

# Phuket Gazette

September 5 - 11, 2015

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■ 'NO MATTER WHAT IT WAS, WE WILL PROTECT TOURISTS'

# Shark alert



Though some experts are convinced the bite wound is from a juvenile bull shark, others doubt it was a shark at all.

## ■ Pregnant Aussie recovering from attack in Karon

By Kongleaphy Keam

A PREGNANT Australian was bitten on Tuesday in the shallow waters of Karon by what experts believe was a juvenile bull shark in the island's first recorded shark attack.

The next day, Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong ordered officials to be on the lookout for any potentially dangerous

marine animals and cautioned beachgoers.

Jane Neame, six-months pregnant, remains under observation at Bangkok Hospital Phuket following surgery for the two bite wounds to her foot.

"It's very painful," Ms Neame said from her hospital bed with her boyfriend, Robert Passmore, by her side. "It severed my tendon."

Ms Neame pointed to two droopy toes on her left foot that are no longer being held up by tendons to illustrate her point.

The attack on Tuesday occurred on the couple's third day in Phuket. Ms Neame was in waist-deep water, about where the waves were breaking, when she was bitten.

"I may have stood on it, and then it bit me. It's hard to say because it bit underneath my foot and on top," Ms Neame said.

"I felt it tear at me. It felt like a shark," she said. "I'm from Queensland, so we have sharks there. I wouldn't have expected sharks to be here."

Ms Neame cried out for help and was immediately rescued by Mr Passmore, who carried her to the safety of the beach. She was then taken to Patong Hospital, before eventually being transferred to Bangkok Hospital Phuket.

"The wound on her foot could have only come from a shark. That shaped wound..."

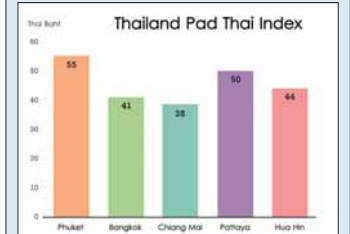
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## PhuketWan not guilty, say island judges

ALL charges filed by the Royal Thai Navy against Big Island Media, Alan Morison and Chutima Sidasathian were dismissed on September 1. However, the Navy's right to file those charges was upheld.

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## BUSINESS



Island inflation from *pad thai* to housing is a sign of a growing economy.

## PROPERTY



Luxury villa market is healthy and growing, says Bill Barnett.

## LIFE&STYLE



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## Officers arrest Chalong killers

POLICE have arrested the gunman who shot and killed a man in the Chalong Pier parking lot on August 28.

Kanawat Thingwai, 21, and his two accomplices, 18-year-old Ekkasit Kongsomot and a 17-year-old minor named by police only as 'Don', were arrested on Monday at a house in Rawai, Provincial Police Commander Patchara Boonyasit said this morning.

The three men drove up on a single motorbike, shot and killed Illyas Malee, 28, and left Humdee Jeklek, 18, in critical condition with gunshot wounds to his shoulder and leg.

All three were charged with gang murder, attempted gang murder, illegal possession of a firearm and carrying a firearm in public.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Air quality back to normal post Indonesian haze

THE haze over Phuket caused by fires in Indonesia has dissipated and the air quality has returned to normal, Pornsri Suthanarak, director of the Regional Environmental Office, said on August 31.

"The wildfire that began on August 22, started to affect Phuket nearly a week later, causing a haze comprising more than 120 micrograms of particles per cubic meter, which is above safe levels. As expected, it took a few days to fade away," Ms Pornsri said.

– Nattha Thepbamrung

# Expatriate pleads guilty to NK meth smuggling charges



A former Phuket resident involved in an international plot to move enormous stockpiles of North Korean methamphetamine through Thailand and onto the streets of New York pleaded guilty. The arrest was connected to US Army Sgt Joseph 'Rambo' Hunter (pictured) being caught in Phuket in September 2013 for leading a ring of globe-trotting contract killers who worked for drug traffickers. For the full story, including an interview with the victim, visit [PhuketGazette.net](http://PhuketGazette.net)

## New batch of breathalyzers hit island roads

IN AN effort to reduce drunk driving and the road fatalities linked to it, 39 breathalyzers were donated to Phuket last week.

Michael Woodford, the executive chairman of Safer Roads Foundation (SRF), and his wife Anunciacion Somavilla, pre-

## LOCAL NEWS Briefly

sented the Lion alcolmeter SD-400s to Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong on August 27.

Phuket Province is seventh in the nation for the most road accidents and is one of the top crash-prone provinces in the South.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Turks arrested for working illegally on Coral Island

A COMPANY has admitted to 'making a mistake' by allowing two Turkish men to work for them on Koh Hei, also known as Coral Island, without work permits.

Ahmet Komurco, 37 and Altin Cern Salih, 49, were arrested on August 27 by plainclothes police for working illegally as customer service employees for Coral Management.

Neither man was able to supply the officers with a work

permit. Both had entered Thailand on tourist visas.

"It is important for the public to understand that neither man had any intentions of doing anything illegal," said Coral Management representative Ing-Orn Komerdo.

Mr Salih and Mr Kumurco were charged for working in Thailand illegally.

– Winai Sarot

## Chinese tourist runs over traffic police officer

A CHINESE tourist drove his rented motorbike into the back of a traffic police officer in Karon on August 26.

Sen Sgt Maj Chaichana Phatikabot was only minorly injured in the incident.

"There were four of them on two motorbikes. They had already been stopped and fined for driving without a licence at our checkpoint," said Sgt Maj Chaichana. "After they got back on their bikes, one of them lost control of the vehicle and struck me from behind. I believe it was an accident."

No charges were pressed against the tourists, who reimbursed the officer for his hospital bill.

– Kongleaphy Keam

## Bangla venues investigated for encroachment

ALMOST 30 businesses along Phuket's primary party street Soi Bangla are being investigated for illegal encroachment, confirmed Kathu District Chief Sayan Chanachaiwong on August 26.

The 28 businesses, occupying 33 units, are allegedly on one rai of land that belongs to the municipality, explained Mr Sayan.

The one rai of land is supposedly owned by Patong Municipality with a *NorSorLor* land document, but the vendors were given permission to run their businesses there more than two decades ago, said Mr Sayan.

"We are looking for a solution that will not have a negative impact on any of the interested parties," said Vice Governor Suthee Thongyam during a meeting about the topic.

– Nattha Thepbamrung

## Trapped: police hunt illegal fishermen

POLICE are searching for the owner, or owners, of illegal fishing equipment found at Bang Yai Canal in Phuket Town on August 30.

Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana led his team in collecting 24 illegal fishing nets, also known as 'ai ngo' from the site.

*Ai ngo* is one of four types of fishing gear made illegal by the National Council of Peace and Order. The others are push nets, generator-powered anchovy purse seines and 'pong pang' stow nets.

The case was handed over to Phuket City Police.

– Chutharat Plerin

## Czech man dies in bike accident

A CZECH man was killed after crashing his motorbike into a utility pole on his way home from Patong with his son on August 27.

Jaroslav Krupka, 44, was on his way to Phuket Villa in Kathu when he lost control on a curve and crashed. Mr Krupka's son, who was on a separate motorbike was found crouching over his father's body.

There were no helmets reported at the scene.

– Winai Sarot





# Understanding 'not guilty' verdict in PhuketWan case

By Chutharat Plerin

ALL charges filed by the Royal Thai Navy against Big Island Media, Alan Morison and Chutima Sidasathian were dismissed on September 1. However, the Navy's right to file those charges was upheld.

Judge Chaipawat Chayanantapat addressed a courtroom packed with international journalists, but was noticeably devoid of members of the navy and the prosecuting team.

According to the court hearing, the charges against the pair stemmed from a report published on July 17, 2013, which contained excerpts from a Reuters special report alleging that some Thai naval security forces worked with human smugglers to profit from the exodus. The integrity of Reuters as a source was one of the saving graces in the case, the judge noted.

"Firstly, we judged whether or not the Royal Thai Navy could file the complaint in this case," Judge Chaipawat said.

"Capt Pallop Komalodaka of the Royal Thai Navy was authorized to file the complaint to police against the suspects over the use of the term 'naval



Mr Morison and Ms Chutima talk to the press after hearing the verdict.

forces' in the article.

"The suspects and defence lawyers made the argument that 'naval forces' does not necessarily indicate the Royal Thai Navy. However, the Royal Thai Navy is one of Thailand's naval forces, so they have the right to file the complaint.

"Secondly, we judged whether or not the suspects were guilty of criminal defamation. The suspects took words from Reuters, which is counted as a reliable news source. We believe that Reuters has

checked their facts before publishing. The suspects did not formulate the paragraph in question themselves. Given these factors, we found them not guilty of [breaking] Section 328 of the Criminal Code.

"Thirdly, we judged whether or not the suspects were guilty of violating Section 14 of the Computer Crimes Act. In this decision we considered the fact that the suspects took information from Reuters and distributed it through their own website. However, the informa-

tion being distributed was not false information. Additionally, the information did not cause damage to public security or create public panic.

"Furthermore, the Computer Crimes Act was not intended to be used as part of criminal defamation cases."

Following the judge's announcement, Ms Chutima and Mr Morison addressed the international press outside of the court house.

"The judges have done the right thing to prove that in Thailand we can believe freedom of the media," Ms Chutima said.

"The benefit is not only for PhuketWan, me and Alan, but beneficial for Thailand and everybody who lives in Thailand."

Mr Morison expressed his gratitude to the Thai judicial system.

"[The verdict] speaks to the maturity of the relationship that should develop between the military and the media in the future. I think in a mature democracy, the military and the media both understand each other, and both recognize and respect each others' roles. And that's what we hope is the outcome for everybody in this case," Mr Morison said.

## New 50-baht van to Patong



The new van service has already hit the roads. Photo: PLTO

A NEW public transport initiative was set into motion on September 1 with the launch of 50-baht van rides from the Old Phuket Town bus station on Phang Nga Road to Patong Beach.

The 15-seat vans will stop at previously established bus stops at Phuket Provincial Hall, Phuket Prison, Satee Phuket School, Vachira Phuket Hospital, Bangkok Hospital, Tessaban Baan Samkong School and Samkong Tesco Lotus.

"The van is scheduled to go from Phuket Town to Patong Beach every hour from 7am to 6pm and from 6am to 5pm from Patong Beach to Phuket Town," said Terayout Prasertphol, chief of the Phuket Land Transportation Office (PLTO).

While it will cost 50 baht to go from Phuket Town to Patong or Patong to Phuket Town, the fare is only 30 baht from Phuket Town to Samkong or Patong to Samkong. Students will be charged half price.

— Chutharat Plerin

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## Beach rules still at sea

CONTRARY to earlier reports, no final decision has yet been made by Governor Nisit Jansomwong on how to manage Phuket's controversial beach chair situation.

At a meeting on August 27, Pun Thongchumnum, head of the research team from Prince of Songkhla University's Phuket Campus, informed the governor of the results of the team's investigation.

The team suggested the government continue to use the 10 per cent zone system, allowing beachgoers to bring their own umbrellas and mats, while rental operators continue to be allowed to provide mats and umbrellas only," said Dr Pun.

The team also suggested that some policy be put in place to allow the elderly and disabled to access beach chairs one way or another.

– **Nattha Thepbamrung**

## Monkey Beach gibbon tout arrested

QUICK action by officers after receiving a tip-off from a *Gazette* reader saw a gibbon tout put behind bars last week.

Anan Nadee, 20, was arrested along with Bancha Songkhai, 24, in front of the Andaman Resort on Phi Phi Don while using their illegally owned gibbons as props for tourists photographs, confirmed Suwat Suksiri, chief of the Thung Talay Non Hunting Zone.

According to Mr Anan, he was making at least 5,000 baht per day during the low season for this kind of work. However, during the high season, he took more than 20,000 baht per day, Mr Suwat said.

With the possibility of making more than 500,000 baht a month during the high-season, the maximum punishment of not more than 4,000 baht, four years imprisonment or both is hardly a deterrent, noted Mr Suwat.

"It is a very low fine. Moreover, when the case goes to court, it is sometimes reduced



Anan Nadee was caught touting. Photo: Thung Talay Non Hunting Zone

to 1,500 baht and a suspended two-year sentence," Mr Suwat said.

Mr Anan and Mr Bancha were charged for illegally possessing protected wild animals.

The two gibbons in the men's possession were taken to the Phang Nga Wildlife Nursery Station.

"We aim to get rid of gibbon touts on Phi Phi Island and we

will not stop looking for them. We really appreciate help from citizens and encourage them to keep sending us information."

Mr Suwat believes that there are still more than 20 gibbons on Phi Phi Island that need to be rescued.

Gibbons are generally brought over from Phuket. These baby gibbons, costing about 25,000 baht each, are

sourced from the wild by poachers who take them from their mother. The mother is killed in the process, Mr Suwat explained.

"I'm not sure if it is easy for the touts to hide from the police or if the police tend to ignore the problem. However, for foreigners, touts represent serious animal rights issues," Mr Suwat said.

In March, former Miss Universe Natalie Glebova caused a social media storm after she posted on Instagram a photograph of herself posing with a gibbon in Ton Sai. She later led a public awareness campaign to educate people about the issues of touts' illegal use of protected species.

Thung Talay Non Hunting Zone officials are urging police and other relevant officials to strengthen policies and to enforce stricter penalties for those caught in possession of protected wild animals.

– **Kongleaphy Keam**

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## Highways Office demands underpass hazards be fixed



The Highway Office is pushing for road repairs. Photo: PR Dept

THE Phuket Highways Office is pushing the repair of the dangerously rough road surface on both sides of the Samkong intersection underpass construction site.

"Construction is well on its way at the site and it is scheduled to be finished by the end of the year," said Samak Luedwonghad, director of the Phuket Highways Office. "However, there are some dangerous potholes and other road surface conditions that could lead to accidents."

Mr Samak confirmed that his office was in talks with the construction company to ensure that the safety hazards are fixed.

"It is the contractor's responsibility to maintain the standards outlined in the contract. However, each contractor has different capabilities when it comes to responding quickly to these issues. This can especially be an issue

given the amount of heavy rain at this time of the year," Mr Samak said.

Mr Samak told the *Gazette* earlier this year that there are no laws in place allowing local government officials to take action if a construction company fails to comply with contractual standards.

Police believe that a pothole was a major factor in the death of a Phuket motorcyclist earlier this week.

Last month, a local lawyer flipped his BMW Z4 near the Samkong underpass construction site, at poorly marked roadworks outside Phuket International Hospital.

"Nobody wants accidents. Most companies follow the standards. When they fail to comply, we follow up," Mr Samak previously explained to the *Gazette*.

– **Chutharat Plerin**



# Aussie attacked on Karon Beach

From Page 1

...can only be made by triangular teeth, which only sharks have," said David Martin, shark behavior specialist and CEO of Kanaloa Nature & Films from France. "The attack took place very close to shore, which is an area that we do find bull sharks. I am 90 per cent sure it was a bull shark, but not a big one. Maybe only 1.5 meters long."

Though bull sharks are known to be among the few species of shark to attack people, they are not particularly dangerous or aggressive, said marine biologist and shark expert Dr Christine Dudgeon, who is based at the University of Queensland in Australia.

"While bull sharks have been responsible for attacks on people in the past, the juveniles are usually fine. They tend to eat smaller fish and not larger prey species," explained Dr Dudgeon. "Where I live in Brisbane, we have a large and healthy bull shark population and there has only been one recorded attack in the last couple of decades from bull sharks."

Thai shark researcher and



Ms Neame was carried out of the water by her boyfriend, Robert Passmore. Photo: Nattha Thepbamrung

freelance photojournalist Shin Arunrugstichai summarized the distribution of the species in the area.

"I have never heard of an encounter with a bull shark around the Phuket area, or seen them show up in historical fishing records. However, some large specimens were caught in Krabi, and juvenile bull sharks were also caught around the river mouth in Phang Nga," Mr Shin explained.

Mr Martin confirmed that it was a 'very, very rare' situation when a bull shark would come into contact with people in Thailand.

"They live here, but despite them living close to shore, we rarely encounter them," Mr Martin said. "Sharks don't bite people because they know they are human; it is always a mistake of identity. I have been diving with bull sharks on many occasions."

However, Mr Martin warned that bull sharks could be dangerous in particular situations, such as when swimming in areas they frequent to hunt.

Kongkiat Kittiwattanawong, chief of Phuket Marine Biological Center's Endangered Species Unit, concurred with Mr Martin's assessment of the bite wound. However, neither Dr Dudgeon nor Mr Shin were convinced that the bite wound was that of a shark, based on a

photograph sent to them.

Additionally, Tassapon Krajangdara of the Department of Fisheries has rejected assertions that it was a shark attack.

"I analyzed the picture with doctors and other experts. If it was a shark attack, a whole piece of the victim's body would be missing, not just a wound like this," Mr Tassapon said. "The wound is triangular, so it must have been caused by an animal with a triangular mouth that can also access shallow waters, such as a puffer fish or trigger fish."

Mr Tassapon pointed out that given that it wasn't, in his opinion, a shark attack, tourist had nothing to fear.

Governor Nisit skated over the technicalities of the issue to deal directly with policy.

"The most important point is that we ensure tourists are confident in their safety when they go swimming in Phuket," Gov Nisit told the *Gazette*.

"I have ordered officials to be on the lookout and have also asked hotels to educate tourists about what happened.

"These aren't warnings, we are just urging tourist to be especially careful."





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THE TIME machine

News from the past

'This money won't last, and [charities here] will never get it again. All charities here must be thrifty with what we have received since the tsunami.'

— Helene Fallon Wood

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## Bus service to airport to launch in October

By Athiga Jundee & Alasdair Forbes

PHUKET: The island is to get a regular bus service between Phuket City and the airport, the *Gazette* was told in an exclusive interview this week.

The service will use four buses, each of them capable of seating up to 34 people. The service will start at 5:30 am every day from Phuket City and 6:30 am from the airport. The last bus will leave the airport at 8:30 pm and Phuket City at 9:30 pm.

In Phuket City, the gray and orange buses will set out from the main Phuket City bus station on Phang Nga Rd. The city via Mae



Gray and orange buses will take an hour to get to the airport.

The return journey will follow the same route. Fares will be 8 baht for one stop and 12 baht for the entire trip. There will be discounts for passengers holding student ID cards.

So far, the operator, a new company called Phuket Mahanokorn Co Ltd, has bought two buses and registered them for the service. Two more will be bought and registered before the service starts on October 1.

Teerayuth Prasertphol, Chief Technical Officer of the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office, told the *Gazette* on August 30.

Asked whether he thought the new bus service would run into trouble from limousine and taxi operators, a spokesperson for the company, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he thought it unlikely as the buses would be catering to a different market, consisting mainly of air-conditioned, Thai tourists and foreign students.

Prices are expected to be some of the lowest in the area (for blue buses). The buses will pick up passengers at the airport and drop them off at the arrivals terminal.

K. Teerayuth said PPTO would like to see bus services running to the airport from other parts of the island, particularly the tourist areas on the west coast such as Patong, Kata and Karon.

## Dead still to be identified

Another 500 bodies, who may be victims of the tsunami, cannot tell at the moment.

"We have learned a great deal from our international DVI team working in the TTVI in Bangkok and Phuket. Combining forces with them was like receiving on-the-job training," Gen Udom added.

(DVI) staff on the TTVI team are scheduled to return home at the end of the year.

Hermann Metz, Joint Chief-of-Staff of the TTVI, said that the international DVI staff might stay in Thailand beyond the end of the year. "We are confident in [the abilities of] our Thai

headquartered in Bangkok, but will continue the work of identifying the remaining tsunami dead in Phuket and Phang Nga."

Hermann Metz, Joint Chief-of-Staff of the TTVI, said that the international DVI staff might stay in Thailand beyond the end of the year. "We are confident in [the abilities of] our Thai

## Gov rebuffs offer of 10,000 tsunami homes

PHUKET CITY: A businessman from Dubai met with Phuket Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura August 25 to offer to build 10,000 houses for tsunami victims.

His name simply as "John", visited Phuket Provincial Hall to request that land be donated upon which to build the Australian-designed structures. The prefabricated

intention of using this time to build the homes.

On August 31, however, Pannee Sittikan, head of the Phuket Office of Social Development

Briton charged with cheap air ticket scam

offer of

PHUKET CITY: A businessman from Dubai met with Phuket Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura August 25 to offer to build 10,000 houses for tsunami victims.



## Gov rebuffs offer of 10,000 tsunami homes

WHEN was public transport not an issue on the island? It seems to sneak into headlines week in and week out with the occasional big splash when authorities attempt to launch a new initiative.

This week, it's the 50-baht Phuket Town to Patong van service – which deserves the butts and bahts of those going from the island's cultural heritage destination to the west coast beaches. A decade ago, it was a regular bus service from Phuket International Airport to Phuket City.

Despite the launch planned for October and Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO) chief Teerayut Prasertphol saying he would like to see more bus services running to the airport from other parts of the island, it was years until the now floundering Airport Express Bus service to Patong was launched.

What is it about the island's transportation culture and geogra-

phy that makes it both so ripe for whingeing about the lack of public transportation and equally apt for a complete lack of support for positive transportation initiatives? It is safe to assume that more than enough hoo-ha has surrounded the transport sector and many of the rascals with their fingers in the pie over the last decade, so let's move on.

With foresight rarely seen on the island, the September 3 -10 issue of the *Gazette* examined the post-tsunami charity situation. The clarity of the concern comes in stark contrast to the fact that 1,522 bodies recovered after the tsunami remained unidentified. Nonetheless, the island was looking forward.

Helene Fallon Wood aptly pointed out, "This money won't last, and [charities here] will never get it again. All charities here must be thrifty with what we have received since the tsunami."

## The gift of hindsight

She was right. Though the good work of numerous charities on the island continues from those established before the tsunami and those after it, the influx of funds is not what it used to be. Many charities are now functioning on the support of a few donation sources unique to them. Just look at the number of charity events held on the island every month as a reminder of the costs incurred by those taking care of the destitute.

Nonetheless, these charity events come and go, as everyone tries their best to support those they feel are most in need. Similarly, *Gazette* columns – and their columnists – do the same. Some, such as Bill Barnett, hold fast for years to create a strong following, while others eventually lose their grip on readers' attentions. Just ten years ago, it wasn't our beloved Patrick Campbell writing about gardening it was 'Bloomin' Bert' – who had a

questionable understanding of what a garden was: "I'm a stubborn git. Can I say 'git' in a gardening column? I very much hope so, because I've just said it again..."

Another column gem unearthed in the September 3 issue takes us even further back with "The Time Machine", which was set for September 1995: Back then a big Australian fellow, wandering among the ladies nabbed an aging katoey (lady man in local parlance or transsexual) to cuddle up with on the night of August 16. Morning brought with it the startling revelation that the dazzled lover's belle, together with 10,000 baht had gone missing.

Looks like ladyboys (lady men, apparently) were making headlines twenty years ago, ten years ago and even now. Did you hear the one about the ladyboy who walks into a convenient store with her fake shooter?

— Isaac Stone Simonelli



## Fishermen urge PM to lift order

MORE than 500 fishermen from the provinces of Songkhla, Satun and Trang rallied outside Songkhla City Hall on Monday calling on Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-ocha to review his order for them to remove their illegal fishing nets by September 10.

The group said they wanted this order, issued under Article 44, to be postponed and subsequently reviewed because many people making a living from the Songkhla Lake were adversely affected.

They also urged officials from related agencies to inspect fishermen's living conditions.

## Woman busted for luring girl into sex trade

POLICE have arrested a young woman for allegedly luring a 14-year-old girl into prostitution in Nakhon Pathom.

Pornnipa Mameesuk, 22, allegedly charged customers 1,500 baht to have sex with the girl, with Ms Pornnipa keeping 1,000 baht as commission, said Col Phassawee Reungphu of the Don Tum Police.

Ms Pornnipa faces charges of taking a minor aged under 15 from her parents for lewd acts and prostitution and procuring a minor aged under 15 for the sex trade and human trafficking.

### 'The Ham Job'

POLICE in Phitsanulok Province are hunting kitchen burglars who simply stole the bare necessities: food.

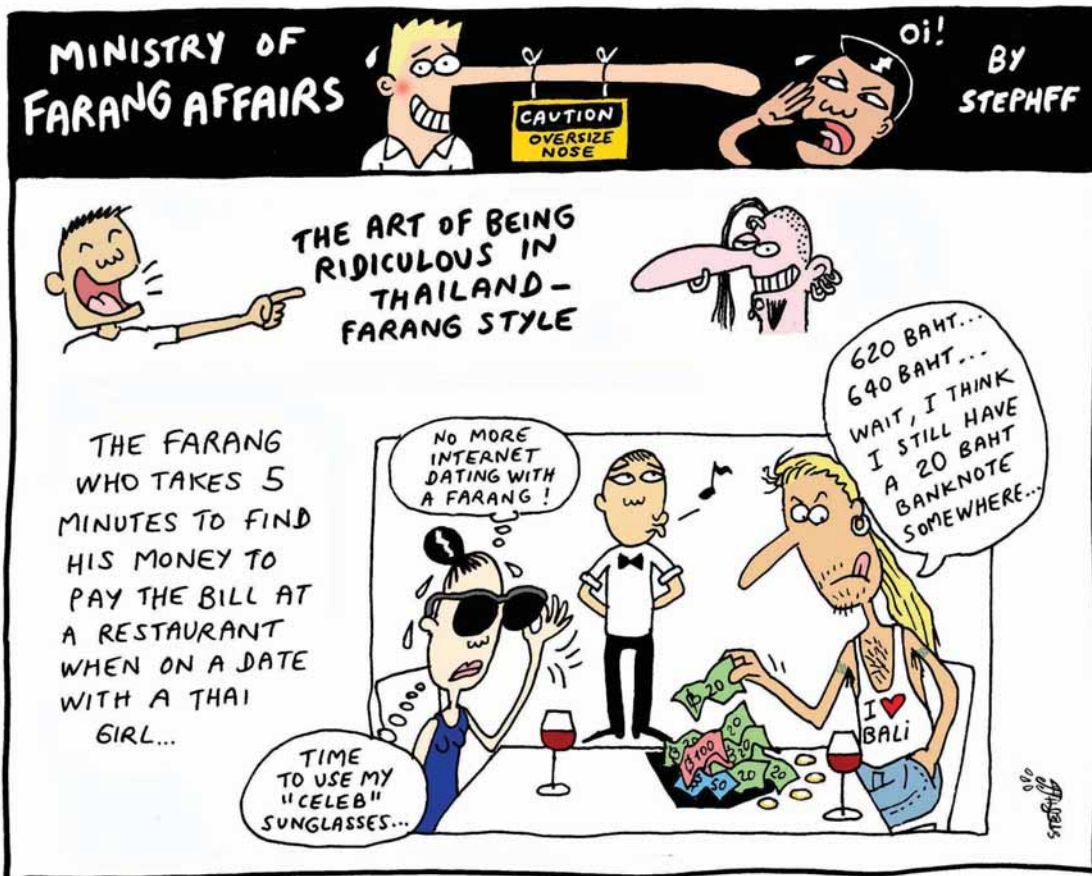
In two separate incidents, food vendors went to open their doors in the morning only to find the door broken and all their supplies missing, reported Sanook.com.

The only thing missing from the stores was the food, but all of it: raw pork and chicken, as well as noodles, canned fish, chilies, vegetable oil, garlic, onions and other ingredients.

Korkrak Suthaprot, 48, who runs one of the robbed shops, said that her cupboards and fridge were completely cleared out. A 60-year-old vendor nearby filed a similar complaint.

As the *Gazette* went to print, no arrests had been made yet.

— *Phuket Gazette*



## Crossing will boost ecology, park chief says

THE wildlife crossing on Highway 304 Kabinburi-Paktongchai will boost the ecology of the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex World Heritage Site and also benefit the community through eco-tourism, Wiroj Rojjanajinda, superintendent of the Tublan National Park, said last week.

The project, which includes road-widening and the construction of bridges and tunnels, met with divided opinions among the locals in Prachinburi. Some worried that the new highway will affect their daily lives, but some saw it as a business opportunity.

The forest corridor between Khao Yai National Park and Tublan National Park, which has just started construction, will reconnect the wildlife between two parts of the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex and will prevent the site from sliding down to the endangered list, he said.

Last year, the World Heritage Committee warned Thailand that the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex would be downgraded to the World Heritage in Danger list if the government did nothing to solve the problems within the area, such as forest fragmentation, illegal logging and forest mismanagement.

## NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

### Koh Kong zone to reduce illegal migrants, say officials

THE Koh Kong Special Economic Zone (KKSEZ) is expected to generate more than 20,000 jobs for Cambodians, which should help ease the problem of illegal migrant workers in Thailand, a KKSEZ official insisted.

However, a Thai immigration officer did not agree, saying poor, unskilled Cambodians would still come into Thailand because the minimum daily wage here is a lot higher than payment levels in the KKSEZ.

Thitidej Tongpatara, vice president of the KKSEZ, said the zone had three key goals: to boost the local economy, become a center of clean industry and to create jobs for local people.

### General, wife surrender over UFUN scheme

A RETIRED Army general, who police claim was a key fig-

ure in the alleged UFUN pyramid scheme, says he was deceived and is innocent after he and his wife turned themselves in to police on August 29.

Maj Gen Athiwat Soonpan, 67, and his wife Jirapimon, 60, turned themselves in to Lt Gen Suwira Songmetta, the assistant national police chief leading the investigation, at Suvarnabhumi Airport after flying back from the United States.

Maj Gen Athiwat said Arthit Pankaew, another key suspect in the case, persuaded him to invest in UFUN, but he declined to reveal how much he had invested.

The couple are facing charges for collaborating to borrow fraudulently from the public, conspiring in a ponzi

scheme, conspiring to run an unauthorized electronic monetary business, entering faulty information into a computer and thus damaging other people and committing a transnational crime.

## Allegations of after hour serve puts Pattaya club in hot water

A PATTAYA club faces closure for up to five years for allegedly violating an order issued under Article 44 of the interim charter.

The club in Soi Diamond was raided by Provincial Administrative Organization officials and police last week-end.

The club is accused of operating beyond the legal time and employing five female dancers aged under 20. Additionally, urine tests on patrons revealed signs of illegal drug use.

The decision on whether to close the club or not rests with the Chonburi governor.

## Rewards for 'bomber' arrest already being handed out

NATIONAL Police Chief Somyot Poompanmuang said he had put together 3 million baht to reward investigation teams whose tedious work resulted in the first arrest of a suspect in the Erawan Shrine bombing.

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# Monkey business

THE recent arrest of a number of touts for the illegal possession of gibbons on Phi Phi Don Island reveals, yet again, the continuation of the pathetic practice of using exotic animals as props to make money from uneducated tourists in Thailand.

On a somewhat brighter note, the fact that the arrest followed images being sent to the *Gazette* by concerned readers indicates that the public, together with social and traditional media, have a key role to play in eventually relegating these practices to where they belong: the annals of history.

Phuket has come a long way in limiting the number of animal photo touts that line the streets in popular tourist areas such as Soi Bangla in Patong, where a police officer once famously quipped, "I am a person policeman, not a monkey policeman," when asked why he did not take action against illegal photo touts.

As mentioned in this space just over a year ago, the National Council for Peace and Order coming to power represents Thailand's best – but perhaps last – chance to rid the island of these malefactors once and for all.

Unfortunately, the dynamics of greed and ignorance that drive the illicit trade are still largely in place, despite increased public awareness about the utterly cruel and inhumane way that baby gibbons and other primates are captured in the wild – by shooting and killing their mothers.

First-time tourists to Thailand who are ignorant of these facts can perhaps be forgiven for paying to pose with these animals. They arrive here with expectations of exotic experiences, and what could fit the bill better than having a python draped around their neck or cuddling a drugged-up baby primate?

For a fleeting moment, it might make them feel like they have been transported into an alternate reality, like a scene out of a *Game of Thrones* episode. Little do they know that their 'Instagram moment' comes at the cost of a lifetime of suffering for gibbons and other primates, who are caged up or even killed once they reach maturity and are no longer cute or cuddly enough for use in this sickening trade.

It is necessary to see an end to photo toutting with all animals, regardless of conservation status. It is a low-class activity that cements perceptions abroad of Thailand as an 'anything-goes', third-world country. Especially at a time when we need to work harder than ever to sell the country as the world-class destination it can and should be.



## Cheap way to make Phuket's roads safer

Answer this please, Mr Samak Luedwonghad [Director of Phuket Highways Office]: Why are so very many main highways and roads on Phuket allowed to go for years without repainting the lane lines?

This has got to be one of the cheapest ways to improve road safety. Driving south from the Sarasin Bridge, the lines are gone! Vehicles wander from side to side. Ridiculous.

This is but one such location on Phuket. By the way, how bad does it have to get to be news. And how long does it have to be bad. Talk is cheap. Let's see something done for a change.

It is very boring to read about the big plans of the officials. If the contract states the roadways shall be maintained, there surely must be some authority to enforce it or it isn't worth the paper it is printed on. Where are all the coppers we see when a 'VIP' is in Phuket?

KCPhuket  
Gazette forum

## Crime on beach not a problem

Re: *Gazette online, Opinion: Cyclocops roam, August 30*

What a strange editorial. First of all, there is no need for these cops on bikes. I have no idea what they'll do. Crime at the beach is not a problem. To say the umbrellas and sun chair vendors were a positive crime fighting force on the beach is a huge stretch. They won't be missed. So, no crime, no reason for cops on bikes and good

## Letters

to the Editor

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

riddance to all the former encroaching vendors.

Pinot  
Gazette forum

## Night out in Patong, stay in Patong

Re: *Gazette online, Czech man killed after night out in Patong, August 27*

I feel very sorry for that young man, the son who has to have that experience. Anyway, if I want to join the night life in Patong, I will have a room in Patong. Then no hilly, curvy roads on three sides out of Patong to manage.

Alfred  
Gazette forum

## Never a dull moment with land titles

Re: *Gazette online, Bangla bars investigated for encroachment, August 27*

There's never a dull moment for businesses in Phuket. Ownership is never a given in Phuket. People who say they have supposedly acquired land legitimately suddenly don't own it. The bending of laws in Phuket is beyond belief. Funny that I don't hear or read of anyone at the land office being jailed for falsifying title deeds. Who is breaking the law and

making a profit from it? Oh, Mr Nobody again.

skip  
Gazette forum

## An endless cycle for gibbon touts

Re: *Gazette online, Re: Monkey Beach gibbon tout arrested, August 31*

The sad part about all of this is the touts who have been caught this time, have been caught in the past too, or other members of the same families have been caught.

Had the authorities left them with their original gibbons, who were older, well looked after and knew no other life, they wouldn't have then gone and gotten new gibbon babies to train in order to make their living.

It's a perpetuating cycle that will only be broken if the tourists stop giving them money.

As for the Thais who do this, I know some of the families personally and this is what they were taught to do for a living from the time they were young kids. They're all poorly educated, but filled with love and care for their gibbons.

I am not saying it's right to allow gibbon touts, but what do you think happens by continually dobbing them in every time they get new babies?

The gibbons go to a sanctuary, the Thai families get fined, and a couple of months later they purchase new babies to train, and the cycle continues. Food for thought.

Melanie Coe  
Facebook

## Phuket Gazette

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Managing Editor: Isaac Stone Simonelli

Managing Director: Oranee Hildebrand

General Manager: Natthira Susangrat

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Contact us:

Editorial: [news@phuketgazette.net](mailto:news@phuketgazette.net)

Advertising Sales: [adsales@phuketgazette.net](mailto:adsales@phuketgazette.net)

Classified Advertising: [classads@phuketgazette.net](mailto:classads@phuketgazette.net)

Website services: [anna@phuketgazette.net](mailto:anna@phuketgazette.net)

Gazette Guide: [guide@phuketgazette.net](mailto:guide@phuketgazette.net)

Events Sponsorship: [events@phuketgazette.net](mailto:events@phuketgazette.net)

General: [info@phuketgazette.net](mailto: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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# Weeding out touts

## FIRST PERSON

THE Thung Talay Non Hunting office, located in the Koh Lanta district, has the duty of preventing people from hunting in the area. We are an office under the Protected Area Regional Office 5 (PARO) of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

PARO 5 is responsible for 6 provinces; Krabi, Phang Nga, Phuket, Satun, Trang and Nakhon Si Thammarat. However, my office only has jurisdiction to arrest people for hunting and possessing wild animals in Krabi.

We were recently ordered by the PARO 5 to lead raids on animal touts on Phi Phi, as this has become a serious problem.

Touts have many types of animals on Phi Phi, such as gibbons, slow lorises, and iguanas.

However, the most popular is the gibbon.

Taking photographs with wild animals can attract tourists, however, it can damage Thailand's reputation. We frequently get reports from tourists that they were forced to take photos with the animals and find it very annoying.

Some foreigners even send letters to the World Wide Fund for Nature Thailand about animal touts. We do not want international organizations to accuse us of ignoring this issue, so the PARO 5 ordered us to get rid of them.



**Suwat Suksiri, 43,** has been the Chief of Thung Talay Non Hunting Zone since 2010. He is originally from Chumphon Province and earned his bachelor's degree in Forestry from Sukhothai Thammathirat University. He has been working in

the forestry field since 1993.

Here he talks about why animal touting is a serious problem for foreigners and not locals and how to solve these issues.

Thai people don't see this activity as animal torture, as the animals are raised like pets and their job is to just take photos with tourists.

Some gibbons are raised very well, actually. The touts feed them fruit such as grapes and apples and give them a good life.

However, people have to understand how hunters get the gibbons.

To get a baby gibbon, hunters have to kill the mother, because the gibbons stay high up in the trees. Hunters shoot the mother down. It's very

cruel.

Gibbons are wild animals and should live in nature, not with humans. It's not the same as raising a dog or cat.

Additionally, many humans from many different countries touch the animals. We don't know what diseases will pass to or from them.

During high season, gibbons are pushed to work very hard.

Even though they receive good food, they have to work hard in exchange.

There are currently about 300 protected species in Thailand. This means that the animal is in danger of becoming extinct if they are open for possession or hunting. Gibbons are one of these protected species.

Most Thai people think that gibbons are everywhere and will not die if people take them out of the wild to raise. However, most don't know that gibbons can only produce one baby per year.

After hunters kill the mother and the baby is in captivity, how will they reproduce? This is why gibbons are listed as a protected species by the DNP and why many foreigners see touting as a serious problem.

We are trying our best to tackle this issue.

I want locals to understand more about how and why taking photos with animals makes them a tout. If people understand, then we will have more support. Local authorities can also help by educating them.

# End of circus show

## Island View

By Tony Kleinschmidt

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

I WAS deeply relieved to see justice served when the court in Phuket delivered a 'not guilty' verdict this week in the case against Chutima Sidasathian and Alan Morison of the local news blog, PhuketWan.

Though there was a great amount of grandstanding, showboating and circus entertaining for the international media leading up to the trial, it was important that the government not use a heavy hand when dealing with the media in this case.

In this, the Thai justice system worked, and should be praised after the onslaught of international condemnation it received.

The fact that the case was pushed by open letters from PhuketWan and a number of human rights groups to Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-ocha in hopes that he would subvert the legal process was disconcerting.

Among the greatest concerns mooted in the international media was that this case could set a precedent for future cases, eventually leading to the specter of straight-up gagging of the local media in Thailand. But there is no system for precedents in Thai jurisprudence. Each case is a fresh start.

Since the May 2014 coup, at least 40 individuals have either been convicted or remain in pre-trial detention for offences under Lese Majeste Section 112 and the 2007 Computer Crimes Act, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Does anyone know what happened to Rinda Parue-

chabut who was arrested under the power of the Computer Crimes Act for allegedly spreading anti-government rumors on social media?

And what about the case of human rights defender Andy Hall? Mr Hall was charged with defamation and computer crimes violations for reporting alleged labor abuses at a large Thai pineapple wholesaler. He is at least getting some international coverage – but it is certainly not on the scale that PhuketWan was able to employ.

The relief I felt when the verdict arrived was not so much for Mr Morison – with his grand claims of willingness to do jail time in the name of journalistic integrity – as it was for Ms Chutima.

In a worst case scenario, Mr Morison would most likely have been deported in a hailstorm of criticism of the current administration. But Ms Chutima – who had assisted Reuters as they conducted their Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation into the Rohingya – wouldn't have had that option. She was facing the possibility of hard time in prison.

Thankfully, the case followed due process with a verdict that was fair to the defendants, to Thais, to Thailand and, yes, to journalistic integrity. But when it comes to freedom of the press, the PhuketWan decision does not by any means see journalism in this country out of the woods.

Just a couple of weeks ago, in the wake of the devastating Bangkok bomb blast, a senior level Thai government spokesman praised the government of China for its skills in 'information management'. The spokesmen went on to warn journalists that the government could "interrupt" them if they did not use discretion in reporting on "negative aspects" of Thailand.

## Words from the Wise

**"Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure."**

– Dr Oliver Sacks

**"The first monster you have to scare the audience with is yourself."**

– Wes Craven

## Issues & Answers

### Who is responsible for road accident clean up?

ON THE way to my house in Rawai I saw a blood stain on the road and could also smell blood. I'm not sure if it was from an animal or from an accident. Who is responsible for cleaning up after an accident?

**Concerned Commuter**

**Mr Sakun Naepnean, a Phuket Kusoldharm Foundation rescue worker, replies:**

The Kusoldharm Foundation is the one which initially cleans up after an accident. For

example, if there is a death and body parts are on the road, we will pick up the parts and put sand on the ground to cover the blood.

However, if the victims are still alive, we rush them to the hospital and don't clean the site.

For a complete clean up, the responsibility lies with the local authorities, such as the municipality and the Orbortor.

**Mr Aroon Solos, Mayor of Rawai municipality, replies:**

Local authorities, such as the municipality and the Orbortor, are responsible. After the accident, police will contact us and we will go to clean up the site.

Normally, we use water to spray and clean the stain. We also pick up broken pieces left by vehicles.

Tourist and locals can contact us if they see any remnants of an accident at 076-613 801 during our office hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm.



## New tourism chief urged to move quickly



**New TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.** Photo: The Nation

**YUTHASAK** Supasorn, the new governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), has been urged to rush rebuilding tourist confidence ahead of the high season and to work closer with the private sector.

Charoen Wangananont, president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, the inbound tourism body, said many holidaymakers have halted their trips to Thailand in the wake of the recent bombing at Bangkok's Erawan Shrine that killed 20 people, including tourists.

Mr Yuthasak, 49, was appointed by TAT's board of directors as the new governor, replacing Thawatchai Arunyk, who completed his term in March and stayed on as acting governor. Previously he was an executive vice president and the chief financial officer of MCOT Plc.

"The private sector welcomes him and hopes he will help drive tourism forward. In fact, he already knows what to do and how," Mr Charoen said.

Mr Yuthasak said he plans to introduce three immediate policies upon taking up the post: to reassure the global community; stimulate domestic tourism in the wake of the recent tragic bombings in Bangkok; and create a better TAT.

— *The Nation*

# Cut to chase: advice or pitch

## Finance

By David Mayes

HOW do you know if the financial advice you are receiving is solid, or if it is a sales pitch in disguise? The first line of due diligence you should always employ is to check the educational background of the advisor. Ask where they did their financial studies and then verify with the institution that they do have the claimed financial education.

Once you can be sure the advisor at least has an understanding of financial markets, you next need to be assured that your interests are aligned. There are several set-ups that can do this. None are perfect, with each having their own set of pros and cons. The worst is a set-up where the advisor makes money for each transaction, as this encourages churning, where the advisor is tempted to make a profit off a transaction that is not in your best interest.

The indemnified commission, another common set-up, is often needed for new advisors to make it in the industry. This is where product providers such as insurance companies pay out in advance to advisors and then collect their money back from the policy, once it is sold. This solves the issue of churning and makes sure the investment decisions are independent of the need of the advisor to make a living.

I started my career this way and don't think I could have survived the initial years any other way. However, this makes it difficult to service accounts, because there is no future benefit other than referrals and so advisors are constantly forced to find the next deal rather than



**Is your financial advisor a pitchman?** Photo: Kris Krug

service their existing clients.

Trailing fees are the best in my opinion, as the advisor is encouraged to do his best job to ensure a future income stream, yet can make investment decisions independent of his need to earn. Even this form is not perfect, however, as it encourages excessive risk taking.

Many advisors earn great fees managing high risk portfolios in the later stages of a bull market and as the markets climb to new highs, so do their fees. The problem is that when the crash comes, the advisor is not required to give back gains, but your portfolio will.

Where things can be tricky is that some salesmen hide where they are really earning money. Look at any lock-ups as a sign that the advisor is earn-

ing a commission. This is fine if he is honest about it, and you are happy with the terms. If advisors are dishonest about this, however, that is a big red flag. 5-4-3-2-1 redemption penalties only exist so the advisor can earn a five per cent upfront commission and there is absolutely no other reason for these.

The client's situation that convinced me to write this article appeared like a good set-up to him, as he was told the advisor made his money off charging him a half per cent per annum trailing fee, which is fairly low and should have been a red flag. In reality the advisor also earned himself tens of thousands of pounds in upfront soft commissions on funds with much higher risk than the client wanted.

Finally, you must understand

the limitations of financial advice and get a real understanding of the meaning of the word risk. Risk means you may lose (hopefully only temporarily in most asset classes), and realizing a loss does not mean your financial advice was bad, or the advisor incompetent. If you really understand this, you will analyze the risks you are taking much more carefully and take responsibility for the results. An advisor's job is to point out the risks and steer you towards taking the risks that match your desire and ability to withstand.

Nobody can guarantee results, so be very wary of advisors who portray themselves as gurus. Remember that if they were so good at making money, they wouldn't need to be managing yours. Many of my clients have made amazing returns in their portfolios, while others have made horrendous mistakes, or had terrible luck. I have made very painful mistakes in my own portfolio, but I have always lived to invest another day because my risk taking has always been in the correct proportion to my overall position.

Just to be clear, while this article may in fact be a pitch for anyone who is looking for a new advisor (I won't pretend to hide that), it is also solid financial advice, which I hope helps you avoid falling for a pitch in disguise.

*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.*

## Shift to e-payment urged to cut costs

THE cost of making payments at banks should go down once electronic transactions become more widely used, said Boontuck Wungcharoen, chairman of the Thai Bankers' Association (TBA).

Speaking at a Bank of Thailand conference on the trends and developments of digital payments, Mr Boontuck said that in his personal view, e-payments would become more attractive if the fees were seen as reasonable by customers. As it is now, the cost of digital banking is lower than for physical banking, but its fees are higher. Under the TBA's five-year strategy ending in 2019, the association is focusing on transactional efficiency in order to reduce the use of cash.

Mr Boontuck told the conference that there were 49 billion transactions a year in Thailand, of which 32 billion were consumer-to-business, 13.7bn business-to-business and the rest consumer-to-consumer. In Thailand, 97 per cent of transactions are done with cash, compared with an average of 94 per cent in other emerging markets. In developed markets, the proportion is 62 per cent.

In transaction value terms, cheques account for 57 per cent in Thailand, against 17 per cent in emerging markets and 20 per cent in developed markets.

Thailand sees 20 cashless transactions per head per year, while emerging markets have 40 and developed markets 283. — *The Nation*



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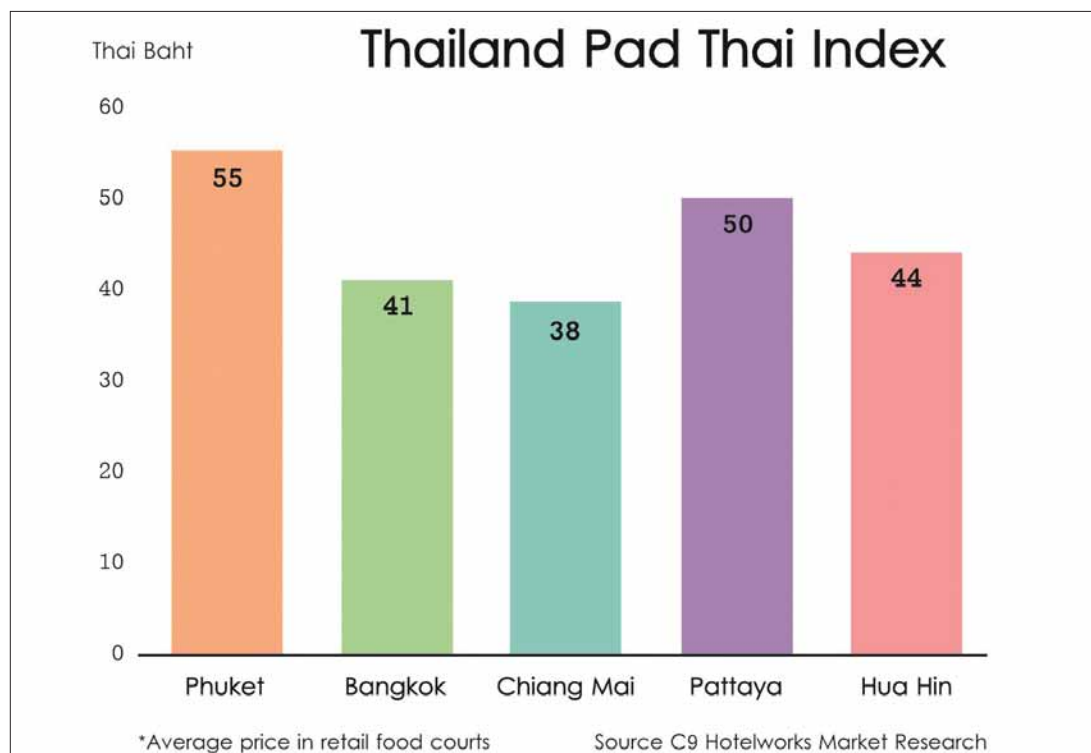
# Island's infamous inflation linked to economic growth

PHUKET inflation grew at a rate of 4.1 per cent in 2014, according to data released in C9 Hotelwork's new Economic Overview of the island.

What is clearly demonstrated in the numbers is how important tourism is as a driver of the economy. Using Gross Provincial Product (GPP) as the lead indicator, tourism directly accounts for 35.6 per cent of the island's economy, while the total exceeds 50 per cent of the expanded economy when looking at related sectors, such as transportation, health and financial services, which see strong tourist input.

According to C9's Managing Director Bill Barnett, "at face value the rising cost of living has caused concern among local residents, yet the reality is that inflation is a barometer of economic growth. Our research into consumer behavior on the island clearly indicates that higher prices are correlated with greater spending power."

"In a nutshell, pricing is driving the underlying numbers when comparing Phuket to the national Consumer Price Index. While Thailand's Gross Domestic Product is relatively flat, the tourism sector dominates



How much are you paying for your pad thai gai? Graph: C9 Hotelworks

the local economy and has continued to expand."

One lead indicator is the real estate sector, which accounts for 4.5 per cent of GPP and builds favorable domestic and foreign investment sentiment. Currently the luxury villa estate market has a pipeline exceeding US\$500 million including Avadina Hills,

Andara Signature, Anantara Residences, Layan Beach, Point Yamu by Como, and the new Rosewood and MontAzure projects under development. Phuket has continued to see traction at the top end of the property market (see page 19).

As part of their economic review, C9 undertook a Thailand

'Pad Thai Index', based on that iconic dish at food courts in five key cities across the country. Phuket ranked at the top at 55 baht, well above the cost of the same dish in Bangkok.

To read the full Phuket 2015 Economic Overview visit [thephuketinsider.com](http://thephuketinsider.com).

## Asean needs to be single destination, says experts

THE Asean Tourism Association (ASEANTA) is drafting another strategic plan for 2016-2025, aiming to raise the region's presence in the global market and to increase intra-regional travel.

Aileen Clemente, president of ASEANTA, said the region's tourism sector was preparing for the completion of activities under the Asean Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP 2010-2015), as well as the formulation of another 10-year ATSP.

Some of the highlights of the new ATSP are the need to implement the Asean Open Skies Agreement and make it easier to cross the region's borders, as well as conducting good marketing campaigns for the region as a whole.

Ms Clemente said ASEANTA had recently worked with the Asean Business Club as its research partner. The resulting document highlights the need for harmonized border-crossing procedures, enabling the private sector to optimize product development, and marketing Asean as one region and not just its individual countries.

## Five tips for content creation for your business



### Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

THE first priority in marketing through social media is to decide what you want to achieve. Is it for people to find out about a new service; to get them to visit your Facebook page; to educate them on something unknown; to be funny, or to shock with facts; or just to create brand awareness? Also think about where the content will be used.

### ADD VALUE

Your post should be relevant to your audience and not always a sales pitch, as they will appreciate this and end up buying more from you in the end.

### BUILD ENGAGEMENT

Get the reader emotionally in-

involved. Make them interested, to know or want more, to care, or to take a stance. People will be more responsive if the message is relevant and important to them.

### BE YOUR VOICE

When you create content, always use the same consistent voice of your brand. Don't try and mix up different voices, as this is part of your brand personality and the reputation you want to create. Your brand voice could be funny, serious, caring, or crazy, and will depend on the industry you are in, and your own personality. The best thing is to be natural and honest.

### HAVE CALL TO ACTION

This could be anything from asking them to like or comment; share with friends; go to your website; join your sub-



Make sure you are creating content that will count.

scribers list; book or buy your product; or request a free session and so on.

The important thing is that what you want the reader to do should be clearly spelled out. They are not mind-readers, so make it easy for them to understand what you want

them to do.

Simon Wetherell is a Social Media Expert, Lawyer and Best Selling Author & International Speaker. He now resides in Phuket where he trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the Social Media industry.



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## Lucky 19 millionth visitor

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) gave a surprise warm welcome to Thailand's 19 millionth visitor at Phuket International Airport on August 16. The lucky visitor also received two economy-class return air tickets from the international port of origin to Thailand, a five-night accommodation voucher, a 'Thailand's Luckiest Visitor' certificate, as well as other prizes from TAT's project partners.



Tang Kwun Wai, one of Thailand's luckiest visitors for 2015 (right), and his friend.

## Airport team at Hotspring Resort



Dusit Mayakarn, chairman of The Hotspring Beach Resort and Spa (middle), participates in the Airport Operations Party with Thani Chongchoo, deputy director of Phuket International Airport (2nd from left); Kawee Thong Sutthi, from AOT Academy's Executive Development Department (1st left); Pakin Sirichan, deputy vice president of Landside Airport Operations Department (2nd from right) and his wife on August 20.

## Congratulations Bangkok Airways

Flying higher is none other than Bangkok Airways, which was cited as one of the Top Ten Airlines worldwide in SmartTravelAsia.com's prestigious travel poll 'Best in Travel 2015.' The boutique airline also ranked 5th in the 'Best Airline for Cabin Service Worldwide' category.



All smiles at the certificate presentation ceremony are (from L-R) Songkrot Palakawong Na Ayuthaya, Bangkok Airways' director for corporate affairs and events; Vijay K Verghese, editor and director of Dancing Wolf Media; M.L. Nandhika Varavarn, Bangkok Airways' vice president for corporate communications, and her secretary Napharachit Dhamawongse.

## Unveiling new lasik technology

Dr Khemmawan Vethayawakul, Supreme iLasik Clinic's medical director, diplomate Board of Ophthalmology and specialist in cornea and refractive surgery, presents new technology for lasik surgery at the clinic on the 6th floor of CCM building on the Bypass Road recently. Photo: Southern Life Style



# Phuket today

Phuket Gazette

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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.

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

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## ents in Paradise

### Helping women become mothers

Bangkok Hospital Phuket held a 'Fulfill Your Dream to be a Mom' event recently to spread knowledge and understanding of factors behind infertility and also introduce new technology to aid reproduction.

Dr Sasiya Metatratip, from the hospital's Reproductive Medicine Department, speaks to the audience during the event.



### Dazzling dance show

PIDA Dance Academy and PK Inter Music, together with the Rotary Club of Sino Phuket, held a City of Dance Performance on Sunday August 30 at Simon Star theater.

Anissa Asavathanachart, from Phuket International Academy, performed Swan Lake ballet at this special event.

### Famous model visits island



Brice Borin, GM of Regent Phuket Cape Panwa (center), warmly welcomes Ase Wang, one of Thailand's most successful young models (right), and her friend recently.



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# RCoPB looking for new recruits

By Able Wanamacock  
and Alastair Carthew

THE Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB), Phuket's only English speaking Rotary, is re-energizing its participation in the community and aiming to firmly debunk the image of Rotary as only for older men.

We are doing this in two key ways: by actively aiming to increase the number of female members and by attracting younger members who can inject new ideas and perspectives.

An RCoPB membership survey last year showed that of our 34 members, only four are women and that our average age is, well, let's just say in the more 'mature' bracket.

However, each statistic has a historical context that is explained through Rotary's worldwide membership.

Fact One: Females were not admitted to Rotary until 1989. But since then, female membership has skyrocketed and the first Rotary International woman vice-president was elected in 2013.

Rotary has come a long way since a 37-year-old Chicago lawyer, Paul Harris, founded it in 1905 as a purely businessman's club.



Rotary Club of Patong Beach President Walter Wyler inducts new member Andrea Buosi.

Fact Two: Age brings wisdom, time to do things, maturity and experience (the average worldwide age of Rotarians has remained steady at 58 for the last two decades). Wisdom, maturity and so forth, are nothing to be ashamed of. There is plenty of it in the RCoPB.

But every organization

needs new blood to generate new ideas, energy, enthusiasm and knowledge. The RCoPB is very open to this proposition.

Locally, the RCoPB survey showed that 81% thought community involvement was the main reason members joined Rotary and that 85% considered local service the most

important. Without such high commitment by its members, the RCoPB's existence as a Phuket service organization would be meaningless.

Our survey showed commendable self-introspection. The natural correlation is that if we can adapt internally, our service to Phuket will improve accordingly.

It's not about changing our 'brand'. We are the Rotary brand that garners huge respect worldwide. This is why the RCoPB was chosen by so many donors after the 2004 tsunami, because they trusted us to get the job done.

It is about leveraging off a combination of female members and young members working alongside a group of dedicated, more 'mature' members, under the leadership of our current president Walter Wyler, and propelling our club forward to further expand our contribution to the Phuket community.

We will make this vision a reality through our existing projects in education, the environment, emergency relief, small infrastructure development and an outreach to the Phuket community through more active participation in events and articles such as this.

To this end, a quote from 1989 by Frank J Devlyn, Rotary International president 2000-2001, is relevant.

"I would like to remind you that the world of 1989 (read 2015) is very different to the world of 1905. Rotary has to adapt itself to a changing world."

## WHAT'S ON in Phuket

### September 5-6. East Meets West Garage Sale

Discover a treasure trove of high-quality used and second-hand items at the first East Meets West Weekend Garage Sale at Phuket Boat Lagoon. The family fun under cover at the new Boat Arcade Community Mall promises bargains galore, fine food and excellent entertainment for Thais, expats and tourists alike. 10am to 4pm, both days.

### 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 Librado.

For more information and booking, please contact

A colorful poster for the 'East Meets West Garage Sale'. The background is light blue with various black and white icons of tools, gears, and household items. The text 'East Meets West' is in red and black, 'GARAGE SALE' is in large, bold, black letters, and 'SALE' is in large, bold, red letters. Below this, in Thai script, it says 'เสาร์-อาทิตย์ที่ 5-6 กันยายนนี้' (Saturday-Sunday 5-6 September). Then '10 AM - 4 PM · Sep 5-6' and 'BOAT ARCADE PLAYGROUND, PHUKET BOAT LAGOON'.

adriano.trapani@gmail.com  
or call 084-844 9215.

### September 18. China High-end Tourism Showcase

American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) members and guests will have an opportunity to hear from David Johnson, managing director of

leading public relations firm Delivering Asia Communications (DAC) and digital marketing specialist Vanessa Zhu, the firm's Shanghai-based director of communications for China.

The session will offer solutions for Phuket's resorts and hotels on how they might

better understand and navigate the China tourism landscape and influence the purchasing decisions of the new brand of wealthy independent travellers.

There will be a question and answer session to follow.

Registration begins at 4:30pm and the session starts

at 5pm. Admission is open to the public and is 500 baht for non-AMCHAM members.

### 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. Make sure to keep checking the *Gazette* for local celebrations.

### December 10. Constitution Day

This day commemorates the day on which Thailand's first constitution was promulgated by HM King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) in 1932. Parades and fireworks take place throughout the country.



# Going to the zoo – part one

TODAY, I took the advice offered in the children's nursery rhyme "Going to the zoo, zoo, zoo / How about you?" It's a long time since I did so. My last visit to Phuket Zoo some seven years ago resulted in my penning a piece which, while critical of some aspects of the place, made encouraging noises about others.

For some reason, the article was never published, but perversely, a more recent and much more condemnatory piece – not written by me – did see the light of day.

Clearly, the whole idea of animals in captivity provokes widely divergent and sometimes irrational reactions. Witness the 'brouhaha' about the proposed Nemo Dolphinarium – an initiative that has resulted in a twelve point opposition letter to the Minister of Tourism and Sports.

Highly intelligent and sensi-

tive creatures with a strong sense of kinship, dolphins are hunted in particularly appalling ways, as a few traumatized individuals are singled out, still alive, for sale to marine parks.

The case for zoos – as opposed to marine parks – is not nearly so black and white. The days of the old style menagerie, where ani-

mals were kept in tiny barred cages, often in solitary confine-

ment, are largely gone, thanks to animal rights movements such as the Wildlife Conservation Society; controls exercised by The American Zoo and Aquarium Society (ASA); and burgeoning public awareness of ecological issues. And while zoos cannot offer an exact replica of conditions in the wild as do game reserves or national parks, many are trying, laudably, to create more spacious and natural environments for their charges.



**Keep It Green**

**By Patrick Campbell**



A trainer sneaks in a quick kiss with a croc. Photo: Tatiana Gerus

Phuket Zoo is a case in point. Still undergoing radical improvements with many zones currently closed for redevelopment, it has dispensed with most of the ancient, barred cages, or at least sited them away from the popular areas. And they are limited to less vulnerable groups of com-

panionable creatures such as purple swamp hens or pigeons.

Happily, there are pairs of most animals such as otters and ostriches, while a colony of pig-tailed macaque monkeys enjoy life in a spacious area. The central lake provides a natural, if under-used focal point, and the

abundance of plants means that the setting looks in places more like a botanical garden than a haven for animals.

Whether it is, however, a 'haven' for many of these inmates and whether they are less stressed than their fellow species in the wild is a moot point. But it can be argued that they at least suffer no anxiety from potential attack, no grisly deaths from predators and no threat of starvation. And certainly some inmates, reptiles such as terrapins, pythons and crocs, do adapt more readily to confinement.

Next week I will look in more detail at the issue of the value of zoos to the animals kept in them and to the humans who visit them.

*Read the full article online. If you have a question about the environment that you would like to see featured, email Patrick at [drpaccampbell@gmail.com](mailto:drpaccampbell@gmail.com).*

## Dolphin Project founder, Ric O'Barry arrested



Ric O'Barry brought international attention to the annual slaughter of dolphins at Taiji Cove, Japan. Photo: Dolphin Project

RIC O'Barry, the founder of Dolphin Project, and a driving force behind the efforts to prevent the Phuket dolphinarium from opening was arrested in Japan on August 31.

Mr O'Barry was apprehended on suspicion of a violation of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of Japan, reported the Dolphin Project.

He was reportedly accused of being unable to produce a passport. According to the act, any alien in Japan shall carry on his or her person at all times the passport or provisional landing permit. After spending the night in jail, Mr O'Barry was released by Shingu Police with all charges against him

dropped.

Mr O'Barry, the subject of the 2009 Academy Award-winning documentary *The Cove*, is in Taiji to condemn the annual dolphin slaughter, scheduled to commence this week.

The dolphin drive hunt takes place from September 1 to March 1 of each year in Taiji, Japan. Dolphins are killed for their meat or captured and shipped to aquariums, such as the Nemo Dolphinarium in Phuket, for captive display. Due to O'Barry's efforts, the hunt has received international criticism for extreme violence and cruelty to animals, as well as concern over the toxicity of their meat.

– *Phuket Gazette*



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# United front for greater good



## On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

THAILAND'S marine industry has received intermittent support from the Royal Thai Government over the years – sporadic and rarely strategic.

In 2004, when the astronomical taxes on importing boats to Thailand was reduced from more than 200% of the value of the boat to 0%, this happened on the back of a concerted effort by the marine industry to get itself front and center in the government's mind.

Issues with chartering boats in Thailand at the time (some of which were resolved and many others which still remain) was one of the driving forces for this concerted effort, as was the desire to create an appropriate regulatory framework for 'pleasure yachts', a definition which Thai law didn't, and still doesn't, define or even acknowledge.

The tax issue was a target of the newly-established Marine Alliance of Thailand (MAT) – a group of industry players and friends of the marine industry, initially chaired by the former British Honorary Consul to Phuket Alan Cooke, and later by Image Asia's Grenville Fordham.

Key members of the industry, through the MAT, leveraging Alan Cooke's high-placed contacts in the Ministry

of Tourism and Sports, with additional personal lobbying of then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra by Royal Phuket Marina's Gulu Lalvani, resulted in the tax success.

It was a combination of leveraging connections and a united front, that changed the face of the industry.

The MAT later morphed into the Thailand Marine Business Association, which subsequently lost its muster and is, to all intents and purposes, now inactive.

Today, the industry appears again on the verge of something big. Central government has

put the marine industry on the national agenda. Big change is promised and expected, at least in the form of a 12-month super-yacht charter licence for foreign-flagged

**All involved from the public and private sectors deserve credit for their efforts, but the real key question is, 'what's next'?**

vessels.

This forward-thinking initiative has already been approved, and with some of the finer details still in the process of being fixed, a full launch is expected in November, together with revised immigration rules and more, it is hoped.

Gulu Lalvani has again been leveraging his contacts and convinced Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul to put this idea (and others) in front of the Prime Minister, which she did.

A working group, including Rico Stapel (JStar and Stapel), Jean-Marc Poulet (Burgess) and Andy Treadwell (Singapore



Yacht Haven is one of six international-standard marinas in Thailand. Photo: Gazette file

Yacht Events), have also been lobbying and discussing details and the practical implementation of this licence with the Marine Department.

The Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Marine Department have all been involved, and all had a hand. Even the Ministry of Transport has had a role in bringing the superyacht licence to reality.

All involved from the public and private sectors deserve credit for their efforts, but the key question for the industry is 'what's next?'

Surely it's time for Thailand's marine industry to create a united front. To go beyond 'I did this' and 'I did that' and develop a body that is made up of the industry and represents the industry. Such a body would need to recognize the multinational nature of both its membership and leadership.

The marine industry could learn from the tourism industry. In Phuket alone, there are umpteen tourism-related associations, perhaps too many, but at least they can present an official point of view, a united position that is listened to by

the powers that be.

Perhaps it's time for the marine industry to come together, establish a body that involves the stakeholders and represents the greater good and start a productive dialogue with all key stakeholders.

*Duncan Worthington is a long time Phuket resident and through Infinity Communications ([www.infinity-comms.com](http://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](http://www.MarineScene.asia). #OnDeckPhuket*

## SAREX aims to educate, give confidence to public

THE general public was invited to watch rescue boats and aircraft deploy for a two-day Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) drill and exhibition at the Ao Makham deep sea port on August 28 and 29.

"There were many interesting activities, such as an exhibition of old equipment, as well as air and maritime drill shows," confirmed Vice Admiral Sayan Prasongsamrej, Commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command.

"The public also obtained useful information on how to manage themselves and others in an emergency situation," Vice Admiral Sayan added.



SAREX gives rescue teams a chance to practice their skills. Photo: PR Navy Region 3

By holding the event, the Department of Civil Aviation aims to strengthen the abilities of rescue teams throughout Thailand.

"With SAREX, rescue

teams get the chance to practice their skills so that they can effectively use their training when a real incident occurs. It also gives the teams a chance

to test rescue equipment and communication systems," V/Adm Sayan said.

"As Thailand is a member of the International Aviation Orga-

nization [ICAO] and the International Maritime Organization [IMO], holding the SAREX ensures that these two international organizations, as well as airline and maritime businesses, have greater confidence in Thailand," V/Adm Sayan said.

Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong voiced strong support for SAREX.

"Phuket is a maritime tourist destination with visitors coming by air and sea. SAREX is a good way to boost confidence in our abilities among foreigners throughout the world, and also with our own citizens," Governor Nisit said.

– **Kongleaphy Keam**



# Phubbing phenomenon decoded

## On Your Mind

By Patrick Mattimore

THE word phubbing means ignoring the person you are with in favor of your phone. The concern is that our smartphones have become so much a part of our everyday lives that our real face-to-face social lives deteriorate.

The phubber phenomenon occurs when two or more people are in a social setting and interact with their mobile phone(s) and not the person, or people they are with. We've all probably encountered or been a part of this phenomenon. We notice it as well when distracted drivers or pedestrians have so immersed themselves in smartphones as to disregard environmental cues to which they should pay attention.

The phubber phenomenon has become so prevalent in Thailand and around the world that it has become the subject of academic study.

A team of language experts assembled by McCann and Macquarie Dictionary first coined the word 'phubbing' in 2012 as a way, they say, to help the world address a growing so-



It is highly likely that we are guilty of phubbing or have been phubbed ourselves. Photo: Lars Plougmann

cial problem and, at the same time, help the company sell copies and subscriptions of their new dictionary.

But is phubbing a reflection of a world that is becoming more disconnected in which the art of conversation is disappearing? Is it a problem at all?

Is phubbing something we have a slightly disdainful attitude toward, such as seeing someone spitting would be in the West? Or has it, like spit-

ting in China, become so commonplace so as to not be even consciously registered by people?

Psychologists, who study human activity in order to understand, predict and modify behavior, are certainly interested in the question of how a phenomenon like phubbing relates to human development and would want to know whether this phenomenon is contributing to a breakdown in social order.

At first blush, it certainly seems that the act of ignoring our companions in social settings is rather antisocial and deleterious.

Deeper inspection suggests however that the phubber phenomenon may be a rather benign continuation of activities put in place long before smartphones became the rage. In questioning this latest adaptation, consider activities predating phubbing.

For example, groups of people have for many years

gotten together to go to movies, a social activity. But then those people spend the next hour or two singularly wrapped up in the cinematic world. True, these people will often discuss the movies afterwards and they have, unlike phubbers, shared a common experience.

But families have gathered around televisions for many years, lost in their individual reveries, and the likelihood of post-TV discussions is minimal. Although the TV experience has been shared, no meaningful familial exchanges occur.

While psychologists have long debated the virtues and vices of the television, the general consensus seems to be that like other behaviors, such as gambling or drinking, TV is okay in moderation and under appropriate conditions.

However, rather than demonize the phubbing phenomenon, we should probably draw a similar conclusion as with other potentially harmful behaviors: phubbing is okay when restrained as to the amount and occasion. And, as to that waiter letting our meal get cold, a note sans tip should do the trick.

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# Container homes anyone?



Across the Land

By Amy Koh

RESEARCHING shipping container homes on the internet was an eye opener and it was both amazing and fascinating as to how cool and creative some of these homes can be.

There are definitely sustainability benefits from building a home with recycled shipping containers, but can it be a real home?

Well, it looks like some countries have taken shipping containers to another level. Out there very talented designers and architects have created and built homes with these containers that are so creative and sustainable that we may all now decide that we want one too.

Container homes are popular in Europe and the trend is starting to hit many other countries.

The top 2014 shipping container structures included unused grain silos converted into affordable student housing in Johannesburg. The Mill Junction had 375 individual apartments, a host of study facilities, libraries, lounges and computer rooms where a series of stacked shipping containers enhance the 11-storey silos.

Another interesting use was Audi building a giant



Boat Avenue's container mall is part of a new design wave spreading across the world. Photo: Gazette file

scoreboard displaying scores of match results on a structure made from 28 Audi A8 models and 45 shipping containers for the 2014 Football World Cup.

In Portugal, the Tagus Linear Park, a recreational outdoor space for the community, re-used shipping containers to form a service building. The Boat Avenue community mall in the Laguna Phuket area is home to Thailand's first container park and houses shops, restaurants, coffee shops and so on.

Could converted shipping containers one day become a more affordable housing option for Phuket?

For a start a 20-foot bare container costs approximately 40,000-50,000 baht and a 40-foot bare container costs 50,000- 60,000 baht. The prices are reduced slightly in Bangkok and most of these containers are stored at the Laem Chabang Port. The price of each container depends on the size, condition, insulation and so on and best of all, they can easily be delivered

anywhere in Thailand.

To do up or renovate a bare container to a livable space would include adding insulation, roof, floors, doors, windows, toilets, decks etc. The renovation costs would be in the range of 100,000-180,000 baht depending on the chosen materials.


It is no longer a novel idea to own a shipping container home, but rather a trend to convert these shipping containers to sustainable homes and even offices and shops. It

may soon not be just a fad, but a definite alternative providing more affordable housing on the island.



As a foreigner in Thailand and not being able to purchase land, the option to lease a plot of land and to virtually park the renovated homes on the land may be a step forward towards affordable housing.

Also the big bad wolf would have a hard time huffing and puffing to blow down a home made out of a shipping container.

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## New JV to buy Mecure hotels

THE BOARD of directors of Thai Industrial & Engineering Service (Tiesco) has approved the company's plan for a joint purchase of the shares of Jupiter Hotels Holdings (JHH), a United Kingdom-based company that operates 26 Mecure hotels in that country, for about 4.3 billion baht

To proceed with the acquisition, Tiesco will establish a joint venture, to be named Newco, which will be equally owned by the Thai company and Fico Holding (UK). Newco will then purchase 27.1 million shares of JHH with a par value of one British pound, amounting to 100 per cent of the paid-up capital, for about 77.5 million UK pounds (4.3 billion baht).

The shares are currently held by Patron Jupiter Holding and West Register Hotels, a unit owned by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Under the acquisition plan,



A Thai company targets 26 Mecure hotels in London and other British cities. Photo: Davide D'Amico

JHH will be made debt-free from third parties.

Tiesco and Fico will arrange for Newco to borrow 82.5 million pounds. This will then be lent to JHH to repay its debts to financial institutions and current shareholders.

The acquisition value will be about four times Tiesco's assets

totalling 1.18 billion baht. Hence the company will have to submit the application and other related documents to the Market for Alternative Investment to review the qualifications of the listing status of the company under the acquisition-of-assets regulations.

– The Nation



# Luxury real estate prospers

By Bill Barnett

ONE thing that I love about Phuket is the ability for luxury to live side by side with abject casualness. You could be sitting next to a multi-millionaire or else a package tourist on the bar stool, as the ties that bind are the flip-flops adorning your respective feet.

Islands tend to have little social stratification, which can probably be explained in a Robinson Crusoe round-about manner. Be it a local eatery, or stepping down the aisles of Villa Market, or indeed sitting in the crowd at a kids' sporting event at one of Phuket's many international schools, the pecking order doesn't much matter at these venues.

All that equality of course does not necessarily apply to where the top end of the market lay down their heads on comfy pillows at night. The history of luxury pool villas has been recanted many times around the local watering- holes, so that's no place we need to go now.

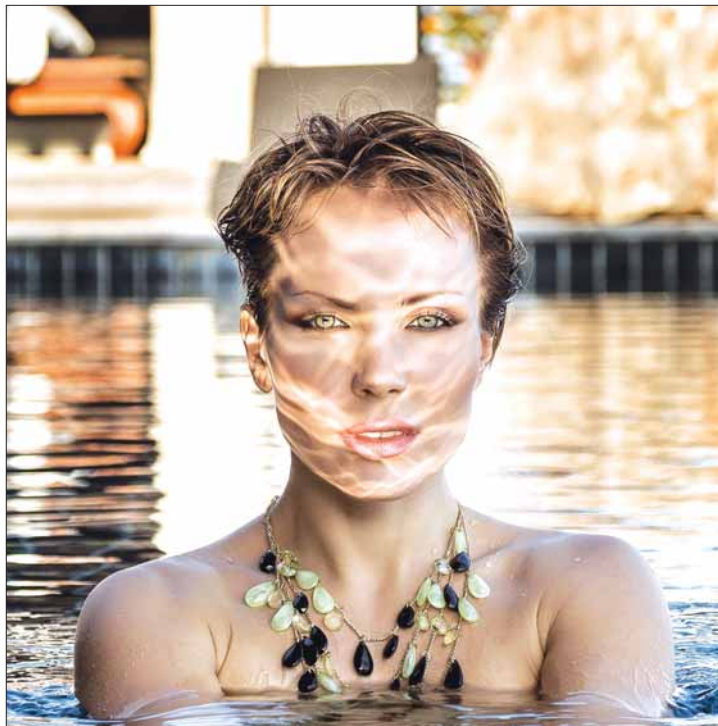
One clear positive sign for Phuket's luxury real estate is the amount of impressive new

product now coming into the marketplace. Just a few days ago I had the chance to visit one of the newest launches, Avadina Hills overlooking Layan Beach, and once you catch your breath, all of Bangtao Bay and beyond.

Size does matter in what has been a hand-crafted effort of 22 ultra estate villas. One feature that I personally love is the ample plot size with an average of two rai each. With configurations mainly of four bedrooms, built up areas range from 1,700-1,800 square meters and internal built up space over 709sqm.

Is the price tag, starting from 300 million baht, high? Certainly, but viewing the high level of quality, the artistic framework of architect Sakakura Associates and landscape planner James Hyatt, ultimately the price tag is attuned to the exclusivity, privacy and view overlooking of one of the island's most sensational vistas.

Writing this, I can almost hear the online boo-birds chirping about the demise of Phuket, being overrun by cheap travelers and with a declining trajectory. Yet looking at the



Luxury is the calling for Phuket property. Photo: Adriano Trapani

bare facts and quality of investment into the island's luxury property sector by well-heeled groups and affiliates like Kajima (Japan), Minor (Thailand), HPL (Singapore), and New World (Hong Kong), the reality seems to suggest that, despite a world gone mad, upscale property is

continuing to find a global marketplace in Phuket.

Over the next 12 to 18 months more than US\$500 million in new luxury estate villas will enter into the market including notable projects such as Rosewood, MontAzure and others, joining Avadina Hills,

Anantara Residences and Point Yamu by Como. One reality of the sector is that a fresh phase of demand will be induced by the world class product and will generate sales from both domestic and overseas buyers.

If you want a reality check about Phuket's leadership in real estate, take a drive on Kamala's Millionaire's Mile some time, or take a look at the superyachts that can't find space at the island's overfilled marinas.

There is little doubt that our island is transforming into an urbanized landscape and, yes, volume is inevitable in all things we do and see. Yet, putting perspective into the real estate sector, and viewing the positive investment sentiment, all indications are that we will continue to move ahead as we enter the next development cycle.

Luxury living is indeed finding more partners to sleep with, given some very spectacular new products that are gracing our shores.

*Bill Barnett is Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks, a Phuket-based hotel and property consulting firm.*



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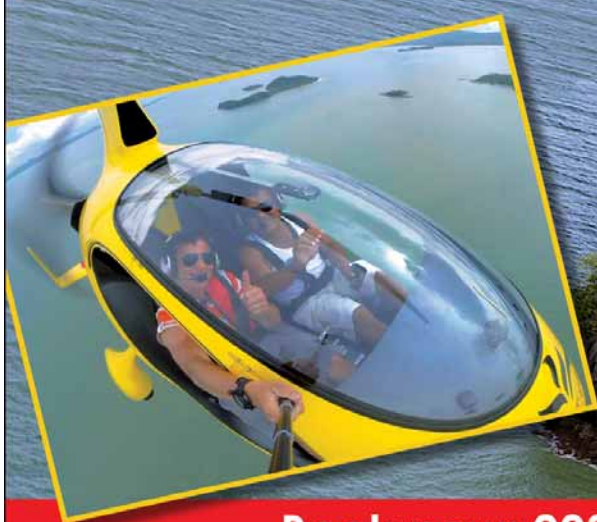
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# Seeing signs that real art still exists

Phuket is full of chalkboards that are home to more than just a menu – they are alive with art.

By Nattha Thepbamrung

DESPITE new technology and graphic design paving the way for creative printing reaching the masses, the art of hand-making signs is still alive and well.

Pete Child, 59, from Atherstone, England is a Phuket expat who has been keeping this art form going since 1975.

After moving to the island eight years ago with his sharp skills and handmade retro chalk designs, Mr Child is now bringing the art of sign writing back.

"I started as a sign writer when I was 19, before computer graphics came out. Hand painting required a five-year training program.

"It was difficult when computer graphics came out. For traditional sign writers, computer graphics took over our job because everybody could do it."

Though technology has become part of everyday life, people still long for the times of old, when art was created with passion.

"After graphic design had been out for awhile, a lot of people wanted to go back to authentic work; the original work, to keep the charm. People like to put character into their signs and I like using chalk because it gives it unique character.

"In my hometown of Atherstone, England, sign writing is very popular, even now. Folks like to put character in their artwork, so the style from decades ago has still not changed and is not considered outdated because they are each very much an individual style."

He knew that moving to Phuket would initially yield little to no work opportunities, but after pushing to make his work recognized, it became

more popular.

"I come from a small village in England where everybody knows each other, and Phuket has a similar atmosphere.

"As it is a small island, it's quite difficult to get a job here in this business. Over the past two years, I have been trying to encourage people to recognize my work and it is getting more popular in Phuket, as well as in Bangkok, especially among the hotel and bar industry.

"So far, I have had many customers such as Iniala, Angsana Laguna Phuket, DoubleTree Resort, DusitD2 Phuket, FourPoints Bangkok, Bampot Kitchen&Bar, Poppers Sports Bar, and so on."

When asked which piece of art was his best, Mr Child couldn't choose.

"Every piece of work is my favorite, as I treat all customers the same."

However, there is one memorable moment he will never forget.

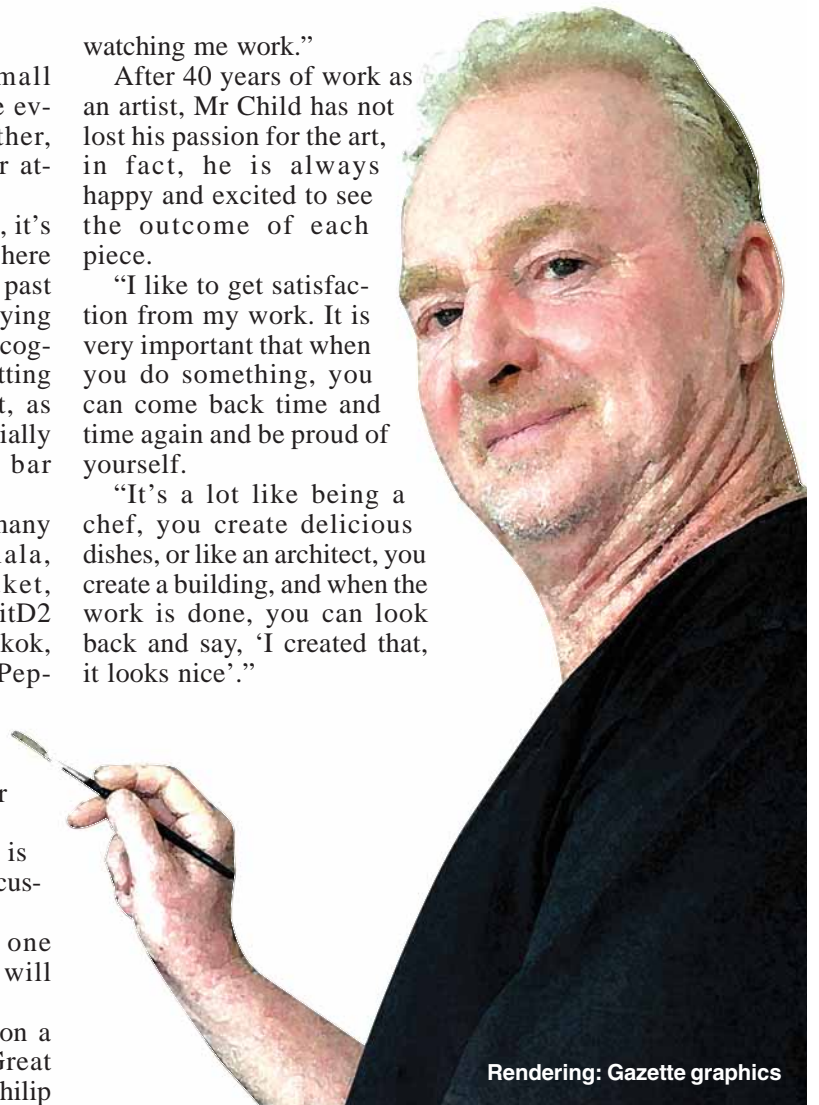
"I was writing a sign on a horse box at Windsor Great Park in 1995 with Prince Philip

watching me work."

After 40 years of work as an artist, Mr Child has not lost his passion for the art, in fact, he is always happy and excited to see the outcome of each piece.

"I like to get satisfaction from my work. It is very important that when you do something, you can come back time and time again and be proud of yourself.

"It's a lot like being a chef, you create delicious dishes, or like an architect, you create a building, and when the work is done, you can look back and say, 'I created that, it looks nice'."



Rendering: Gazette graphics



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