

Phuket Gazette

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Now inside THE NATION every Saturday

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■ 'KRATOM SMUGGLING HAS INCREASED 39 FOLD'

Kratom culture



A group of kratom users busted in Phuket while creating their own home brew with the leaves from the tree, which is native to Thailand.

Traditional Thai medicine now built into illegal cocktail

By Kongleaphy Keam

The arrest of a low-ranking Royal Thai Navy officer for smuggling a large shipment of kratom, *Mitragyna speciosa*, into Phuket's primary party town of Patong this week is only a flake on the epidermis of a complicated political and cultural battle against the illegal drug.

The use of the substance in a number of wild concoctions has infiltrated many teen

social groups, leading to high levels of consumption – more than an estimated 1.2mn since 2011 – which in turn results in almost weekly arrests in Phuket, said Director of the Narcotics Control Board (NCB) Sithisak Kallyanapradit.

To meet consumer demand, dealers have to look beyond Thailand for supply. Regular raids throughout the country, which include chopping down kratom trees, have led to a ramped up trade across the Malaysian border, one user who lives in the Thai-border province of Narathiwat explained.

"From 2008 to 2012, the number of suspects arrested for illegally importing kratom from Malaysia increased by 39 times, especially in Songkhla, Yala and

Narathiwat provinces," Mr Sithisak said.

"In 2012, the price for kratom in Malaysia was about 200 baht per kilogram. However, after being smuggled into the southern provinces of Thailand it becomes worth 600-1,200 baht per kilogram."

Despite kratom trees being native to Southeast Asia, their leaves have been designated a controlled substance, in the same category as cannabis, since promulgation of the Kratom Act in 1943.

"It is fairly well established that the Kratom Act was put in place due to the government losing money from the taxation of opium. Local preference had moved toward kratom, hurting the opium..."

Continued on Pages 4-5

B170k reward offered for missing diver

POLICE have yet to rule out foul play as the family of an American diver who vanished from a liveaboard boat in April offers a 170,000-baht reward for information that will lead to the discovery of his whereabouts.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



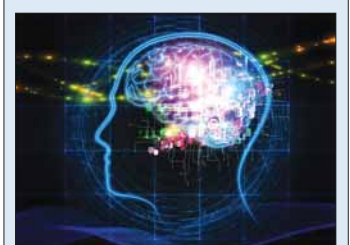
Dermatology stakes claim in island's medical-tourism industry.

PROPERTY



It's not as easy to invest billions in Phuket hotels, resorts as it might seem.

LIFE&STYLE



Spinning your wheels can have real brain-boosting benefits, says study.





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ISAT

Five teens hit by recklessly driven van

FIVE teenagers on two motorbikes were injured after a van driver lost control of his vehicle on wet roads and crashed into the adolescents on July 13.

“Teerapong Boonteng, 24, passed over the median and struck the teens who were on their motorbikes,” said Maj Santi Prakobpran of the Tah Chat Chai Police.

Mr Teerapong was charged with reckless driving causing injury and the van was taken to Tah Chat Chai Police Station.

– *Thawit Bilabdullar*

Money raised for Kiwi in bike accident

THE friends and family of 28-year-old New Zealander Paul ‘PJ’ Lupi, who was seriously injured in an accident on Patong Hill, have received more than NZ\$150,000 from generous helpers willing to fund Mr Lupi’s fight back to health.

Mr Lupi was driving over the hill at about 12:30am on July 6 when he fell off his motorbike and sustained serious head injuries, said Phuket Provincial Health Office Chief Kajohnsak Kaewjarus.

“Mr Lupi was unconscious from his head injury when he was transferred from Patong Hospital to Vachira Phuket Hospital for more specialized treatment,” Dr Kajohnsak said.

“He was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit [ICU] there, but only for one day. He was transferred to Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok on July 7.”

Mr Lupi’s friends and family had put out the call for help

Media flock to trial of news blog PhuketWan



The trial of Alan Morison and Chutima Sidasathian of PhuketWan took place this week. The suspects, as well as Big Island Media, faced charges of criminal defamation and violations of the Computer Crimes Act. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

through the New Zealand-based crowdfunding website, Givealittle, under the title “Paul (PJ) Needs Your Help”, and the money was raised in two days.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Statutory rape fugitive caught

A STATUTORY rape fugitive was arrested after Thalang Police went to investigate an assault at his home on July 11.

Trirong Dejpongtha, 24, was arrested after hitting his stepfather, Veera Bunnarak, 56, multiple times in the head with a brick, Lt Preecha Rakjan of

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

the Thalang Police confirmed.

After Mr Trirong’s arrest, police found that he was wanted in Chalong for a statutory rape case in 2014.

“Mr Trirong was charged with having sexual encounters with a child under the age of 15 last year. We have contacted the Chalong Police Station, so that they can continue with the case,” Lt Preecha said.

– *Thawit Bilabdullar*

Bungy-jump firm quiet on compensation

WORLD Bungy Jump in Patong has declined to confirm rumors that it has offered the family of a Kuwaiti tourist, who recently plunged to his death during a jump, compensation of up to 300,000 baht.

The company’s representative Kullanan Samnuk revealed that negotiations are being held with the family of the victim, 25-year-old Abdullah Adel Kadhmbadman.

“We will ask police how the compensation news spread, as we didn’t mention it.”

– *Thanaphon Phromthong*

Police arrest ladyboy for pickpocketing

POLICE promptly arrested a ‘friendly’ ladyboy after she picked the pocket of an Indian tourist in Patong on July 12.

“Montree Srichantra, 24, had gone up to Amit Mahendra Shah, 34, and given him a big hug, pretending to greet him. However, she had swiped his wallet,” Lt Col Suthichai Thianpho of the Patong Police said. “Mr Shah immediately noticed and started calling after her; that’s when a Patong Police patrol happened to be driving past.”

The officers approached Ms Montree and discovered the wallet. Inside it was 5,190-baht in cash and a number of cards belonging to Mr Shah.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Drugs lead to wild bird find

A RAID on a local kratom dealer

in Thalang uncaged a number of wild birds as police mounted a series of busts in an effort to combat drugs in the district.

Officers arrested Chabaprai Kamnamjan, 44, after she was caught selling kratom in a sting operation.

Ms Chabaprai was charged with possession of a Category 5 drug with intent to sell.

“During the raid, we noticed that Ms Chabaprai’s neighbor had an unusual number of caged birds,” Thalang District Chief Veera Kerdsirimongkol said.

The suspect, Piyapan Saenpan, 25, was found with 25 wild birds and three bird traps.

He was charged with hunting wild animals and protected species, and the illegal possession of protected wild animals, Mr Veera said.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Local fishers scramble to become legal

THE flood gates opened this month as hundreds of employers and migrant workers in the fishing industry queued up at the newly-opened one-stop service center designed to get fishing boats and their crews legal.

“This is a very good time to get everything sorted out properly, as fishing boats are unable to go out during the rough weather anyway,” said Capt Preecha Tuntiruk of the Third Naval Area Command, who heads Phuket’s Port In-Port Out Center (PIPO).

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Tight-lipped killer out on B500k bail

A SECOND man wanted for the murder of a SuperCheap store manager turned himself in to Phuket City Police on July 8.

Nattapong Thongsirthong, 24, arrived at the station with his lawyer after a warrant for his arrest was issued.

“Mr Nattapong refused to answer any of our questions, saying that he would make his statements in front of the judge,” Col Sien Kaewthong of the Phuket City Police said.

“He was charged for the murder and for bringing a weapon into a public place.”

Mr Nattapong was released on a 500,000-baht bail.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

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Police consider foul play, reward offered for diver

By Kongleaphy Keam

POLICE have yet to rule out foul play as the family of an American scuba diver who vanished from a Similans-bound, liveaboard boat in April offers a 170,000-baht reward for any information that will lead to the discovery of his whereabouts.

Joshua Michael Devine, 36, a civilian IT operative working at a United States military base in Kuwait, was on the CRP Transport diving trip with his Thai wife, Ms Thadsana, and 22 other divers, when he went missing from the boat in April.

Despite days of nautical and aerial searches following his disappearance, no signs of Mr Devine were discovered.

The circumstances surrounding Mr Devine's disappearance led his sister, Jennifer Bakowski, to believe that there was something suspicious about the situation.

"He's been in war zones since he was 18, and goes miss-



Jennifer Bakowski, Mr Devine's sister, on the search for her brother.

ing while on a diving trip. It just doesn't equate," Ms Bakowski told FoxCT.

"We don't want to put anyone else in danger by coming forward, but we need to bring

him home. We need closure to this."

Lt Thanapop Rattanaburi of the Chergng Talay Police – who were put in charge of the missing person case – confirmed

that the file has yet to be closed.

"The family has the right to post a reward like this, and we are grateful for any help they can give us," Lt Thanapop said.

"I know they are upset with the lack of results, but we've not closed the case yet.

"We cannot say whether this was an accident or a crime, as we have yet to find him. At the moment we are considering it a missing person case."

Lt Thanapop pointed out that all the witnesses on the boat that police questioned had supplied roughly the same theory: he was drunk and may have fallen off the boat.

"The boat was big, and the sound of the engine would have been louder than a person falling into the water," Lt Thanapop said.

"During our questioning, we did not ascertain any information that led us to believe foul play was involved. However, we have not ruled it out."

Meth smuggler packs private part with drugs

A WOMAN was arrested in Phang Nga following the discovery of 760 pills of *ya bah* (methamphetamine) hidden inside her vagina.

"The pills were packed into three plastic bags before being put into two condoms and inserted into the suspect's vagina," said Takua Pa Police Deputy Superintendent Worawit Yamaree.

The 33-year-old Laos national named by police as 'Ms Vene', was in the midst of transporting the drugs on a bus from Bangkok when she was arrested.

"Ms Vene showed us her luggage and said she didn't have any drugs. However, we conducted a full-body cavity search and discovered the package in her vagina," said Lt Col Worawit.

Police confiscated the packed condoms, her mobile phone, a tablet, 1,120 baht in cash and the rest of her belongings.

Ms Vene was charged with possession of a Category 1 drug with intent to sell.

– **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

Body of missing crew believed found

MARINE Police are working to identify a body they believe is the sixth and final member of a crew from the barge which sank in heavy seas between Koh Racha Yai and Koh Phi Phi on July 7.

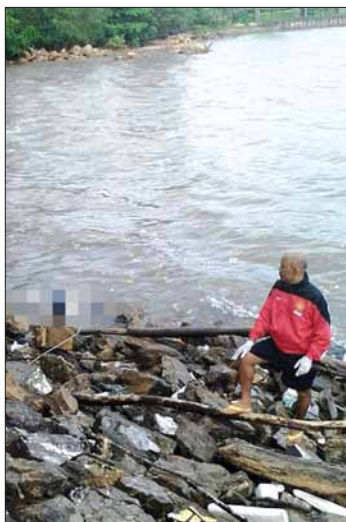
The 30-meter barge *Sintu Phuket 1* was transporting construction materials and a backhoe from Ao Makhom to Koh Racha Yai when it sank in rough seas at about 3:55am, leaving the six crew missing.

The body was discovered in Trang on Monday, the same province in which the body of the barge's captain was discovered on July 11.

"It looks like the person died about five days ago. There was no sign of a struggle," explained Lt Col Panya Chaichana, chief of the Phuket Marine Police.

Police called representatives from the company that own the boat to come and see the body, but they were unable to positively identify it.

"We are trying to contact someone on Koh Racha Yai who might be able to identify the body, as the crew are based there," said Col Panya.



The body was found in Trang on Monday. Photo: Phuket Marine Police

The first of the crew found were three men rescued by locals, from the sea off Koh Lanta on July 8 and 9.

"Locals first spotted Nathee Klabjit, 23, who was floating in the sea, holding onto a gas tank near Klong Kong Beach at about 6:30pm [on July 8]," said Krabi Marine Police Chief Anurak Parinyasathiragul.

"[On July 9], two more crew were found at about 5:30am floating in the sea in the same area off Klong Kong Beach.

These two men had been holding onto logs," said Col Anurak. "They were rescued by a *Phu Yai Baan* [village head] in the Saladan subdistrict of Koh Lanta."

The two men rescued on July 9 are Myanmar nationals, named 'Ngae' and 'Lu-a', said Col Anurak.

On July 10, a fourth survivor was found by locals on Koh Ngai, southeast of Phuket.

Myanmar national Thar Hliang, 46, was brought to the island on board a transport ship for Koh Ngai Villa after the crew saw him floating in the water, said Col Anurak.

The next day, the barge captain was found dead by local fishermen in Trang.

The heavily tattooed body of Visanu Thongbai, 50, was taken to Prince of Songkla Hospital in Trang and then transported to Phuket for a funeral ceremony.

A number of tattoos, including a tiger's head, a scorpion and a skull and crossbones were enough for next of kin to confirm the body as that of Mr Visanu. – **Kongleaphy Keam**



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Letter against Nemo Dolphinarium handed over to tourism minister

ON BEHALF of business owners and Phuket residents, a twelve-point opposition letter against the Nemo Dolphinarium was handed to Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul in Bangkok on Monday.

"In the paper 'Case of Opposition Against Phuket Dolphinarium' I've tried to get rid of all of the emotional stuff and just focus on facts and laws and regulations and legislators, as well as pick the key points from the TAT 2016 marketing strategy that it [the dolphinarium] completely contradicts on so many different levels," Natasha Eldred, managing director of travel marketing company Shine PR, told the *Gazette* after handing over the letter and supporting paper.

Joining Ms Eldred in representing those concerned in Phuket were Dale Lawrence, president of SKAL (International Association of Travel and



From Left: Dale Lawrence, president Skal International Thailand; Natasha Eldred, managing director of Shine PR; Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Minister of Tourism and Sports; John Gray, founder of John Gray Sea Canoe; and Nick Laidlaw, director of communications at Freeland Foundation in Bangkok.

Tourism Professionals) International Thailand; John Gray, founder of John Gray Sea Canoe; and Nick Laidlaw, director of communications at Freeland Foundation.

The target markets outlined by the TAT do not fall in line with the types of tourists a dolphinarium would attract, the supporting paper explained.

The most recent push to pre-

vent the dolphinarium from opening garnered the support of SKAL Thailand; Ric O'Barry's Dolphin Project; Phuket PR Network; and Phuket Hotel Association, as well as numerous local residents, students and business owners.

As of Wednesday, Ms Kobkarn was not available for comment about the letter.

— Isaac Stone Simonelli

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Brewing

From Page 1

...market," explained Surphon Patharapagorn, director of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board Division 9.

"Although many present-day users believe that use of the drug originated in the Deep South of Thailand, in fact it has been used as a traditional medicine and been part of our culture throughout Thailand since ancient times," Mr Surphon said.

Part of the association between the South and *kratom* use is derived from religious misunderstandings in the predominantly Muslim part of Thailand.

"I personally believe that the starting point for *kratom* use was in the Deep South, especially with Muslims, who thought that *kratom* was not alcohol, and therefore was not against their religion to consume," one *kratom* user told the *Gazette*.

Dr Phiangbunpa Natithamkul, a psychologist specializing in drug addiction at Vachira Phuket Hospital, agreed that a number of Muslim teenagers feel less guilty about drinking *kratom* drinks than alcohol. However, the holy scripture is more sweeping in its ban.

"*Kratom* is forbidden by our religion," Piyadet Chuachalard, secretary of the Phuket Islamic Committee, said. "It is clearly stated in the Quran that all drugs and substances that make you 'drunk' are forbidden, not just alcohol."

4X100

The creation of *kratom*-based brews first known as '4x100' and later upgraded to more complex drinks known as '8x100' – which uses *longkong* leaves, meth and number of other ingredients – are thought to have been developed by teenagers in the South, who were struggling with living in the terrorism-torn region. They also turned to cough syrup containing codeine, which was part

of the more 'traditional drink'.

"With the strict control of cough syrup containing codeine starting in 2003, teenagers got creative and invented 4x100, which uses *kratom* juice, normal cough syrup and coke. To this, some other ingredients, such as mosquito spray, are then added," explained Dr Phiangbunpa.

Users themselves, who all declined to be named, told the *Gazette* that the powder from inside fluorescent lights, road paint and a number of other chemicals were used in making 4x100.

"We like discovering new ingredients. It makes us feel powerful and better than when we just use the normal ones," one user told the *Gazette*.

USERS

To get a better understanding of the *kratom* culture in Phuket, the *Gazette* sat down with a number of confessed users.

"I started taking the drug when I was in secondary school because that's what my friends were doing. Even now, we get together to smoke, drink alcohol and drink *kratom*," one user said.

"I'm now in my third year of university and drink *kratom* almost every night."

The main draw to the drug was the social connection it provides, he explained. However, things have changed.

"Now, I don't think it is because of social reasons. I can't stop drinking it. When I do, my body feels weak and I end up getting diarrhea constantly."

Another user, who is also attending a university on the island, said that he first started experimenting with the drug during secondary school in Narathiwat.

"I think I became addicted because of the social elements. All the teenagers in the area drank *kratom* juice," he said.

Dr Phiangbunpa agreed with the users' first-hand accounts of why the drug had infiltrated so many people's lives.



The destruction of kratom trees in Thailand has led to a boom in smuggling the drug across the boarder from Malaysia.

trouble with kratom

“However, it also works as a stress reliever,” Dr Phiangbunpa said. “They think they can take the drug and still function normally, but without stress. However, they forget to consider the long-term effects.”

THE DRUG

Kratom is listed as a Category 5 narcotic in Thailand. Narcotics are generally physically and mentally addictive, need increased dosages because of resistance to the effects, leaves users with withdrawal symptoms and can cause damage to the user’s health, explains Dr Phiangbunpa.

Through surveys conducted in 2011 the Narcotics Board estimated that there were 1.2mn active users in Thailand, Mr Surphon expects to see that number increase during the next round of surveys.

“It should be noted that *kratom* is legal in many countries. The plant is not on the list of Single Convention on Narcotic Drug 1961 or the



A number of ingredients are used to make derivative kratom drinks. However, the more ‘traditional’ beverage is made with only Coke and cough syrup containing codein. Photo: Patong Police

Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 of United Nations,” said Mr Surphon.

In small doses, the drug works as a stimulant, but high doses are almost always sedative.

“As a stimulant, the drug can produce an analgesic effect along with physical energy, alertness, increased libido, so-

ciability, improved mood, euphoria, focus and overall improved demeanor,” Dr Phiangbunpa said.

Dr Phiangbunpa explained that a small amount could give a similar buzz as *ya bah* (methamphetamine) – another popular drug on Phuket – while a higher dosage would result in an opium-

like effect.

“There are a number of negative side effects that can occur if high dosages are consumed, including fluttering heart beats, stomach pain, chronic constipation, insomnia, anxiety, stress, darkened skin and depression,” she said.

“The long-term psychiatric

damage from the drug depend on the dosage and frequency the drug is used, as well as the user’s general health.”

LEGALIZATION AND CONTROL

In October 2013, a sub-panel of the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA) failed to reach a decision on whether to remove *kratom* from the prohibited narcotics list.

The Public Health Minister at the time, Pradit Sintavanarong, said it would take another couple of months to reach a conclusion. However, the move was put on ice.

One of the main reasons for removing the *kratom* from the list was so that it could be used as a medicine in aiding the recovery from *ya ba* and *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine), reported *The Nation*.

There had already been two attempts to de-list kratom, one in 2004 and the other in 2009, but the committee had refused to change *kratom*’s status.



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The Phuket Gazette

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191 service back on line after emergency repairs

Today, some providers are selling 1MB for 800 baht a month or less. Might you be thinking 'Oversubscribed?'

Phuket City to get new beach

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: In an effort to spruce up the city's premier recreation area, Phuket City Municipality will spend a total of 39 million baht on drainage, repairs and other improvements at Saphan Hin.

Once the project is complete, Saphan Hin will have a 500-meter-long beach, created from recovered sand, near the remaining mangrove stands on the north coast of the peninsula.

Funding for the work, to be carried out by the Municipality, will be from both provincial and national government coffers. Deputy Mayor K. Tansukatanon told the press that 5 million baht from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) National Redevelopment Fund will be used to repair concrete walkways damaged by the tsunami. Some 80% of the work will involve simply paving stones.



B36m awaits tsunami jobless
PHUKET: Huge amounts of money are sitting waiting for employees who lost their jobs because of the tsunami. Of more than 10 million baht set aside for compensation, a ministry spokesman said. The deadline for applications to receive the money is set for the end of the month. "When the money is paid out, it will serve as a new landscape area for people to enjoy," K. Kawee said. Funding for this will come from the CEO Governors' budget, in accordance with Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's "Beautiful Road Project", he explained.

Gov proposes new zones for entertainment

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: Governor Udomsak Usarangkura has announced proposals for new, larger entertainment zones for Phuket, subject to public consultation.

The proposed new entertainment zones, in all three districts, were discussed at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on July 7.

"This is the first step in the expansion of our entertainment zones," Gov Udomsak said. "Each district will conduct a one-month round of consultations with the public. After that, we will decide upon the most suitable locations for entertainment venues."

The proposed new zones are as follows:

- Muang district:**
 - North of Nimit Circle along Tilok Uthit 2 Rd up to Phang Nga Rd;
 - 200 meters south of Nimit Circle along Ong Sim Phai Rd;
 - West of Nimit Circle along Chana-Chaoren Rd to Tilok Uthit 1 Rd;
 - Phun Phol Night Bazaar.
- Chalong District:**
 - 150m west from the intersection of the airport entry road and the road to the airport.

ADB earmarks US\$1.7m for tsunami aid plan

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has set aside US\$1.7 million (about 75 million baht) for Thailand, to help Bangkok develop long-term solutions for tsunami-affected areas, especially Krabi, Phang Nga, and Phuket, an ADB report announced.

The plan includes the construction of a medium- and long-term plan for the area. The plan also includes the construction of a medium- and long-term plan for the area.

Gov proposes new entertainment zones

From page 1
turning northwest across Nanai Rd, jinking southwest to a point east of Patong Street Inn, about midway between Rat-U-Thit 200

in favor of the expanded zone for Patong. He commented, "In fact, there are many unlicensed businesses around Patong Beach. Why not help these bars to oper-

"[The benefit of expanded zones is that] people won't need to open clandestine bars because the new zoning gives them the opportunity to operate lawfully."

The gift of hindsight

THE real seller in the July 16-22 issue of the *Phuket Gazette* wasn't the page-one story. It was Athiga Jundee's 'Inside Story', which played off a t-shirt circulating the shopping arcades of the island, which read: 'Phuket- 2001: Bomb Alert; 2002: Sars; 2003: Bird Flu; 2004: Tsunami. What Next?'

Well, little did the t-shirt producers know that there was plenty more to come.

Phuket seems to be on a steady pace of one international-level crisis a year. So, you'd think that the island and the industries on it would have already mastered crisis-management strategies... clearly, those who read the article have either left the island,

or aren't in a position to act appropriately.

The number of businesses that clam up after a tragedy because they have no protocol for dealing with the media or the public in a worst-case scenario is extraordinary. The old ostrich-head-in-a-hole management system seems to be extensively used, in hopes that the media will give up and the public will forget what happened, such as with the story of two Korean tourists who were killed as a result of the reckless driving of a speedboat 'captain'... a little reminder of the not so distant past.

However, that was just two pages of the *Gazette*, not even page one, which

was scooped by Saphan Hin.

The park scored big a decade ago when it landed a 39-million-baht budget to 'spruce up' Phuket Town's premier recreational area. Though rarely used by the expat community, for whatever reason, the park plays host to a number of extraordinary events including the annual Red Cross Fair and this year's Southern Criterium and Bike Week, as well as a number of sporting events.

"When completed, the area will serve as a new, beautifully landscaped

area for people to enjoy," the *Gazette* was told.

Well, for those expats or tourist who are willing to make the trek from the west-coast beaches with a picnic basket for some local vibes, it's not a bad deal at all.

Oh, the *Gazette* was packed with other headlines, as well as some questions that are hard to wrap our heads around in today's online data-driven world, such as: 'Today, some providers are selling 1MB for 800 baht a month or less'.

Might you be thinking 'Oversubscribed?' Clearly the world, and Phuket, has changed a bit in the last ten years.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

Police get training in international crime

NHRC hosts talks about Uighurs getting Thailand boot

THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is seeking opinions from all interested parties to the controversial deportation of Uighur migrants to China.

The NHRC wants to hear from the government why it expelled the migrants, and from non-governmental agencies about their objections to the government's decision.

Many countries and local civil sectors have criticized Thailand for repatriating 109 Uighur Muslims to China, as they believe that the Uighurs would face prosecution or punishment by death.

However, Xinhua China's official news agency has said the Uighurs had been on their way to join *jihād*, and that 13 of them had fled China after being implicated in terrorist activities.

Two more have escaped detention, Xinhua reported.

Did that Mc D Minion just say f**k?

THE animated film *Minions*, a prequel to *Despicable Me*, is now showing in Phuket's cinemas and causing a stir for youngsters. However, the Happy Meal toys created by McDonald's Corp of the small, yellow, gibberish-talking characters is creating a completely different kind of scene.

In videos posted online, some customers said they heard a curse when, by tapping one of the tiny plastic caveman characters against a hard surface, they activated its voice, reported Reuters. Some commenters wrote they heard the words: "What the f**k?"

"To me, it sure doesn't sound like anything a kid should be hearing," one commenter said on a YouTube video post.

In a recent statement, McDonald's denied the toy used bad language, and a company spokeswoman said there was no plan to pull the toy from distribution.

McDonald's said the Minion Caveman toy emits three sounds – "para la bukey," "hahaha" and "eh eh".



Koh Tao DNA evidence not 'lost', say police

THE trial on the murder of two British backpackers on Koh Tao entered its third day on Monday, with witnesses testifying that the Samui provincial court was not able to rule on the defence team's request for a re-examination of forensic evidence.

Chief prosecutor Thawatchai Siengjaew said the cross-examination of the witnesses would take time, but should be completed by the end of this month.

The defence team has asked the court to have the forensic and DNA evidence re-examined by the Justice Ministry's Central Institute of Forensic Science. It had initially been collected and examined by the Police Forensic Science Institute.

The trial of the two Myanmar migrants – Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun – for allegedly murdering David Miller and Hannah Witheridge has caught the attention of both local and international media as it is widely believed that they have been made scapegoats for the crime.

Mr Miller and Ms Witheridge were murdered in September last year on Koh Tao.

Meanwhile, National Police Chief Somyot Poompunmuang dismissed reports that the DNA evidence in the case could not be re-tested as some of it had either been 'used up' or lost.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Gen Somyot said miscommunication may have resulted from a misinterpretation of the police investigator's remark.

A key witness threatened in trafficking case

A KEY witness in a human-trafficking case had asked to 'lie low' in Malaysia after she received a threat from a suspect following initial court hearings, said Deputy National Police Chief Aek Angsanant, responsible for inquiries into the trafficking of Rohingya and other migrants.

Police will press a separate charge against the suspect for threatening a witness.

Officers are still hunting for 46 other fugitives suspected of trafficking. Police should file the case against 72 suspects in a Songkhla court by next month.

Laotian woman arrested with dog carcasses

MARINE Border Police patrolling on the Mekong River arrested a Laotian woman and seized two sacks of dog carcasses last week.

Dao Siliwai, 40, told police she had merely accompanied

her Thai husband to sell the carcasses, but police showed up and the 65-year-old buyer, Phut Meenadee, fled.

Police found that the Mr Phut allegedly bought dog carcasses for 60 baht per kilogram to be re-sold to a Laotian man identified only as Pon for 200-300 baht per kilogram.

Security tighter after two bomb blasts in South

AUTHORITIES are conducting stricter checks of all vehicles on land and water in their hunt for two motorcycles used in bomb and arson attacks in Narathiwat last week.

Security officers at the Sungai Kolok River are also looking for any suspects who may cross the border to carry out more attacks, amid rumors of further violence.

The blasts in Sungai Kolok killed three people and injured eight. They also did more than 200 million baht in damage.

The Padang Besar bomb killed a karaoke bar owner and two workers while wounding three others.

Teacher gunned down in Pattani

PATTANI physical education teacher Sakol Chadarat was fatally shot on Monday afternoon when he was ambushed by two men on a motorcycle.

Mr Sakol's older brother, also a schoolteacher, was shot dead two years ago and Mr Sakol was hired to replace him.

Use Article 44

THE *Gazette* fully endorses SKAL and other groups in petitioning Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul to end plans to open a dolphinarium in Chalong.

In their letter to the minister, Phuket business owners and residents make a succinct, yet highly compelling 12-point argument against the development.

There is no doubt that public opinion here in Phuket is overwhelmingly opposed to having a dolphinarium anywhere on the island. Internationally, over 17,000 people have already signed an online petition launched by Sea Shepherd Global Conservation Society, which is just one of several high-profile international NGOs who have rallied together to oppose the project.

The many arguments against the dolphinarium are too extensive to be listed here in full. The opening of such a facility would severely damage Phuket's reputation as a sustainable and eco-friendly tourist destination – especially since the dark secret of how dolphins are brutally captured in the wild at places like Japan's notorious Taiji Cove was revealed in the 2009 Academy Award winning documentary *The Cove*.

The only argument in favor of a dolphinarium that we are aware of is financial. The strategy is apparently based on attracting busloads of package tourists from places like mainland China and Russia. The *Gazette* feels it is insulting to presume that people in these market segments lack sufficient awareness of the issues involved, especially at a time when countries as diverse as the United Kingdom and India have comprehensively banned the capture and display of cetaceans for human amusement and profit.

Some readers might harbor positive childhood memories about going to a dolphin show, but that was a different time – before it was revealed just how badly marine mammals suffer, physically and psychologically, in captivity. These truths have been clearly revealed by former dolphin trainers and handlers, most notably former *Flipper* trainer Ric O'Barry, whose organization Dolphin Project is one of five NGOs actively campaigning to stop the Phuket dolphinarium.

We hope Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will consider using the special powers under Article 44 of the interim charter to ban the future development of any facilities in Thailand that would involve the public display of cetaceans and incorporate this directive into the country's 20-year development plan, currently under draft in Bangkok.



Thankful for the saviors of wildlife

Re: *Gazette online, Dolphin washes ashore in Phang Nga, July 14*

I am so thankful for the PMBC and Kusoldharm Foundation workers who work tirelessly to save and protect wildlife, not only on the island, but around it as well.

In the photos, you can always see how much respect they have for the animals.

I hope that both of these organizations are well funded, so that they may continue to do amazing work for years to come.

Alan Richards
Thalang

What's the appeal of wild birds?

Re: *Gazette online, Illegal wild drugs lead to wild birds in Phuket, July 13*

I am thoroughly confused by the amount of people on the island that keep wild birds.

I see them driving one handed on their motorbike holding their birdcages, or with a pick-up full speeding down the road.

What do they do with them? I once heard that they have contests to see whose bird sings the loudest, prettiest and so on.

Do they win money? Are they betting on them, and if so, isn't that illegal?

There has to be some monetary reason why these people feel the need to harbor these poor birds.

Alex Reed
Mai Khao

Letters

to the Editor

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

Bad tread doesn't go with rainy roads

Re: *Gazette online, Five teens hit by out-of-control van, July 14*

I don't understand how this always happens.

Rainy season is not a new concept and these drivers, I assume, have grown up driving these roads, or, at the very least, been passengers on these roads.

It is common sense to drive with caution during and after a rain storm.

Your tires don't magically develop better tread when mixed with water.

Jamie Kingsbury
Koh Kaew

Hoping this family gets some closure

Re: *Gazette online, Police consider foul play, reward offered for missing American diver, July 13*

I feel so sorry for the family of Mr Devine.

More than 1.2 million baht has already been spent in the search for him, in addition to the reward that his family is offering.

It must be so frustrating to hear that the police didn't find

anything suspicious while questioning all those on board, and yet they are still unable to rule out foul play.

I hope they find him soon, so the family can have closure.

Susan Cartwright
Patong

Drugs on a bus

Re: *Gazette online, Myanmar man caught in drug bust, July 14*

It always amazes me that people think they can bring huge amounts of drugs into Phuket on a bus and not get caught.

This man was smuggling them onto the island for a mere 15,000 baht.

Is a possible jail sentence really worth that cash?

Kimberly Newton
Chalong

Pointless late night police checkpoint

Re: *Gazette online, Myanmar man caught in drug bust, July 14*

I went through a checkpoint with a few friends in town the other night. The cops let one friend go through without a helmet, but stopped the other, bigger, friend with a helmet and checked his bike.

They didn't find anything or fine him, but they did take his smokes. Amazing Thailand.

I don't get it
Surin

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Phuket's only woman lifeguard stands tall

FIRST PERSON

I LOVE rescuing people. Before I became a lifeguard, I saw many people drown in the ocean and while I always wanted to save them, I couldn't. All I could do was call for help and that was never enough for me.

I came to Phuket in 2005 to train to become a lifeguard at Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort. I had never done it before, but I knew I could. I have trained with David Field, chairman of Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club in Australia, since my first year in Phuket.

Mr Field saw that I had strong swimming skills, so he sent me to train in life-saving skills in Australia in 2007.

The more training lifeguards have, the safer the lifeguards and the swimmers they protect will be. Lifeguards do not only have to save others' lives, in the process they also have to preserve their own.

It is imperative that lifeguards are healthy and have strong bodies. Lifeguards who are not trained well enough can make life-saving operations more dangerous.

Lifeguards must know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and how to safely bring a swimmer, sometimes more than one at a time, back to the beach in high tide or in strong currents.

Some of the most difficult situations we face as lifeguards are when groups of people are in trouble in the water. We only



Jongdee Haemkaew, 35, from Songkhla, is the assistant sport and recreational manager at Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort. A former taekwondo athlete with a bachelor's degree in health and sport science from Thaksin University in Pattalung, Ms

Jongdee is the first female lifeguard on Phuket and one of the first to be certified by Surf Life Saving Australia. She has been a lifeguard for 10 years.

Here, she talks about her motivation to become a lifeguard, the skills needed to be able to save lives and the importance of such a service on Phuket.

have three lifeguards on duty, and sometimes entire families need our help.

The other lifeguards and I have to make multiple trips to the swimmers in order to get everyone safely to shore. This is tiring and dangerous, and there were many rescues during which I thought I would die.

It is not just my beach that is lacking sufficient life-saving staff, with there being only about 100 lifeguards on Phuket. More lifeguards would be hugely beneficial for the island, but it would be even better if people could learn to save themselves and each other.

I have seen many Australian parents teaching their kids how to swim safely while they enjoy their weekends on the beach. I would love to see relevant offices on the island hold lifeguard training programs for Phuket residents, as is done in

Australia.

Residents could be taught to stay ashore during dangerous tides or monsoon sea conditions. They could also learn how important it is to stay inside safe-swimming areas.

Every year in monsoon season, I join the lifeguards on the beach to watch over the swimmers. As the sea in front of our hotel is one of the most dangerous on the island, it is the perfect place to train lifeguards. Our lifeguard training sessions take place once a year, and lifeguards can learn or brush up on essential life-saving information, techniques and strategies.

My word of advice for lifeguards: stay strong and healthy and remain calm when helping people. If you make a mistake, your life could be taken away. Work as a team, as this will make the rescue operation much more efficient.



This six-wheeled truck lost control coming down Patong Hill and crashed, killing a woman on a motorbike. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Uphill safety battles

ACCIDENTS happen every day on the island – whether they are caused by drunk driving, running a red light or something else. I argue that the most serious accidents on our island occur during the rainy season on the hills in Patong, Kamala, Surin and Kata.

Maybe some of these accidents are caused by 'slippery roads', as is often reported, but I think the more common cause is the poor condition of the vehicles.

Patong Hill accidents almost always involve cement trucks, tour buses, 10-wheeled trucks, vans and cars. The reason is always that the brakes fail or the driver lost control.

We cannot predict when the rain will come, so we need to focus on maintaining vehicles so that they are safe and brake failures don't happen. We should not overload the capacity of the vehicle. This goes for every single vehicle on the road.

Accidents of this nature take away the lives of so many people. I understand that these drivers probably had no intention of driving dangerously or killing people, but these accidents all too often end in the deaths of innocent people.

Personally, I am afraid every time I drive up the hill in front of or behind large vehicles.

Island View

By Pruth Kulprasit

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

How can people avoid these horrible accidents?

The government and authorities need to recognize that these are not normal occurrences.

Authorities need to attempt to solve this problem by taking serious action and pushing for vehicle quality checks every six months and weigh buses before they drive up the hill.

During heavy rain, when the roads are slippery, buses and trucks should not be allowed to cross the hills.

They should build a tunnel from Kathu to Patong – a project which has been discussed for so many years, but never started.

Simply, the local government and law enforcement officers need to do something to protect people's lives.

However, people who choose to drive over the hill must be alert the entire time and concentrate on what they are doing to protect their lives and the lives of others.

We must stay safe for our families. We cannot leave them behind.

Words from the Wise

"The power of one, if fearless and focused, is formidable, but the power of many working together is better."

– Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

"If you're trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I've had them; everybody has had them. But obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

– Michael Jordan

Issues & Answers

Can illegal parking outside airport be stopped?

EVERY time I go to Phuket International Airport, I always see several cars, mostly taxis, parking along the curb just be-

fore the entrance to the airport. This curb is painted red and white. To my understanding, red and white paint means 'no parking'. Am I right? If police do not bother checking there, why do they not just paint the curb black and white?

Somchai Sanprasert, superintendent of Tah Chat Chai Police, replies:

Please be informed that we take this problem seriously.

People continue to park in

that area illegally, no matter how often we fine them. We used to fine offenders 200 baht but now we raised the fine to 500 baht. This has not yet changed the drivers' behavior.

We cannot paint the curb black and white, as per the Phuket International Airport security regulations.

We will start sending more officers out to patrol the area to prevent people from parking there, in addition to raising the fine.

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.
Submit your issue at
www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Rising interest rates won't kill REITs



Finance

By Don Freeman

MANY investors looking for yields and exposure to real estate have piled into Real Estate Income Trusts (REITs) despite the prevailing investment wisdom being that any eventual rise in interest rates will be a disaster for the sector. After all, REITs rely heavily on borrowing to acquire real estate, with interest payments on this debt usually being their biggest expense.

However, before you consider dumping your REITs when interest rates eventually rise, consider the following reasons not to:

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

Using historical data, Deutsche Bank published research earlier this year that showed while REIT performance is interest-rate sensitive, they only underperformed stocks by a small margin over periods when interest rates rose. In the period afterwards, they actually tended to outperform the broader markets.

TEMPTING DIVIDENDS

REITs typically pay out all of their taxable income as dividends. Given the low yields on other investments, some investors have gone so far as to substitute REITs for bond investments with this substitution proving to be a shrewd [albeit

risky] move since the end of the financial crisis. This could be a problem should these investors have a knee-jerk reaction and dump their REITs when interest rates do rise.

BIGGEST RISKS

Rising interest rates are not the biggest risk for REITs. Actually, the biggest risks come with recessions when vacancy rates rise and occupancy rates along with property values fall.

Likewise, any decrease in credit quality at any point in time can prevent weaker REITs from refinancing their debts or force them to pay higher interest rates with this hitting the bottom line or their ability to maintain strong dividend payouts to investors.

DEBT REFINANCING

Normally, only a small portion (perhaps 10 per cent) of a REIT's debt needs to be refinanced in any given year. In fact, REITs will most likely save on interest payments when they refinance since most of the expiring debts are still above the cost of new financing.

STRONGER UNDERLYING BUSINESSES

Interest rates should only rise if it is clear the economy is growing on a sustained basis with a good economy ultimately leading to more



Commercial real estate values have improved, with office vacancies declining. Photo: Peter Bennets

operating income and higher occupancy rates, rents and property values. Moreover, any rise in interest expense in an improving economy is a good excuse to raise rents on tenants in order to offset any increase in interest payments.

PRIVATIZATION TRENDS

Large investors like sovereign wealth funds and pension funds have noticed that REITs offer a much more favorable yield than anything available in the bond market. That has led to a number of REITs being acquired or moved private by such investors.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY EXPOSURE

REITs are the primary and easiest way for retail investors to gain exposure to a commercial

property recovery. And while many Americans remain 'underwater' on their home mortgages as values are still below their pre-financial crisis peak, commercial real estate values and rents for non-retail properties in the US have largely improved with office vacancies declining and industrial properties benefiting from strong demand for warehouse space.

In addition, multifamily housing vacancies are near historic lows as rents continue to rise in many parts of the country.

INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE EXPOSURE

More than 30 countries around the world have adopted REIT legislation largely modeled on US legislation. This means international investors can look

for REITs in other real estate markets (including both developed and emerging markets) where interest rates may not be set to rise just yet.

You and your investment advisor will want to take a much closer look at any individual REITs in your portfolio, along with any funds that might hold them or other real estate related investments.

Don Freeman, BSME is president of Freeman Capital Management, a Registered Investment Advisor with the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), based in Phuket. He has over 15 years of experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. Don can be reached at 089-970-5795 or email: freemancapital@gmail.com.

State banks asked to help

FINANCE Minister Sommai Phasee has instructed the four state banks to give a helping hand to low-income debtors in danger of losing their land that they used for collateral to borrow outside the system.

The order came after Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha expressed concerns over low-income earners and farmers who have been hit by the protracted slowdown of the

economy and are unable to pay back their loans. Their lack of liquidity has contributed to a rise in non-performing loans (NPLs) in and outside the financial system.

The Interior Ministry has estimated that about 90,000 low-income earners, farmers and SMEs are in danger of losing their land to loan sharks, Mr Sommai said.

— *The Nation*

Egat closes up 4 per cent from IPO

THE Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand's North Bangkok Power Plant Block 1 Infrastructure Fund gained 4 per cent in the first day trading after its initial public offering (IPO).

The country's first SET-listed state-enterprise infrastructure fund worth 20.86 billion baht, trading under the ticker symbol EGATIF, saw its shares open at 10.50 baht, 5 per cent above its IPO pricing of 10 baht per unit, before climbing to peak at 10.90 baht. The price closed at 10.40 baht, with total daily trading volume of 36.92bn baht.

EGATIF offered 2.085 billion IPO units at 10 baht per unit from June 22 to 26 with a total value of 20.86bn baht.

Krungthai Asset Management is the fund manager, while Siam Commercial Bank is the financial adviser and underwriter.

After the IPO, there are three



Ms Pimolpa. Photo: The Nation

major unit holders. One is Egat, which has committed to hold 25 per cent of EGATIF for at least five years, Thai Life Insurance at 11.99 per cent and Egat Saving and Credit Cooperative at 8.34 per cent.

Egat has invested in the right to availability payments of its latest plant, North Bangkok Power Plant Block 1, for a 20-year period with a contracted power-generation capacity of 670 megawatts.

Egat governor Soonchai Kumnoonsate said about 10bn

baht of the fund mobilization from the IPO would be invested in electricity-generation expansion and the rest would be reserved for business expansion next year.

Pimolpa Suntichok, head of the corporate division of SCB, said EGATIF was the first infrastructure fund of a state enterprise and had been overwhelmingly welcomed by investors.

EGATIF is expected to encourage other state enterprises to use this type of instrument to raise funds, possibly the Expressway Authority of Thailand and Airports of Thailand, Ms Pimolpa said.

Many financial institutions are pitching themselves as financial advisers to the state enterprises, Ms Pimolpa added.

— *The Nation*

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Get beautiful during lunch break

By Mauri Grant

DERMATOLOGY is staking its claim in Thailand's developing medical-tourism sector, a growth which is due in part to an increasing number of highly qualified dermatologists, state-of-the-art treatments and affordable services.

Romrawin Clinic, with two of its branches located in Phuket, is among the aesthetic clinics which has taken advantage of the demand for dermatological procedures and is now at the forefront of the business with cutting-edge technology and treatments.

The driving force behind Romrawin Clinic is Dr Thanisorn Thamlikitkul, who opened her first clinic in Bangkok in 2004.

"Thailand is well-known for its quality and affordable aesthetic treatments. This, together with skilled dermatologists, brings customers to our clinics," said Dr Thanisorn.

"We also credit the success of Thailand's medical tourism to Thai people's hospitality and politeness. This continues to draw customers from around the world to our clinics."

After noticing that demand for skin care treatments and other dermatological procedures was increasing among both Thais and international



Dr Thanisorn of Romrawin Clinic provides her patients with tailor-made treatments for top results.

tourists, Dr Thanisorn decided to expand her business to some of Thailand's busiest tourist spots: Pattaya and Phuket.

The Bangkok branches treat mostly Thai patients – about 70 per cent – while the two Phuket branches, at Central Festival Phuket and Jungceylon, see about 80 per cent foreign patients and 20 per cent Thai.

"Foreign patients tend to opt for non-invasive procedures

that are one-time services and involve very little downtime, such as Thermage and Ultera treatments, which are great for skin tightening and face lifting," said Dr Thanisorn.

"Other popular procedures are Botox and filler. These are short, lunch-time procedures which alter face shape and eliminate wrinkles and fine lines."

For Thai patients, melasma

– otherwise known as dark spots – is a main concern, but Romrawin Clinic has recently introduced technology from Australia to specifically and effectively treat the problem.

"Melasma cannot be permanently treated and is challenging to control," Dr Thanisorn explained.

"Our new technology, Super Smart FEM, uses a gentle, painless laser treatment to slow

down the formation of dark spots, eliminate the root of the problem and rejuvenate, resulting in clear, flawless skin."

Doctors at the Romrawin Clinic take their work a step further by combining the technological procedures, such as Super Smart FEM, with medical products so that each treatment has a combination that answers individual skin conditions.

"Romrawin is more than just a skin clinic, we also educate our patients so that they can maintain their beautiful, healthy skin," said Dr Thanisorn.

"Being beautiful from the inside out is what we believe in, which is why we provide our patients with tailor-made combinations of treatments, vitamins and supplements, together with beauty tips and tricks for diet and exercise routines."

When asked what the next step is for Romrawin, Dr Thanisorn answered that she has plans to open one-stop service centers for overall health and well-being.

"We want to expand Romrawin and turn it into a clinic that combines anti-aging, holistic medicine, alternative health care, plastic surgery, cosmetic dental procedures and hair treatments," she said.

The beauty of Instagram



INSTAGRAM is a photo-sharing app that reportedly has more than 300 million monthly users. It is very popular with people born in the 80s and 90s, which account for more than 37% per cent of its users.

Interestingly, each user spends an average of 21 minutes per day on Instagram.

When it first started, Instagram had a zero-monetization policy, which included a no ads policy.

After Facebook purchased Instagram for what can only be described as an obscene amount of money, advertising started. In fact, ads have generated more than US\$3.5 billion in the last three months alone.

How can Instagram be of benefit for a local business?

Instagram, being based on

photo images, is perfect for our beautiful island setting.

This allows you to use photo imagery to highlight your business, your products and even humanize your company with a behind-the-scenes insight.

Companies can connect with followers on a more personal level, building connection, trust and rapport. This helps with branding and recognition, which can lead to sales.

Remember, social media can be a lot of fun and create great opportunities for business, so it is worth doing some research and seeing how it can benefit your own.

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



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Eager cyclists head for Kathu



Addressing an attentive audience during a press conference held to announce the Kathu Cycling Fest on July 8 are (from L-R) Somboon Aiyarak, Kathu deputy mayor; Chaianan Suttikul, Kathu mayor; Sayan Chanachaiwong, Kathu district chief; Attapong Jantaratanawong, Kathu deputy mayor and Col Chawalit Phetsipear, superintendent of Thung Thong Police Station. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn.

Boat Lagoon Resort lighting seminar packs them in

Attracting a large crowd was the Provincial Electricity Authority's Mid LIGHT Crisis seminar held recently at Phuket Boat Lagoon Resort. This is part of the Thailand Lighting Fair 2015 activities taking place from August 19-21 at Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Center (BITEC).



Displaying the Thailand Lighting Fair placard during the seminar are (from L-R) Jarun Sangsarn, vice president of Phuket Chamber of Commerce; Lertchai Kaewwichian, director of Alternative Energy Encouragement and Efficiency Department of the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA); Suthee Thongyam, Phuket vice governor; Warah Chanchao, director of Provincial Electricity Authority Area 2 (South); Pakwan Jiamjiroj, general manager of The Exhibiz Company; and Worrawud Korkongwisarut, product manager of Phillips Electronics (Thailand) Company.

Birthday bash



Cecilia Pitre (left), founder of the Phuket Professional and Fun Ladies Club, enjoys herself with her friends Stellucia (middle) and Jenny during a birthday party at the rooftop lounge of Le Versace Patong on July 3.



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Events in Paradise

Thanyapura's duo dominate triathlon



Beaming with joy are Thanyapura's Executive Chairman and four-time World Champion Chris McCormack (right), who came first in the sprint distance of Bangkok Triathlon Tour Series 2015, and Thanyapura's Director of Cycling Academy Nick Gates, who came fourth in the Olympic distance. Photo: Asia Tri

Swimmers step into the boxing ring

Thanyapura swimmers got to train with living muaythai legend, Jomhod Kiatadisak, who is considered one of the top 10 boxers of all time.



Jomhod (left), 20-time muaythai world champion, shows Sofia Gadegaard Shah, FINA swimmer from Nepal, how to punch.

Full moon fun



Enjoying themselves at Two Chefs Beach Bar and Restaurant's first full moon party held on July 4 at Serenity Resort Residences are Phitcha Thitikullaw (left), from Serenity's PR team, and Henrik Ojelind, owner of Two Chefs Group. Photo: Southern Life Style

New luxury condominium at Krabi's Ao Nang

Pulling out all the stops at the grand launch of their new project, The Emerald Ao Nang Condominium, is developer Emerald Development Group with a memorable event taking place at their sales gallery in Krabi on July 10.

Happy with the progress they have made are (from L-R) Clifford Maylam, Emerald Development Group's director of sales and marketing; Samphan Thongsamak, chief adviser and former education minister; and Sawit Ketroj, Emerald Development Group's president. Photo: Southern Life Style



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RCoPB President Walter Wyler

Rotary club elects new president

SWISS national Walter Wyler was elected president of the Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB), Phuket's only English speaking Rotary club, earlier this month.

The former Swiss Air Force colonel, and 15-year Rotarian, has set a number of goals for the club for the 2015-2016 year, including attracting more female members and continuing to support the club's projects, such as the Ban Ya Learning Center and an extensive scholarship program for young Thais affected by the tsunami.

"Becoming president of a Rotary club is always a special privilege and honor. Serving the community that most Rotarians have benefited from and giving something back to that community is the least we can do," Mr Wyler said.

– *Phuket Gazette*

English lecturer runs marathon to help fight HIV on island

A LOCAL English lecturer at the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) raised more than 150,000 baht for Phuket Loves You Club (PLU) during the Laguna International Marathon last month.

Colin Gallagher had originally hoped to garner 50,000

baht for PLU, which raises funds to fight HIV on the island.

"I am a huge supporter in what the PLU is achieving in fighting HIV on Phuket and I am so pleased to have raised so much money," Mr Gallagher said.

Mr Gallagher raised a total of 151,774 baht, which will be

distributed to the Life Home Project Foundation, where the PLU assists with funding for the education of children with HIV or with parents with HIV, and the PLU Community Projects which aim to increase awareness about HIV and safe sex in Phuket.

– *Phuket Gazette*



Colin Gallagher finishing the race.

Phuket Raceweek underway

Community

Phuket Gazette

THE first event of the 2015 Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek kicked off in wild weather on Wednesday.

The event, which concludes on Sunday, falls in the middle of Phuket's southwest monsoon season – a time when some of the best sailing and racing conditions can be expected – and has a competitive line-up of IRC racers, cruisers, multihulls and a growing number of charterers.

Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek, organized by Media Business Services, consists of four days of world-class racing from July 15 to July 19, off the southeast coast of the island.

"We have boats and crew taking part from more than 20 countries this year, many of which have come from overseas to compete in Phuket



Support Phuket sailing by using #PhuketSailing. Photo: Gazette file

Raceweek," said Byron Jones, the managing director of Media Business Services.

"The Panwa Cape will be busy with more than 500 sailors and friends accommodating

themselves in the area and contributing to the local economy during what is normally a relatively quiet month for Phuket."

Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek organizers and

relevant authorities are working to promote sailing in Phuket to the world.

"Phuket's green season coincides with colder weather during Australian and European school holidays, making it an ideal time for sailors and families to come to Phuket for a sailing holiday," Mr Jones said.

A large contingent of Australian and British nationals are competing in Phuket Raceweek this year, most of which have flown in specifically for the event. It is this international appeal and the potential of Phuket's marine leisure tourism that has seen the Thai government recently prioritize the industry for development and promotion.

"It's great to see Thailand's marine-leisure tourism on the national agenda. Regattas have been promoting and positioning Thailand as a boat-friendly destination for many years," said Mr Jones.

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 in 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



Join the Phuket Aviation Club for a day of fun, music and flying. Photo: Gazette file

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

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 2. Flying Club Social

There will be 'up-close-and-personal' displays of different types of aircraft and, weather permitting, some flying to either participate in or to simply watch from the clubhouse. From 5pm to 6pm we'll be running a Q&A session for

any information you might seek about private flying or other general aviation issues in Thailand.

A buffet will be on offer for 250 baht from 6pm onward. Live music until 10pm.

A great opportunity to network and meet new friends, whether you're a fan of flying or not. It will run from 4:30pm to 10pm.

For more information, contact Pat James at info@phuketaviationclub.com.

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. Keep checking the *Gazette* for local celebrations.

October 23. Chulalongkorn Memorial Day

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

Gambling through the decades

Looking Back

By Anand Singh

GAMBLING, in all its forms, is illegal in Thailand. Despite it being outlawed for several decades, it is still a popular recreation for many Thais.

Throughout the decades since, Thais have continued to gamble, legally and illegally.

The history of gambling in Thailand goes back a long way. Before it was outlawed, gambling was a popular pastime, growing especially rapidly during the late 19th century. It was spurred by Chinese immigration, a growing economy and the adoption of paper money.

In fact, gambling dens frequented by Chinese immigrants were an important source of revenue for the government during the reign of King Rama V, representing about one-fifth of total government revenue collected from tax farms during the 1860s.

During the reign of King Rama V, tax farms were the most efficient means by which the government could collect tax. The government would al-



Forty slot machines were seized as recent as March of this year. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

low several wealthy merchants or businessmen to bid for a 'tax farm', which was an area or district with enough business activity that could generate revenue for the government.

If a merchant wins the bid, he would have to pay the government the agreed sum for the right to raise tax within that area. Gambling contributed significantly to the revenue.

Not only was gambling an important source of revenue for the government, it was also a sensitive matter in maintaining

relations with the growing Chinese immigrant communities.

On the other hand, gambling was seen as a vice that was against Buddhist teachings.

Gambling dens were also seen as uncivilized by western powers that threatened Siam's independence. King Rama V wanted to promote the image that Siam was a civilized nation, worthy of equal respect to its European counterparts.

Moreover, there was a disturbing perceived connection between gambling and crime.

The King understood that the state had to outlaw gambling in order to avoid social unrest.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the government increased its control over all forms of legal gambling in Siam, and the number of farms and gambling dens was reduced.

The Gambling Revenue Act of 1902 gave the government full authority in permitting and licencing different forms of gambling throughout the Kingdom.

By 1916, a series of tax

reforms had diminished state reliance on gambling revenue.

Gambling, however, did not cease after 1916. Corruption on the part of police and other government officials, as well as social attitudes towards gambling, ensured that illegal gambling remained prevalent and widespread until today.

James Warren even argued that revenue from gambling might have even helped build the modern Siamese nation during the reign of King Rama V.

During the late 19th century, Siam was subjected to several unfair treaties. The Bowring Treaty of 1855 for example, forced Siam to remove barriers to trade with Britain. Tariffs and trade monopolies, a traditional revenue for the government, was abolished.

With its independence under constant threat from European powers, Siam had little choice but to rely on other sources of revenue, such as gambling tax. Siamese state spending on projects such as the construction of hospitals and railways may have been financed to a significant extent through taxation of gambling activities.

Life through the lens

OVER the past decades, Bangkok has undergone several transformations as it works toward becoming a hub of Asia in every field.

While it has achieved that goal geographically and commercially, its aspirations to hold a major international arts festival have yet to be realized.

The Thai capital lacks a world-standard art museum and, perhaps more importantly, receives relatively little government support for the arts.

The city is taking a step in the right direction this month by playing host to the inaugural Photo Bangkok, which features more than 60 photographers from across Southeast Asia at 20 galleries in the city.

The brains behind the event is photographer Piyat Hemmatat, who has rallied dozens of Thai artists, curators and gallerists to join his cause.

"The essence of Photo Bangkok 2015 is first and foremost to enhance standards and collaborations in the photographic community and creative industries in Thailand," says the 39-year-old, who

is serving as festival director.

The festival aims to become a major platform for photographic arts in the region.

"Our country is full of passionate, creative artists with promising photographic capabilities and potential, and we have all come together to work on creating an integrated platform that will take the works of Thailand's photographers to an international stage," Mr Piyat says.

Among many other well-known photographers, lensman and curator Manit Sriwanichpoom will bring his show 'Rediscovering Forgotten Thai Masters of Photography', to the festival in September.

As the title implies, Mr Mani's exhibition features vintage works by seven famous Thai photographers.

— *The Nation*

The International Photography Festival runs from July 29 to October 4 at various venues around Bangkok. For more information about the event, visit www.PhotoBangkokFestival.com or [Facebook.com/PhotoBangkok](https://www.facebook.com/PhotoBangkok).

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Cycling: Not just for a healthy body



Blazing Saddles

By Baz Daniel

AS IF burning calories and improving cardiovascular fitness and body strength weren't enough, a new study shows the brain-boosting benefits of biking, which begs the question: does cycling improve your sanity?

I was recently out cycling in the south of Phuket with my usual riding buddies: four enthusiasts who regularly pound the pedals together, followed by just the occasional rehydrating beer or two.

Perched atop Promthep Cape overlooking the gray pounding monsoonal seas and scudding rain clouds, I was struck by the fact that this little group was not exactly in the first blush of youth. In fact, a quick bit of mental arithmetic led me to the fact that we boasted a total of 270 years of (ahem) 'wisdom' between us. On closer inspection I also noticed that most of the fat ungainly tyres in the group were in fact on the rims of our bicycle wheels, rather than around the group's collective midriff.

The physical health benefits of cycling are well documented and have also been covered in previous 'Blazing Saddles' columns. But as I thought more about our little group, it also struck me that here was a merry band of Lycra Louts who also seemed more well-balanced and cheerful than the average male in his mid-sixties.



Studies show that cycling speeds up connections in the brain. Photo: A Health Blog

Some follow-up research revealed that cycling is not only good for your body, as several recent scientific studies indicate that it improves the way your brain works by making several important structures bigger so you can think faster, remember more and feel happier.

The brain is made up of two kinds of tissues: Gray matter, which has all the synapses and is the command center of your body, and white matter, which is the communication hub, using axons to connect the different areas of gray matter. The more white matter you have, the faster you can make important connections, so anything that increases white matter is good. A recent study from the Netherlands found that cycling does exactly that,

improving both the integrity and density of white matter and speeding up connections in the brain.

White matter is not the only brain structure affected by cycling, however. Another study, published this year in the *Journal of Diabetes*, found that after cycling for 12 weeks, participants gained more than just strength in their legs, as they also saw a boost in brain-derived neurotrophic factor which is a protein responsible for regulating stress, mood and memory. This might explain previous research that has found cycling to be associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety.

You will not only feel mentally better after a bike ride, but you will actually be smarter. Biking, along with other types of aerobic exercise, has been

shown to increase the hippocampus, one of several brain structures related to memory and learning.

A study from the University of Illinois found that the hippocampus of participants they tested grew 2 per cent and improved their memory and problem-solving skills by 15 to 20 per cent after six months of daily cycling. Additionally, the cyclists reported a greater ability to focus and an improved attention span, certainly factors that are critical to surviving on Phuket's maniacal roads.

To top it off, all of these advantages gained from cycling seem to counteract the loss of brain function normally associated with aging, with the scientists noting that the cyclists' brains appeared two years younger than their non-exercising peers.

Dr Art Kramer, the director of the study at the University of Illinois said, 'Increasingly, people are living more sedentary lifestyles. While we know that cycling can have positive effects on cardiovascular disease and diabetes, we have now found that it can also bring about improvements in cognition, brain function and brain structure.'

He added that there is no need to go all out to get the brain boosts either. Most of the studies showed significant mental improvements after cyclists rode for thirty minutes or less at a moderate intensity and the results were consistent whether people rode their bikes inside or outdoors.

The sheer decision-making intensity and need for razor-like concentration that cycling in Phuket demands will train your brain to work extremely efficiently as a matter of cycling survival. But these benefits also continue into your everyday life as they make your brain more efficient, effective and indeed happier than if you do not challenge it in this way. All this is predicated of course upon cycling with the greatest care and attention to safety whenever you go out on our congested island.

Stronger neural connections, a better mood and a sharper memory in addition to better heart health, a lower risk of diabetes and less incidence of cancer. With all these benefits, the only questions you should be asking now should be: "What time does that spin class start" or "where do I buy a good bike to take to Phuket's roads?"

Lay Pang Beach getting bike lane, sidewalk

AN OCEAN-view sidewalk and cycling path have been tabled to run along the once encroached-upon Lay Pang Beach, it was announced July 9 by Somchai Chanrod, chief inspector-general of the Ministry of Transport.

The paths will run about three kilometers, with the bike lane being three meters wide and the sidewalk four meters wide.

"If we receive positive feedback about the project, we will look at extending the paths farther down the coast," Mr Somchai said. "This is a pilot project aimed at building a greater understanding within the community

about the need for order, and for loving nature," said Mr Somchai.

Locals who registered with the provincial authorities after losing their jobs through the beach clearance will be allowed to sell food on the sidewalk. However, this is supposed to be on movable carts only, Mr Somchai explained.

Mr Somchai suggested that the Provincial Land Transport Office will arrange local transport to the beach.

"If we have local transport to the beach, families will get a chance to have fun there and this will be another benefit for the beach," Mr Somchai said.

"Our country's economic



Chief inspector-general of the Ministry of Transport Somchai Chanrod (middle) and other public officials survey the site of the new sidewalk and cycling path on Lay Pang Beach. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

growth relies heavily on tourism and I am certain this project will be beneficial for everyone."

Mr Somchai mentioned that

similar projects are in the pipeline, with one being at Sirinath National Park.

"The officials are planning to build sidewalks and bicycle

lanes in the park too. We are hoping this will increase the number of cyclists visiting the park," he explained.

— Nichana Madsatool

Dodging bullets with agility

Agility ladder training hones nimble feet, bodies, minds

Health

By Dorene Internicola

AGILITY ladders, a staple of sports training when victory can hang on the athlete's ability to turn quickly, have moved into mainstream gyms where fitness experts say they are helping everyday exercisers be nimble and quick.

Jumping, running, marching and hopscotching through the grids on the floor have become an added feature in personal training and group fitness classes.

Will Elson, personal training manager at New York Health and Racquet Club in New York City, said the ladders also make a great addition to circuit training and can help to strengthen joints, ligaments and tendons, while elevating the heart rate.

"It boosts cardio with fast foot strikes and knee lifts, while incorporating balance and joint stability," said Elson. "It also has the benefits of working on coordination. And it's fun in a confined space."

Agility is the ability to change the body's position quickly, efficiently and with control.

A study in the December 2013 issue of the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* found that agility training can also enhance cognitive skills, such as memory



Agility training also has benefits for those of us who aren't trying to go pro in a sport. Is it part of your workout? Photo: Erik Nomm

and vigilance.

Elson likens agility training to learning a new language.

"It's a great exercise to force someone to focus, to learn a movement pattern and be able to execute it without looking down," he said. "The body is learning something new."

Jonathan Ross, spokesperson for the American Council on Exercise, believes agility

training is also a valuable skill for non-athletes.

"It actually develops eye-foot coordination where you're able to move through a discretely defined space," explained the Washington DC-based trainer and author of *Abs Revealed*.

"Most people don't target foot placement," he added. "Most people will look down, but in sports you can't be look-

ing down. You have to focus upward."

Foot drills on agility ladders can range from simple walking between rungs, to complex skipping of spaces and sideways shuffles. However, Ross suggests conquering two or three basic drills before tackling new ones.

"A common mistake is going too quick too soon," he said. "It

like riding a bike. People get nervous about making a mistake, but it's not that difficult to learn, as long as they don't get too stuck in their own head."

Elson also warned that all agility ladders are not the same and there is no standard size.

"One needs to take into account the height of the person and the size of the boxes," he said.

Jawbone, FitBit usher in wave of wearable health tech

THE purchase of wearable devices are booming in Thailand, where people who are concerned about their fitness and tracking their health are turning to technology to help them reach their goals.

Recently, Jawbone launched two new tracking devices, UP2 and UP3, in Thailand.

This country is one of the five key markets in Asia for Jawbone, said Daniel Tan, the wearable-technology company's managing director for Asia.

Jawbone says its UP system helps people live better by providing personalized insights into how they sleep, move and eat.

"We make a platform [that] is connected to many devices. Currently, more than 2,000 apps connect to Jawbone's platform. The company intends to make the platform [connectable with] other apps, so that Jawbone will become



Track your health.

the contact engine to make all these devices work for it," Mr Tan said.

UP features a 'smart coach' system to help people be more active, sleep better and eat healthier each day, the company claims.

Mr Tan said there were three main

categories of wearable devices: workout, workday (dominated by smart watches) and lifestyle. Jawbone focuses on lifestyle wearable devices, which are all about balancing exercise, sleep and eating.

Currently, Jawbone has three products on the Thai market. UP Move costs 2,490 baht, UP2 costs 4,990 baht and UP3 7,990 baht.

UP3 is a multi-sensor activity tracker that provides in-depth information about health and fitness. It collects and analysis a wide range of biometric signals, delivering actionable insights specific to users. The distinguishing feature of UP3 is its ability to measure the resting heart rate, which is a key indicator of overall heart health.

Another wearable-device company, US-based Fitbit, recently launched its line-up of devices including Fitbit

Surge, Fitbit Charge, Fitbit Flex, Fitbit One, Fitbit Zip and Aria Wi-Fi Smart Scale for the Thai market.

With a growing focus on personal health, fitness and well-being across Thailand, and the strong demand for mobile devices and technology, Fitbit plans to provide consumers here with a full line of trackers at prices across all mobile platforms, ensuring that everyone can find the right fit for their lifestyle and their goals, said James Park, chief executive officer and co-founder of Fitbit.

"Our mission is to deliver innovation. Our wearable is designed in a way that empowers consumers with greater knowledge of their overall health, while understanding that everyone's approach to health and fitness is different," Mr Park said.

- The Nation

Middlemen scuttle many property deals

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

AFTER 12 years in Thailand helping international investment funds and property groups buy big-ticket real estate, particularly hotels and resorts, the founder of ThaiEstate Asia Group knows too well that it is the middlemen who have ruined many a good transaction.

Lars Lang chose his words carefully in voicing his frustration with middlemen and the way the market moves here, as he does not want to sound as if he is talking down to anyone, and in fact wants to alert people that they now have serious regional rivals, namely Malaysia and Vietnam.

“One of my challenges right now is that the countries near Thailand such as Malaysia and Vietnam have more friendly governments.

“My clients, they could be in the Middle East, sitting in Hong Kong or Singapore, wherever, and for them Thailand is not everything.

“I know when I talk to the Thai people they think Thailand is gold and Thailand is the best in the world, maybe it is, but not for investors because

there are too many risks here.”

Of course, Mr Lang’s foreign clients have an uncomplicated route, and that is buy a large plot of land to build a resort on and go to the Board of Investment and get some privileges. The real challenge arises when they opt for existing hotels or resorts, particularly those owned by independent owners not by international management groups.

“After I have convinced my clients that I have a structure in place to secure their money,

I try to contact some interesting resorts.

“That is when the big system starts, because many middlemen jump in and everyone is hungry,” Mr Lang says.

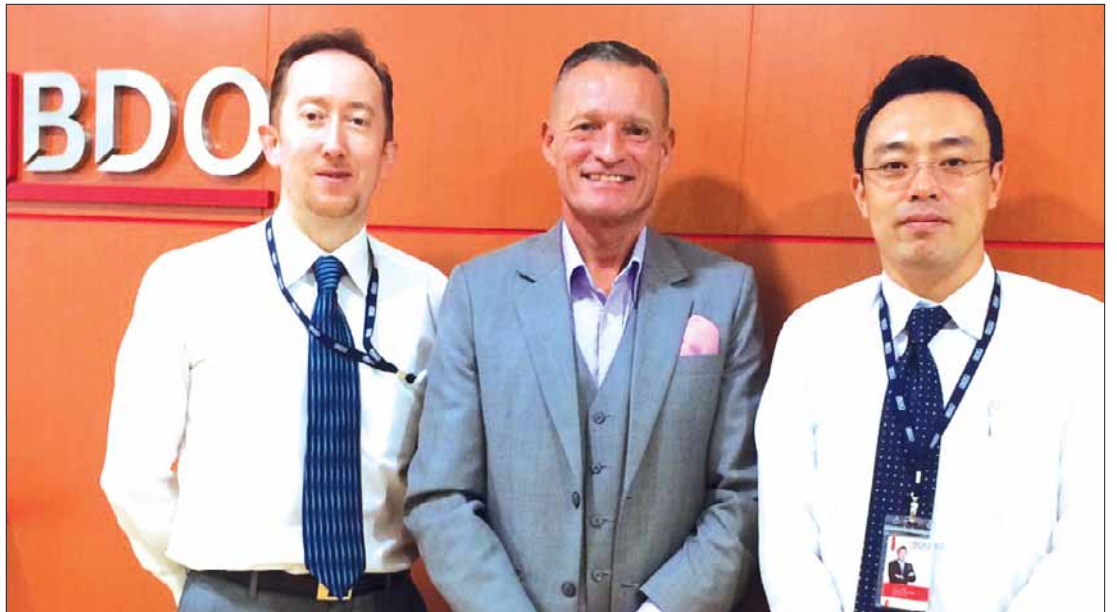
A property with a value of

about 100mn might end up getting turned up to 200mn baht by the time Mr Lang is able to contact the owner, such a price is suddenly no longer attractive to potential investors due to it being unrealistic.

It seems Thai hotel and resort owners do not want to talk to anybody, and in between are a lot of agents who sometimes damage the owner’s interest, Mr Lang pointed out.

“Maybe the owner never finds out, this is what I have

It seems Thai hotel and resort owners do not want to talk to anybody, and in between are a lot of agents who sometimes damage the owner’s interest.



Lars Lang, founder of ThaiEstate Asia Group, is flanked by his partners from BDO Advisory Thailand law firm, with whom his company has a strategic partnership.

usually faced, sometimes the owner is sitting in Bangkok and maybe doesn’t know what is going on. Or the owner will say give me a Letter of Intent or a 10 per cent deposit, only then will I talk to you.”

Coughing up that kind of money or such legal documents without even knowing how many keys the property is, how much land it comes with or even how old the building is, is of course out of the question.

“How do they expect me to go to Hong Kong or Singapore and tell my clients ‘I may have a resort, please put in 300 million baht, but actually I don’t know what you are going to get.’”

Mr Lang is currently engaged with a task from one overseas client within the listed Hospitality Group Sector – who already operates in the global luxury market with more than 12,000 keys – to provide the requested criteria for investment in various locations in Thailand, with a two-year strategic implementation plan and an initial budget of more than 10 billion baht.

The group, Mr Lang is always discreet and runs a strictly confidential operation, recently made a 3bn baht cash offer for an approved luxury resort in Thailand.

“However, due to various unfortunate circumstances, the deal fell through in due dili-

gence,” Mr Lang explained.

Mr Lang believes that private family-run hotel owners who are not used to working to international standards are going to start seeing their business fall apart, especially with the influx of mass tourism through the Chinese market.

The problem of being unable to circumvent the multitude of middlemen putting out their hands when an investment opportunity arrives does not just stop in the sale of hotels and resorts, it permeates the whole industry and is in other segments such as the entertainment, retirement and healthcare industries.

Ace condo developers face more charges

THE developers of the unfinished Ace 1 condominium project in Phuket are facing multiple charges after dozens of buyers filed complaints seeking compensation for down payments on the project, which was scheduled to be complete in April this year.

The company behind the project, Nine Property (Patong), was given two weeks from June 15 to address compensation to pre-build purchasers, but they have yet to take any action, confirmed Ampol Wongsiri, secretary general of the Consumer Protection Board (CPB).

“We have yet to see them take any action as per our order, so we requested the help of Consumer Protection Police Division [CPPD] and the National Anti-Corruption Commission [NACC],” said Mr Ampol.

The CPPD has since slapped the developers with five charges: defrauding the public; developing a project without permission according to Land



Ampol Wongsiri

Development Act BE 2543; generating fake IT information leading to members of the public suffering losses according to Computer Crime Act BE 2550 (2007); putting out fake or exaggerated advertisement leading to a misunderstanding of the main concept of the product or service according to Consumer Protection Act BE 2522 (1979); and failure to obtain permission to build a condominium according to the Building Control Act BE 2522.

“Evidence has been sent to the NACC in regards to suspected money laundering,” added Mr Ampol.

Officers from the CPB have

been negotiating with the company to refund the buyers’ booking and down payments for several months, but to no avail, Mr Ampol said.

“So far, CPB has received 21 complaints from buyers of 48 units totalling 18 million baht. ACE had sold all of its 183 units at 400,000 baht per unit, totalling 70 million baht,” Mr Ampol said.

“Not many foreign buyers have come forward, so we are in the process of contacting them.”

In the meantime, CPB is filing an additional civil case with the Phuket Provincial Court to get the buyers’ money back.

“The Patong Police have already charged the developers with fraud. The court issued arrest warrants for three people, one of whom was arrested while the other two turned themselves in,” said Lt Col Anukul Nuket of the Patong Police, but declined to name the suspects. “All three are out on bail.”

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Nai Harn condo goes big

Phuket Pads
By Patrick Lusted

NAI Harn Beach, which some say is one of the most popular on the island with the nearby lake attracting many tourists and locals who regularly walk or exercise around it, is getting the biggest condo development in the south of the island, due for completion in 2017.

This is a much welcomed addition to Nai Harn and the many tourists who return there year after year. Unit prices start at 3.65 million baht and will likely attract a lot of attention due to closeness to the beach and local facilities.

The Luxury Nai Harn Development, which has studio, one and two-bedroom units, is located just a few minutes' walk from the pristine white sands and crystal waters of sheltered Nai Harn Bay on Phuket's stunning southwest tip. Even while being near the inland lake it is also close to other luxury resorts and offers beautiful mountain views.

This low-rise development has 12 buildings, each four storeys, surrounded by free-form swimming pools and water gardens. There are 57 studios (40.6 sqm), 189 one-bedrooms (42.7 sqm), 82 pool-access one-bedrooms (45.7 sqm), 36 deluxe



The new Nai Harn development is located just a few minutes' walk from Nai Harn Bay.

two-bedrooms (62.4 sqm) and 12 pool-access two-bedrooms, a total of 376 units.

Furniture packages are available for separate purchases. Studio and one-bedroom furniture packages are 300,000 baht and two-bedroom are 450,000 baht. Furniture packages are mandatory for those participating in the rental guarantee program.

This rental management service allows owners to use their holiday homes while also earn-

ing 6 per cent guaranteed rental return a year for three calendar years and then opt for another 12 years. Participants can stay up to 30 nights a year, have the common area maintenance fee waived with property care service also free and no other monthly expenses.

This development is a short drive from Ya Nui, Rawai, Kata and Karon beaches and Promthep Cape, and a few minutes' drive from a variety of retail amenities and restaurants

such as Tesco Lotus, Villa Market and Da Vinci and Nikita's restaurants.

Construction will begin in the fourth quarter of this year for completion in last quarter of 2017. Prices range from 3.65 to 5.25 million baht and the showroom is already open.

For more information contact: Patrick Lusted at Siam Real Estate, quote reference number: CSIL7564 T: 076-288908 www.siamrealestate.com.

Vijitra budgets B1.4bn for five new projects in three provinces

VIJITRA Property Group has set aside an investment budget of 1.4 billion baht to develop five residential projects worth 2bn baht in the second half of the year.

It targets total presales of 1bn baht after recording 500mn baht worth in the first half, chief executive officer Suebwong Sukhamongkol said.

The five new residential projects will be in Samut Prakan, Chachoengsao and Sa Kaew provinces, just north of Chonburi and Chanthaburi.

They will be detached houses and townhouses under the Maruey and Victoria Private City brands.

Mr Suebwong said the demand to buy homes looked like stabilizing in the remaining months of the year after people delayed their purchasing decisions and the commercial banks restricted mortgage approvals.

As the demand for detached houses and townhouses is more than it is for condominiums, the company is confident that its new projects will help it meet its presale target, Mr Suebwong said.

- The Nation

Promotions set to boost presales in second half

PROPERTY firms are launching promotion campaigns to boost their presales during the remaining months of the year. They include price discounts, transfer-fee waivers, free furniture, and other benefits.

AP (Thailand) has kicked off a campaign called 'It's Your Move' for buyers of its Baan Klang Muang townhouses. There are 17 projects nationwide under this brand with unit prices ranging between 3.49 million baht and 7.99mn baht. The campaign offers discounts of up to 500,000 baht per unit, or customers can choose free air-conditioning, free furniture or transfer-fee waivers.

The promotion will run from now until September 30.

"We launched this campaign to boost our sales in the second half of this year after we enjoyed sales worth 17.27bn baht in the first half, up 86 per cent from the same period last year. Our campaign will continue our presale growth in the second half," said



Bookings in Phuket are on offer for Nusasiri customers. Photo: edwin.11

the company's chief marketing officer, Vittakarn Chandavimol.

Nusasiri's latest campaign is focused on customers who bought its homes for investment purposes. The company guarantees rental income of 6.5 per cent of the unit's value for the first nine years after purchase. The company also offers customers the right to sell the units back to the company.

"We will buy the residence back for the same price the customer paid us to buy it," Nusasiri chief executive officer Visanu Thepcharoen said.

Mr Visanu added that its


customers could also make bookings to stay at the company's properties in tourist destinations such as Phuket, Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Khao Yai.

The campaign covers eight Nusasiri residential projects in Bangkok and upcountry, comprising 2,403 units worth 20bn baht.



The company targets presales worth 6bn baht this year after reporting presales of 3bn baht in the first half alone, equivalent to the total for all of 2014, Mr Visanu said.

- The Nation

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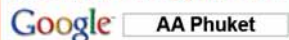
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The Candidate

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- Comfortable and motivated to work against daily deadlines and call targets
- Knowledge of Thailand and its attractions
- Enthusiastic, eager, dedicated and committed team member with strong inter-person skills
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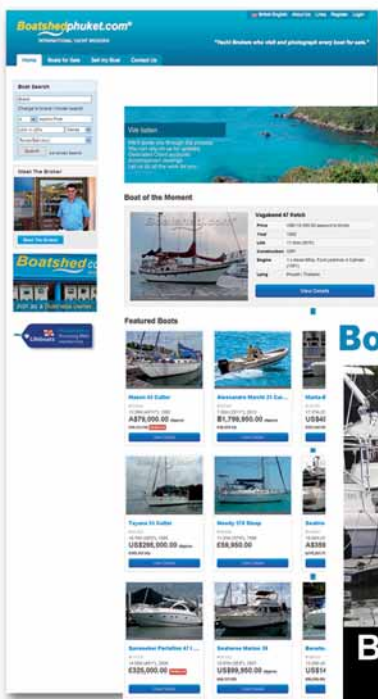
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Tank returns: Beloved DJ back at it

By Mauri Grant

ONE of the island's most beloved residents, Tom Saharut Somsanuk, perhaps more well known as 'DJ Tank', has been taking it easy after a health scare in April, but he is all juiced up and raring to come back – harder, better, faster, stronger – to Phuket's party scene.

With a larger-than-life personality and a taste in music which ranges from funky Motown, to 80s pop, to house music and classic rock, you can catch Tom on the radio waves from the 89.75FM studio, mixing beats at a swanky island event or getting the party started at a wedding.

Tom credits his success in these sectors of the music industry to a mix of an American upbringing and Thai heritage.

"I'm like a turtle – an amphibious being. I have a foot in each world. It gives me an edge. It allows me to have more empathy so that I can feel out both sides and find the middle," Tom explains.

Tom brought experience as a bouncer and a DJ in the States to Bangkok, where he got his

feet wet working festivals and small parties before moving on to bigger gigs, including one at the 'party house of the stars', Q Bar on Soi Sukhumvit 11, in the early 2000s.

Flash forward several years, and Tom is now a sought after wedding DJ with a new day job at 89.75FM.

"Weddings are the most challenging things I've ever done," he says. "But [performing at weddings] is like being part of a large life cycle of entertainment.

"Kids from the UK, Australia, they come here as backpackers. Maybe they meet someone and make a connection. How many of these people end up dating, getting serious, wanting to have their wedding in Thailand?"

"They bring their families here [for the wedding]. Then, later, they come with kids. Then they may come to renew their vows. Maybe some of them retire here. They go through different life stages and still love Phuket.

"It's a neat glimpse into their world. We sometimes forget

where we live – it's paradise." And Tom isn't leaving this paradise any time soon.

"I love Phuket because I have learned more about myself since I got here," he says.

"I am discovering what I can do, what I would like to do. I am trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up – even though I am already grown up."

There are a few things Tom has already discovered he can – and cannot – do.

"I can't sell, create, cook, evoke the same feelings as I can by laying down a tapestry of music. I build a sound environment that makes

everyone so happy and so in love and so in the moment that they feel like they are out of their body," he says.

"I never thought I could do that, that it would be something to do."



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