

Phuket Gazette

July 11 - 17, 2015

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68 Pages / 20 Baht

■ 'IT IS A LARGE-SCALE BANGKOK OPERATION'

Drugs by Post

■ Suppliers use postal service, online apps to move tons of 'product'

By Kongleaphy Keam

ENORMOUS quantities of drugs are being shipped to Phuket through the Thai Postal system as island dealers buy in bulk through online social media platforms.

"It has become increasingly difficult to catch drug dealers after they started using social media applications such as LINE and Facebook to buy and sell their products," Director of the Office of Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) Sithisak Kallyanapradit told the *Gazette* on Tuesday.

"These platforms are very broad, anyone can use fake identities and evade recognition."

ONCB officers are now hot on the trail of those running the operation out of Bangkok, confirmed Mr Sithisak.

"After receiving the initial report from Phuket officers, we have been able to identify a number of the people posting the packages in Bangkok via...

Continued on Page 4



Officials are asking the Thai Postal Service to review its policies to prevent more drugs from being shipped. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

Crew missing as rough seas sink boats

HEAVY southwest monsoon seas sunk three ships, leaving the Royal Thai Navy and Marine Police scrambling to rescue crew members.

A total of 16 sailors have been saved, six are missing.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



GrabTaxi smartphone app gets governor's push in preparation for launch.

PROPERTY



Knight Frank Chartered Company cautious about budget-condo market.

LIFE&STYLE



'Keep it Green' explores the silence that engulfs rubber tree plantations.

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ISAT

Iranian tourist dies in Patong

IRANIAN tourist Hasan Fhakhr, 30, drowned at Patong Beach on July 4 after getting dragged out to sea by a strong current.

Mr Fhakhr was pulled out of the water near the Patong Police box at about 6:30pm by lifeguards. They immediately administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for about 15 minutes, until an ambulance arrived to transfer him to Patong Hospital.

Mr Fhakhr was pronounced dead on arrival, confirmed Patong Beach head lifeguard Wirot Saweangphol.

– *Thawit Bilabdullar*

Alleged IUU caught, given fine of B51k

A FINE of 51,000 baht was levied against the alleged illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) vessel that successfully fled the New Zealand and Australian navies with its cargo of Atlantic toothfish before being seized in Phuket earlier this year.

“Last month, the Customs Department in Bangkok fined the captain, Alberto Zavaleta Salas, and South Service Co Ltd, which managed the cargo, for falsely reporting the Atlantic toothfish as grouper, as well as falsely reporting the value of the fish,” said Phuket Customs Chief Prasongsak Boonma.

“The fine was only the Customs Department part of the process. The next step is for the Marine Office to carry out its

Three killed in two Patong Hill crashes



A cement truck descending Patong Hill killed two women on a motorbike on Monday, just two days after a woman succumbed to head injuries sustained after a six-wheeled truck struck her on the same hill. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: VR Patong 145.400 mhz

investigation concerning the ship’s registration,” Mr Prasongsak said.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Security boost requested for sea gypsies

GOVERNOR Nisit Jansomwong has requested that naval

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

officers and Chalong Police carry out random checks at the Rawai sea gypsy village to boost security and reassure locals that they will be safe during ongoing land dispute cases.

The security boost follows reports from June 22 that 200 sea gypsies had begged Phuket authorities for protection after a group of men allegedly threatened to shoot them if they moved concrete blocks that had been placed on the public access road to their village.

“We will not let such threats occur again, and violence is certainly not the answer,” said Governor Nisit.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Kenyan caught with alleged fake passport, pharmaceuticals

KENYAN national Josphat Gikundi Gichunuku, 35, was arrested at Phuket International

Airport on July 4 for carrying an extensive amount of pharmaceuticals and an allegedly fake passport.

“As Mr Gichunuku passed through the immigration queue, the officer checking his passport noticed several suspicious aspects and believed it to be fake,” said Tourist Police Chief Urumporn Kondejsumrit.

When officers arrested Mr Gichunuku, they found he had 380 packets of dexamethasone (steroid) and 85 packets of Super Apeti (antihistamine) with him, totalling about 4,600 pills.

Mr Gichunuku has been charged for the possession of a fake passport and importing more pharmaceuticals than are needed for 30-day personal use.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Car flips inside new underpass

A CAR flipped inside of the Darasamuth Underpass near Central Festival on July 1, causing all lanes to be temporarily closed off to traffic.

Police believe that an individual driving a Toyota Yaris struck the back of a Toyota Avanza, causing it to flip, said Maj Narong Muangduang of the Wichit Police.

Both drivers received minor

injuries in the accident. Police declined to name either, as no charges have been pressed.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Alleged victim of theft found dead next day

Jantana Seangdee, 37, the victim of an alleged robbery on July 3 was found dead, hanging from the door to the rooftop terrace of her apartment building two days later.

Ms Jantana was expected at the police station on July 5 for further questioning related to the robbery. However, at about 9:45am Phuket City Police received a report that Ms Jantana was found dead.

When police searched her pockets they found a phone and an apology letter to her family.

Ms Jantana’s family confirmed the letter was written in her handwriting and did not have any questions about her death.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Truck caught dumping near Nai Harn

ISLAND officials are looking for the owner of a truck who was caught dumping rubbish near Nai Harn Beach on June 6.

“As a video caught the licence plate of the truck, it will be easy to find them. We will ask the Phuket Land Transport Office [PLTO] to track down the owner and then we can fine them,” said Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos. “The maximum fine is 2,000 baht.”

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Russian fraud fugitive caught in Rawai home

RUSSIAN fugitive Dmitrii Rodionov, 38, who was hunted by Interpol for alleged fraud totaling 25 million baht, was arrested in Rawai on June 10, according to *The Nation*.

Police arrested him at his home in Soi Sammakee, said Phuket Immigration Police Deputy Superintendent Thawatchai Nongbua.

After he was charged in Phuket for overstay, Mr Rodionov was sent to Immigration Police Headquarters in Bangkok.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Crew rescued from two sunk boats off southeastern coast

By Kongleaphy Keam

CREW members of two boats which sank Wednesday morning off Koh Racha and Koh Hei (Coral Island) have been safely rescued by Marine Police.

However, as of Wednesday night, search and rescue teams were still looking for the barge *Sintu Phuket 1*, which sank early Tuesday morning, and its six crew members.

There were six people on the fishing trawler, *Nava Yuthakit*, which sank at around 8:15am Wednesday near Koh Racha while the other boat which sank off Koh Hei, Cambodian-flagged *Sinaran Andaman*, was carrying 10 people.

At about 1pm, a Thai navy helicopter rescued three of the 10 *Sinaran Andaman* crew while the remaining seven were saved by a Marine Police boat.

Of the 10 crew members on the *Sinaran Andaman*, six are Indonesian and four are from Myanmar.

Phuket Marine Police Deputy Commander Prasert



Crew from two boats that sank on Wednesday morning were safely recovered. Photo: Phuket Marine Police

Srikhunrat questioned the boat's Indonesian captain Selamat Waluyo, 50, who said that the vessel was delivering cargo from Myanmar to Penang, Malaysia, when it was hit by strong waves near Koh Hei. As it moved to rest on one side, it suddenly hit a rock under the

water and started to sink.

"I am glad that all of my crew were safely rescued. We would like to thank all of the officers," Mr Selamat said.

One hour later, six crew members from *Nava Yuthakit* were brought ashore.

The six, five Thai and one

from Myanmar, were exhausted and taken to Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization Hospital, confirmed Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana.

Meanwhile, officers continued to search for the six crew members of *Sintu Phuket 1*.

Tourists stranded as fierce storm, big waves roll in

HOTELIERS on Koh Phi Phi, Koh Racha Yai and other islands in the Phuket region have requested that the Navy and Marine Police assist in transporting tourists back to Phuket following a ban on any boats smaller than 24 meters going out to sea.

The Phuket Marine Office's ban on small boats comes as the Thai Meteorological Department issued a warning letter that waves could reach four meters.

"Tourists and business operators should relax and make



Even Marine Police would have trouble reaching the tourists in such rough seas, said Mr Phuripat. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

safety a priority," Phuket Marine Office Chief Phuripat Theerakulpisut told the *Gazette*. "I understand hoteliers on the island are worried about

their guests, who now might have to stay longer than they had planned, but this is a natural phenomenon which no one can predict."

Mr Phuripat insisted that there was very little the Marine Police or Navy could do.

"We want to pick them up, but we cannot due to the challenging weather. Even Navy or Marine Police boats cannot pick up the tourists on the islands. The waves are strong and three to four meters high, so how could the tourists get on the boat?" Mr Phuripat asked.

Mr Phuripat urged business operators to use the warning letter to explain the situation to tourists. - *Kongleaphy Keam*

Kbank closes for upgrades for 48 hours



Kbank branches, and ATMs, will shut down for two days this month. Photo: Nist6dh

KASIKORN Bank (Kbank) has advised all bank customers on Phuket to plan ahead as it will be closing all banking services, including ATMs, for 48 hours next week.

Customers will be unable to use Kbank services from 10pm on Friday, July 17 to 10pm on Sunday, July 19.

"We are aware that this will affect a lot of our customers. However, we will be back with better service for all of our clients," Nartwadee Thongtip of the Phuket Kbank branch in Phuket Town, told the *Gazette*.

"Please prepare your transactions prior to the weekend."

Ms Nartwadee declined to provide any specific information about what system and service efficiency changes were being made to improve the banking experience for customers.

Those with Kbank credit cards will still be able to make transactions, confirmed Ms Nartwadee. For more information visit their website at www.kasikornbank.com or call the K-Contact Center anytime of the day at 028-888888.

- *Nichana Madsatool*



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Chavika Watsang

Local ready for final round for Miss Universe Thailand

PHUKET native Chavika Watsang, 19, is asking island residents to vote for her as 'Miss Popular 2015' as she awaits the final round of the Miss Universe Thailand competition.

Ms Chavika attended Plukpanya School before graduating and going to Srinagarindra the Princess Mother School in Phuket, her father, Chairat Watsang, told the *Gazette*.

– *Thanaphon Phromthong*

Three arrested for pyramid scheme

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

THREE suspects have been apprehended in Phuket for their alleged involvement in the international 10-billion-baht UFUN pyramid-scheme.

Police first arrested Natthinont Puttathamarong, 42, on July 7 at his car shop, NN Used Car, in front of the new bus terminal in Rassada.

During the raid police seized a Mercedes-Benz E 250 8 and an Audi A7, together worth more than 10 million baht.

"The Mercedes-Benz we seized belongs to Techasit Prasomsab, a UFUN suspect who is currently on the run," revealed Consumer Protection Police Division (CPPD) Deputy Chief Angkul Klaikleung.

Police tracked down Mr Natthinont after he submitted evidence to police in defence of the purchase and sale of luxury items, including the purchase of a Porsche from Mr



Mr Natthinont faces a number of charges for his alleged involvement.

Techasit, reported *The Nation* on June 2.

"Mr Natthinont admitted to police that the Mercedes-Benz belongs to Mr Techasit, and that he had his staff drive the car down from Phang Nga last week," said Col Angkul.

Mr Natthinont claims the

seized Audi belongs to a friend, who police have declined to name. His friend allegedly has a secondhand car shop in Bangkok, and had asked Mr Natthinont to sell the car.

Col Angkul explained that Mr Natthinont has been involved in the UFUN network

in Phuket for more than two years, and has about 10 people below him in the pyramid.

"Mr Natthinont was charged with money laundering, gang defrauding and involvement in a transnational crime network," said Col Angkul.

Officers from CPPD arrested two more UFUN suspects in Phuket Town later that night.

Nitiwat Thitipriyakon, 35, and his 35-year-old girlfriend, Konveena Leelaratrungruang have denied charges of gang defrauding and involvement in a transnational criminal network.

Ms Koveena was also charged for tax evasion and expanding the pyramid network by recruiting members. She denied these charges as well, confirmed Maj Sura Chankaew of the CPPD.

Police revealed to the *Gazette* after the arrests on July 7 that they are searching for 10 more people in Phuket who are believed to be involved in the illegal scheme.

Illegal tinted helmets spark debate online

RECENT heated discussion on social media has prompted Phuket police to confirm that it is in fact illegal for motorists to wear helmets with tinted visors in Thailand.

The news follows Maj Gen Apisit Muangkasem, national Traffic Police commander, recently speaking to many Thai media outlets about which types of helmets are prohibited. The commander's statements sparked an argument on the Thai PBS Facebook page about the topic, and whether or not helmets with tinted visors should be prohibited.

Lt Col Rungrit Rattanapagdee of the Phuket City Traffic Police spoke out this week in response to the discussion, confirming the official standards for helmets.

"There are three types of helmets in Thailand: half face, full face and open face. Every motorbike and motorcycle driver must use a helmet that meets Thai Industrial Standard (MorOrKor)," said Col Rungrit.

"Imported helmets are allowed. However, any sort of helmet with a tinted visor is illegal in Thailand, even if it meets international safety standards."

Col Rungrit explained that



This helmet is illegal.

police must be able to see a driver's face at all times while on the roads.

"Helmets with tinted visors are likely to be used by people who are carrying out crimes, as police are not able to identify the face of the suspect if he or she is wearing this type of helmet."

Col Rungrit insisted that everyone needed to obtain a legal helmet and wear it while driving a motorbike.

"Everyone should wear a helmet to protect their [sic] life. Most motorcyclists who die in road accidents are not wearing helmets," he noted.

Anyone caught by police wearing a helmet with a tinted visor – or found to be riding without fastening the chin strap or not wearing a helmet at all – faces a fine of up to 500 baht, Col Rungrit explained.

– *Thanaphon Phromthong*

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Island unravels postal drug gang

From Page 1

...CCTV footage of them at the post office," Mr Sithisak said.

"We are in the process of strengthening our case by collecting more evidence and identifying more people in the network. We expect to make sweeping arrests soon."

The nationally-operated network, which supplies marijuana, *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) and a variety of other drugs, was first identified in Thalang.

"According to the evidence, it is a very big system that

distributes to many places outside Phuket," Thalang District Chief Veera Kerdsirimongkol said. "Based on the way the drugs are packed, it seems like they have a machine doing it - it's clearly a big business."

The ONCB and Thalang District officers started unraveling the operation after they had drug dealer Pichet Thipbamrong, 24, under surveillance.

After about a month of surveillance, Mr Veera and Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Siripong Leeprasit moved in with a team to arrest Mr Pichet at his rental home in Cherng Talay on June 30.

"In his possession we found 1kg of marijuana, 400 grams of kratom leaves and 1.02g of *ya ice* [crystal methamphetamine]. Additionally, we found a digital scale and the phone he used to place orders," Mr Veera said.

Mr Pichet was initially charged with the possession of Categories 1 and 5 drugs.

"He confessed to the charges, and agreed to assist in our investigation," Mr Veera said.

Once all SIM cards are required to be registered by the end of the month, it will help us track these criminals down.

- Director of ONCB Sithisak Kallyanapradit

On Mr Pichet's phone police found records of his drug orders on the messaging application LINE. On June 29, Mr Pichet had ordered 3kg of marijuana.

Mr Pichet had only 1kg of the 3kg order at the time of the arrest. The remaining 2kg arrived at the Thalang Post Office on July 1.

The message that revealed that the shipment was coming in also tipped off police that a shipment would be made to Nakhorn Sri Thammarat.

On July 2, Nakhorn Sri Thammarat officers moved in and arrested Nattapon Nuanprajak at the Srichon Post Office as he picked up a 1kg package of marijuana.

That same day Panchat Sangkhao, 19, was arrested at



The drug orders were made through LINE and shipped by Thai post.

the Thungsong District Post Office with 1kg of marijuana.

Following the successful raids, police asked Mr Pichet to use his phone to put in additional orders with the suppliers, named by Mr Pichet only by their nicknames 'Tai' and 'Dam'.

"We wanted to track down 'Tai' and 'Dam', so Mr Pichet placed an order for 100g of *ya ice* and 2kg of marijuana," Mr Veera explained. "Mr Pichet told us that he had been working with the suppliers for more than a year."

The order of *ya ice* arrived at the Thalang Post Office on July 2, while the first kilogram of marijuana arrived on July 4. The last kilogram of marijuana arrived on July 6.

To combat the 'postal drug service', Mr Veera has suggested that new security measures be taken and new regulations be put in place.

"Post offices should have scanning machines, as well as a drug dog to help put an end to this," Mr Veera said.

"Currently, if a package is

less than 2kg, the sender doesn't have to present an identification card. However, I think this weight needs to be changed and a copy of the card needs to be made."

Mr Veera also pointed out that there are a number of private postal companies whose services could also be abused.

ONCB confirmed to the *Gazette* that it will be sending letters to all government and non-government postal delivery providers in Thailand asking them to review their policies.

Social media platforms have created an easy method for drug dealers to take orders and coordinate shipments. However, Mr Sithisak explained that officers were being trained and prepared specifically on monitoring social media activity in order to help crackdown on crime.

"Once all SIM cards are required to be registered by the end of the month, it will help us track these criminals down," Mr Sithisak said. "I understand that we should be able to follow the IP address used when they are accessing fake Facebook or LINE accounts to track down the phone and the suspect. However, the technical systems we have access to in Thailand are limited, so we will just have to see how effectively we can manage the situation."

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Exhibitions of art aimed at boosting tourism

The Phuket Gazette

Governor's environment watchdogs score arrest

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Airport landing fees cut by half

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: Airports of Thailand (AOT) is set to cut as much as 50% off landing fees for both international and domestic arrivals at Phuket International Airport (PIA) until December, in an effort to boost the region's flagging tourism industry.

Rice to visit Phuket



Bike racers suspected of burning police box

By Sangkhae Leelanapom

PHUKET CITY: A second police booth has been destroyed by fire, leading police to revise their belief that an earlier, similar incident was due to an electrical fault.

Police received reports of the latest fire, at the police booth at the intersection of Wichit Songkham Rd...

CAMALA: The new special committee, set up by Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura to investigate land encroachment and abuses of environmental protection, has garnered its first arrest - that of Boonhuay Reungpetch, 40, on June 15, for encroaching on and building three homes on national forest land in Kamala.

Volunteers sought for Samaritans' phone lines

SLAK: The legacy of emotional trauma left by the tsunami is generally unquantified, but is believed to be widespread throughout the affected communities.

Can I take a *songthaew* [a basic and privately-operated bus] from the airport to Phuket City? ... Holders of prepaid phone cards must register...

What are my transport options from the airport?

Can I take a *songthaew* [a basic and privately-operated bus] from the airport to Phuket City?

Juha Itha
By email

Nattawut Sirijun, a service officer from Phuket International Airport, replies:

There is no *songthaew* service serving the airport, but *songthaews* do run between Nai Yang and Phuket City. It's about 100 meters from the airport to the road they run along.

The fare from the airport to Phuket City is 20 baht, and the journey will take up to one-and-a-half hours.

There is also a minibus service from the airport to some major tourist destinations.

The fare to Phuket City is 100 baht per person; to Patong 150 baht; to Kata, Karon, Kata

Noi and Karon Noi 180 baht per person and to Merlin Beach, Baan Yin Dee 250 baht per person.

[Editor's note: on May 30 this year, the Gazette reported that Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura had ordered an investigation into claims that a minibus company that had secured the right to collect passengers from the airport had been taking them to an office on the bypass road and intimidating them into buying highly over-priced package tours.]

There is also a limousine service from the airport. The fare to Phuket City is 400 baht, or 800 baht for a "VIP" service (a bigger, nicer car); to Patong 550 baht, VIP 1,100 baht, and to Kata-Karon 650 baht (1,300 baht VIP).

It is also possible to book an airport meter taxi from a

counter inside the airport. Usually, the meter starts at 100 baht, although some companies, such as Tawat Taxi, start the meter at 50 baht.

The standard price from the airport to Phuket City is 350 baht, to Patong 500 baht, and to Kata and Karon 550 baht.

Suwalai Pinpradab, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) Region 4 office in Phuket, replies:

There is a rank for ordinary taxi meters on the road outside the airport, but these vehicles cannot be booked from inside the airport, and they cannot pick up passengers inside the airport itself. The only taxis and limousine which can pick up passengers inside the airport are those with green "Taxi" or "Limousine" signs.

Queer News Kata cat burglars get creamed in stakeout

MUCH like 2005, the island was battling a flagging tourism industry and scrambling for solutions in 2005. Though Airports of Thailand (AoT) said it couldn't bring tourists back 'alone', it was looking to slash landing fees for both domestic and international flights to woo crowds to Phuket - little did they know that the time would come... and so would the Chinese and Russians.

Was the fear of a crashing tourism sector well founded, and the solutions conceived 10 years ago to our tourism dilemma what ushered in the mass tourism trade mentality to the island? Who knows, but without a doubt, when there is a drought, a farmer sheds his tears for rain with no concerns of the quantity. Now in 2015, despite concerns, the number of arrivals has led to a rift in the tourism industry between those desperately reliant on the mass-tourism source markets and those chasing Free Independent Travellers (FIT).

Tourism bouts aside, the July 9-16 issue of the Phuket Gazette was packed with more 'good airline news' as Australian Airlines announced plans for Phuket

flights and Taiwan cancelled its travel advisory.

In other sections of the paper, the wheels of the bus go round and round - and apparently so does the tragedy that is often referred to as Phuket's public transport. A decade ago, the Gazette was faced with the simple question that people haven't yet stopped asking - what public transport can I get from the airport? Okay, this reader was a bit more savvy: Can I take a *songthaew* from the airport to Phuket City?

In this current issue of the Gazette, as we are neck deep in the age of technology - though *songthaews* are no relic of the past - Governor Nisit Jansomwong is pushing for taxi drivers to saddle up and use the smartphone application GrabTaxi for safe, easy and reliable transportation on the island.

If only expats and tourists could change their mentality and sort out the *songthaew* system, maybe we won't be hounding on and on about public transport for another 10 years... then again, perhaps by then the light rail will have arrived.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

The gift of hindsight

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Prayut seeks healthcare donations

PRIME Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha hopes Thais will make donations to support the universal healthcare scheme, according to Public Health Minister Rajata Rajatanavin.

"We are now exploring the guidelines to make such donations tax deductible," Dr Rajata said at a meeting of the National Health Security Office (NHSO) board.

NHSO manages the universal healthcare scheme, which covers 49 million Thais. As the scheme offers most kinds of medical treatment to people for free, it now needs a budget of about 120 baht billion.

Dr Rajata told the meeting that while PM Prayut was concerned about the scheme's growing budget, he insisted that he had no policy to end it.

I've come for your blood – don't judge me

THE vast majority of the world has been in celebration following the United States legalizing gay marriage. However, is the world ready to accept ethically practicing vampires? This isn't a joke.

"Most vampires believe they were born that way; they don't choose this," DJ Williams, director of social work at Idaho State University told Reuters.

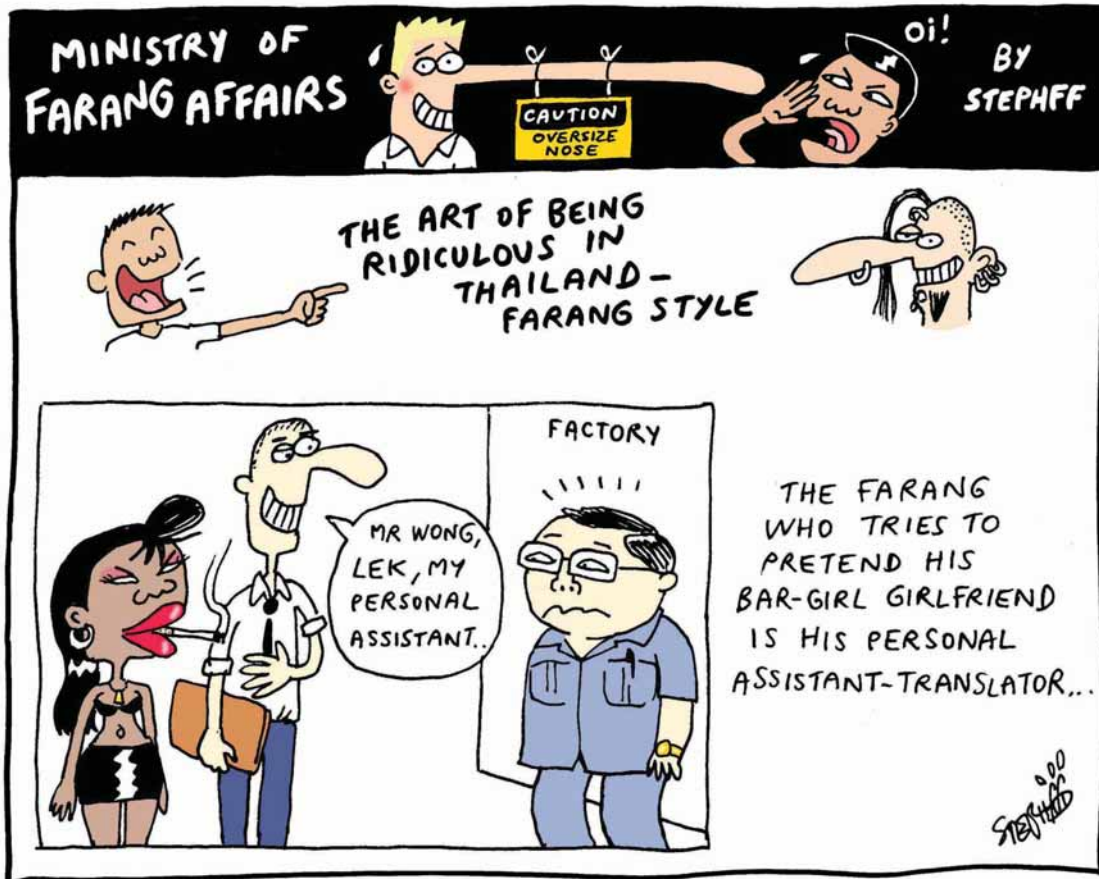
Mr Williams recent work published in a Canadian peer-reviewed journal found that authentic vampires, as opposed to 'lifestyle vampires', might be stereotyped by clinicians, despite the professional fields discourage biases.

Mr Williams, who has studied self-identified vampires for nearly a decade, finds the coffin sleepers come from every walk of life and profession. They tend to be low-energy people who need blood as an energy source.

Those in the community rely on volunteers that allow them to make a small incision in the chest area so they can have a drink.

"The real vampire community seems to be a conscientious and ethical one," Mr Williams said.

The global vampire population is thought to number in the thousands, he added.



Five jet-ski rental operators arrested

SOLDIERS were dispatched on July 2 to arrest five jet-ski operators on Koh Pha Ngan after people filed complaints of being overcharged and about the operations having negative impacts on the environment.

Fishermen have also complained that shrimp stocks have migrated away from Surat Thani waters due to the disruptive water sport.

Arrest warrants were issued for the five operators, who were apprehended and are being detained at Koh Pha Ngan Police Station. Military personnel confiscated 20 jet-skis.

NACC receives 2,500 reports against officials

THE National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has received nearly 2,500 complaints against state officials in the Northeast, including a provincial governor and a judge.

The judge and governor were accused of claiming prizes from lucky draws despite not being the winners during their tenure in Udon Thani province between 2006 and 2007.

There were several complaints involving senior officials from Udon Thani.

In addition to those against

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

the judge and the governor, the NACC has also received complaints against former Nam Som district chief Metha Siripaiwong, who is accused of violating laws in relation to bidding on government projects.

Surapon Sukprasert, former head of Khai Prachak Silapakhom School in Udon Thani, was also accused of issuing fake certificates for teachers' academic work during his tenure.

The NACC had already completed its investigation into 417 of the 2,492 complaints related to the Northeast.

Most related to bribery, embezzlement, dereliction of duty, abuse of authority and offenses related to procurement and bidding on projects.

Five killed in zoo tram crash

ZOOLOGICAL Park Organisation Director Benjapol Nakprasert, along with Khon Kaen Zoo head Thewin Ratanawongsawat, have apologized for the tram collision that killed five people and injured 55 others on July 5.

The zoo, located 500km northeast of Bangkok, will be closed for five days as police probe the two-tram collision. The Khon Kaen Zoo will re-

sume services on Saturday.

The zoo and the company operating the trams have set up a committee to investigate the crash.

Minimum wage tight for family of three or more

A FAMILY of three may not be able to rise above poverty on just the 300 baht minimum daily wage, a research director

on labor development at the Thailand Development Research Institute said on Monday.

An analysis of the Thai poverty level found that people earning the 300 baht wage and who had a family of three in municipal areas were living below the poverty line, while those outside municipal areas could support families of three better.

In reality, sole income-earners in a family had to do overtime, a side job on weekends or have their spouse work part-time, according to the researcher.

Navy wants to buy B36bn in submarines

THE Navy has proposed the purchase of three submarines from China through a government-to-government contract worth 36 billion baht.

The payment, if approved, would be made over seven to 10 years. China would train Navy personnel on how to operate the subs and provide eight years' worth of spare parts.

The decision to submit the proposal was made by 17 young-generation committee members from the Submarine Squadron, after examining similar products from six countries.

Fourteen of them favored Chinese submarines, while two chose submarines from Germany and one preferred submarines from Sweden.

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War on drugs

THE revelation that the Thai Postal Service is being used to ship large amounts of illegal drugs is the latest in a long list of embarrassments in the country's effort to combat 'recreational' drug use.

As far back as 1943, the government passed the Kratom Act in a bid to halt declining revenues from the government-taxed opium trade, in a large part because opium addicts used the leaves of this native plant as a way of coping with opium withdrawal symptoms. To this day, Thailand remains the country with the most severe penalties for possession of *kratom*.

A more recent embarrassment came when numerous government bodies started buying bogus drug detectors, such as the fully-discredited 'Alpha 6', at a total cost to the taxpayers of almost a billion baht. Purchase of the detectors, which had no electrical components whatsoever, started in 2004 and went on for years. Costing 1.2 million baht each, they may have been the most expensive pieces of plastic ever produced – and our nation has the sad distinction of having bought more of them than any other country.

By far the most chilling chapter in this ham-fisted history came early in 2004 when the government of Thaksin Shinawatra launched its infamous 'War on Drugs'. The result was not the cessation of drug use, but rather the extrajudicial killing of more than 2,800 people.

Three years later, in 2007, an official investigation revealed that more than half of those killed had no connection to the drug trade whatsoever.

Given this very sad history, we propose that the government experiment with new approaches.

Start at the bottom, with *kratom*. Decriminalize it for a year or two, then perform a 'Freakonomics'-like statistical analysis of the financial and social effects over that period. If they are found to be negligible, or even positive, move on to the next substance up the chain – marijuana perhaps.

On the enforcement side, let's start a 'One Post Office, One Drug-Sniffing Mutt' (OPooDSM) policy.

Local efforts to train up some drug dogs proved extremely promising a few years back – until their work was quietly and mysteriously put on hold, after a successful meth bust at Suan Luang Park.

Perhaps officials were just too preoccupied with waving their Alpha 6 magic wands at the time.



Drivers on tight schedules take big risks

Re: Gazette online, Breaking News: Another two killed on Patong Hill, July 6

Do we pick A, B, C or D of the stock answers as to why this occurred?

These cement truck drivers are on far too tight a schedule and, as such, take chances that unfortunately result in this sort of incident (I refuse to use the word 'accident', as it isn't).

I understand another one wiped out on Naka Hill between Kamala and Patong over the weekend, near last week's fatal incident.

Their bosses need to be taken to task.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Shoppers take over

Re: Gazette online, Opinion: Bring back sun loungers, tourists will come again, July 8

The Tourism Authority of Thailand and the government don't feel the need to address the drop in arrivals from western (mostly European) countries.

They have successfully replaced nature and beach loving tourists with Chinese package tourists who come to shop.

And when Chinese tourists show up in large numbers, they are a further deterrent to Europeans.

But, this eliminates the need to clean up the environment, which is apparently not recognized by those who 'govern' Phuket.

Mike
Gazette forum

Letters

to the Editor

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

Trash dumping not a difficult act to stop

Re: Gazette online, Video Report: Truck caught dumping near Nai Harn Beach, July 3

This is easy to stop.

It was very common in London too. The fines were made very high. People lost their cars and trucks, and some even went to jail. Members of the public were rewarded for reporting them.

When there are so many people short of money during low season, then there will be loads of people with their eyes open if they can get a reward.

Simon
Gazette forum

Amazing Thailand drivers strike again

Re: Gazette online, Two Myanmar workers killed in truck crash, July 3

The hill was to blame?

It had nothing to do with a vehicle that probably was unsafe to use on the road, nothing to do with there being too many people in the truck, and nothing to do with the driver not having the skills to even drive on a hill? It was the hill that caused the accident?

Two people killed because no one wants to require vehicles to be safe.

Amazing Thailand.

James Bond
Gazette forum

What's different?

Re: Governor backs GrabTaxi push into Phuket, July 7

I am confused as to what is different about GrabTaxi that it could be 'logged into a provincial system' (whatever that means) while Uber could not?

Whatever the difference or the reason for the government deciding to back up GrabTaxi rather than Uber, I hope that this service actually moves past the local taxi mafia and is successful enough that people here start to trust in and depend on the service for safe, affordable and reliable rides on the island.

Phuket needs a serious transportation overhaul. Maybe this will get the wheels turning.

Annette Underwood
Phuket Town

Blowing us away

Is it just me or is this wind more intense than the last few rainy seasons? What is going on?

I can barely drive without being blown off my bike, and the branches and debris from trees blow into the street, making already treacherous roads even more dangerous.

Rita Myers
Chalong

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The lay of the land

FIRST PERSON

WE HAVE created a website that is a one-stop service which provides specific data as well as tips for land buyers or sellers before they make a decision to buy or sell land.

Readers can find out what is legal and illegal for certain areas of the island without having to go to so many relevant offices and read too many complicated pieces of legal literature.

While working with a Kamala Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor) official on this project as part of his master's degree research, we realized how essential a service like this is for Phuket. The university and I decided to continue this research after the official completed his part and moved on. It has taken us four years, but now we have data for the entire island.

Our research has brought together the most updated satellite pictures of the land on Phuket and data from three laws – Town Planning Act BE 2518, Building Control Act BE 2522 (1979) and Ministry of Natural

Resources and Environment BE 2553 (2010). All potential land owners would be well advised to consult these laws before buying land on the island.

People can go to the website, search for a land plot and click on it. The site will show you what you can and cannot do with the land. There are many benefits to be gained by using



Dr Sangdao Wongsai, 35, from Bangkok, is a professor at Prince of Songkhla University's Phuket campus. She graduated with a master's degree in chemical engineering from the King Mongkut University of Technology in Thonburi,

before earning a Doctorate in Applied Statistics from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. She now teaches statistics and researches geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing.

Here, she talks about a website she helped create, which is a one-stop service for Phuket land information and sustainable land usage in the Andaman provinces.

a website like this.

The data in the website can help the public, especially relevant government officers, to work faster. It can help investors and land sellers or buyers to get information they need before making a final decision.

Foreign investors who are abroad do not have to come to Thailand to check the land, or go to many offices to get essential information. They

can ensure that they are not being cheated or fooled into buying protected land. From an economic standpoint, this will give investors more confidence.

Crooked landowners or officials will not be able to use loopholes in the law to benefit themselves, as everyone has the same information they do.

Additionally, environmental experts and researchers can use the data to encourage proper, environmentally friendly use of the land. This information gives us the tools to prevent the destruction of our environment.

As anyone can visit the website and access this information, the number of land fraud cases will decrease, transparency in business will increase and people and officials will be able to avoid land grabs and problems.

These are all expected benefits that use of the website offers. To what extent it can actually help society is in the hands of the local government.

I have handed them a sharpened knife. It is their decision to approve the information for official use. Until then, the information on the site is labeled 'unofficial data'.

We did the research for them. They have to decide whether or not they will use it.



Best to wait out the lights with everyone else. Photo: Kongleaphy Kearn

Traffic bubble buster

Island View

By Alex Stone

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

THERE is a social glue that seems to be forcing more and more drivers to a complete standstill at red lights in Phuket than ever before. However, it only takes one weak link in the proverbial chain for old habits to kick in, along with first gear.

Depending on how long ago you arrived on the island, the significant changes you've witnessed will vary from tourists who have just arrived and know Phuket as nothing other than what it is today, to the pioneer expats who remember that a trip from Patong to Phuket Town was an overnight affair.

With only four years under the belt as an expat on the island, I have witnessed enormous changes – from infrastructure to clear beaches. However, the most reassuring one to witness has been a steady increase in the number of road users obeying laws.

There are still more crazy, incompetent and self-absorbed drivers out there than one would like to see. However, the number of people wearing helmets, especially full-face helmets, does seem to have steadily increased, perhaps even picking up momentum as the months and years wear on.

There are really few things as heartwarming as seeing an entire three-person family on a motorbike, with even the toddler having a helmet strapped to his head – with such a statement, we are of course removing all heartwarming

baby animals, such as sneezing pandas, from the mix.

However, what has been the most incredibly striking change on the roads over the last few months is what is happening at t-junction traffic lights, most notably on Chao Fa West. People are stopping – all of them.

A year ago, there would be maybe one old lady on her motorbike watching the red light as a dozen or so other drivers zipped by, regardless of the traffic light's color – perhaps Michael Jackson would approve.

Now, however, there are crowds of bikes waiting. That being said, it seems that everyone is bonded in place by a very thin social membrane stretched out across the lane. All it would take to break is one driver going, 'Heck with this'. As soon as they push through, many drivers, who were impatiently waiting, are quick to follow.

Help boost the strength of this social membrane. Everyone – foreigners and Thais – must show a little more self control to ensure that we at least aren't the ones willing to bust the road-safety bubble and return to the old Phuket habits of abiding by only those laws that are convenient at the moment.

Words from the Wise

"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."
– Maya Angelou

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity."
– Amelia Earhart

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."
– Thomas Jefferson

Issues & Answers

Xenon headlights blinding drivers at night

I HAVE an issue with the Xenon headlights installed in some cars. Whenever I am approaching a car that has them, it makes it very difficult for me to see.

I'm concerned that these types of headlights will cause an accident for me or for other drivers.

I am wondering if police are able to do anything about these lights?

Concerned commuter
Koh Kaew

Lt Col Teerawat Leamsuwan of the Phuket Traffic Police replies:

Please note that it is legal for people to install the Xenon technology headlights, as they can help drivers see more clearly while driving at night.

However, if police find any cars that have Xenon headlights with a color temperature that is too high, we will call the driver to test the temperature.

The color can only be white

and light yellow (less than 5,000 Kelvin).

At this moment, we do not have enough equipment or the time necessary to check whether or not every single vehicle's lights follow standards.

However, if we receive a complaint about a specific vehicle, we will press charges against the owner.

If the car doesn't follow regulations, the owner will be charged up to 2,000 baht.

Millennium in a league of its own

Finance

By David Mayes

I HAVE been asked quite a few times by my readers for some of my advice that I actually follow myself, since I often tend to focus in my articles on warnings to stay away from certain asset classes or at least temper exposure to them.

With that in mind, I have chosen to write about a few funds which have long, solid track records to back up their claims on their ability to control risk and perform in different market conditions. One of these is the world's largest trading fund: Millennium.

Before I begin, I would like to reiterate why I spend more time focusing on risk control and extolling on the virtues of diversification.

With any fund, or even asset class, it needs to be looked at in the perspective of the overall portfolio. With proper diversification, even the worst calls and timing should do minimal damage. All of the horror stories I have seen have come from over-concentration either into one fund, or one asset class (for example, buying heavily into equities before a crash).

If you take care to avoid any major catastrophes in your portfolio, the small wins will add up to great long-term performance.

Another reason why I am writing about Millennium is that a feeder has recently been

made available to allow ordinary investors to access the fund in US\$10,000 increments as opposed to the US\$1.5 million minimum investment if you go to them directly. This opens access to its amazing asset management team for even relatively small portfolios. When I say 'team' I actually mean more than 170 teams located all around the globe.

Millennium is slightly different than many of its peers in that sense. It is essentially a group of teams where the risk is managed at a fund level, often with different teams partially offsetting

If you care to avoid any major catastrophes in your portfolio, the small wins will add up to great long-term performance.

each other's overall risk to the fund in the long term while both teams seek out gains in the short term.

Millennium was founded by Israel Englander in 1989 and employs over 1,600 professionals across its more than 10 global offices, over half of which are focused on the investment research and trading functions.

Current assets under management are more than US\$26 billion. Considering the massive size of the fund, the track record is even more impressive, with only one small down year of less than 5% in the last 25 years.

The group has averaged over 12% per annum during this time with less than 5% annualized standard deviation, a popular measure of risk. Compared to the global stock market as measured by the MSCI World Index's standard deviation of over 15% during the same time period, which included the larg-



Millennium's current assets under management are more than US\$26 billion. Photo: Ken Teegardin

est bull market in the history of the world, and yet still only produced an average return of less than 10%, and you can see why the group has attracted such a massive chunk of money to manage.

Most impressive yet, the largest draw down in its 25-year history of trading has been less than 8%. That is unheard of for funds which have produced similar results.

As I mentioned before, you never know what the future holds for any fund, company, country, sector or asset class. Just because they have outperformed essentially any other investment you can find while maintaining liquid positions on the world's largest markets doesn't mean things couldn't go wrong in the future.

However, a small position with these guys is almost certain

to improve the overall quality of any portfolio. They are indeed in a class all of their own.

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.

Hit by drought and sluggish economy

MANY bank borrowers have been adversely affected by the drought, lower prices of farm products and slower economic growth, the director of the Government Savings Bank (GSB) said.

Chartchai Payuhanaveechai said 58,000 clients with a combined loan worth of 34 billion baht have so far applied for loan restructuring as the GSB state-owned bank allows a debt moratorium on the debtors' principal for six months to two years. During this period, they are required to pay only



GSB will lend 4 to 5 billion baht, with details to be finalized in the next few months. Photo: Paul Bica

interest payments.

Borrowers adversely affected by economic hardship have raised the bank's non-performing loans (NPLs) up to

2 per cent of total loans from 1.4 per cent at the beginning of this year, Mr Chartchai said. The bank wants to cap NPLs at no more than 2.08 per cent of total loans this year, he added.

The GSB will participate in 80bn baht in syndicated loans to Thailand's largest agribusiness conglomerate, Charoen Pokphand Group (CP). The GSB will lend about 4-5bn baht and details could be finalized in the next few months, Mr Chartchai said.

-The Nation



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GrabTaxi gets island green light

By Thanaphon Phromthong

GRABTAXI is preparing to push into Phuket, following the attempt of similar service provider Uber, which has sliced off a piece of the island's taxi-service market since it arrived here in November last year.

Unlike Uber, which was originally declared illegal by local government officers as they wrangled with exactly what the business model was, the launch of GrabTaxi was tabled by Governor Nisit Jansomwong at a meeting on public transportation projects on Monday morning.

"Though Uber does provide a similar service, GrabTaxi drivers will be logged into the provincial system, allowing us to monitor and control the situation better," Gov Nisit explained.

"This service will provide more options for those needing to get around the island and will hopefully help to usher in a new era of convenient, reasonably priced public transportation."

GrabTaxi, available for free download on iOS, Android, and BlackBerry platforms, is the first and largest taxi app in Southeast Asia that enables passengers to book taxis with just a few taps on their smartphones, the company's website explains.

"GrabTaxi aims to revamp



GrabTaxi, a taxi application, is preparing to push its services into Phuket. Photo: Mauri Grant

the local taxi industry by introducing simple, cost effective, mobile-based technology to both supply [driver] and demand [passenger] sides of the distribution chain. With this technology, GrabTaxi hopes to optimize the matching process between drivers

and passengers."

The company's mission statement sidles up next to those made by Uber Regional General Manager Mike Brown last year: "Uber is a technology company that connects riders and drivers to enable safe, convenient and afford-

able transport. Uber makes cities better by reducing congestion and improving transport availability and safety. Today, Uber operates in more than 220 cities across six continents."

At the meeting on Monday, Gov Nisit justified the need for

the GrabTaxi service as a number of countries' ambassadors continued to demand a better understanding of what measures are being taken to sort out Phuket's public transportation disgrace.

"I think now is the right time to manage the taxis on the island," Gov Nisit said. "GrabTaxi will make it easier for people to catch rides."

Gov Nisit insisted that this did not mean that there would need to be an increase in the number of taxi drivers on the road.

"We just give the drivers already here the application to use," Gov Nisit said. "The app will also allow passengers to report bad experiences with specific drivers."

An educational seminar for legal taxi drivers – including metered and green-plate taxi drivers – will be held on July 14.

Though green-plate taxi drivers are invited to download the application, GrabTaxi's website assures that all "drivers are trained to turn on the meter once the passenger is inside the taxi."

GrabTaxi charges a 25 baht booking fee in Bangkok. However, it has yet to be revealed if Phuket will follow suit.

"We already have 57 applicants for the pilot project," Gov Nisit added.

Peer into the phones of others with Periscope



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

WELCOME to Periscope, the latest craze to hit the online world. Periscope is the newest addition to the Twitter stable, with huge information sharing possibilities.

Periscope is an app that allows you to 'discover the world through somebody else's eyes'.

Users can download the app and then choose from a multitude of people and experiences that they want to be a part of by watching live streams from that person's smartphone. It also records the information and allows people to watch replays for 24 hours.

A recent example of its widespread popularity was during the Mayweather versus Pacquiao fight, which was held in Las Vegas. People simply aimed their smartphone at the TV and Periscope did the rest



Discover the world through someone else's eyes. Photo: Cocoparisienne

with one person streaming live from the event, thus allowing thousands of people to watch the fight free, without the need of expensive pay-per-view subscriptions.

In its relatively brief existence, Periscope has managed to find itself upsetting companies and hitting the headlines for all of the wrong reasons.

Users have been flouting copyright laws and so there are already legal demands that

Twitter ban the accounts of people impinging copyrighted material.

Enough of the evil, what about the practical uses?

Periscope will become an amazing tool for marketing and sales. Providing live feeds of user experiences and brand and product promotion are all very simple now, not to mention incredibly cost effective.

Think about streaming a day in Thailand at a luxury resort,

showing a dining experience at a restaurant, or diving in the beautiful Andaman Sea.

Think of Periscope like this: social media marketing getting married to reality TV. I am sure we are going to get a lot of rubbish we do not want to see, but if used correctly, there can be huge benefits that we have already identified for clients and their events.

Now is the perfect time to use it for marketing, while it is riding this momentum of intrigue is growing.

Maybe Andy Warhol was correct – there is no bad publicity.

Simon Wetherell is a social media expert, lawyer, best-selling author and international speaker. He now resides in Phuket where he trains businesses and individuals on profiting from the social media industry. For more information, visit PhuketOnlineMarketingSchool.com or call him at 095- 085 -3355.



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Haad Thip bags top prize in Royal-initiative campaign

The Vetiver Development and Campaign According to the Royal Initiatives

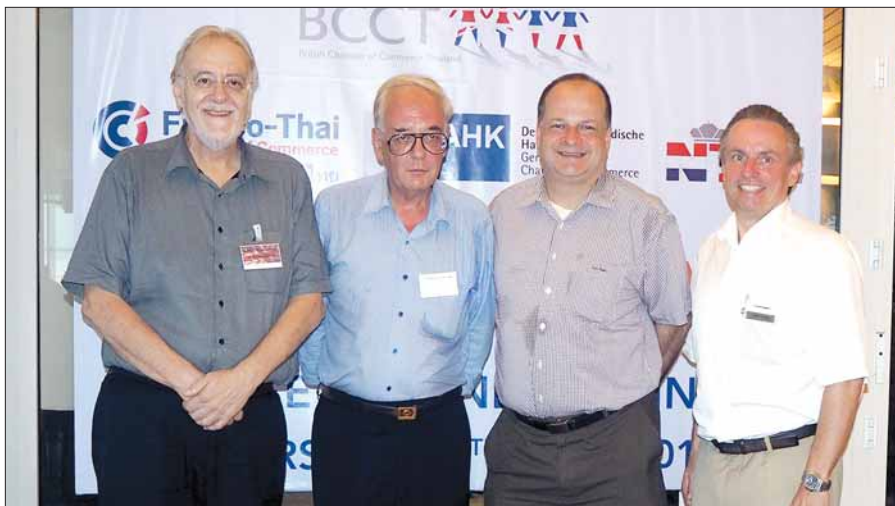


Haad Thip Plc's Chief Executive Officer Sec Lt Phairoch Rattakul smiles broadly at topping this Royal-initiative campaign this year.



Haad Thip Plc beat other competitors to win the 2015 first prize in this Royal-initiative campaign, with its senior vice president Pariya Chirabanhu (right) receiving a shield from Chaipattana Foundation secretary-general Dr Sumet Tantivejkul.

Business and pleasure



In a jovial mood as he welcomes guests to the Phuket Business Dinner at Amari Phuket's Rim Talay restaurant, is the hotel's vice president Pierre-Andre Pelletier (right). The guest speaker was Graham Catterwell (second left) and flanking him are two representatives from the British Chamber of Commerce Thailand: Chris Thatcher (left) and Greg Watkins (second from right).

Amari Phuket wings ahead



Enjoying a thank you party for successful completion of Amari Phuket's new ocean wing are (from L-R): Somchai Kittikaisak, ONYX Hospitality Group's director; Pierre-Andre Pelletier, ONYX and Amari Phuket's vice president; Sungkorn Changjaruek, Amari Estates Company director; Yuthachai Charanachitta, Amari Estates' president and CEO; Harold Olaya Leon, Amari Estates' CEO; and Vanchai Siritongtavorn, Management 103 Company president.

Cooking up a storm



Participants got some cooking lessons from Chef Pol Tantasatien at the latest Agnesi Cooking Demonstration and Tasting Event which took place at Mövenpick Resort & Spa on June 24. Welcoming the famous chef is the resort's general manager, Hansruedi Frutiger.

Hospital moves up a notch



Dibuk Hospital's director Dr Piriya Atisook warmly welcomes an AIA insurance team led by Sueksawadee Chanchoo (right) during a visit to inspect the new hospital's units as part of preparations for better customer service.

ents in Paradise

Citygate Phuket rolls in



In a good mood at the launch of Citygate Phuket condominium on June 26 are (from L-R): Bernard Bilardello, Citygate Exclusive Development Company's shareholder and developer; Sophie Bilardello, also a shareholder and developer; Chury Maisapraw, wife of the firm's director and developer; Lamphun Tangnoi; and Sai Kretnatee and Danny Vercauteren, both developers of Palmyra Surin and 6th Avenue condominiums.



Raring to go is the Citygate Phuket sales team (from L-R): Sai Duangkamon, executive assistant; Sharmane German, executive manager; Fredrick Young Carlsson, Thailand sales director; Tingly Naksan, Chinese sales executive; and Kat Klinchan, booth supervisor.

I declare, it's Éclair Day

Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort threw a memorable bash to celebrate Éclair Day on June 24 with associates and guests having fun galore with the children of Uncle Pitak Home and Holland House Orphanage Phuket as they created a 'Sea, Sun and Sand' edible canvas with more than a thousand éclairs. Donations raised at the event benefit both charities.



Julian Lowry (middle), Le Meridien Phuket's food and beverage director, shares a special moment with the children from Uncle Pitak Home and Holland House Orphanage Phuket.

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Confessions of a Caffeine addict

By Katie P Arnold

LOCATED on the very busy Wichitsongkram Road, near Prince of Songkhla University in Kathu, you will find one of the best places in town to satisfy all Italian cravings.

Caffeine Food and Coffee Bar has been part of the Kathu community since October 2013.

Opened by Andrea Capucci and his wife Kui, Caffeine offers up some of the best authentic Italian coffee, wine, desserts and main dishes you could ever hope for.

Decorated like an outdoor cafe with books, inspirational wall quotes, and even a porch swing, it is easy to forget that you are in Southeast Asia.

The original oven was only able to make two pizzas at a time, but the customer demand became so high for Caffeine's pizza and calzones that Mr Capucci installed an outdoor, wood-fire oven in May 2014, thus creating Capucci Pizzeria.

Main dishes ranging from salads, homemade lasagna, calzones, pizza and even paninos on wood-fired sandwich dough, make it easy to taste the authentic Italian recipes that have been passed down through generations.

The pasta is always cooked



Two things must not be missed while visiting Caffeine – the bruschetta and the tiramisu.

to the perfect al dente and any dish that includes a cream sauce is highly recommended. Alfredo is a treat, and though

it is no longer on the menu, as they change it according to the popularity of dishes, it can be made upon request. The sauce

is creamy and sometimes has a hint of nutmeg.

The calzones and pizza leave you feeling content. The

flavor of the homemade sauce and fresh ingredients, with an abundance of fresh cheese, makes this food and coffee bar a step above the rest.

One of the items that is not to be missed is the bruschetta. The quality of the olive oil is apparent and the added flavor of a little drizzle of some high quality balsamic vinegar sets it apart from any other.

It is advised not to get too full during the meal and to save room for dessert.

If the bruschetta is not to be missed, then the tiramisu is an absolute must. It is heavenly and full of flavor, without being too heavy or sweet.

And if that isn't enough incentive to visit this wonderful family-owned eatery, Caffeine is also one of very few places in Kathu that is open in the morning, offering a western style breakfast, breakfast sandwiches (some with pesto!) and that wonderful Italian coffee.

Caffeine is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 10pm and is a truly wonderful place to relax, dine, indulge and enjoy the company and conversation of good friends. It is also a place that will almost certainly leave you wanting to go back time and time again.

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

July 15-19. Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek

Now in its 12th year, Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek offers exceptional sailing on the east coast of Phuket and quality accommodation. Four nights of extravagant parties that have become famous around the Asian-yachting scene make this one of the best summer sailing regattas.

Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek 2015 has a comprehensive commercial sponsorship and partnership program that enables corporate Asia to get involved with the world of sailing. The growing popularity of sailing in Asia makes it the ideal platform for companies to increase their brand awareness. For more information, email

info@phuketraceweek.com or call 089-000 4664.

July 16. Australian Visa Information Night – Free Event

Everything to know about Australian Visas.

There has been a lot of confusion about this topic – where to get them, how, and so on.

Did you know you do not need to go to Bangkok, or to even use VFS?

Avoid the Embassy phone message run-around and poor information and get all of the latest information.

This session has been designed to answer all of your questions. 7pm to 9pm.

Peter Loughton will co-present with Thai resident and Australian lawyer Simon Wetherell.

Peter is one of Australia's most highly regarded migration agents, with almost 20 years of experience.

For more information and bookings, contact Simon by phone at 095-085 3355 or at migration@swconsulting.asia.



Join one of the best summer sailing regattas, at Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek. Photo: Gazette file

July 30. Asahna Bucha Day

This full-moon day of the eighth lunar month commemorates the Buddha's first sermon to five disciples after he attained enlightenment more than 2,500 years ago. Evening candlelight processions will be staged in all Thai Buddhist

temples throughout the island.

August 12. HM The Queen's Birthday

HM Queen Sirikit's Birthday is also marked as Mother's Day in Thailand, with festivities taking place throughout the country.

October 23. Chulalongkorn Memorial Day

Chulalongkorn Day commemorates the reign of Rama V, who is best remembered for introducing many progressive reforms, including political and military, and for the abolition of slavery.

Haunted by silence of the leaves

Keep It Green
By Patrick Campbell

ANYONE who travels around Phuket will have witnessed the infiltration of the oil palm as the area devoted to this species has increased three-fold since 2000.

Moreover, it is the avowed aim of the government to add 400,000 rai of oil palm plantations every year to our island landscape. By 2028, the authorities anticipate that 10 million rai of these man-made forests will dominate the scenery of Southern Thailand.

To a significant extent, the oil palm will replace the para rubber tree, another monoculture crop, since the profits that accrue from its oil are both more substantial and less subject to wild fluctuations than those made from cultivating *hevea brasiliensis*.

Why and wherefore? Well, we all know that the world, at least until the recent rash of fracking, was paranoid about the fast-depleting resources of fossil fuel and especially petroleum. How much longer could



Of the total land area in Phuket, about 100,000 rai is made up of rubber plantations. Photo: Jeremie Schatz

we drill and delve into the earth before the supply of this precious stuff petered out?

Alternatives such as palm oil were at hand. Converted into bio-diesel, they offered, and still offer, a viable and supposedly more environmentally friendly alternative to the products of drilling and mining.

But there are considerable ecological downsides. The increase of palm plantations – a three-fold increase in 15 years across Southern Thailand and

especially Phang Nga – has inevitably meant the depletion of lowland rainforest.

While proponents of this initiative will point to the palm's propensity to act as a carbon sink and absorb large quantities of CO₂, as well as limiting soil erosion, it has meant the demolition of virgin forest, profound damage to the environment, and loss of biodiversity.

There are perceived ways of mitigating the damage. One study has suggested that super-

markets could place a price premium on items with palm oil ingredients, provided the funds raised went to conservation.

Other suggestions include cultivating oil palms only on land formerly used for other crops, such as rubber or rice, or preserving jungle habitats by locating plantations well away from existing rainforest.

Hevea brasiliensis does not have quite such a bad track record as *elaeis guineensis*. True, in Phuket at least, it is far

more visible where unbroken avenues of rubber trees stretch away from every roadside. They comprise a staggering 84 per cent of the existing woodland; aboriginal evergreen forest accounts for a mere 7 per cent. Of the total land area of Phuket, more than 100,000 rai is rubber plantation.

Because these trees have been a palpable presence in Phuket for so long, we tend to forget that their cultivation muscled out both virgin forest and its wildlife, or that they possess the disadvantage of providing a sterile environment for mammals and birds. And because they attract pests such as scale insects, they require massive doses of pesticide as well as chemical fertilizer to keep them healthy.

Ever walked through a gloomy rubber grove? It is eerily silent.

Dr. Patrick Campbell has written more than 300 gardening columns for the Phuket Gazette. In the newspaper's revised format, he will still contribute one monthly piece on gardening and another on environmental issues.

Governor pushes forward green plan on Koh Racha

PHUKET officials moved to ensure the environmental sustainability and the growth of the tourism industry on Racha Island with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local hotels and restaurants on July 4.

Governor Nisit Jansomwong signed the MoU on proper wastewater and trash disposal during his visit to the island, while also underscoring that all segments, including the official arms, have to unite in order to prevent environmental degradation.

As agreed upon in the MoU, all boats and businesses on Koh Racha Yai are now forbidden from dumping trash into the sea. Trash must be effectively sorted out according to type before being brought to Rawai to be properly disposed of.

The handling of wastewater was front and center as part of the MoU following a resolution by the Cabinet.

"Our move to resolve wastewater problems on Koh Racha follows a Cabinet resolution

that demanded a quick solution. We have appointed officials to work on this issue in a sustainable way in order to maintain the beauty of Koh Racha," said Governor Nisit.

"I want everyone to join in solving this problem, rather than it merely being a law enforcement issue. I believe that environmental issues cannot be solved by issuing laws alone, because it depends on people's love for nature."

The guidelines agreed to be adhered to by those who signed the MoU include having pumps placed in canals as an immediate solution to the rank water build up. There will also be a survey of the sewage system and all restaurants will have grease traps installed.

Additionally, the Natural Resources and Environment Phuket Office was ordered to advise entrepreneurs on wastewater management to ensure the problem doesn't continue.

"This way Koh Racha will be beautiful forever," said Gov Nisit.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Economic benefits of regattas



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

SAILING: the sport of Kings. Or is that Polo?

This famous resort island is challenging that old perception...at least the sailing one anyway.

Purchasing a boat can be pricey, sure, but you do not have to be a boat owner to enjoy sailing. There are plenty of chances for residents and visitors to enjoy sailing in Phuket.

The same goes for racing. The Ao Chalong Yacht Club runs a regular racing program and most boats are looking for crew, so pop down to the club and get involved.

On the youth front there are also options. In addition to the ACYC, the Phuket Youth Sailing Club has picked up trophies and plaudits for their sailing success, but if you are a beginner, do not let that put you off as they also offer learn-to-sail programs.

As Phuket stands proud against the notion that you need to be wealthy to sail, the island has for many years also hosted some of the best regattas in the region with three of the biggest and longest established being the Phuket King's Cup Regatta (launched in 1987), Bay Regatta (launched in 1998) and Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek (launched in 2004).

Often perceived as an expensive niche sport, regattas attract people from all walks of life, and whether a regatta is committee-



Regattas have been mainstays of Thailand's marine and sports tourism for decades.

run, club-run, privately-owned or commercially-driven, they all have two things in common: They are open to all and they bring in significant local revenue.

With much recent fanfare about a soon-to-be-introduced superyacht charter licence and talk by national government of making Phuket (and ultimately Thailand) the marine hub of ASEAN, regattas are often overlooked.

Yet regattas have been mainstays of Thailand's marine tourism and sports tourism industry for decades, generating money for the island's economy and raising the profile of Thailand as a

leading sailing destination comparable with the best in the world.

Speaking at a press conference earlier this year in Bangkok, Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Minister of Tourism and Sports, said: "Sports tourism is an area in which we see a lot of growth potential for the country. Marine events attract high-spending tourists, many of whom are repeat tourists coming back to Thailand throughout the year."

Attracting anywhere between 300 and 2,000 sailors and friends to a destination for a week or longer, this is valuable revenue stream for a local economy in the form of spending on accommo-

dation, food and entertainment.

At the same press conference, Ms Kobkarn also noted that Thailand's regattas generate approximately 500 million baht per year for the national economy.

An impressive figure and one some may wish to debate. Another time, perhaps, but talking with local regatta organizers, the message is one of local economic benefit.

"Phuket Raceweek has grown from being primarily a local regatta 12 years ago to a truly international regatta with more than 70 per cent of the crew flying in to Phuket to compete.

"Hosted by Cape Panwa Hotel, Phuket, you can see the

benefits to the entire Panwa area during the regatta with sailors spending in bars and restaurants and booking rooms at nearby hotels.

"This is money spent directly into the local economy that would not be spent in that area, at that time of the year or otherwise," said Byron Jones, Managing Director of Phuket Raceweek organizers Media Business Services Co Ltd.

"The Bay Regatta is a multi-base regatta that attracts more than 15 nationalities of sailors. We move from Phuket to Phang Nga to Krabi and then finish back in Phuket.

"Logistically it is complicated and expensive and along the way sailors are spending as are we, the organizers, by putting on nightly parties for the participants," said Simon James of Regattas Asia, owners of the Bay Regatta and Samui Regatta.

While government officials are hogging the headlines with the words 'superyacht' and 'marine hub', perhaps regattas should be given some of the limelight too. In a country where tourism is a key economic driver, it is surprising regattas do not at least get the credit they deserve.

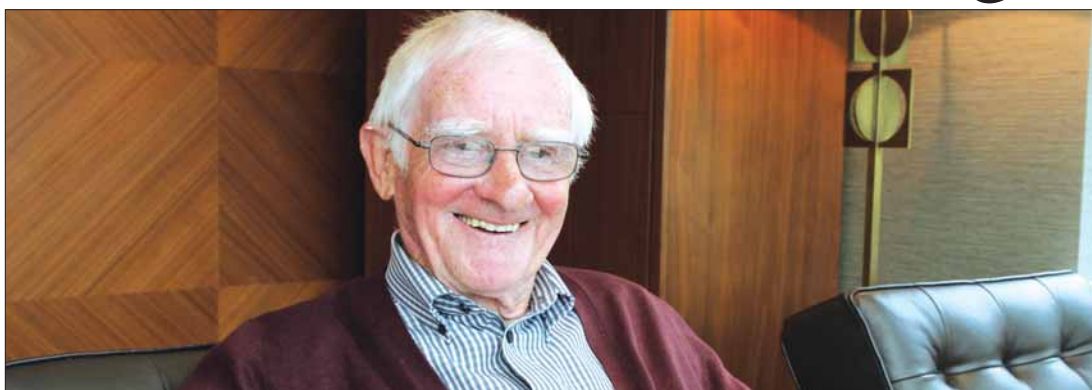
Duncan Worthington is a long time Phuket resident and through Infinity Communications (www.infinity-comms.com) consults to leading consumer brands, hospitality and marine clients in Thailand. In his 'spare time' he runs the marine portal www.MarineScene.asia. #OnDeckPhuket

Princess Yachts welcomes back original experts

PRINCESS Yachts International Plc have welcomed back some of the original experts behind Project 31, the model which launched the company in 1965, to share their insights, memories and to guide the unique restoration of Project 31@50.

Colin Grills was among the first employees at Princess Yachts, then known as Marine Projects. His initial reservations about working with fiberglass hulls, having been apprenticed in building traditional wooden boats, soon changed upon joining the company.

"I could see there was a future in it. We could not build the Project 31 boats fast enough. As soon as you had built one there was someone at the door waiting to buy it," said Mr Grills.



Peter Moore joined Princess Yachts in the late 1960s and enjoyed a career that spanned more than 30 years.

He progressed to management early in his career and remained with the company until his retirement at age 60.

Peter Moore joined Princess Yachts in the late 1960s building Project 31s and went on to enjoy a career that spanned more

than 30 years, before retiring.

"There was a lot of laughter, but getting the job done was the most important thing. Everyone all mucked in together," Mr Moore recalls.

The Project 31@50 team are carefully restoring the icon

of Princess' history to return her to her former glory, while incorporating some of the advancements of modern shipbuilding to uplift her for today.

Mr Grills and Mr Moore, along with former colleagues Dave Cotter, Eddie Rawle and

RP Kerslake, have returned to the shipyard to share their knowledge with the team.

The unique restoration of Princess Yachts' original model is bringing together individuals at all stages of their careers.

Princess Yachts offer apprenticeships in engineering, carpentry/boat building, development and fabricating and welding in partnership with the City College Plymouth. Princess work closely with the College to support the training and employment of young people in the marine sector.

Project 31@50 will be unveiled at the Cannes Yachting Festival, September 8-13.

- *Phuket Gazette*

Rocked by Thai-style justice

On Your Mind

By Patrick Mattimore

IN THE 1980s, when I was working as a prosecutor in California, victims would occasionally contact our office and tell the deputy district attorney handling their case that they did not want to 'press charges.' Sometimes, the arresting officer's crime report would indicate that the victim was reluctant to press charges. In those cases, we knew in advance that we had a problematic witness.

When we spoke to the victims, we explained that while we were interested in any information they could provide us, including their reluctance to proceed, the decision on whether or not to press charges was ours, not theirs.

There were, of course, any number of reasons why the victims might not want charges pressed: victims might fear the perpetrator or be economically dependent upon that person; they may have initially exaggerated or lied to police about what had happened; and some people had prior negative experiences with the justice system and did not want to get involved. The list goes on.

But, the ultimate charging decision in jurisdictions



In US criminal proceedings, the weight of the state can be brought against defendants. Photo: Michael Coghlan

throughout the US rests with the various district attorney's (prosecutor's) offices, not the victim. The cases are delineated as 'People versus (name of defendant)', indicating that the prosecution of crimes is unlike civil matters, which are normally waged between private parties.

In criminal proceedings, the weight of the state is brought against defendants and the state's interest in justice is greater than individual victims. There is a sense that justice is being served for all people.

In theory, and normally in

practice, taking the decision on pressing charges out of victims' hands ensures that rich defendants would not be able to buy their way out of trouble by negotiating settlements with victims. Attempts to bribe victims not to testify constitute the crime of witness tampering.

After living in China for three years, and now in Thailand for nearly the same period, I have become aware that compared to US, the justice system operates very differently in Asia. In China, for example, there seems to be two classes of crimes, with one being

crimes which are perpetrated against specific persons and the other, more generally, being crimes against society.

Examples of the latter would be the manufacture of tainted milk products, or officials taking bribes. Those crimes are prosecuted by the state and guilty verdicts are nearly always predetermined.

But garden variety crimes, such as drunk driving causing injury, and even murder, are often handled extra-judicially. Perpetrators arrange payoffs to victims, or their families, and thereby avoid prosecution.

In Phuket we recently had an example of Thai-style justice, although I admit to not having inside knowledge of the details of the case and am relying only on what has been reported so far by the media.

Police have dropped the case against an Australian expat who fatally stabbed a nightclub employee in Patong.

A public prosecutor will review the case, but I am guessing it is unlikely the police's decision will be reversed. Police said they made the decision after reviewing video footage which backed the man's claims that he acted in self-defense. So far, so good. Self-defense constitutes a legitimate defense to murder charges, assuming the force used was reasonable to repel the attack.

The kicker is that the island media have also reported that there was a settlement between the parties. What that means is that the expat has agreed to pay the victim's family an undisclosed amount of money. That puts in question any of the supposed exonerating evidence.

I have lost a lot of my Western sensibility living in the East, but cannot quite wrap my hands around the concept of a justice system that operates like a Monopoly pay-to-get-out-of-jail board game.

Em District 3D-mapping project

BANGKOK'S new Em District, comprising the revamped Emporium, the newly opened EmQuartier, and the soon-to-come EmSphere, wants to know how you feel. In fact, the District is so keen on finding out that it's just invested 150 million baht in a storytelling experience through 3D mapping that will project peoples' stories on a 4,500-square-meter space on the facades of both shopping malls.

Winai Chairakpong, a consultant to The Mall Group, which operates the Em District, explains that the aim is to find out consumers' points of view and experiences by engaging residents and workers in the Sukhumvit area to share their stories and feelings in a shoot-and-share show on Instagram. There are three tags that can be used: #ifeel, #wheneveryoufeel and @TheEmDistrictPeople.

After posting their pictures, posters can then select the ones



Project your feelings on the walls of Em District. Photo: The Nation

they'd like projected at The Em District.

This project, initiated by Busarakum Chansue, senior vice president, is about district people.

"We have designed permanent mapping using advanced techniques from Singapore and Canada. The pictures can be selfies, instagram shots or even taken at a photo booth. The overall experience of shopping mall is no longer just inside the mall anymore but is part of the

city, of the district. Get off the Skytrain and you can already feel the fun and creative ambience. If you are not too busy, you can stop at the station and simply enjoy," says group executive Mr Busarakum.

Salawit Supiporn, assistant general manager for marketing, adds that there will also be surprises from celebrities and leading Thai photographers every Saturday through July 18.

- The Nation

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Tread carefully in budget condo market

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

REGARDLESS of whether the Thai Gross Domestic Product expands at the lower target of 3 to 3.8 per cent, as earlier expected this year, it would not help the Phuket budget condominium market, or that of other major provincial cities', as they have already been impacted, Phanom Kanjanathiemthao, managing director of Knight Frank Chartered Company, said in an exclusive interview with the *Gazette*.

One segment that is still looking somewhat vibrant is the development of single houses and townhouses, but the total volume is far lower than the condominium market.

"This is an option for developers, as they still have room to play, but other segments have definitely been impacted. I believe this is because buyers in the mid to low-end range have been hit by the weakening economy," Mr Phanom said.

Developments in Pattaya

are among those suffering because key buyers, the Russians, have disappeared, while in Hua Hin there is usually more supply than demand can absorb annually.

"Samui can still move along... but I have heard many people say that one has to be very careful about Chiang Mai's condo market," Mr Phanom explained.

Currently, Phuket is quite exhausted in the budget and city condominium segment, with projects already built costing from 2 to 5 million baht

because of poor sales or large amounts of vacant units in still developing projects.

"Phuket's city condos are something which everyone has to be cautious about – more so than normal. At this point, we are actually recommending that such projects not be launched," Mr Phanom said.

However, he pointed out the bright side.

"As far as we can see, condos along Patong, Kata, Karon, Kamala and Surin beaches in the 3



Currently, Phuket is quite exhausted in the budget and city condominium segment. Photo: Jeff Gunn



Phanom Kanjanathiemthao, managing director of Knight Frank Chartered Company.

to 7 million baht price range are still moving."

The top-notch premium villa segment is flying above the economic malaise. The reason being that there are not that many types of projects on the island, and each comprises only 10 to 15 pool villas.

"Among the projects launched over the last two to three years is Andara Signature, and this is doing well. As far as we can see, this segment is not something to worry about because it is a tight niche and to put it bluntly – only wealthy millionaires are buying these

villas," Mr Phanom stated.

Regardless of international crises, particularly the feared exit of Greece from the Eurozone, this group of moneyed buyers will continue purchasing posh villas here if they so want to.

Although it's feared that the Greece debt crisis will affect tourism, Mr Phanom pointed out that the link between tourism and the premium villa segment is quite flimsy, but certainly more tourists do improve the chances of selling more villas.

"Any widespread repercussions of the crisis in Greece would have some effect on

Phuket, but actually those buying mid-range condos on the island come from across the world," Mr Phanom reassured.

Even as the Russians have disappeared because of the weaker ruble people from the Eurozone and Scandinavia have been buying property here. There are also other key, healthy markets including Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and other Asian countries.

"The Chinese market may continue to grow, so the overall picture is that Asian markets are still on the move," Mr Phanom said.

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Designing creative domiciles



Across the Land

By Amy Koh

IT IS interesting every year to see the new season's designer-wear on the runways of Milan, New York, London and other haute couture centers. Creative designers show off their very latest fashions to the world on those runways and instantaneously these new designs are considered the hottest fashion trends.

Designing clothes is of course very different from designing a house because the former is nearly always a designer's dream design, but when it comes to the latter an architect's design has to match current market demand and what will actually sell.

These factors are important to developers because many skills and abilities are required to be successful, with probably the most important being the ability to ascertain what buyers are looking for and produce the right product.

Traditional Thai pavilion villas with pitched roofs were all the rage a couple of years ago and many developers who designed this type of residence to meet the strong demand were very successful.

However, over time, demand for pavilion villas started waver-



There's been an increased demand for modern homes with flat roofs and glass windows. Photo: Alex Liivet

ing to be replaced by a more modern and practical design.

As Phuket has a months-long rainy season, pavilion villas are actually not very practical because these pavilions could separate young children

from their parents. It is also not much fun getting up in the middle of the night and walking through the garden to check on the children.

There has been an increased demand for modern design

houses with flat roofs, glass windows, panels and doors, steel beams and bright colors, with all these elements being a clear shift away from the traditional wood designs synonymous with Thai architecture.

'Less is more' – the very famous phrase of minimalists – is reducing design to the most essential elements. This seems to be the trend now and is what buyers are looking for. Gone is the traditional classic design and in is modern design. This is not just for home-buyers below 40 years of age, but seems to also apply to clients in the 40-60 age bracket.

However, very few new villa projects launched in Phuket last year offered modern design, so there are very few properties that fit the 'modern design' ticket.

Clearly, Phuket's developers should be more innovative and should try to fill the demand gap for such properties. We hope that developers will follow the creative route and design modern-looking and functional homes. The demand for such homes is in the northwest of the island and we see that it will only increase in the foreseeable future.

In fact the cost of building a modern villa is lower than building a traditional Thai pitched-roof villa. It is also a lot faster to build a modern villa than a traditional classic villa, and developers can also benefit from this.

Amy Koh is the sales manager of Engel & Voelkers Phuket. To contact Amy or for more information, visit www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket

Thai Property stake to help Property Perfect

PROPERTY Perfect is confident that both its presales and revenue will hit 20 billion baht this year thanks to its acquisition of a major stake in Thai Property, which gives it a 40-per-cent stake in Grand Asset Hotels and Property.

Property Perfect chief executive officer Chainid Adhyanasakul said 16bn baht of its presales would be from its residential sales, and 4bn baht from Grand Asset. Up to 18bn baht of its total revenue will be from the sale of homes and transfers to customers, and 2bn baht from recurring income from its own hotel in Japan and from the Sheraton Grand Hua Hin, which is owned by Grand Asset.

Property Perfect recorded presales worth 6bn baht in the first half of this year.

The company plans to launch 12 more residential projects this year worth 15bn baht, after launching eight in the first half. Total value of this year's 20



Chainid Adhyanasakul of Property Perfect (left) and Somchai Lertsutiwong of AIS. Photo: The Nation

launches will be 25bn baht.

The company announced a partnership with Advanced Info Service to provide its AIS Fibre broadband service to all of Property Perfect's residential projects.

"This will add value for our homes at a time when people are moving into a digital lifestyle," Mr Chainid said.

The AIS Fibre system will be provided to the company's 43 residential projects including condominiums, detached houses and townhouses, for 6,000 units in nationwide. The system will

also be installed in its projects launched into next year.


AIS chief executive officer Somchai Lertsutiwong said this collaboration would help his company achieve its goal of serving 10 million residences within five years.

"Besides Property Perfect, we have been negotiating with other property firms to provide the AIS Fibre system to their residential projects. Property Perfect is the first company to join us," Mr Somchai said.


Mr Chainid said the inclusion of AIS Fibre broadband in its homes did not increase their prices, but the purpose was to add value for the property firm's customers.

He said the overall property market in the second half of this year looked like it was recovering thanks to the government's spending to boost the economy. This would especially affect demand for homes costing more than 5mn baht.


– The Nation




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Building body, life to inspire

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

IT IS hard to imagine Lance Armstrong, Floyd Mayweather, Serena Williams or even Arnold Schwarzenegger having to worry about their makeup ahead of a sporting event for performance reasons. However, that is exactly what single mother of two, 2012 World Bodybuilding and Physique Federation (WBPF) champion and published author Wilaiporn Wannaklang is having to battle with: eyeliner and blush.

Wilaiporn, now based in Phuket, turned 40 this year, and after having reached the pinnacle of the world of bodybuilding, she slid down to second place in 2013 and remained there in 2014.

“Just look at the muscles, it’s very hard for a woman to get her gluteal muscles to take that form,” Wilaiporn says as she shows a picture of the final three competitors in the 2014 competition. “But I didn’t win. They gave it to her [she points]. The judges didn’t think I was ‘feminine’ enough in my looks.”

Wilaiporn was beside herself.

“It’s not right. I compete in

bodybuilding, not a beauty contest. The judge should be looking at our physiques,” Wilaiporn says. “But, whatever, I have started to learn about the political side of the sport. So I’ve had to start thinking about my makeup: more eyeliner, brighter colors – these things.”

Wilaiporn is also branching out with her bikini, and trying to get brighter colors that will catch the eye and perhaps ‘soften’ the extraordinary muscle definition she has created through years of dedicated dieting and training.

It’s crazy to think of Wilaiporn focusing on these flourishes – however unsavory it might be that in the female divisions of the sport of bodybuilding they are factors that can sway judges – because about eight years ago she didn’t know what a gym was and had never even worn in a bikini.

“My husband died, and I was thinking I had to take care of myself. I didn’t want to get sick – I had two daughters to take care of,” Wilaiporn says. “I

started with aerobic dance, but I had hyperthyroid, so I would start getting tired in five

felt like my legs were going to break – they were swollen, but I felt great. I felt like a hero; my body full of pain, but good somehow.”

Wilaiporn was hooked. One of the guys at the gym continued to show her the ropes and her muscles began to define. The idea of competing in the Thai National Games was floated, and with the same attitude that got her started, Wilaiporn



thought, ‘Why not?’

With such a grab the bulls by the horns approach to life, it should be no surprise that there is a literary side to Wilaiporn. After taking the 2012 WBPF title and then losing it in 2013, she began to write her extraordinary auto-biography.

Wilaiporn confirmed the book, in Thai only, would eventually be translated to English.



Photo: Adriano Trapani
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