

Phuket Gazette

April 2-8, 2016

Now inside **THE NATION** every Saturday

56 Pages / 20 Baht

‘PUBLISHING REGULATIONS TOO SOON CAN CAUSE CONFUSION’

Kids dodge blacklist



Lt Gen Nathathorn addressed about 400 people in a public meeting to clarify the new immigration regulations. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Immigration office clarifies regulations for ‘good guys in, bad guys out’ push

By Chutharat Plerin

AFTER more than a week of speculation, which caused some concerned parents to rush out of Thailand with their children on ‘emergency visa runs’, officials have confirmed that minors will not be black-listed for overstaying their visas.

Thailand’s implementation of a regula-

tion to blacklist overstayers will not affect those under the age of 18, explained Immigration Commissioner Nathathorn Prousoontorn.

The news about the changes in regulations was broken late last month, before local officials had received any clarification on the details from Bangkok.

“Sometimes a new draft of a regulation hasn’t been approved yet, or has yet to become effective. In these cases, I would ask publications to be patient and not push me for comments,” said Phuket Immigration Chief Sunchai Chokkajaykij on Wednesday. “Publishing anything too early could create confusion, as readers may misunderstand the current situation.”

Additionally, Col Sunchai pointed out

that anyone who fears that a new regulation might impact them should thoroughly research the topic, or even go to the Phuket Immigration Office to ask about their specific circumstances.

“Foreigners are always welcome to come to our office. News spreads very fast on the internet, which means misinformation can also spread very quickly. So it’s best to check multiple sources and rely on the ones that are trustworthy,” said Col Sunchai. “The bottom line though, is that I can only explain current, effective regulations. I play no part in developing new regulations, so until orders come from Bangkok, there is not really much I can say...”

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Finnish teen falls to death after night out in Patong

POLICE are still piecing together the circumstances around the death of a 19-year-old Finnish woman who fell from the rooftop of a Patong guesthouse in the early hours of Monday.

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BUSINESS



Social media marketing is the ‘new’ thing, but are we overvaluing Facebook.

PROPERTY



Time to pay attention to area crime rates when buying island property.

LIFE&STYLE



Ultraman champion begins swim around Phuket for local charities.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Police charge second suspect for stabbing of French tourist

POLICE have charged a second Thai man in relation to the death of French tourist Akim Boukheddouma, 23, who was stabbed during an altercation in front of the Orchid Resortel on Soi Sansabai in Patong on March 23.

"We tracked down Somkid Lhemood, 30, after checking CCTV in the area," said Lt Col Sutthichai Thianpho of the Patong Police.

The first suspect, 33-year-old Somporn Kakkaw, was arrested shortly after the attack in which Moroccan national Said Missoury was also injured.

"Mr Somkid, who works with Mr Somporn at a Patong pub, said he saw his friend in a fight with two foreigners and went to help.

"However, they were still outmatched, so Mr Somporn confessed that he drew his knife and stabbed Mr Boukheddouma," said Col Sutthichai.

– Winai Sarot

Milo trafficking case resubmitted to police



Milo the orangutan is currently at the Phang Nga Wildlife Nursery Station, waiting to be moved to the Khao Prathap Chang Wildlife Sanctuary in Ratcha Buri. This week, National Park officers resubmitted a case against the Phuket Zoo for allegedly possessing and releasing the orangutan into the forest without permission. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Gazette file

Plankton bloom blamed for brown water

MARINE biologists confirmed on March 26 that Patong Bay water was within safe parameters for recreational use, despite reports of swimmers

developing rashes from the brown colored water.

The water turned brown last week due to a plankton bloom. However, there is no health risk, said Suphasit Boonpeinphol of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC).

Test results did show high amounts of *Chaetoceros* and three other types of plankton, Mr Suphasit said.

– Winai Sarot

Dive sites may close due to coral bleaching

A JOINT committee on March 25 called for the temporary closure of 32 diving spots in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea to protect against coral bleaching.

The panel comprises representatives from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources; the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP); and the National Policy Committee for Tourism.

Of the diving spots suggested to be closed, 17 are Gulf of Thailand islands, including Koh Kangkao, Koh Chang Noi and Koh Talu, and 15 are Andaman Sea islands, including the Similans, Phai and Rawi.

Koh Yung, which is part of the Phi Phi archipelago and one

of the 32 dive spots, has already been closed for weeks.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a marine science academic and key member of the investigative panel, said about 80 per cent of the country's coral was prone to bleaching.

Dr Thon said that the temperature of the Andaman Sea was reaching a critical point of 30.5-31 degrees Celsius as a result of climate change, which would lead to bleaching.

– The Nation

Karon ready to be powered up

THE Karon power sub-station, set to open in June, is 95 per cent complete, confirmed the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA).

Due to the rapid growth of tourism on the island, we are no longer able to ensure that enough power is getting to those who need it in Rawai, Kata and Karon, explained Patong Sub-station Deputy Manager Atipong Thongyun.

"The new Karon station coming online by June is vital for us to meet the rising demand."

This year, power usage is expected to increase by 5.59 per cent in the area. Businesses and residents in southern Phuket tourist destinations are currently using about 40 megavolt amperes (MVA).

The new sub-station will more than double that capacity, opening up access to 100 MVA.

There are currently eight power stations on the island. However, the PEA aims to continue to increase that number to match the rising demand, Mr Atipong added.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Five women killed in Krabi school collapse

KRABI police are investigating the culpability, if any, of construction company Ekphat Enterprise Ltd Part after an entire floor of partially-hardened cement fell and crushed to death five female construction workers on March 25.

The women were named as: Jitranon Saikaew, 26; Kaliya Jandewan, 22; Yad Kodorn, 42; Warin Ratchabut, 31; and Linthong Promsuvann, 37.

A worker at the site told police that laborers were about to pour the cement for the second floor of the Institute of Physical Education - Krabi Campus building when the accident occurred.

"He said a section of poured cement that had not fully hardened fell on the women working on the first floor," said Krabi City Police Superintendent Sompong Thipa-arpakul. "However, he had no idea why it happened."

Ekphat Enterprise is negotiating compensation with the families of the women killed in the incident, confirmed Col Sompong.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Man bags 30kg king cobra

A KOHLANTA local caught a five-meter-long king cobra on March 23 using a stick-and-rope technique that he learned on YouTube.

Worawut Longasan, 56, volunteered to nab the snake spotted in his neighbor's garden. It only took him a few minutes to bag the nearly 30 kilogram cobra using a small stick and a looped piece of rope.

"This is the biggest and longest snake that I have ever caught," Mr Worawut said. "I believe that it came to the house because there is a lack of food and water in the forest due to the hot weather."

The snake was released back into the forest.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Finnish teen dies after night out in Patong

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

POLICE are still piecing together the circumstances around the death of a teenage Finnish woman whose body was found in Phuket Monday afternoon.

Ida Maria Bexar, 19, fell from the rooftop of the Good Dreams Guesthouse onto the roof of a nearby building in the early hours of the morning. However, her body was not discovered until that afternoon.

“We are still investigating what caused Ms Bexar to fall,” said Lt Col Sutthichai Thianpho of the Patong Police. “We have yet to rule out any possibility.”

A resident at the Good Dreams Guesthouse reported hearing a loud noise some time after returning home from work at about 3:20am. She told police that it sounded as if something had crashed onto the



Police are still investigating how Ms Bexar came to fall from the rooftop. Photo: Sampawat Wannasangkam

roof of the adjacent low-rise building, but didn't investigate, as she knew foreigners often went up to the rooftop late at night to socialize, and assumed someone up there had dropped or thrown something.

Though Ms Bexar was staying at a nearby residence,

Darisa Apartment, she had returned to the Good Dreams Guesthouse after a night on Soi Bangla with Swedish national Robert Dahlman, 26, confirmed said Col Sutthichai.

People in the building said that the pair had gotten into

an argument on the bottom floor of the guesthouse.

“Mr Dahlman was among a group of five foreigners, including Ms Bexar, who had been out drinking at the Stockholm Syndrome bar on Bangla Road that night,” said Col Sutthichai.

“According to Mr Dahlman, who said that he had known Ms Bexar for about a month, everyone in the group was quite drunk when they left the bar at about 3am. However, he said he has no idea what happened to Ms Bexar, as he went directly to his room when he returned to the guesthouse,” said Col Sutthichai.

Police found Ms Bexar's mobile phone on the rooftop of the Good Dreams Guesthouse. However, they have yet to find clues to indicate that a struggle took place. Meanwhile, officers are examining CCTV footage of the area for additional clues.

“Belongings found on Ms Bexar's body included a purse containing a key to her room at Darisa Apartment,” said Col Sutthichai.

Ms Bexar's body is being kept at Patong Hospital. The Finnish Embassy has been informed of her death.

Body on beach identified as British superyacht builder

POLICE have identified the body found on a Phuket beach last weekend as the builder of the 31-meter superyacht *Raja Laut*.

The body of Georges E K Carraz, 66, was found on Surin Beach by two passersby at about 7am on Saturday. Nearby, police found a rental car in the name of Winai Sawatdeesarn.

“Mr Winai confirmed that he had been renting the car out to Mr Carraz since January 29,” said Lt Peerasit Nhupayan of the Cherng Talay Police.

Described as a French boat designer, Mr Carraz was a British national born in Chateau Arnoux, France. However, he spent the past 30 years of his life working and living in Southeast Asia, developing an intimate knowledge of the people and boat building traditions in the region.

Mr Carraz is best known for



Raja Laut. Photo: Public domain

co-designing and building the *Raja Laut*, a classic gaff rigged schooner built with ironwood in northeast Borneo. After an extensive refitting, the *Raja Laut* – which means ‘King of the Seas’ in Malay – came back on the charter market last October.

As Mr Carraz valued privacy and discretion, his family have declined to make any comments with regard to his death.

Police have yet to determine the cause of death.

– Kongleaphy Keam

Investors set sights on Phuket for world's highest Ferris wheel

THE world's highest Ferris wheel will be built in Phuket, investors announced March 29.

“The Giant Ferris Wheel will break the record for the highest Ferris wheel in the world. It will be Phuket's landmark,” said Igor Protasov, the chief executive officer for Thai Business Development Co Ltd (TBD).

Currently, the highest Ferris wheel in the world is the ‘High Roller’ in Las Vegas, which



TBD CEO Igor Protasov. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

is 167.6 meters high.

“The Giant Ferris Wheel will attract tourists from around

the world to Phuket, and create important revenue and employment opportunities,” Mr Protasov said.

The project is a joint venture between TBD, Anuphas Group and PAX Group.

Mr Protasov explained that the wheel would take about two years to build and that other attractions would be added to the 40-rai area set aside for the project. – Chutharat Plerin

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Immigration clarifies new rules

From page 1

To clear up misunderstandings about the new immigration regulations, Lt Gen Nathathorn flew down from Bangkok to speak at a public meeting at Phuket Boat Lagoon on March 25.

“The new penalties came into effect on March 20. They are part of the Immigration Bureau’s campaign: ‘Good Guys In, Bad Guys Out’,” Gen Nathathorn explained to the more than 400 people in attendance.

The new rules are:

In case of aliens surrendering to the authorities:

Overstay more than 90 days – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 1 year

Overstay more than 1 year – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 3 years

Overstay more than 3 years – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 5 years

Overstay more than 5 years – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 10 years

In case of aliens being arrested and prosecuted:

Overstay up to 1 year – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 5 years

Overstay for more than 1 year – forbidden from re-entering the kingdom for 10 years

The new rules do not include a life ban as a penalty for people who overstay their visas by 10 years or more, which was proposed in a previous plan.



The new regulations are outlined out water bottles, as well as pamphlets. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

“We are here to spread awareness, especially among those who work with foreigners, so that they can ensure that foreigners are aware of the laws and penalties. We admit that it’s an issue which many foreigners take lightly, as the penalty for overstaying is only 500 baht a day, with a maximum fine of 20,000 baht,” said Gen Nathathorn.

“This is all but an invitation to overstay in Thailand. People used to just pay the fine and re-enter the Kingdom without any problems. However, the new regulations will help put an end to this.”

The Immigration Bureau has collected almost 300 million baht in fines within the last six months, said Gen Nathathorn. He also noted that within that

period, the number of people flagged in their database for overstaying their visa dropped from 810,522 to 486,947.

“In almost all cases involving transnational criminals, we found that they also overstayed their visas,” he said. “We welcome tourists, but only the law-abiding ones.”

Gen Nathathorn admitted that Thailand is both a destina-

tion and a point of transit for criminals.

“We have a policy of welcoming tourists in order to support our tourism industry – some nationalities don’t even need a visa to travel in Thailand. However, many foreigners exploit this situation, making Thailand a transit destination in their criminal schemes,” Gen Nathathorn said.

“Foreigners are living in almost every province in Thailand. They travel to many different places, such as Phuket, Pattaya and Chiang Mai, where they can easily hide among the large number of other foreigners. This regulation will be instrumental in protecting the innocent ones, whether they’re tourists or investors,” he said.

Martin Carpenter, British Honorary Consul for Phuket, expressed his support for the policy.

“I think this is a very good policy. It’s very clear and precise, and should be followed,” Mr Carpenter told the *Gazette*.

“I am sure that in the past, possibly even now, there are some foreigners living in Thailand who overstay anywhere from a year to five years, or even more. It is irresponsible of them to take advantage of the situation. But if they don’t follow the regulations, the punishments are there, strong and clear.”

Mr Carpenter noted that the regulations are unlikely to affect those who want to work or retire here.

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Pornthip to investigate 300 bodies

After 10 years, 'Battman' set to move on

Phuket Gazette

Volume 13 Issue 13 News Desk - Tel: 076-236555 April 1 - 7, 2006 Daily news at www.phuketgazette.net 25 Baht

Assassination gunman named

His wife's a bitch - and that's why he loves her

The Gazette is published in association with **The Nation**

Phuket Airlines 'off ban list soon'

Air France helping to improve safety systems



Top Dog doesn't know his shows

Patong assault victim dies



The road to hell - or Patong...

By Sangkhue Leelanapom



Flashback to September last year, the nadir of Phuket Airlines' fortunes, when one of its aircraft slid off the end of the runway at Tak airport.

Lawyer appeals against poll ban

Extra checks on boats during Songkran

Airline 'off EU blacklist soon'

What is the dress code for government offices?

Solid reasons behind Phuket's waste problem

Gov urges tax boss to chase Villa Santi

FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Barry Singleton

TRASHING Phuket

PIWC elects new officials features Royal buildings

THE April 1, 2006 edition of the *Gazette* was no joking matter, as the European Commission (EC) blacklisted the now-defunct Phuket Airlines due to safety concerns. However, even as the *Gazette* went to press a decade ago, the company had applied to launch another airline, to be called Holiday Airlines.

Phuket is no stranger to horrific airline crashes, only a year and half after Phuket Airlines was blacklisted, One-Two-Go flight OG269 crashed during landing, killing 89 of the 130 people on board. That company wasn't added to the EC blacklist until April 8, 2009 - you can only imagine what Phuket Airlines was up to, to find themselves banned from the airspace of the European Union and Switzerland.

Then again, we don't have to imagine.

The airline began to have problems with its safety image in 2005, when passengers aboard one of its Boeing 727s bound for London forced a takeoff to be aborted after

seeing fuel pouring from a wing tank after a refueling stop in the United Arab Emirates.

A few days later, another flight was abandoned after it had to turn back to London with a hydraulics problem. The company tried to switch to an Amsterdam route, but authorities barred a flight from taking off there after it was discovered that the emergency lighting inside the plane was not working properly. The saga continued when a small aircraft skidded off the end of the runway at Tak Airport in northern Thailand - only one passenger was injured.

If the looming threat of an EC ban of flights from Thailand doesn't seem to just be coming from the annals of history, that's because the EC and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) are currently working with Thai authorities to improve safety standards.

The Commission and EASA will closely monitor future developments, and if the protection of air passengers

The gift of hindsight

against safety risks so requires, the Commission could then propose to include one or more air carriers from Thailand in the Air Safety List, said the EC in a statement in December.

Though Thailand airlines narrowly escaped being added to the blacklist in December, they had already been downgraded by the Federal Aviation Administration, which regulates United States air safety, to category 2. Prior to this, the International Civil Aviation Organization placed the airlines under 'special measures', which prompted Japan and South Korea to block new flights from the Kingdom.

Clearly, despite the golden opportunity of having an April 1 issue date, the *Gazette* a decade ago - and now - did not see aviation safety as a laughing matter.

Regardless of the ban on Phuket Airlines in Europe, the importance of the European market was still enormous for Phuket. So, the 'Inside Story' a

decade ago dived into the International Tourism Bourse (ITB) in Berlin.

Tourism business people from Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi returned from Berlin optimistic about the prospects for the 2006-2007 high season, having received positive feedback during the ITB 2006.

Though the European market pipeline has been constricted to the point that it only produces a trickle of what it once did, having been replaced by a strong Russian market (until the bottom dropped out on Russian ruble) and now the Chinese market, the Tourism Authority of Thailand continues to attend the ITB - pushing the wonders of the Andaman region to Europe.

These wonders - deserted beaches in Krabi and Phang Nga, the island speckled Gulf of Phang Nga and the Phuket infrastructure that makes all of these places easily accessible - will continue to draw people from around the world to the region. Now, whether or not they arrive in Thailand on a Thai airline is a different matter altogether.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

Dog killer gets suspended prison sentence

THE man who killed a dog in front of a Bangkok mall on January 13 was given a two-year suspended jail term and hit with a 7,500-baht fine.

Wicha Boonleulak – who was found guilty of violating the 1947 Act on Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, Fireworks and the Equivalent and the 2014 Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animal Act – also has to perform 12 hours of public service.

Mineral Bill violates basic human rights, say activists

ACTIVISTS have warned that the proposed Mineral Bill, if passed, will severely violate human rights by allowing mining firms to drive people off their land and give the state absolute power to manage mineral resources.

More than 80 people from six provinces went to the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to protest the bill on March 28.

Wanpen Phromrangsarn, who represented the group from Lop Buri, said the bill contained



many articles that would end communal rights in the management of natural resources.

She said Article 29 would allow firms that own a mining concession to areas of land to legally evict the people from those areas.

“This is the most terrible part of the bill, because the gold mine firms have already registered for gold mining concessions over more than one million rai of people’s land, and the majority of those people do not have a land deed,” she said.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Defunct prison to exhibit ancient artifacts

THAILAND’S first prison of the modern era, in Nakhon

Pathom province, is set to get a new lease on life

The 118-year-old prison, which used to house convicts since the reign of King Rama V and has been closed for two years, was recently selected to house artifacts from the Dvaravati period, from the sixth to the 13th centuries.

The Culture Ministry saw potential in the building, located 500 meters from the Phra Pathom Chedi pagoda, and decided to turn it into the Nakhon Pathom National Museum.

Police officers slammed for 4-year delay in ‘Red Bull’ case

THE Acting Metropolitan Police Chief has criticized a team of Thong Lor Police for possibly intentionally delaying the investigation into the four-year-old hit-and-run case against the grandson of late Red Bull founder Chaleo Yoovidhya.

“The incident took place in 2012. And by now, one of the charges has already passed the statute of limitations. How come the investigation team let this happen? During this time, the suspect could go abroad and not face trial,” Lt Gen Sanit Mahathaworn said on March 28.

However, Gen Sanit said any decision to re-open the case against Vorayuth Yoovidhya rested with public prosecutors.

Worst drought in 50 years

AS THE worst drought in 50 years drags on, the government is calling on people to lower their household water consumption by at least 20 per cent.

Additional concerns are that the drought has increased the risk of wild elephant encounters, as the pachyderms move out of the jungle to farmland for food.

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Much needed break from tuk-tuks

THE introduction of traffic barriers to stop pedestrians crossing Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Road in Patong serves as yet another reminder that the traffic problem in the tourist town could be vastly improved by the introduction of a simple, reasonably-priced public transport system.

Patong Police and Patong Municipality, the forces behind the barrier project, believe that not having pedestrians venture out into the dangerous one-way road will also help ease traffic congestion in the area, which is particularly hazardous late at night due to the level of partying in the area.

While these barriers might bring about marginal improvement to traffic flow, the main cause of the traffic problem in Patong could not be more obvious: the ridiculous overabundance of tuk-tuks.

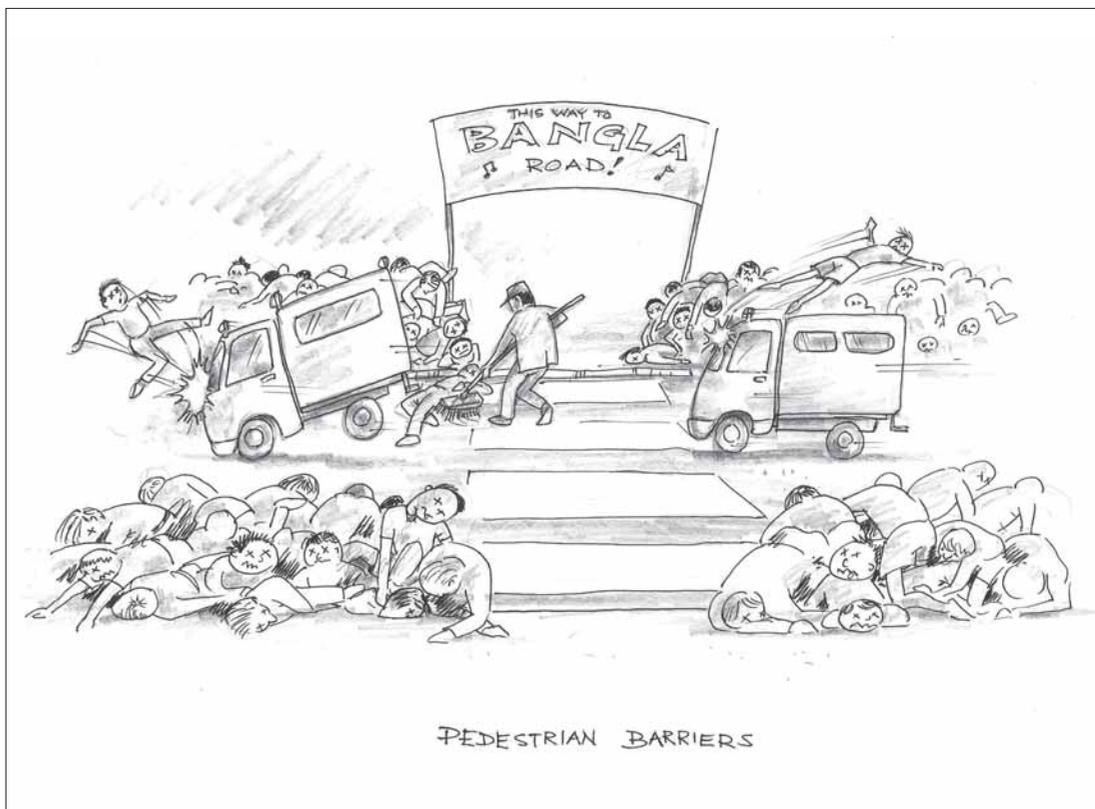
The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) deserves credit for its unprecedented effort to put illegal transport syndicates and other 'mafia groups' and 'influential figures' out of business – but there is clearly still a long way to go.

We hope the NCPO's next public transport initiative for Phuket will be to launch a real public transport option for Patong. All that would be needed is a simple *songthew* (passenger pick-up) or bus service of the kind that is readily available in just about every other major urban area of the country – including Pattaya.

These *songthew* could go south along Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Road, west toward the beach along Prachanukroh Road, then north along Thawewong Road (the beachfront road) until they hit Phra Barami Road, then right back to Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Road, completing a loop. Simple.

Such a service would be enormously popular with both tourists and local residents, allowing many to leave their cars or motorbikes at home – without having to deal with rude, price-gouging tuk-tuk drivers or risk their lives on the back of a motorbike taxi. Such a service would improve traffic congestion immediately.

The need for real public transport in Patong is long overdue. The NCPO's mandate includes restoring social order, rooting out corruption and 'returning happiness to the people'. There is no better time than now, under the NCPO, to turn the tables on tuk-tuks and give Patong tourists and residents a new, safe and inexpensive public transport option.



Seven days not severe enough punishment

Re: Drunk drivers to lose vehicles for entire Songkran 'Seven Days of Danger', March 23

Madness. If caught drink driving, then you lose the license, not just for the seven days.

If you kill someone when drunk, they don't get their life back after seven days. Also, there is no 'quota' for catching drunk drivers. When you reach the target, you go home.

The only target is zero drunk drivers on the road. That should be the target all year, every year.

Simon
Gazette forum

Soi dogs on Surin drink wastewater

Re: Surin Beach wastewater to be wiped up with illegal buildings, March 25

I walk Surin Beach in the morning for an hour and I find it appalling that the stray soi dogs have to drink out of the filthy black sludge pond on the northern end of the beach.

Is there anyway the *OrBorTor* can provide a large tub and some fresh water for these dogs to drink? What they are drinking now must be pure poison.

Mark
Gazette forum

Feeling good about Thai immigration

Re: Opinion: Visa Overstay – Nefarious Intentions or Just Bad Planning?, March 27

Letters to the Editor

Do you have an opinion to voice?
Email Editor@PhuketGazette.net

Six to eight years ago, I broke my wrist at the Bangkok Airport hotel on the last day of my visa. My wife is Thai and contacted Immigration.

They came to the hospital and took a picture of me holding a copy of that day's newspaper and granted me a visa extension.

Just wanted to add my experience here.

Watcher
Gazette forum

Building-site safety standards pondered

Re: Five women confirmed dead in Krabi building collapse, March 26

A terrible tragedy that would get headline news around Australia.

RIP to the ladies who lost their lives in this tragic accident.

In my ignorance, it does beggar the question, however, about safety standards on building sites here and appropriate compensation for the families involved.

Are they adequate? I sincerely hope so.

Seht1912
Gazette forum

New roundabout not helpful at all

Re: Sidewalk barriers in Patong

raise concerns, March 25

The temporary roundabout is a horror. Coming from Karon, turning into Nanai Road with a big car is almost impossible without reversing.

The barrier is placed about two meters too far 'into town'. In addition, this thing creates more confusion than security, since a lot of the drivers don't recognize it as a traffic circle and they don't know how the rules of traffic circles work anyway.

Take it away, it was much better before.

Fritz Pinguin
Gazette forum

30 years, and things are getting worse

Re: Breaking News: Foreigner in fatal plunge from Patong guesthouse, March 28

I have been coming to Thailand for 30 years and should know the place by now.

Thai people in most cases are beautiful people who will do anything to help you.

You show them respect and they show you respect. There are good and bad people in all walks of life.

Some people come here and bad mouth others and wonder why they get into trouble.

I have seen it all here and it's getting worse now with a lot of the teens getting into trouble and in 99 per cent of the cases, it's their own fault.

Stephen Battaglione
Facebook

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Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

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Volume 23 Issue 14

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Protecting the industry

FIRST PERSON

ATUS was founded in December 2004 and registered as an official association in Thailand in March 2005.

We are the national diving association of Thailand and are internationally recognized as a voting member of the world underwater federation CMAS (Confederation Mondiale des Activites Subaquatiques). We also work under the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT).

There are three main responsibilities of the ATUS; to control and maintain CMAS standards throughout the industry, conserve our marine natural resources and promote water sports throughout the country.

We have committees that take care of each responsibility and work with the relevant authorities involved; some of these include monitoring CMAS diving standards, training, diving techniques, diving equipment and so on.

As far as conservation goes, we step in to help as a member or committee for relevant authorities, such as the national parks or the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Sometimes, we even get together with our members and non-members to do social work, such as diving to pick up trash, placing artificial coral reefs or educating locals and students on how to conserve nature.

For SAT, we work as a whole by helping to promote water sports; training coaches, athletes and referees; and helping to expand



Ratanaporn Promchoo, 35, is the president secretary of the Association of Thailand for Underwater Sports (ATUS) and has been working with the ATUS for ten years. She graduated from Rajabhat Nakhon Sri Thammarat University with

a bachelor's degree in science.

Here she talks about what the ATUS does to help promote and protect the dive industry.

knowledge of water sports by sending our coaches to train others.

Our goal is to see Phuket be the first place that people think of when talking or thinking about diving, not only in Thailand, but throughout the world.

However, this is not something that can happen overnight, as there are still some people out there who do not think about the nature of the business, only the money.

In the last two years, we have seen an increase in the number of diving industry businesses. However, we have also seen an increase in the number of deaths, accidents and damage to our natural resources. All of these things give the industry a bad image.

So, we've stepped in to talk with tour operators and relevant government officials to help solve these issues. Our target is to maintain safe, sustainable diving spots in Thailand, to see the preservation of our natural resources and to see that all divers and dive companies follow safety standards.

In general, we also help co-

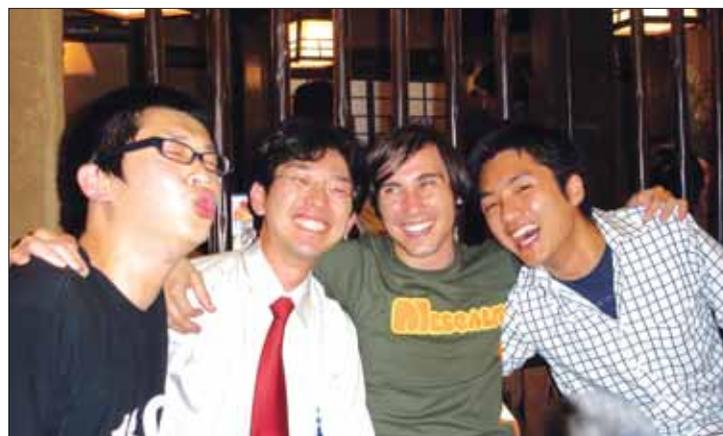
ordinate between the diving industry and government authorities when the two parties have an issue. In this regard, we fulfill the role of being a middleman.

The hope is that eventually we will all join hands and go in the same direction together.

Once nature is destroyed, nothing can be accomplished by regretting our actions as we cannot take it back when it's done. That is why we must do our best to prevent future problems. Other agencies help us in this effort. For example, PADI always informs us when they have a meeting. This way, we can help each other improve the industry.

However, most importantly, I want people to stop seeing the dive industry as a business and start seeing it for the beautiful experience under the sea that it is. It's a bonding experience with old friends, and a wonderful way to meet new friends along the way.

If we think about it this way, it doesn't seem all that difficult to preserve nature, so that generations to come can enjoy the same experience.



Adulthood does not necessarily come with age. Photo: hibino

Coming into adulthood

Island View

By Nick Davies

Do you have an opinion to voice? Email Editor@PhuketGazette.net

TURNING 18 in the UK is widely accepted as entering adulthood. You can drive, vote, get married and buy a round of drinks for your mates and yourself – all on the same night, if you like, and it would be perfectly legal to do so.

Here in Thailand though, the laws surrounding alcohol consumption and various other adult pursuits come with an age restriction of 21, which to Europeans may seem a bit harsh.

Ultimately though, adulthood, or the kind of maturity expected of an adult, is not necessarily something that comes at a particular age and cannot be dictated by any law. It's more about learning as we go through certain situations and coming out the other end – hopefully with nothing more than a few scratches. The school of hard knocks, as it were.

Fortunately, most of us make it through those formative years and come out relatively unscathed. We'll have a few juicy stories to tell of cheating death or getting away with something that could have turned out a lot worse if luck wasn't on our side that day.

Those experiences can serve as sage advice which we can

pass on to our kids in the hopes that they won't have to deal with similar situations.

Others though, are not always so lucky and don't even make it through those formative years to tell their tales. This week, we have the tragic news that a 19-year-old Finnish woman apparently fell to her death from the rooftop of a guesthouse in Patong after a night out drinking with friends on Bangla Road.

While extremely sad, stories of young deaths through misadventure are not unusual, and with Songkran approaching, we brace ourselves for news of hundreds of deaths on the roads, many of which will be alcohol related or just down to sheer stupidity and bravado.

At the very least, one hopes others will somehow benefit from hearing how quickly and unexpectedly a night of fun fueled with alcohol can turn into a nightmare for those left behind to clear up the mess.

Words from the Wise

“It's not the hair on your head that matters. It's the kind of hair you have inside.”
– Garry Shandling

“Some people hear their own inner voices with great clearness. And they live by what they hear. Such people become crazy... or they become legend.”
– Jim Harrison

Issues & Answers

Who can paint the Sapam Temple speedbumps?

I COMMUTE to work every day from Phuket Town to Koh Kaew and have noticed that there are some speed bumps at the curve near Sapam Temple that are not painted.

Sometimes I see people speeding around the curve and almost getting into accidents because they hit the speed bump without realizing it's there.

I'm wondering who is in charge of painting the bumps and if it is possible to repaint them?

Samak Luedwonghad, director of the Phuket Highways Office replies:

Thank you for the informa-

tion and question, as I was not aware of the problem beforehand.

Please note that those bumps were painted when they were first installed, but have since faded.

We will send our officers to go inspect the area that you are talking about and will try and repaint them as soon as possible.

If you have anymore concerns please do not hesitate to contact us.

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.
Submit your issue at:
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Thailand resilient to outflows



BOT Gov Veerathai Santiprabhob.
Photo: The Nation

BANK of Thailand Governor Veerathai Santiprabhob expressed his confidence in the Thai economic resilience to sudden capital outflows.

Mr Veerathai said foreign holdings in Thai government bonds and the bonds issued by the Bank of Thailand accounted for only nine per cent of the outstanding value. Meanwhile, corporate debt denominated in foreign currencies is at a very low level. As such, there is a low and 'nearly impossible' risk that the economy would encounter another crisis like in 1997, which spurred massive capital outflows.

Still, he said that as Thailand showed slow economic recovery, the economy would continue to face economic challenges, chiefly due to low export demand, which led to low investment in the private sector.

Mr Veerathai noted that in this juncture, the Thai economy needed to focus more on enhancing connectivity with neighboring countries, as exports to traditional main markets were sliding.

– *The Nation*

Meet the right people for success

Finance

By David Mayes

THEY say you can determine a man's income simply by taking the average of the four or five people with whom he spends the most time. I am not sure how scientific the study was that has produced this timeless piece of advice, but the general concept is easy to validate if you look closely at the people you know. Success in life is not only a function of absorbing the mindsets of those around you, but opportunities are often determined by those with whom you surround yourself.

It's common sense that if you have friends who are successful stock traders, they may be able to teach you some basics, or keep you from going too far off track. They may even give you a tip from time to time, although tips can be very dangerous if you don't have a clear risk control strategy. If you have friends who are real estate investors, they may offer you opportunities to co-invest with them on larger projects, or simply to split up a larger plot so that everyone gets a better deal. Studies have often found that most people find their employment from 'fuzzy connections', who are not close friends, but the people they know.

So, if it is so important in life to have friends who are successful, how exactly do you go about becoming friends with these kinds of people? Obviously, the wrong way to do it is to become fake and shallow and judge people by the car they drive and the clothes they wear. Some of the



Rather than see what new people can do for you, see how you can help them. Photo: Steve Jurvetson

most successful people I know look and play the part of the beach bum, but if you get to know them, the reality is far different. Going to networking functions, handing out business cards to everyone, and trying to sell something to everyone you meet within the first five minutes is another wrong way to go about it.

The saying "people who are nice to you, but not nice to waiters, are not nice people" is one I love. You want to find people with real character.

When I was in business school, we had a networking expert talk to us about how to build a network to find jobs. His advice is not what most people would expect. Rather than look at new people you meet in terms of what they can possibly do for you, always look for ways you can help anyone with whom you come into contact. This is often easiest

done by being genuinely interested in people, asking questions, and letting others talk about themselves. People love to talk about themselves, and most people are simply waiting for their turn. Let people talk and you will often find a way of helping them.

Usually it is simply connecting two people who you know, who then mutually benefit from knowing each other. Once you get in the habit of doing this, it becomes natural, and it is a great reward to introduce people and see them hit it off and become friends, or business partners.

So how does all this helping other people impact your own financial future? The trick is that the 80/20 rule applies in every aspect of life. 80 per cent of the nice things you do for people will have no effect on your future, other than giving you the satisfaction of knowing deep down inside you are the

kind of person who goes out of his way to help people. However, over a long period of time, those 'lucky breaks' that come, are often from those 'fuzzy connections' I mentioned earlier. The more you help others and come across as a nice, genuine, helpful person, the more people will be willing to go out of their way to help you, often without you ever having asked. This is not a tit for tat kind of thing, it is simply human nature. Surround yourself with good people and good things will happen in your future.

David Mayes MBA resides in Phuket and provides wealth management services to expatriates around the globe, focusing on UK pension transfers. He can be reached at david.m@faramond.com or 085-335 8573. Faramond UK is regulated by the FCA and provides advice on pensions and taxation.

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Is Facebook getting oversold?



ONE of the great benefits of Facebook is that due to the sheer number of people using it, it has become a marketer's dream to easily and cheaply connect with potential customers and to market their products and services with great results.

But has it now got to the point of oversaturation?

A classic case in point being the use of online groups and fan pages as platforms for real estate and classifieds here in Phuket. I spent an hour or two just searching for different items and options, and was amazed at what I found.

There are now about 34 groups and six pages just for Phuket Classifieds. These groups range from having as little as 476 members, to the most popular site having almost 19,500 members. For those that can remember, there used to be just one expat buy and sell group in Phuket, and because of that it was very efficient because all of the buyers and sellers ended up in the same place.

Now that many people have started their own group, it has diluted the overall usefulness, and means that people now have to post or search in numerous groups to find anything.



More than 67 million 'likes' might have seemed like a lot in 2012, but now there are more than 1 billion active Facebook users. Nonetheless, are businesses overvaluing its potential? Photo: Christopher

Even more saturated is the Phuket real estate scene. I stopped counting after a while, as page after page, and group after group, was returned in my search request. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of these sites, and people have even created normal profiles under real estate names, which adds even more to the oversupply.

For the early birds and trend

setters, this was a very successful form of marketing, but what has happened now is the lazy, unoriginal marketers and latecomers have decided that they should set up their own groups, in effect diluting the whole sector's communications. I am guessing that the theory was that by being in control of a group, marketers thought they would get more exposure, but the reality is that

this had an overall negative impact for all involved, both buyers and sellers.

So what does this actually mean in real terms?

Quite simply, as a seller you are now just part of a huge amount of noise. For the average person, this has become annoying, so Facebook searches have certainly lost appeal. People looking for classifieds or real estate now

have to work much harder to get the quality answers that they are seeking.

So, in reality, a lot of customers have changed to different search methodologies, or resigned themselves to the fact that they must search through more groups than ever before. If you are careful with how you phrase your search enquiry, you can also do some qualified searches to get rid of a lot of the rubbish.

From a business perspective, this has meant that to stand out you need to now be different and know what you are doing. The days of the easy post and quick returns are over, so more technique and marketing finesse is required.

I guess the interesting question will be what Facebook will do about it. Given that it now means businesses may be forced to spend money on Facebook ads to stand out, the likely answer is nothing. However, given that they want to be the premier search platform, they may have something up their sleeve to keep users happy and engaged.

Simon Wetherell is a social media expert and lawyer. He trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the social media industry. For more information: PhuketOnlineMarketingSchool.com or call 095-085 3355.

Thailand international springboard for Asia

ASIAN brands are using Thailand as a hub for going global by leveraging differences in their strategic marketing, management and distribution, according to research findings by an American academic.

Willy Shih, professor of management practice in business administration at the Harvard Business School Massachusetts, said that the leveraging was mostly being done by big companies in Taiwan, Japan and China.

Mr Shih said that Thailand was a key strategic hub for big Asian companies for their glo-

bal expansions, such as Japan's Toyota Motor, which began exporting cars before moving to local production and management. Toyota started with Thailand and then expanded to Australia and the US.

Matsushita (Panasonic), Honda, Canon and Sony used the same trick by beginning with a focus on exports and manufacturing.

The companies send young leaders abroad and force them to learn foreign markets through trial and error, Mr Shih explained. Japanese firms call this approach 'force learning'.

- The Nation



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Island's grandest gem emporium bedazzles

Royal Gems International Co Ltd hosted a dazzling, star-studded evening on March 20 to celebrate the grand opening of the recently completed Royal Gems Pavilion, Phuket's largest gems store, covering 15 rai adjacent to Heroines' Monument in Srisoonthorn.



BLING BOSSES: Royal Gems International Co Ltd Chief Executive Officer Oran Rochrungrangsee (left) and Managing Director of Royal Gems Pavillion Chartchai Rochrungrangsee. Photo: Royal Gems International

Cycling in scenic Kathu

Cyclists in Kathu joined the mayor and his deputy in a pedal-powered rally around the area on March 15 to promote Kathu as a 'cycling city' with recommended routes along the road to Bangward dam, Kathu waterfall, Phuket Mining Museum and Kathu Old Town.



ON THE ROAD: Kathu Mayor Chaianan Sutthikul (right) and Deputy Mayor Soomboon Aiyarak. Photo: Kathu Municipality



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Events in Paradise

Pink beats for Xana's 4th birthday bash

Xana Beach Club threw a Pink Party on March 11 to celebrate the venue's 4th anniversary with live vibes from Asia's top female DJs.



DOUBLE DECKER: Top Thai DJ Roxy June (left) and South Korean virtuoso DJ Soda.
Photo: Xana Beach Club

Anchan moves in to Moroccan lifestyles

Lifestyle property developer Anchan Group launched its first offering for the Phuket property market on March 11, holding a grand opening party for the Moroccan-style boutique residence Riad Anchan Hotel and Studio Phuket.



(From L-R) Chief of Phuket Governor's Office Saranyou Sema; Anchan Group Managing Director Praneejit Soonthornnont; singer Wichayanee Pearklin (Gam The Star) and Chalong Mayor Samran Jindapol. Photo: Anchan Group

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Grab your motorcycle and join the fun. Photo: Harley-Davidson Phuket

Calling all HOGs for record Harley convoy in Phuket

HUNDREDS of Harley-Davidson bikers from across the country are roaring into Phuket on April 10 to set the record for the longest Harley-Davidson convoy in Thailand.

Phuket's HOGs (Harley Owner's Group members) are calling on all Thailand chapters to join the attempt to set the record for the longest Harley parade with about 500 bikes.

Rider registration is free. To sign up ahead of the event, contact Suzie at 083-655 2252.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Ultraman champ swims Phuket

SWEDISH Ultraman World Champion Jonas Colting splashed into Phuket's waters Wednesday morning with the goal of swimming around the entire island in eight days.

Mr Colting led a group of swimmers, including four-time triathlon World Champion Chris McCormack, on the first leg – 14 kilometers – of the 'Swim Around Phuket' challenge.

The endurance swim will take place from 7am to 1pm every day, as swimmers work their way counterclockwise around the island, passing Andaman beaches, Laem Phromthep and Chalong pier. The route will then turn northward, going past Ao Po Pier, under the Sarasin Bridge and curve down to end at Mai Khao Beach.

"I'm very excited and look forward to getting started on this adventurous and inspirational journey around beautiful Phuket," said Mr Colting, before commencing the first leg. "My preparations have gone



Ultraman World Champion Jonas Colting plans to circumnavigate the island in eight days. Photo: Thanypapura

well, but I have a lot of respect for the challenge of averaging more than 15 kilometers per day in the ocean. My main concerns are the heat and the sun."

Mr Colting aims to raise funds for the Yaowawit Orphanage School, which was first built to support victims of the tsunami, and the Mai Khao Marine Turtle

Foundation, which is committed to protecting the marine and coastal environment for the well-being of the sea turtles that nest in the Sirinath National Marine Park and surrounding areas.

"I've known Jonas my entire racing career," said Mr McCormack. "I believe he's the perfect athlete with the endur-

ance engine and the will to be the first person ever to swim around Phuket. When he took on this challenge, we decided to put our full organizational support behind him, hosting him and his team from Apollo Travel Group as they prepared for the swim."

– *Phuket Gazette*

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Island's top chefs serve up a show at Lighthouse Market



Some of the best chefs working in Phuket will be taking part in a culinary show that culminates in a free taste test. Photo: Gazette file

THE Lighthouse Market returns to the Boat Lagoon and this time it's bigger, better... and more flavorful.

Over the last two years, the Lighthouse Market has gotten us used to great outdoor dining and fun activities in a fantastic atmosphere. Now, to keep things exciting for the third edition in 2016, the market brings out the big guns: this Friday and Saturday some of Phuket's most admired chefs will join the event to put on a culinary show.

Taking the stage will be the winner of the Iron Chef competition Alessandro Frau of AQUA restaurant, Michelin Star Chef Nicolino Bruno from Senzanome Restaurant, 'Master of Cakes' Peter Webber of Les Diables

and French cuisine expert, Chef Vincent Meuwly of Le Winch.

Sounds delicious? With free tastings following each show, it will be!

The festivities begin at 6pm on Friday, with live cooking shows starting at 6:30pm.

But the market's dining extravaganza won't end there. Flavors from around the globe will be represented at stalls, with dished from Japan, Russia, Turkey, India and many other corners of the world awaiting the hungry and the curious.

Mix in a selection beverage options, live music and outdoor activities, including an outdoor cinema, and you end up with an outdoor event you don't want to miss.

– *Maciek Klimowicz*

Dive ban to impact yachting

On Deck
By Duncan Worthington

'MOVE to regulate diving industry' was a recent headline and front page story in the *Gazette*. At first glance, I thought; 'fair enough', until I read further.

Following a spate of deaths and accidents, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MOTS) Phuket Office, headed by Santi Pawai, has taken it upon themselves to improve safety in the dive industry.

Improving safety is a good thing, but the upshot of this is to ban private diving.

"It doesn't matter how qualified you are or if you're diving with a buddy; it's necessary for your diving excursion to be linked to a recognized dive business," said Mr Santi.

Yet again, this knee-jerk reaction from local officialdom is a hasty response with little or no thought and planning.

Banning private diving is unlikely to fix anything. The MOTS is assuming that all the injuries and deaths come from private diving, which they don't. I would go as far as to say that private diving accounts for far less than half.

Perhaps paying attention to snorkelling trips, tour guides and speedboat drivers and their safety competency would im-



Safety is important, but officials need to rely more on industry experts when developing plans. Photo: Manoel Lemos

prove the safety in Phuket's waters. Resources spent on these issues would be spent wisely, whereas a blanket ban on private diving will have a negligible effect on safety.

Where a private ban is likely to have a significant affect is on the yacht charter industry.

Firstly, how can you realistically enforce this private diving ban? The MOTS in Phuket has a hard enough time controlling illegal Chinese guides, which can be found at about any 7-Eleven.

Back to yacht charter: if you missed it, the government has been shouting a lot about a new 12-month superyacht charter

licence that they have introduced, with the aim of attracting yachts over 30 meters to spend more time in Thailand and charter their yachts while they are here. Good idea, good revenue for the industry and economy, but what if a charter guest wants to dive off the yacht? Or what if the owner flies in and wants to dive off his own superyacht?

Assuming the MOTS enforces its blanket private diving ban, then individuals on any yacht (owners or charter guests) simply cannot dive. Unless, of course, they go with an official diving company, which they are unlikely to do.

Looking at the marine big picture, there is clearly a need to bring relevant stakeholders together. Jet-skis, speedboats, tour boats, yachts and yacht charters are the remit of the Phuket Marine Office. Diving, previously self-regulated and following the international PADI system on the whole, is now being claimed by the MOTS in Phuket. Perhaps a single authority for everything marine would make more sense?

Rather than making rash announcements, which as history has proven time and time again results in little action, how about officialdom consulting with the industry stakeholders?

There seems to be apathy by public officials towards the private sector, yet the knowledge and experience in the private sector far outweighs that in the public sector. If a more open-minded and inclusive approach to safety discussions and industry development can happen, I'm sure the improvements will be clear for everyone to see.

Thailand Marine Business Association anyone?

Duncan Worthington is a long-time Phuket resident and through Infinity Communications (www.infinity-comms.com) consults to leading consumer brands, hospitality and marine clients in Thailand. In his 'spare time' he runs the marine portal www.MarineScene.asia. #OnDeckPhuket



The Singapore Yacht Show is the 'sister' show to the Phuket Yacht Show, which was launched this year. Photo: Michael Denker

New, returning superyachts at the SYS 2016

WITH the sixth edition of the Singapore Yacht Show (SYS) less than a month away, the international yachting industry has shifted its focus to the Lion City. Leading the way is the 43-meter M/Y *Triple*, which was built by Royal Denship in 2009 and recently entered the superyacht market for sale.

Italian shipyard Fincantieri will join the growing list of Superyacht Building Association members exhibiting at the Singapore Yacht Show, building brand awareness and making valuable connections among Asia's elite. Fincantieri made waves in 2015 with the launch of M/Y *Ocean Victory*, which was moored in Singapore during SYS 2015.

This year's show will also see the return of Silveryachts, following the launch of the super-sleek and eco-friendly M/Y *Silver Fast*. - *Phuket Gazette*



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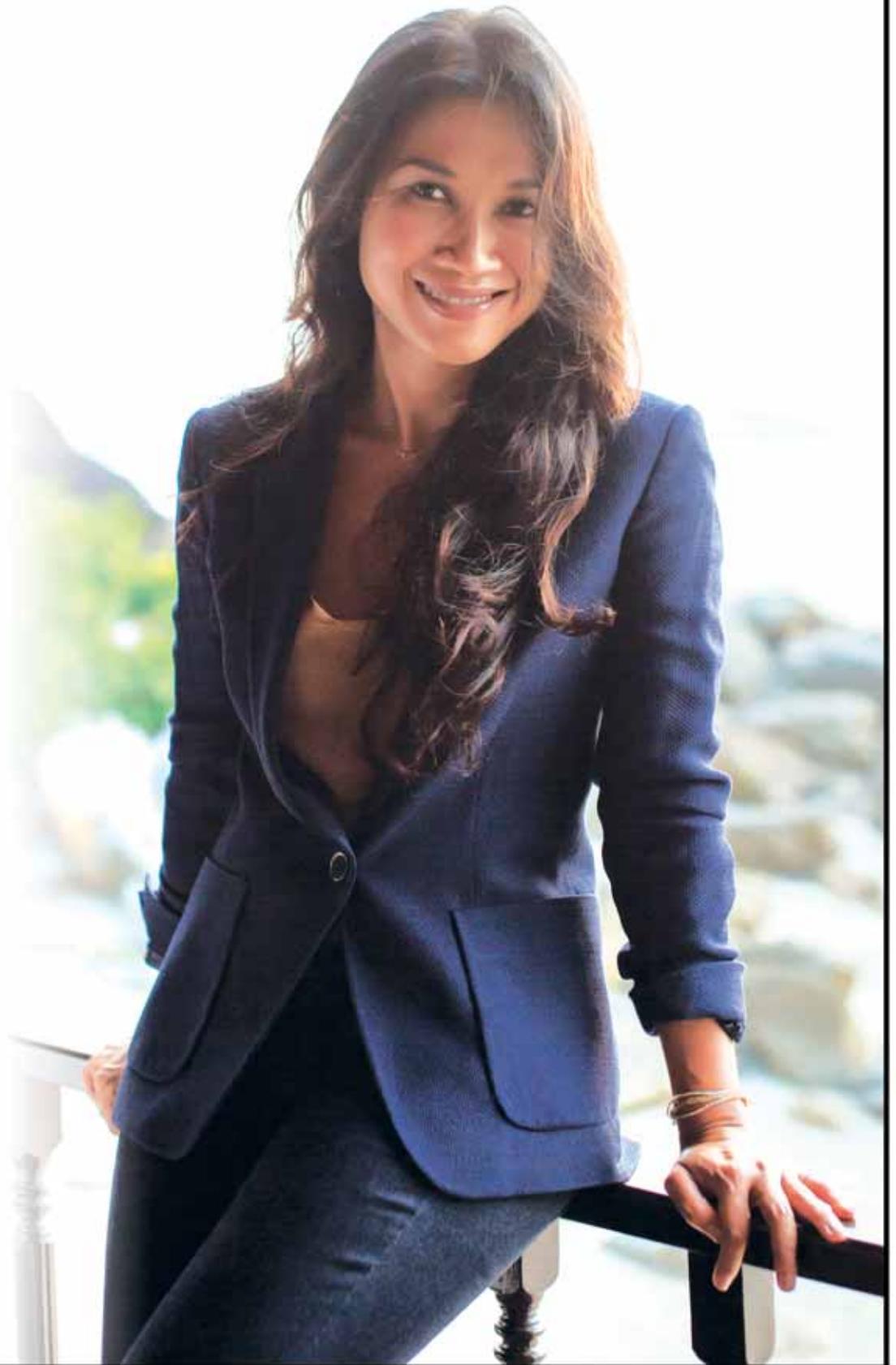
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Phuket Gazette

Less we forget the magic of orchids



AT MY age, time seems to whiz by – about the only form of awareness that does. Recently, it was the doleful anniversary of the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris. It seems only a couple of months ago, but memory plays strange tricks on the aging brain.

For instance, when I checked, I found my last piece about orchids was penned in these pages nearly five years ago. Asked, I would have estimated less than a year! Nonetheless, orchid lovers will rightly conclude that I have deliberately ignored not only one of the largest and oldest families of flowering plants (twice as many varieties as birds), but arguably the most exotic of all. The quintessence of tropicana. Phuket even has its own orchid farm in Chalong.

So why the disregard? Well, apart from the lapse of memory, I confess to possessing few orchids in my garden and have generally had mixed success with them. Part of the problem is that different species have different needs. For example, temperate orchids are terrestrial and grow, like most self-respecting plants, in the ground; on the other hand, many tropical species need no soil, are epiphytic (air plants) and survive in the wild by clinging to trees, or even rocks.

Your local nurseryman's answer to this propensity is to display epiphytic orchids in small, perforated containers of wood or plastic, with a loose potting mix of coconut husk, sphagnum moss, plus broken brick or charcoal to allow perfect drainage. The roots must be allowed to breathe. Perversely, the plants will still require regular applications of liquid fertilizer – a substitute



Orchid blooms can easily brighten up your garden. Photo: Tomld_o_g

for the organic matter that they would naturally absorb from the rainwater that courses down trunks or rocks.

The other aspect of orchid

cultivation that tyro gardeners often get wrong is to locate them in an unsuitable part of the garden. *Phalaenopsis*, or moth orchids, for instance, do best in

full shade and must never be allowed to dry out, although they will not tolerate water at the growing tip. Avoid full sun.

Suitably cared for, they are gorgeous additions to any tropical garden, and though the single main stem is fleshy and produces a mere two or three thick leathery leaves annually, it sends out spikes – wiry flowering stems on which the large blooms seem to float like pantomime fairies, almost independent of support.

Moth orchids are, moreover, profuse bloomers: one long stem may carry up to twenty flowers. Widely hybridized, they are now available in white, pink or red.

If you have gardening or environmental concerns, contact Patrick at drpaccampbell@gmail.com. Many of his creative and academic publications can be found at his website: [GreenGaloshes Wordpress](http://GreenGaloshes.wordpress.com).

Dumped in Paradise



Let the Gazette dig into your trash's story. Photo: Pom Siambud

WE WANT to know the story behind your trashy pictures... and we'll reward you for it.

The *Gazette* is proud to announce the launch of 'Dumped in Paradise' – an eight-week competition where we are calling on you to help get Phuket out of the trash can.

The procedure is simple:

Step 1: Take a photo of way-laid garbage you have seen anywhere on the island and pin it to get a GPS location. Send it in a message to the *Phuket Gazette* Facebook page or Editor@PhuketGazette.net. Don't forget to provide us with the location and any other details you have.

Step 2: Garner as many likes for your photo as you can once

it's put on our Facebook page.

The picture with the most likes by midnight every Sunday will be short listed as the weekly winner. If it makes the short list, we'll call the local municipality to dig deeper into why such a pile of rubbish is soiling our beautiful island, and publish the story in the following week's issue of the *Gazette*.

Step 3: At the end of the eight-week competition, the weekly winners will go toe-to-toe. Whoever racks up the most likes on Facebook will receive a beautiful piece of junk-art made by one of Phuket's own.

Good luck to all *Gazette* readers. Send us those trashy photos... let's get clicking!

– *Phuket Gazette*



"Go Live" SUNDAY SEAFOOD BRUNCH

Banyan Tree's famous Brunch returns under the leadership of the talented and well travelled Executive Chef, Alfonso. Enjoy the decadent spread with some great new touches.

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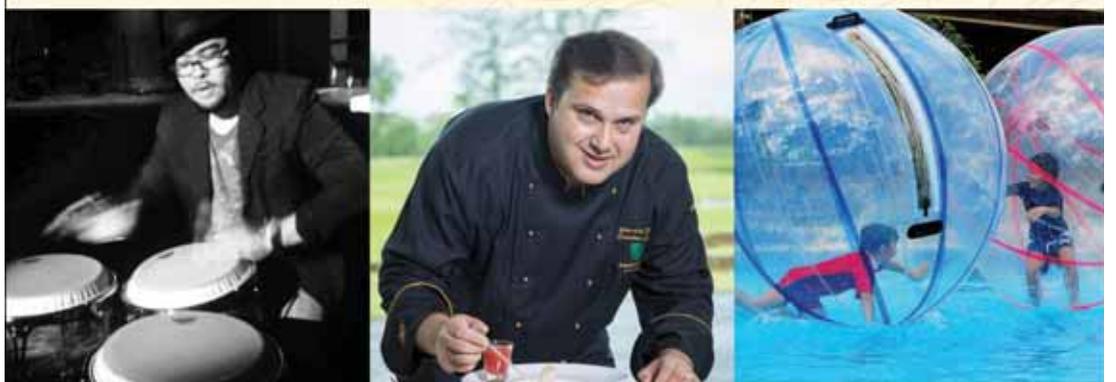
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BANYAN TREE
— PHUKET —



Influence of crime on land value



READING through the news each week for Phuket, we all see the stabbings; suicides; drive-by shootings; drug hauls; crazed mini-van and other public vehicle smashes; horrific murders and assaults.

Some elect to comment on these stories in the hope that those who can do something about the levels of crime take action, not just to deal with crime, but to try and prevent it. I have personally commented on some of the more shocking news items that I have seen. Sometimes it is hard to hold back the negativity surrounding this type of news.

To be fair, crime isn't exclusive to Phuket. In recent times, Chicago has been going through a series of crime waves and, as with all places that allow guns to be traded fairly in the public domain, gun deaths ensue. Many sub-Saharan countries, such as Somalia, are rife with crime, and in many major cities around the world there are 'neighborhoods' which for one reason or another, become crime centers.

However, many of those places don't rely primarily upon tourism in a direct or indirect manner, and many of those places aren't seeking to expand their tourism market



Crime isn't exclusive to Phuket, Chicago has also been going through a series of crime waves. Photo: vxla

through attracting higher quality and longer-staying tourists, as is the case in Phuket.

The island's crime and its management will continue to significantly shape the neighborhoods of Phuket, and therefore their property prices.

Land and property prices used to be subject to quite a simple set of parameters: sea view; proximity to a beach; access; and proximity to the airport.

We all know this has changed and evolved to include proximity to retail outlets, sports and recreational facilities, schools

and hospitals, as well as distance from congested traffic areas.

With the continuing Phuket crime-wave that seem to increase each year, neighborhoods will be impacted, with the value of land upon which properties are constructed being influenced. Below, I have listed the crime dimensions that might influence the development of neighborhoods in future:

- Whether or not motorbike gangs operate in the area.
- The proximity of communities with known drug issues.

- The proximity of an entertainment area or drinking establishment known to be a hotbed of criminal activity, excessive noise or illegal closing times.

- The proximity to a 'cut-through' or 'short-cut' road around a traffic congestion zone, resulting in public vehicles frequently violating traffic laws, including speeding and driving dangerously.

- The proximity to a public park where crimes are often committed.

- Proximity to a perceived

danger area, such as a taxi rank.

Will the Surin Beach area become an area with high burglary rates due to the large number of upscale villas, or will security guards and CCTV cameras function to ward off intruders?

Will Kathu become the new Patong? Will Rawai become an underage motorbike driver-free zone? Will public parks have roaming security guards policing the theft of coins from *krathongs* at Loy Krathong?

Time will tell.

Our neighborhoods will develop according to the normal factors that influence real estate values, but crime will also play a large part in determining the attractiveness of various locations and the resale market will reflect that accordingly.

Neighborhoods in other countries have created 'Neighborhood Watch' programs, in which communities and residents cooperate to fill the gaps where the enforcement authorities lack the resources to cope with the amount of crime. The focus in such groups is always on crime prevention. I understand more CCTV cameras are coming to Phuket soon, and provided they are monitored properly, they are welcome.

Desmond Hughes has been an owner and operator of his law firm in Thailand for 14 years, and is a Senior Partner at Hughes Krupica law firm www.hugheskrupica.com

Developers applaud government stimulus package

PROPERTY developers have welcomed the government's 70-billion-baht stimulus package for low-income house buyers.

The measures, which target housing priced below 1.5 million baht, is likely to spur sales in Bangkok and peripheral provinces by 400 billion baht this year, which should raise the industry growth rate to 10 per cent, from the earlier estimate of eight per cent, Prukha Real Estate president and chief executive officer Thongma Vijitpongpan said.

"We believe the 'Baan Pracha Rath' loans will run out within three to four months, because demand to buy homes priced up to 1.5mn baht is strong, at 20,000 units a year," he told *The Nation* by telephone after the Cabinet approved the new package.

Prukha Real Estate has about 5,000 units ready for transfer in the price range covered by the scheme, he added.

Mr Thongma said the government's

latest initiative was a boon to the property market, following the first set of measures announced earlier.

In the measures that are due to expire at the end of next month, the mortgage fee and transfer fee levied on a home purchase were both reduced to 0.1 per cent of the house price.

Prasert Taedullayasatit, president of the Thai Condominium Association, said the latest stimulus measure would drive the property market in the second quarter and also help meet strong demand from the lower-income segment. It is also expected to reduce the mortgage-application rejection rate from around 25 per cent currently to below 20 per cent this year, he said.

Of the total 70bn baht in the government's package, 30bn baht is reserved for project financing and is available to the state-owned National Housing Authority and property developers that join the scheme.

The package offers a discounted in-



Developers have praised the package for low-income home buyers. Photo: Kate Lundy

terest rate in the first two years to participating developers.

However, the developers must shoulder the transfer fee, which will be raised back to 2 per cent of the house price after April; the 1-per-cent mortgage registration fee; a 2-per-cent discount on house prices; as well as a one-year free

central-area credit.

The remaining 40bn baht is for homebuyers, subsidizing the mortgage rate for first-time buyers or those in need of loans for house renovation.

The renovation loans are being capped at 500,000 baht each.

- *The Nation*

South to get eight new marinas

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

TWO new marinas are to be built in Phuket as part of the government's plan to stimulate economic growth by turning Thailand into a marine leisure hub in the Asean region.

The marina development plan, announced by Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, includes construction of eight new marinas – four in the Andaman Sea and four in the Gulf of Thailand – to service large yachts, including superyachts, along coastal areas in five provinces: two in Phuket; two in Phang Nga; two at Koh Samui; one in Chonburi and another in Trat.

“These new marinas will stimulate economic growth throughout the region, especially in the tourism sector,” said Mr Arkhom.

The two marinas planned for Phuket are the Asian Marina in Rassada and the Kung Bay Marina in Pa Khlok, the latter being the larger of the two, and deep enough to handle superyachts.

The government is currently negotiating with local land owners to secure long-term leases on the numerous parcels



All of the new marinas are to be built on private land. Image: Gazette graphics

of land in each area tagged for the marina projects, confirmed a ministry source.

“Construction of the Kung Bay Marina in Phuket is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2017. However, much will depend on when environmental impact assessments are completed. Once construction is

underway, though the marina should take about one year to complete,” he said.

“A start date for construction of the Asian Marina has not yet been set, as negotiations are ongoing with local land owners, as well as with potential investors. It could mean that construction may not begin for another two

years,” said the source.

All eight of the new marinas are to be built on private land, confirmed Mr Arkhom.

Mr Arkhom said that the transport ministry expected to attract domestic and foreign investment by offering investment opportunities with the marina projects.

Chinese hotel group soon to enter Phuket



7 Days Premium Patong Beach to open in 2017. Photo: Gazette file

CHINESE hospitality group Plateno has inked their first hotel deal in Phuket for a 110-room property in Patong.

Tagged as the 7 Days Premium Patong Beach, the new-build hotel is being developed by Kiri Resort and Spa Ltd.

An opening in June 2017 is planned for the property located next to the upcoming Premier Inn Nanai.

Plateno is currently one of the largest hotel chains in the world. They are expected to announce a number of new Phuket projects soon.

– Bill Barnett

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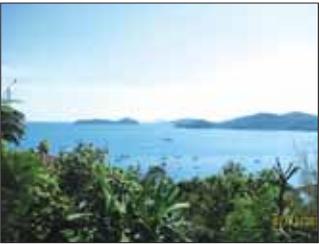
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Facilitating high-end healthcare

By Nick Davies

Dr Somrit Jantarapratin (MD, MBA) recently became the new director of Bangkok Hospital Phuket. One might expect a position of such prestige to require extensive study and experience from foreign medical institutions, but this is not the case with Dr Somrit, who is an example of the world-class advancements that Thailand's grass-roots medical institutions can help doctors achieve.

Dr Somrit grew up in Songkhla and studied medicine at Prince of Songkhla University (PSU). He undertook postgraduate training at Songklanagarind Hospital, then studied for two years at Chulalongkorn University to specialize in pediatric cardiology.

Dr Somrit's arrival in Phuket comes after a five-year stint as director of Bangkok Hospital Hat Yai, which works closely with the medical training facilities and professionals at PSU.

Dr Somrit aims to oversee developments that will firmly establish the hospital as an international hub of medical

innovation, making the entire facility a 'center of excellence' recognized worldwide.

Bangkok Hospital Phuket on Yaowarat Road in Phuket Town opened in 1995 and now boasts 24 medical 'centers of excellence', including the Heart Center, Bone & Joint Center and Oncology Center, each staffed with medical professionals in those specific fields.

Recent additions to the hospital's centers of excellence include the Colorectal Disease Institute, the Neurology Science Center, the Brain Health Institute, the Spine Center and a new Sports Med facility.

More recently, the hospital has developed satellite medical facilities, each specializing in a specific area of practices and treatments, allowing the original Bangkok Hospital Phuket to return to its roots as a community hospital.

This is something Dr Somrit is keen to oversee, making the hospital's facilities and services more accessible to the local community.

The point is not necessarily to make the services cheaper, but more efficient for 'optimum

outcome', so that patients are spending less time convalescing and therefore saving on medical bills in the long run.

Dr Somrit is at the heart of Thailand's own home-grown developments in keyhole cardiac and colonoscopic surgical procedures, which allows patients to return home very soon after an operation.

Dr Somrit's vision is to build alliances with other medical institutions rather than being in competition with them. An online patient portal is one of the advancements in patient care that Dr Somrit plans to develop over the next few years.

The portal will give patients and doctors anywhere easy access to medical records. It is part of the 'constant care' mantra adopted by Dr Somrit that helps patients keep tabs on their own health and the advice they need.

When asked what are the most pressing health problems in today's society, Dr Somrit listed lack of sleep, stress and diet (too much sugar) as the three most significant factors that are detrimental to good health.

Dr Somrit aims to see patients

getting good medical advice so that they can take their own preventative measures before the need for surgery or other treatments arises.

Promoting prevention of disease with regular clinics for locals

is another way that patients can stay healthy and save on the costs involved with complex treatments needed for conditions left undiagnosed and untreated.

Rendering: Adriano Trapani





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ISSN 1905 - 8268

