

Phuket Gazette

December 19 - 25, 2015

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Flying SorKor 1 lands on Naka Noi Island

■ Multi-million-baht property document allegedly island hops

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

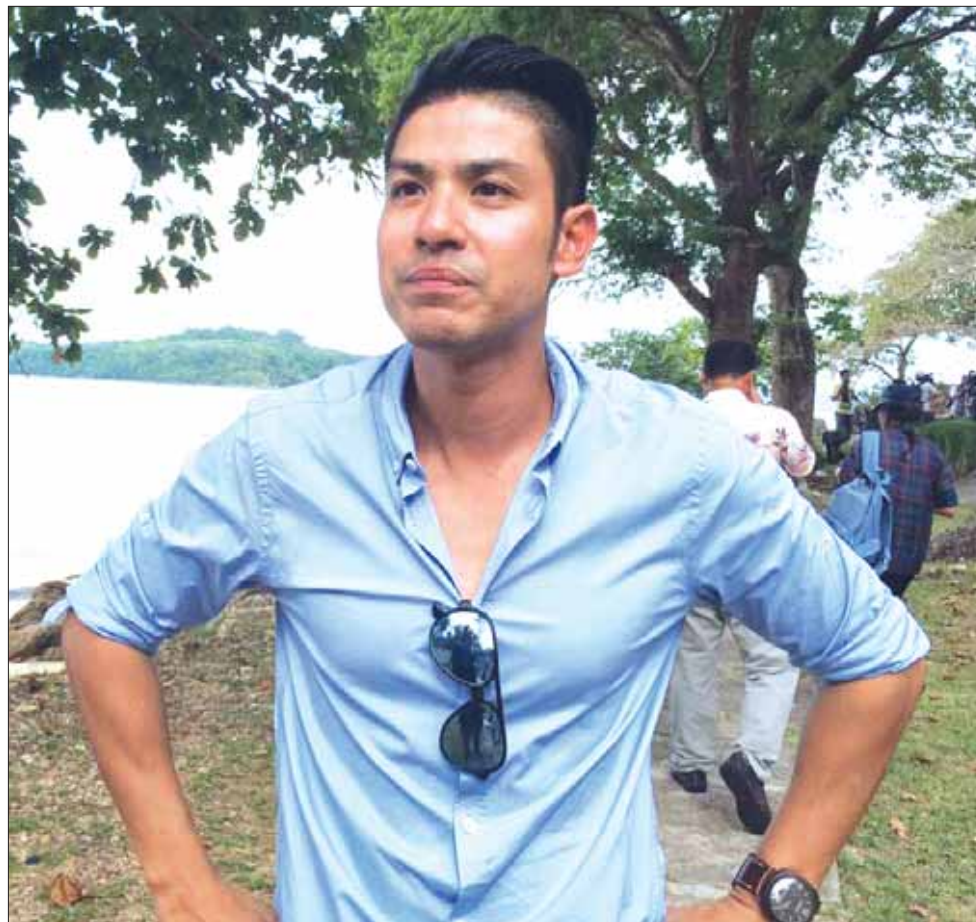
THE Department of Special Investigations (DSI) on Monday investigated a complaint alleging that a 'Flying' SorKor 1 land document had managed to glide from Naka Yai Island to Naka Noi Island, just off Phuket's east coast.

Thai actor Puri Hiranpruk, whose family owns 60 rai of Naka Noi, along with a concession that secures the first 200 meters of a section of seabed for a pearl farm, filed the complaint, saying that there were a number of suspicious activities surrounding the SorKor 1 No70 land document.

"Mr Puri told us that about four years ago, someone tried to sell his family the SorKor 1 No70. One side of the plot bordered a protected forest area, while the other three sides were adjacent to local homes. He said that, after checking with the village headman, it was determined that the document was for Naka Yai Island, not Naka Noi Island," explained Lt Col Prawut Wongseenin, director of the DSI's Bureau of Consumer Protection and Environmental Crime.

In anticipation of possible issues down the road, the Hiranpruk family kept a copy of the document.

"Last year, the SorKor 1 No70 was upgraded to a NorSor3 Kor for a plot of land on Naka Noi. During the upgrading, the size of the plot changed from about seven rai to about 17 rai," Col Prawut said. "With the new size, the ocean now bordered the



Famous Thai actor Puri Hiranpruk, whose family owns about 60 rai of land on Naka Noi Island, filed the complaint about the alleged encroachment. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

plot on two sides."

The same day that the land document was upgraded, July 30, 2014, it was immediately sold to a private company for more than 42 million baht.

"The quick sale itself is suspicious," Col Prawut noted.

Officials were unable to contact the land document holders during their preliminary

investigation into the plot.

"Based on what we could see, there does appear to be clear encroachment on protected forest land on the southern part of the island. That section should be wild forest, home to our precious hornbills, but instead we found rubber and coconut..."

Continued on Page 4

Expats, Thais mourn loss of pillar of island community

BRAD Kenny, 59, died at Mission Hospital this week.

Mr Kenny was deeply involved in the rebuilding efforts after the tsunami, as well as numerous charitable projects.

Full stories Page 2 and 8

BUSINESS



Natthakanya Saengpho, CEO of the Paradise Group, gets stellar marks for 2015.

PROPERTY



Nook Dee Resort owner says Kata Beach is best place to attract FIT.

LIFE&STYLE



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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

British woman killed in Patong Hill accident

A BRITISH national died and another was injured after a pick-up truck allegedly hit their motorbike on the notoriously dangerous Patong Hill on December 12.

Rebecca Leanne Shaw, 32, was pronounced dead on arrival at Patong Hospital, while passenger Julie Anita Maria Robinson, 55, suffered minor injuries.

The driver of the pick-up truck has yet to be charged.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Top cop probes alleged officer's 'crazy' driving

THE island's top cop has ordered an investigation into the reckless driving of an alleged uniformed police officer, who was caught on video driving erratically near the Samkong Underpass construction site, on December 8.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol Thipjaroen was alerted to the

Respected member of Phuket community dies



Brad Kenny, a pillar of the Phuket community, passed away unexpectedly on December 11. Mr Kenny, 59, was the past president and current assistant district governor of the RCoPB, member of the Grumpy Old Men Society (GOMS), member of the Navy League of the United States and involved with numerous charity projects in the region. The Gazette sends its deepest condolences to the Kenny family (see page 8). For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Gazette file

video after a Facebook user claimed that the driver was a uniformed officer, while other commenters recognized the vehicle as possibly belonging to Lt Col Pornthep Putluecha, a

police officer who allegedly has a history of mental health issues.

Col Pornthep will be asked to seek treatment if necessary.

– *Winai Sarot*

Swiss national busted with ammo at HKT

A SWISS man carrying live ammunition was arrested at Phuket International Airport on December 14.

Officials discovered two rounds of ammunition and a firearm magazine in the bag of Andre Steinemann, 39, when he attempted to pass it through airport security.

Mr Steinemann was taken to the Tah Chat Chai Police Station and charged for illegal possession of ammunition.

– *Winai Sarot*

Wastewater seen flowing into Samkong canal

OFFICIALS have confirmed that the foul-smelling water seen flowing into the Bang Yai Canal in Samkong on December 11, was, in fact, wastewater.

Phuket City Deputy Mayor Thavorn Jirapattanasophon was alerted to the situation after a video posted by Facebook user Kanawut Boonsong,

showing black water flowing into the canal, went viral.

Although it has been confirmed that the water carries raw waste, the municipality will have to wait until next year's budget to implement a long-term solution.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Couple busted with 741 packs of kratom leaves

PROVINCIAL Police apprehended a couple in possession of nearly 143 kilograms of kratom in Kathu on December 9.

The arrests of Jamjun Kosai, 36, and his wife Urai Siriwong, 28, followed a tip-off from a police source that the pair had been selling drugs to teenagers and laborers out of a rented house in the area.

They were both charged with possession of a Category 5 drug with intent to sell.

– *Winai Sarot*

Raid digs up four arrests in Chalong plot

OFFICIALS apprehended four men on December 11, after a complaint was filed with Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada claiming that a Chalong land plot was being developed illegally.

The suspects claimed to have been hired by a man named Wansak Ongsantiphap, but failed to provide any information or documents giving them permission to work the land.

All four were charged with developing land without permission.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Tuk-tuk driver returns tourist's stuffed wallet

THE driver of one of the infamous Patong tuk-tuks returned a wallet containing more than 10,000 baht cash to a British tourist in Phuket's primary party town on December 9.

Nimit Weladee, 44, discovered the cashed stuffed wallet in the middle of the road.

The tourist, who police declined to name, reclaimed his wallet that night. He gave Mr Nimit a reward of 1,000 baht.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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Interpol behind Russian busts

One man wanted for human smuggling, the other for drug running

A RUSSIAN wanted for human smuggling was arrested in Phuket on December 11 at the request of Interpol.

Wanted by Russian authorities, Alexander Bukharov, 42, was arrested in Rawai, while a second Russian fugitive, Roman Ledenev, 33, was scooped up by police on Phi Phi the same day.

Mr Ledenev is wanted in Russia for drug smuggling.

"Russia's Interpol unit contacted us about these two suspects," Assistant National Police Commissioner Suchart Thirasawat said on December 13.

Records show that the two men had been living in Thailand for nearly two years before their arrests.

"As Russia has already revoked their passports, we have now cancelled their visas to Thailand," Gen Suchart said.

The arrests of the two men attest to Thailand's successful steps in cracking down on transnational gangs and criminals who are using the country as a safe haven, Maj Gen Surachet Hakpam of the Tourist Police asserted.

Mr Ledenev and Mr Bukharov were taken from Phuket to Bangkok on December 13, as police arranged for their deportation.



Both Mr Ledenev (right) and Mr Bukharov are wanted in their home country, Russia. Photo: PR dept

Immigration police in Thailand are attempting to link their systems with Interpol's database of stolen and revoked passports as part of the crackdown on transnational criminals.

"Interpol's database contains about 47 million cancelled and stolen passports," said Maj Gen Apichat Suriboonya, commander of the

Foreign Affairs Division of the Royal Thai Police.

The failure of the Thai immigration system to connect with the Interpol database has allowed numerous foreigners to sneak into the country undetected.

"With the link, immigration officials will be able to check a passport in the database in just

0.03 seconds," Gen Apichart said, adding that a signing ceremony regarding the collaboration would take place in the coming week.

Gen Apichart refused to reveal how many foreign criminal suspects Thailand is currently monitoring or attempting to track down.

- The Nation

Phuket jet-ski 'cowboy' quick on the draw



The gun and matching rubber bullets. Photo: Patong Police

PHUKET police are hunting a jet-ski operator who pulled out a firearm on December 10 at Patong Beach.

"We arrived at the beach after receiving a report of an argument between two jet-ski operators. However, Banyong Thonghorm, 46, had already fled the scene," said Lt Col Sutthichai Thianpho of the Patong Police. "Witnesses led us back to his vehicle where we found a revolver with matching rubber bullets."

When police visited Mr Banyong's house, his wife told them that he was 'not home'. As the Gazette went to print on Wednesday, police had still yet to detain Mr Banyong.

"We are still looking for him. However, the victim has yet to file a complaint, so we are not pressing any charges at this point," Col Sutthichai said.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong



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Flying into Naka Noi



DSI investigates Naka Noi Island.

From Page 1

...trees,” Col Prawut said. “We will be calling the land owners and other related parties in order to verify the document and get a better idea of what’s happening.”

The Anti-Money Laundering Office was also notified about the case and will be investigating the possibility that the multi-million-baht transaction was part of a money laundering scheme.

“It might take us several months, but we will get to the bottom of this and ensure justice is served,” Col Prawut said.

DSI hunts three in multi-billion-baht Sirinat park land encroachment case

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

THE Department of Special Investigation (DSI) is hunting down three men for their alleged involvement in land encroachment cases involving more than 2.4 billion baht of Sirinat National Park land.

“We are searching for Ghao Naknam and Ti Nahnam, who illegally acquired a *SorKor1* in Thalang for 2bn baht worth of national park land,” Lt Col Prawut Wongseenin, director of the DSI’s Bureau of Consumer Protection and Environmental Crime, said yesterday. “With the help of three officials, including a former national park chief, the men were able to illegally upgrade the document, turning it into two *Chanote* title deeds.”

SorKor1 documents recognize only possession, not



Lt Col Prawut is heading the investigation. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

ownership, rights to a parcel of land and may not be transferred to another party. However, *Chanote* titles recognize land ownership and can be easily

transferred.

In a separate land encroachment case, DSI officials are looking for Lamsan Sroison, who acquired a *Chanote* title for

seven rai of Sirinat National Park and then used a ‘flying’ *SorKor1* to acquire a total of 420 million baht worth of land.

A flying *SorKor1* is a deed that has been legally issued for a specific plot, but then applied to another site elsewhere.

Mr Lamson’s documents were approved by three different officials.

“We are trying to locate the suspects in both cases,” Col Prawut said. “We plan on formally charging them in January. The information will then be sent to the Phuket office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission.”

Col Prawut confirmed to the *Gazette* that the six officials involved in illegally issuing the documents were under investigation. However, he declined to name them and the government agencies for which they work.

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UK foundation to fund new Phuket roundabout

THE UK-based non-profit Safer Roads Foundation will fund the construction of a roundabout at the island’s deadly Narisorn-Surin intersection in a bid to reduce accidents.

Phuket had 108 road deaths last year and is in Thailand’s top five provinces for road casualties over the past decade.

The intersection near Phuket Provincial Hall in Muang district has claimed five lives this year, while 36 others have been injured.

After the Safer Roads Foundation offered to help prevent road carnage at a key location in the province, the Phuket Network for Road Accident Prevention came up with the project, said Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol Thipjaroen.

The 2.8-million-baht roundabout was designed by a Phuket Rotary Club of Tongkah architect and approved by Prince of Songkhla University Professor Pichai Taneerananon. It will be constructed by the Nakhon Phuket Municipality.

The roundabout will provide motorists with enhanced visibility, while its aluminium-composite frame will be durable and will require low maintenance.



The roundabout is designed to increase safety. Image: Phuket PR

The globe frame will comprise small octagonal shapes.

‘Octagonal’ suggests the unity involved in the project; the round shape represents Phuket’s nickname, the Andaman Pearl; while the overall look resembles the pattern of a turtle back, signifying longevity.

Phuket’s public and private sectors have initiated a number of measures to try to reduce the number of accidents in the province. The 108 road deaths last year are a marked improvement from previous years, when about 200 deaths per annum were typical.

Measures include the repair of 20 accident-prone road sections from 2008 to 2011 and a serious campaign pushing for people to wear helmets on motorcycles in 2011.

– The Nation

German killed in crash

Partner seeks justice, alleges derelict of duty

By Kongleaphy Keam

A WOMAN severely injured in a Phuket traffic accident is demanding justice for her dead German partner, following police failing to conduct a blood alcohol test on a man who allegedly had admitted to drinking prior to the fatal accident on December 3.

"I was conscious, but unable to move immediately after the accident. The driver didn't stop; he kept trying to drive forward over the top of my boyfriend. I couldn't do anything," Patcharin Lammai, 35, told the *Gazette* from her hospital bed. "Thankfully, a tuk-tuk driver and local man who witnessed the accident were able to stop the driver."

Andreas Walter, 47, was rushed to Vachira Phuket Hospital, but succumbed to his injuries the next morning. Ms Patcharin, Mr Walter's partner of 10 years, suffered injuries to her face, legs and abdomen. She was taken to Bangkok Hospital Phuket by request, following Mr



Ms Patcharin helplessly watched at the scene. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

Walter being admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

"The couple were on their way to Chalong from Kata when they were in an accident with a car driven by Jakarin Rodpradit, 26," explained Lt Nipon Temsung of the Karon Police.

Ms Patcharin alleged that Mr Jakarin told witnesses that he was not drunk, but had in fact been drinking.

Police confirmed to the *Gazette* on December 10 that officers at the scene did not corroborate this information with a statement from Mr Jakarin or the witnesses.

"The two officers at the scene did not ask Mr Jakarin whether or not he had been drinking," said Lt Nipon. "We also have yet to question any witnesses about this accident."

Police detailed the incident in their report, seized Mr Jakarin's driver's licence and allowed him to return to his vehicle and go on his way.

"I later learned that police did not even test the blood alcohol level of the driver," Ms Patcharin said. "Why haven't any police officers come to question me about the incident? Why did they let the driver go free?"

Ms Patcharin has pressed a reckless driving causing death charge against Mr Jakarin, who had returned to work the day after the accident.

At police-conducted negotiations on December 8, Mr Jakarin denied all charges. He told police that Mr Walter was, in fact, the one driving recklessly.

Mr Jakarin is out on bail, while police continue their investigation.

Army colonel accused of threatening Navy officer

AN ARMY colonel is under investigation after he was allegedly recorded threatening a Navy officer for breaking up an underground casino in Chalong on December 6.

"At the police station, one of the suspects handed me a phone and said that someone wanted to talk to me," said Lt Somphop Kamkana of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command.

"He introduced himself and proceeded to tell me that the Navy had no right to execute such raids and threatened to have me transferred if I didn't let the suspects go."

Lt Somphop declined to name the officer, but referred to him by his nickname, 'Col Phaek'.

"Col Phaek became increasingly irritated and rude, so I decided to record the conversation and hand the recording over to my commanding officer," Lt Somphop said.

Military officials are now investigating the incident.

- Kongleaphy Keam

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Layan Marina construction to start next month

Drumstick beat rules of the regatta

Police gag will not serve transparency in justice system

PHUKET: T... federation of... will launch a... project this mo...

The Phuket Gazette

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THIS ISSUE
Task force to blitz illegal labor; PIMEX hailed...

Gov helps search for little Solitaire

Immigration aiming to beef up staff at airport

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

PHUKET: Pol Col Chirdcha Rattanametanon, the new Superintendent of the Immigration Office at Phuket International Airport, has applied for more officers in order to reduce timesome delays in processing tourists.

Col Chirdchai told the Gazette, "I understand that there are not enough Immigration officers at the airport to process the volume of tourists, but I have already applied to my superior officer to have more officers stationed there."

He said that there are currently about 50 officers manning immigration counters at the airport, but added that half of them worked the day shift and the other half worked the night shift.

"We have officers standing by at both the arrival and the departure counters, but in the outboard... an... me... and... son... peo... tryin... Chir... and e... added... T... migrati... follows... On... the Goze... day, Nov... nearly an...

Lovely place - pity about the jet-skis

I have been to Phuket for each of my last six annual holidays in the sun among the world's friendliest people.

However, if there is one thing that ticks me off it is the total lack of respect that jet-ski users show towards other beach users.

project this month in a bid to help... pilot... My... ism... four...

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

Hoover plainly loves playing his golf, damn it



Governor works on riddle of little Solitaire

PULP FRICTION

Following a directive by national police chief Pol Gen Kowit Wattana, police nationwide have been parading... The media... made aware of those people and what they are alleged to have to the

Task force to blitz illegal labor

A DECADE ago on page one, the *Gazette* told the story of a renewed spark of hope that filled the souls of Sascha and Patchara Meissmer, as they re-launched the search for their young daughter, Solitaire, who went missing in the 2004 tsunami.

"On December 26, I held onto Solitaire as tightly as I could, but the second wave ripped her out of my arms. A friend later told me he saw my daughter being rescued. I have long sensed that my daughter is still alive somewhere, and when I saw the picture, I felt more sure. We may find her yet," Mr Meissmer said.

A body with a 99.99% DNA match for Solitaire's was recovered and identified by the Thai Tsunami Victim Identification (TTVI) unit... evidence that would seem conclusive. However, as 2005 was coming to a close and the anniversary of the great wave quickly approached, a photograph of a Eurasian-looking girl, who appeared strictly similar to Solitaire, was posted online - that was all it took to rekindle hope for the Meissmers.

Countless miracles rose from the rubble and devastation left by the tsunami. For every survivor's story of great loss, there seemed to be an equally compelling story of extraordinary human kindness, compassion and hope. Was the story of Solitaire yet another?

The TTVI unit and the Phuket governor at the time, both did their best to review the evidence, as well as search the Phuket flight records for any trace of the little girl in the photograph.

Then, in the late spring of 2006, a new and independent DNA analysis was conducted. It confirmed that Solitaire was one of countless children that did not survive the waves - but ten years ago, we didn't know that, and neither did the Meissmers.

As the Meissmers and government officials searched for Solitaire at the end of 2005, a disconcerting silence had fallen over the island.

Maj Gen Decha Budnampeth, the Phuket provincial commander at the time, had put a gag order in place: officers at all levels, including station superintendents, were to stop releasing case-specific information to the media. The order was a trickle down from the national level.

"The media blackout has been lauded by activists as a long-overdue step to protect the rights of victims and suspects who have yet to be found guilty by the courts, but the press and television are finding it more difficult than ever to do their jobs," the *Gazette* reported in the December 17-23, 2005 issue.

Gen Decha blamed inaccurate and unethical reporting by both the media and the police. Like police officers, some members of the press lacked the education or experience to report accurately and without bias, he said.

Reenacting crimes remains a standard carnival-like practice by police looking to parade unconvicted criminals in front of the media. (Who remembers the man who reenacted the sexual assault of a minor, using a teddy bear as he smiled for the cameras?) Despite the government's stance on unethical reporting, the practice of reenactment was to be considered on a case-by-case basis, only with the permission of the suspect. A similar stance on reenactments was reinstated on Phuket several years ago, but didn't seem to stick.

Without a doubt, the information leaked to the media, along with unfounded assumptions made by police - the questionable circumstances surrounding a number of deaths ruled as suicides by police should serve as apt examples - would not be permitted in many western countries. The best solution is a police spokesperson, who is briefed on cases that are of public interest and capable of walking the fine line between providing important information to the public, and those appealing to the voyeuristic tendencies that draw so many to the news pages.

Nonetheless, a media blackout, such as was seen ten years ago, raises the hackles on the back of a person's neck and conjures up the inevitable question: what are they hiding? In all countries though, especially those where distrust of the police runs as high as a person's temperature when down with dengue, nothing holds more true than the oft-quoted aphorism: "Not only must Justice be done; it must also be seen to be done."

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

The gift of
hindsight

Three-day funeral held for Supreme Patriarch

HIS Holiness the late Supreme Patriarch Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara Somdet Phra Sangharaja's funeral and cremation ceremony began on Tuesday and ran until Thursday.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, on behalf of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, led a number of elaborate rituals during the three-day period honoring His Holiness.

His Holiness died on Oct 24, 2013, at Chulalongkorn Hospital. He was 100 years old.

Former general seeks asylum in Australia

A FORMER high-ranking police officer, who headed a human-trafficking investigation that led to the arrests of state officials, is seeking political asylum in Australia, he disclosed last week.

Maj Gen Paween Pongsirin said he was seeking asylum, as he felt unsafe in Thailand.

"If I remained in the police force, I would be in danger. I sought help from my supervisors but received nothing – no protection, no mercy and no compassion," he said.

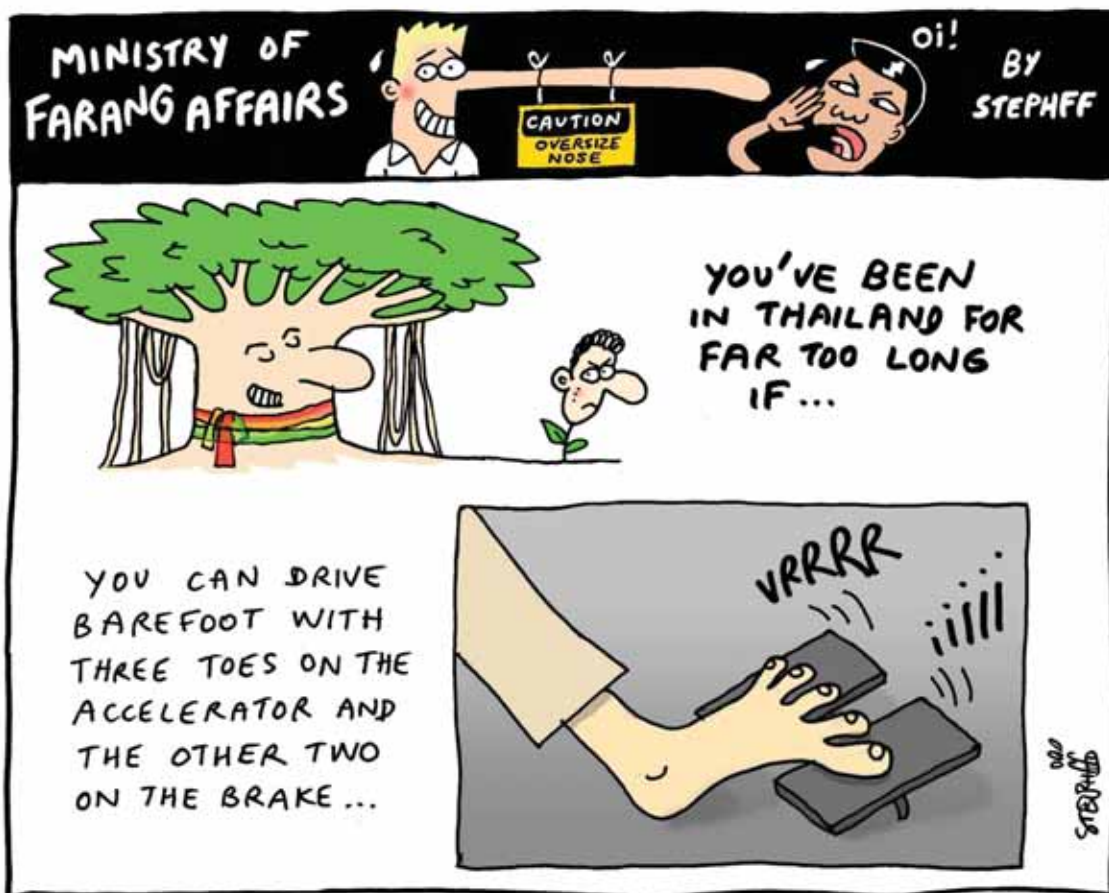
"Even after I resigned from the service, nobody seemed to care. So I decided to bring my family to Australia immediately after the national police chief approved my resignation."

Gen Paween, 57, arrived in Melbourne on a tourist visa.

Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha said instead of remaining in Australia and seeking asylum, Gen Paween should return home and file complaints against those whom he accused of threatening his life and receiving a pay-off from traffickers.

Bomb found, disarmed outside Narathiwat bank

AN EXPLOSIVE ordnance disposal team on Monday defused a pipe bomb planted on a motorbike parked in front of a bank in the Muang district in Narathiwat.



Azi Jehdoma. The corpse of Mr Saikh's mother was blown out of the grave.

Police said Mr Saikh's mother passed away on December 10.

"We believe the bombers might have been hiding nearby and detonated the hidden bomb when they saw the victims praying unsuspectingly," a police spokesman said.

Rorki Dorloh, who has previously been accused of other bombings, was named as a prime suspect.

Amnesty slams Thailand over move against US ambassador

AMNESTY International heavily criticized the government on December 10 after police launched an inquiry into the US ambassador's comments against the lese majeste law.

The human-rights organization called on Thailand to stop using the royal-defamation law to curb the freedom of expression.

US Ambassador to Thailand Glyn Davies faces a police investigation after a complaint was filed against him. He had voiced concerns, at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand on November 25, about the 'unprecedented' prison terms handed down under the law, particularly after the coup last year.

Police sealed off the area after residents alerted them at 7am to a 'suspicious' bike left overnight on Phupha Phakdi Road. Bomb squad officers inspected the vehicle, and found a 10 kilogram bomb in a compartment under the seat.

Witnesses told police that two youths pushed the vehicle, which appeared to be broken, to the spot at around 5am.

Navy rounds up Vietnamese fishing trawlers

FIRST Naval Region sent three ships out to round up 10 Vietnamese fishing trawlers that were discovered in Thai waters near Trat's Koh Kood area on December 12.

The pre-dawn operation only captured two boats along with 10 crew members. The rest of the fishing fleet managed to flee before the Navy arrived.

FB users face arrest for street race organizing

THE Justice Ministry has told police to proceed with taking legal action against administrators of Facebook pages who provide people with street race times and dates.

Wisit Wisitsora-at, chief of the ministry's Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, said preventing street

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

racing was one of the government's key policies.

Mr Wisit said that if police did not seriously implement the measure, he would propose that the justice minister ask Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha to use Article 44 of the post-coup interim charter against indifferent officers.

Man charged for Facebook sedition records video apology

A FACTORY worker in Samut Prakan, who is accused of lese majeste and instigating sedition, has expressed remorse in an audio clip he recorded himself while being brought to a military court.

Thanakorn Siripaiboon, 27, admitted in the six-and-a-half-minute clip that he had distributed damaging information about the Army's controversial Rajabhakti Park project, with the goal of attacking the government.

He said he regretted what he had done and asked activists campaigning against alleged corruption surrounding the Rajabhakti project to stop using him for their benefit.

Explosive kills ranger visiting mum's grave

A CONCEALED bomb was detonated at a graveyard in Yala as a paramilitary ranger and his father prayed at the grave of his mother on December 13.

The blast immediately killed Saikh Jehdoma, who worked for Ranger Taskforce 43, and injured his 63-year-old father



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A fond farewell

THE *Phuket Gazette* joins with the entire Phuket community in mourning the passing of one of the island's most well-known and respected expats, Brad Kenny, who died at the age of 59 on December 11.

Brad lived an exemplary life of self-sacrifice and service to the less fortunate, both independently and through the many charitable organizations of which he was a part. These included the Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB), of which he was a charter member and served as president last year when the chapter was awarded the HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn Trophy, Thailand's highest service award.

In addition to his numerous and never-ending charitable works, which are too extensive to be listed in this space, Brad was extremely helpful to this publication over the years. He provided valuable insight on a wide variety of topics, ranging from tsunami recovery efforts and landslides along the bypass road, to important environmental and water-related issues. Indeed, Brad was one of the island's leading experts on water issues through his experience with his company Environmental Solutions & Protection (ESP) Corporation.

In 2010, he received the highly-prestigious Sahataya Naval Insignia and Certificate from the Royal Thai Navy for his work with the American Navy League. Brad was involved in no fewer than 63 US Navy Community Relations (Comrel) and Handclasp projects, which often saw visiting US Navy servicemen and women on 'rest and relaxation' stops on the island, going out to paint at local schools or take part in other kinds of community service work.

As a father of three, Brad was also a key member of the parent's association at QSI International School Phuket and always helped out with school activities.

Politically, Brad was an outspoken Democrat and liberal who maintained a keen interest in American politics despite having left his home country for Thailand more than 15 years ago. He was active on social media; hardly a day would pass when he would not serve up a Facebook posting pointing out the lunacy of American gun control regulations or commenting on some of the other social issues he was passionate about.

We join the entire Phuket community in offering our deepest condolences to the Kenny family at this difficult time and hope that all who knew Brad will take time to reflect on his life and many achievements as a source of inspiration and as a reminder that it really is better to give than receive.



Light-years away from world-class

The coral reef here is nearly all dead, the sea is full of sewerage, the beaches are not safe to swim in because of jet skis, tourist boats regularly sink, there's gang shootings, smoke haze from Indonesia, traffic jams, incessant road works, menacing taxi drivers, carnage on the roads, no proper public transport, and the few pavements are usually blocked by trash, cars, bikes or vendors.

So please, let's stop any further talk right now about Phuket being a 'world-class destination'.

It is light-years away from achieving such status, if it ever will.

Andy
Phuket

Jet-ski operators should be held liable

Re: Phuket jet-ski operator pulls firearm during beach argument, December 11

So the Phuket authorities are going to crack down on taxi drivers who don't deliver customers directly to their hotels, because it gives Phuket a bad name, but they are going to let people threaten others with a gun on Patong Beach in front of many tourists and do nothing because nobody has made a formal complaint?

Great way to guarantee that Phuket continues with its bad name. How does this make tourism better?

Mai Chob
Gazette forum

Letters

to the Editor

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

Already at capacity before its opening

Re: Grand opening of Phuket airport expansion slated for May, December 14

'Due to the delays the 12.5-million-passenger capacity of the newly-expanded airport will be bulging at the seams with arrivals projected to be at about 13.6mn next year.'

So full before it opens – guess the 'feasibility study' got the numbers wrong.

The prison is going to fall short as well. Mind you the TAT stats on arrivals appear very dodgy looking around the place at present.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Uncertainty is the danger of GMOs

Re: Phuket farmers denounce GMO bill, December 11

The real danger of GMOs isn't economic and/or market protectionism, it's biological.

The ramifications of GMOs are not well understood, but it is this uncertainty that is the danger. Local concerns always seem to involve protecting the little guys (not little really).

Well, if Thailand wants to be a part of the international community, then it needs to consider thinking like one.

I'm not promoting GMOs but looking at the big picture.

Anon
Gazette forum

Protecting natural beauty in Kamala

Re: Opinion: Communities to help protect natural beauty, December 9

Do people do this in Kamala? Unneeded building projects ruining the environment all over town. The long-treasured Casurina Grove on Kamala Beach is being destroyed for another massive hotel project.

Phuket already has so many environmental problems with water, sewage, trash and traffic. In any western country there would be a building moratorium, but there's not a prayer of that happening here.

Pinot
Gazette forum

An interesting case to keep an eye on

Re: Army officer under investigation for threatening Navy lieutenant, December 12

This will be a fascinating case to watch.

Will the rule of law prevail and the Navy Lieutenant be rewarded? Or will corruption prevail?

William Moynihan
Facebook

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Finding common ground

FIRST PERSON

THE new Biological Safety Bill leaves much room for GMO businesses and farms to freely operate in Thailand. There are many hoops that small organic farms must jump through that the bigger GMO companies can bypass.

One such case is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or the Environmental Health Impact Assessment (EHIA). GMO farms are not required to undergo this important step.

This is a serious cause for concern, considering the fact that if one were to get ill from a GMO product, the company can decline to take responsibility by claiming that it was an accident.

An amendment that we would like to see in the Bill would be a requirement to label all GMO products. It is only fair that people are able to make an informed choice about what they put in their bodies, particularly if they can choose to eat something from a farm that will hold itself accountable if their consumers get sick.

Another concern is the fact that the Bill allows businesses and farms to be approved at the department level as opposed to the ministry level. Companies that can create a huge impact on Thailand's farms should be looked at from the highest authority possible.

The effects that this will have on Phuket at this point have yet to be seen, but considering the limited amount of farming space on our island, I



Somchai Sakulchit is a Phuket native and current president of the Phuket Farmers Council. He graduated from Phuket Rajabhat University with a master's degree in Crop Sciences.

Here he talks about the negative effects that the

new bill regarding Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) will have on Phuket and ways to amend it in order to minimize the impact on small organic farms.

fear that small organic farmers will be put out of business, because at this point, there are no clear regulations in the Bill that state how far a GMO farm must be from an organic farm.

This is a huge issue, because if a GMO product seed travels into an organic farm and pollinates the crop, the GMO company has the right to sue the organic farm for selling its product. It will also damage the reputation of the farmer who claims his products are organic and make him vulnerable to lawsuits if consumers fall sick and take him to court.

To go to court in such cases requires a lot of money, so the farmer will either have to re-grow all of his crop or try to take on the big company in court. This, I fear, will result in a lot of small farms going out of business.

This is one of the many reasons why the Phuket Farmers Council has been protesting the Bill and would like to see amendments made before it's passed. It is essential that these important details are laid out and not left

open to interpretation.

Though Phuket is mainly a province that relies on its rubber plantations and fishing industry, there are still many organic farms on the island that grow papaya, tomato, corn and cucumber.

The Phuket Farmers Council does not want to prevent the improvement of our country's agriculture; we just want to make sure that GMO businesses and farms are regulated and that small farmers are adequately protected.

We have called upon the government to allow representatives from small farms to be present and have a say in the drafting of the Bill.

Until then, the only thing we can do is educate the public about the effects that the Bill will have on local farmers and let them know that they, too, have just as much say in this, because it affects the food that they feed to their families and consume themselves.

We love Phuket. It is our beautiful home, and we want our home to have safe and clean food for its people.



The picturesque early morning commute is the best part of my day.

Always something new

SETTLING down in a new place can sometimes be unnerving, but it's usually outweighed by all the little things that attracted you to it in the first place. I'm drawn to Phuket because it's very multi-faceted and there's no lack of activities to enjoy, no matter what time of year it is and regardless of whether you're alone or with a group of friends.

One of my favorite places to visit on the weekend is the Anthem Wakepark in Cherng Talay. I am definitely not sporty, but this is one activity you can enjoy even from the sidelines.

The park has such a vibrant atmosphere that it's hard not to get into the spirit of things. It's exciting to watch people zooming by in the water, performing back-flips and ramp jumps around you. What's more impressive is that all kinds of people seem to enjoy it – kids, adults, amateurs, professionals – you are bound to encounter them all. Add to that a delicious and reasonably priced (yes, really) menu, and you have the perfect recipe for a Sunday afternoon.

Another enjoyable weekend activity is the Naka weekend market in Wichit. This is a preferred weekend haunt for tourists, locals and expats alike.

Island View

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

Granted, the crowds may not be everybody's cup of tea and havoc ensues if it rains, but the market has a charm about it that makes it a worthwhile visit, particularly the large variety of street food on offer.

And if you're a bargain seeker, a dozen rows of shops await your patronage, with a variety of clothes, shoes and knick-knacks for sale.

My favorite part of the day, however, is my morning commute. I live roughly 20 minutes from where I work, and the daily ride from Kathu to Koh Kaew is invigorating, yet serenely beautiful. By taking the back route through the Loch Palm Golf Course, not only do I avoid the bumper-to-bumper rush hour traffic of the bypass road, but I also enjoy a stunning view of Phuket's hills, trees and open roads. If anything has got you under the weather, I would highly recommend getting on a bicycle or motorbike and riding through the scenic parts of the island.

I aim to learn something new about the island every day, and it has not disappointed me so far.

Words from the Wise

"I don't look at a man who's expert [sic] in one area as a specialist. I look at him as a rookie in ten other areas."

– *Conor McGregor*

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

– *Maya Angelou*

Issues & Answers

Can I buy things at King Power without a flight?

I PLAN on going to King Power, the new duty-free complex in Chalong, within the next week or so.

Although I don't plan on purchasing anything, I was wondering if it is possible to do so even if I do not have a flight to or from Phuket.

A King Power representative replies:

Yes, of course. However, it is only certain items that you will be able to buy.

People who don't have flights can buy any of the products labelled blue, and take them home immediately.

This includes items such as watches, electronic devices, souvenirs and local products.

Please note that items with white labels are exclusively for those who have flights and are only available to be picked up at Phuket International Airport.

However, you do need a member card in order to purchase anything. Luckily, we are currently offering free registration to new members.

For further information, please contact 076-397 888.

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Market crash or merely correction?



Finance

By Don Freeman

THE recent market volatility and media hype surrounding it may have you panicking that another stock market crash (or bear market) is coming. After all, there are serious geopolitical and economic concerns ranging from a migrant crisis in Europe, to Putin on the march in Eastern Europe and Syria, to concerns about the overall health of the Chinese economy and the recent terrorist attacks in the United States and France.

Add in the uncertainty as to when the US Fed will finally raise interest rates and we have the perfect storm of bad news and uncertainty that's hurting stock markets and investor confidence. However before you head for the market exits, you need to understand the difference between a stock market correction and an outright stock market crash or bear market.

A market correction is usually defined as a 10 per cent decline to adjust for an over-valuation in a market that is otherwise in a longer term uptrend or bull market, and such declines can be localized to certain sectors or asset classes. A market correction is often just a way for the market to bring some sense to



The 2008 financial crisis was caused by a massive housing bubble in the US. Photo: pingnews.com

over-enthusiastic investors and usually has a much shorter duration than a bear market or recession.

On the other hand, a stock market decline of 20 per cent or more is usually considered to be a stock market crash or a bear market, and such a decline is more likely to trigger a recession (or even a depression) as it's usually a market-wide meltdown with few safe havens.

The good news is that for a stock market crash to happen there needs to be a really big trigger that seldom strikes out of the blue, and usually it in-

volves some sort of a bubble. For instance, the dotcom crash happened because there was a huge and very obvious Internet bubble, in which certain stocks with little or no revenues (or even prospects for revenues) were given crazy market valuations.

The 2008 financial crisis occurred after a credit crunch/contraction that was ultimately caused by a massive US housing bubble where people with very low or uncertain incomes were able to buy (or flip) houses with little to no-money down mortgages. These toxic mortgages were backed by

guarantees from American taxpayers and then repackaged and sold by banks to often unwitting investors.

One recent exception to the rule that obvious bubbles will cause stock market crashes was the October 19, 1987 crash where the Dow plunged 22.6 per cent causing \$500 billion to vanish in one day. In that crash, the most important factor was program trading that was intended to act as a market hedge. Instead, the computer programs exacerbated existing market weaknesses by liquidating positions as certain loss targets were hit – pushing prices ever

lower in one day.

What does all of this mean for you and your investment portfolio right now?

My take is that as of October 2015, the stock market is in the midst of a 10-15 per cent market correction rather than an outright crash or bear market. And while some valuations are looking stretched (biotech stocks, for instance) and there are some isolated bubbles (such as China), there are still no bubbles that compare to those that caused the dotcom or 2008 meltdown. The fundamentals of the US economy continue to improve slowly despite the negative headlines.

Either way, the key to surviving a stock market correction or crash is simply to not panic and to make sure you have some extra cash on hand to take advantage of lower prices for high quality stocks that get dragged down by any panic.

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

Govt mulls power offer Market rife with illicit outflows

THAILAND will consider a proposal to increase purchase of electricity from Laos from 7,000 megawatts to 10,000MW, Energy Minister Gen Anantaporn Kanjanarat said on December 9, at the ceremony to open Laos' first lignite-mine-mouth power generation plant, the Hongsa Power Plant.

Under the current agreement, Thailand has agreed to



Officials at the Hongsa Power Plant ceremony. Photo: The Nation

purchase 5000MW so far, while another 2000MW will be purchased next year.

– *The Nation*

THAILAND is ranked eighth by the volume of illicit outflows, just ahead of Indonesia and Nigeria, according to a study released on December 9 by Global Financial Integrity (GFI), a Washington, DC based research and advisory organization.

Titled 'Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries: 2004-2013', the study claims that illicit financial flows grew to US\$1.1 trillion (39 trillion baht) in 2013 – marking a dramatic increase from 2004, when illicit outflows totalled US\$465.3 billion.

The study ranks countries by the volume of illicit outflows. According to the report, the 10 biggest exporters of illicit flows over the decade, in decreasing order, are China, Russia, Mexico, India, Malaysia, Brazil, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia and Nigeria.

Authored by GFI chief



GFI President Raymond Baker. Photo: Global Financial Integrity

economist Dev Kar and GFI junior economist Joseph Spanjers, the report pegs cumulative illicit outflows from developing economies at \$7.8 trillion between 2004 and 2013, the last year for which data was available.

This study clearly demonstrates that illicit financial flows are the most damaging economic problem faced by the world's

developing and emerging economies, said GFI President Raymond Baker, a long-time authority on financial crime.

This year at the UN, the mantra of 'trillions not billions' was continuously used to indicate the amount of funds needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Significantly curtailing illicit flows is central to that effort. – *The Nation*

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Community at the core of success

By Simon J Hand

IT'S been a stellar year – and then some – for Natthakanya 'Apple' Saengpho, CEO of the Paradise Group.

Andara Signature – the latest project from Andamandara Development, the company she runs with Dr Allan Zeman – won best Phuket villa development, best Thailand villa development, best residential architectural design and best landscape architectural design at the Thailand Property Awards in September.

Then, in October, she was honored by United States Agency for International Development as one of the Outstanding Women Business Leaders of Thailand for Green Growth – an award designed to encourage environmental development.

The awards come as Apple and her team reach the zenith of a learning curve Dr Zeman set them on seven years ago, first with the development of Surin Plaza, then the Andara resort and villa developments – each new project expanding their skills and knowledge of how best to accommodate the ultra-high-end international market.

The latest iteration of this is Andara Signature. Spread across 30 rai of Kamala hillside, the new project features



Natthakanya 'Apple' Saengpho, CEO of Paradise Group, commands a 400-plus-strong staff.

just eight luxury villas.

Beyond the input of Dr Zeman and his international partners, all of these projects have been designed and built by Apple's team of Thai specialists – all of whom can now justifiably take those skills to the international market without any doubt that they can compete with the best the world has to offer.

"I have the development team, architects, engineers, surveyors – a full team – and I'm looking for projects for that team," Apple says. "I'm look-

ing for investors. I really hope that they are coming. I have a very strong team and we can do much more."

What Apple's team has that their international counterparts cannot claim, is inside knowledge of how to create these mighty projects within Thailand's legal and social framework – the latter having been the downfall of many international developers who tried their hand in the Thai market.

Beyond her development team, Apple commands a 400-

plus-strong staff, running the resort and taking care of guests.

"Most of our staff are local – more than 50 per cent are from Kamala, so the community is very important to me," Apple explains.

"We manage the resort as a family. Everyone here works as if they are at home: they try to save; they try to get things done properly; they try to make sure the guests are happy and love to come back."

With half of her staff quite literally working on their own doorsteps, Apple places

particular emphasis on developing community relations.

"If there are any difficulties, they will be the people that can make me take action to solve problems quickly. These people are very important to me. And, of course, whatever I can return or help them back with, I will do it," she says.

"I'm in a position where I have better opportunities, as well as the ability to do more. So, before I do anything, I always think: how will my people support this?"

Apple sees improving Kamala, keeping the beach clean and working to improve the community as a benefit to her business – after all, who would want to stay at a five-star resort if they have to stumble through piles of trash to get to it?

As such, her team is active in the Kamala Green Club helping with beach cleanups and joining the Friday afternoon town cleanups that are organized by local teens. "[This is] not just to help with the cleanup, but to get to know the teenagers in the community," she explains.

Apple is also pushing to get all of the Kamala hotels and other local businesses involved in the cleanups.

"That will be a very lovely community gathering," she smiles.

Social media in review



THIS has been a big year for social media, so I thought it was worthwhile reviewing some of the interesting facts and figures.

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in the United States were the leading platforms, and the amount of time, effort and money spent in social media marketing has risen rapidly. Social media are now well and truly established, and starting to eclipse areas like television and some print media.

For the first time, Facebook had one billion users log in during a single 24 period, showing the size of this giant medium and the growth in popularity from its early days.

People are far more likely to follow a brand on Twitter, however. And for all things related to employment, LinkedIn is the chosen platform, although it

does not seem to do as well for clients using it to advertize as do Facebook and Twitter.

'Periscope' has grown faster than any other social media platform in the same time-frame, having launched in March 2015. It will no doubt be a platform to watch in 2016.

Smart-phones are continuing their growth in popularity, with the majority of users being female. A huge 73 per cent of all users admitted they would have a panic attack if they lost their mobile device.

So one thing is clear: social media is growing and for a business owner it is becoming a 'must have' tool in the marketing arsenal.

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



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29th Phuket King's Cup Regatta sails on through



Kumpee Maneloke (2nd from right), Haad Thip Public Company Limited Phuket branch manager, presents an award to the crew of Thai Navy 1, the winner of Modern Classic, on race day 4.

The 29th Phuket King's Cup Regatta hosted its official opening ceremony at Kata Beach Resort & Spa on December 5. The highly anticipated event was attended by Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada, high-ranking officials from the Royal Thai Navy, the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand and over 1,500 international and local participants.



CEREMONIOUSLY TOGETHER: (From L-R) Santi Kanchanabandhu, member of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta Organizing Committee; Anoma Wongyai, director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Phuket Office; Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada; Rear Admiral Kittipong Rumakhom, deputy commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command; Kevin Whitcraft, president of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta Organizing Committee; and Andrew Swatdipakdi, general manager of Kata Beach Resort and Spa.

Trading up information

The 7th biennium Andaman Travel Trade 2015 saw nearly 226 overseas tour operators mingle with more than 100 local tourism related operators, such as hotels, tour companies and airlines from Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, Ranong and Trang in an effort to promote tourism in Thailand's southern regions. The event was held at Phuket Rajabhat University on December 10-11.



GETTING THE SCOOP: (From L-R) Purit Maswongs, vice president of international marketing for the Phuket Tourist Association; Santi Pawai, director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Phuket Office; Srisuda Wanapinyosak, TAT deputy governor of international marketing (Asia and South Pacific), Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada; Juthaporn Rengrosana, TAT deputy governor of international marketing (Europe, Africa, Middle East and America's); and Sathirapong Na Takuatoong, president of the Phuket Tourist Association.

Local hospitals spreading around cheer for New Year

Members of Bangkok Hospital Phuket, along with members of Dibuk Hospital, visited some of the island's top officials to wish them a happy New Year and spread holiday cheer throughout the festive season. Officials were greeted with warm smiles and gift baskets from staff.



Dr Narongrit Havarungsri (left), Bangkok Hospital Phuket director, presents a gift basket to Vice Admiral Sayan Prasongsamrej, commander of the Royal Thai Navy's Third Area Command.



Dr Watit Wattanasupt (middle), Bangkok Hospital Phuket deputy hospital director, and Dr Piriya Atisook (right), Dibuk Hospital director, hand a gift basket to Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat.

Events in Paradise

Saddling up for Bike for Dad 2015



More than 5,000 participants joined in the Phuket leg of the nationwide event that was held to honor HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej for his 88th birthday.



Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada (center) led the group of cyclists during the procession throughout the island.



Somjai Suwansupana (1st left), Phuket City mayor; Vassana Tipayapongtada, president of Phuket Red Cross (4th left) and other cyclists joined the event.

Howling at the Full Moon Party

Xana Beach Club with Attica successfully brought back its always anticipated Full Moon Party with a crowd of partygoers, who enjoyed house music while dancing to the beats of international and regional DJs, on November 28.



FULL OF FUN: (From L-R) Koy Ratchawin, popular Thai actress; Toon Athiwara from Body Slam; Nantanee Chuaychu, Laguna Phuket assistant events manager; Suratwadee Phetriang, Laguna Phuket PR & marketing communications manager; Prapah Hemmin, director of sales – MICE & Corporate Events Laguna Phuket; and Sree Valsan, Angsana Laguna Phuket F&B director.

Recognizing excellence at the AMCHAM CSR 2015



Laguna Resorts & Hotels PLC was given the AMCHAM CSR 2015 Excellence Recognition award (ACE) by the American Chamber of Commerce on November 24, in acknowledgment of their education empowerment efforts.

Peera Pomsook (center), CSR manager, representing Laguna Resorts & Hotels PLC, accepts the AMCHAM CSR Excellence award from Glyn Davies (left), US ambassador to Thailand, and Darren Buckley, AMCHAM board president of Thailand.

Class warfare at King's Cup final

By Gazette editors

ON THE final day of the 29th Phuket King's Cup Regatta 2015 there was some serious class warfare played out in Kata Bay. Keelboats and multihulls hit the water for one last run, as teams fought for the honor to claim Phuket King's Cup victory in the name of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

In IRC0, *Windsikher II* skippered by Sarab Jeet Singh of Singapore made a great fist of challenging for King's Cup glory with a string of first and second place finishes. *Windsikher II* carried an advantage in both points and momentum going into the last day, and seemingly only an unexpected upset could derail their run. They took both race 10 and race 11, two bullets, as if underlining the completeness of the week's massive performance.

Mr Singh was delighted to finally win a Phuket King's Cup Regatta, after coming in second and third place in many past runs since 1997.

"We had the points advantage going in, but anything can happen, any equipment failure or other issue en route. Second place is a threat, and so we decided to sail the same way, no messing about, with keen roundings," said Mr Singh. "This is my sixteenth King's Cup since 1997, and my first win. Our Welbourn 52 custom boat had the same crew as my other boat (Sydney 40), and we've basically enjoyed ourselves and done really well.

"Courses were well organized but the light breezes are always challenging here. The team did well and the only reason I bought this boat was that I knew we had



There was some serious class warfare on Kata Bay for the final day of the King's Cup. Photo: Guy Nowell

a team that could step up."

Among the IRC1 entrants, Kenn Eyears and *Rerefine* (formerly *Windsikher*) led the class ahead of Kevin Whitcraft's *Wan Ma Rang*, chasing by a single point. *Wan Ma Rang* took line honors in race 10, but placed 90 seconds behind *Rerefine* on corrected times. In race 11, *Rerefine* won again to finally nail their regatta trophy.

Japanese team *Karasu*, skippered by Yasuo Nanamori, lead IRC2 with a total of four race wins, just one point behind was Roland Dane's *Jessandra II*, but Mick Tilden's *Fujin* team threw a spanner in the works by claiming race ten, leaving the two leaders to fight it out for second place.

An incredible battle ensued with *Jessandra II* beating

Karasu by 24 seconds on elapsed time and a skinny 9 seconds on corrected. In race 11, *Karasu* struck back, the resulting final day's points scramble seeing *Karasu* sitting pretty and three points clear. A classic Phuket King's Cup finale.

Pine Pacific had already won the Premier Class after another two victories – although, true to form, still took line honors (and then another win, just for luck). *Audeamus* skippered by Kim Ramen & Adrian Fini took a consolation win in race 7.

Andrey Novikov skippering *Alexa* in Bareboat Charter put in another predictable first, securing a King's Cup Regatta win for the Russian team. Their run of 6 wins out of 7 races put them miles ahead of any rival in final scoring for the class.

Vladimir Oleynikov's Open Charter entry *Popeye* had a marvelous run. The Russians took another seemingly sweat-free run, finishing fastest on both elapsed and corrected time – twice. Their victory had been emphatic, dominating the class by winning their first four races at the beginning of the week – and never looking back.

The Royal Thai Navy entry, *Thai Navy 1*, skippered by Chief Petty Officer First Class Wiwat Poonpat, achieved regatta glory in Modern Classic Class. The team finished well ahead of the rest of the fleet again to win both of their races.

IRC Cruising Class race six was won by Thai-registered *Slipstream* skippered by Rod Mulcahy. *Slipstream* and *Mustang Sally* were tied up after the

last race, and on countback, *Slipstream's* race win from the previous day proved invaluable; an edgy final day decider.

Cruising Class race six fell to a Chinese entry named *Atom*, skippered by Jian Quan Tong. Tony Byrnes and *Mohawk*, who won the first four races in spectacular fashion, had done enough by midweek, and were named winner of the Class.

Of the two Classic entries this year, Cedric Rimaud skippering *Selma* took every race in the regatta apart from on the first day's racing. The boat did well, completing every course in allotted time limit.

Firefly 850 Sports had been absolutely owned by John Newnham skippering *Twin Sharks* all week, with seven wins before the final day. Hans Rahmann's *Voodoo* team took a consolation win in race 9 but were 8 points adrift at the close.

In the Multihull Racing Class, Alan Carwardine and his team led the Class by three points ahead of Team *Java*. Asia Catamarans *Hurricane* claimed a narrow victory over another very well sailed boat, *Three Itch*, in race 9. Race 10 completed their two bullet performance and well-earned Regatta honors.

In Cruising Multihulls, Japanese entry *Minnie*, which has performed brilliantly this regatta, came second behind *Star Fruit*, but the team had done enough to win the class by four points.

Performance Multihulls was won by Australian Elizabeth Schoch on *Sudu3*, and she had been on exceptional form throughout the regatta. She enjoyed first and a second on the last day, completing a magical run in this new Class.

DJ Oakenfold takes on Xana

THE atmosphere at Xana Beach Club was electrifying as guests poured in for the opening night of the DJ festival, running from December 12-20 and featuring nine of the best local and international DJs. Despite the pouring rain, the venue was quickly filled to capacity as guests waited for the first performer of the night – three time Grammy nominated DJ and record producer Paul Oakenfold.

"Every time I come here, I meet a lot of great people. I've got friends in Phuket... I can see some regular faces [here] and it really makes a differ-



Paul Oakenfold at Xana.

ence," Mr Oakenfold said.

He also had some advice for aspiring local DJs and artists.

"My advice to them is, focus on yourself, don't worry

about what anyone else is doing – become the best at what you do and your time will come," he said.

"When I lived in New York, I slept on the floor. I didn't have a lot of money because electronic music wasn't big in London at the time... To anyone who reads this, I want to say there's no excuse for not doing what you love."

True to form, Mr Oakenfold had the crowd on their feet with his raving tunes, setting a great tone for the rest of the week's performances.

– Sahar Aftab Paliwala

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

December 16-18. The Asia Pacific Superyacht Rendezvous 2015

The Asia Pacific Superyacht Rendezvous invites luxury yachts over 100ft, their owners, guests and VIPs for 3 days of unforgettable fun.

This is an exclusive invitation-only event that celebrates luxury yachting.

December 20-27. JW Marriott Phuket's Kabuki Japanese Sunday Brunch

Kabuki Japanese Cuisine Theatre is back with the most elaborate and well-known weekly Japanese Sunday Brunch in Phuket.

The menu includes highlights such as Japanese Sashimi selections, Akami Tuna, Salmon, Red Snapper, Octopus, Japanese King Fish and fresh Oysters. The exquisite Teppanyaki cook-to-order selections feature a lineup of the finest meats from Tenderloin, Striploin, Lamb Cutlets, Chicken, to Kurobuta.

2,000 baht per person, including food and free-flow soft drinks, with 50% off for children aged 7-12 years old. 12pm-3pm.

THAI still soars in European airspace



By Stephen Fein

AFTER a slew of bad news for Thai commercial aviation abroad, the industry finally got a much needed piece of good news with the December 10 announcement by the European Commission (EC) that no Thai airlines were included on the updated Air Safety List drawn up by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

Some industry analysts had mistakenly feared that EASA might follow in the footsteps of the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which earlier this month downgraded Thailand to a Category 2 rat-



THAI airways was not on the updates Air Safety List drawn up by the EASA. Photo: Aero Icarus

ing, citing the failure of its now-defunct Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) to comply with international aviation standards, as mandated by the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The DCA has since been replaced by a new agency known as the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), which will oversee a much needed overhaul of aviation safety

standards in Thailand, to ensure compliance with ICAO standards.

ICAO red-flagged Thailand in June after the results of an audit conducted earlier in the year were announced. Several countries including Japan, South Korea and China imposed new restrictions on Thai carriers operating in their air space, not allowing them to add new flights or change sched-

ules on existing routes until improvements were made and recognized by ICAO.

While the FAA ban is a major blow to Thailand's safety reputation abroad, it comes with no direct effect on any Thai carriers, since none currently operate flights to North America. It came as a surprise to some when THAI dropped its service to Los Angeles in late October, given that the

city's unofficial nickname is 'the 78th Thai province' because 80,000 of the estimated 120,000 Thais in California call it home.

As for EASA, most of the fear and trepidation regarding an across-the-board downgrade turned out to be misplaced, because the EASA's report only mentions whether to allow THAI and jet charter firm MJets – the only two Thai carriers currently operating to Europe – to continue service over European airspace. Much of the confusion stemmed from the fact that EASA does not function in the same way as the FAA. It does not typically audit civil aviation in other countries, leaving that task to ICAO. Rather it looks into safety aspects of operations of individual carriers operating in their airspace. So the good news is that neither THAI nor MJets were included in the list and they will be allowed to continue flying to Europe.

Grand opening for HKT expansion slated for May



Phuket International Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan gave a tour of the project last week. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

THE highly-anticipated expansion of the Phuket International Airport will be celebrated with a grand opening in May, confirmed the airport director.

"We are now 83.69 per cent done. There will be an additional 10 bays and four aerobridges," explained Phuket International Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan on December 9.

A soft opening of the 5.7-billion-baht expansion will be held on Valentine's Day following two trial phases to be completed in the next two months. The opening, however, will only be for the extension – not any other facilities or renovations.

"We are doing what is necessary to ensure everything runs perfectly," Ms Monrudee said.

In May, all international flights will be moved to the new terminal. Following the move, further renovations will be made to the old terminal so that it can better cater to domestic flights.

The expansion was originally slated to be complete midway through this year, but a number of difficulties faced by contractors – including heavy monsoon rains – caused the project to be pushed back.

Due to the delays the 12.5-million-passenger capacity of the newly-expanded airport will be bulging at the seams with arrivals projected to be at about 13.6mn next year. About 12.5mn people will have arrived at the airport this year, dwarfing the airport's current capacity of 6.5mn passengers.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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PADI dives in with freediving courses

Diving

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

PADI is taking the plunge as it dives into an entire new world with its recently-launched set of freediving courses.

Freediving is a small niche in the diving industry that PADI has, up to now, not tapped into. For more than a decade there has been the PADI Skin Diver course, which “teaches you how to enjoy watching life below the surface and comfortably venture underwater for short visits”. However, the course wasn’t designed to compete with freediving training agencies or train people as freedivers.

PADI, which is nearly synonymous with getting a scuba diving licence, got its feet wet with the launch of a freediving specialty course about three years ago. However, at a PADI Asia Pacific Regional Managers conference, the feedback that area managers from Indonesia, India, Korea, Thailand and numerous other locations, brought to the table was the same – there needs to be more.

“It was just a specialty course; it wasn’t a proper freediving course or instructor course,” explains Andy Auer, PADI Thailand West Coast regional manager. “We listened to people like Richard Wonka [co-owner with Sarah Witcher of Phuket-based Freediving Instructor Training Center ‘We Freedive’] who were saying: ‘Hey, there are certain elements that are really missing in this specialty course... Maybe you need to make the course a little more complex, because it’s a

little short just as a specialty.’

Following the regional meeting, it was decided to completely restructure the program.

PADI talked to freediving experts from other certifying agencies, and it became obvious that, though other courses were solidly built, they were not supported by the best learning materials, explains Andy.

“PADI has always done a good job in providing a complete system. We have videos, we have photographs, and we have a book for the student and a manual for the instructor,” Andy says.

The final result of listening to the instructors and combining it

of corresponding instructor courses.

The first course “develops the knowledge and skills for basic Static Apnea, Dynamic Apnea, Free Immersion and Constant Weight freediving from 10-16 meters.” Advanced and master freediver courses were developed to build on this base and increase a student’s understanding of the science behind freediving as they push to new depths.

The only major freediving disciplines not covered by the course are: ‘No Limits’ and ‘Variable Weight’, both of which use a ballast weight on the descent.

“At first, I was surprised that PADI took this long to launch a well-developed system, until I got some insights in the development of the program,” says Richard. “The biggest challenges were likely the unexpected differences between scuba diving, which PADI knows very well, and freediving, which was an entirely new field for them.”

PADI’s greatest strengths are also its greatest weaknesses as it enters the freediving arena: standards, accessibility and sheer size, says Richard.

“At the core of PADI’s expertise are three things: A high level of standardization, quality control and broad business support.

PADI aims at making freediving accessible to a wide demographic by creating a basic set of well-defined, safe standards and supporting those who aim to apply these standards.”

The PADI standards define safe minima and the content is provided in a proven system,

Safe practices can only be based on a solid understanding, and structured freediving education has proven its worth in making this understanding accessible. /

– Richard Wonka, co-owner of Freediving Instructor Training Center ‘We Freedive’

with the resources and systematic approach of PADI is the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art freediving course on the market, Andy points out.

The freediving program now offers three student courses: Freediver, Advanced Freediver and Master Freediver. Additionally, there are three levels



Sarah Witcher of ‘We Freedive’ makes a descent. Photo: We Freedive

which means that a basic skill set for freediving and safe practices will be accessible to an enormous audience – PADI has certified more than 22 million people in its 50-year history.

“PADI’s accessible certification standards will likely lead to a broad range of qualifications within the ranks of PADI Freediver Instructors,” Richard points out. “The standards established are a solid base, and it will be up to us instructors to know when our students need us to go beyond this base.”

The most important element PADI can bring to the sport, however, is its global network, as it disseminates up-to-date information to millions of people, dispelling misconceptions and helping to put an end

to risky freediving practices that both beginners and seasoned divers engage in.

“Safe practices can only be based on a solid understanding, and structured freediving education has proven its worth in making this understanding accessible. Freediving education saves you the time, effort and risk that it would take to repeat – and learn from – the mistakes made by prior generations,” Richard says. “Seeing and providing freediving education at this scale is really exciting. We Freedive is involved in launching the program throughout Southeast Asia and we are looking forward to helping people discover what we think of as one of the best things one can do in – or out of – the water.”



The new PADI freediving curriculum offers three student courses and three instructor levels. Photo: James Hoyland

Seeking asylum in Thailand



Law & Order

By Robert Virasin

LAST week, I met with an American who wanted to apply for a tourist visa for his Thai wife. The American has lived in Thailand for about four years. I asked him why he was living in Thailand instead of the United States with his wife. What he told me was a bit jarring.

He said, "I am an economic refugee. If I lived in the United States, I would be living in a trailer home, worried about getting sick and feeding myself." He informed me that what he receives from his monthly pension provides him with a comfortable life that would not be possible if he lived in the United States. Of course, he is not a refugee. He is in Thailand by choice.

However, there are large groups of people who have been forced to leave their home country because of persecution, war, or natural disasters.

In Bangkok, there are many non-registered asylum seekers and refugees who are hidden in the city. They typically entered Thailand on some type of visa and never left the country.

A friend of mine, John Federaland, volunteers at a Christian Church in Bangkok. He told me a story of a family



Thailand is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Photo: Domic Santiago

of asylum seekers that live hidden in Bangkok.

"It has just been over a year since I first met Goshif's family in our church. Back then, I did not really know much about their background or story. Only recently have I learned that they are living in Thailand as asylum seekers where every day is a challenge to survive.

Goshif, his wife, and young children fled Pakistan to escape discrimination, mistreatment and persecution. This decision is not unusual for people like them who are Christian converts. In

Pakistan, it is illegal for Muslims to convert to another religion under their 'Blasphemy Law'. Christian converts are targeted for imprisonment, violence, and even execution. Goshif decided to come to Thailand because he found out that it's cheaper to travel and live here.

Goshif and his family entered Thailand legally on a visitor's visa. Since entering Thailand, they have not been able to obtain an extension on their visas and have been living in seclusion, moving from one place to another to escape

detection by government authorities. They have applied as asylum seekers with the UNHCR in Thailand.

While waiting for their hearing at the UNHCR, they stay in their apartment on the outskirts of Bangkok. The church provides them with a small amount of money and food. Goshif goes out every day looking for low wage, manual labor jobs to cover the remaining expenses. The young children cannot go to school, so they stay in the apartment all day and go out to play for a couple

of hours in the evening. The only time they travel from their home is on Sundays to go to church.

It is a difficult life in Thailand for Goshif and his family but they feel safer than if they returned home."

In my practice, I receive weekly calls and emails from people seeking assistance with asylum applications. It is very difficult to assist them because they lack financial resources and filing a claim is expensive. Thailand is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not have any laws governing how to deal with refugees. Refugees who enter Thailand on a traditional visa and overstay, are viewed by government authorities as illegal migrants. If located, the refugees would be sent back to the persecution that they are trying to escape. Their lives in Thailand are very difficult. If they still would rather be in Thailand than their birth country, it is hard to imagine what they are escaping.

Robert R. Virasin is a licensed US Attorney and managing director of Virasin & Partners. John Federaland lives in Bangkok and volunteers every Sunday teaching English at his Church. The UNHCR can be contacted through their website at www.unhcr.or.th.

Mining firm to sue girl, 15

THE Community Resources Center (CRC) is trying to help a 15-year-old schoolgirl out of legal trouble, after she participated in a TV citizen reporter scheme that stirred legal action from a mining firm.

Wanpen Khunna, a Mathayom 4 student in Loei province, has allegedly been targeted in the planned defamation lawsuit.

Thung Kham Ltd, which operates a gold mine in Loei's Wang Saphung district, is seeking permission from the Loei Juvenile Observation and Protection Center to bring the lawsuit against Ms Wanpen to court.

However, under current laws no one can take a criminal lawsuit against a minor without prior permission from a relevant juvenile observation and protection center.

"Her interview is libelous to our firm," Thung Kham Ltd said in its letter to the center.



Thung Kham Ltd seeks to file a defamation lawsuit against a 15-year-old. Photo: Michael Coghlan

The Loei Juvenile Observation and Protection Center has summoned Ms Wanpen and her parents to testify on December 21 to determine if there is grounds for the firm to sue her.

Her mother said she was worried because no one in her family had ever been in legal trouble before. She has now

said she doesn't want her daughter joining any more extracurricular activities.

Ms Wanpen joined camp activities between August 28 and 30 this year, during which she helped with the production of a TV report aired on ThaiPBS on September 1.

According to Thung Kham Ltd, Ms Wanpen said in the report "Huai River is affected by the gold-mining industry. The river is now contaminated, thus not drinkable anymore."

Rattamanee Phonkla, CRC coordinator and lawyer, revealed that she had already talked to Ms Wanpen over the phone.

Ms Rattamanee said the TV 'scoop' in fact focused on community rights and was largely not specific about her allegations.

In Loei, many local people have expressed moral support for the girl.

- The Nation

Public outcry over microchip

PRIME Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha is trying to downplay public concern about his government's plan to add occupation and salary details on national identification cards.

Many people have criticized the idea because of the potential for discrimination on the

basis of financial status.

PM Prayut denied that the initiative, which he expects to take effect by 2017, would divide people according to financial status, insisting that it would instead bring many benefits and also reduce tax evasion.

- The Nation

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Nook Dee in hot spot for FIT

New resort appeals to source markets with 'Thainess'

By Kongleaphy Keam

KATA is prime real estate for those in the hospitality industry who are catering to the free independent traveller (FIT) market segment, explained Watanyu Asawabenjang, owner of the recently-opened Nook Dee Kata Beach Phuket Resort.

"Kata Beach is where those people want to be. It's the top choice for the FIT market, as well as couples and families," Mr Watanyu said.

Situated in the mountains overlooking Kata Bay, the Thai-style boutique resort was built on three rai of land for a total cost of about 500 million baht.

The 68-room resort offers Superior Sea View, Deluxe Sea View and Deluxe Jacuzzi rooms with the rates swinging from 4,000 to 20,000 baht per night, depending on the room and time of year.

The resort, which held its grand opening earlier this week, invested heavily on the appeal of 'Thainess'.

"We are selling a unique feeling of being in Thailand – bringing the exquisiteness of Thai culture and Thai cuisine to all of our guests. Not only



The resort was built on three rai of land at a total cost of about 500 million baht. Photo: Pramook Tipvimalmas

do guests enjoy the luxurious facilities and amazing views, but they can soak up that unique feeling of Thailand during their stay at our resort,"

Mr Watanyu said on Monday.

In order to win over the FIT market in the current, highly-competitive environment on Phuket, Nook Dee decided to

move forward as a four-star hotel with the goal of providing five-star experiences.

So far, occupancy rates are strong at the resort – more than

80 per cent, most of which is from the European market – confirmed Mr Watanyu.

Occupancy for the island overall remains at about 75 per cent, with 35 per cent coming from western arrivals and the rest mostly coming from major Asian markets, such as China, Korea and India, explained Kritsada Tansakul, director of the Thai Hotel Association Southern Chapter.

"In the first quarter, we will still be in the high season, so the occupancy levels should remain strong. Though the second quarter will see a change in the source markets, I don't expect to see our occupancy numbers drop significantly," said Mr Watanyu.

Though Nook Dee has just opened its doors on the island, Mr Watanyu is not prepared to invest further in Phuket. Instead, he is looking at nearby Andaman markets that are still relatively young, but have potential for growth.

"When it comes to hospitality, I think Khao Lak is the next place to invest. It is becoming a very well-known tourist attraction and there is plenty of room for further growth," he said.

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IS warning fails to impact Phuket occupancy rates

THE recently leaked memo warning of Islamic State terrorists being dispatched to Phuket has not affected hotel occupancy numbers, explained the director of the Thai Hotel Association Southern Chapter.

"We surveyed occupancy levels at our hotels and saw no impacts that could be attributed to the warning about ten IS members arriving in Thailand," said Director Kritsada Tansakul. "Overall occupancy has stayed at 75 per cent, with 35 per cent coming from western arrivals and the rest mostly from major Asian markets."

Though hotel-booking cancellation numbers remain unaltered, Mr Kritsada voiced his concern about new tourists postponing their trips to Phuket.

"Following the Bangkok



Mr Kritsada worries that Islamic State warnings might cause tourists to postpone trips to Phuket. Photo: Gazette file

bombing and the terrorist attack in Paris, we asked all member hotels and resorts to fully cooperate with local security efforts and have guards report any suspicious activity to police immediately," said Mr Kritsada.

Monrudee Gettuphan, director of the Phuket International Airport, assured the *Gazette* that airport security remained

a top priority, with increased measures including the presence of military personnel and other security specialists.

Earlier this month, Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol Thipjaroen confirmed that all police forces were on full alert and taking all necessary actions to prevent any attacks. – *The Nation*

Domestic market goes international



PART of Phuket's expanding economy is its strong attraction as a regional hub for expatriates to live and work and a key attraction for them is the high quality of educational offerings.

Over the past decade, ten of the current thirteen international schools were established. The most evident surge was in the period of 2005-2010, when seven schools, most notably HeadStart International School (HeadStart) and Phuket International Academy (PIA), entered the market.

Recently C9 Hotelworks researched this market sector and presented the results in a new Phuket International Schools Market report. In 2015, there are a total of 2,508 students from preschool to grade 12 enrolled in international schools. What is surprising is that 38 per cent of students in attendance are Thai. Granted there are some dual passport holders, but what is clear is the growing influence of the domestic market.

High demand has been filling up emerging new supply briskly. In just six years since opening, HeadStart achieved a student population of 512. The enrollment in Kajonkiet International School Phuket (KIS) surged tenfold from 23 in 2011



Demand growth is sustained by the growing number of Thais who perceive international schools as the passport to pursuing higher education overseas. Photo: Asian Development Bank

(KIS's first year) to 224 students in 2015.

Viewing the more popular offerings, in terms of enrollment figures, British International School Phuket (BISP), HeadStart and Phuket International Academy (PIA) rank as the top three, with 830, 512, and 318 students respectively.

Demand growth in the sector is sustained by the growing number of Thais who perceive international schools as the passport to pursuing higher education overseas.

Foreigners are the other key source of demand. The availability of Thai visas for foreign students and their guardians

has been attracting many to study in Phuket's international schools. The top five foreign nationalities are British, Russian, American, Australian and South Korean.

Another emerging trend on the island is that Thai schools with an English Program (EP) are secondary competitors to international schools. The latter adopts non-local and globally recognized curricula while the former instructs about 70 to 80 per cent of the Thai curriculum in English.

There are six Thai schools offering EP on the island, of which 91 per cent of the 4, 805 students are Thais. Phuket Thai

Hua School, Kajonkietsuksa School and Darasamuth School are the largest in terms of enrollment. Some foreigners may choose EP to be nurtured in the local school environment, but a certain level of Thai proficiency is required.

As a point of comparison, international schools cost two to six times more than EP. On average, Phuket's international schools command annual tuition fees of 202,900, 300,800, 452,900 baht for preschool/kindergarten, primary, secondary respectively, while EP averages 83,200, 99,000, 101,000 baht respectively.

As more international insti-

tutions are established, a broader range of tuition fees will be available, expanding the market by increasing market reach. For example, a primary education ranges from 130,000 to 573,000 baht – an evidently wide scope.

To accommodate rising demand, international schools have been expanding to increase capacity. Most notably, HeadStart International School is ready to support an additional 750 students with their relocation and expansion on a new site in August 2015.

Looking forward, the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) initiatives of regional integration, along with the sustained demand of Thais and foreigners will spur new schools to enter the segment. The emergence of more schools and the constant evolution of existing campuses create a healthy competition that improves Phuket's overall quality of education, fueling the island's advancement to be a significant education hub.

Additional reporting by Natalia Kusomo.

Bill Barnett is the founder and managing director of C9 Hotelworks (C9Hotelworks.com), a leading Thailand-based hospitality and real estate consulting firm.

AccorHotels to restructure

THE French hotel group, AccorHotels, has announced the acquisition of three iconic brands, Fairmont, Raffles and Swissotel, in strategic deals that make it a worldwide leader in the luxury segment.

An executive at AccorHotels' Bangkok office said that the group would hold discussions with the owners of all of the hotels under its management as well as owners of the new brands to line up new business plans and business strategies.

The source said AccorHotels would ask all of the hotels currently under its umbrella whether they wished to stay with the group and would do the same with its new members.

Currently, AccorHotels operates 55 hotels in Thailand with 13,103 rooms, under multiple brands such as Sofitel, Novotel, Pullman, Mercure and Ibis.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the group operates about 668



Novotel Phuket falls under AccorHotels' umbrella. Photo: Gazette file

hotels and 128,284 rooms.

There are seven Swissotel, Fairmont and Raffles hotels in upper Southeast Asia, including Swissotel Le Concorde Bangkok, Swissotel Nai Lert Park Bangkok, and Swissotel Resort Phuket. The others are Fairmont Makati and Raffles Hotel Le Royal in Phnom Penh, and Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor in Siem Reap.

"In Thailand, AccorHotels

should take at least six months to talk with all 55 hotels operated by AccorHotels and the three Swissotels," said the source.

With nearly 500 luxury and upscale properties, AccorHotels will become one of the key global players in this segment and will be able to offer the most profitable management contracts and the best growth potential in many markets, the company says. – *The Nation*

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265 METER SEA VIEW FRONTAGE



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HOLIDAY RENTAL

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2 bedrooms with aircons, 2 bathrooms, 90sqm, WiFi, cable, maid. 12,000 baht per month. Minimum 3 months. Tel: 084-716 0502.

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Sansiri encourages iodized salt consumption to help boost IQ of children

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