

Phuket Gazette

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'THERE IS NO NEED TO BE AFRAID' After the blast

Island prepares for damage to the tourism sector

SECURITY measures were increased throughout Phuket following the devastating bombing of a tourist destination in Bangkok that killed at least 20 people and injured 125 on Monday night.

Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong has called for residents and tourists not to panic, as members of the tourism industry prepare for the impact of the deadly attack on arrival figures.

"There is no need to be afraid," Governor Nisit said. "We are increasing surveillance at checkpoints on the island and may set up additional checkpoints as needed."

The governor noted that the checkpoints might cause tailbacks and delay traffic, but emphasized that his number one priority was public safety.

The officers at the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint, the gateway to Phuket, have been ordered to boost security checks of vehicles and people coming onto the island, confirmed Phuket Provincial Police Commander Patchara Boonyasit. Additionally, security forces have been ordered to monitor tourist attractions and crowded areas on the island.

Security measures have also been increased at Phuket International Airport.

"Normally, we enforce strict security measures through the officers who work at the airport. However, we are now receiving the help of the Royal Thai Navy and local police in order to further ensure the safety of all those using the facility,"



Love and compassion immediately followed the terror caused by the blast. Photo: The Nation

said Monrudee Gettuphan, the director of Phuket International Airport. "We are monitoring activities inside, outside and in the surrounding area of the airport."

The tragic bomb blast appeared to target Bangkok's Erawan Shrine, which is popular with Chinese tourists who are

Phuket's and Thailand's largest in-bound tourism market.

The improvised three kilogram TNT explosive device was placed under a chair close to the fence of the...

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Four tourists succumb to deadly waters

TREACHEROUS waters claimed the lives of four foreigners this week, and nearly a fifth, had it not been for the quick action of lifeguards.

Three of the five victims were swimming in no-swim zones.

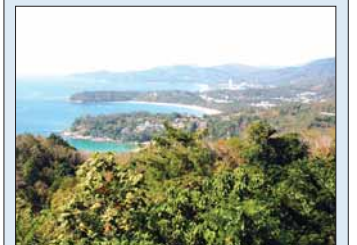
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BUSINESS



Chinese are ready to pay full price for package tours, locals undercut each other.

PROPERTY



Desmond Hughes returns from Australia to weigh the value of Phuket.

LIFE&STYLE



Competitive Thai sailors struggle to move up due to lack of opportunities.

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Turkish tourist arrested with 99 fake cards

KRABI Police arrested a Turkish tourist and a Thai woman for the possession of 99 fake ATM cards in Krabi Town last week.

Teke Onur Mustarfa, 36, and Kanitha Saramee, 45, have both denied the charges of making and using fake bank cards.

The two suspects are believed to have already made a number of withdrawals using the cards. Also in the couple's possession was about 240,000 baht in cash, said Krabi Provincial Police Deputy Commander Boontawee Toraksa.

— Winai Sarot

Thai Navy raid unearths dirty diggers in north

A ROYAL Thai Navy raid dug up nine men working at an illegal excavation site that local officials are allegedly involved in.

The men were arrested on two different Mai Khao plots of land that have unclear borders that are most likely overlapping with preserved forest land, said Lt Sompop Kamkana of the Royal Thai Navy. Additionally, one of the plots is on top of a mountain. The slope is greater than 30 degrees and is more than 80 meters above sea level, which automatically makes excavation illegal.

The lower plot has been dug deeper than three meters, which requires a permit from the Natural Resources and Environment Phuket office, Lt Sompop noted.

The five-rai mountain-top plot was being worked on by Phuket Mitrmittree Co Ltd, while the lower 10-rai site was

Guinness world record set by 'Bike for Mom'



VIDEO REPORT: People on Phuket, and throughout Thailand, smashed the Guinness World Record for most cyclists riding at the same time on Sunday with the 'Bike for Mom' event honoring HM Queen Sirikit's 83rd birthday. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Phuket PR

being worked on by Saha Utsahakam Lae Suanyang Co Ltd.

Both companies had excavation permits issued by the Mai Khao Local Administration Organization (OrBorTor), but they expired three years ago, Lt Sompop said.

Police seized a total of five backhoes and eight dump trucks from the sites.

The arrested men alleged that Mai Khao OrBorTor President Sarawut Sisakukam was the owner of the lower plot of land.

Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong has created a committee to investigate Mr Sarawut, as well as other Mai Khao OrBorTor staff, about the process of issuing the permits.

— Nattha Thepbamrung

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Phuket 'debt settlers' found with grenade

THREE people were charged for the possession of a M65 grenade following their return from 'clearing up' a debt problem at a karaoke in Srisoonthorn.

Officers searched the vehicle after flagging it as suspicious when it approached a checkpoint just south of Tesco Thalang.

Police named the driver as Songchai Nianhorm, 38, and the passengers as Nampon Horhao, 34, and Wijitra Chawee-In, 34.

Since none of them stepped forward as the owner of the explosive device, all three were charged for the illegal possession of a weapon of war.

— Winai Sarot

Slasher attacks more than 50 motor vehicles

POLICE apprehended a suspect for allegedly vandalizing

more than 50 vehicles in the Thalang National Housing Village on August 16.

Sunthorn Somkhan, 31, from Rawai, gave confused accounts about slashing the tyres of cars and vans, as well as smashing their windows and slashing the seats of motorbikes in the area.

Given the mixed up testimonial provided, police believe that Mr Sunthorn might be suffering from a mental disorder.

Police have asked relatives of Mr Sunthorn to report to the Thalang Police Station with any information that could either back or refute the theory that the man's actions were dictated by a mental disorder.

He was charged for damaging property.

— Winai Sarot

Patong officer transferred over police brutality allegation

THE police officer charged for allegedly beating a Patong bouncer in June has been transferred to Surat Thani while the investigation is underway, Patong Police Superintendent Chaiwat Auikam said.

The investigation follows more than 100 Patong nightlife employees protesting on the

street on June 10, after Hollywood Discotheque security guard Kamolchai Singhakerd was allegedly beaten by Lt Col Sorapong Chukaew of the Patong Police. Mr Kamolchai later filed charges against Col Sorapong.

Lt Col Anukul Nuket, who is heading the case, confirmed that the investigation is underway.

"The investigation will be lawful and fair for both parties," Col Anukul said. "The parties have yet to sit down and talk. No settlement has been reached yet."

— Kongleaphy Keam

AoT yet to set Phuket launch date for APPS

AIRPORTS of Thailand (AoT) has yet to confirm the exact Phuket launch date for the Advance Passenger Processing System (APPS), which will see all international passengers paying an additional 35 baht for background checks.

The main objective of implementing APPS is to save passengers and government offices time, as well as to improve the country's security.

According to Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) regulations, the airport is allowed to check and screen all passengers in advance for security purposes.

Additionally, AoT has the right to collect a fee not exceeding 50 baht per passenger per flight on these transactions.

The APPS will be applied at Suvarnabhumi (BKK), Don Mueang (DMK), Phuket (HKT), Chiang Mai (CNX), Mae Fa Luang in Chiang Rai (CEI), and Hat Yai (HDY) international airports and will check every passenger upon each departure and arrival.

— Kongleaphy Keam

Donations made for Te Krajar

MORE than 1,500 of Phuket's poorest showed up at the Kusoldharm Foundation's headquarters on Tuesday to receive food and clothing donations as part of the annual *Te Krajar* merit-making ceremony.

In addition to foodstuff and clothing donations, the foundation also donated 700,000 baht to renovate the pavilion of Admiral Prince Abhakara Kiartivongse, Prince of Chumphon, at Saphan Hin.

Te Krajar is traditionally held before the *Por Tor* Festival, or Hungry Ghost festival.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Phuket's sea claims more lives

TREACHEROUS waters claimed the lives of four foreigners this week, and nearly a fifth, had it not been for the quick action of Surin Beach lifeguards.

Three of the five victims were swimming in no-swim zones demarcated by lifeguards with red flags.

The first life lost was that of 43-year-old Chinese tourist Chunhua Qi.

Mr Chunhua was with a tour group at Karon Beach on August 13 when he was swept away by a wave while swimming in a red-flag zone, confirmed Lt Col Jongserm Preecha of the Patong Police.

It took lifeguards nearly 10 minutes to reach Mr Chunhua, who was later pronounced dead at Patong Hospital.

A day later, Phuket Marine Police recovered the body of Korean tourist Seung Jinseo, 46, near Koh Poo.

Mr Seung was swimming in a red-flag area with his girlfriend on Kata Noi when he went missing on the evening of August 12, Supachai Janphet, chief of Karon Municipality Tourist Rescue Center said.

Family confirmed Mr Seung's identity for police at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

On Saturday, a Russian tourist had a brush with death but was fortunately rescued from a no-swimming zone at Surin Beach by lifeguards.

Pavel Ugai, 24, was pulled out to sea by a strong rip that took him nearly 250 meters from shore, Surin Beach Chief Lifeguard Viroon Chuasaman said.



Three of the five victims were swimming in no-swim zones designated by red flags. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

"Lifeguards were able to safely bring Mr Ugai back to shore within 15 minutes," Mr Viroon said. "As a precaution, he was taken to Thalang Hospital."

Sunday's waters claimed the life of two victims; 71-year-old Swiss national Ernst Krummenacher and 38-year-old Thi Da of Myanmar.

Mr Krummenacher had gone out for an early morning swim at Nai Harn before lifeguards had arrived, explained Maj Patiwat Yodkwan of the Chalong Police.

"Mrs Krummenacher said that her husband started calling for help shortly after entering the water. She and friends hurried to help him and bring him back to

shore," Maj Patiwat said.

Mr Krummenacher was unconscious when rescue workers arrived on the scene. He was pronounced dead at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

On Sunday night, the body of Ms Thi Da was recovered at Patong Beach after locals were unable to stop her from running into the water.

Ms Thi Da had allegedly told her employer that she was in debt and was contemplating jumping into the sea, Maj Pathapee Srichai of the Patong Police told the *Gazette*.

"People in the area saw Ms Thi Da running toward the sea and tried to catch her. However, by the time they reached the

water, they were unable to find her quickly enough," Maj Pathapee said.

Doctors at Patong Hospital confirmed the official cause of death as drowning.

The recent deaths have prompted yet another warning from Phuket's lifeguards.

"There have been many incidents in red-flag zones recently," Phuket Lifeguard Club President Prathaiyut Chuayuan said. "I would like to again urge everyone to obey signs, red flags and the lifeguards' warnings – refusing to do so puts your life, and the life of anyone who tries to rescue you, at risk."

– Gazette staff

Four injured in bus crash on Patong Hill



The bus rolled backwards into a taxi. Photo: VR Patong 145.400 mhz

FOUR people were injured after a tour bus crashed into a taxi on Patong Hill on Saturday morning.

"The bus was exiting Patong and had almost crested the hill, when it suddenly started rolling backward," said Sen Sgt Maj Amnuay Niewthong of the Patong Police. "It crossed into the opposite lane, hit a taxi and finally came to a rest."

The four injured people, three bus passengers and the taxi driver, were taken to Patong Hospital.

Charges have yet to be pressed against the bus driver, Amornthep Jantharabut, 29.

"We will investigate the cause of the accident before filing any charges," Sen Sgt Maj Amnuay said.

In a single week in July, three people were killed in two separate accidents on Patong Hill that involved over-sized vehicles.

– Kongleaphy Keam

What is the short-term fix for Phuket public transport?

A NUMBER of projects have been put in motion to improve the public transport sector following the cleanup of the taxi mafia by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) last year.

There are many long-term projects that have been on the table for years, such as the light-rail system. However, there have also been several new initiatives, from taxi locating apps to yellow-topped tuk-tuks.

So, the *Phuket Gazette* asks you: Which new initiative will have the greatest short-term impact on public transportation in



Yellow-topped tuk-tuks offer 30 baht rides in town. Photo: PLTO

Phuket? 1) Yellow-topped tuk-tuks with their 30 baht Phuket Town rides; 2) GrabTaxi and Uber taxi locating applications; 3) Expansion of the Airport Ex-

press Bus service; or 4) The establishment of new taxi ranks on the island.

To have your say in this poll, vote at www.phuketgazette.net.



Man-sized cobra found

A WOMAN found herself face to face with a man-sized cobra when she went to hang up laundry at her house in Phuket on Wednesday afternoon.

The shocked homeowner, living behind Thalang Hospital, safely fled the scene.

"She called us for help," said Kusoldharm Foundation rescue worker Sakun Naepnean. "It was a big cobra, maybe with the girth of an adult's wrist and weighing three kilograms. However, we were able to efficiently bag it."

The snake was later released at the Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary in Thalang.

"I would like everyone to be careful when it comes to snakes in Phuket, especially if you live in a house near jungle or unkempt properties," Mr Sakun said. "Make sure you close windows and doors properly before leaving your house."

— **Kongleaphy Keam**

Fresh funds flow to Chalong Dam

A BUDGET of 180 million baht has been allocated to restart the stalled Chalong Dam project, which was originally slated for completion in 2013, revealed Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong in an exclusive interview earlier this week.

"The project stopped due to budget issues, as it ended up costing significantly more than planned," Governor Nisit said. "With the newly allocated budget, the contractor will be able to complete the project, which is important for residents in Chalong and nearby areas."

The allocated money will come from the Thai Khem Kaeng (Strong Thailand) fund, which was established by former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. The funds are expected to be disbursed in October.

"The project was originally allocated 449mn baht. How-



The project stalled due to insufficient funds. Photo: RID

ever, when we realized it couldn't be finished by the 2013 deadline, the budget was cut," said Panuphan Seneewong, site manager and senior engineer of the Royal

Irrigation Department. "At the time, we had already spent about 300mn baht."

A number of unanticipated issues inflated the budget for the project and forced it to a halt.

"We expected a different soil composition at the site, something with a lot more clay that we could then use for the construction of the east side of the reservoir," Mr Panuphan explained. "Despite this issue, we could have made it work by continuing to blast the granite bedrock in the area. However, we had to stop due to a number of complaints being filed by the local community about the noise."

With the anticipated clay and bedrock removed from the plan, the team had to return to the drawing board.

"We considered trucking in the clay we needed, but it would have just cost too much. So, we are using geotextiles to help reinforce the dam," Mr Panuphan said.

"Once the project is complete, the reservoir will be more than 4 million square meters."

— **Chutharat Plerin**

Beach Police start rolling out on routine patrols



The officers' uniforms and equipment were donated by ThaiBev.

ISLAND officers hit the beaches on two wheels last week as the Phuket Provincial Police deployed the 'Phuket Beach Police'.

"Beach Police officers are just regular officers assigned to beach patrol. They will have the power to make arrests while on duty," confirmed Phuket Provincial Police Commander Patchara Boonyasit. "The idea is to boost tourists' and locals' confidence in their safety, as well as benefit the officers' health by having them exercise."

Uniforms, bicycles and other necessary equipment, with an estimated value of 384,000 baht, was donated by ThaiBev. Police officers from every station on the island

will use the bicycles as their main mode of transportation as they patrol the island's beaches and main tourist attractions.

Past methods of ensuring beachgoers' safety, such as checkpoints and car patrols were deemed unsuccessful, Maj Gen Patchara noted.

"Each station will be given four bikes for police to conduct patrols randomly throughout the day and night," Gen Patchara said. "Officers from each station will be on a rotating schedule. Stations that do not have a beach to patrol will patrol popular tourist attractions."

The Beach Police idea was revealed to the public by Gen Patchara last November.

— **Woranut Pechdee**



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Police probe illegal passport trade

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What's making Karon Municipality hot under the collar: shirtless revelers at the Nation Party last year on Sentosa Island, Singapore. - Photo courtesy of Fridae.com

Karon nixes gay festival

Tailor touts facing crackdown

KARON (Kom Chad Luek) Community leaders in Karon have issued a warning to the 144 tailor shops in the area that they will crack down on any that use aggressive tactics to take advantage of tourists.

Many of the foreign nationals, mostly from India and Nepal, he said. Shops which continue to be sources of complaint will be penalized to the full extent of the law and subject to police investigations that would see any illegal aliens deported immediately, he warned.

K. Winai called for cooperation from the Immigration Police in this regard, as deportation procedures fall under their jurisdiction. The wreckage of trees and children playground equipment needs to be cleaned up.

'I have been given the task of making sure that Phuket remains safe, and I shall do that, although I admit that sometimes I become very weary and do have to face problems at work.'

Redevelopment confusion reigns

Revamp of English curriculum ordered

Karon opposes gay fest

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Hey you, you! You wanna T-shirt?



Smiling Col Paween accepts the keys from Arnaud Verstraete.

Finally, some new wheels

FACEBOOK profile pictures turned into rainbows following the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States last June.

The US Supreme Court ruled in the Obergefell versus Hodges case that state-level bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional.

However, a decade ago in Phuket – now well-known for the flamboyantly wonderful Pride Week – the Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community found Karon Municipality being a wet towel when it came to flaming fun.

Despite then-Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura having signed off on the 'Nation Party' – the largest LGBT festival in Asia – Karon Municipality was worried about 'the

possible consequences of hosting' the event.

Ironically, municipality officers stayed in the closet, well at least behind closed doors, during the meeting. Previously, the party had been held in Singapore, but was denied a licence in 2005, as it was 'contrary to public interest.'

Kata-Karon Mayor Thawee Thongcham, who is still in charge of the popular tourist area despite facing recent charges of conspiracy and the aiding of illegal activities carried out by criminal associations, said locals were worried about noise and drunk revelers possibly having sex on the beach – we assume they were not

The gift of hindsight

talking about the cocktail.

"We don't have problems involving sex. We don't want teenagers seeing and copying bad behavior," Mr Thawee said at the time.

We will leave it to you, dear reader, to sort out exactly what that thinly veiled comment was supposed to mean.

Karon leaders actually got double exposure in the August 20-26, 2005 issue of the *Phuket Gazette*, not only in their handling of the Nation Party, but also for a crackdown on aggressive tailors.

A total of 144 tailor shops were issued warnings about aggressive marketing techniques and taking advantage

of tourists.

Ten years later, it is hard to imagine that the warnings did much good. An additional concern about the tailor touts was that 'many of the shops hire foreign nationals, mostly from India and Nepal'. Again, one has to wonder what the local community watch and call on Immigration Police for support actually accomplished.

Anyone wanting to see a blatant disregard of touting laws, which is a job reserved for Thais only, need only visit Ton Sai in Phi Phi and see what sun-kissed *farang* tries to drag them into some backpacker bar for bucket loads of Sex on the Beach – clearly, Mr Thawee is not around to water down that party.

– Isaac Stone Simonelli

Occult con man accused of new sex scandal

POLICE on August 15 searched the Ban Poklon monastery in Lop Buri, where they had arrested occultist con man Harn Raksajit the day before for allegedly defrauding and sexually abusing a woman who paid him 50,000 baht to conduct a ritual to regain her estranged foreign husband.

Mr Harn, 55, is more widely known as Nain Ae, who was infamously involved in grilling the bodies of still-born babies.

The monastery's head monk said Mr Harn was aware that police were coming to arrest him, but refused to flee because he insisted he was innocent.

Widow ghost 'forces' men to cross-dress for protection

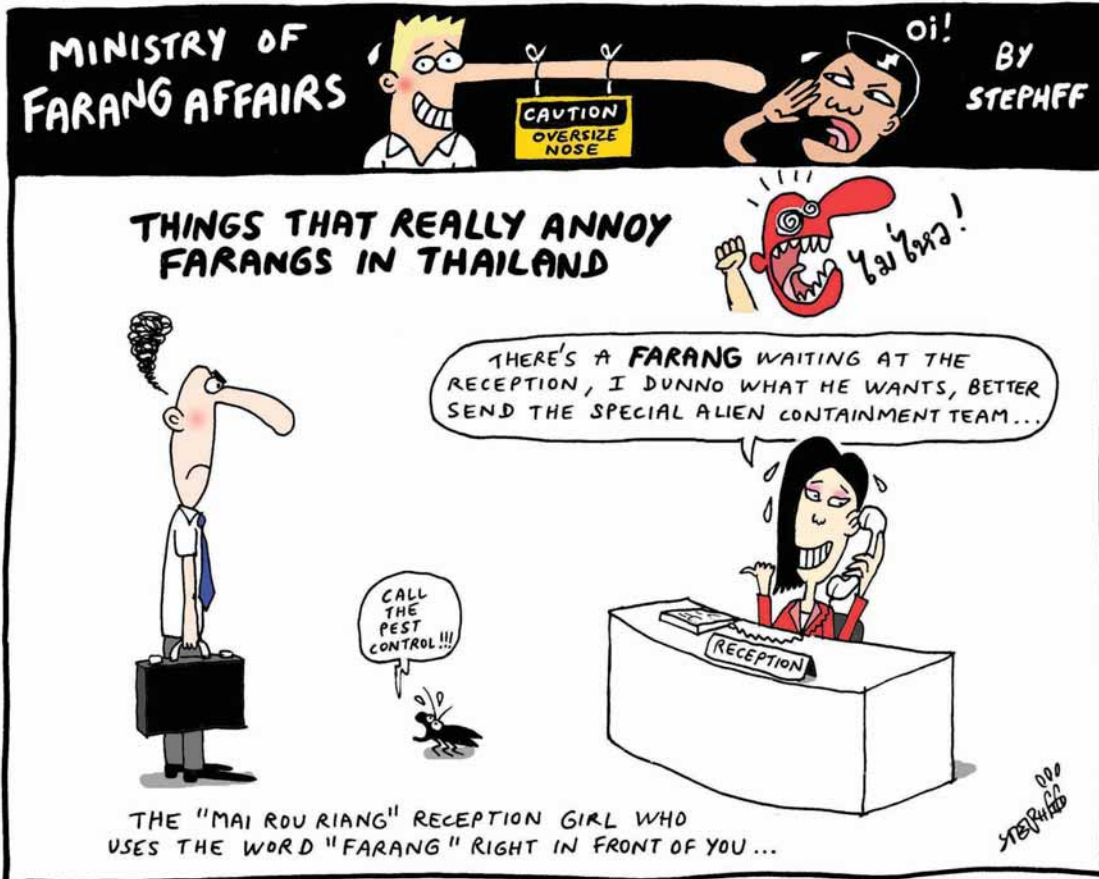
THE sudden string of deaths of ten fit and healthy men in Nakohn Phanom province has locals pulling out all the ritualistic, spiritualistic and superstitious plugs to avoid widow ghosts, *pee mae mai*.

Red shirts hanging in front of homes to ward off the ghosts are a common sight in the Don Nang Hong sub-district, with some male teenagers and adults putting on skirts and painting their nails red to avoid being noticed by the *pee mae mai*, reported *The Nation*.

"So many people have died lately, most of them men," said local Srisawat Sangsawang, 40. "One man went out to cut grass for his cows, and just passed out and died. Another man went out to scatter fertilizer. When he returned home, he also passed out and died. They were strong men."

Phra Kru Anukul, the Don Nang Hong abbot, has counseled the locals to accept that dying is natural.

"Everyone dies in a different way. Better to do good things when we are alive – there is no need for such superstitions," Phra Kru Anukul said. "I have never seen or witnessed the work of a *pee mae mai*, and it would be good if I never do."



Youth firearm access issue in capital city

SHOOTOUTS among gun-totting vocational college students, which have led to many young lives being taken prematurely, have shed light on the availability of firearms in Bangkok.

The severity of these violent exchanges have often depended on the type of weapons used, the number of students involved and the police response time, said Maj-General Chanthawit Ramasut, deputy chief of the Metropolitan Police.

The youths' ability to get access to guns – illegally purchased or homemade – was a major factor in student violence.

Thailand needs more specialized school, staff for the handicapped

THE rate of employment among physically challenged people in Thailand has risen to 26 per cent, which is why special schools need to have more specialized staff, said Channarong Pornrungraj, director of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment.

Citing the 'good to excellent' results of the External Quality Assurance (EQA)

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

evaluation at such special schools over the past three years, Mr Channarong said that better access to education helped open the door for handicapped people at vocational and undergraduate levels.

This, in turn, has resulted in more handicapped people getting jobs, thus boosting self-reliance, he said.

The Department of Employment's Employment Service System Development Division's 2014 report also showed that the rate of employment for the physically challenged has risen to 26 per cent.

However, the EQA evaluation found that these special schools still need improvement and regular support from the government, especially when it came to specialized manpower in fields such as psychology and physical therapy.

US slams long sentences for lese majeste

THE United States has spoken out against the prison sentences given to two Thai citizens convicted for insulting the Royal Family.

On August 7, a man was jailed for 30 years for insulting the monarchy on Facebook, in

one of the most severe sentences ever handed down under the law. The same day, a woman received a 28-year jail term also for posts on social media.

"We are deeply concerned about the lengthy prison sentences handed down by [a] Thai military court against two people for violating the lese majeste

law," said Mark Toner, a State Department spokesman. "No one should be jailed for peacefully expressing their views."

New national police chief signed off on

THE ENDORSEMENT of General Jakthip Chaijinda as the new national police chief has raised the likelihood that General Preecha Chan-o-cha, the premier's younger brother, will be promoted to the powerful post of Army commander-in-chief this month, analysts say.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha did not chair the recent crucial meeting of the Royal Thai Police board, leaving Deputy Premier General Prawit Wongsuwan to preside over the vote.

The board voted 6-0 for Gen Jakthip, a member of Prawit's inner circle, while another front-running candidate, Gen Aek Angsanant, did not get a vote.

Political observers said PM Prayut's gesture to allow Gen Prawit to handpick the new police chief could have underlined a behind-the-scenes gentlemen's agreement for the premier's younger brother to take up the top post at the Army.

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Usual suspects

AUTHORITIES here in Phuket have acted sensibly in the wake of Monday night's terrorist bombing at the Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, stepping up security in popular tourist destinations across the island and urging the public not to unduly panic or believe everything they see in social media.

Sadly, in this case, it was not only the social media where unfounded conjecture took place far ahead of any proven facts.

Soon after the blast, easily the worst terror incident in the country's history, at least one domestic media source quoted 'unnamed police sources' as saying that those responsible were Uighers, a Muslim minority group in western China who feel they face persecution by the ruling Han Chinese.

The 'reasoning' in this case, stated with no backing evidence whatsoever, was that the attack was retribution against the Thai and mainland Chinese states for deporting a group of some 90 Uigher refugees back to China in July.

Other groups quickly thrown into the conjecture cauldron included the usual suspects: anti-government insurgents fighting for independence in the Malay-Muslim majority Deep South; 'red-shirt' forces aligned with ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra; and even rogue forces within the Thai security apparatus itself.

The list will continue to grow as conspiracy theorists continue their orgy of speculation in the absence of enough solid evidence, just as the lack of solid answers following the mysterious disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 in March last year led to over twenty different hypotheses.

As this issue of the Phuket Gazette went to print, the identity of those responsible remains unknown, although CCTV images of a man who apparently left behind a backpack at the site provide hope that the perpetrator (or perpetrators) will be captured soon.

Out of respect for the victims and their families, we would like to support the government's call to not share or even 'like' graphic images of the injured and deceased that have gone viral in the social media in recent days.

Rather, we hope the island's expat community and English-speaking Thai community will use social media to help paint a clear picture about the security situation on the island as the high season for tourism draws near.

Last but not least, we offer our most sincere condolences to the victims and their families in this time of terrible grief.



Tour companies putting money before lives

Until these large buses and lorries are banned [from Patong Hill], this will happen every day. They are very poorly looked after and very badly driven by people who cannot drive. Oil cannot do this. If the brakes fail, use the gears to stop. The tour companies put money before the lives of locals on motorbikes who die from these accidents, along with the tourists on board. Until this changes this will happen every day. Next high season another god-knows-how-many will die from this.

The police and local government can stop this tomorrow by introducing one-million-baht fines for the companies, plus compensation on top of a minimum of 1mn baht per person hurt, and for the driver, 1mn baht for driving a coach or bus in poor condition that causes an accident resulting in death. Then, only well cared for coaches and lorries will be on the road and they will be driven by good drivers. Problem solved.

Simon Lomas
Facebook

Thailand has something to be proud of

Re: Gazette online, 'Bike for Mom' sets Guinness World Record, August 17

What a great event. So nice to see so many people involved. By the time they got to Kathu it took almost an hour for the whole crowd to pass by. Thailand has something to be proud of here, and a Guinness World Record as well. I just wish I had

Letters to the Editor

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

a bicycle shop; that's the business to be in right now.

CaptainJack
Gazette Forum

Where can I source Thai avocados?

Re: Gazette online, Avocados: Earth's magical fruit, August 15

There was a guy near Thanyapura that used to grow avocados, but unfortunately the trees got some sort of blight and were wiped out about 5 or 6 years ago. Don of 'Don's Mall' fame used to buy a lot of them and became the Guacamole King of Phuket. I would be interested to know where to source the Thai avocados on the island at present – as pointed out, the imported ones are expensive.

Mister Ree
Gazette Forum

People are unaware of what to look for

Re: Gazette online, Missing Korean found at sea, August 15

A lot of people just don't understand the danger or what to look for in the surf. I sat with a

friend and kept an eye on an Asian man with his child swimming right next to a rip. We hung around just in case it turned bad and we had to pull them out.

Lee Bryer
Facebook

Sentence the crooks

Re: Gazette online, Dirty Digs: Navy unearths nine illegal excavators, August 18

The reason this continues to happen is that no one seems to be going to jail for illegal land schemes. Sentence some of these land grabbers to 10 years in jail and it might make these guys think twice.

Why hasn't anybody ever been tried yet for falsifying land documents?

Me
Gazette Forum

Nothing but respect

Re: Gazette online, Opinion: Love for Bangkok unshaken, August 18

Over time, I have used some direct language in my comments on Patong and other parts of Phuket, due to the corruption, the vendors ripping off tourists, unsafe conditions on the roads and transportation. However, I have the highest respect for Thai people and do hope this latest tragedy will not impact the economy too much.

Charlie
Gazette Forum

Phuket Gazette

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Managing Editor: Isaac Stone Simonelli

Managing Director: Oranee Hildebrand

General Manager: Natthira Susangrat

Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

Contact us:

Editorial: news@phuketgazette.net

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net

Classified Advertising: classads@phuketgazette.net

Website services: anna@phuketgazette.net

Gazette Guide: guide@phuketgazette.net

Events Sponsorship: events@phuketgazette.net

General: info@phuketgazette.net

Telephone: 076 273555 (10 lines) Fax 076 615240
79/94 Moo 4, Thepkasattri Rd, T. Koh Kaew, A. Muang, Phuket

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On same-sex marriages

FIRST PERSON

AFTER 15 years of practicing US Immigration Law, I received my first transgender relationship case: a long-term relationship between an American man and a Thai transgender. The United States Supreme Court recently declared that laws preventing same-sex marriages were unconstitutional. This was not well received by large portions of the United States, where there is a deeply ingrained religious and cultural view that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. I understand that view. I am in a long-term, committed relationship with my wife and we have a child together. I also have a conservative and traditional mindset.

However, as an attorney, I have considered the issue of same-sex marriages as an equal rights issue. In most established societies, including Thailand, marriage is not a religious ceremony, but a legal designation. Married couples are conferred special rights and duties under the law that are not provided to single individuals. In most countries, spouses have special property rights including government benefits, tax benefits and employment benefits. In my area of the law, marriages confirm special immigration and visa rights. In addition, there are special rights in cases of the death of a spouse, a divorce or custodial rights battle.

As an attorney, I have considered the issue of same-sex marriages as an equal rights issue... it is not a religious ceremony, but a legal designation.



Robert R. Virasin serves as managing director of Virasin and Partners. He is a licensed United States attorney and a graduate of the University of California Los Angeles, the University of Houston Law School and Chulalongkorn University.

Here he talks about the real issue with same-sex marriages and the legal obstacles that these couples face.

However, the United States Supreme Court decided the issue was about protecting the institution of marriage. The majority stated that 'marriage is a keystone of the Nation's social order' and 'there is no difference in a marriage between a same-sex and opposite-sex couple.' The court believes that families are the foundations of a strong society and deserve to be protected. The special benefits provided to married couples and families is proof that society values families. Since same-sex couples can also have families, laws that prevent same-sex couples from marrying create unnecessary instability and are not justifiable.

This returns me to my clients. My clients have been together for over a decade. If you did not see their identification cards, you would have believed that they were a traditional heterosexual couple. My wife told me that my

transgender client is 'very beautiful'. They have travelled all over the world together, but the American's work situation forces him to work and live in the United States, and my Thai client has been denied a travel visa to the United States because she has an American boyfriend. The US Embassy believes that she will stay in the United States and, like most Asian countries, Thailand does not recognize same-sex marriages.

In this backdrop, I have come to understand that same-sex marriage is not a simple matter of equal rights. It is about the love between two people. I understand there is a divergence of opinion on the definition of marriage. As an attorney, I see marriage as a legal designation and believe that there should not be discrimination under the law. However, my recent experience with this issue shows that I need to expand my view of it. Same-sex marriage is about two people who love each other and have chosen to live together as a married couple. As a person who deeply loves his wife, I would be heartbroken if the law were to prevent us from being together.



The nearest path back to the hotel was directly through ground zero.

From dusk until dawn

Island View

By Bill Barnett

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

SITTING with a friend and chatting over some wonderful food last night, messages started coming in on my iPhone about a bombing nearby. Looking around the eatery, dozens of faces were staring into the glow of smartphones and an eerie silence seemed to grasp the moment.

With more details of the event starting to roll in, my next move had to be contemplated, given that the nearest path back to the hotel was directly through ground zero.

Travel for me is a true passion. Certainly it's my work, but in reality I love the exploration, experiences and diversity of discovery. It's remained a constant my entire life. I often think that the inability to move about the world would be the ultimate confinement of my soul.

It's far too early to explain or understand what is behind the Bangkok bomb, except one motive is clear, that killjoy hash tagged as terrorism. Terrorists would have us live behind closed doors in fear, hovering about in cramped corners, unwilling to leave the known for the unknown. It's tantamount to spiritual abduction, or losing your soul to the devil.

As I sit on a plane this morning typing out my feelings in the light of day, after a long dark night, I can only vow: yes, I will continue to visit Bangkok as of-

ten as I can. I will still stay in the same hotel that has been my home away from home for the past eight years and yes, I will still walk past the Erawan Shrine and the Rajaprasong intersection as part of my journey to and fro.

Travel is by nature a trip into the unknown. Terror attacks, plane crashes, shark bites and bad airplane food are just a view of the many dangers hanging over the heads of those who embark on journeys.

Bangkok remains one of the world's great cities. And yes, it joins the ranks of New York and London and so many other places that have felt the blow of terror. Do I avoid those great metropolises of the West? No. So why should I avoid Bangkok?

My heart goes out to the dead and wounded tourists, as well as the nearby workers and innocent bystanders. This life, for all its magic and wonder, has a cruel side.

In the stark light of day, all that I can say is: Bangkok, you are not alone in this dark time. I will be back again standing next to you in admiration and joy, just like I always have.

Words from the Wise

"Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them."

— Steve Jobs

"When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That's relativity."

— Albert Einstein

Issues & Answers

Who is responsible for the pigs on the Bypass Rd?

WHO is responsible for the boars that wander freely on the Chalermprakiat bypass road? Why is this allowed to happen?

I regularly see them being fed in this area at around 7:30am while on my way to work, although I cannot say if it is the owner or just someone who enjoys luring pigs onto a thoroughfare. Who is the owner, and why aren't these animals fenced in?

Concerned Motorist

Nattahong Getmanee, director of Rassada Municipality's Public Health and Environment Division, replies:

Thank you for your question. The area where the pigs are is under the care of Rassada municipality and the pigs do not have an owner.

Long ago, there were a couple of pigs trotting around and crossing the road next to the Index Living Mall in an open ground near Tesco Lotus.

We believe that the pigs

were owned by a restaurant that used to be located in this area. When they vacated, they left the pigs behind.

We have received many complaints about the smell and road dangers from locals and are planning to move them away and will cooperate with Wichit municipality, as the pigs originated from their side of the municipality line.

Currently we are helping stray dogs in Soi Samakee at Koh Sireh. We will start helping the stray pigs as soon as possible.

Cash in on six forms of passive income

Finance

By David Mayes

I HAVE written before about the ideal financial situation. This exists when you have multiple streams of passive income that exceed your desired lifestyle.

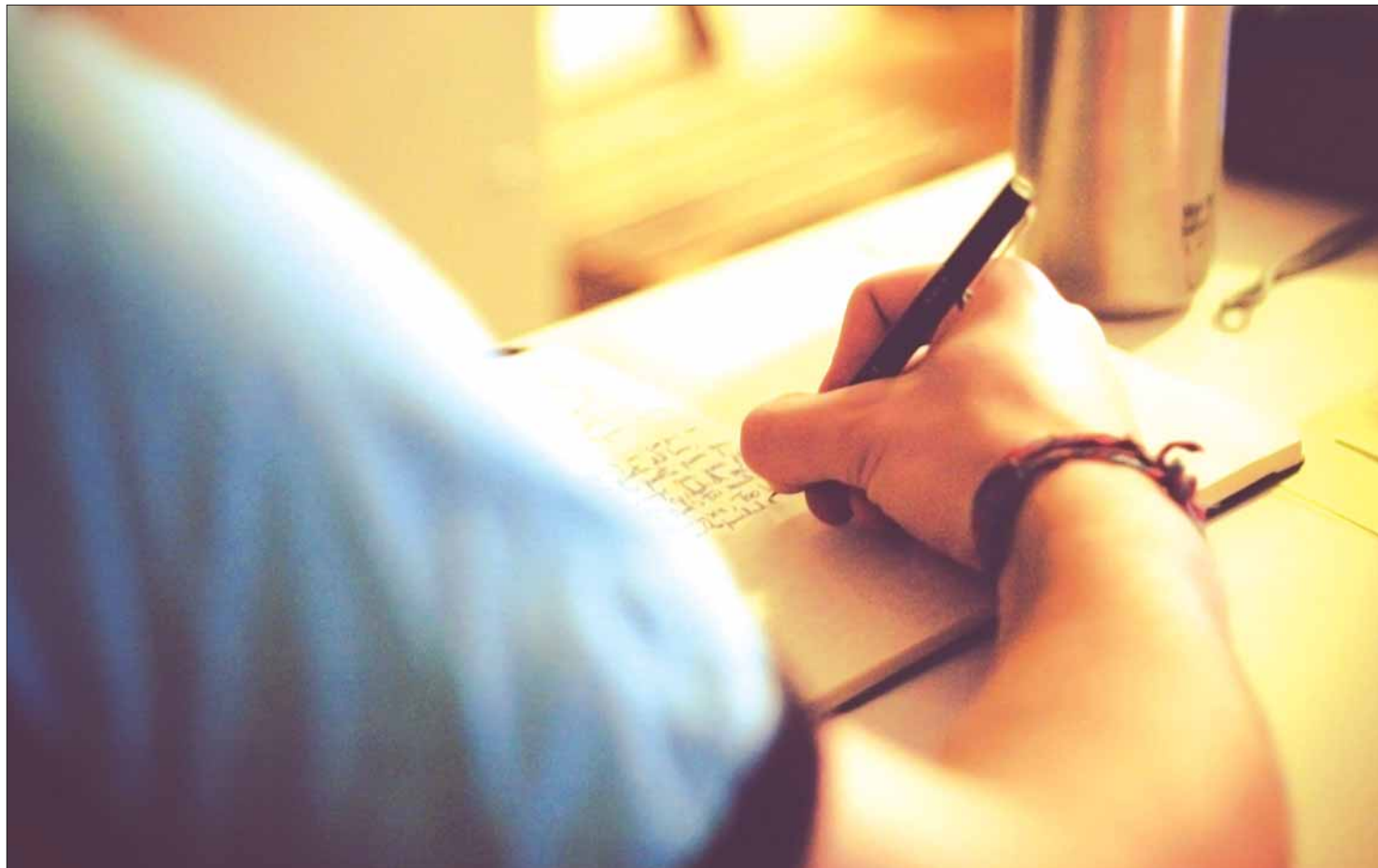
In this scenario, you can live as long as you want and your means will continue to grow, allowing you to contribute to society with the excess. There are different forms of passive income, and generally speaking, these can all be placed under one of the broad six types of passive income.

The first one that comes to most people's mind is usually real estate. With the exception of buying in a bubble or buying in a market with less than straightforward legal title, as long as you do not use leverage, this is a very stable asset class.

The biggest downside to real estate other than the lack of liquidity is the high price of entry. Most of us will not be able to save enough in our lifetimes to build a real estate empire without taking on massive loans, and hence massive risk. Leverage is the number one reason people lose their shirts in real estate, so be very wary of it.

The next form of passive income is interest from a bank account. Assuming you stay within the limits that the government guarantees, and of course assuming the government doesn't default, this is probably the safest form of passive income.

The main downside is that inflation risk is extremely high; meaning the purchasing power of your passive income will decline over time. In the current environment one may ask



Intellectual property, such as publishing a book, is one of the best forms of passive income. Photo: Roco Julie

if you can really even call it income with the lousy rates banks are paying.

Dividend paying blue chip stocks will give you a higher return than a bank account, and as long as you diversify, you are insulated from any company-specific risk, but you still face market risk and the longer we go in the current bull market, the greater this becomes.

Growth stocks are another form of passive income, but market risk is even greater with this form, and without the dividend stream, it is not really 'current' passive income unless the market rises each period and you can cash in some winnings.

A crash could see your ability to safely take income out of

winnings disappear for a long recovery period with this form of passive income and thus should be reserved for the part of your nest egg not needed in the next decade.

The main problem with developing a really large passive income stream with those first three forms of passive income arises from the fact that they require a massive investment, which in turn, requires nearly a lifetime of working and saving.

Many of us will retire without ever having earned enough or saved enough to build up significant income streams from these forms of passive income and thus are doomed to live on a tight budget in our golden years.

The next two forms of passive income are great if you can get them, but not many have the skills required to do so.

Intellectual property is probably one of the best forms of passive income in my opinion. The downside is that nobody wants to buy my mix tape and while I really feel my fiction novel is sure to be the next Harry Potter, the publishing companies just don't seem to acknowledge my genius.

If you have the talent to develop a passive income stream via intellectual property that is great. The rest of us will have to revert to dreaming about this one.

You can also build a traditional business with a system

that you can remove yourself from, even better if you can franchise it out. It has slightly better odds of success than you becoming the next Justin Bieber. Of course, building a business from scratch is a very tough slog and most successful entrepreneurs declare bankruptcy at least three times before making their big success.

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.



Siam International
38/54 Nanai Road,
Patong, Kathu, Phuket 83150

Siam
International

- ❖ Legal consultation Contact: K.Joy
- ❖ Company formations Tel: 076 346 149
- ❖ Notarial Fax: 076 346 150
- certifications Email:
- ❖ Contracts siamint@loxinfo.co.th
- ❖ Work permits
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Move to lower goods prices

THE Commerce Ministry this week called for a meeting with goods manufacturers to discuss whether they can lower goods prices following the cut in the price of diesel and subsequent drop in the cost of production.

A senior source from the ministry said that, with the edging down of the price of diesel to the lowest level in more than six years, enterprises may be able to lower the price of some items, in particular heavy goods, due to lower transport costs.

The move aims to ensure fair



Diesel fuel price cuts may reduce the price of goods. Photo: Mike Mozart

practices for consumers, traders, and manufacturers.

However, the ministry admitted that it may not be easy to bring down goods prices immediately since enterprises

had fixed costs, while the depreciation of the baht had resulted in price hikes, especially for products that rely on the import of raw materials.

—The Nation

Bill to slash cheap package tours, arrival numbers to be unaffected

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE plan by Cabinet to put an end to cheap tour group packages arriving in Thailand will not have a significant affect on the industry in Phuket, Santi Pawai, Director of Ministry of Tourism and Sport (MOTS) Phuket office said.

"I've heard about the draft bill, but have yet to receive any official notification. I believe there are many details that they still need to consider," Mr Santi said.

"If Cabinet passes this into law, it will be a step forward for the tourism industry."

Although the bill is designed to put an end to 'zero baht tours', that rely on mass tourism to be commercially viable, Mr Santi said it would not affect the number of Chinese budget tourists taking part in group tours in Phuket.

"Chinese companies are ready to pay a standard rate. However, Thai tour companies are constantly trying to undercut each other by providing cheaper and cheaper pack-

ages," Mr Santi said.

"Smaller, less established companies will be the ones most affected by the bill."

The MOTS Phuket office data shows that almost 70 per cent of tour operators are offering 'cheap tour' packages.

"For example, a Chinese company will say that it can pay 20,000 baht for a package tour. Then small Thai companies will start competing with each other for the business

by offering lower and lower prices, sometimes even dropping below the cost of providing the tour, because it can make money through additional incentives," Mr Santi said.

"These additional incentives are usually commissions for taking the tourists to specific souvenir or jewelry shops, or other activities."

This leads to tour operators only caring about the number of tourists, not the quality of the service provided, Mr Santi pointed out.

"There are already established tour companies that don't lower the prices of its

Chinese companies are ready to pay a standard rate. However, Thai companies are constantly trying to undercut each other.



Smaller companies catering to the Chinese market are expected to be hit the hardest should the bill be passed. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

tours because it's ensuring a certain level of quality," Mr Santi said. "Having more tour-

ists taking part in these tours will be an improvement for the industry as a whole."

Tourism to compensate for export contraction

THE Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) agrees with the National Economic and Social Development Board's (NESDB) assessment that the excellent performance of the tourism industry should be able to offset the contraction in exports.

"I think the expansion of the tourism sector should be able to cover the slowdown of the export sector in terms of revenue, as the baht has depreciated by 7-8 per cent since the beginning of the year, which should compensate in the balance of payments.

"But I'm not sure about the impact on economic growth," Supant Mongkolsuthree, chairman of the FTI, said on Monday.

The expansion of tourism alone would not be able to compensate for the slowdown in economic growth, as exports

account for 65 per cent of gross domestic product, so the private sector is hoping that government investment will start to kick in by this quarter or the next.

The NESDB on Monday lowered its GDP forecast for this year from 3-3.5 per cent to 2.7-3.2 per cent after revealing that the economy was able to expand by 2.8 per cent in the second quarter, down from 3 per cent in the first quarter. However, seasonally adjusted, the economy was able to expand by 0.4 per cent from the first quarter, while altogether the economy grew by 2.9 per cent in the first half.

The FTI is expected to revise down its 3-per-cent GDP growth prediction next month.

— The Nation



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

Consistency is the key

ONE of the most frequent comments I receive from unsuccessful people is that they believe social media doesn't work and is all hype and myth.

It's interesting that so many say this, especially when successful users swear that without social media their business would be dead.

The first element is what you are trying to achieve. This is a very important but often overlooked first step.

Once you have chosen your purpose, and planned an effective strategy, the key becomes consistency.

The part that many people fail to appreciate is social media, while part of it has immediate brand awareness impact, generally requires success built up from repeated exposure.

We need to build awareness, create a following and stay connected. This takes time and a strong message.

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

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Central Festival Phuket marks HM Queen's Birthday

Shoppers and well-wishers joined Central Festival Phuket staff and executives in celebrating Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's Birthday on August 12, which is also National Mother's Day, with a candle-lit ceremony in the Grand Hall of the shopping mall.



Central Festival Phuket's Vice President for property management and General Manager Wilaiporn Pitimanaaree (2nd from right) and the mall's marketing team celebrate this auspicious event with a young well wisher.

Dtac launches 'Lucky Number' campaign

Those who believe that lucky mobile phone numbers will help make them happy and prosperous will be attracted to Dtac's new campaign offering numbers selected by Master Chang Todsaporn Sritula.



Launching this campaign are (from L-R) Pritsana Ratanasuwansri, Total Access Communication Plc's (Dtac's) senior vice president for postpaid business; Master Chang Todsaporn Sritula; Nittaya Yangyeun; and Panya Vechbanyongratana, Dtac's senior vice president and head of south and west regional business.

Celebrating Swiss National Day on Phuket Island

Moevenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket was selected for 7th time to host the Swiss National Day for Phuket's Swiss Society on August 1, 2015.



Hansruedi Frutiger, general manager of Moevenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket (1st right), and Victor Madhavan, hotel director of sales and marketing (middle), welcome Fredy Reutlinger, president of Swiss Society Phuket.

Kee Resort & Spa team visits Gazette



The Kee Resort & Spa Phuket representatives paid a visit to the Phuket Gazette on August 13 and gave a delicious box of cookies. Receiving this yummy treat are Gazette's Assistant Sales Manager Supanun Supawong and Managing Director Oranee Hildebrand (left and second left) from The Kee Resort & Spa Phuket's Marketing Communications Manager Kanyapoj Chairprapan and The Kee Resort & Spa and Keemala Hotel's Director of Sales and Marketing Nurat Atibaedya (second right and right).

BROADCASTING PHUKET TO THE WORLD
 Phuket Today takes the Pearl of the Andaman to an international audience. PGTV's one-hour show features the personalities, lifestyle, sports and leisure activities that make Phuket famous.

Produced by PGTV, the show is designed to promote Phuket to tourists and the international community in Thailand.

LOCAL COVERAGE	NATIONAL COVERAGE	INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE
<p>Phuket Cable Coverage: All of Phuket Channel: 1 Monday-Friday: 10.30am, 6pm, 9pm Saturday-Sunday: 10.30am, 9pm</p> <p>Rawai Cable Coverage: Rawai, Kata, Karon Channel: 1 Monday-Friday: 10am, 1pm, 7pm, 10pm</p> <p>KDTV Coverage: Phuket's West Coast from Patong to Cherno Talay Channel: 10 Daily: 8.30am, 2.30pm</p>	<p>MCOT World Tuesday: 6.10am, 12pm, 7.10pm Wednesday: 6.10pm Thursday: 1.10am Friday: 1.10am Saturday: 1.10am Sunday: 6.10am</p> <p>Truevisions Channel: 79 PSI Channel: 223, 320 Dynasat Channel: 106 Thaisat Channel: 185 Infosat Channel: 185 Sunbox Channel: 81 GMMZ Channel: 103</p>	<p>Broadcast to China, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Turkey, UAE, and many other countries around Asia and beyond.</p> <p>Thaicom 5 Sat 3520H Tuesday: 6.10am, 12pm, 7.10pm Wednesday: 6.10pm Thursday: 1.10am Friday: 1.10am Saturday: 1.10am Sunday: 6.10am</p>

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BIKE FOR MOM

Phuket joined the whole nation in celebrating the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's 83rd Birthday on August 12, which this year was made even more special with the record-breaking mass bicycling event 'Bike for Mom' led by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn on August 16. The total of 146,000 'eligible' cyclists riding at the same time across the nation was more than double the previous Guinness World Record topper set by an event in Taiwan.



Over 4,000 people biked through Phuket on August 16 in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's Birthday.



Getting ready for the ride at the starting point in Phuket Provincial Hall are (from L-R) Teerapong Pongsupakul, Phuket Provincial Court Chief Justice; Pol Lt Gen Decha Butnamphet, chief of the Provincial Police Region 8; Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong; and Korkiat Suphonphong, Justice of Region 8 Court of Appeal.



Enjoying the ride are (from L-R) Boon Yongsakul, deputy managing director of Phuket Boat Lagoon; Dr Vichit Suraphongchai, chairman of Siam Commercial Bank's executive committee; Kanit Yongsakul, chairman of Phuket Boat Lagoon; and Phuket Governor Nisit.



Going green was also a theme during the 'Bike for Mom' ride with Adirek Tanthaveth, assistant headman of Vichit Subdistrict (1st left) receiving a sapling from Kathu Mayor Chaianan Suttikul (2nd from left) while Jessada Nabnien, Kohkeaw subdistrict headman (3rd from left) also receives a sapling from Governor Nisit to plant at Kathu Municipal 2 School.



Having a lot of fun with fellow bikers is Cherrng Talay Mayor Ma-Ann Samran (1st left)

Benny's: a bite of classic americana

By Katie P Arnold

TUCKED away by the sea, between four and five-star hotels in Cherng Talay, you will find Benny's American Bar and Grill.

The four-table establishment, made by gutting and opening up an old Thai-style house, has a wonderfully intimate, dark and comfortable air about it.

The perception of what an American bar would entail to an expat or traveller, particularly an American, would possibly be visions of a smoke-filled room with darts, pool, draft beer and fried food.

However, the concept of the American bar goes further back to the prohibition era.

"It's the actual bar itself that is American," says owner Benedikt De Bellis. "The concept of the American bar was actually born in England – specifically in London."

American bars grew popular in England in the thirties during prohibition, as England was the nearest English-speaking country that sold alcohol. Wealthy Americans would travel to London and patronize bars that sold common American mixed spirits.

"That's the kind of concept I am trying here. All of my cocktails are original recipes. I plan to have a nice menu where I can actually describe the history of the cocktails," Benedikt added.



The cheeseburger is made with kilcoy beef and served with fries deep fried in duck fat. Photo: Aliya Iriskina

"For most of the cocktails, I use recipes from the UK Bartenders Guild and use caster sugar instead of syrup."

It is not just the bar that has an American theme, as some of the dishes are inspired by popular food from the west, particularly the chili poppers.

"I took the recipe from the American jalapeno poppers; however, here you can't find fresh jalapenos. But I have these beautiful sweet green chilies...

we roast them a bit first, take off the skin. You can taste the smokiness from the grill."

These breaded beauties are then stuffed with cheddar and cream cheese, fried and then served with a sour cream lemon dip.

As far as the grill is concerned, it is definitely what one could hope for... and affordable. Among the tempting offerings are BBQ pork ribs, slow cooked for six hours; 120-

day grain fed rib eye; and the pièce de resistance, a no-bells-and-whistles, bacon-topped cheeseburger that is juicy, flavorful, tender and quite possibly the best burger on the island. And this is without mentioning that it comes with a side of french fries that have been deep fried in duck fat.

When asked what made his burger so incredible, Benedikt very humbly mentioned that it could be the pork fat that he

mixes in with the Australian kilcoy beef to keep it moist. Either way, it is absolutely one to journey out for.

Just like the establishment itself, the menu is also very intimate. Therefore, Benedikt likes to mix it up every once in awhile.

"The menu is small, other than the fact that I will be adding one lamb dish and one vegetarian dish. I want to keep it small, as I already have some regulars," he says. "On average, I change one or two dishes every few weeks."

To do this, he generally keeps a watchful eye on what is popular and what can be changed for something new.

One new addition will be a take on a classic parmigiana.

"You fry the eggplant in tempura and build three tiers with fresh tomato, basil, mozzarella and parmigiana. Then you put some fresh basil and pesto on top."

To try any or all of these wonderful culinary delights, it is recommended to book a table in advance. However, the bar is always an option for walk-in customers who need a fix.

Benny's is located on Soi Had Bangtao, Moo 3, in Thalang and is open from 6pm to 12 midnight. Bookings can be made by calling 080-700 1509 or by emailing book@bennysphuket.com.

Shoppers learn how to cook

MBK shopping mall, a winner of TripAdvisor's Exceptional Service Awards 2015, recently launched a brand new Thai culture workshop featuring demonstrations of Thai cooking and making traditional Thai souvenirs guaranteed to delight customers from all over the globe.

This month's workshops are demonstrating how to make garlands and fish ornaments as well as Thai-style bird-shaped steamed dumplings, a rare Thai snack. Heading the team is the adjacent Pathumwan Princess Hotel's veteran chef ML Chanya Chompoonut and he's being helped by cooking enthusiast and celebrity Jarospan Sawasdiwat Na Ayutthaya. They'll be back from September 11 to 13 showing how to carve fruits and make pumpkin custard.

"This Thai snack is a rare treat, as it takes considerable time to make. You also need skill and attention to detail to create the delicate and beautiful shape of



Demonstration of bird-shaped dumplings. Photo: The Nation

the bird's body," said ML Chanya.

"Thai food is very healthy and Thai ingredients are typically natural, highly nutritious and easy to find. The steps involved in making a Thai dish require patience, calmness and focus on the task at hand. Once served, the dishes will delight everyone both with their pleasing appearance and excellent flavours."

"I've long been personally interested in making Thai food and snacks, and I am very excited to have this opportunity to learn how to make bird-shaped dumplings," Mr Jarospan added.

– The Nation

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

August 15-21. Adventure Golf Summer Package

Phuket Adventure Mini Golf's 18-hole course is fully floodlit for twilight and night golfing. All-you-can-play day passes – Adults: 499 baht, children (up to 11 years old): 299 baht. For more information visit phuketadventureminigolf.com.

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 or call 084-844 9215.

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Join Adriano Trapani's fourth Bohemian workshop, at the Banyan Tree.

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 in Thailand.

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.

Sowing seeds: A classroom encounter



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

I RECENTLY received an unusual request. Would I talk to a class of pre-school children about plants?

I hesitated for all of two minutes before emailing back and agreeing to come. The charming teacher, Marisol de Cuevas, offered a few wise words of advice in advance: they all speak English as a second language. They are all bright, but at this age (4-5 years old) they only have a short attention span. So it would need to be interactive and hands on. I prepared accordingly – variety is the spice of life.

Where to begin? I made a line drawing of a flowering plant with a felt-tip pen and another of a larger-than-life bee. A copy for each student. A papaya was picked from the garden and a bunch of rosy-red lychees, complete with leaves and stems.

I took seeds already dried in the sun from another papaya (*carica*), from a sunflower (*helianthus*) and from a yellow bells tree (*tecoma stans*). Last, but not least, a bag of compost

and half a dozen black plastic pots.

The classroom at The International Quality School of Phuket (QSI) provided a perfect learning environment: small tables and chairs for sit-down activities, such as looking at picture books and drawing, and a large carpeted area with colorful cushions where we could exchange ideas.

I had included Thai names on the plant outline, but these proved unnecessary as the students' English was remarkably good and they were both eager to learn and genuinely bi-lingual.

We began by coloring in the plant picture, which the children all did with alacrity, some producing multi-colored petals, but most sticking closer to reality. We identified the parts of the plant – root, stem, leaf and flower – and though we did not consider why leaves are green – too difficult to grasp at this tender age – we did wonder why flowers have pretty colors. It is, of course, for the same reason that many blooms smell so sweet – to attract insects, especially bees and butterflies.

We next asked some questions about what happens once



Dr Campbell brings the beauty of the natural to a QSI classroom.

the flowers finish blooming, which brought us on to the topic of seeds and fruits. Different seeds were handed around and the class was shown how seeds – the source of new plants – can travel. Thus, the yellow bells seeds were 'winged' and could flutter some distance in the wind, while a huge hard nut (*barringtonia*)

grows on a seaside tree and often floats for hundreds of miles before finding a new home.

Ms Cuevas then cut open the papaya and showed how seeds often live inside a fruit whose rind protects them from intruders. We then looked at the lychees – still attached to their branches – and took off the hard skin. Soon, the sweet flesh of

both the papaya and the lychees had disappeared, leaving only seeds clutched in tiny palms.

Then it was time to go outside and do some planting in the garden. So we washed our sticky hands, put the compost in the pots and pressed down the soil before putting the seeds on top and pushing them into the earth.

Finally, after another water break, we trooped back to the classroom for a quick chat about bees. It is important, even at this age, to know how crucial these precious insects are to the planet's survival. They are wonder workers who not only cover a collective 30,000 miles to produce a liter of honey, but more importantly are essential to the very survival of the world's flora.

I am sure that when this animated group get around to coloring in their bee pictures, Ms Cuevas will remind them of this precious heritage.

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.



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Books

By James Eckardt

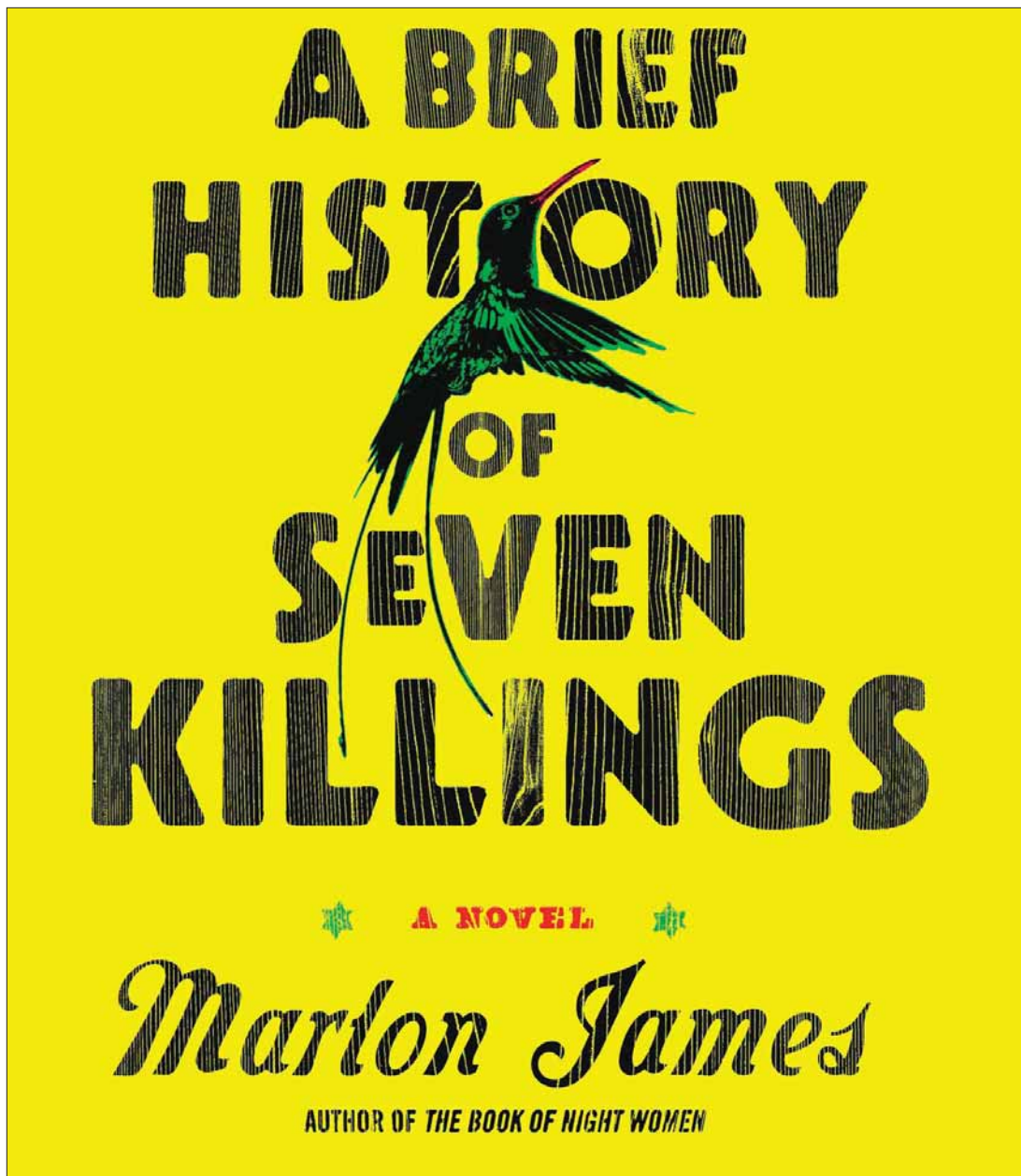
TRINIDAD had V S Naipaul and Jamaica now has Marlon James through his third novel, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* [Riverhead Books, New York, 2014, 688pp], which is an epic tale of gang warfare in Jamaica, spilling over to Miami and New York and spanning the years 1976 to 1991.

Like a Russian novel, a big cast of characters is listed at the front of book: over 70 gang leaders, gunmen, politicians, journalists, CIA agents, Cuban exiles, Colombian drug lords and Bob Marley, the charismatic reggae star known as The Singer.

Each chapter is voiced by a different character, the gangsters speaking Jamaican patois: "Mama-Lo didn't raise no son who walk with he back straight to get spit on like mangy dog. And this here Papa-Lo never ever forget. Man, like we don't forget, we collect."

Thus speaks Papa-Lo, the don of the Copenhagen City slum, about how he executed two cops who abused him in jail. Papa-Lo is supported by the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP); his rival Shotta Sheriff in the Eight Lanes slum by the People's National Party (PNP).

The left wing PNP is under the influence of Fidel Castro, who has sent a huge influx of Cuban technicians to the island. The JLP, in turn, is funded and armed by American CIA agents. With their 'posses' of thugs, Papa-Lo and Shotta Sheriff are kingmakers. Who wins the slums of Kingston, wins Kingston and who wins Kingston, wins Jamaica.



Each chapter of the extraordinary novel is narrated by a different character.

In the weeks leading up to the 1976 national elections, Jamaica is torn apart by gang warfare.

In steps Bob Marley with a free 'peace concert' in Kingston scheduled for December 3. Two days before the concert, eight gunman armed with automatic weapons invade

his compound. Marley is shot twice but goes on to deliver his historic concert.

The leader of the attack is Josey Wales, a rogue enforcer for Papa-Lo. He – along with his deputy Weeper and two young drug-addicted gunmen, Demus and Bam-Bam – tell the

story in their own voices.

These voices are all too similar: aggrieved, cynical, posturing, brutish, angry, violent, and doomed. In gruesome detail, Bam-Bam tells what it is like to be buried alive; Demus, to be dragged in a sack over rough ground to a hang-

ing tree. One by one, the low-ranking gunmen are eliminated to prevent them from fingering Josey Wales.

A much more sympathetic target is Nina Burgess, a former lover of Bob Marley, who had been loitering outside the compound when she came face to face with Josey Wales. She flees to the north shore of Jamaica, where she changes her name and moves into an ocean-front villa with Chuck, an American engineer at a bauxite mine. Her voice, in educated English, spews acerbic comments on American food, sports, movies and men.

When the bauxite mine closes down under 'communist pressure', a hilarious scene unfolds when Nina realizes that Chuck is not taking her to America. But she winds up in New York on her own, under yet another name, working as a private caregiver. Also in New York is Weeper, who is running the Brooklyn end of a crack cocaine racket that Josey Wales has set up with the Medillan cartel.

In 1985, Josey Wales arrives in Brooklyn on an inspection trip and, in an over-the-top Quentin Tarantino shootout scene, murders nine men and women in a crack house. Both he and Weeper will come to sorry ends, as told in more Grand Guignol detail by their assassins. A single new drug lord, Eubie from the Bronx, stands atop a heap of bodies. Except for the gritty Nina, everyone else is dead.

"People like me, our life write out before we, without asking we permission," observes one gangster in prison. "Nothing much we can do 'bout what God decide he want to drop on you."

Ajarn of Thai tattoos putting more ink into foreigners

IN A cramped Bangkok room filled with statues of deities and plumes of incense smoke, a master is at work.

With expert precision Ajarn Neng repeatedly plunges a razor sharp needle dipped in black ink into the back of a disciple, each stab producing a perfectly placed pixel that goes on to form a traditional Thai tattoo.

It is an ancient art carried out by *ajarns* (masters), steeped in superstition that Thais have prized for centuries. But increasingly it is foreigners beating a path to this Buddhist tattooist's door.

"I've been dreaming of getting a tattoo like this for years," says Silvia Falbo, from Rome, proudly showing



There is a controversy over foreigners getting tattoos of Buddha for aesthetic reasons, especially if below the waist.

five lines of Khmer script Neng recently inked onto her shoulder blade.

"I'm attracted to Buddhism and all the spirituality that goes with it. And the

design is really beautiful and original."

Ever since American GIs passed through Bangkok for their R&R during the Vietnam War, foreigners have returned home sporting traditional Thai tattoos, known as *sak yant*.

But it was when Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie unveiled a Khmer inscription – traditionally used in the region for Buddhist scripture – on her left shoulder that *sak yant* hit the mainstream.

Now, the faces patiently waiting for their turn in front of Neng are just as likely to be from outside Thailand than inside.

But foreign enthusiasm for exotic

Thai ink is not without its controversies.

While tattoos in the west are largely an aesthetic decision, in Thailand they are imbued with both spirituality and superstition.

Those who wear *sak yant* often believe their tattoos genuinely lend them magical powers, bringing good luck or protection from evil spirits.

Some are even convinced that their inking will make them bullet proof.

The designs – lines of script, geometric patterns and animal shapes – are also deeply interwoven with Buddhist and animist imagery that some Thais fear westerners fail to appreciate.

– *The Nation*

'Deck drain' for Thai sailing



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

THAILAND has a very strong national youth sailing team based in Sattahip on the Gulf of Thailand. Run by the Yacht Racing Association of Thailand [YRAT], they have had increasing success on the international stage in recent years.

The breakthrough happened in 2010 when a young Thai girl called Noppakao Poonpat won the Optimist World Championships. Not only did she win the women's division, but she beat all the boys and was the overall World Champion. Noppakao is part of the Poonpat family sailing dynasty, and while most were shocked to see her win, YRAT and those close to her in Thailand were not. At the same event, the Thai team went on to win the Optimist World Team Championships for the first time.

Since 2010, the national youth sailing team have picked up regional and international trophies and a treasure chest full of medals with increasing frequency, including again being crowned Optimist World Team Champi-



Many Thai sailors are left without wind in their sails due to limited opportunities when it comes to move up in the sport. Photo: Guy Nowell

ons in Argentina last year.

The Optimist is a global class of boat that is recognized by the International Sailing Federation [ISAF] and is considered the starter class for youngsters. It is a single-handed one-design dinghy that you can find in almost every country in the world.

Once youngsters reach the age limit of 15 years they look to move on to something bigger

and the choice of boats increases. If you wish to continue competing in national and international competitions, then the Laser, 420 and 470 are common classes in this region. However, the number of boats is limited.

While YRAT has over 150 Optimists, their Laser fleet is small, and when you look at the 420 and 470 they have only a handful. Similarly, the new high-tech 29er and 49er are hard to

come by in Thailand and YRAT have very few for training and competition. Either the Thai youngsters buy their own or their interest in sailing dies out, and it is the latter that has become a chronic problem in Thailand.

As they get older, there are even fewer Thai sailors who move up from dinghies to larger keelboats or multihulls. As the opportunities decrease, so does their interest and this is a crying shame for Thailand's marine industry.

While there are Thai sailors who crew boats in regattas and others who own their own boats and compete, the younger generation of Thai sailors are not coming through. The sport is losing them.

After starting out on the single-handed Optimists dinghies or similar, there are few opportunities for these Thai sailors to work themselves up to larger boats and keep their hobby and interest in sailing alive, and this does not bode well for Thailand's marine industry.

In Phuket, the Ao Chalong Yacht Club provides sailing lessons, as does the Phuket Youth Sailing Club. Both are privately

run operations and both deserve a lot of credit for trying to get youngsters of all nationalities into sailing. However, more needs to be done.

Leadership is needed at the national level. A structured program whereby Thai youngsters have a pathway to develop and move onto larger boats is needed, with opportunities for Thai youngsters to develop a career path in the sport.

More grassroots support is needed to help foster this endeavor, and ultimately the people who will benefit most down the line when these youngsters are older and still enjoying sailing, buying new boats and maintaining them, is the marine industry itself.

Perhaps it's time for Phuket to take the initiative.

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

Sailing outlier races forward



Ging with Michael Spies, Co-Skippers in the TRANSPAC 2013 ocean classic race in Hawaii.

ONE Thai sailor has managed to buck that trend of dropping out of competitive sailing as it comes time to move up from dinghies to larger keelboats or multihulls.

Sailing came into Patinyakorn 'Ging' Buranrom's life late. He never went through the national team ranks. He came to Phuket for work and through his job at the time picked up sailing skills. He then joined local races at the Ao Chalong Yacht Club and worked his way to buying his first boat, a Hunter 24.

His passion and drive made him a determined individual and since those early days he has built up a Thai team, and they now compete in the regattas around Thailand and Malaysia on his latest boat, the 42-foot Windstar.

Ging is an exception.

— Duncan Worthington

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Island remains worthy investment



Property Watch

Desmond Hughes

LIKE many Phuketians, I took a 'green season' break with my family. I chose Sydney and the Gold Coast and inevitably a visit of this nature leads to comparisons with my home island of Phuket.

Property investors interested in Phuket will also conduct their own comparisons and therefore agents, developers and owners who wish to sell should take note, just as much as those who are considering buying, with the main focus being whether or not Phuket is still of good value.

ATTRACTIVE BUYING PRICE ENTRY POINTS

Even though the cost of living in Phuket is high these days, the cost of investing in property considering the surroundings, beaches, schools, amenities and access to the international airport as a hub, is still low.

Agents and developers used to deliberately target the investment bankers and bonus-receiving expatriate communities in Singapore and Hong Kong as easy pickings for persuading them that a property twice as big as their principal residence with a garden and sea-view is available for a fraction of the price.



Despite rising costs of living, Phuket property is still a good deal – if you shop right. Photo: Oberpepe

Now that the market has turned, agents, developers and resellers are looking anywhere and everywhere for buyers, although they do not always get them.

Whoever the buyers are, the price of entry still remains a good value if the choice is considered carefully.

When I toured the eastern suburbs of Bondi in Sydney with my real estate agent friend, which you will be amazed is part of how I spent my holidays, I saw properties for AUS\$2 - 25 million in, admittedly, pristinely clean and convenient locations, but size-wise not dissimilar to some amazing properties available on Phuket.

I also spent a fair amount of time enjoying Surfer's Paradise on the Gold Coast of Brisbane. Sunsets at the back and sunrises for the early risers, got me

thinking 'Yamu'.

The prices of a place in 3.5-star style apartments that are not new but are well maintained are about AUS\$750,000. These alternatives are available for property investors, and there is rental demand.

THE COST OF LIVING

As many Thais who have moved to Phuket know, and increasingly more foreigners know, Phuket has an unreasonable and unbalanced cost of living. A quick Thai snack can cost double the price in Bangkok because those that make the snacks have a higher costs of living too. A bottle of wine, which in most places in the world would be a few dollars, would be in the twenty-dollar and thirty-dollar mark in

supermarkets.

A car, as per most of Thailand, is also expensive. Renting cars that are decent is expensive, and if you are brave enough to take a green plate or 'limousine' taxi, then you may pay the cost of your meal per head for the privilege.

This has a strong detrimental effect on the micro-economy of Phuket. How can tourists visit shopping centers to spend their money? How can a family staying in an apartment conveniently access a supermarket and a kids playground where they feel safe?

On my Gold Coast holiday, we visited a park and used a government-provided barbecue to cook high-quality meat that we had bought for a low price at the supermarket directly beneath our apartment. We bought a bottle of 'cleanskins'

wine (AUS\$4), which is a good quality wine, but just from the glut of a vineyard.

In summary, Phuket is becoming internationally overpriced and needs to be made more safe, clean and convenient – especially in terms of transport.

OVERALL COMPUTATION

You can buy great property cheaply, but live with middle-class standard at a high expense; eat international food at international prices; drink wine as a luxury; and you have to buy or long-term rent-a-car, unless you want to buy a consortium of taxi drivers a new house each year. You can live near or next to a beach, a stone's throw away from a school. You can get to the airport in less than an hour from most places, most of the time.

Phuket still has some charm, financial benefits and a set of challenges that, although not the same as a place like the Gold Coast, are solvable. The value in property still exists, but you need some maintainable income to live comfortably in Phuket.

Desmond Hughes has been an owner and operator of his law firm in Thailand for 12 years and is a Senior Partner at Hughes Krupica law firm. www.hugheskrupica.com

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Iconic Royal Phuket Yacht Club prepares to re-open in January

EXCITEMENT is building up across the island over the upcoming reentry of the iconic Royal Phuket Yacht Club in January.

After an expansive 18-month upgrade, the Royal Phuket Yacht Club, which in 1986 was the island's first luxury hotel, will re-open under the name 'The Nai Harn' on January 16, 2016.

Over the years, the 130-key luxury hotel has come under both the Mandarin Oriental and Le Meridien brands. However, in 2014, the hotel was acquired by an affiliate of the private equity firm SC Capital, which is also behind the growing Manathai hospitality brand.

"It's an iconic property, it's well-known, it's in Nai Harn and it has a significant design," Bill Barnett, managing director of C9 Hotelworks, told the *Gazette*. "It was designed by famous Thai architect Mom Tri [Mom Luang Tridhossyuth Devakul] at the time and its return is a good thing."

Meanwhile the 10-bedroom Ani Villas private hotel, which is currently opening on Koh Yao Noi in Phang Nga Bay, is expected to attract the jet set crowd who wish to rent an entire full-serviced luxury product.



The property will be re-named 'The Nai Harn'.

"For us, it is interesting to see Phang Nga Bay starting to evolve. There is The W in the works in Phang Nga Bay as well," Mr Barnett said.

"We are starting to see people looking at that area, so that is an exciting development in terms of people wanting something different."

Already shaking things up on Kamala Beach is the upcoming soft opening of Keemala, an upscale boutique hotel.

"That is interesting for us because it's a wellness and holistic-based concept. It's something different, so that is something we are keeping our eyes on," Mr Barnett added.

– *Nina Suebsukcharoen*

Sansiri launches mid-rise condo

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

THERE are panoramic views of Phuket with glimpses of the sea from the 14th floor of Sansiri Plc's recently completed, mid-rise condominium The Base Height-Phuket, making it something truly special.

With the starting price of a 30-square-meter unit, including all transfer expenses at the Land Department, coming to 1.99 million baht during a promotional period, this high-class condominium in the center of Samkong is easily obtainable.

While the infinity-edge pool and roof-top garden are beguiling, there is also a lawn with a big pool on the ground floor for residents of the 358-unit building.

Uthai Uthaisangsuk, Sansiri's executive vice president, said that 60 per cent of the condos have already been sold, with two of the three designs still available.

Though the 29sqm to 34sqm one-bedroom units are the only options left for property buyers, the two show units are well-planned and attrac-

tively decorated.

"Most of the customers interested in this project are doctors and nurses who work in hospitals in the Samkong area," Mr Uthai said.

This is Sansiri's only mid-rise on Phuket, though it has already built more than 10 condominiums on the island. This is due to regulations preventing buildings to be more than 23-meters high in the other locations.

It is also the island's third 'The Base' brand condominium, with the first two being The Base Uptown on the Bypass Road and The Base Downtown in Phuket Town.

"Normally in Bangkok, The Base is a high-rise building. It's only in Phuket that we are limited to building eight and 14 storey buildings."

It has also unveiled a 'Plus Concierge' service, run by its subsidiary Plus Property Company, which includes a host of choices on top of the essentials to make life really easy.

Like in a hotel, residents can book rooms in spas, tours and limousine service to and from the airport. It also offers drinking water and bill payment services.



Uthai Uthaisangsuk, Sansiri's executive vice president, said that 60 per cent of the condos have been sold.

Phuket can expect more developments by the well-known listed developer.

Mr Uthai confirmed that his company stands firm on what it said when it first arrived here – that it is going to be here for a long time.

"Sansiri has many classes of property, including single-detached houses and townhouses. In Phuket, we have our Burasiri

single-detached housing project... We have developed a total of 15 projects here."

Despite the upbeat mood amid this elegance, one can hardly forget that the Thai economic growth is sliding. The Bank of Thailand recently lowered its GDP forecast for 2015 to less than 3 per cent because of worse-than-expected performance in the export sector.

However, Mr Uthai optimistically hopes that things will improve in the rest of the year's third and fourth quarters, as he thinks the economy has already hit bottom.

"If the government spends money on infrastructure in the third and fourth quarter, they could stimulate investment and I think the economy might pick up."

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Surf star searches for balance

By Alexander Maycock

GROM surf star Annisia Flynn, 17, took the local surf scene by storm in her younger years, regularly beating older, more experienced board riders.

Now she is competing in the top regional competitions, most recently at the Quiksilver Challenge, which took place this June at Canggu in Bali.

"I placed sixth at Canggu," she says with a shrug. "The competition has really grown and there are a lot of young girls who are home-schooled and live on the beaches in Bali. Their fathers are all ex-pro surfers and board shapers, so it's really hard to beat them."

"When the competitions are here in Phuket, I'm still pretty hard to beat because I have all the home advantage."

Anni is also one of the top flow-boarders in the region and spends her out-of-school days training and working part-time as an instructor at Kata's Surfhouse.

"I've won pretty much all the recent flow-boarding competitions. Ili Lim from Singapore won the world title in Abu Dhabi last year and I beat her at the Asian series, but I couldn't go to the world finals because of school."

Despite the call of the surf, Anni is trying hard to keep on top of her school work.

"I'm finishing my final year of school and thinking about what to do after that. My mum wants me to go to university, so I have to keep my grades up."

"Sometimes it's hard to find a balance because when the surf is up, you want to surf, or have to surf, and the teachers don't really get that."

Anni also has to contend with a busy competition schedule, with surf contests looming in the Maldives, India and Indonesia all before the end of September.

"We're looking for more sponsorship so I can get to the Maldives. They have really great waves on the outer fringes of the reefs, but we would need to rent a boat to

stay on, so it's *peng mak*."

Roxy Thailand and Surfhouse are both supporting Anni's roll to boarding stardom, but the cost of competing around the region can make being a surf star an expensive undertaking.

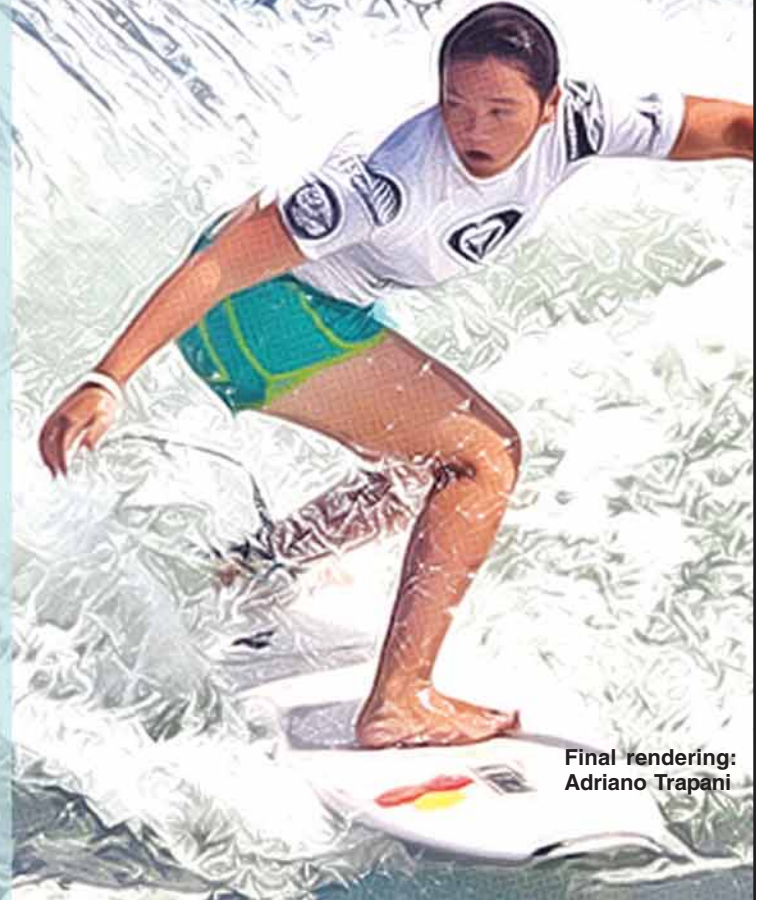
The Flowtour Asia, for instance, will see competitions in the Philippines, Singapore, Hua Hin and Bangkok over the next few months. That's a lot of air-miles.

"I'll try to get to one or two of those so I can get into the finals because I think the winner gets to go to the United States or Korea this year."

When the surf is up in Phuket, however, you'll find Anni atop the waves at Kata or Kalim.

"I used to like surfing every day after school in the low season. But now I only want to surf if the waves are good."

"The best thing is not thinking about anything else, just being in the water and feeling the waves come past. And when I take off on a good one, it's incredible. I love it."



Final rendering:
Adriano Trapani



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