

# Phuket Gazette

August 8 - 14, 2015

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■ 'HE WORKED HARD FOR THE PEOPLE AND NEVER GAVE UP'

## 'Pink Panther' passes

■ **Legendary Phuket politician succumbs to colon cancer at age 58**

By Chutharat Plerin

LEGENDARY champion of Phuket people and the highest elected official on the island Paiboon Upatising lost his battle against colon cancer on August 2 at the age of 58, with his wife and eldest son by his side.

The former Phuket senator, suspended President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO) and charter President of the Rotary Club of Patong (RcoPB), has left a legacy of local innovation, care and businesses sense. He is survived by his wife Keawta Upatising and their four children: Maetapong, Pongsapak, Peerati and Wutthichai.

"My mother and I were beside his bed when he passed away," Mr Maetapong told the *Gazette* in a calm voice, just two days after his father's death. "I told him not to worry about anything, I will take care of the family and everything for him."

Mr Paiboon is remembered by family as a delightful man with a good voice, who was the entertainer of the group and inspired all those around him, both at home and at work.

"Mr Paiboon was a strong-willed man who paid an enormous amount of attention to his work," Governor Nisit Jansomwong told the *Gazette*. "He was a politician who worked hard for the people and never gave up. He continued to work even when he became very ill."

The well-established politician was dubbed Phuket's 'Pink Panther' due to his use of pink to brand his public projects following his election as the PPAO president in 2008.

After having already served as the island's senator, Mr Paiboon won with a landslide victory against Anchalee Tephabuttra. Eleven months later, he was issued a 'yellow card' by the Election Commission (EC) in Bangkok for vote buying...



Paiboon 'The Pink Panther' Upatising is best known on the island for developing and implementing the 'Pink Bus' service in 2009.

Continued on Pages 4-5

### Girl dragged to death in hit-and-run

A MOTHER found herself attempting to chase down an 18-wheeled truck that was dragging her daughter, 12, down Thepkraassatri Road just south of the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint in a deadly hit-and-run accident.

Full story Page 3

### BUSINESS



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## Patong police in deep water

PATONG Police were knee-deep in water as their station was inundated by flooding on Monday morning.

"There was about a meter of water in some parts of the station. It happened so fast this time that we were unable to clear everything," Deputy Superintendent Akanit Danpitaksat of the Patong Police told the *Gazette*. "We will just have to see how much damage was done once the water clears."

Flash floods also caused long tailbacks and left many motorists pushing their scooters through deep water in Chalong and Patong, as well as at the Samkong underpass construction site.

— Chutharat Plerin

## 13-year-old boy dies swimming near Koh Sireh

A 13-YEAR-OLD boy drowned off Koh Sireh on July 30 after his friends were unable to save him and failed to report the incident to adults or authorities for nearly three and a half hours.

Payu Pairiron, a student at Baan Koh Sireh School, drowned at about 1:30pm after becoming too tired to swim back to the floating walkway.

It took 30 minutes for rescue workers to recover Nong Payu's body from the water.

The boy's mother, Yawaluck Pairiron, 32, does not blame the boys for her son's death and understood that it was an accident.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

# Monster lizard caught in Phuket Town home



**VIDEO REPORT:** Rescue workers captured a 20 kilogram monitor lizard at a house in Phuket Town, as heavy rains inundated the island. After about 30 minutes the team was able to extract the lizard. For the full story, visit [PhuketGazette.net](http://PhuketGazette.net). Photo: Kusoldharm Foundation

## Kratom junky attacks ATM

AN UNRULY kratom user was arrested at his apartment in Rawai on Monday morning after a CCTV footage showed him smashing the screen of an ATM on his way home from Phuket Town.

Using the CCTV footage, police were able to trace Somphon Kekina, 22, back to his apartment.

While making the arrest, officers found kratom leaves, kratom juice, cough syrup and the clothing worn by the suspect when he bashed the ATM.

"Before the incident, Mr

### LOCAL NEWS

## Briefly

Somphon went to drink kratom at his friend's room in Phuket Town. On his way home, he went to withdraw money. He wanted 1,000 baht in two 500-baht notes. However, the ATM only gave him a 1,000-baht note," General Patchara said.

Mr Somphon was charged with damaging property and for the possession of a Category 5 drug.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Swedish tourist takes fall with Thai woman

A SWEDISH tourist and a Thai woman took a tumble from the balcony of their room at the Phuket Paradise Hotel in Patong on Monday morning.

"When we arrived at the scene, Dahlin Erik Conny, 33, was unconscious while Numpueng Kumpueng, 26, was crying out in pain on the ground," said Lt Col Jessada Saengsuree of the Patong police.

Rescue workers rushed the pair to Patong Hospital just after 7am. Witnesses were unable to shed light on what may have led to them falling over the balcony banister.

Later a Patong Hospital

employee, who declined to be named, confirmed on Monday night that both patients were conscious, but remained in doctors' care.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Region 8 Police headquarters opens here

DESPITE some protest, the Region 8 Police headquarters was partially operational in Phuket when it officially opened on Monday.

Several systems need to be put in place at the new facility, before they are fully up and running in Phuket. Officers will also be operating out of their Surat Thani office until then.

The move of the regional police headquarters to Phuket is due to the province's ability to generate revenue via Thailand's tourism industry.

— Chutharat Plerin

## Drug dealers arrested in police barracks

A POLICE officer's son, along with three other men, were arrested with nearly three million baht worth of drugs at a residence at the Ao Luek Police Station barracks in Krabi on August 2.

The four men were caught in possession of one kilogram of ya ice (crystal methamphetamine) and nearly 8,000 pills

of ya bah (methamphetamine).

Ao Luek police were tipped off by one of their own officers, whose son was dealing from a former residence at the station.

The four men were charged with possession of a Category 1 drug with intent to sell. Additionally, one of the suspects was found to also be in possession of two guns and was charged with possession of firearms without permission.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Gov establishes legal taxi ranks

MORE than a year after the National Council for Peace and Order made a sweeping effort to remove illegal taxi stands from Phuket, the provincial government has announced a plan to establish legal taxi ranks at ten locations throughout the island.

The move to establish the taxi stops at some schools, hospitals and police stations on the island goes hand-in-hand with efforts to support GrabTaxi, as authorities establish and improve taxi system on the island, Governor Nisit Jansomwong said.

The ten official taxi queues will be at: Bus Terminal 1; Bus Terminal 2; Phuket City Police Station; Chalong Police Station; Karon Police Station; Phuket Provincial Hall; the Phuket Land Transportation Office; Patong Hospital; Loma Park in Patong; and Rajabhat University.

— Chutharat Plerin

## Nightlife raid nets underage drinkers, shisha

RAIDS on nightlife venues in Phuket continued on July 29, with police seizing 40 hookahs used for smoking shisha and catching eight underage drinkers.

The underage drinkers were questioned and then released. However, Thanongsak Chanmanee, the manager of Sabaijai, was charged with the possession of untaxed shisha and selling alcohol to minors.

The shisha charge carries a penalty of up to five years imprisonment, a fine of up to 500,000 baht or both while the penalty for selling alcohol to minors is one year imprisonment, a fine of up to 20,000 baht or both.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong



# 12-year-old dragged to death by 18-wheeler in hit-and-run

By Kongleaphy Keam

POLICE arrested the driver of an 18-wheeled truck that hit and dragged a 12-year-old girl to death just south of the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint on July 31.

The truck allegedly struck the motorbike that the girl and her mother were riding, causing minimal damage, but knocking the mother-daughter pair to the concrete.

Vassana Kaewkumpa, 40, screamed for the truck driver to stop as it continued down the southbound lane of Thepkrasattri Road just past the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint, explained police.

"Ms Vassana found the body of her daughter in the road, almost one kilometer away from the scene of the accident," Maj Santi Prakobpran of the Tah Chat Chai Police said.

Latthaporn Duongkae was pronounced dead at the scene by rescue workers.

The driver, who fled the scene, was arrested hours after the accident, as police followed the truck via CCTV footage to its resting place near Wat Luang Pu Supha in Chalong.

The 22-year-old, Sittipong Sinphae, was found with the truck and arrested for reckless



Latthaporn Duongkae was dragged by the 18-wheeled truck for about one kilometer. Photo: Thawit Bilabdulla

driving causing death and fleeing the scene of an accident, Maj Santi said.

"The driver told us that he didn't know anything about the accident," Maj Santi said. "He said that it was raining hard at the time, and though he did

hear something, he thought that it was nothing."

Nonetheless, marks on the side of the truck revealed that it had been in an accident.

"Mr Sittipong has already informed his insurance company and will negotiate with the

girl's family when they are ready to talk," Maj Santi said. "We will of course continue with the necessary legal steps with regard to Mr Sittipong."

Both Ms Vassana and the body of young Latthaporn were taken to Thalang Hospital.

## B500mn taken from temple on holiday



Police believe the thieves knew where the money was hidden.

ABOUT 500,000 baht designated for temple repairs was stolen from an abbot's residence during the Buddhist holiday of Asarnha Bucha.

This is not the first time that Phra Khru Pothipanyakorn of Wat Suwan Khiri Wong had a large sum of money taken from his living quarters. About two years ago, 200,000 baht was stolen without a trace, Lt Col Sutthichai Thianpho of the Patong Police told the *Gazette*.

"We have suggested that Phra Khru Pothipanyakorn install CCTV. However, in this case, we have some leads after questioning about 30 monks and men who live in the complex," Col Sutthichai said.

"We believe that at least two people were part of the robbery."

Police are continuing their investigation and expect to make arrests soon.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

## B30 tuk-tuk ride for Phuket Town

YELLOW-ROOFED tuk-tuks providing a flat fare of 30 baht are on the road to Phuket Town in order to lessen congestion and provide affordable public transport in the area, explained Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong.

"There will be 87 tuk-tuks registered under the 30-baht flat-fee program. They will only be able to operate in Phuket Town toward Bang Khu intersection and along the bypass road to Kwang Road via Chao Fa East and West," Gov Nisit said. "We want to make Phuket like other popular provinces by providing cheap tuk-tuk services inside the municipality area."

To help officers enforce the law and prevent tuk-tuk drivers from overcharging and working outside their remit, the roofs of the tuk-tuks will be painted yellow. Drivers caught breaking the rules will be fined 5,000 baht. Repeat offenders will have their permission to



The new tuk-tuks will only be able to provide rides in Phuket Town.

operate the service revoked, confirmed Gov Nisit.

"The driver's identification information will be clearly displayed, as will a complaint contact number," said Gov Nisit.

"This will be a great alternative to driving for people in Phuket Town. I urge all tuk-tuk drivers involved in the plan to adhere to the conditions. We've done our part to support them, now they must help us build a positive reputation for Phuket's public transportation."

The Governor's announcement comes in the wake of protests in May by illegal tuk-tuk drivers seeking an opportunity to legitimize their business.

"We have yet to set the launching date, as some of the tuk-tuk drivers are working on getting their public transportation registration. We expect to launch in mid-August," Jaturong Kaewkasi, chief policy adviser of the Phuket Land Transport Office, said on July 30.

— **Chutharat Plerin**

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## Chinese hack into Phuket tourism

THE provincial Communist Party chief of Phuket's sister province in China arrived here this week with hopes of 'hacking' the secret of the island's strong tourism sector.

"Hainan officials are here on a fact-finding mission to better understand exactly why Phuket hosts so many tourists from so many countries, while Sanya of Hainan is only playing host to about 4.3 million domestic tourists a year," said Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong.

Sanya has several bays with large resorts and stunning beaches, all factors highlighting the similarities between the sister provinces.

"They would like to learn how Phuket has developed a variety of tourism activities, and how we have become a hot destination for travellers around the world," Governor Nisit said.

Meanwhile, a plan for direct Hainan-Phuket flights was announced during the visit, which marked the tenth anniversary of



Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong (left) hosted Luo Baoming, the Chinese island's provincial Communist Party chief and its former governor, during a Chinese fact-finding mission.

the two islands becoming 'twin cities'.

The Chinese officials, led by Luo Baoming, the Chinese island's provincial Communist Party chief and its former governor, said they have already asked Sichuan Airlines to provide direct flights from Sanya, a city on the southern end of

the Chinese island, to Phuket.

"We have discussed the plan with Airports of Thailand, and they have approved the direct flights to land about three times a week after midnight," Governor Nisit said. "However, we are now negotiating to have the flights land at about 8pm.

— Chutharat Plerin

## Prominent

From Page 1

... "When the EC first gave me a yellow card, I was unable to defend myself by any legal means. But the provisions of the 2007 Election Act are very good, so now I can defend myself in the Appeals Court," Mr Paiboon said in May 2009.

"I feel like someone sucker-punched me in the head, but I don't know who. Now I can find out the identity of my accuser and fight back in court," said Mr Paiboon, whose business interests in Phuket included the Phuket Villa group of residential estates and the sole distribution rights to Boon Rawd Brewery.

Mr Paiboon was cleared of vote-buying allegations by the Appeals Court in Bangkok on September 8, 2009. However, it is not Paiboon's cleared yellow card that he will be remembered by, nor the corruption allegations most recently levied against him by the Office of the Auditor General of Thailand (OAG) for issues flagged as problematic in the construction of the PPAO Hospital last month.

In fact, Mr Paiboon assumed he would be quickly cleared of the allegations and return to working for the people.

"This order will give me a chance to relax and recover," Mr Paiboon said at the time. "I think after the OAG confirms that there was no illegal activity, I will resume my position, which might be in a few months."

What Mr Paiboon will be remembered for, however, is his vision for the island and his hands-on approach to bringing the community together.

"Mr Paiboon's vision to encourage more interaction between the Phuket business community and local Thai of-

ficials led to our club's establishment in 2001," current RCoPB President Walter Wyler said.

In 2001, as Phuket's first ever directly elected senator, and as a Rotarian, Senator Paiboon decided that founding a new, English-speaking Rotary Club would be the best way of achieving his goal of mutual understanding between the business and local government sectors on Phuket.

As such, on January 9, 2001, the Senator invited a selected group of foreign business people to attend a meeting

at the Aloha Villa Hotel. During the meeting it was decided to form the RCoPB with the aim of fostering goodwill and understanding between Thai officials and the foreign business community.

"Our club members will always remember Mr Paiboon as someone who upheld the ideals of the Rotary through his actions and his legacy. We will be forever grateful for his vision and support," Mr Wyler said.

Previous RCoPB President Brad Kenny earlier this week recalled how Mr Paiboon helped the island recover from the tragedy of the 2004 tsunami.

"My fondest memory of Khun Paiboon was from a few days after the tsunami, when he suggested the governor contact me, being a Rotarian and in the construction business, about his need to make temporary caskets," Mr Kenny said.

The standard Thai casket was not big enough for foreigners.

"After we set up a production line, [Mr] Paiboon came by and held hands with my workers and said a prayer concerning the tragedy, thanking all of them for doing an



He adopted a pink color scheme for everything he did... [The color] can be seen around the island in so many good things he did for the common people: low-cost bus transportation, bus stops, the PPAO Hospital and many more projects.

— Brad Kenny, Rotary Club of Patong Beach



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# politician leaves pink legacy

unspeakable job as tears ran down all of our cheeks... We bonded that day, as Rotarians and as humans, with our love and despair about what had happened to our paradise island. We kept that bond until the last time I saw him a few months ago."

For the general public though, perhaps the Pink Panther's most visible and applauded project was the island's first practical and low-cost public transport system: the *Po Thong* 'Pink Bus', which won a national award for 'Local Innovation' from the Prime Minister's Office.

The award was one of 61 awarded to local administration offices by the new Prime Minister's Office committee on decentralization of power to local administration organizations. A total of 1,003 projects were nominated nationwide.

Mr Paiboon accepted the award from then-Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva at Government House in Bangkok on the morning of September 17, 2010.

PM Abhisit defined the term



For details on how to join funeral ceremonies or pay your respect to Mr Paiboon, visit [PhuketGazette.net](http://PhuketGazette.net).

'local innovation' as any change in government-sector service with a clear public benefit.

Additional major projects backed by Mr Paiboon in-

cluded plans to redevelop Bang Wad Dam, Bang Neaw Dam, anti-flood measures, the distribution of 1,000 UV flashlights that he paid out of his own pocket for to be handed out to

vendors in Phuket Town to combat a flood of fake bank notes and the PPAO Hospital.

"The hospital is 90 per cent complete," Mr Paiboon said in September 2010. "I have tried

very hard to have the hospital open as soon as possible and it looks like it will open by early next year."

PPAO Vice President Soratham Jinda, who has been working with Mr Paiboon since he took the position in 2008, explained that it was a quickness of mind and action that had allowed Mr Paiboon to accomplish so much.

"He worked very fast and was constantly reviewing the data available before making any decisions," Mr Soratham said.

"We always had to layout the good and bad impacts any given project might have when we presented them to him.

"Though he demanded a great deal from us, he was very kind and respected everyone he worked with. He will be greatly missed by all of us."

Mr Soratham confirmed that the elected government body would continue to serve the island with PPAO Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Watcharin Patomwattanapong as acting PPAO president until the end of term next April.



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With about three months to go to until November 1 – the official start of the tourist high season – can tourist arrival numbers return to pre-tsunami levels? The *Gazette's* Sanghae Leelanapaporn and Anongnat Sarpsit asked some leading figures in the industry what is happening in the all-important tourism sector now – and what they believe the future may hold.

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## Gov under siege from furious limo drivers

By Athiga Jundee

PHUKET CITY: Some 100 furious limousine drivers blocked Phuket Governor Udomsak Usarangkura's car, preventing the Governor from leaving Provincial Hall for lunch on July 29.

The drivers arrived at Provincial Hall at 7:30 am, angered by the Governor's decision to support in the local newspaper, *Tai*, in which the Governor was threatening to bring order to the turbulent transport sector.



Gov Udomsak, with loud hailer, pleads with limousine drivers.

Arriving at 8:30 am, the Governor promptly went into the drivers' leader's car, prepared to halve the concession fees levied on limousine drivers. This failed to placate the

nal – and at every beach on Phuket [as proposed by the Governor] – as this will greatly increase the number of meter taxis," Manod Chusak, who runs the limousine counters at the airport, told Gov Udomsak.

"We don't want the number of meter taxis to increase because that will have a direct effect on our livelihood."

Three hours of discussions, from 8:30 to 11:30, failed to calm the angry mob outside the Provincial Hall and, when the Governor emerged from the building to go for lunch, the crowd blocked his car and security staff had to protect him from drivers who appeared to be about to push him around.

Using a megaphone, the Governor pleaded with the drivers for two hours. He made no concessions but eventually, at 1:30 pm, the drivers went away, vowing to return the following Friday (August 5) at 2 pm, and in greater force, for another

## Tsunami 'flushed out Patong Bay'

11 road deaths in June

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## Yacht chartering still in doldrums Patong and Kamala revival budgets finally settled

## Villagers slam officials for not helping since tsunami

PHUKET Governor Nisit Jansomwong is making great efforts – with what appears to be the buds of success – to make metered taxis a pillar of public transport on the island. However, a decade ago, then-Governor Udomsak Usarangkura was hearing a different tune as his metered-taxi push left his car stuck in a sea of furious airport 'limousine' drivers.

The man was simply about to pop out of Provincial Hall for lunch when about 100 angry drivers surrounded his vehicle, preventing him from moving for more than two hours – one can imagine the pangs of hunger.

At this point in time and for years to come, it was par for the course to see such a thuggish backlash to the governor's alleged threats of sourcing Army muscle to ensure that the airport limousine drivers did not attempt to intimidate metered taxi drivers.

The irony, which those who have been on the island for at least more than a year can enjoy, is that it in fact did take the National Council of Peace and Order mobilizing the Army to root out the deeply-entrenched, illegal taxi mafia. However, even that effort has not completely seen us out of the jungle, as the lack of public transporta-

### The gift of hindsight

tion continues to be an unsightly stain on Phuket's reputation as an international tourism destination.

That topic was on page one of the August 6 Issue of the *Phuket Gazette* but hiding just inside the cover was a classic headline and revelation: 'Tsunami 'flushed out Patong Bay'. Though it took less than 10 years for the bay to once again play host to water of question-

able quality, it turned out that levels of harmful bacteria in the bay, which were associated with untreated human waste being discharged directly into it, had been reduced to nearly zero. Those were again the days of poop-free Patong, though as we all know – they did not last.

Much like the water-quality levels, tourist levels – as we now know – would also return to pre-tsunami levels. However, with the tourism industry suffering, the *Gazette* asked: "With about three months to go to until November 1 – the official start of the tourist high season – can tourist arrival

numbers return to pre-tsunami levels?"

At that point, the concern was not about whether the Russian market would be coming or even the Chinese – who was even thinking of such markets 10 years ago? The real question was whether or not the Scandinavians had faith in the effectiveness of the recently implemented tsunami-warning system and would once again grace our shores. The answer of course was that the numbers would quickly surpass pre-tsunami arrivals, though perhaps we should have been more careful for what we wished for.

– Isaac Stone Simonelli



## Jellyfish sting kills tourist in Koh Phangan

A THAI tourist died after being stung by a box jellyfish while swimming off Koh Phangan in Surat Thani on July 31.

Police revealed that Chayanan Surin, 31, had travelled to the island from Bangkok with friends and went swimming at around 8pm in Tambon Ban Tai where she was stung. She was pronounced dead at Koh Phangan Hospital that night.

One of the world's most poisonous creatures, this jellyfish's sting can cause extreme pain, muscle numbness, stomach and back muscle spasms, vomiting and death.

Dr Thanuwat Tippinit, who works at the Koh Phangan Hospital, warned that this type of jellyfish was more prevalent in Thailand during the southwest monsoon season.

## Travelling bot loses its head in America

POLICE inaction without a formal complaint being filed seems to be the rule of thumb in Phuket. However, apparently that also applies to hunting down people who decapitated hitchBOT in Philadelphia.

The experimental, child-sized robot had safely hitchhiked across Canada and through parts of Europe, but travel in the United States of Freedom Fries, from Boston to San Francisco, turned out to be too dangerous.

It's trip ended abruptly last weekend when it was found in a Philadelphia alley, with its head removed, reported Reuters.

"We can't do anything without a complaint being filed," said Philadelphia Police spokeswoman Leeloni Palmiero. "If they did, we would absolutely investigate."

The robot's owners said they have no interest in mounting a criminal prosecution.

"We wish to remember the good times, and we encourage hitchBOT's friends and family to do the same," the team behind the project said in a statement posted on the hitchBOT website.

"Sometimes bad things happen to good robots."



The move will make the public safer as metal gas cylinders are often used in bomb attacks in the restive region, a spokesman for the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Region 4 Front Command said.

## Woman seeks help to find abducted sons

A CAMBODIAN businesswoman on August 1 sought help from Thai officials at Sa Kaew's Aranyaprathet border checkpoint to locate her maid, who allegedly had abducted her two American-national sons aged 5 and 3 last December.

The 26-year-old Cambodian maid, Tek Jia, had reportedly crossed the border into Thailand with the boys in March this year.

Ms Tek allegedly abducted Un Somealea's sons from her Phnom Penh home on December 24. Ms Un had filed a complaint with Cambodian police and her family had been trying to find them since.

Ms Un said that her ex-husband, who held both American and Cambodian passports, might have conspired with the maid.

## Thailand might not pass fishing standards for EU

THE authorities, the business sector and NGOs all predict that Thailand's rank on the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) list will not improve, despite the strict measures being implemented by the government.

Many controversies have emerged from the implementation of the policy to stop illegal fishing and regulate the long-ignored problems within the fishing industry.

Within a short period of time, the Command Center for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) implemented many measures to solve the IUU fishing problems, such as fine-tuning the fisheries law, registering fishing vessels, port in-port out inspections, installing vessel tracking devices and banning four destructive types of fishing equipment.

However, few are confident that enough has been done to clear the EU inspection.

## Fake Hooter jobs used to lure women into prostitution

FIVE Thais suspected of being members of a transnational gang that forced Thai women into prostitution in China by promising 'Hooter girl' jobs

## NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

have been arrested after four victims filed police complaints.

The gang, which police suspect has a number of other members, is believed to have operated since 2012, promising women jobs in China, Malaysia and Singapore.

The gang targeted good-looking woman via social media and falsely offered 'Hooter girl' jobs in the city of Chongqing, said Maj-General Thiti Saengsawang, commander of the Anti-Human

Trafficking Division.

Once in China, the women then found themselves locked up and forced into the flesh trade in the Chinese city, police said.

## Gas cylinders in Deep South to be changed for security

RESTAURANTS and households in three southern border provinces and four Songkhla districts have been urged to gradually change from using the 15-kilogram metal cooking-gas cylinder to the 11kg composite-plus cylinder before the October 1, deadline.

## Firefight leaves 18 volunteers wounded

SECURITY personnel are hunting for more than 20 suspected insurgents who launched a bloody attack on village security volunteers in Yala on July 31.

The incident injured 18 security volunteers, six of them seriously, at a checkpoint.

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# In mourning

THE *Gazette* joins the Phuket community in mourning the death of Paiboon Upatising, who passed away after a long battle against cancer last week.

A descendent of Chinese immigrants, Mr Paiboon was a highly-successful businessman, who used his own good fortune to help those in need.

In addition to having exclusive rights to sell Boon Rawd Brewery products on the island, Mr Paiboon was the island's leading residential real estate developer. He developed the wide network of Phuket Villa residential estates throughout the island, which have brought prosperity to so many families: numerous buyers who bought on mortgage agreements have seen their assets more than quadruple in value over the years.

Mr Paiboon's Christian faith was reflected in the projects he initiated and saw through to completion as President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Authority (PPAO). Despite the tuk-tuk mafia, he managed to introduce Phuket's first practical, low-cost public transport system for the island with the *Po Thong* 'Pink Bus'. This service provides reliable transport to many communities that could otherwise never have afforded them, including the Sea Gypsy community on Koh Sireh.

The list of Mr Paiboon's achievements are too numerous for this space, but it is worth noting how effective he was at gaining support from such a wide spectrum of groups, from the Thai Buddhist and Muslim to ethnic Chinese communities, as well as Phuket's large expatriate community.

Mr Paiboon also had a fine sense of humor. When once asked by this editorial writer if he would take offence at being referred to as 'The Pink Panther' in print for his propensity to paint all PPAO assets in his trademark color, he said he loved the idea.

It is hard to fathom how Khun Paiboon could have been forced out of office over accusations of corruption at the PPAO Hospital in Rassada, as has been alleged.

Redevelopment of the long-abandoned facility in Phuket's poorest area stands as yet another example of Mr Paiboon's work for the development of Phuket and care for its least fortunate residents.

The *Gazette* hopes that the probe into these alleged improprieties is conducted quickly and in a fair and transparent way, so as not to unfairly tarnish the legacy of one of the island's most popular and successful public administrators.



## Dealing meth while living among police

*Re: Gazette online, Police officer's son caught dealing drugs from barracks, August 4*

I don't understand how such a sheer amount of drugs can get into police barracks without anyone noticing.

Sure, they caught the men after being told to keep an eye on them and one acted 'suspiciously' and happened to have a small amount of drugs on them.

But how did the three million baht worth sneak past officers?

Something isn't right.

Laura Salzburg  
Patong

### Letters to the Editor

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

for the boys to tell an adult that their friend had drowned. I don't understand how it is possible for not one adult, in a three and a half hour time period not to notice or overhear the boys panicking or searching. Are we so oblivious to anything that is not directly in front of our face, that something like this could happen?

Alan Cummings  
Rawai

## Excited for the Four Regions Fair

*Re: Gazette online, 'Unique Four Regions Fair' to start on Mother's Day, August 4*

I think it's a wonderful idea to arrange such events so that locals and tourists alike can experience the things that Thailand has to offer.

I am particularly looking forward to trying all of the local food and organic fruit that will be for sale.

Rita Harris  
Phuket Town

## Road responsibility

*Re: Gazette online, Drive at your own risk, August 4*

So who is responsible for the condition and the lousy repair work on the road between Karon and Patong near the entrance to Centara Grand? Every time a company tries to repair it, it takes at most 3 weeks until it is full of holes and dangerous again. Vehicles coming from Patong prefer to use the opposite lane to avoid the bumps, even though there is no way to see the oncoming traffic.

Fritz Pinguin  
Gazette forum

## No surprise Patong Police Station

*Re: Gazette online, Patong Police in deep water, must assess damage, August 3*

How is it that every time heavy rain falls, Patong Police Station is swamped with water and property is damaged?

It's almost not even laughable anymore. They are the ones who tell us to prepare for heavy rains and flash floods, yet they do not do so themselves.

Who pays for all of the damaged electronics and equipment? It is to the point where they need to take responsibility and either move buildings, or figure out a solution to re-route the water.

Alex Parker  
Chalong

## Where's the adults?

*Re: Gazette online, Boy drowns off Koh Sireh, July 31*

How does such a thing happen?

It took three and a half hours

## Heavy rain blame

*Re: Gazette online, Phuket DDPM warns of heavy rains, flash floods and landslides, August 5*

Safety is not just about getting to your destination and staying dry indoors because the people of the world are collectively responsible for more frequent rainstorms.

A recent Reuters report mentions a scientific study which says that rising man-made greenhouse gas emissions are stoking extremes from heatwave to precipitation.

Litterbugs should keep this in mind when they next throw a plastic bag or bottle on the beach or into the sea. We are definitely ruining the good earth with our careless habits and leaving the mess for the next generation to clean up.

Newcomer  
Phuket Town

## Phuket Gazette

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# Corruption battle

## FIRST PERSON

THE Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is a free organization working under The State Audit Commission. We are responsible for checking and auditing the balance of expenses, property, and income in the whole country.

We work toward financial transparency of the country for the citizens, as the money of the country is the money of the citizens.

The OAG does not only audit, but also actually fights corruption as well. Corruption is the enemy of development. Therefore, the more we can work toward eradicating it, the more the country can develop. This is our single most important duty.

The OAG does not work alone, however. We collaborate with The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the Public-sector Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Anti-Money Laundering Office for effective results.

When we find any suspicious activity in the financial system of a government office, we ask relevant officers to file a complaint against them and to move forward through justice procedures.

Lately, we have found a large amount of corruption in many government project budgets, such as their procurement systems, reimbursements, payments and expenses, among



**Law Professor Chaisit Trachoetham**, 65, has been Chairman of the State Audit Commission since 2014. He earned his Bachelor's in Law from Thammasat University, where he is also a professor, and his Bar-at-law and Doctorate from

Mahasarakham University. He has been working as a judge for 37 years, and is also a former president of the Court of Appeals and of the Supreme Court.

Here he talks to the Gazette about the importance of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and how it helps to fight corruption.

other things.

Recently, many presidents of our Provincial Administrative Organizations have been temporarily removed by the National Council for Peace and Order. This is because of the report they received from the OAG.

Even though we have done a lot of work dealing with corruption, our system still needs to be improved for the future.

In addition to our regular checks, we need to go deeper into financial systems from the very beginning.

For now, I cannot say whether Phuket is having serious corruption problems or not. However, we can see the fast development of Phuket as a famous tourist destination.

Population is increasing, along with the number of businesses. Logically, corruption

will also increase.

Land encroachment is a very big issue on Phuket. There are many ownership documents that have been issued for land that is not allowed to be possessed. Many buildings were constructed without proper permission.

The OAG has done its best on this issue. Many ownership documents have been canceled. However, to be more effective, we need the local authorities to be more transparent.

The law cannot control everything. People's attitude and awareness are equally important, as it has to start with the citizens themselves.

Students and youths are the best target to be trained at school, so as to grow up with an anti-corruption mindset.

Corruption is not a difficult thing to deal with if we help each other. Start with yourself and one day we will rid our country of corruption.



Chinese investors are now searching for safe-haven assets with real estate in key markets, such as Phuket. Photo: Sam/Olai Ose/Skjaervoy

## Real estate xenophobia

WHILE some Thais are jittery about foreigners buying Thai real estate, particularly land in some form or another, they should remember that they themselves can buy real estate in most western countries, with the rationale being that one can never bring that piece of real estate back to one's home country.

It is also pertinent to remember that Thai economic growth is sliding, with the Central Bank recently trimming its gross domestic product growth projection for this year to 3 per cent, from 3.8 per cent.

What Baron Rothschild said in the 18th century, 'the time to buy is when there is blood in the streets', applies today to China, where punters anxiously watched the Shanghai Composite Index plunge all of 13.4 per cent in July despite government measures to support it.

It is far from surprising that Chinese investors are now searching for safe-haven assets with real estate in key markets because of the low risk and often good returns one can get from a well chosen property.

This is underscored by a recent CNBC report saying that the Chinese are now the biggest foreign buyers of American real estate, having poured in US\$28.6 billion in the past year – more than double the amount invested by Canadians who

## Island View

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

Do you have an opinion to voice?  
Email [Editor@PhuketGazette.net](mailto:Editor@PhuketGazette.net)

rank a step below.

A firm bridge from this island to China is already being built, with Charn Issara Development Plc leading the way after launching the 42-rai Baba Beach Club development on Phang Nga's Na Tai beach, together with its Chinese partner Junfa Real Estate Company, with Thai-Chinese partnerships surely to follow.

What the sagacious among us hope for, is that the island continues to further develop into a truly cosmopolitan-resort center with room for all nationalities to live in harmony.

However, 'harmony' is the key word. If some locals or foreigners who have invested here suffer financially in one way or another, they will get desperate, and in that desperation may turn to crime and vice, which will ruin Phuket's future.

As property is most people's key investment, the more investors who come in and strengthen the market while not building up the much-feared bubble, the better. It would go a long way toward ensuring a rosy future for all of us.

## Words from the Wise

**"You think your pains and heartbreaks are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who have ever been alive."**

— James Baldwin

**"If you smile when no one else is around, you really mean it."**

— Andy Rooney

## Issues & Answers

### Is sweating and rolling up sleeves offensive?

WHEN I first moved to Phuket, I was told that rolling up my sleeves and sweating, was something I should be aware of. Is it really seen as offensive?

Alex Wright  
Kamala

**Jakapong Boonsawang, an official at the Phuket Cultural Office, replies:**

Thank you for your question. Please note that rolling up your

sleeves is acceptable in Thailand. However, for formal occasions, such as a job interview, meeting a customer, working in an office or meeting with your boss, it can be seen as a bit rude.

Women should not wear revealing clothes, such as tank tops and skirts above the knee, especially when entering Thai temples.

For the beach, Thai people usually wear light clothes that do not reveal too much. Most

men wear short pants, not swimming trunks, while women wear clothes while swimming.

It is acceptable to sweat in Thailand; however, some Thai people think it's distasteful, even though it's easy to sweat here.

Everyone is responsible for how they look. Sweating is not really controllable, but it is better to limit your time in hot places, use an umbrella outdoors or cool down before meeting others.





Boon Yongsakul, deputy managing director of Boat Development Company, gets the ship sailing for Boat Arcadia.

## Boat Arcadia sets sail with packed retail spaces

WITH a lot of activities for children and their doting parents, the brand new Boat Arcade, branding itself as the 'East Coast Edutainment & Family Center', expects to be a smash hit when it opens its doors next month.

This two-storey, high-street style shopping, dining and edutainment complex is dedicated to the island's international community. Located at the Boat Lagoon Marina, the facility is in an ideal location to continue to build the marina up as a lifestyle destination.

"Our aim is to satisfy the growing demand in the international community for a convenient place for all the family – a community mall where kids can learn and play in a safe environment, while adults enjoy shopping, relaxing and dining in style," Deputy Managing Director of Boat Development Company Boon Yongsakul said.

– *Phuket Gazette*

# Cash in on divergence markets change with some dumb luck

## Finance

By David Mayes

OBVIOUSLY a very interesting topic at the moment with the recent market action has been China.

From a technical perspective the recent action has been fascinating because the NASDAQ continued to make new highs during the first big leg down in China. This is what is called divergence, when major markets that have been mainly flowing in tandem for many years suddenly start to head in opposite directions.

As I write this, the Chinese market has taken another 12 per cent hit in two days and it looks like we may be in for some more forced selling via margin calls.

Before I go into explaining how I interpret this divergence, I feel it is necessary to go into how traders actually use technical indicators. Notice I said traders, who are generally speculating, and not investors.

Long-term investors should not be paying too much attention to technicals, but rather looking at the underlying fundamentals and buying an asset class when it represents value. Technicals can, however, help with the timing. One area in which they can help is taking profits at the end of a bull market.

The thing that is critical to understand is that all technical indicators only work when they do, and each one has a different probability that changes depending on which time period you choose to use to measure it.

Calculate a probability of a



The Chinese market and NASDAQ went different directions recently. Photo: Bfishadow

breakout succeeding in the S&P 500 index over the last few years and you will get a different number than if you calculate it using the last 50 years. Also, traders use the law of large numbers by doing tonnes of trades to make a large enough sample size for the probabilities to be realized. Trying to time changes in an investment portfolio is not going to produce a large enough sample size for statistical significance.

What I am saying, in layman terms, is simply this: timing is generally pure dumb luck when it comes to longer-term investors.

That said, divergence in major market indicators was one of the most trusted indicators of a turn around on the trading floor I used to work on.

Intraday we would see the Russell, S&P and Dow all making new highs for the day while suddenly the NASDAQ would tank all on its own, for example. This divergence would have us scrambling to exit or trim down positions.

Similarly, in the midst of a sell off, all indices would be heading down and then suddenly one of them would make a big bounce. This greatly increased the odds that the others would soon stop falling and would greatly reduce the risk of making a quick buck off the bounce.

Now, investors are not out to make a quick buck over and over again the way traders do. I always say trading is a profession and you should not try to make it a hobby. Hobbies always end up costing you money, and trading can be a

devastating hobby for many.

I advise sticking to investing with solid companies or asset managers, but that does not mean we can't use technical tools to guide us when we hold equity assets and China suddenly has a ferocious crash. It may just be a blip, but I would certainly use the strength in the NASDAQ to take some profits and put them in the bank in case it is the first signal of a major turn.

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

## Cheap oil to further cut inflation target for 2015

AMID the continued decline in inflation for seven consecutive months, the Commerce Ministry will revise down its annualized inflation target to lower than 0.6-1.3 per cent – despite the weakening baht – due to low oil prices.

"Whole-year inflation could be lower than previously anticipated, as key factors, including oil price, have been much lower than expected. However, inflation should slightly increase in the final quarter due to the high base year-on-year last year, while the global oil price will increase following high demand in the market," Somkiat Trairatpan, inspector-general at the ministry, said on Monday.

The ministry reported that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) continued weakening in July by 1.05 per cent year on year. Month-on-month infla-

tion was down by 0.07 per cent, the first contraction in six months due to lower oil price. The CPI for the first seven months was 0.85 per cent lower than in the same period last year.

Last month, core inflation – excluding volatile fuel and food prices – remained at 0.94 per cent year on year, but increased 0.10 per cent month on month. Core inflation in the first seven months was 1.18 per cent year on year.

Although inflation had gone in reverse for six months, the ministry denied that Thailand had slipped into a deflationary phase. However, the ministry admitted that consumer purchasing power had been declining due to weak confidence in the economy. Major negative inflation was due mainly to plummeting oil prices and lower food price.

– *The Nation*



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- ❖ Bookkeeping
- ❖ Visa service
- ❖ Translations







## Zoom ahead with Toyota

Toyota Pearl Phuket recently announced the 2015 Fast Fun Fest race to be held on August 8 and 9 at Saphan Hin.



Attending the press conference for the greatly anticipated race were (from L-R) Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong; Wiboonchai Na-Ranong, deputy managing director for Toyota Pearl; and Chaipat Na-Ranong, managing director for Toyota Pearl. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikam

## Loads of fun at street festival



Revellers greatly enjoyed themselves at the seventh Kathu Culture Street Festival held from July 30 to August 1. Kathu Mayor Chaianan Suttikul (left) and Culture Minister Vira Rojpojanarat opened the colorful event.



Kathu Mayor Chaianan and his wife, Patong Deputy Mayor Banyong Kebsub, go through the festival grounds in traditional dress and mode.



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## ents in Paradise

### Bodyslam to get rocking for charity

Good music and fun galore will take place on August 22 when top Thai rock band Bodyslam gets the beat going on the island with a charity performance organized by Laguna Phuket. Some of the funds raised will be given to Phuket Punyanukul School.



Hosting a media showcase for the upcoming concert and launching ticket sales at Central Festival Phuket are (from L-R) Ma-ann Samran, owner of Works.com (international) and Cherng Talay OrBorTor president; Prapa Hemmin, director of sales-MICE and corporate events for Laguna Phuket; and Napaporn Phromsorn, assistant director of Phuket Punyanukul School.



A youth band performs during the press conference.

### A special day for tigers



Tiger Kingdom Phuket fittingly marked International Tiger Day on July 29. Among those attending the celebration were (from L-R) Wynn Sinchai, general manager of Tiger Kingdom Trakarn; Beer Saipoo, owner of Mintira Travel; and Siripol Yongyoothavichai, assistant managing director of Tiger Kingdom Trakarn's. Photo: The Guide Phuket

### Body builders show their stuff



Beautiful bodies were on display at the 'Body Fit Model Contest 2015', which took place at Limelight Avenue on Saturday August 2. Present for the competition were (from L-R) Panee Koaysomboon, managing director of Limelight Management; Wilaiporn Wannaklang, former world female body builder champion 2012; and Saksri Kerdphol, managing director of wine distributor Chao Rawai.

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# Boathouse pushes the boat out

By Baz Daniel

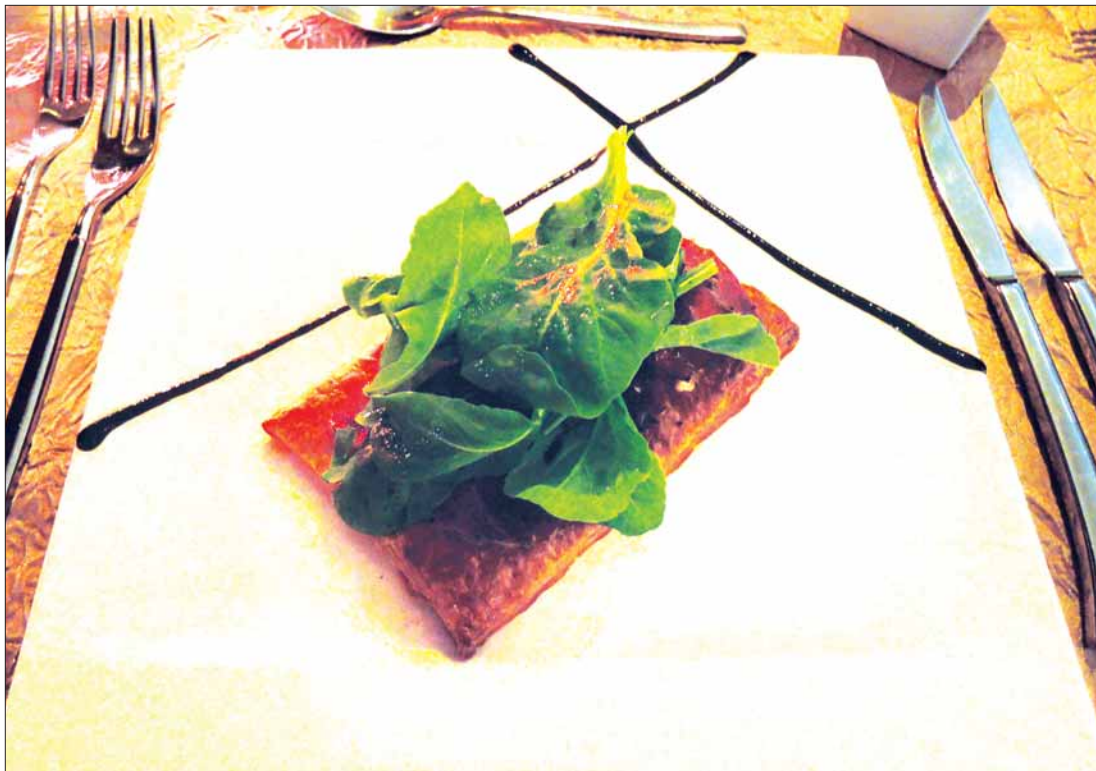
THAT much-misused word 'iconic' is actually totally appropriate when applied to the glorious Boathouse Boutique Resort and its fabulous Wine and Grill Restaurant overlooking the sands of Kata Beach.

The original Mom Tri's Boathouse was lovingly created by His Majesty the King's cousin no less, Mom Luang Tridosyudh Devakul, better known as 'Mom Tri', renowned as Thailand's most famous architect and designer.

In the late 1980s Mom Tri showered his considerable resources, design talents and unparalleled good taste upon a piece of stunning property he owned right upon the soft golden sands overlooking Kata Bay.

He created the elegant Boathouse Resort and its equally elegant restaurant, completing them in 1989 and they became an immediate 'hit' with the sophisticated set that holidayed and owned homes in Phuket and the Andaman region.

The cognoscenti flocked to the Boathouse not only for its fabulous location and incomparable Mediterranean and Thai cuisine, but for its huge



Chef Berger's duck breast and goat cheese tart with fresh rocket from the French Gourmet special menu.

and comprehensive wine cellar and even its musical, art and literary events that became a trademark of this indeed 'iconic' property. The rich and glamorous beat a path to Boathouse's charming portals including such luminaries as Peter Ustinov, Prince Henrik of Denmark and Rudolf Nureyev.

In 2010 Boathouse was sold to the Three Dolphins Group,

owner of the luxurious Trisara Resort and villa development in Phuket's northwest.

The Group's Executive Chairman Narong Pattamasaevi said at that time, "Boathouse is more than just a hotel on the beach; it has inspired a loyal following of visitors who appreciate its friendly, superb service, gourmet food and one of the best wine cellars in the Kingdom of Thailand."

Following extensive renovations, completed in 2012, Boathouse was re-launched offering a refreshing blend of its original elegance with additional modern luxuries and tropical flare.

In its latest burst of pyrotechnical excitement, Boathouse recently appointed the experienced hospitality professional Max Chin as its new general manager and he

has hit the ground running in every sense.

A spectacular promotion that Boathouse ran throughout July was their French gourmet menu featuring a four-course selection of contemporary French cuisine ranging from a savory duck breast and goat cheese tart to a Hokkaido scallop and foie gras terrine, all paired most elegantly with wines from that quintessential New Zealand vineyard - Sileni Estates.

This menu was priced starting at 1,800 baht per person for food only and an additional 1,500 baht or more for the wonderful wine pairings.

The inaugural 'What's For Lunch Chef?' event took place on Friday, July 17 with a happy throng of the highly talkative Phuket in-crowd seated at a long table sampling the delights of Chef Bryan Berger's fresh cuisine for that day. The concept is that Bryan cooks whatever he finds to be best and freshest at the market that morning and then it is served for lunch with abundant wine and plenty of friendly banter and fun.

This lunch will be staged every second and last Friday of the month from August onwards and is priced at 1,500 baht or more per person.

## August 8. The Lotus Experience Phuket

Arriving under the banner 'The Lotus Experience Phuket', 30 magnificent cars of that awesome breed will grace our island this weekend.

The cars, all from Malaysia, will be 'hanging out' at Phuket Airpark on Saturday starting at about 12 noon. This is not a formal exhibition but any car enthusiast is more than welcome to come and have a look.

PGTV will be filming for the 'Phuket Today' show and the drivers, led by famed Red Bull stunt pilot Les Vorosmarthy, will be on hand to answer any questions about their gleaming machines.

Entry to the Airpark is free of charge.

## August 8. Wine Lover's wine tasting event

Please come and enjoy our wine tasting event with live music. Six glasses of wine, Thai appetizers, mini sushi and salad bar, fruit, desserts and more for only 899 baht.



**MANNY LIBRODO**

SONY AMBASSADOR FOR PHILIPPINES



**ADRIANO TRAPANI**

CREATOR OF BOHEMIAN WORKSHOPS

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## WHAT'S ON in Phuket

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For more information visit [www.phuketadventureminigolf.com](http://www.phuketadventureminigolf.com)

## August 12. HM The Queen's Birthday

HM Queen Sirikit's birthday is also marked as Mother's Day in Thailand, with festivities taking place throughout the country. Keep checking the *Gazette* for local celebrations.

## September 5-6. Fourth Bohemian Workshop

Phuket's very own Adriano Trapani will be holding the fourth edition of his 'Bohemian' signature photography workshop on September 5 and 6 at Banyan Tree Phuket, co-hosted by Sony Ambassador for the Philippines Manny Librodo. For more information and booking please contact [adriano.trapani@gmail.com](mailto:adriano.trapani@gmail.com) or call 084-844 9215.

## October 23. Chulalongkorn Memorial Day

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

## December 5. HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Birthday

HM The King's birthday is also marked as Father's Day in Thailand, with festivities taking place throughout the country.



# So much water, so little to drink


**Keep It Green**
**By Patrick Campbell**

'AND not a drop to drink', bemoan the parched and stricken seaman drifting to oblivion on a windless sea in Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner'. It is an irony not lost on any of us that though most of the earth's surface is covered by water, it is largely saline and undrinkable.

Does this affect Thailand? Well yes, it does. You would hardly think so, since the country has 25 major river basins, and an average annual rainfall of 1,700 millimeters. Bangkok, let it be known, was under water some 500 years ago, and boasted a canal system more extensive than that of Venice.

Even so, the facts speak for themselves.

The country's central plain possesses no large reservoirs and is heavily reliant on dams. These in turn reduce the flow along those rivers which constitute the main source of running water. Agriculture is a thirsty business: in Thailand, the sector takes up a massive 70 per cent of the



Unlike other crops, rice needs abundant water through most of its growing cycle. Photo: Michael Coghlan

nation's total water supply.

In North America, the vast prairies are devoted to the cultivation of wheat, a crop which requires relatively little moisture once past the green shoot stage. The picture is totally different in Thailand, where the staple crop is rice and rice needs abundant water through most of its growing cycle.

Although much of the crop, 9.2 million hectares in total, has been traditionally dependent on the monsoon rains, more and more paddies are now reliant on

expensive and updated irrigation technology, a fact which has not only led to the decline of the small peasant farmer, but has resulted in the large-scale diversion and consumption of water from outside sources.

True, the so-called green revolution has increased production and the possibility of growing three crops a year, but it has generated its own massive problems. There is now 40 to 60 per cent less water for other uses, waterlogged areas and heavier usage of pesticides and herbi-

cides which has led to the pollution of streams, rivers and the contamination of ground water systems. These initiatives have also led to the loss of biodiversity, a decrease in traditional rice varieties and farming methods and reduced resistance of some species to disease.

Indeed, if you think Thailand's problems are unique, think again. Take the 'golden state' of California. It is one of the richest and most fertile places on Earth with almost eight million acres un-

der cultivation, which should truly make it the fruit basket of an entire nation.

Just as parts of Northern Thailand are becoming an artificial agricultural heartland, so too is California, where 80 per cent of the water used in cultivation does not arrive naturally in the form of rain, but is diverted from rivers, or pumped from aquifers or groundwater reserves. Now even California is having to cut down on its hectares of fruit and vegetables.

At the end of the day, you can manipulate Mother Nature, but you can never ignore her.

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

*If you have a question or a garden that you would like to see featured, email Patrick at drpaccampbell@gmail.com. Many of Patrick's past articles and his academic and creative publications can be accessed at patrickaccampbell.wordpress.com.*

## Opposition building for Communal Forest bill



PMove fear the bill will dismantle communities. Photo: The Nation

THE People's Movement for a Just Society (PMove) has protested the proposed Communal Forest bill, saying it would render forest communities impotent by handing the government complete control of forest management and result in the communities being dismantled.

PMove protesters, led by Northern Region Farmer Union President Direk Khongnguen, gathered outside Government House on Monday.

The bill is being considered in the second reading by the National Reform Council.

Mr Direk said the bill would let the state have an iron grip on forest management by al-

lowing only relevant agencies to handle management.

"This is a violation of communal rights, which has been protected under the 1997 Constitution up until the current interim constitution, and it will separate the people from the forest, as the bill sees the people in the forest as encroachers and not caretakers," Mr Direk said.

"Therefore, we demand that the NRC abort the consideration and take the bill out immediately."

The bill was presented the NRC's land and forest subcommittee under the committee on natural resources and environment reform. — *The Nation*

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# Tonnes of trash killing future

## Island marine tourism industry not immune to effects



### On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

THE 'crystal clear,' 'aqua blue' sea off Phuket is a significant part of the island's tourism offering and attracts many visitors to this fair isle.

Those iconic sea, island and beach snorkelling images from Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT] campaigns have been around the world more times than an inter-continental jet.

Today's reality, however, is somewhat different because the sea needs our help. We derive benefit from it but rarely invest in its upkeep and now the oceans around the world suffer from a huge trash problem.

Eight million tonnes of plastic was dumped into the world's oceans from coastal communities in 2010 alone, and that figure is expected to increase tenfold in the next decade, according to a study by a group of scientists, published in *Science* earlier this year.

Phuket is not immune to this problem and while its waters appear clean, the volume of flotsam, jetsam and trash on the seabed is undoubtedly growing. This is easy to see on any day trip from Phuket, even while swimming off Phuket's coast or a nearby island.

We have all read about the damage to marine life caused

by this trash and have also seen gruesome images of seals or turtles being strangled by plastic. We have seen images of marine animals that have choked on plastic bags and yet we do nothing.

Simply put, trash in Phuket's waters means the death of Phuket's tourism industry. Sounds a little over the top? Not at all. The aforementioned study looks at the worst offenders and of the Top 10 worst-offending countries in the world, eight are in Asia.

Something you will not find in any TAT brochure is that Thailand is among this Top 10.

Much of the surface waste you can see off

Phuket is everyday trash: food packaging, styrofoam boxes, plastic bags, plastic bottles. The kind of products that easily float many miles and are used regularly on boat tours.

It is time to put a stop to this. It is time standards were set, and those standards set high and then enforced.

Ocean trash is no one person's fault, but a collective responsibility that requires a joint effort to fix. Trash from elsewhere can float into Phuket's waters, the same as trash that is dropped overboard here can make its way to other areas.

The Cambodian-flagged cargo ship *Sinaran Andaman*, which recently crashed onto



**INTERTWINED:** Marine trash can do more than kill wildlife, it can kill the tourism industry. Photo: NOAA

the rocks and sank off Coral Island is a ecological tragedy for Phuket, the proportions of which have yet to be discovered. The most immediate and obvious environmental impact is the trash on the water's surface.

Quoted in a recent *Gazette* report, Department of Marine and Coastal Resources [DMCR] Phuket office Chief Thanet Munnoy said, "We have already found some items washing up on Phuket and some on Koh Lanta. This is a

big deal. We will need the help of the Phuket Marine Office to collect all the waste."

When recently visiting the spot where the cargo ship went down while the salvage operation was still underway you could see plastic food packaging floating on the surface all across Chalong Bay to Lone Island.

How will that be cleaned up? I doubt the majority will. Currents will disperse and move the trash elsewhere and 'what we don't see, won't hurt

us' will take over.

It's not good enough. A joint approach to cleaning up the seas is needed. Phuket deserves better.

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

# Fleming 58 in Derani Yachts portfolio

DERANI Yachts was appointed as the new sales and service representative for Fleming Yachts in April, covering Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Located in the Phuket Boat Lagoon, Derani Yachts provides a full range of services including new boat sales, brokerage, service, yacht delivery, commissioning and management.

"Derani Yachts has a very loyal clientele with many repeat customers. This patronage comes from trusting relationships, where customer's needs and interests are emphasized and attended to," said Hakan



**The Fleming 58 won 'Best Passagemaker' in the 50-59 foot class in 2014.** Photo: Billy Black

Lange, yacht broker and owner of Derani Yachts.

Fleming Yachts offers four models: the Fleming 55, 58, 65

and 78. These semi-displacement, raised-pilothouse motor yachts are considered to be 'The Ultimate Cruising Yachts' by

boating journalists and yachting enthusiasts throughout the world.

The Fleming 58 was awarded 'Best Passagemaker in 50-59 ft

class' at the 2014 AIM Marine Group Editor's Choice event at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show on October 31.

The winners of the awards were chosen with the intent of selecting examples of 'true ground-breaking innovation that are well executed.'

Fleming believes that the award validates their decision to use the 2014 downturn as an opportunity to develop an entirely new design, based on the Fleming tradition, intended to fill the gap between the legendary 55 and the newer, but equally successful, Fleming 65.

— Isaac Stone Simonelli



# Realpolitik defines relationship

## On Your Mind

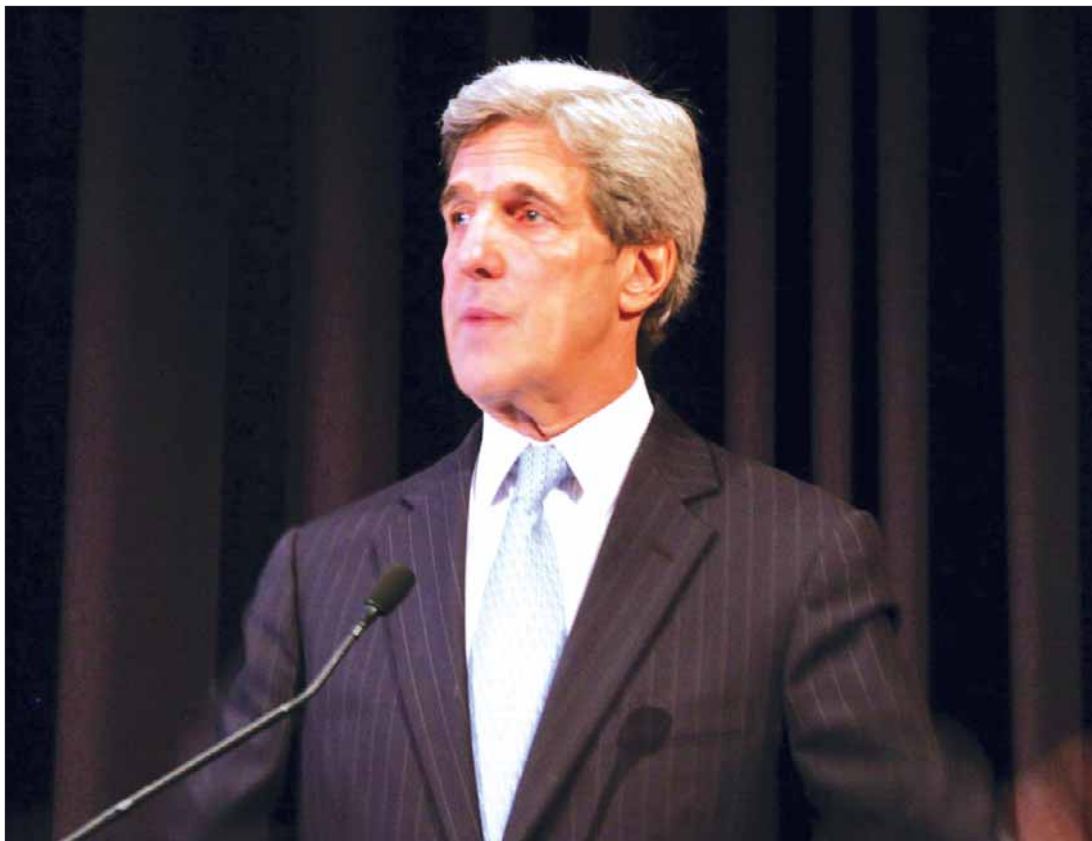
By Patrick Mattimore

WEBSTER'S dictionary defines realpolitik as a system of politics based on a country's situation and its needs rather than on ideas about what is morally right and wrong. No doubt US government officials would deny that realpolitik defines American policies, but it is hard to see any clear moral imperative with regard to that country's relationship with Thailand.

The moral face the US shines on Thailand, urging for example, that the Thais take steps to end human trafficking and restore democratic rule, is two-faced.

On the one hand, the US insists that the current Thai government act expeditiously to reinstitute democratic traditions here, while on the other, US government encroaches more and more into the lives of private American citizens, surveilling those lives as the government sees fit.

As Edward J Snowden, a former Central Intelligence Agency officer and National Security Agency contractor revealed, the US government pressured some of the world's most popular online services to partner in mass domestic and international surveillance programs.



The US insists that the Thai government act promptly to reinstitute democratic traditions. Photo: Cliff

The American government narrative about concern for the humane and ethical treatment of all people flies in the face of the torture of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.

In spinning one domestic organization to do its will, for example, the US government enlisted the American Psychological Association

(APA) to help with its dirty work. In an April 30 report in *The New York Times*, James Risen wrote that the APA, 'secretly collaborated with the administration of President George W Bush to bolster a legal and ethical justification for the torture of prisoners'.

In a book published last year, *Pay Any Price: Greed, Power,*

*and Endless War* (Houghton Mifflin, October 14, 2014), Risen uncovered numerous documents implicating key psychologists in torture.

American government officials exported that torture too.

*The Washington Post* reported in 2005 that the CIA was holding suspects in secret prisons in two countries, one of

which was Thailand. Thai authorities have denied that the country ever hosted a secret CIA prison, but the agency confirmed in 2009 the existence of the facility in Thailand and that it had destroyed 92 taped interviews with detainees at 'Detention Site Green', the name given to the Thai prison.

In 2006, President Bush acknowledged that the US had imprisoned individuals in other countries, but insisted that they were 'treated with the humanity that they denied others'. Bush said the interrogation techniques used through the program were tough, but did not constitute torture.

In 2014, a US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence disagreed, finding that CIA detainees were tortured and that the 'conditions of confinement and the use of authorized and unauthorized interrogation and conditioning techniques were cruel, inhuman, and degrading'.

The US often uses its position as world leader to preach from the bully pulpit about how other countries, such as Thailand, should handle their own affairs. Generally, the preaching is rather benign. That changed, however, when the US went from the pulpit to just plain being a bully, insisting Thailand allow the US within its borders to torture whomever they pleased.







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# Penang, Phuket: islands of irony

By Simon J Hand

PENANG and Phuket share many historical and cultural similarities and recent similar events in their property markets show that the sister islands still have much in common.

On a recent trip there, courtesy of Firefly Airlines, to join Penang's heritage celebrations, I was introduced to a small Thai enclave in the northern quarter of Georgetown, not far from the Royal Thai Consulate, a favorite of many Phuket visa runners.

The five-acre (about 13 rai) site was gifted to Penang's Thai and Burmese community by Queen Victoria in 1845 to help foster trade between Penang and Siam, as it was then known. The gift, presented on behalf of the British Queen by the East India Company's W. L. Butterworth, was made in perpetuity, allowing this small Thai enclave to remain in Penang forever.

And so they did, for more than six generations.

A large part of that five acres is taken up by the impressive Wat Chayamangkalaram, which is a stop-off for many Thai Buddhists visiting the island. Around the temple has grown a hodge-podge of family homes, many in the vernacular of the island's Chinese heritage, but others just modest Thai homes you could easily expect to run across right here in Phuket.

It is here that one of the oldest practitioners of Thai Menora dancing resides, the 93-year-old Noo Wan. However, he and his family may not be able to stay in the village much longer.

About 15 years back, Queen Victoria's gift was being managed by a group of 'unscrupulous' trustees. Somehow, through the sort of under-the-table shenanigans



The roughly 13 rai site was gifted to Penang's Thai and Burmese community by Queen Victoria in 1845. Photo: Simon J Hand

you might better expect on our own island, they had the title for a large part of the land 're-assigned' and promptly sold it off to developers.

The developers stayed quiet for many years, possibly hoping for the dust of ages to bury the misdeeds. But then, a couple of years back, they announced plans to build a big hotel across one acre of the Thai village, sending eviction notices to the residents, including poor Noo Wan.

By now, regular readers of the *Gazette* will have caught on to the correlation with an ongoing story from beautiful Phuket. Rawai's Moken sea gypsy community faces a similar threat

from property developers who claim they have a legal right to lands that the Moken have inhabited for generations.

While no royally mandated gift validates the Moken's legitimacy to their land, DSI's investigation did reveal that their ancestors inhabited the land long before titles were issued. Regardless of this, bully boys working for the developers are still trying to drive out the Moken villagers with threats of violence.

Queen Victoria's grant to the Thais of Penang has not helped those villagers much either, as the developers claim that the land was acquired legally and therefore they have a legal right

to destroy this community and build yet another mega-hotel on the site.

In both cases, it is now down to the courts to decide the outcome.

Penang, however, has a vibrant community dedicated to cultural preservation, and those that drive it are hoping that they can save the ramshackle Thai village by pushing the government to declare it a site of historical significance, not for its built heritage, which is, frankly, not much worth saving, but for its living heritage, such as Noo Wan. Then it would not matter who owned the site, because the only form of development allowed would be to the benefit of

its cultural significance.

There is by no means any guarantee that such a ruling could be brought to save the Thai village of Penang, but it is a very good idea that might just work right here in Phuket to save Rawai's Moken community – let the developers have the land, just don't let them change anything that would be a detriment to the living history of Phuket.

With the government high on the idea of applying for UNESCO World Heritage accreditation for the Andaman coast, this would be a positive step toward proving that such conservation is possible in Thailand.

## Wealthy Thais supporting developers in slow economy

THAI property developers are raising record funds in the domestic bond market to finance high-end residential projects in a stumbling economy that appears to have hurt all but the affluent.

Developers issued 54.2 billion baht [US\$1.55 billion] of bonds in the first half of this year – a record for a six-month period and equal to 74 per cent of the debt sold by developers for the whole of 2014, according to the Thai Bond Market Association.

Raising funds from the debt market

is much cheaper than bank loans despite the two cuts in the central bank's policy rate so far this year. A sluggish economy has turned banks cautious about lending. Prime lending rates are at least 6.5 per cent, compared with the 3.31 per cent coupon on five-year bonds issued this year by Land & Houses, Thailand's largest home builder. Real estate developers are also loath to raise funds in a weak stock market.

But wealthy Thais seem to be unperturbed by the economic woes, playing

the role of white knight in an uncertain property market. Their purchases in Bangkok have gravitated toward developments near future transport nodes and hubs. Skytrain operator BTS Group and developer Sansiri said this month they would jointly develop 25 condominium projects worth 100 billion baht along mass transit lines over the next five years.

In Greater Bangkok, the value of new housing projects rose 64 per cent in January-to-June to 227 billion baht from a year earlier, and is expected to climb

to 449 billion baht for the full 2015, according to the Agency for Real Estate Affairs. The agency expects the market value of new premium units to surge 281 per cent this year, versus zero growth for cheaper units.

"We have also switched to the high-end market," said Kessara Thanyalakpark, director of Thai property firm Sena Development. "Others probably think the same, as household debt is quite a problem for the lower segment of the market," she said.

– *The Nation*



# Not all doom and gloom on Phuket



**By The Book**

**Kevin Hodges**

PEOPLE who spend time in Phuket or reside here will surely have heard expats grumbling about the island's property market.

Of course there are some nagging issues: there is a lack of easily accessible information for buyers, similarly and most certainly a lack of regulation and there is no Multiple Listing Service [MLS].

However while the market here is a little soft with the resale and secondary side yet to get into full swing, we believe it is not all doom and gloom because it does have a bright future ahead with many strengths already in place and many more opportunities on the horizon.

Moreover property prices in Phuket have been very stable mainly because nearly all foreigners are cash buyers as it is impossible for them to obtain a mortgage in this country. This greatly reduces the amount of debt in the market.

A large segment of foreign-



Despite what you hear, there are still many development opportunities in Phuket Photo: Gunther Hagleitner

owned property is made up of retirees and these buyers will not slash prices to sell because the property is part of their retirement plan. They will instead wait for the market to recover. The upshot of this is more stable pricing than in other property markets.

An improved lifestyle offered by living in Phuket is a major attraction for many expats. The weather, Thai culture, Thai and international cuisine, beaches, established expat community and sporting

activities are some of the main advantages of living in Phuket.

Tourism in Phuket has been booming for a while now with tourist numbers growing year upon year. This is supported by a first class hotel industry which provides huge economic benefits for Phuket and with more luxury hotel brands coming online the industry looks set to prosper well into the future.

For those looking to purchase or develop property here in Phuket, or other related businesses there are many

opportunities.

There are also good value resale options with Siam Real Estate's Residential Market Report pointing out that resale properties in Phuket are on average priced lower than new properties. This provides opportunities for above average return on investment through rental returns and capital gains. New off-plan condo and villa developments also offer interesting deals to those who buy early.

Despite what you might hear

Phuket is not yet over developed and there is continuing market demand for new property developments.

Phuket already has a well-established and successful marine industry and, with support from the government, aims to keep expanding. Much publicized recently was Phuket's plans to attract more superyachts to the island's marinas.

As with any business and investment there are always threats that could derail the best laid plans. It is nearly impossible to predict the next black swan event even though in hindsight some will say 'I told you so.'

Having analyzed the market we believe that the strengths and opportunities Phuket offers far outweigh the weaknesses and potential threats. Although the market is currently soft, we expect this to be nothing more than the usual economic trend which affect property markets all over the world. Phuket's brightest days lie ahead of us.

For more information, contact Kevin Hodges by calling 076-324042 or by emailing: [kevin@siamrealestate.com](mailto:kevin@siamrealestate.com).

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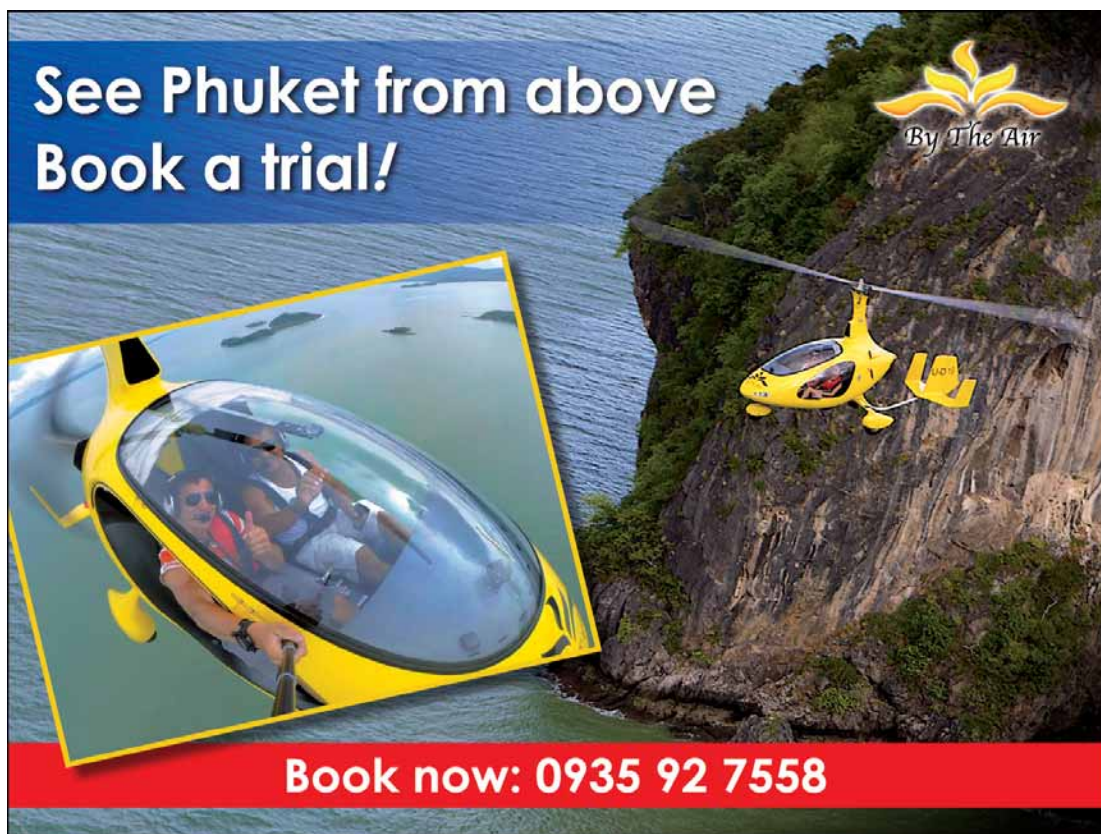
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# Prab Keesin – the family business

By Chutharat Plerin

THE Keesin clan is a household name throughout Phuket, as the political powerhouse family from Patong has a number of developments and interests in the island's primary party town. Most recently they found themselves caught in the limelight with mafia charges being levied against them.

The founder of the clan was the recently-deceased Pian Keesin – local Patong politician for life. However, it is now his son Preechavude 'Prab' Keesin who holds the family's banner as he changes its paradigm away from politics to above the table business.

"My role as the Managing Director of the Pisona Group started in 2004, after the tsunami struck Phuket," Prab explains. "Most of our businesses were along the beach front. Our hotels and assets were completely destroyed."

Prab was facing 900 million baht of debt when he stepped in, about 200mn of it was informal debt.

"It was not easy, but I had to make it work. I negotiated the informal debt, and eventually

was able to drive our business forward. We are now free from non-performing loans (NLP)."

Prab's father cast a long shadow over Patong as a politician who worked his way up from *Phu Yai Ban* to *Kamnan* and eventually become the town's first elected mayor. His career saw him pulled from power multiple times for alleged election fraud. Only shortly before his death had he once again lost the reins for the city. Despite this legacy, Prab insists he has no interest in politics.

"I am my own man. I am not related to my father's reputation in that way," Prab says. "I don't want to battle for power in the government or do anything related to buying votes. It is not my way, and I like the way I am by creating strong businesses, paying taxes in accordance with the law."

Prab does not want to leave a legacy marred by allegations of mafia-like activities. He wants to leave a positive, lasting impression on society.

"Transportation services is part of the Pisona Group, which is what the mafia charges are connected to," Prab says.

"Being a well-known person who is supported by the people because he gives back to the public does not define mafia activity."

Despite his rejection of the allegations, Prab says they came as no surprise, pointing out that those extorting money and taking bribes were merely using the Keesins as scapegoats.

"What has mattered most in what I have done was the development of the Pattana Patong Foundation [Patong Development Foundation]," Prab says. "We support a variety of religious activities from the Vegetarian Festival to Ramadan."

The foundation also supports local schools and formal police functions.

"I want to continue building a successful business, so that I have the money to help people get free education and free training. With these skills, the people of Patong can drive the city

forward."

Money matters are never far from hand for a man who is juggling the number of businesses and assets that Prab is. However, the bottom line, he says, is happiness.

"If I had a single wish that could come true, it would be for everyone to be happy every single day of their lives," Prab says.



Photo: Chutharat Plerin  
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