schools take the weight in King’s Cup

ASPIRING YOUTH WEIGHTLIFTERS descended on Phuket last weekend as the island hosted the national King’s Cup. The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) Youth Weightlifting Championships, 2021 was held between Dec 15-18 at Suphan Hin Sports Center.

The competition was organised in conjunction with the Amateur Weightlifting Association of Thailand in honour of His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn (Rama X) and is designed to help select athletes for national representation in the sport.

A total of 27 clubs sent athletes to compete at the tournament, which was divided into seven male weight categories and seven female weight categories. There were two rounds of competition each day, starting at 9am with a total of 126 medals at stake (42 gold, 42 silver and 42 bronze).

Team A from Nakhon Sawan Municipal Sports School finished first overall in the male and female classes to win the trophy and weightlifting equipment worth B180,000. The school’s Thitikorn Saetan won all three gold medals in the men’s 89kg category, breaking his own national youth record in the process. His colleague, Chonthicha Siraphat, also excelled in winning three gold medals in the women’s 74kg category.

Chonburi Provincial Sports School and Bangkok Sports School finished second and third and received weightlifting equipment worth B90,000 and B56,000 respectively.

A female competitor at the King’s Cup. Photo: PR Phuket

Team A from Bangkok Sports School won the female class overall and Team A from Siuket Provincial Weightlifting Association won the men’s class.

The best male athlete award went to Wetsaraphon Wichuma from the Surin Weightlifting Club. Poy-Sian Yodsarn from Suksa Songkho Surai Than School won the best female award.

Athletes will also be selected in due course to progress and represent the national weightlifting team, based on their respective performances and results.

The event was inaugurated by Pichit Panapong, Vice wGovernor of Phuket, who presided over the opening and closing ceremonies. He was joined by Saroj Niramolphan, Mayor of Phuket City, selected officials and athletes from the competition.

Mr Saroj said that Phuket Province was honored to be selected by the Amateur Weightlifting Association of Thailand to host the event which respected COVID-19 health and safety protocol at all times.

The Phuket News
Premier League to play on during COVID chaos

FOOTBALL

Kieran Canning

Premier League clubs decided against a temporary halt to the season on Monday (Dec 20) despite a surge in coronavirus cases that has forced mass postponements and threatened to derail the season.

Just four of last weekend’s scheduled 10 games went ahead as Britain battle record numbers of positive COVID cases due to the new Omicron strain.

The Premier League board has been considering applications for postponements on a case-by-case basis but there has been criticism over the decision-making process, with fears it jeopardises the sporting integrity of the competition.

There had been talk of a potential “firebreaker”, with suggestions that the middle round of the festive fixtures from Dec 28-30 could be postponed.

But on Monday the English top flight, following a shareholders’ meeting involving representatives from the 20 clubs, said games would continue through the busy festive season.

“It was confirmed at a Premier League club meeting today that while recognising a number of clubs are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and challenges, it is the league’s collective intention to continue the current fixture schedule where safely possible,” the Premier League said in a statement.

“The health and wellbeing of all concerned remains our priority and the League will continue to monitor and reflect public health guidance, always proceeding with caution.”

The statement also said 84% of players had had at least one dose of vaccination.

Tuchel fears

Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel is concerned with the current situation, citing risks to the health and safety of players. Photo: AFP

“We were put in a huge risk of health and safety to the players, not just because of COVID but also physically,” Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel said last Sunday.

“From a medical point of view, I’m very worried because we have had four consecutive days of positive tests in the squad.”

“How will this stop if we carry on and pretend it’s not happening? This is my opinion and it’s the medical opinion but it’s not the opinion of the Premier League, so we have to play.”

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has called for more transparency over the decision-making process.

The Gunners were forced to play at Brentford on the opening weekend of the season despite four players testing positive and lost the game 2-0.

“We want to play all under the same rules,” said Arteta after Arsenal thrashed a depleted Leeds 4-1 last Saturday.

“That’s where I think they have to come forward. Whatever they decide is best for the competition has to be explained.” AFP

Aussies unchanged for remainder of Ashes

CRICKET

Australia named an unchanged 15-man squad for the remaining three Tests against England on Monday (Dec 20) with captain Pat Cummins and fast bowling partner Josh Hazlewood rejoining the team in Melbourne this week.

The home team resisted any changes after demolishing England in the second Test in Adelaide to go 2-0 up in the series, leaving the visitors’ dreams of winning back the hallowed urn in tatters.

Cummins, the world’s number one Test bowler, missed the day-night Adelaide Test after being a close contact of a positive COVID case at Adelaide restaurant.

He was supposed to isolate in the South Australia capital for seven days but was permitted to return to Sydney on a private charter flight.

Hazlewood was ruled out with a side strain, with Jhye Richardson and Michael Neser replacing them in the starting eleven.

Australian players celebrate their second Test win against England in Adelaide. Photo: AFP

England slumped to defeat by nine wickets in the first Test in Brisbane and the Adelaide loss means their hopes of winning back a trophy they last secured on Australian turf in 2010-11 are all but over.

Joe Root’s men will head to Melbourne for the Boxing Day Test starting Sunday (Dec 26) knowing that the only instance of a team coming from 2-0 down to win the Ashes was Donald Bradman’s Australia way back in 1936-37.

“The reason it’s disappointing is because we made the same mistakes. I think we could have bowled a lot fuller, and with the bat we need to be better, make bigger scores and apply better,” said Root.

“The second innings is the attitude and desire we need. It’s frustrating because we know we are better. Lessons learnt, we have to be better in the next game.”

England’s chances of victory had been nigh on impossible – no team had ever posted such a big fourth innings score to win in Test cricket history, with the West Indies’ 418 for seven in beating Steve Waugh’s Australia at St John’s in 2003 the highest.

“In hindsight, you might say we should have picked a different side,” said England bowling coach Jon Lewis.

AFP

Teerasil Dangda is the highest scorer in the tournament’s history. Photo: AFP

War Elephants charge for Suzuki Cup title

THAILAND WILL NEED to overcome defending champions Vietnam if they are to achieve their pre-tournament goal of winning the Suzuki Cup.

The War Elephants were drawn against Vietnam in the last four after topping Group A with three straight victories against Myanmar, the Philippines and hosts Singapore.

They were set to play their first leg of the semi-final against Vietnam yesterday (Dec 23) with the second leg scheduled for Sunday (Dec 26).

They go into the games unbeaten and full of confidence with star striker Teerasil Dangda, who has scored four times in the tournament so far, now established as the all-time top scorer of the Southeast Asian championship with 19 goals, overtaking retired Singapore forward Noh Alam Shah.

Vietnam finished second in Group B behind Indonesia who managed to beat Malaysia 4-1 last Sunday (Dec 19) to secure top spot in the group. Indonesia’s first leg semi-final game against Singapore was played on Wednesday (Dec 22) with the second leg to be played tomorrow (Dec 23).

The tournament was rescheduled from last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is being held in Singapore to minimise travel as per the usual home and away basis.

Thailand are the most successful side in the tournament with five titles followed by Singapore with four.

Desperate to win back the title, Thailand manager Nuolph Lamson has promised to give the team B20 million in bonus if they are crowned champions. The winners will also get about B50mn in prize money. The Phuket News
Dechapol and Sapsiree make history as world champions

The world No.1 pair claimed their fifth successive title and eighth overall this year after beating arch-rivals Yuta Watanabe and Arisa Higashino of Japan 21-13, 21-14 in the 46-minute final at Palacios de los Deportes Carolina Marin in Huelva.

Dechapol and Sapsiree won the Hylo Open in Germany in November before winning the last three events of the 2021 World Tour season held in Bali, Indonesia, ahead of the World Championships.

They started the year with three successive wins on home soil in the 2020 season-ending tournaments in January.

“I would like to congratulate Dechapol and Sapsiree for winning the world title,” said Badminton boss Khuonying Patama Leeswadtrakul after their victory.

“It is a historic achievement as both are Thailand’s first ever mixed doubles world champions and they have also won five successive tournaments.”

“They are a great example for a new generation of athletes to follow in their footsteps. Their victory is also a New Year’s gift for Thai people,” she added. *Bangkok Post*