

Phuket Gazette

September 19 - 25, 2015

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56 Pages / 20 Baht

'TEENS ARE BUYING GUNS VIA FACEBOOK' Like & Load



Well-machined, homemade guns are being bought online through social media networks and delivered to the island by post. Photo: The Nation

■ Number of firearms seized per month has doubled, says Phuket City Police Chief

By Kongleaphy Keam

CLOSED groups on social media platforms are facilitating a boom in illegal factory-built and homemade firearms, confirmed the head of the Phuket City Police.

"A decade ago, people would need the know-how or a special connection to get their hands on a firearm. But now, with Google and YouTube, as well as social media, such as Facebook, almost anyone can obtain a gun," Superintendent Kraithong Chanthongbai told the *Gazette*.

"We are seizing twice as many guns a month, than we did previously. Last year, we confiscated three guns a month on average. This year, it's six."

The figures presented by Col Kraithong are only for the area under his jurisdiction. Provincial Police Commander

Patchara Boonyasit was unable to supply complete figures for the entire island.

"Though there are no significant gun manufacturers or professional builders operating in Phuket, these firearms are being purchased online through closed groups on Facebook and other social media platforms, and then sent via post to the island," Col Kraithong said.

"We sometimes seize firearms when we arrest drug dealers operating on Phuket – there is without a doubt..."

Continued on Pages 4-5

Two seriously injured as resort's boat catches fire

FIVE men were injured, two seriously, when a resort's transfer boat burst into flames while refueling at the Royal Phuket Marina (RPM) on September 13.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



Local tour bus association mooted by MOTS Phuket director.

PROPERTY



Supply overload shakes budget condo sector, says MD of Knight Frank.

LIFE&STYLE



Discover why multihull boats have gained so much momentum in Phuket.

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Kiwis arrested for 2-year-old, unpaid F&B tab

POLICE scooped up a New Zealander and his son upon arrival at Phuket International Airport on September 14 for a 2-year-old unpaid restaurant bill from the Blue Marine Resort and Spa in Patong.

The Phuket Provincial Court issued an arrest warrant for Brian Russell Finn, 54, and his son Luke Russell Finn, 24, for allegedly 'dining and dashing' on a 15,000 baht food and beverage bill in 2013, explained case officer Capt Yingyong Chuoykij of the Patong police.

"Both sides have made it clear that they would rather negotiate than go to court. So a representative from the resort will come to the police station soon, as we only have the right to keep the suspects in custody for 48 hours," Capt Yingyong said on September 15.

— *Kongleaphy Keam*

Civil defense volunteer pistol whips tourist

POLICE arrested a Kathu district civil defence volunteer for breaking a Kuwaiti tourist's nose in a fight in Patong early on September 9.

Officers quickly broke up the fight between Fahad Al Mutariy, 57, and 38-year-old civil defence volunteer Amnart Chudet.

Mr Amnart was in posses-

Private sector may join Phuket light rail project



Adjustments made to the light rail project during a recent visit by a Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP) team is expected to see the previously estimated 23-billion-baht budget increase. However, once the final budget is proposed, some of it could possibly be offered to private investors. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net

sion of a loaded .38 handgun.

"Mr Mutariy said that he was walking down the road when Mr Amnart came out of nowhere and started to attack him," said Lt Sarawut Putthapornapiban of the Patong police.

"He also claimed that Mr Amnart hit him in the face with the firearm."

Mr Amnart was charged with assault and carrying an unlicensed firearm in public.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Fishing vessel sinks, all crew safely rescued

ALL four fishermen who abandoned their sinking ship on September 15 were rescued safe and sound.

"I didn't think we would make it. I am thankful that we are so lucky to still be alive and thankful to everyone who helped us," said the 39-year-old captain of *Jor Tuemsup*, Nantaporn Boonsit.

The team was out trying to recover lost fishing gear near Koh Mai Thon when heavy seas battered their boat and it began to take on water.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Police unravel prison-based drug network

KRABI police arrested four men last night who are part of

a criminal network allegedly headed by an inmate in Bang Kwang Prison in Nonthaburi, just outside of Bangkok. The four were holding more than 28 million baht's worth of *ya ba* pills (methamphetamine).

All four men were charged with possession of a category 1 drug with intent to sell.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Officials level forest of illegal rubber, oil palm

CHAINSAWS were roaring in Phuket as the Royal Thai Navy led a 300-strong task force in removing illegal rubber and oil palm trees from more than 82 rai of public land on September 9.

Officers filed a complaint about the illegal plantations in Suan Pa Bang Kanun in March. However, no owner has stepped forward to account for the trees that are within a forest reserve, said Capt Boworn Promkeawngam of the Royal Thai Navy's Phuket-based Third Area Internal Security Operations Command.

Once the trees were cut down, a chemical was sprayed on them to prevent them from growing back, Capt Boworn confirmed.

The next step is for the Royal Forest Department to begin a forest restoration project.

— *Chutharat Plerin*

Monks catch temple raider

MONKS prevented a thief, who had previously broken into Srisoonthorn Temple, from escaping when the man returned to the scene of the crime last night to commit another theft.

The police seized a batch of mixed currency comprising dollars, yuan and baht, as well as the motorbike Mr Thawatchai had arrived on.

"This was his third time robbing the temple – and it was his last," said Lt Col Kritsana Jannit of the Thalang Police.

Mr Thawatchai was charged with theft.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Road-raging drivers arrested

TWO road-raging truck drivers were in an intentional crash on Thepkasattri Road, the north-south artery of the island, causing long tailbacks for about an hour on September 12.

Suriya Kuivoksui, a 35-year-old driver of an 18-wheeled-truck, flung open his door to ensure a minor crash with the driver of a six-wheeled crane truck. The men then exited their vehicles and began arguing.

The trucks remained in the middle of the road blocking traffic as Mr Suriya and Wisut Sutcharittham, 32, argued.

Both men were charged for having a violent argument in public and obstructing traffic, police confirmed.

— *Winai Sarot*

Region 8 HQ brings in rescue helicopter

A ROYAL Thai Police rescue helicopter will be stationed on Phuket to help boost tourists' confidence in their safety while visiting Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi, it was announced at the grand opening of the Region 8 Headquarters on September 11.

The helicopter and its crew have yet to be dispatched to the island, as they are still undergoing training.

Hundreds of people joined the opening ceremony at the headquarters, which is based near the Tah Chat Chai Checkpoint.

— *Chutharat Plerin*

Department of Disease Control issues Enterovirus 71 alert

PHUKET is one of several provinces on alert for Enterovirus 71, which has killed three children in Thailand so far this year, confirmed the Department of Disease Control (DDC).

Enterovirus 71 can cause outbreaks of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) in children. Additionally, it has the potential to cause severe neurological diseases.

"HFMD can be caused by many types of viruses. However, Enterovirus 71 has the severest complications," said Phuket Provincial Health Office Deputy Chief Krit Sakulpat.

"The situation is nothing to be overly concerned about in Phuket, at least for the moment. None of the cases of HFMD on the island have been caused by Enterovirus

71, so the children have quickly recovered."

HFMD usually causes rashes on the palms of a person's hands and soles of their feet, as well as blister-like sores in the mouth (herpangina). However, if HFMD is caused by Enterovirus 71, the rashes can be found in many other areas on the body, such as the cheeks, tongue, gums, knees or ankles.

— *Nattha Thepbamrung*

Civil defence volunteer pistol whips tourist



Mr Mutariy. Photo: Patong Police

POLICE arrested a Kathu district civil defence volunteer for breaking a Kuwaiti tourist's nose in a fight in Patong early on September 9.

"Our officers were on a routine patrol when they saw two men fighting in front of the Royal Palm Beach Front Resort on Thaweewong Road," said Lt Sarawut Putthapornapiban of the Patong Police.

Officers quickly broke up the fight between Fahad Al Mutariy, 57, and 38-year-old civil defence volunteer Amnart Chudet.

Mr Amnart was in possession of a loaded .38 handgun and was charged with assault and carrying an unlicensed firearm in public.

Kathu District Chief Sayan Chanachaiwong told the *Gazette* that he was not aware of the incident. However, he said that he would contact the Patong Police in order to revoke Mr Amnart's civil defence volunteer card, if he is convicted.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Two recovering after boat blaze

FIVE men were injured when a resort's transfer boat burst into flames while refueling at the Royal Phuket Marina (RPM) on September 13.

"Two of the victims were seriously burned, with one having burns to more than 50 per cent of his body and the other with burns to about 40-50 per cent of his body. The other three received only minor burns," said Sub Lt Chatree Vetrangsi of the Phuket City Police.

Only two of the men injured on the boat were employees of The Village Coconut Island Beach Resort, confirmed the resort's director of sales and marketing, Tom Gordon. It remains unclear why the other three men injured in the incident were in the vicinity of the boat when it caught fire.

"There were no guests injured in the incident, as our policy is to never have customers on board when we are fueling. However, our thoughts and wishes go out to the one mem-



The transfer boat had just finished taking on fuel when it caught on fire. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

ber of staff who is making a speedy recovery in hospital," Mr Gordon told the *Gazette*.

"We believe something must have happened at the fueling station that caused the fire. Given what happened, we followed protocol to prevent any further damage or harm."

RPM issued a statement wishing a speedy recovery to the two men.

"Royal Phuket Marina staff acted quickly and professionally," the statement said, noting that safety precautions were followed.

"[RPM staff used] on-site fire safety equipment, doused the blaze, assisted the speedboat staff off the boat and moved the burning boat away from the fuel dock, causing no further damage."

The Village's speedboat, *H2O*, had just taken on fuel when it burst into flames, 29-year-old RPM employee Preecha Samapong, who had just filled the boat, told police.

The boat was moved about 300 meters away from the marina, where strong winds continued to fan the fire until the boat sank.

— *Winai Sarot*



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Nightlife venue operators push for 4am closing time

PATONG nightlife operators will send a letter to the Ministry of Interior asking for opening times in the party town to be extended to 4am, revealed Weerawit Kurasombat, head of the Patong Entertainment Business Association.

The announcement comes after a meeting on September 11 that reiterated the rules and regulations of the current 'nightlife zone management plan' for Patong.

"We talked to operators and owners about opening times, closing times, zoning laws and a number of other issues to ensure that all of them clearly understand what they can and cannot do," said Kathu District Chief Pattanapong Nueklorn.

During the meeting, the majority of business operators pushed for changes to be made to the closing times of nightlife



Venues want tourists to be able to party later into the night.

venues.

"Tourists want to party very late into the night. Some aren't even going out until after midnight. If we close at 2am, they will feel unsatisfied with their experience in Phuket," said Mr Weerawit. "Additionally, business owners will see their revenue take a hit. We think 4am is the best time for these businesses to close. It's neither

too late nor too early."

Mr Weerawit told those at the meeting that he would prepare a petition for all business owners to sign before it is submitted to the Ministry of Interior.

"Whether or not the Ministry will accept our suggestion, I don't know. However, we have to ask," Mr Weerawit said.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

Facebook

From Page 1

...an intimate connection between the drug world and violent crimes where guns are used."

A police raid on a house in Si Suchat Grand View 5 in Rassada last month uncovered a cache of drugs worth about 5 million baht, four handguns, one silencer and 400 rounds of ammunition. The suspect managed to slip out of the house moments before police arrived.

Firearms are regularly being confiscated during such drug raids and arrests in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi.

One 19-year-old, who was willing to talk to the *Gazette*, but declined to be named, explained that he was arrested for carrying an illegal firearm. However, he denied that he had purchased it with the intent of using it to commit a crime. He said it was for self-protection.

"I felt cooler and safer when I had a gun with me. I knew if we had a problem with someone or bumped into our rivals they wouldn't dare mess around with us," the teen said.

The 19-year-old confirmed that he had purchased a zip gun or 'Chab Pong' after a friend had invited him to join a closed Facebook group used to buy and sell firearms. Zip guns are generally defined as crude homemade guns. Those on Phuket are usually single round weapons designed to take shotgun shells as ammunition.

"Most of the gun-makers are based in Bangkok. It was easy to buy. We simply placed an order through the group, paid and then the gun was delivered by post.

"Depending on the type of gun you buy it could cost as little as 2,000 baht."

Many of these gun-makers are in the pre-order business, explained Krabi Provincial Police Commander Nunthadej

Yoinual. The weapon-smiths are not necessarily putting products out on Facebook groups or in the market in general prior to an order – most products are custom made.

Although the teen who was willing to speak to the *Gazette* said he had never attempted to make a firearm himself, he did say it was an easy process given the resources available through the internet and general access to metal working and machining tools in Phuket.

In agreement is Anuphong Phuangjan, an 18-year-old from

northeastern Thailand who was arrested after shooting himself in the leg with a homemade gun in April. He confirmed that Thai-language resources were readily available when he decided to make his weapon.

"It was very easy to learn how to make a gun. You just Google it, and everything you need is there," Mr Anuphong said.

"At the time, I learned from a do-it-yourself gun construction website that was in Thai. However, the page has been deleted.

"The equipment is also easy to find. The barrel of the gun is just a piece of the right kind of metal tubing, while the rest is easy to find too."

Mr Anuphong explained that he had grown up in a rural area, where he was exposed to guns as a child for hunting and protection from animals. After moving to Phuket with his mother, he felt a responsibility to protect her and his girlfriend.

Obtaining ammunition was the real issue though.

"Eventually, I was able to buy ammunition from a Burmese man who sold me ten for 200 baht," Mr Anuphong said.

Col Kraithong's real concern has less to do with individuals attempting to make homemade guns than that illegal construction is becoming a serious business in Thailand.

The most common firearms



! A decade ago, people would need the know-how or a special connection to get their hands on a firearm. But now, with social media almost anyone can obtain a gun. /

— **Phuket City Police Superintendent Kraithong Chanthongbai**

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used for illegal gun sales

reported being seized in Phuket are handguns, including those that are homemade. However, a number of firearms classified as 'weapons of war' have been seized on Phuket this year, including M3 submachine guns and a M16 assault rifle.

Being caught with a weapon of war is the most serious weapon possession crime in Thailand, explained Lt Thanom Thongpan of the Tah Chat Chai Police. It carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment with the minimum jail term being two years.

Though weapons of war are not found very often on Phuket, there are several other firearm possession crimes that are more regularly dealt with by police.

"There is the possession of an unlicensed firearm, which carries a maximum penalty of a 20,000-baht fine and 10-year prison term. Most often, the suspects are given a 10,000-baht fine and are forced to serve about nine months in prison," Lt Thanom said.

"Lighter charges are carrying a licensed gun in public without permission when the



The quality of the homemade guns seized varies dramatically. Photo: Phuket City Police

weapon isn't registered in your name. This usually comes with a fine of about 8,000 baht. Those found carrying their own licensed firearm in public without permission are usually fined about 3,500 baht."

Additional factors, such as the criminal's age are also added to the equation when the case is reviewed by the court, with minors being processed through juvenile court.

Lt Col Somkid Boonrat, chief of the investigation department of the Phuket Provincial Police, expressed concern about teenage gun vio-

lence on the island.

"Some of these teens are part of real 'at-risk' groups, who are doing anything to be accepted by their friends and feel cool," Lt Col Somkid said.

"These kids want to show their friends and the world that they are the best and that they are powerful, and they think having a gun will do that."

To crackdown on 'at-risk' groups, police raid areas most likely to be housing illegal firearms, Gen Patchara said.

"The problem isn't just gun-makers; the problem is gun buyers. If there was not a mar-

ket for these weapons, then we wouldn't have this problem," Gen Patchara said.

However, for Col Kraithong the issue is that the penalties currently handed down are not strong enough to dissuade people from violating the law.

"The issue is criminals are not scared of being arrested and fined," Col Kraithong said.

Police continue to attempt to infiltrate closed Facebook groups where firearms are bought and sold. However, they are struggling.

"We have created fake accounts to try and access the

groups. If they would only accept us, then it would be easy to get to the heart of the matter," Col Kraithong said. "However, given that these guns are being made in other provinces and sent to Phuket, there really needs to be a national effort to put an end to this."

Several officers who spoke to the *Gazette* pointed out that education and the social fabric that keeps families and society as a whole functioning are the most important factors for putting the brakes on gun violence on the island.

"It really is the responsibility of families and educational institutions to help children develop a strong moral code that will help prevent them from getting involved with guns," said Gen Patchara.

Phuket Technical College Director Adisak Chutchavate agreed.

"If students were well-educated from the beginning, then a greater percentage of them would go on to be valuable members of the community," Mr Adisak said. "We are doing our best here to do that."



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FROM THE STREETS OF PATTAYA

By Duncan Stearn

Legal casino could bring social disaster

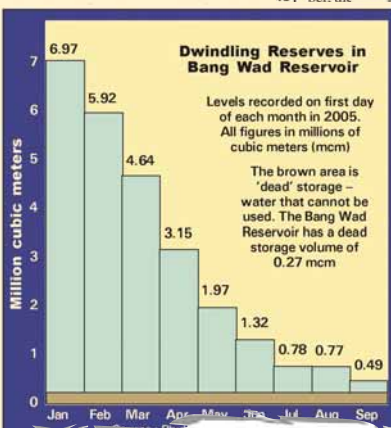
Rise in spirits tax begins to hit shop shelves

Don't

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

PHI PHI ISLANDS: Phankam Kitithorakul, the Chairman of the Ao Nang Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor), which is responsible for the Phi Phi Islands, has called for greater government support, saying the islands are being overlooked.

K. Phankam said that eight months after the tsunami the central government had still to help boost tourism to the islands. "It seems that everyone has forgotten Phi Phi; they are focusing only on Koh Samui and Phuket."



The Phuket Gazette

Volume 12 Issue 38 News Desk - Tel: 076-236555 September 17 - 23, 2005 Daily news at www.phuketgazette.net 20 Baht

The Gazette is published in association with

The Nation

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Wildflowers grow where there should be water in the Bang Wad Reservoir. Unless there is heavy rain soon, and plenty of it, even the puddle in the middle will disappear.

Reservoir down to last few drops

By Ananya Anongnat & Alasdair

KATHU: Phuket's second largest reservoir, the Bang Wad, is falling - 1 of year in years. With shortage of water, the Phuket Airport there is end of the line.



Singers sought after tourist 'rape'

Bangkok resurrects casino plan

BANGKOK (The Nation): The government has revived its plan to build casinos to Thailand to boost the sagging economy amid increased competition from rival Asian destinations.

Phuket Fantasea back in action

Phuket Air cuts routes after crash

Phuket Air cuts routes after crash

Mortgages for foreigners must be the top of a slippery slope

WATER woes - how many times has the Gazette used that headline in the last ten years? Well, it soaked through page one again as Phuket's sole public reservoir in 2005 was 'down to [its] last few drops'.

Not too long ago, when those of us currently on the island were knee deep in flood waters, we found out that the Royal Rainmaking Project was called upon to help seed clouds and bring some much needed water down to the island in 2005. However, they had very little effect.

In turn, one clever man began looking into import-

ing camels, which led to an entire street of camel dealers somewhere in Patong - somehow, only their toes remain.

As if personal hydration hiccups on the horizon weren't enough to sink islanders' spirits, the effects of a hike in hard alcohol taxes was starting to be reflected on store shelves.

The increase, which ostensibly had a twofold goal of cutting down on alcohol consumption and boosting government revenue, applied to all distilled alcohol.

If the measure did in fact cut alcohol consumption in Phuket, it is hard to imagine what a tangled, deadly mess of drunk drivers we'd find

The gift of hindsight

ourselves in now, ten years later.

Though the Gazette no longer reports every drunk driving fatality on the island, as it once seemed to, the problem itself remains grave.

Those who have not yet been jaded by numerous failures to rein in drunk driving on Phuket can at least hope that the 39 Lion alcoholmeter SD-400 breathalyzers donated last month will help officers

get some drunk drivers off the road.

And speaking of inescapable booze conundrums, Phi Phi - the hedonistic party island of the Andaman - cried out 'Don't forget us' as the Ao Nang Local Administration Organization (OrBorTor) pleaded for more government help for tsunami relief.

Phankam Kitithorakul, chairman of the Ao Nang OrBorTor, attempted to dispel the idea that Phi Phi had yet to recover from the tsunami, while in the same breath conceding that the cabinet had already taken much-needed steps to help rebuild local infrastructure: electricity, fresh

water and footpaths.

Unfortunately, the development, foot traffic and apparent lack of interest in preserving the stunning national marine park has taken a serious toll on the island, with speedboats regularly anchoring in fragile coral reefs.

If investigators do indeed prove that millions of baht over the last three years has been skimmed off the top of national park fees, we can only hope that Phi Phi officials - not the beautiful archipelago itself - are forced to pay the price.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

DNA from Koh Tao murder not a match, expert tells court

DNA found on the weapon allegedly used to kill two Britons on Koh Tao last year did not match those of the defendants currently on trial, a forensics expert testified in court this morning.

Pornthip Rojanasunand, head of the Ministry of Justice's forensics institute, told the Samui Provincial Court that the DNA found on the garden hoe used against Hannah Witheridge, 23, and David Miller, 24, did not match those of the two Myanmar defendants accused of the murder.

Ms Pornthip said that the DNA belonged to two other men, but did not provide any further identification.

Police had said the DNA evidence found on the hoe by its own forensics team was from the defendants, but the trial judge allowed a defense request for a second opinion from Ms Pornthip.

Mystery beast rips rectums to eat entrails

LOCALS in the Chonburi area on the hunt for a mysterious creature that has been killing pigs and robbing them of their entrails, reported Sanook.com.

Several pigs have been found dead, each one day before a Buddhist day, fully intact with just a wound to their rectum where the entrails had been pulled out.

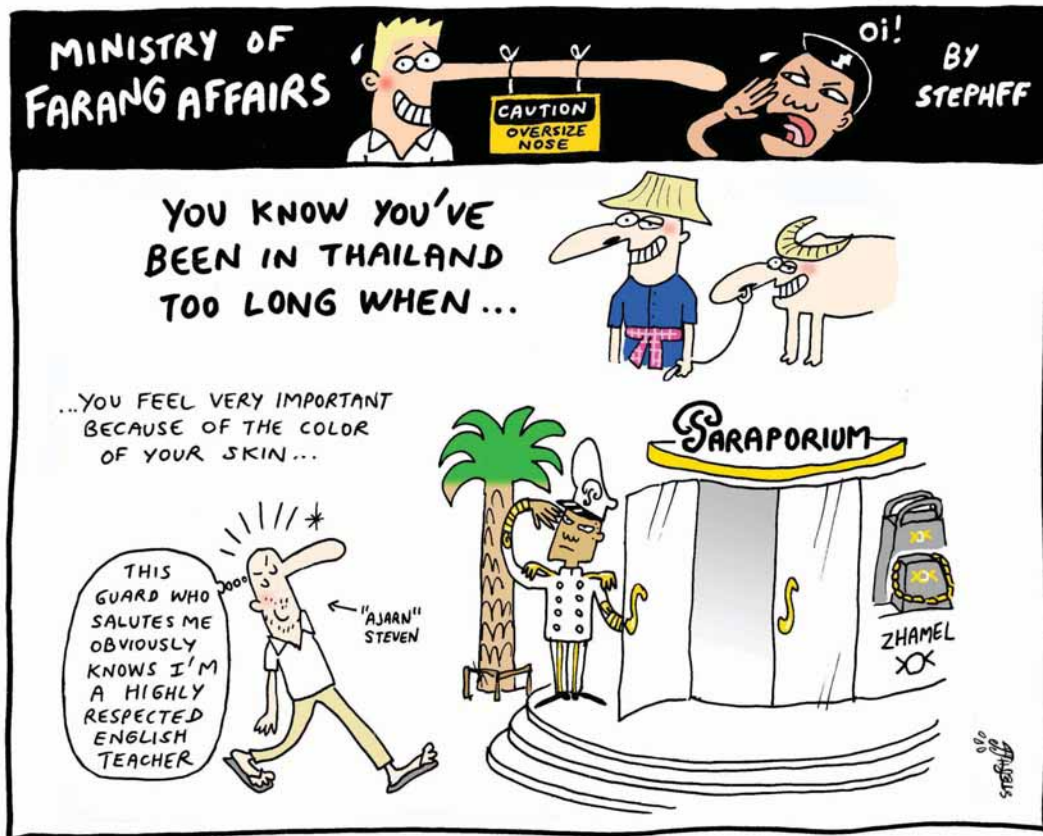
Locals believe that it is the works of a small, one-foot long, creature with short ears that is grayish-green in color.

The pigs belong to Phra Wichai Wichayo of Mai Koo Morn temple.

Prawit Pramon, one of the locals, wondered why it always happened one day before a Buddhist Day.

"If it was an animal, there should be signs of struggle between the pig and the animal, but there were no signs of fighting at all," Prawit told Sanook.com

Locals have been on high alert, searching for the animal. However, they have yet to find any trace of the culprit.



Bangkok bomb plotter hiding in Turkey

POLICE will seek cooperation from their Turkish counterparts over reports that the alleged mastermind, who fled to Bangladesh a day before the bomb blast in Bangkok on August 17, is now in hiding in Turkey.

Police spokesman Lt Gen Prawut Thavornsiri said intelligence reports indicated that Abu Dastar Abdulrahman, or 'Izan', a Chinese national, had covered up his escape route by changing his itinerary to Istanbul.

Stolen B10mn diamond inside suspect's gut

TWO Chinese nationals accused of stealing a 10-million baht diamond from a jewellery fair were taken to Nonthaburi Provincial Court by police on September 12.

Afterwards, police took the two suspects – Hae Ying, 34, and Jiang Xulian, 39 – to Police General Hospital in Bangkok, so doctors could locate the gemstone, which Jiang is thought to have swallowed.

An X-ray of her stomach showed a diamond-shaped object in her intestines. Ms Jiang was being kept under strict surveillance at the hospital.

Police provided her with food and drink to prevent her health being harmed while waiting for the diamond to emerge.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Thai women warned about foreign men

THE Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) on September 14 warned Thai women who have foreign boyfriends or husbands to beware of being tricked or forced into drug trafficking.

Between 2012 and 2014, the agency learned that 190 Thai women had been arrested overseas for smuggling narcotics, said ONCB Deputy Chief Withawan Sunthornkhajit.

Countries with the most Thai women in prison are Brazil, with 35; Japan, 30; Malaysia, 16; and Cambodia, 13; with most cases related to methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin.

Silk cocoon vests able to 'catch bullets'

A KHON Kaen University researcher and a weaver from the northeast have successfully developed what has been labelled the world's first silk-cocoon bulletproof vest.

The men behind the innovation are Orapin Thongnonggoy, president of Phu Viang Silk Handicraft Centre's community enterprise, and KCU chemical

engineering lecturer, Panomkorn Khoahong.

A two-year study that helped create the vest found its fibres could 'catch' bullets or reduce their speed – from .22 calibre weapons to an M16 – without the bullets passing into the body.

Death sentence upheld for child rapist, killer

THE Appeals Court on September 14 upheld the lower court's death sentence for child killer Wanchai Saengkhaio.

Wanchai, 23, raped and murdered a 13-year-old girl on an overnight train bound for Bangkok on July 5 last year. He was employed on the train at the time.

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Warning shots

THE wide-scale presence of homemade guns is nothing new in Phuket, but the increased ease with which potential buyers can source firearms should be a source of great concern for law enforcement agencies – as well as society at large.

The revelation that these gun purchases are now often conducted through social media platforms, such as closed Facebook groups, should come as little surprise. The news follows reports that social media apps, together with the Thai government postal service, were already being widely used by drug dealers as the most cost-efficient and reliable method to get their illicit contraband to buyers.

Like many countries, Thailand has developed a gun culture that purportedly has its roots in hunting and the perceived need for self-protection, especially in rural areas where the presence of any official law enforcement has been historically minimal.

But like most countries across the globe, Thailand is becoming increasingly urbanized. In almost no other province in the Kingdom is this trend more apparent than right here in Phuket, with its growing population and all the social and environmental problems that inevitably come with it.

We concede that firearms can be a very effective form of personal protection under the right circumstances – such as when used by professionally trained soldiers during war.

Given our increasing urbanization and lack of serious, external military threats, Thailand should be trying to follow in the steps of the many European nations that have successfully managed to largely rid their societies of firearms.

Unfortunately, this Land of Smiles now seems to have drifted into something more akin to the inexplicable gun culture that prevails in the United States, where hardly a week goes by without reports of some needless shooting tragedy.

Most of these have little or nothing to do with personal protection, and are more often linked with depression, paranoia, anxiety and other forms of mental illness.

As Thailand's only island province, Phuket has some natural advantages when it comes to keeping the island free of firearms and other contraband. Now that the Police Region 8 Headquarters is fully functional, we hope that the commander there will realize this potential at his doorstep and replace the permanently saluting police mannequin at the checkpoint with real officers and police dogs to conduct random inspections of vehicles coming onto the island.



Making decisions to be a tourist destination

My suggestion has always been that Phuket needs to decide if it's a large, real tourist destination or not.

If not, then don't provide tourists with what they want. The past year demonstrates the results – tourism will plummet.

If Phuket wants to have a thriving tourist industry, they must provide what tourists want – a safe environment, shops, food, drink, chairs and umbrellas on the beach.

Which is it, Phuket?

*Bigfoot
Gazette forum*

Letters to the Editor

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

*defence volunteer pistol whips
tourist, September 10*

And the governor wonders why the tourists from the west are not coming anymore.

Things like this, corruption, tuk tuk drivers, jet ski pirates, and the buses, coaches and trucks killing everyone on the roads with bad driving and badly maintained vehicles.

*Simon Lomas
Facebook*

See warning signs? What about lights?

Re: Gazette online, Phuket underpass construction site gobbles up taxi, September 7

'The driver ignored warning signs'. The area is pitch black at night with totally inadequate lighting to warn drivers of construction hazards.

A few weeks ago, I drove past a brand new BMW that was upside down and had driven into one of the open construction holes opposite Index Living Mall.

*Steven Bradley
Facebook*

Phuket Gazette

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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Volume 22 Issue 38

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Moderation of free online speech

Re: Gazette online, Island View: End of circus show, September 7

Mr Morison does appear to make a rod for his own back on occasion.

He is always quick to push the notion of free speech, but then 'moderates' the comments on his own blog when they do not suit his agenda.

A well deserved victory for Ms Chutima, but a Pyrrhic one for him.

Best he rest on his laurels for awhile instead of poking the nest again.

*Mister Ree
Gazette forum*

There's no wonder

Re: Gazette online, Civil

Bus accidents have been out of hand

Re: Gazette online, Local buses move to safeguard business, September 10

I hope it improves the safety of tourist buses and bus transportation in general.

Bus accidents have been way out of hand for quite a few years.

What's needed is: Real road-worthiness checks, not backhanders; Regular spot drug tests for drivers (1st time, 1 year suspension; 2nd time, life); Adherence to the Patong Hill curfew (100,000 baht company fine and 1 year suspension for the driver).

The companies will understand this language.

*skip
Gazette forum*

Mangroves holding back traffic relief

Re: Gazette online, Phuket light rail modifications announced, September 10

For crying out loud, get rid of those darn mangroves. They are nothing but a pain in the rear.

They have already halted the joining of Sakdidej Soi 7 with Rattanakosin 200 Pi Road, thus stopping the Phuket Town Southern Ring Road. So all traffic goes through the town causing ridiculous traffic jams all because of a few mangrove trees?

Where is the common sense?

*Chas
Gazette forum*

Helping Patong's growth

FIRST PERSON

FROM my point of view, Patong is growing very fast, both in terms of population and development. It's similar to Pattaya and other big tourist destination cities because so many investors come here for business.

Investors from different parts of the world have differing ideas that they bring from these other countries and adapt to suit Patong. That is why we see a lot of businesses and a large variety of entertainment.

However, undertaking development here is a lot more difficult than other places. There are a lot of laws that do not mesh with the growth of Patong. Service and the volume of people are not flowing well.

A fast growing city like this should be more productive and indeed Patong's tourism business has expanded rapidly over the past two decades. The law cannot adapt fast enough to the constant growth of the city. It is a very old fashioned form of authoritarianism, controlled by the central administration in Bangkok.

I would like to eventually see a special administration enforced with a connection between the central authorities in Bangkok and local officials.

Under the administration, if businesses were to register in Patong, tax money would stay in Patong as would taxes from alcohol and foods sales.

Can you imagine how much money we would make in a day? Millions of baht could be earned and we would still be



Preechavude 'Prab' Keesin, 39, a Patong native, is best known as the Managing Director of the Pisona Group. He attended Kasetsart University in Bangkok where he received a Bachelor's degree in Finance. He now holds a

PhD in public administration from Phuket Rajabhat University.

Here he talks about the changes needed for Patong to move forward and meet the demands of tourists from around the world.

able to pay some tax to the central government.

As Patong earns Thailand a lot of money, it is essential for local officials and the central government to strike a deal.

Additionally, there are other ways of improving Patong for businesses and tourists.

I often wonder how many officials are able to use a computer and the internet properly, or how many official websites are up to date so that we can read the latest news and laws. Also, how many police officers at the Patong police station can speak fluent English? I would like the posting of officers who are capable of working and benefiting Patong the most here.

Officers who work in Patong should get at least 50,000-baht per month salary, and these officers must pass standard courses and speak English well.

Therefore, officers should be able to pass a standard Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) because it

doesn't matter how fast Patong grows if this is not matched by our officers being able to speak English and meeting the island's demand.

We also have to make investors, business owners and tourists happy here. If they are extorted and put up too much capital, it is not good for anyone.

For example trading hours should be extended. How can businesses earn enough money to hire qualified staffers who speak English if they lose a lot of money because of short trading hours?

We should also spend money on power and waste management plants, good schools, training centers and public transportation, such as a sky train, so that we can compete with other countries.

I would just like to see the people who live and work in Patong, love Patong and unite in moving it forward. I want to see good people who constantly develop themselves live on the island.



Lard Yai Market is a lovely place for creative types. Photo: Gazette file

Market for creativity

HAVING moved to Phuket Old Town from Bangkok a couple of months ago, the huge difference between the great metropolis and this petite community is unavoidably on my mind.

Of all its charming features, particularly the Sino-Portuguese architecture, which harkens back to the island's long history, is the Lard Yai Sunday Walking Street market, which really delights me.

Certainly no visitor or resident could find fault with this colorful gathering.

Every Sunday evening from 4pm to 10pm, Thalang Road is closed off to traffic and people flock in to make this market a fun place to be.

Aside from the tasty food and drinks sold at reasonable prices, it is the artists, musicians and actors who make this once-a-week market special.

It's important to give these creative people a venue to display their talents and this is exactly what the walking street has done.

Likewise, it makes the people who stroll along the delightful market realize that there is another side to the money-mad world we live in and somethings are more meaningful than what money can buy, such as listening to a good musician strum his guitar and

Island View

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

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

sing old numbers from the 1970s for token donations, or watching an artist draw a really good portrait of a schoolboy for just 200 baht.

The walking street also brings the community together and creates a sense of oneness, which is what will help the Old Town maintain its very special characteristics going forward, as they could stand up together and oppose any drastic changes that could undermine its appeal.

Up in the north of the country, Chiang Mai also has a Sunday walking street in the center of the old walled city area and there too musicians, puppeteers and dancers perform after dark.

When I was young and living with my parents in Bangkok's Chinatown, the whole community eagerly awaited the annual four-day temple fair where we all would have a lot of fun for a small amount of money right on our doorstep.

Now living in Phuket's Old Town, this merriment is for us to enjoy every Sunday.

Words from the Wise

"I'm sick of following my dreams. I'm just going to ask them where they're going and hook up with them later."

— Mitch Hedberg

"Miracles happen everyday. Change your perception of what a miracle is and you'll see them all around you."

— Jon Bon Jovi

Issues & Answers

Where can I find a coin counting machine on Phuket?

I HAVE been living in Phuket for years. I have a lot of Thai coins but am too lazy to count them. I was wondering if there are any coin counting machines in Phuket or even Thailand? Will they charge me something if I go get my coins counted and changed to bank notes? I used to go to a bank, and saw them counting by hand.

Mr Ruengnam Usornwirot of the Bank of Thailand replies:

Thank you for your question. Yes, there are coin counting machines in Thailand, but they belong to the Treasury Department.

In banking business, we do not have coin counting machines. If you have coins, you can just go to any nearby bank and they will count them by hand for you. However, if your coins total over 2,000 baht, they will charge you for the service. The amount and fee varies from bank to bank.

Mr Warapong Rungkrajang of the Department of Treasury replies:

Yes, we have coin counting machines. You can bring your coins to us to exchange for bank notes for free. However, the problem is we do not have an office in Phuket. You would have to go to the Department of Treasury's local office in Songkhla or Surat Thani provinces for this service.

Japan safe haven for UOB funds



Property prices are expected to rise in Japan.

UOB Asset Management (Thailand) will launch a real estate investment trust and a property-focused equity fund this month, specifically to cash in on the expected rise in property prices in Japan.

"Japan's economy is recovering continuously, where the labor market has improved thanks to Abenomics. Domestic consumption is expected to continue to recover," said Siripun Sutharoj, senior director UOBAM's investment division.

Quantitative-easing measures are expected to stay for some time, as Japan's inflation is still below the government's target of 2 per cent.

Natcha Suntornarawong, executive director of UOBAM's business development senior division, noted that real estate prices in Japan were relatively low now compared with those in other developed countries. The prices in Singapore, in particular, are four times higher than Japan's.

"The current Japanese government has successfully implemented its fiscal and monetary stimulus policies," Ms Natcha said.

— *The Nation*

The Forum: Continuing education

Finance

By David Mayes

I HAVE always been a big fan of education. It was instilled into me by my father from the time I was young and saw all of my friends leaving education early for the allure of a quick paycheck.

Obviously, the short-sightedness of that only becomes apparent in hindsight, but I don't think it is ever too late to continue your education.

I also think you only ever really become 'old' when you stop learning, so I try to read as many books and attend as many seminars as I can. This past weekend I participated in the Landmark Forum and I highly recommend everyone to attend this.

It is hard to explain exactly what the Forum is without actually going through the three days yourself. What it promises is a whole new world of possibilities and the ability to make a quantum breakthrough in any of the most important areas of your life.

These can be financial or business related, but also in terms of relationships with our families and society, our own health, or basically any area in which we feel there's room for improvement.

The course promises the possibility of a complete transformation and it did not disappoint.

While the course allows each participant to focus on any area of their life where they would like to make a breakthrough, one area in which many do is financial.

The Forum was first recommended to me by a childhood friend with whom I had done some pretty extensive and



Landmark Forums are not just limited to those searching for better financial results. Photo: Nazareth College

rough travelling around the US. As someone who had dropped out of high school in ninth grade, not many would have placed him on their 'most likely to succeed' lists.

However, he now earns about a half a million dollars a year running his own business. He not only credits Landmark education as essential to his business success, but also to his happy marriage and relationship with his children.

He is just one of many who have gone on to accomplish amazing things after attending the Forum. I briefly mentioned it to one of my retired clients who had been very successful as a venture capitalist, and sure enough he had done the forum as well.

It is an essential piece of the education process for the side business I do with my wife, and I think it is not limited to people searching for better financial results.

If you would like to have new possibilities for your relationships with friends and loved ones, a life free of fear and the kind of life you have always dreamed of, then Landmark Forum is a must.

Of all the education I have done in my life the Forum probably represents the best value.

You can learn more about the Forum by visiting www.landmarkworldwide.co.th/. The Forum is conducted in English with Thai translation, so anybody can attend even

here in Thailand.

I earn no commission of any form by mentioning this, by the way, but hopefully you will make the world a better place once you realize that you are capable of achieving anything you decide to create. Hurry up because the course is popular and usually fills up at least a month or two in advance.

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.

Beating inheritance tax easy, says expert

THE inheritance tax law will take effect on February 1 but wealthy families can keep taxmen away from their fortunes by setting up holding companies, a prominent lawyer said.

Under the law, the extra incremental of an inheritance worth over 100 million baht will be taxed at between 5-10 per cent.

The best way to keep taxmen away is to minimize the value of inheritance, said Chinapat Visuttipat, a partner of Siam City Law Offices, during a presentation to Kasikornbank clients last week.

"Assets should be transferred to a holding company, chiefly land plots," Mr Chinapat said, adding that this should be done as soon as possible, as the Treasury Department's new appraisal value would be effective next year.

The holding company can then pay out dividends to all beneficiaries, he said, and despite the transfer the owners enjoy full control of the assets through the ownership of preferred shares.

Of 100 shares, two preferred shares with 200 votes are more powerful than 98 shares owned

by their children with 98 votes, he said. Importantly, those receiving the preferred shares control the family business' reins.

"All the inherited can benefit from the family assets. Yet, this is not inheritance, but the pool of assets, which are not allocated to descendants. As the assets are not passed through, no tax will be levied," Mr Chinapat said.

A holding company is also a vehicle to ensure the sustainability of family businesses, he added.

— *The Nation*



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Phuket tour buses attempt to push out outsourced vehicles

By Nattha Thepbamrung

A MEMORANDUM of Understanding (MoU) between Chinese tour businesses and local bus companies is to be drafted in order to decrease the number of outsourced buses used on Phuket, confirmed Santi Pawai, the Phuket office director for the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

Local bus companies pushed for the MoU due to the alleged negative impact the outsourced buses have had on their businesses.

"The Chinese tour businesses previously used our buses," said Pornsri Piyachocksakul, a bus business owner. "The Andaman Tourism Association, which is representing the local bus group, is dealing with the Chinese tour businesses and local authorities to reach an agreement."

Mr Santi confirmed that several requirements have been put forth and need to be agreed upon before an MoU can be drafted.

"In my talks with the Chinese tour companies, three main demands have been put on the table in order for local tour bus groups to gain their business," said Mr Santi.



Mr Santi confirmed that several quality-control demands have been made by tour operators.

"One, the bus must be in good shape and well maintained; two, the driver must be trained, speak politely, have good manners, wear a uniform and pass a drug test; and three, the bus must have insurance to guarantee the passengers' safety."

While discussions are still under way, the Andaman Tourism Association is compiling a list of bus companies that would like to join the association.

"After bus companies have been enlisted in the association, it will be more convenient to

organize and improve the quality of service," Mr Santi said.

"Additionally, once bus companies have joined, all replacement buses, in the event that one breaks down, will be supplied by other companies in the association, so there will be no need for outsourcing."

ICT initiative may build 'smart' island

THE Information and Communication Technology Ministry (ICT) is eyeing Phuket and Chiang Mai as 'smart cities' that focus on tech start-ups as part of a move to turn Thailand into the digital hub of Asean.

ICT Minister Uttama Savanayana said that under the policy the ministry planned to roll out pilot projects to drive the country forward, with the 'smart city' plan as one of them.

Phuket and Chiang Mai could be piloted as smart cities because of their technology readiness, location, and cosmopolitan outlook, he said.

"Currently, there is a lack of direct governmental support in terms of direct investment and direct policies to support tech start-ups, but there are relevant supports such as the support scheme provided by the Soft-



ICT Minister Uttama Savanayana. Photo: The Nation

ware Industry Promotion Agency," he said.

"Smart cities" would be the fifth pilot project introduced over the next three months, Mr Uttama said.

"The ICT Ministry plans to steer the existing budget, especially the budget for the student tablet scheme, to be used for running the pilot projects," he said.

- The Nation



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

Don't forget the database

ALMOST every business these days has at least some form of website and social media presence.

What still amazes me though is how few are creating a database.

Companies are spending a collective fortune on social media and websites, but all this becomes an expensive branding exercise if you do not understand what you are doing.

The critical step that most businesses are missing is using that exposure to build their database. I am not just talking about getting 'likes' on Facebook, but actually collecting respondent's details as a client relationship-building management tool.

Once you have created your database you can then keep marketing to people you've attracted, and as long as you provide them with quality content, they will not leave.

Simon Wetherell is a Social Media Expert, Lawyer, 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. For more information go to <http://PhuketOnlineMarketing.com> or call him on 095 085 3355.

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Central Festival Phuket marks 11th anniversary

Central Festival Phuket celebrated its 11th anniversary on September 12 with a string of fun events, including a mini performance by popular Thai actor Porse Saran, a fashion show and the Central Phuket Ideal Awards 2015.



Seen at this special ceremony are (from L – R) Wirawath Piamwiwattikul and Pornthip Piamwiwattikul, president and managing director of Pornthip Phuket Company; Panat Pookpho, Central Phuket Store GM; Pacharawat Wasikarn, GM of Earth Media Company; Wirachai Pranveerapaiboon and Kanokpan Pranveerapaiboon, CEO and real estate managing director of The Attitude Club. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn



Panat Pookpho, Central Phuket Store GM (2nd from left) together with Thai actors Porse Saran (1st right) and Boom Piyaphun (1st left) welcome Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong (3rd from left) as chairman of the opening ceremony. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn



Seen at the panel discussion are (from L-R) Richard Marco, Amari Phuket's hotel manager; Dr Punlop Singhasene, Phuket vice governor; Anoma Wongyai, director of TAT Phuket Office; Dale Lawrence, president of SKAL Thailand; Grenville Fordham, from Image Asia Company; Nick Porter, Movenpick Hotel's GM; and Chris Thatcher, BCCT's vice chairman.

VIP Phuket toursim talk

A VIP dinner business panel discussion on 'Phuket's Tourism Future – Public and Private Sector Plans', organised by the British Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Netherlands, French and German chambers of commerce, took place at Amari Phuket's Rim Talay Restaurant recently.



Biking for Charity

A total of 30 cyclists from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand joined the Apex Club of Penang's 3rd Apex 850 endurance bicycle ride from Phuket to Penang for four days from August 27 to 30. The charity ride raised funds for the education of disadvantaged people in their respective countries.



Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana (middle) joins bikers at the starting point of the endurance bike ride at the Royal Phuket City Hotel.

ents in Paradise

PEMEX 2015

Phuket International Airport Emergency Plan Exercise 2015 (PEXEM 2015) was recently held to ensure the safety of the airport for passengers, entrepreneurs and employees in keeping with the International Civil Aviation Organization's policy.



Phuket Governor Nisit Jansomwong, the training exercise's chairman, gives a speech to launch this year's drill. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn

Full Moon Party

Xana with Attica brought Thailand's world-famous Full Moon Party to Phuket on August 29 to the delight of a large number of party-goers who enjoyed dancing to both house music and DJ beats.



DJ Kraiz (Christian Coccato) from Illusion hypnotizes the crowd with his beats during the Full Moon Party.



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Maroon 5 stops over in Phuket



James Valentine of Maroon 5 (4th from left). Photo: Thanyapura

SUPERSTARS from the American pop rock band Maroon 5 took to the tennis courts of Thanyapura last week for a bit of downtime between concerts.

James Valentine, the band's lead guitarist, took advantage of the world-class Phuket facility for some practice and a few friendly matches with the Spin and Slice Team.

"It was such a surprise to see Maroon 5 playing on our tennis courts," said Timo Sivapruksa of Spin and Slice.

"James was such a nice guy and played tennis with several people over the weekend.

"At first, we didn't even know who he was, so I think he felt quite comfortable knowing that he could enjoy his holiday without being crowded by fans."

The band has now left Phuket for a series of concerts around Asia, including two sold out shows in Bangkok next week.

— *Phuket Gazette*

Storm-sunk ship salvaged for dive site

A LARGE section of the Cambodian-flagged cargo vessel that sank near Coral Island has been moved to Koh Racha Yai in the government's effort to support the scuba diving industry in Phuket and Krabi.

The piece of *Sinaran Andaman* was placed on sand at a depth of about 30 meters, far from where it could impact coral reefs in the area, said Thanet Munnoy, chief of the Phuket office of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR).

"The structure will make an interesting dive spot for the area, especially after it begins to attract marine life," Mr Thanet said. "Previously, locals had sunk a motorbike and a few other pieces of broken ships in an attempt to draw divers to the area."

Locals from the island requested that the Marine Office



The ship was placed on sand at a depth of about 30 meters off Koh Racha Yai. Photo: DMCR

approve the plan to move a section of ship be moved to the area.

"However, we had to ensure that there were no contaminants or anything still on board that could be harmful to the environment," Mr Thanet said.

"Our investigation found it to be clean enough."

Once approval was granted, the DMCR, the owner of the *Sinaran Andaman*, and the owner's insurance company worked together to move the

section of the ship to its current location.

The 67.6 meter long multi-purpose cargo vessel was one of several ships to sink during rough weather earlier in July.

— *Kongleaphy Keam*

Australian boarding school fair to be held at RPM

MORE than one million baht worth of scholarships, study trials and fee reductions are being offered by various schools at the CETA Worldwide Education's inaugural Australian Boarding and Day School Fair on October 4 running from 1pm to 5pm at the Royal Phuket Marina.

The exhibition is organized in conjunction with the Australian Education Assessment Services and supported by the Australian Trade Commission,

as well as the Australian Embassy in Thailand.

Seven secondary schools will be in attendance, including co-educational schools, day and boarding schools, girls-only schools, boys-only schools, International Baccalaureate, foundation study schools and a specialist English-language preparation school for secondary schools.

Based on 13 years of experience working closely with Thai

students in Australia, Andrew Gray, CETA's managing director, said that the students achieve more than just an academic education – they also develop a broader world perspective.

"Parents and students should use this opportunity to visit the various school exhibitors to assess if the schools that they are interested in can really meet their needs academically, socially and emotionally," Mr Gray said.

"The information gained

by face-to-face discussions in a focused environment, with such a large variety of quality schools at the fair, will be more effective than visiting their websites. You are able to visit all the leading Australian private schools in just one day."

Admission is free, though attendees are requested to preregister at www.ceta.co.th/ registration.

— *Phuket Gazette*

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

September 28. Super Moon Super Blues

Black & Blue will be wailing into the night as they host a Super Blues Event at Bliss Beach Club during the Super Moon Monday night, from 7pm to 12.

This will be the musical event of the year for Phuket with notable guest artists such as Pjae Stanley, K PJ and Bobby Blues.

The food too will be a fabulous showcase of several chefs who will put out their finest soul food dishes to help Chef Garfield of Bliss.

The gala evening is a 'Fun-Raiser' for Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB) with proceeds going to the club's charity fund, which supports a number of projects for children.

Prepaid tickets are 2,000 baht, while tickets at the door are 2,500 baht.



Ticket are available at the Gazette office, Bliss Beach Club and through RCoPB.

There will be auctions, raffles and door prizes.

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.

October 30. Phuket Tourism 'By The Numbers' at AMCHAM Event

The American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) Greater Phuket Chapter will present a tourism event led by STR Global's Area Director for Asia/Pacific Jesper Palmqvist at

Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort.

STR is the leading global performance indicator for hotels and will showcase the past, present and future outlook for the island.

Mark Simmons, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts' vice president of sales and marketing in Asia Pacific, will join Jesper on stage and lead a discussion providing insights on strategy in a volatile marketplace.

Registration begins at 4:30pm. The session runs from 5pm to 6pm.

Admission is open to the public and is 100 baht for non-members.

To sign up for the event please visit www.amchamthailand.com or contact Sarudha Netsawang at orn@amchamthailand.com.

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 promulgation of Thailand's first constitution by HM King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) in 1932. Parades and fireworks take place throughout the country.

Turning over a new leaf



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

TROPICAL gardens, for a variety of reasons, need plenty of attention. Take the case of Patima's garden in the Land and House estate. Her busy life as a computer expert means that she has little time for horticultural activities, and her partner is more interested in compression ratios than common oleanders. Get the picture?

A low-upkeep garden is, laudably, what Patima both wants. So, this is an object lesson for other busy readers who are new to gated community life or whose gardens may need attention.

The plot, on three sides of the property is not large, but therein lays one of the problems. One area, originally laid with Malaysia grass, is now mostly bare soil. The culprits are a large Indian cork tree (*millingtonia*) at one corner and an evergreen mango, with a dense crown, nearby. A second cork tree stands guard at another focal point. Nearer the house are two very substantial royal palms.

I have nothing against Indian cork trees: they look beautiful with their distinctive pendant white blooms. But these specimens, apparently planted as mature trees seven years ago, are now so large that they are usurping all the sunlight and, with their large root systems, most of the nutrients in the restricted space. As a general rule, roots and branches spread over similarly broad areas, so the impact made by these subterranean radicals is profound.

Borders, though not clearly defined, exist near the perimeters of the property, and a few shrubs are valiantly struggling with the conditions – for example a couple of yellow peruvians, some leggy *polyscias* (both in need of pruning) and nearer the house, some gardenias.

In front of the portico, and coincidentally where there's



Because of her busy life, Patima has not had time to maintain the upkeep of her garden.

more light, things look healthier. The steps are flanked by two large, neatly clipped *ficus benjamins*. They look in reasonable nick (about two meters tall), though the leaves are not as dense as they should be, and the root systems are precariously close to the house foundations. Between these and the front gate are two sizeable foxtail palms, somewhat past their best.

A mixed picture. So where should we start? Back to basics with the soil. It would be a good idea to make raised borders at the perimeters by adding top soil or mixing the existing stuff with bags of compost,

adding some granular fertilizer and then maybe defining the edges with natural stone or small bricks.

The area inside the front and side wall could then be planted with small, hardy shrubs such as

ixoras, *tabernaemontanas*, *russelias* and *periwinkles*, or larger shrubs such as *murrayas*, *gardenias*, or *durantas*. *Bougainvilleas*, which are both colorful and tolerant, would be ideal. Maybe variegated foliage plants – *dracaenas* or *crotons*, even a climber or two such as *allamanda* with its yellow trumpets, or a free-blooming Rangoon creeper.

Container plants are worth considering, especially in the short term, since they are a moveable feast.

As for the grass, it is prob-

ably best forgotten, at least in the bare areas. I would opt for a covering of pebbles, with maybe some squares of natural stone – less upkeep for busy people who nonetheless cherish their gardens.

If you have gardening or environmental concerns, contact Patrick Campbell at drpaccampbell@gmail.com. His creative and academic publications can be found at his website: [GreenGaloshes Wordpress](http://GreenGaloshes.Wordpress.com).

Tip of the week: Robust Ruellias

I HAVE commented before on the surge in popularity for wild petunias or *ruellias*. This flower was rarely seen in Phuket a decade ago, but is now a common sight in public plantings. That's because it is very easy to grow and *ruellias* flower more or less continuously and come in two attractive shades – deep pink and a distinctive violet.

Slender-leaved *ruellias* cope well with most situations, but prefer moist soil.

Plant nursery owners know this: once their *ruellias* get leggy and start to bloom less, they cut them back to a few inches and re-pot the cuttings. The success rate is very high, so in no time at all, you can have a bed of these distinctive flowers. Remember though that the *ruellia* is not dubbed the 'three o'clock flower' for nothing, as the papery blooms fall in mid-afternoon.

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Phuket Gazette

Multihulls here, there, everywhere



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

LOOKING around the marinas and anchorages of Phuket, it is apparent that there has been a significant shift in the type of boats that call Phuket home. It's not an entirely new trend, but the move from single to multiple hulls has certainly gathered steam in recent years.

A healthy local boat building industry with a predisposition to multihulls has clearly played a role in that, but what is it that makes a multihull the boat of choice for a growing number of people?

"Because they make so much more sense than a mono in almost every regard. Space, stability, safety, they have an ideal layout for charter, easy access to water and are easy to maneuver," says Andrew de Bruin, Multihull Solutions' general manager for South East Asia.

Having opened Multihull Solutions' first Asia office in 2014 in Phuket, de Bruin is confident of building on the company's more than 10 years of success in Australia and five years in New Zealand.

"We represent a selection of quality multihull brands such as Fountaine Pajot, Privilege, Catana, Tag Yachts, Corsair and Neel Trimarans. We are also the exclusive importer for Fountaine Pajot catamarans in South East Asia and have plans to open offices in Singapore and other locations over the coming year," he said.

A number of local multihull



What is it that makes a multihull the boat of choice for a growing number of people? Photo: Multihull Solutions

builders and charterers including Asia Catamarans, Charter Catamaran, Faraway Yachting as well as the stable of Pescott-designed catamarans that have been built locally such as the Whitehaven Series and Firefly 850s, to name just a few, have helped this multihull boom and with it the racing scene too.

Most local regattas have seen a growing number of multihull fleets competing and, with the advent of the Multihull Solutions Regatta, a new era of multihull racing was ushered onto the island.

However, it's the charter potential of multihulls that is arguably the driving force behind more boat owners opting for multis over monos.

Phuket's charter market is the envy of many of its regional neighbors. The cruising grounds along the Andaman coast have helped position Phuket as the marine playground of Asia and a famed charter destination globally, with multihulls now coming to the fore.

"Their practicalities lend themselves to the tropics and

shallow cruising grounds," noted de Bruin.

While Phuket's larger charter agents still have predominantly monohull fleets, the trend to multihulls is moving apace as an increasing number of individually-owned multihulls are being offered on the charter market independently and through agents.

This increased charter interest for multihulls is, by default, driving sales. Phuket's largest multihull purchase to date, at least in terms of numbers, was the recent order of four Corsair Pulse 600s by Krabi Sailing

School. These nifty day-racers hit the water at the Multihull Solutions Regatta and Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek this year, providing some exciting racing and a lot of fun, and are now set to become sail training vessels.

Having arrived on the island less than a week ago, the latest addition to the multihull charter fleet, and possibly the largest, is a brand new Fountaine Pajot Victoria 67. Sold by Multihull Solutions, *Arabella* is owned by a Chinese-based hospitality group, Naked Sail, which will be offering the 67-foot catamaran for bespoke sailing trips in the area.

So what's next for multihulls in Phuket and beyond?

"I see more and more multihulls in Phuket and the region, and I hope to see a change in marina layouts and charges where they are not penalized by excessive mooring charges. There have been many positives happening with Thai Customs and boat import laws in general over the last few years, and with a few more small changes, I see Phuket and Thailand in general becoming the absolute yachting hub of South East Asia," de Bruin said.

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

Thailand's first Thai, female marina manager takes reins at RPM

ROYAL Phuket Marina confirmed the appointment of Thailand's first Thai, female marina manager, Woranart Wongvanich.

Ms Woranart has worked in Thailand's marine industry for more than 20 years, more than 10 of those at Royal Phuket Marina, where she has worked her way through the ranks to her current management position.

"Joining Royal Phuket Marina at the beginning, I have enjoyed being part of the development team and have seen the marina and facilities grow. I admire the vision of the chairman, Mr [Gulu] Lalvani, who is always looking to develop the company and marine tourism in Phuket, and am very proud of his confidence in appointing me as the marina manager," said Ms Woranart.

Being the only Thai female marina



Woranart Wongvanich has been with the Royal Phuket Marina for more than 10 years.

manager in Thailand, and one of just a few Thai nationals who have ever held the post, Ms Woranart acknowledges the importance of team work.

"The most enjoyable part of my work

at Royal Phuket Marina is the marina team. They are passionate and professional. I am proud to be a part of this team and together we strive to deliver the best service possible to our

customers," added Ms Woranart.

Prior to embarking on a career in the marine industry, Ms Woranart worked in the travel industry and made a name for herself in companies such as Diethelm Events (Phuket), Tropic Asia Tours, The Travel Company, Fast Boats, Asia Voyages and The Pansea Resort.

Ms Woranart brings this hospitality and tourism experience to the table in her new role and is confident in the potential of Phuket and Thailand's marine leisure tourism.

"It's encouraging that the central government sees the importance of marine tourism for Thailand. Here at Royal Phuket Marina we look forward to working closely with government officials in all departments to promote and develop the industry further."

— *Phuket Gazette*

New T C Boyle an emotional dud

Books

By James Eckardt

SINCE 1982, T. Coraghessan Boyle has written 15 novels, of which I've read ten. The first two – *Water Music* and *Budding Prospects* – are among the funniest novels ever written. The latter is about marijuana growers in northern California; the former, improbably enough, about 18th Century explorer Mungo Park's expeditions up the Niger River.

Boyle's tone has since mellowed and his interests wandered from Alfred Kinsey and Frank Lloyd Wright to Alaskan homesteaders and Mexican immigrants.

His latest, *The Harder They Come*, begins with a superb epigraph by D.H. Lawrence: "The essential American character is hard, isolated, stoic and a killer. It has never yet melted."

This applies to Adam Stensen, a 25-year-old schizophrenic who is at home in the forests of northern California. He calls himself 'Colter' in homage to John Colter who joined the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1803 and was on the verge of returning to civilization in St Louis when he turned around to live in the wilderness as the first mountain man. For seven years he trapped beaver,



Both the father and the son in the novel have a love for California's forests. Photo: Ken March

narrowly escaping torture and death from hostile Blackfoot Indians.

For Adam Stensen, his own beaver pelts are the poppy plants he is nursing to produce balls of opium. Despite his fragile mental state, trapped on a 'wheel' of hyper-alertness and fugue, he is keenly attuned to the forces of the forest: "The rain was coming at the windows like the ocean turned upside down and the Noyo swelled up and gouged at the banks and took the big logs and boulders down with it so you could hear them grinding like teeth."

The novel opens with a bril-

liant set piece. Adam's father, Sten, a 70-year-old Vietnam vet and retired high school principal, is with his wife on a cruise to Costa Rica.

At the entrance to a national park, his tour group is confronted by three robbers, one armed with a pistol, two with machetes. Sten grabs the one with the gun, puts him in a chokehold and kills him. He becomes a reluctant hero back home in California where he is a leader of a group called 'Take Back Our Forests' which aims to drive out Mexican marijuana growers who are poisoning the wildlife of state and national

forests.

He was no racist – he'd seen the demographic shift in the school population over the years, the Swedes, Norwegians, Italians and Poles who'd worked the lumber mills when they were still a going concern, giving way ever so gradually to the Hispanics who cleaned their houses, repaired their cars, stocked the shelves in the supermarket and made up the beds for the tourists.

All this had meant nothing to him, immigrants in a nation built on them – but when they destroyed the land, drove people out of their own parks

and forests, it was another thing altogether.

The third character in this novel is Sara Hoverty Jennings, a middle-aged divorcee who works as a farrier and substitute teacher.

She's a radical libertarian whose rejection of the laws of California cause her to be arrested for not wearing a seat belt and then resisting arrest. For her pains, both her car and her dog are impounded. She gets her car out first and then plots with a spaced-out hitchhiker to steal her dog back from the government shelter.

The hitchhiker is Adam Stensen and after they liberate her dog, she takes him back home for a celebratory dinner and a night in bed. She knows he is damaged mentally, but can't resist his hard, young body. The two set up house-keeping in the forest home of Adam's late grandmother.

The plot spirals off into madness and murder, abetted by Adam's possession of a Chinese Norinco assault rifle. The problem is that the reader doesn't care much. Adam is too opaque and too far gone to spark much sympathy, while Sara is too ideologically rigid and emotionally scattered. Sten Stensen is heartbroken by his son's collapse into criminality but becomes peripheral to events. In the end, the reader is left cold.

Bon Jovi giving rock a good name

FANS of the American rock group Bon Jovi were pleasantly surprised when the band announced a show date in Bangkok for September 15.

Bangkok was not originally included in their Asia leg of the tour, but was added after the band's two shows in Shanghai and Beijing were abruptly cancelled due to 'unforeseen reasons'. The hastily arranged concert in Bangkok was organized by Live Nation BEC-Tero and held at Impact Arena Muang Thong Thani.

The occasion will mark the long-overdue return of Bon Jovi to Bangkok after their only show back in 1995 at the Thai Army Stadium.

"It's great to be back here again and we find it's important to do what people enjoy," said lead singer Jon Bon Jovi at a press conference before the concert. "We'll be doing hits, as well as some new songs like *We Don't Run*.



Jon Bon Jovi is flanked by keyboardist David Bryan (left) and drummer Tico Torres during a press conference to announce their surprise concert in Bangkok. Photo by Watcharachai Klaipong

Wear comfortable shoes and warm up your voice because you'll be dancing and singing a lot."

"We appreciate the enthusiasm and we can promise you that we'll give our all."

Drummer Tico Torres

added: "We love you guys. We're glad to be back."

The band now consists of Jon Bon Jovi, Tico Torres and keyboardist David Bryan, as guitarist Richie Sambora left the group in 2013.

– The Nation

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Supply overload shakes budget condo sector

By Nina Suebsukcharoen

THE budget condominium segment both in Phuket and many other cities in Thailand is now suffering from the large supply flooding in over the past 5 to 7 years, Phanom Kanjana-thiemthao, Managing Director of Knight Frank Chartered Company said this week.

This low-end market, with units costing just over 1 million baht to around 1.5mn baht and 1.8mn baht, has also very clearly been impacted by Thailand's slower economic growth with the Asian Development Bank getting ready to revise down its projected GDP growth for this year from the current 2.9 to 3 per cent, because of the disappointing expansion of only 2.9 per cent in the first half.

However, Mr Phanom mentioned that buyers of all segments of residential properties are unlikely to be greatly affected by the National Reform Council recently rejecting the draft constitution by a vote of 135-105 with seven abstentions.

Foreigners who had already planned to buy property here can still do so whether or not there is a new constitution. There are no laws blocking them and what they were previously permitted to do they can continue doing.

"I think issues about the new



Phuket's mid-rise condos offer stunning views, but the question is whether the prices are coming down.

charter might not have as strong an impact as local economic problems, plus the economy in Europe and Asia, and the problem of currency exchange."

Another factor undermining the ability of local people to buy a property is that their income has not increased at the same pace as property prices which have jumped over the past 5 to 7 years, Mr Phanom explained.

Developers have had to hike prices because land costs have markedly increased with construction costs too having steadily gone up.

"So it's understandable why they cannot maintain the old prices," he said.

While previously developers reduced the smallest unit size from around 30 square meters to approximately 22 sqm to bring prices down, Mr Phanom pointed out it would be

difficult to reduce the unit size any further.

On the other hand, the luxury and high-end markets do not appear to have changed substantially because buyers in this segment have money and are in a strong position to buy property regardless of the economic conditions.

"If their business is not good they might delay buying for a bit, but this group, if they find a property they like, are in a po-

sition to buy."

With Phuket's market diverging in many directions from modest budget condos to posh million-dollar villas, investors tempted to jump in right now are advised by Mr Phanom to focus on return on investment and only go in for well-managed developments, with hotel-brand properties perhaps being the safest choice.

"The issue is that prices have not dropped, the initial cost is the same while the market does not show a clear positive sentiment.

"So we have to ask ourselves whether the timing is good for an investment. However, there are some projects worth investing in, these are run properly like a hotel and offer readily rentable units that generate income which we can see.

"But there are a lot of properties which are not really for investment."

Knight Frank Chartered's boss added that developers offering buyers 5 to 7 per cent guaranteed return for a certain number of years are in fact indirectly giving buyers a discount because they dare not openly slash prices.

"Investors have to focus on the operation, management and the ability of these properties to generate income in future as otherwise they would only get income during the period the developers pays and perhaps nothing at all after that."



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Novotel to renovate Phuket resort

NOVOTEL plans major renovations of its resort in Phuket to attract guests from emerging markets in order to secure a 5 to 10 per cent growth next year.

Pobchai Jivavisitnon, owner and managing director of Novotel Phuket Resort and Novotel Phuket Vintage Park, said the company is planning to spend 70 million baht to refurbish its resort.

Major renovations at the Novotel Phuket Resort will include upgrades of the swimming pool and additional pool access, public facilities, the spa and the restaurant.

All work is scheduled to be completed before November next year, at the start of tourism's high season.

The resort was opened 20 years ago with 215 rooms as one of the first international hotel chains on Patong Beach.

Mr Pobchai said 60 per cent of the resort's guests had



Novotel Resort. Photo: Gazette file

traditionally been from the European market, while the rest were mostly from Asian countries.

"The hotel currently has average occupancy rates as high as 85-87 per cent. Luckily, there was no negative impact from last month's bomb blast in Bangkok."

The chain's other hotel in the Patong area, the three-year-old Novotel Phuket Vintage Park, serves mainly the Asian market, at 60 per cent, with the rest

mainly being from Europe.

It has 303 rooms, a 2,000-square-meter swimming pool, one of largest in Phuket, and runs at an average occupancy rate of 85-87 per cent.

Mr Pobchai said both hotels were expected to gain more business in the remaining months of the year, as they had seen significantly more arrivals from emerging markets such as China, India and the Middle East.

"Next year, I expect that my two hotels will be able to increase their occupancy rates by 5 to 7 per cent from this year, and increase their room rates by 7 to 10 per cent."

According to a report by C9 Hotelworks, arrivals at Phuket International Airport rose by 11 per cent from 2.8 million in the first half of 2014 to 3.1 million in first six months this year. China and Russia accounted for more than 50 per cent of international passenger arrivals.

— *The Nation*

Pitfalls in Thai property market



Property Watch

Desmond Hughes

INEVITABLY, I have seen a fair amount of unethical and immoral behavior in Phuket connected to my work and experience of clients. This, combined with the huge changes in the Phuket business; infrastructure; development and demographics, has lead me to conduct a quick mental check on where we stand in Phuket when it comes to morals, and how this relates to one of Phuket's most important markets – property.

I would like to set out a few examples of some common moral issues and I will leave it to you to draw your own conclusions.

IT IS EASY FOR FOREIGNERS TO OWN LAND IN THAILAND

It is quite clear under Thai law that foreigners are generally prohibited from owning land. There is no deception there. The issues that have arisen from this prohibition are that many don't like the law and try



If a developer owes money to the bank, it is unfair not to inform potential buyers. Photo: Images Money

to find ways 'around' the problem. Foreigners can lease land. A Thai corporation can own land, but not solely for the purpose of owning land. Foreigners can own buildings. These have become, I hope, commonly known facts.

Even though it is legal for a Thai person to own property in the UK, for example, I haven't heard of many Thai people being accused of 'circumventing UK law' in relation to property restrictions.

I TOOK A RESERVATION DEPOSIT AND THE BUYER WITHDREW

If there is one way to destroy the market you work in, being unfair on potential buyers who will clearly discuss their experience with other potential buyers is a surefire way to contribute to negative impacts on the property market.

For a dozen years I have seen miscommunication, misunderstanding and unfortunately quite

a few cases of immoral unfairness in relation to 'reservation deposits'. A reservation deposit for a property is security for a seller against costs incurred by time wasters. If a potential buyer places a reservation deposit and then uses the sellers' time and their advisers' time, and simply withdraws without cause, they should lose some money if not all of their reservation deposit, if the amount is fairly small.

However, if a seller has mis-sold something – maybe told the

buyer they are buying 'freehold' when they are buying leasehold, or a variation of leasehold, and the buyer feels uncomfortable about that and wishes to withdraw, then the money should go straight back to the reservation holder. Further, if the buyer finds out there is an issue with the property, or a serious defect, they should get their money back.

HONESTY ON FINANCIAL POSITION

When it comes to off-the-plan property when sales require large payments from buyers to fund construction, if the developer already owes money to the bank and the payments are a priority, it is unfair to take money from potential buyers without first informing them very clearly that the developer has some debts that must be repaid as part of the financial equation. I have seen many situations where buyers are shocked to learn of a registered mortgage against the same title that they thought they were investing in.

It would be great to see more honesty in the world generally and Phuket is no exception.



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- Willing to learn new skills
- Previous corporate experience is an advantage

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CLXTHAI Co., Ltd. 44 Moo 3, Palai Soi 2, Chalong, Muang, Phuket 83130.
Tel: 076-380653. Fax: 076-380655.

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- Good command of written and spoken English
- Proficiency in MS office
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Please send a short letter of application, Curriculum Vitae, recent photograph by email/fax and telephone contacts of referees to

British International School, Phuket

59 Moo 2, Thepkasattri Road, Koh Kaew, Muang Phuket 83200
Tel: 076-335555 Ext.2113 Fax: 076 335573.

Email: sirirats@bisphuket.ac.th, kojchapant@bisphuket.ac.th

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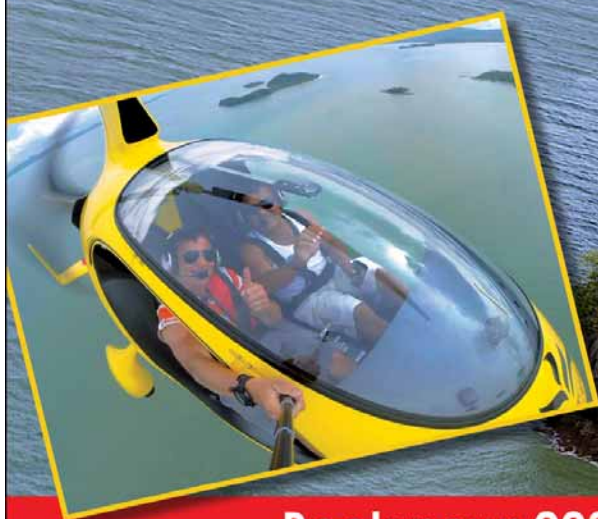
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'Under The Sun' lips escape London

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

LISA Allen emerged from the fantastical set of the Blue Peter garden, where she and a fellow BBC information technology employee had settled in for lunch. That was the day in 1996, or at least she thinks it was the day, that she met the makeup artists for Celine Dion and the Bee Gees in the BBC Lottery Studio.

"I decided I needed to make a career change to feed my creative urges. That day changed my life," Lisa bubbled as she drank her latte at Gallery Cafe in Chalong.

Lisa has since garnered more than 100,000 followers to her business Facebook page 'Lisa Allen Make Up Artist' and done the makeup for more than 1,000 weddings, carefully calming bridezillas with her quintessential hair-salon small talk, an impressive designer makeup kit and some serious experience under her belt. She has worked with big stars shooting in Phuket – applying makeup for Rita Ora and anti-shine to the face of Snoop Dog. However, it all really started with her mum, a hairdresser in London.

Now, all little girls, and a fair share of little boys in Thailand, find themselves at one time or another experimenting with their mum's makeup: base, powder, eyeliner, eye shadow, mascara, blush, primer, concealer, lip liner, lipstick and the list just goes on.

Though Lisa now packs more than 100 shades of red lipstick, it was the warm golden-orange glisten of her mother's Boots No. 7 'Under The Sun' lips that first enticed her into the makeup world. She eventually applied to the beauty therapy program at Kingston College back in England. She was accepted and promptly turned it down to work as a travel agent.

"I have no idea why I did that," she said with a laugh.

Eventually, travel agent led to IT – hard to say exactly how. Then, Lisa found herself full circle after meeting the makeup artists for the stars. She enrolled in the Brushstroke.co.uk program for makeup and hair for media and television.

"We learned everything from straight makeup to period makeup, hair and styling," Lisa said.

The first four or five years was a bag of cats with Lisa doing hair and makeup, even dipping back into IT when there was a drought in makeup artist and television work.

"I went from having money to having no money, it was a nightmare. I struggled at first. Then, you'd just get in with the right people."

"So I worked in TV and film and I ended up working for a

few bits and bobs, I worked for a really old television series called Last of the Summer Wine for the BBC," Lisa recalled.

"Whilst working for a well-known TV series, they booked me for an extra set and cancelled on me at the last minute. I'd had enough. I needed to get away."

She escaped dreary England with a friend to Koh Tao to sort out her PADI Divemaster.

After a botched experience as an underwater videographer that ended with her getting stiffed by her employer in Australia, she came back to Thailand to do her PADI Instructor Development Course, but decided to go to Phuket for it.

"I got into Kata. Got up the next morning. Went in to Calypso Divers and met Mark, we fell in love."

"I proposed to him two weeks later after a

night out in Patong. And he said yes, poor guy. We got married two months later. That was about 13 years ago."

Eventually, word got out that Lisa did makeup, and did it well. Using her IT skills she built a website and registered Lisa Allen Make Up Artist in Thailand.

"Each year it's gotten bigger and bigger and bigger. And I'm trying to stay up to date with my skills."

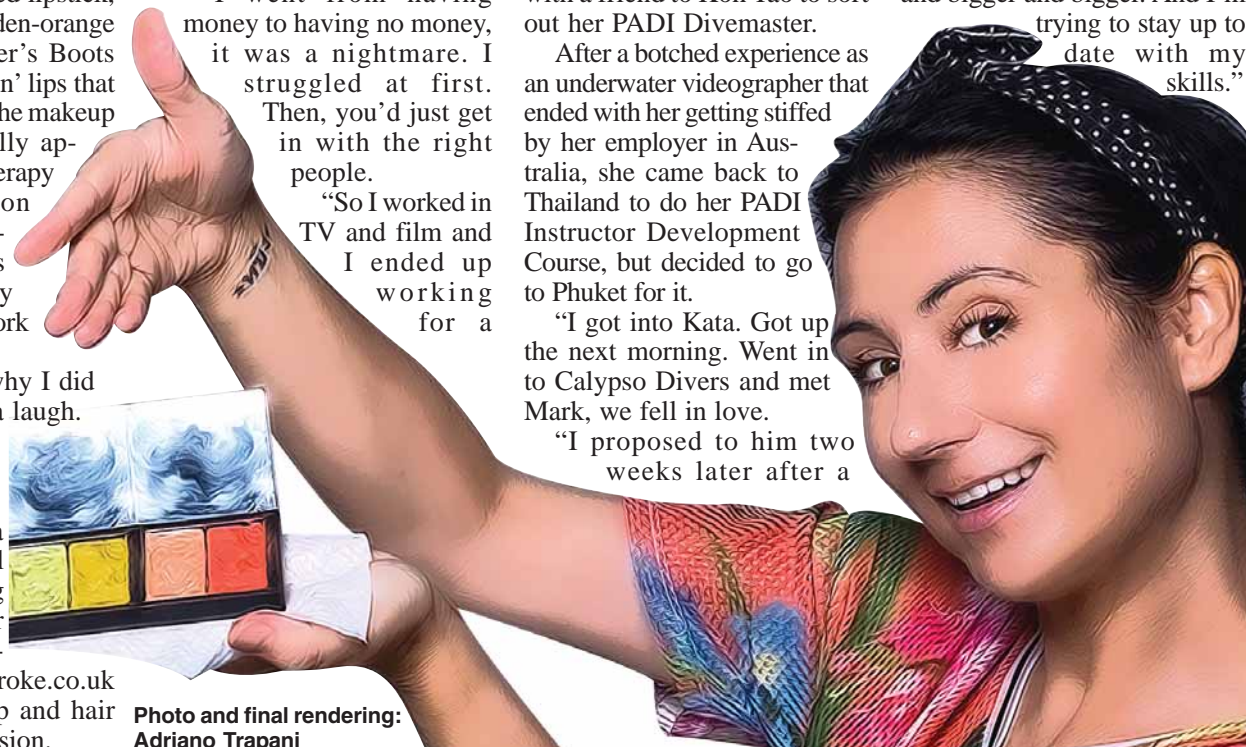


Photo and final rendering: Adriano Trapani



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