

# Press Release

## **King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament Announces the World's First Elephant Therapists**

The King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament, held at Anantara Golden Triangle Resort & Spa, is proudly providing funding for the world's first ever elephant therapy programme. Designed to research the rehabilitation benefits for autistic children, the Thai Elephant Therapy Project (TETP) has been created in conjunction with Chiang Mai University and the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre (TECC).

For the clinical trials of this groundbreaking project, the TETP aims to provide autistic children with an opportunity to develop their social interaction and emotional skills by using Elephant therapists accompanied by occupational therapists, thus showcasing Thailand as a pioneering leader in the support of research into alternative therapy solutions.

The TETP was formed in December 2006 at the TECC, and by only March 2007 results showed improved adaptive behaviour, sensory processing, postural control, balance and social skills of participants, while their parents also reported perceived improvement and satisfaction with the programme. By November 2008, published features began appearing in the global specialist reports, with the oral presentation entitled "Thai Elephant-Assisted Therapy Programme: The Feasibility in Assisting an Individual with Autism" judged the best paper at the Singapore-Malaysia Association Conference in June 2008. A second project was then developed, and confirming the success of the first, ongoing programmes are now planned to provide for a larger number of autistic persons, including the venture keenly supported by the King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament.

The King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament in 2009 raised 1.8m Baht to fund the elephant and mahout element in forthcoming research trials. In addition, Anantara Golden Triangle Resort & Spa's on-site Elephant Camp has made itself available as a venue for the research. In August 2009 five elephants were rescued from the streets of Thailand especially to participate in the project, with their specific training commencing immediately to ensure that all five were healthy and well prepared for the clinical research sessions due to take place in March, April and May of this year.

The selected elephants will be accompanied by their expert mahout handlers, as well as the project's elephant specialist, Khun Prasop Tipprasert, alongside human therapists and researchers from the Chiang Mai University Faculty of Occupational Therapy who designed the exemplary programme. Upon completion, and dependent on the results, the official elephant autism clinics will commence in Chiang Mai later in 2010, with a workshop at the Asia Pacific Occupational Therapy Congress to follow in 2011.

Be a part of the most exciting sporting event of the year by booking your place for the King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament at Anantara Golden Triangle Resort & Spa.

**Editor's Note:**

*The on-site Elephant Camp at Anantara Golden Triangle Resort & Spa's 160 acre lush jungle setting plays host to the annual King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament. The game, which showcases the skillful grace of its rescued elephants, has become Thailand's 6th largest annual tourist event according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The 2010 event, to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, promises to enthrall spectators for the 9<sup>th</sup> year running, thanks to valued sponsors such as Audemars Piguet, TAT, Mercedes Benz Thailand, King Power Duty Free PricewaterhouseCoopers, Soco International, Veuve Clicquot and many more.*

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