

Phuket Gazette

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PROVINCE SETS AGENDA TO REDUCE ANNUAL ISLAND FATALITIES BY HALF

SAFETY TARGETED



More than 250 people from 12 nations competed in Phuket Surf Life Saving Competition 2016 held at Patong Beach on December 10 to bolster safety standards at Phuket beaches ahead of the high season. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

■ Provincial heads push to bolster safety standards on Phuket's highways, waterways for high season and beyond

By Kritsada Mueanhawong & Kongleaphy Keam

SAFETY on the roads and waterways in and around Phuket are a top priority for the high season, Phuket Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan has declared.

In a meeting with police, disaster prevention officials and public health department heads on December 7, Governor Chokchai set a target of less than 50 deaths in the province next year, starting by implementing strict safety measures on the land and at sea before the end of the year.

Reducing road accidents is a priority, said the governor, adding that there were many factors to take into account, but drunk driving was the most predominant cause of road deaths and so a provincial-wide anti-drunk driving campaign would be launched ahead of the festive season.

Governor Chokchai also called for a

renewed effort to make all motorcyclists wear crash helmets when on the roads.

According to the latest statistics from the provincial health department, 114 people were killed in accidents in Phuket between January and October this year; 80 per cent of them motorcycle collisions and 84 per cent of the victims male.

Most motorcycle accident victims were men aged 21-25 years old and were killed between midnight and 3am. At least 80 per cent of those victims were not wearing crash helmets, the report stated.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen said police checkpoints would be set up across the province to check motorists for drunk driving and speeding during the early hours.

"It will be hard to control the number of accidents, but with co-operation from all departments to ensure motorcyclists wear their helmets and don't drink alcohol before driving, there could be a measure of success in reducing road deaths," said Commander Teerapol.

Marine safety is also high on the agenda for the influx of foreign tourists during the year-end high season. The Phuket Lifeguard Club and Patong Municipality teamed up with the International Life Saving (ILS) Federation and the Australian Lifeguard Service this week to launch an international beach safety summit on December 10 involving life saving specialists from 12 nations: Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, The Philippines, Vietnam,

Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India.

About 250 people took part in the Phuket Surf Life Saving Competition 2016 held at Patong Beach, which was jointly organized by ILS head Norman Farmer, Australian Lifeguard Service head for the Asia Pacific region, David Field, and the Phuket Lifeguard Club (PLC).

The participants practiced rescue skills and were graded in swimming, running and board rescue contests.

PLC President Prathaiyuth Chuayuan said the day of activities was a significant step towards improving safety for swimmers at Phuket's popular tourist beaches.

"Swimmer safety is our priority and so improving our life-saving knowledge and skills is a paramount," said the PLC president. "The participants benefited greatly from the workshop, which has brought us up to international standards as well as building strong ties between the 12 nations involved."

Phuket Marine Chief Surat Sirisaiyas confirmed that his department was also going into high gear for the high season to keep a closer eye on marine safety and called for co-operation from boat and tour operators to ensure against accidents.

"We will be strictly enforcing laws governing marine safety, including speed restrictions and preventing boats from entering restricted areas. If everyone obeys the laws, accidents can be dramatically reduced," he said.

Aussie tourist plunges from parasail

THE owner of a parasailing operation on Patong Beach denies breaching safety regulations after an Australian tourist fell out of the harness and plunged five meters into the sea, sustaining a head injury.

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BUSINESS



Deputy PM pushes 'Thailand 4.0' strategy in the Andaman region.

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PROPERTY



Patong convention hall plans revealed as municipality reaches settlement in months-long dispute with Loma Park vendors over beachfront management policy.

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LIFE & STYLE



King's Cup Regatta wraps up for another year with over 1,000 sailors making historic sail pass.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Man arrested for stealing 80,000 baht

A THAI man who robbed a Patong exchange booth of 80,000 baht on December 7 was apprehended in Thalang on December 9.

The suspect, named as Promma Seesuree, had broken into the unmanned booth on Rat-Uthit 200 Pi Road and stolen 80,000 baht worth of coins.

“We received a complaint about the incident and collected evidence from the robbery,” said Maj Korapol Leangboonjinda of Patong Police. “After identifying the suspect via CCTV footage we asked the court to issue an arrest warrant.”

“We located his rental house in Baan Suan Bang Jo in Thalang and nabbed him about 11:30pm.”

Mr Promma confessed to the crime and told police that he did it to pay off a debt. He was charged with theft.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

ICU-admitted officer dies after 9 days

A PHUKET City Police officer involved in a collision in Thalang on December 1 succumbed to his injuries on December 10, after fighting for his life for nine days at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The 23-year-old officer, Lance Corporal Thanakorn Jimjuan, had suffered a severe head injury after crashing into a metal barrier surrounding the Heroines' Monument.

Doctors at the hospital said

Parked car bursts into flames in Phuket



A car parked outside an apartment in Talad Nua spontaneously caught fire on the afternoon of December 12. The vehicle's owner had parked the car behind Poopara Apartment in the morning and left it there, returning at 12:40pm after being told by locals that her car was on fire. The interior was badly burnt, causing an estimated 100,000 baht in damages. No foul play is suspected. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

that his condition worsened due to a blood clot in the head and that he had remained unconscious the entire time.

The funeral was held at Kosit Wihan Temple, after which his body was taken to his hometown in Songkhla for cremation.

– *Winai Sarot*

Honeymoon ends as Korean husband dies

A NEWLY-MARRIED Korean couple's honeymoon came to a tragic end when the man drowned while snorkeling at Koh Hei on December 12.

The 33-year-old tourist, named as Jeong Yong Soo, had arrived in Phuket with his wife on December 10 after their wedding. Tourist police received reports of the incident

from Vachira Phuket Hospital representatives about 10am.

“The tour guide, as well as boat crew, reportedly tried to convince Mr Soo to wear a life jacket, which he refused to do,” said Phuket Tourist Police Chief Naruewat Puttawiro. “His wife called for help after he jumped into the sea to snorkel. The boat crew administered CPR on him after fishing him out of the water, but to no avail.”

The Korean embassy has already been informed of Mr Soo's death.

Meanwhile, a Chinese woman, also at Koh Hei at the time, injured her pelvis after she unsuccessfully attempted to step off one boat and into another. She survived the injury and was taken to Dibuk Hospital.

– *Winai Sarot*

Chinese tourists end up with broken limbs

TWO Chinese tourists on their way to Phuket airport in a taxi on the morning of December 14 were severely injured when their driver slammed into the back of a parked 18-wheeled truck on the bypass road at 5:40am.

The taxi driver was attempting to overtake another car on

the inside lane when he hit the parked truck, an eyewitness told police.

The taxi, a Toyota Vios, was destroyed in the high-speed collision. The driver and the two passengers suffered broken arms and legs and were rushed to Vachira Phuket Hospital.

The accident follows a series of foreign tourists' deaths in rapid succession on Phuket's wildly dangerous roads where death and mayhem haunt the island on an almost daily basis.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Tourist dies after 5th floor fall from hotel

A KAZAKHSTANI tourist died after falling from the balcony of a 5th floor hotel room in Patong early morning of December 14.

Patong Police Chief Lt Col Weerapong Rakhito received reports of the incident about 4am from the D1 Hotel.

“We arrived to find the 42-year-old man still alive, lying face up on the asphalt with a bone sticking out of his right leg. The left side of his face was crushed,” confirmed the colonel. “Rescue workers performed CPR at the scene and took him to Patong Hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.”

Hotel staff unlocked his room for the police to inspect it for clues and found no signs of struggle or ransacking.

“We found 12 empty bottles of Thai rum and 3 empty beer cans, in addition to several wines and even more empty alcohol bottles. Hotel staff said he had checked into the hotel alone on December 5, and only went out for food and alcohol. His checkout date was December 16.”

“We have yet to learn whether it was his intention to jump or not. We're working closely with the Kazakhstan Embassy to investigate his death and communicate with his relatives.”

On November 24, he updated his Facebook with a post translating to: “Dear Santa, I have been well-behaved all year, [so] reward me with a trip to Thailand – a couple of weeks to behave badly.”

Additional reporting by Zohaib Sikander.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Purse thief escapes from police custody

A suspected 19-year-old thief is on the run after escaping from police custody on December 14.

The suspect was being questioned about his involvement in a failed ride-by robbery attempt on Phang Nga Road in Phuket Town the day before.

The teen was arrested after he and an accomplice allegedly snatched a bag from a female student on a motorbike, who then gave chase and collided with her assailants at a junction manned by police officers.

“The victim, named Chompoonut Noparat, sped up her bike to follow the thieves and collided with them in front of the police box in Talad Yai,” Lt Preechat Sangnoi of Phuket City Police told the *Gazette*.

One of the robbers got away but the 19 year old was held by police and escorted to Phuket City Police Station.

Ms Chompoonut was reunited with her belongings by the police before being taken to Dibuk Hospital for treatment of minor injuries sustained in the crash.

However, the suspect reportedly took flight about 12:30pm the next day, after outsmarting his interrogators and asking for a toilet break.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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TOT

Man found dead, flatmate disappears



Police and rescue workers stand outside while others scope Mr Petch's room. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

A CONSTRUCTION worker was found dead in his room in Patong in the afternoon of December 9. Police are looking for his roommate, who disappeared after he was seen drinking with him two nights beforehand.

"We received a report at about 12:30pm of a dead man in a room on Pisitkoranee Road," confirmed Lt Sirinat Cherdchutrakulthong of the Patong Police.

"When we arrived, we saw him lying face up, wearing a blue T-shirt and black shorts, with a bleeding wound on his elbow. Broken glass was littered all over the floor."

The deceased is known only by his nickname 'Petch', as police could not find any identification documents onsite.

"We found no signs of a struggle on Mr Petch's body, who had died at least 12 hours prior to our arrival. On Thursday, a neighbor saw Mr Petch drinking with his roommate, named as Viset Kaenwong. When Mr Petch didn't show up at work the next morning, a co-worker went to check in on him and found his body. Mr Viset, however, was nowhere to be found," Lt Sirinat added.

The body was taken to Patong Hospital to determine the cause of death.

"At this stage we will wait for the results of the autopsy, and meanwhile hunt for Mr Viset to see if he knows anything. We currently cannot say whether or not he was involved in Mr Petch's death."

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Australian tourist plunges into sea while parasailing



Ms Popovic was given first aid at the scene before being taken to Patong Hospital. (PIP): Police checked the hooks on the parasail but they were not damaged or twisted. Photo: Patong Police

AN AUSTRALIAN tourist was hospitalized after she plunged five meters into the sea while parasailing in Patong on December 7.

Sally-Ann Popovic, 26, reportedly fell out of the harness and plunged into the water below shortly after launching in front of the Banthai Resort on Patong Beach.

Police questioned the boat driver, Wissanu Srabua, and his assistant, Weerachart Hon, who had strapped Ms Popovic into the harness. They also questioned the business

owner, Waewta Srithongkul, who immediately denied any equipment failure and rejected any responsibility based on that.

"Ms Waewta insisted that her staff had tied the rope firmly and that she had no idea how the tourist fell," said Patong Police captain Yingyong Chuoykij. "We checked the hooks on the parasail and they were neither twisted nor damaged."

Ms Popovic was staying at the Add Plus hotel in Patong and had paid 1,000 baht for one

round of parasailing.

"Rescue workers at the scene tended to her left ear, which was bleeding after the fall. Fortunately, she was conscious the whole time," said Capt Yingyong.

Ms Popovic was admitted to Patong Hospital for observation. It is not yet clear whether she has suffered hearing loss.

Police have not pressed any charges against the boat operators and are awaiting the victim's recovery to discuss compensation, if any.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Earthquake shakes up Phuket Island

RESIDENTS in Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga felt tremors from an earthquake that shook parts of Indonesia December 7 at about 5am.

The earthquake measured 6.5 on the Richter scale, occurring 377km away in the Indian Ocean near Aceh, North Sumatra. At press time about 101 deaths were reported and more than 800 people were hospitalized with injuries.

Many locals and expats in Phuket took to social media to express their fears. The National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC), however, announced that there would be 'no tsunami effects for Phuket and Thailand'.

- Phuket Gazette



Tremors were felt in Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga. Image: Google Maps

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Forgetful monk demands 'missing' money from bank

By Winai Sarot

AN ELDERLY Buddhist monk baffled Krungsri Bank staff on December 8 at a branch on Thepkrasattri Road when he insisted on withdrawing 20,000 baht from his account – an amount he had already withdrawn the previous day.

A security guard at the bank called in 'reinforcements' from Phuket City Police to handle the precarious situation that ensued, as the monk dropped to his knees and began begging the staff for his money.

"The bank statements of 62-year-old Phra Weera showed that he had already withdrawn 20,000 baht in cash the day before," confirmed Lt Chatree Wetrangsri of Phuket City Police. "He had, however, only 1,091 baht in his account and was trying to withdraw much more."

"The monk insisted that he wouldn't leave the bank until he got his money."

Police then took Phra Weera to Buddhamongkolnimit Tem-



Police were called to deal with the monk, after he created a bit of a scene, demanding money that he'd already withdrawn. Photo: Winai Sarot

ple to see the abbot there, who is also the dean for Phuket City. However, he was unavailable.

"We learned later that Phra Weera is, in fact, a forgetful monk, and he eventually remembered his previous day's withdrawal. We dropped him off at the bus station as he

wanted to go to Trang Province. Before we left, he extended his apologies to the bank staff.

"We also learned that Phra Weera entered the monkhood 19 years ago in Nakhon Sawan Province," Lt Chatree told the *Gazette*.

Pony patrol 'giddy up' for high season at Surin Beach

POLICE officers saddled up on ponies at Surin Beach on the morning of December 9, first day of a trial to have mounted police patrol the sands during the high season.

The horses have been employed at the beach to make it easier for police officers to get across the sand, after they found it difficult to trudge along the beach on foot, Region 8 Deputy Police Commander Chalit Thinthanee told the *Gazette*.

"The horses are well trained so the officers don't need to be accomplished horse riders. They'll be patrolling two days a week, depending on the weather," said Gen Chalit. "The horses can help officers reach people in need of help more quickly."

Cherng Talay Police have been tasked with overseeing the equestrian beach patrols, using six horses in total, supplied to the police by private companies.



Tourists flank mounted police officers at Surin Beach as part of a safety bolstering campaign for the high season. Photo: Winai Sarot

The addition of the horse patrols is part of an initiative to boost general safety police presence during the high season. We hope it will help officers respond quickly to incidents and boost confidence

among visitors," said Gen Chalit.

"If feedback is positive then the horse patrols will be extended to other beaches," confirmed the general.

– Winai Sarot

HM King, clubs donate for floods



The flooding has affected about 23 districts. Photo: The Nation

THE PHUKET provincial Public Health Office on December 8 sent relief packages of food and medical supplies to flood-hit southern provinces including Nakhon Si Thammarat, Surat Thani, Trang, Phattalung and Songkhla.

Residents in Nakhon Si Thammarat have urged state agencies to help drain floodwater from the Pak Phanang River Basin before their rubber and oil palm farms are destroyed. A social club in Phuket representing people from Nakhon Si Thammarat earlier called for donations to help flood victims in their hometown, as over 100 schools have been closed and more than 261,000 residents affected.

The basin area, which covers Pak Phanang, Chalerm Phrakiat, Chian Yai and Chauat, was inundated.

Nakhon Si Thammarat Governor Chamroen Tipayapongthada said 301,557 residents had been affected by floods, which have claimed five lives, damaged 890 homes, 159,363 rai of rice fields, 15,889 rai of plantations, and 1.1 million rai of orchards and other farm areas.

Similarly, flood relief kits provided by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, comprising water, uncooked rice and dried foods among other items, were distributed the same day in Songkhla's Ranot District.

The 43rd Border Patrol Police of the Ram Kham Haeng Camp officers delivered the kits to 200 families in heavily-flooded Ban Phak Kood in Tambon Ban Mai.

Songkhla and other southern provinces have been hit by heavy rains and floods since the beginning of the month.

In Trang's Muang District,

flood barriers along the Trang River burst on December 8 at one 10-meter section in Tambon Nong Trud and another 20-meter section in Tambon Bang Rak. This sent torrents of water into nearby homes and forced residents to move to higher ground.

Torrents also knocked over power poles causing blackouts, forcing Provincial Electricity Authority workers to cut power as a precaution.

Floodwater in Nong Trud, Bang Rak, Na Ta Luang and Na Toh Ming in Muang District, as well as areas in downstream Kantang District, were deep and draining slowly due to the seasonal seawater inflows.

Officials installed pumps borrowed from Phuket officials at the 20 rai (3.2-hectare) Tha Chin Temple, which was surrounded by floodwater threatening hundreds of monks and their students. Officials said they hoped the two-meter-deep water could be drained in less than 24 hours if there was no more rain or runoff.

In Surat Thani, the Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation office announced on December 8 that the situation was improving after the rain stopped, although several coastal homes remained under one meter of water due to seawater inflows.

It was reported that overall 17 districts in Surat Thani were hit by floods, affecting 106,874 residents, causing three deaths and leaving one person missing. More than 1,700 homes, 7,300 farms, 200 fish ponds, 180 roads, 160 bridges and seven dams were damaged, causing losses of 60 million baht.

The week-long flooding has also caused many residents to develop water-borne sicknesses.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Royal pardons granted to inmates

HIS MAJESTY King Maha Vajiralongkorn has granted amnesty to a number of inmates on the occasion of his accession to the Throne, according to a Royal Gazette announcement on December 11.

Early release was granted to convicted persons who were under detention. Those eligible for release include people doing public service as punishment, as well as those who had been released on probation, had less than a year of jail term to serve or had served not less than one-third of the jail term, were blind or seriously sick and females serving a jail term for the first time who had already done more than half of their sentence.

The pardon was also granted to prisoners more than 60 years old who had served at least five years or at least one-third of the jail term, as well those under 20 years who had done more than half of the total jail term or had less than two years to serve.

Temple followers to petition King

DHAMMAKAYA Temple's followers are planning to petition HM King Maha



Vajiralongkorn for help over what they believe are unfair actions against the temple and its current 'honorary' abbot Phra Dhammachayo.

"We will ask for royal protection," Ongart Thamnita said on December 11 on behalf of the temple's followers.

According to Mr Ongart, the followers suspect that the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) and the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division (NRECS) are unfairly perse-

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

cuting the temple and fugitive former abbot Phra Dhammachayo.

The monk is wanted on charges of money laundering in relation to the embezzlement of several billion baht from the Klongchan Credit Union Coop-

erative. Since the scandal broke, followers of the temple have returned more than 1bn baht to the cooperative, maintaining that Phra Dhammachayo and related monks received the money as donations without knowing it was related to fraud.

"In fact, the cooperative has sent us a thank-you letter. But now, donors who have raised the funds for the return of the money are charged with unauthorized solicitation of donations," Mr Ongart claimed.

Experts call for better treatment of refugees

PANEL speakers at a seminar on "Stand Up for Urban Refugees' Rights" called for better treatment toward urban asylum seekers and refugees.

Several speakers expressed their views that urban refugees are living difficult lives in Thailand and there needs to be proper legal protection and sufficient humanitarian aid for them to survive.

The event was hosted by the European Union Delegation to Thailand at Central World on December 9 to mark International Human Rights Day on December 10. It was aimed at raising public awareness on the current situation of urban asylum seekers and refugees in Thailand.

"Most people are unaware that there are asylum seekers and refugees in Thailand. They live a precarious existence - unable to work, unable to send their children to school, financially stressed and dependent on arbitrary handouts to survive," said Jesus Miguel Sanz, head of the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand, in his opening speech at the seminar.

"Many have physical and psychological health problems resulting from the trauma they experienced in their home countries," he added.

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Phuket Gazette

Marine mishaps

THE high season is well upon us and the Marine Department and related agencies are working hard to ensure tourist safety at sea [see Page 1].

Despite relatively calm conditions this time of year, the highly-seasonal 'feast or famine' nature of Phuket tourism makes this a stressful time for those responsible for public safety offshore.

This is due primarily to the sheer number of people enjoying the many recreational opportunities available in our local waters. These guests need to not only be catered to, but also kept out of one another's way in order to avoid further expanding the wide variety of maritime mishaps that we have already experienced.

Monsoon season mishaps tend to follow sad-yet-predictable scripts: 'the overconfident foreigner entered the heavy surf despite clearly visible red flags'; 'the overcrowded speedboat left port despite official warnings about heavy seas', and so on.

During the high-season, however, all the activity ensures that the old adage 'anything can happen, and it usually does' is more likely to apply.

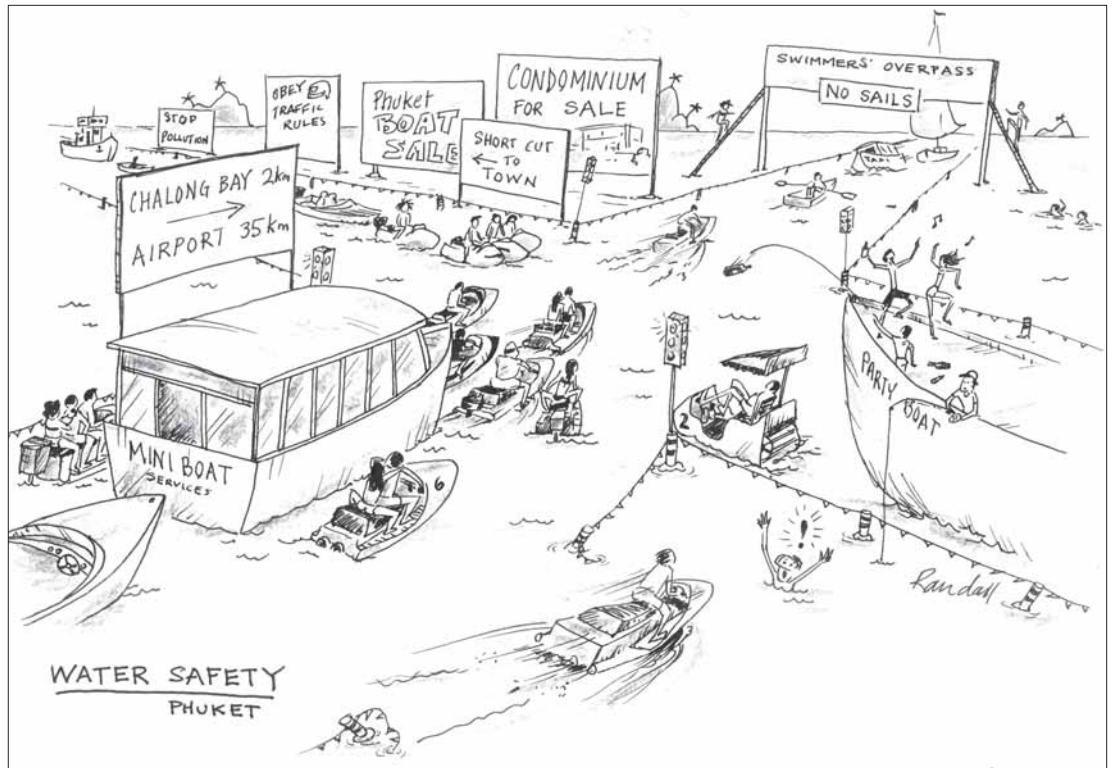
Just as Phuket Airport this time of year needs to bolster human resources at Customs and Immigration checkpoints, so too should the Marine Department have increased staffing to help ensure that safety standards are maintained by the many ferry and speedboat operators who are operating at full-throttle this time of year.

Unfortunately, it is practically impossible for authorities to ensure that all of these are legally licenced and registered, let alone operating within required guidelines.

On a related topic, plans are in the works to dust off a Marine Department plan to introduce a 'taxi boat' service to ferry passengers from Phuket Airport to beach resorts on the island as well as locations in Phang Nga and Krabi.

The *Gazette* maintains that this is not a long-term solution to the island's traffic problem. It fails to consider what the experience would be like for tourists – and is impractical in too many other regards to be listed here.

The traffic problem is the result of too many vehicles on our roads and related factors. Authorities need to address the root causes. The idea of forcing sleep-deprived, disoriented tourists and their luggage onto rocking ferries only reflects how dire the traffic situation has become.



Jet-skis a nuisance to all nearby

Re: Australian tourist hurt in parasail fall at Patong Beach, Dec 8

This is the same everyday. These guys are a danger to all on the water and on the beach, not just those parasailing.

The sooner these guys and the jet skis are gone the better and safer the beaches will be. If phuket wants the tourists back then these idiots must go.

Simon Lomas
Facebook

I have asked before why, if no businesses are allowed on the beach, jet-skis and parasailing is still permitted to operate there.

I formally request that the governor answer this question. It would be great to have an answer as I'm sure most people in Phuket would like to know how such a disgraceful business could be allowed to operate here.

Babin
Gazette forum

Order the moon to be full on Saturday

I notice at least one beach club in Phuket is having a full moon party on Saturday December 17th, yet the full moon is predicted to fall on the 14th.

Such discrepancies here are usual, if not normal.

Perhaps there should be a law to prevent such silliness, or maybe to order the moon to be conveniently full the Saturday following the predicted astronomical date.

Letters to the Editor

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

I think there is more hope of the latter working than in getting every motorcyclist here to wear a helmet.

Andy Phillips
Letter to the editor

Should also allow umbrellas on beach

Re: Police pony patrol trial trotted out at Surin Beach, Dec 9

Who is going to clean up after the patrols? Well, at least the left-overs are smaller than those of elephants.

Fritz Pinguin
Gazette forum

And still we cannot have umbrellas to get some protection from the sun?

Barry Hayward
Facebook

More sincerity in road safety efforts

Re: Island View: Safety needs more than lip service, Dec 6

Remember the 'Yellow Helmet' campaign a couple of years ago?

Nope, just goes to show what a success that was.

Apathy from the authorities and the the police, combined

with a blatant disregard for driving laws, all add to the pot of making the roads dangerous.

No sign of the schoolkids being stopped from riding yet either.

We need to be concentrating less on PR exercises about helmets and more on proper road safety.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Exactly – more sincerity would help a lot.

I think we're all quite bored of the hit-and-run 'crackdown' PR.

Not effective, as they well know.

Cynthia Morrison
Gazette forum

Hope the plan to move Patong vendors really works

Re: Compromise reached with new site for Patong vendors, Dec 9

By April next year? Reminds me of the jet-skis which were 'banned' from Patong Beach with effect from 1 January 1998.

The ban was broken, right in the then-governor's face, within an hour of sunrise that day.

And of course, not only have they never lost an hour since, but they keep growing in numbers every year. Great business.

Amazed
Gazette forum

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PM pushes Thailand 4.0 strategy

By Chutharat Plerin

DEPUTY Prime Minister Admiral Narong Pipatanasia met with the governors of Phuket, Phang Nga, Ranong, Krabi and Trang over a week ago to push for the implementation of the Prime Minister's 'Thailand 4.0' policy to bolster the economy in the Andaman region.

At the December 6 meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall, Admiral Narong said the nationwide plan initiated by Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha aimed to develop the region from the ground up.

'Thailand 4.0' is part of a nationwide 20-year strategic economic reform and development plan launched by the PM earlier this year, with a public relations campaign encouraging co-operation from all sectors of society to make the initiative a success, said PM Prayuth in one of his regular public 'Return Happiness to the People' addresses on July 1.

"We need a collective effort to move the country forward under the vision of 'stability, prosperity, and sustainability'," said the PM.

Admiral Narong said at the meeting that part of the initiative was to iron out differences and unite society with equality. "Each province must focus on its strongest points but more



Deputy Prime Minister Admiral Narong Pipatanasia met with the governors of Phuket, Phang Nga, Ranong, Krabi and Trang in Phuket to push for the implementation of the Prime Minister's 'Thailand 4.0' strategy to develop the region. Photo: Phuket PR

importantly the government and private sectors must work together to drive Thailand 4.0 forward," he said.

Budgets are to be allocated to each province in the Andaman region and must be spent in the best way possible to benefit locals, stressed the

deputy prime minister.

"Provinces must also have back up plans in case their main projects are not approved by the central government," he said.

Phuket Governor Chokchai Dejamorthan said at the meeting that Andaman provinces

should focus on developing tourism as well as the region's notoriety as a 'world kitchen'.

"We have a world-class tourist destination based on sustainable agricultural communities and should be focusing on generating more

income to support local food products and the unique traditions and cultures of the Andaman region," said Gov Chokchai.

He added that the strategy includes developing 'the four S's', namely 'Standards, Security, Safety and Sustainability'.

BOI shifts gear for EVs

THE BOARD of Investment is to include plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) in the new electric-vehicle promotional package to be unveiled shortly, Industry Minister Atchaka Sibunruang revealed recently.

Earlier, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha, chairing the investment board, had asked the BOI to reconsider its previous EV proposal, which included only pure EVs – that is battery electric vehicles or BEVs – and not hybrids, in order to avoid any negative impact on the automotive industry.

"Because of their high cost, EVs would be 'millionaires' vehicles' with minimal sales volumes in the initial stage, said Ms Atchaka.

In an exclusive interview with *The Nation*, Ms Atchaka said the Industry Ministry was hastening its plan to promote the five targeted industrial

groups: agriculture, food and biotech; high-tech industries such as automobiles, electronics and aviation; health and wellness, and bio-med; digital, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and embedded technology; and creative culture and high-value services.

However, some industries still face obstacles, she said, citing aviation, in that the current law allows only fully Thai-owned enterprises to invest in them.

While the Transport Ministry has agreed to amend its law on this issue, the fact that it would like to revise the entire law means the process has been delayed, she explained.

"We're negotiating with Airbus and Boeing to invest in U-tapao. Lufthansa is also interested and has requested a meeting with us," the minister said.

– *The Nation*



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A Royal award ceremony presided over by HE Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk, representing HM the King, was held December 10 at Kata Beach Resort & Spa. Photo: PKCR

'True breeze' brings King's Cup Regatta to a close on high note

THE final day of racing off Kata Beach for the Phuket King's Cup Regatta on December 10 saw all classes of boats competing in only one race each, making the most of good winds in the afternoon after light conditions earlier in the day.

A Royal award ceremony presided over by His Excellency Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk, personal representative of His Majesty the King of Thailand, was held in the evening at Kata Beach Resort & Spa to honor the winners.

Also in attendance were Minister of Tourism and Sports Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul; the regatta's organizing committee president Kevin Whitcraft; Royal Thai Fleet commander Admiral Sucheep Wangmaitri; Yacht Racing Association of Thailand President Admiral Kraisor Chansuvanich; Phuket Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan; Kata Group Resorts Director Iam Thavornwongwong; and Ex Commodore of Royal Varuna Yacht Club Tom Whitcraft plus other dignitaries and sailors.

The winning teams were



Kevin Whitcraft and THA72 finished six minutes ahead last Saturday on a short sprint course, and were named Regatta winners for IRC0. Photo: Guy Nowell

presented with their trophies by Air Chief Marshal Chalit after a highly competitive last day of races, which began with light breezes that stiffened up later in the day.

"Happily today we ended with a true breeze. It really brought the regatta to a close on a good note," said Race Officer Ross Chisholm on December 10.

The Thai team in the Platu One Design class were proud winners of CPO1 Class with Wiwat Poonpat and his *Royal Thai Navy 1* successfully win-

ning all seven races over the week.

Kevin Whitcraft and THA72 finished six minutes ahead on the last day and were named overall winners for IRC0.

Japanese team Yasuo Nanamori's *Karasu* was victorious in the IRC1 class, fending off a stern challenge from *Mandrake III* all through the week.

April Jorgensen's IRC2 team, *Judy*, performed well all week to receive Phuket King's Cup honors.



More than 1,000 sailors performed a 'sail pass' on December 9, sailing past the Royal Thai Navy's HTMS Klaeng and other vessels in honor of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun. Photo: PKCR

In Premier Class, *Ithinai Yingsiri* and *Pine-Pacific* both won after a week of solid first and second place performances.

Among the fireflies, John Newnham and *Twin Sharks*, beat the *Royal Malaysian Navy* and came in second place on final standings.

The Pulse 600 Racing Class was won by Neil Ayre, skipper for *Java Racing*. The Multihull Racing Class was won by Andrew Hurford (*Phantom V*). Kimiya Shimizu skippering *Ying*

Yangwon the Multihull Cruising Class.

In Open Charter, Vladimir Oleynikov and team *Popeye* were victors, whilst their compatriots on *Snapdragon* skippered by Igor Ginzburg won Bareboat Charter A.

In the Cruising Class, *Jianquan Tong* and *Asia Pacific Atom* won class honors by the regatta's close.

The *Phuket Gazette* and *The Nation* are proud media partners in the King's Cup since 2006.

– *Phuket Gazette*

This week's events in Paradise

Taste of Korea at Dusit Laguna

Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, in cooperation with the Korean Food Foundation, organized a food festival titled 'The Taste Of Korea' December 7-15. The opening ceremony was held at the resort's Pool Deck. Master chef Kim Sang Tae – who also catered for the G20 Conference in Korea – teamed up with Dusit Thani chefs to craft a variety of Korean dishes for guests, tourists and Phuket residents.



Kim Sang Tae (left) with Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk, General Manager of Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket.



Izhar Mohsin, Director of Revenue Management at Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket (center) with participants.

Haad Thip hosts regatta awards dinner

Haad Thip, one of the region's leading bottlers and distributors of Coca-Cola products, held an award ceremony and dinner reception at Centara Grand Beach Resort on December 7 to mark the close of racing on the second day of competition at the 30th Phuket King's Cup Regatta. Haad Thip executives handed out refreshments and hosted the awards ceremony and dinner reception for more than a thousand guests and VIPs.



Jacky Benedetti (3rd right), Senior Vice President of Haad Thip PCL, with members of the Ying Yangwon crew, winners of the Multihull Cruising Class on Day 2 of the King's Cup at Centara Grand Beach Resort.

Wedding bells ring

Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization Council member Thanatphat Thaneerat was married to Praewpim Suwanchairat at The Imperial Mae Ping Hotel in Chiang Mai on December 10.



Newlyweds Thanatphat Thaneerat and Praewpim Suwanchairat.

Second phase of Cassia apartments attracts investors with assurance of 7 p/c returns



The Cassia Phuket apartment complex in the grounds of the Laguna Phuket resort overlooks an expansive lagoon and gives residents panoramic views of the Andaman Sea.

Advertorial

WORLD-CLASS developer of premium resorts, hotels and residences, The Banyan Tree Group is enticing investors in its Cassia Phuket apartments at Laguna Phuket with a promise of 7 per cent returns over three years for owners.

With the first phase already sold out, the second phase of the contemporary upmarket two-bedroom apartments in the grounds of the Laguna resort are aimed at young families or groups of friends, offering stylish accommodation near the beach, surrounded by five-star facilities and hospitality services – an addition to the Banyan Tree Group's portfolio that brings an innovative twist to holidaying.

The Cassia Phuket apartment complex overlooks an expansive lagoon and gives residents panoramic views of the Andaman Sea from the bedrooms and open-air terraces of apartments, which are priced from B5.5 million, fully furnished, and range in size from 40 square meters to 88sqm, featuring mezzanine levels with additional living and entertainment areas.

Head of the Banyan Tree Group's property division, Stuart Reading, said the modern-tropical architecture of Cassia Apartments on the west



Priced from B5.5 million, fully furnished, Cassia Phuket's stylish 2-bedroom apartments range in size from 40 square meters to 88sqm with views across the lagoon and the Andaman Sea. Left: One of the loft apartments. Right: Mezzanine bedroom with a sea view. Photos supplied

coast had received enthusiastic responses from international clientele.

"As well as being affordable, Cassia Phuket apartments are a secure investment, offering owners a new dimension in holiday and lifestyle benefits," said Mr Reading.

"Since opening as a hotel in late 2015, Cassia Phuket has attracted a broad spectrum of

travellers from around the world looking for the ideal way to linger a little longer, holidaying where the conditions are perfect and entertainment and leisure options are virtually at their door. This also makes it a robust investment proposition," he said.

To take full advantage of the luxury lifestyle options in the Laguna Phuket resort, investors

have complimentary use of their Cassia apartment for a full 30 days each year.

Cassia apartment owners are also entitled to exclusive membership of the Sanctuary Club, with which comes benefits such as discounts and privileges across the group's global network of 43 resorts and hotels, more than 66 spas and 80 retail galleries. Club membership

also includes access to three championship golf courses along with the opportunity for complimentary stays in other properties through the signature owners exchange program.

Contact the Cassia Residences sales office for further details. Tel: +66 (0)76-362 333. Email: cassia@banyantree.com Website: cassiaridences.com

Patong convention hall plans revealed

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

THE long-standing dispute between Patong Municipality and vendors at Loma Park off Patong Beach over the expiration of rental contracts and alleged violation of beach management rules was concluded on December 8 after both parties reached an agreement as plans were revealed for a convention hall near the beach.

An hours-long meeting chaired by Phuket Vice Governor Teera Anantaseriwidhya between the municipality and the vendors on November 1 ended in a deadlock with the vendors insisting on being allowed to operate their businesses there while Patong Mayor Chalerm-luck Keksup insisted on ousting them to build a convention hall in the space.

Municipality officers attempted to cordon off the area on November 24, but a group of vendors gathered and pleaded with the municipality workers to allow them a chance to talk to the provincial committee first.

Twelve of the 16 vendors at Last week's meeting agreed to leave the area by April 30, 2017



Construction of the boat-shaped convention hall at Loma Park near Patong Beach is expected to begin in May. Image: Patong Municipality

whereas three were on the fence and one disagreed. Mayor Chalerm-luck said she was satisfied with the outcome.

“The conclusion of this matter works out perfectly, as it gives us just the time we need to design blueprints and find a

construction company to build the convention hall, which will include a food hall as well,” she explained.

“Once the vendors leave, we will start construction, probably by May. For the duration of the construction, we will give the

vendors temporary space to operate their stalls. Once it's finished, they will have to permanently move inside the building's food court.”

The draft design of the new convention hall, which is expected to cost 20 million

baht, has the venue resembling a boat with car parking at the rear and a garden at the front featuring a number 9 motif in honor of the late King His HM Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) and his passion for sailing.




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ACCOUNTANT

- Thai nationals, aged 22 years up
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Good salary for the right candidate.
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Marching to his own rhythm

By Zohaib Sikander

IT'S not everyday that you meet someone who inspires you and makes you look forward to what life has in store. A chat with Silvano Stabile, Phuket's radio extraordinaire, gives you exactly that.

He was born in Italy, but moved to France at a young age. Silvano's life-long dream was to do something in Asia.

"As a student of philosophy, I was very much attracted to the great wise men and philosophers of Chinese culture. The Dao and Zen is what served as a proverbial magnet of sorts and I felt it in all Asian people I met," he says.

"When I was 17 years old, I took part in a program that was meant to help Vietnamese refugees and got an opportunity to teach them French. I became closely acquainted with a Vietnamese family and for the first time in my life, I became really immersed in their culture and felt that I needed to make a move."

Silvano landed in Chalong five years ago and saw that there was a large French speak-

ing community in the area with magazines and books, but no radio show – so he decided to do something about it.

"While attending a restaurant opening at Laguna, I happened to meet Olivier Gibaud, the manager of Twin Palms Phuket, and without thinking, I said to him "I see your brand everywhere and I just know I will work with you someday". I also told him that his brand should have its own voice so there would be no need to advertise in newspapers and magazines. That caught his attention."

Three months later, Olivier handed over the marketing reins to Silvano. Now, half a decade later, Twin Palms has five separate radio stations, all managed by Silvano.

Silvano loves his work and, in fact, doesn't consider it to be 'work' at all.

"When everyone else in Phuket is preparing their breakfast and getting ready to go to work, I wake up to make sure that all five of my radio streams are working. If there is something wrong, I can simply figure it out with the help of my mobile phone. I never work in real-time,

which makes it all the more enjoyable for me."

"There are times I listen to a song on my own station and ask myself 'what was I thinking?'. Other times I will listen to an amazing tune and it brings a smile to my face. If you want to label this work, then so be it, but it's not really work for me."

Silvano's plan in life is all

mapped out inside his head, he says.

"My 'life' is in my brain. There is nothing more important to me than the many inhabitants of my brain. My home, however, is in my bed because that is where all important things happen – sleeping, reading and watching

videos," he says.

"I'm trying to live my life in a way that I hope to see others do in the future. Technology allows me to control everything in my life and around me, regardless of where I am in the world."



As a student of philosophy, I was very much attracted to the great wise men and philosophers of Chinese culture. The Dao and Zen is what served as a magnet of sorts and I've felt it in all Asian people I've met /

**– Silvano Stabile
Sound Design Manager,
TwinPalms Phuket**



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