

Phuket Gazette

October 31 - November 6, 2015

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'YOUTH GANG VIOLENCE IS ON THE RISE' Gangs of Phuket

■ More than 30 teen gangs high on drugs and packing heat take slice of island

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE justice system's soft handling of criminal youth is at the core of the growing drug-powered gang violence on the island that led to a 15-year-old bystander being gunned down during the final hours of the Phuket Vegetarian Festival last week, explained Phuket City Police Deputy Superintendent Khunnadet Nanongkhai.

Five suspects have already been charged for the murder of Thanakij Sawirum, 15, and the attempted murders of three 14-year-old bystanders who were injured by stray bullets as members of rival gangs *Wan Wai* and *Mac Tim Villa 3* exchanged gunfire.

"Shootings, thefts, drug dealing and violent crimes committed by youth associated with gangs on the island has been steadily on the rise," said Col Khunnadet.

"Fundamentally, the issue is that the courts don't deal out harsh enough punishments to minors, so these criminals get a slap on the wrist and are back out there causing problems. However, the recent increase is also due to social media. Gangs are able to quickly recruit members, set up drug deals, organize times to fight with other gangs and gain fame by boasting about it."

Col Khunnadet explained that his station was making about two gang-related arrests per month. Prior to the widespread use of social media, his officers were rarely having to deal with gang activity at all.

"Now these teens are able to easily purchase homemade firearms online. When they are on drugs with a gun in their hand, they will do whatever they want – this is an incredible risk for society as a whole."

GANG DEMOGRAPHICS

More than 30 gangs, with memberships ranging from 30 to...

Continued on Pages 4-5



A-non Wandee is one of five suspects arrested for the gang violence which left a 15 year old dead and three 14 year olds injured. Mr A-non has denied all charges against him. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Booze ban serves up lots of confusion

AS IS routine upon introduction of poorly formulated new rules in Thailand, confusion reigned again when a new law dictating an alcohol ban around educational institutions came into effect.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Urinating man caught behind Veg Fest table

POLICE nabbed a foreigner found urinating behind a Phuket Vegetarian Festival offerings table in the middle of the explosive festivities near Surin Circle on October 21.

The shirtless, inebriated man was found on his knees delivering a most unwanted offering of his own behind a table of fruits, joss sticks and drinks that were being offered up to the spirit mediums, as Chinese shrine processions marched down the road.

No charges were filed.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Beach rules to be clear by Nov

WITH Phuket's high season starting next month, the details of exactly how the beach 'management' system on the island will be maintained and implemented remain hazy.

Though meetings were held on October 26 and 27 regarding the 10 per cent zones in Thalang, Muang Phuket and Kathu districts, Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat confirmed that everything detailing the beach zone policy would be plainly laid out by November 1.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Whale sharks spotted near Phang Nga Bay



Tourists and officers were delighted when they spotted a group of whale sharks off Phuket's coast this week. The largest of the group was estimated to be 12 meters long and nearly 2 tonnes. Whale sharks are occasionally spotted in the region between October and December, as the area becomes rich with food. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: DNP

catch, Matya Thamsuan decided to keep the marine arthropod alive in a bucket. Neighbors began to visit his house daily to see the mutant creature.

Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Trang Campus was contacted to see if they wished to study the creature.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Gov Chamroen attends funeral of crash victims

GOVERNOR Chamroen Tipayapongtada attended the funeral of the two suspected drug dealers who died in a police chase that sparked the Phuket riot earlier this month.

Numerous government officials and police officers joined Governor Chamroen at the ceremony for Patomwat Panarak, 22, and Teerapong Srisamut, 17.

Mr Patomwat and Mr Teerapong were cremated on October 26.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Man sets self on fire at temple

A MAN who set himself on fire at a Phuket temple on October 22 has refused to explain what motivated the self-mutilation.

Pichet Meephon, 24, told police that he drove his motorbike to purchase fuel from a nearby gas station and returned to the temple where he set himself ablaze.

Mr Pichet received burns to 30-40 per cent of his body.

– *Woranut Pechdee*

Karon officer killed in Rawai big bike crash

A KARON Police officer was killed after he lost control of his Honda big bike in Rawai on October 28.

Police believe that L Cpl Nattachai Huahin was unfamiliar with the area and hit a curb at high speed just after midnight.

L Cpl Nattachai was wearing a helmet at the time of the crash. However, because he was going so fast, it broke off when he hit the ground.

Police confirmed that blood alcohol tests were negative.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Good samaritan nabs gold thief

A PHUKET local pursued a snatch thief attempting to flee the scene of the crime for three kilometers before the thief crashed his motorbike on October 27.

Supachai Mattanang, 20, witnessed the man rip a gold necklace, worth about 20,000 baht, from the neck of a

Myanmar national before fleeing the scene on his motorbike.

Phuket City Police were able to quickly apprehend 20-year-old Sarawut Nitapai.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Drug raids yield three with meth

PHUKET Provincial Police arrested three suspected drug dealers in separate raids this week.

Altogether, the raids yielded more than 170 grams of *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) and 190 pills of *ya bah* (methamphetamine).

All three men were charged with the possession of Category 1 drugs with intent to sell.

– *Winai Sarot*

Patong sets date for annual fair

PATONG'S annual carnival is set to hit the beach town's sands on November 1 with the theme: 'Patong Seafood Festival 2015'.

The event has been marking the beginning of Phuket's high season for 30 years and will take place from November 1-3.

In addition to local art and

history exhibits, there will be several food zones: world seafood, local street food, Thai seafood and Asian seafood.

An estimated 20,000 visitors are expected to attend this year's event.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

British national found dead in Rawai home

BRITISH expat David Cummins, 54, was found dead in his Rawai home on October 21.

Mr Cummins' body was found by 45-year-old Duangduan Ngamprim, who had been living with him in Soi Saiyuan for about a year.

A cause of death has yet to be determined.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Fisherman nets mutated crab in Krabi province

A KRABI fisherman discovered a mutant horseshoe crab with six tails last week.

Intrigued by his strange



Confusion sets in as booze ban comes with discretions

By Kongleaphy Keam

AS IS routine upon introduction of poorly formulated new rules and regulations in Thailand, confusion reigned again on October 23 when a new law dictating an alcohol ban around educational institutions came into effect.

"My initial understanding was that the law would name only universities and technical colleges as 'educational institutions'. This would be better, as many big businesses, such as Central Festival Phuket, would be affected if the ban applied to all 'schools'," said Phuket Excise Office (PEO) Chief Pairuch Kulima. "However, the law that has come into effect does not clarify what constitutes an 'educational institution'. In fact, it doesn't even tell us how wide the no-alcohol buffer zone is."

Lack of any clarity about the definition of 'educational institution' has been at the heart of the issue since the law was approved by Cabinet in July. At the time, the 'booze belt' around educational institutions was set to be 300 meters.

"Because the law only uses the [mud-soaked] term 'nearby', it means that enforcement will come down to the



The new law does not clarify what constitutes an 'educational institution'. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

discretion of police officers," said Mr Pairuch in frustration. "Also, the lack of clarity about educational institutions means that it should be applied to all schools, colleges, universities and other places of learning."

In Phuket, there are 106 primary educational institutions, four technical colleges and two universities, as well as 122 private schools, according to the Phuket Primary Educational Service Office.

"Since we are unclear about how [on earth] to proceed with

enforcing the law, we have yet to take any action," Mr Pairuch admits.

However, as a preemptive measure the provincial government and Phuket Rajabhat University launched a one kilometer (radius) "Campus Safety Zone" last month with the goal of eliminating alcohol and drug use, as well as prostitution and gambling, in the area.

"Rajabhat University's campaign is a pilot project, so relevant officers will be checking in with them next week to see

how successful it has been," Mr Pairuch says. "We will use whatever information they have gathered and look at what can be applied elsewhere on the island."

Mr Pairuch noted that some government officers, apparently in recognition of a high-potential business opportunity, were already discussing the wiggle room available in the new law - and the possibility of allowing businesses that already have permits to sell alcohol within the (undefined) booze-ban zones to continue to do so.

Two teens wield gun, get busted



The two teens were tracked down at their rental home in Kathu.

POLICE arrested two road-raging teens caught on tape waving an illegal firearm at a fellow driver on the bypass road on October 27.

The video posted on Facebook shows a car quickly overtaking the two teens. However, once the car is past, the teens take off after it with the passenger threatening the car driver with the firearm.

The driver of the car, Veerachon Chuaykhao, filed a complaint with Phuket City Police. Officers were quickly able to track down the 17-year-old suspects, who were identified by officers only as 'Mr A' and 'Mr B'.

Police found the pair at the suspect's rental home in Kathu after tracking down the licence plate number.

The teens were charged for the illegal possession of a firearm and intimidation.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Prime plots under investigation

AN INVESTIGATION by Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division (NED) officers into four plots of land will dig to the root of the issue and reveal any officials neglecting their duties or acting illegally, says NED Region 5 Deputy Commander Montri Pancharoen.

A one rai plot of land currently occupied by a barber-shop on Soi Bangla and a six rai plot on Paradise Beach were the first properties to come under fire during the investigation, which commenced on October 21.

The next day, officials looked into an 805 rai plot of land at Phuket's iconic Promthep Cape and an 11 rai plot in Sapam, confirmed Col Montri.

"At this point, we are just talking with the alleged property owners and collecting the necessary paperwork so that it can all be crosschecked," Col Montri said.



NED Region 5 Deputy Commander Montri Pancharoen is heading the investigation into the ownership of the properties.

"The investigating team includes officers from the Land Department, the Phuket Marine Office, the Tourist Police, Marine Police, Provincial Police, Provincial Hall and other local authorities.

"We wanted representatives from all necessary agencies at hand to expedite the process of verifying documents."

Col Montri pointed out that it was still unclear whether or

not anyone was illegally encroaching on public land.

"If the plots are illegally owned, we need to identify which government office is responsible for this. Then, we can investigate why relevant officers neglected their duty or issued illegal land documents," Col Montri said. "We will get the entire system properly cleaned up this time."

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Teen gang

From Page 1

...150 people, have sliced up the island into 'home turfs'.

"There is a gang for nearly every village in Phuket. However, there are eight gangs that are known to be very criminally active," Col Khunnadet said.

Gangs are usually identified by their Facebook group name or the location they are based in, Col Khunnadet explained.

The eight major gangs on the island are: *Baan Don* (Thalang); *Wan Wai* (Patong); *Sab Soon Mafia Phuket* (Wichit); *Harm Chaow Lol Kheng* (Koh Kaew); *Adoi Soi King Kaew*, also known as *KingKaew* (Rassada); *Sai Lang Sapan Hin* (Sapan Hin, Phuket Town); *La Taem* (Talad Yai, Phuket Town); and *Soom Thai Look* (Sapan Ruam, Phuket Town).

Though these gangs best-known to police for their criminal activity, others, such as *Mac Tim Villa 3*, which was allegedly part of the Vegetarian Festival shooting, are criminally active.

The gangs are mostly composed of male and female teens 15 to 18 years old, with about 40 per cent of them being female.

GANG ACTIVITY

Police records show that 80 to 90 per cent of the gangs operating on the island are involved with drugs on a daily basis.

Asking to be referred to only as 'Mr Fresh', a 27-year-old former leader of the *KingKaew* gang in Rassada – who has served nine months in prison for his involvement in a gun battle three years ago – confessed to the *Gazette* that he supported himself as a member of the gang through selling *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) and *ya ba* (methamphetamine) to younger members.

However, drug and gun dealing is not the primary source of income for most members, explained Col Khunnadet. The most popular way for the teens to get money is by asking their parents for it. Many also turn to theft or even pull guns on secondary students, demanding that they give them money.

"Most members of the groups are still students. They believe that we can take care of them. They feel safe with us,"

explained Mr Fresh. "To get into the gang, the new members have to respect us. Sometimes they will pay for our food, as they believe that we will help them fight members of other gangs."

Conflicts are usually about girls or being disrespectful, Mr Fresh explained.

"Some gangs are our enemies and some are our friends. As the leader of the gang, I had to sort out the problems created by our members," Mr Fresh said. "If a younger member had a problem, I would talk to the leader of the other group first. If we couldn't solve the problem, we would let them have a fist fight. However, if the problem was still not resolved, we would revert to swords and guns."

Local gang leaders are revered for their bravery by fellow members. They develop strong reputations for their ability to fight, Mr Fresh explained.









Gang members usually spend their time hanging around their base – Saphan Hin is a very popular area for Phuket's gangs – drinking and waiting for the opportunity to start a fight, Mr Fresh said. Some fights are prearranged on either LINE or Facebook.

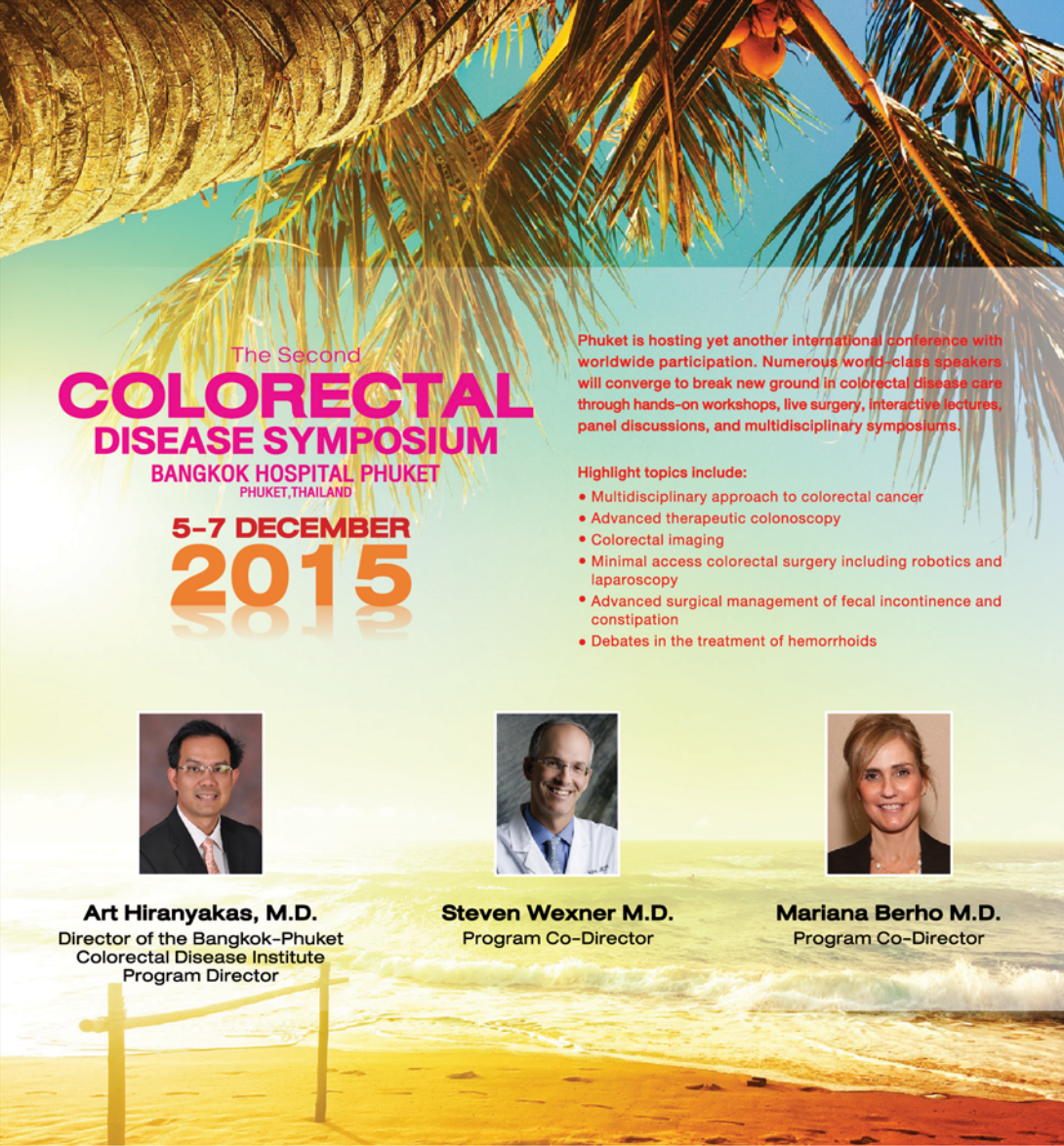
"Under the influence of drugs, gang members will zip around the island in packs, usually stirring up trouble with other gangs," Col Khunnadet said. "Drugs are the main reason they get together. *Kratom* is particularly popular because it's cheap."

No matter how a fight goes, each conflict between rival gangs feeds into a never-ending cycle of members seeking revenge, Col Khunnadet said.

"We were never afraid of the police because we believed we could always escape," Mr Fresh said. However, like the five men arrested for the slaying of Mr Thanakij, the law eventually caught up with Mr Fresh.

"During my nine months in jail, not one member of the gang came to visit me," he said. "After I was released, I quit the gang. I'm now trying to educate a new generation about staying away from drugs and weapons. I'm not saying they can't still be part of a gang. But they must talk with reason first, and then, if that fails, they can fight it out like men – no guns, no swords."



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GANG FLOOD GATES OPEN

Police are struggling to rein in gang activity on the island, as they are usually limited to arresting the youths when they are caught in a criminal act.

"Because they are teenagers, it is very difficult for us to secure a search or arrest warrant, despite knowing that they have drugs or weapons in their home," Col Khunnadet said.

"We know the gangs' Facebook pages and other information about their members. They even post videos showing them threatening people with guns, but we cannot do anything until the court gives us permission."

Even when the teens are arrested, the cases against them are sometimes dismissed or they are only given a small fine before being taken to the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center, where their parents can pick them up, Col Khunnadet said.

"The teenagers are never afraid of being arrested because they know the penalties won't be severe. There are many cases where we have to deal with repeat offenders. They don't realize that the law is designed to give them another chance to be good people."

Deputy Phuket Court Chief Judge Boonjuan Panich confirmed to the *Gazette* that it was rare for a judge to sentence a teenager to serve prison time.

"Thai law is designed to protect youth. We believe that they



Police mark evidence following the Vegetarian Festival shooting. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

are too young to fully realize the consequences of their actions. Yes, they did something wrong, but we want them to have a chance to change," Judge Boonjuan said. "Police also have to be careful and ensure that they have enough evidence when they arrest the teens. They can't use handcuffs on them and must inform the legal guardians."

Judge Boonjuan noted that despite the good work being done by police, the real burden of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the parents and educational institutions.

However, the slaying of Mr Thanakij, who was not involved with any of the gangs on the island, set off alarm bells for officers.

A number of measures are being taken to clamp down on

gang violence on the island, explained Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Peerayuth Karajedee.

"Starting next month, the Phuket City Municipality will

close Leab Khlong Road at 10pm and Saphan Hin Circle from 12am to 5am to prevent teenagers from gathering at those locations," said Col Peerayuth. "We will also continue setting up

daily checkpoints to create a police presence at popular gang locations, as well as check motorbike plate numbers and to see if there are any arrest warrants out for the driver."

Additionally, the Phuket Provincial Police have ordered all local police stations to launch investigations into gangs operating in their areas and to crosscheck their records with other local stations.

Phuket City Police, which have three of the eight most criminally active gangs in their jurisdiction, will begin calling in members of influential gangs, whether or not the youth have committed a crime, to establish a database, explained Col Peerayuth.

"By having their names and addresses, it will be much easier to track them down if they are wanted for criminal activity," he said.



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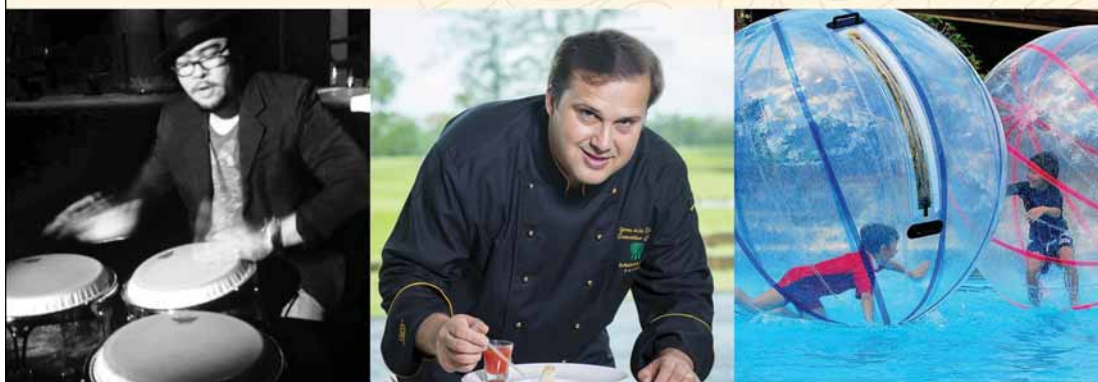
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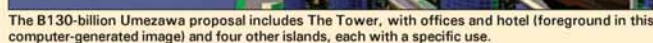
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Mystery over murder of photographer

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Since then, Phuket has been fast to act when faced with the potential outbreak of other infectious diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus earlier this year. Protocols are well established, as the island continues to battle any possible threat to the tourism industry, which is increasingly becoming recognized as the entire Kingdom's economic lifeline – with or without a futuristic city floating in the bay.

Crackdown on mafia-style influentials on Thai horizon

THE nationwide crackdown on mafia-style influential figures will be launched as soon as Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha signs an order to establish a committee to carry out the task, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan said on October 26.

Gen Prawit said the policy would focus on the suppression of crimes featuring military-grade weapons. He also revealed that the government was considering introducing a law to prohibit the carrying of weapons.

He said mafia-style figures at entertainment venues would also be investigated and, if any military or police personnel were found to be involved, their supervisors would also be held accountable.

Man happily bears weight of devotion

WE ALL have burdens to bear, but rarely can they be so accurately measured in weight as the 109 amulets that a Samut Prakarn man wears around his neck every day.

It is with these more than three kilograms of amulets that 46-year-old Damrong Jeerayuchaiwattana pays his respect to a monk named Luang Phor Khun, reports Sanook.com.

Mr Damrong's feverish praise of the monk comes from a life-saving miracle nearly 20 years ago. It was after receiving an amulet from Luang Phor Khun that he survived a horrendous motorbike accident – something that seemed impossible to survive, he explained.

The man now has about 300 Luang Phor Khun amulets. However, even for him, it is impossible to wear all of them, so he chooses 109 each day to wear.

Mr Damrong isn't phased by the critics who say he wears too many. For him, he is paying the maximum respect to Luang Phor Khun.



Police charge thousands for illegally entering Thailand

MORE than 9,000 foreigners were busted for illegally entering the country – including four wanted by Interpol – during a weeklong police crackdown that finished on October 25.

Police said 9,038 of the 9,265 people arrested – mostly migrants from nearby countries – had been charged with violating the Immigration Act 1979.

Drop charges against Koh Tao migrants, says defence

THE defence team in the Koh Tao murder case called for the Koh Samui Court to consider dismissing charges against Zaw Lin and Wai Phyto (Win Zaw Htun) during their closing statements on October 26.

The team is defending two Myanmar migrant workers accused of killing two British tourists in mid-September last year. The verdict is expected on December 24.

The team said to the court that confessions were gained through torture, no link was shown between the suspects and the alleged murder weapon and the lack of any significant

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

evidence being presented by the prosecutors connecting the men to the murders.

Hackers target telecom agency

HACKERS have struck the state-run telecommunications agency and published sensitive information, amid uncertainty over the government's plan to establish a single internet gateway for the country.

International hackers group Anonymous gained access to the systems of state-run CAT Telecom on October 22, according to posts on a Twitter account apparently run by the group's members on October 23.

The group has expressed concern that the National Council for Peace and Order still plans to tighten its control over the internet, despite saying earlier that the plan had been shelved.

Baan Tor Phrae wins community forest award

A COMMUNITY forest in Mae Hong Son province has won the top award at a national contest that seeks to encourage

locals to conserve forestland.

Baan Tor Phrae community forest was declared Best National Community Forest, beating more than 1,200 others.

Their forest covers 1,170 rai with a rich variety of plants. After several years of rehabilitation, the forest now sports 300 different types of herbs, which earn the community about 30,000 baht every year. Additionally, the villagers are able to generate income from eco-tourism.

ThaiHealth may face new budget restrictions

THREE sections of the Thai

Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) Act, including the definition of health promotion and budget usage regulations, have been designated for amendment to resolve the management problems within the foundation.

Justice Minister General Paiboon Koomchaya, chairman of the Centre for National Anti-Corruption, said after meeting with ThaiHealth at Government House that the two sides agreed on the need to amend the three sections. They are Section 3, which defines 'health promotion'; Section 10, governing usage of the foundation's annual budget; and Section 18, on the qualifications of ThaiHealth's board members.

Boozing celebs broke the law, says panel

THE Alcoholic Drinks Control Subcommittee has said celebrities and an alcohol brand violated the 2008 Alcohol Control Act when they posted pictures of themselves posing with the brand on social media.

The act forbids the advertising of alcohol, even the display of brand logos and 'enticing' others to drink, and those violating it are subject to a maximum jail term of one year and/or a fine up to 500,000 baht.

The panel's office director, Dr Samarn Futrakul, said on October 26 that evidence relating to the 15 celebrities would be passed onto police and public prosecutors after November 3.

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Growing problem

THE tragic shooting of a 15-year-old boy during the closing ceremony of this year's Phuket Vegetarian Festival is yet another indication that Phuket's increasing urbanization is having a dire effect on the cornerstone of any successful society: the family unit.

The ongoing investigation into the shooting of Thanakij Sawirum, who was apparently caught in the cross fire of two rival gangs, also reveals that not only is gang activity prevalent in Phuket, but that authorities' efforts to keep firearms out of the hands of the general public, especially minors, continue to fail abysmally.

Saphan Hin, where the murder took place, has long been the island's hotbed of gang activity. This is hardly surprising. As Phuket's largest public park, it hosts an almost endless series of large public events, from the Songkran water throwing mayhem to motor racing spectacles and many more that attract untold thousands of people from across the island, not to mention visiting tourists.

Responsible parents know the park is relatively safe during daylight hours, but that their children's safety there inevitably falls after dusk. This is especially true for teens and young adults with raging hormones and limited experience in how to control themselves while under the influence.

We respects the religious beliefs of the many island residents who hold as sacred the rites associated with the Vegetarian Festival. But from a more secular perspective, parents will now have to think much longer and harder before allowing their teenage children to join the closing ceremonies of the Vegetarian Festival next year. Having so many people together in so many different psychological states creates the perfect storm for potentially dangerous confrontations to arise.

Yet many of the teens involved in this tragedy were not only there unaccompanied by adults, but riding around in packs on motorbikes, armed with loaded pistols. Though police are actively doing their best, the front line in the battle against gang violence and ensuring children are not caught in the cross fire comes down to parents.

The Vegetarian Festival is meant to be a ritual of communal purification. To allow even a single youth to lose their life in this way is the greatest disrespect we could show to the countless ancestors whose sacrifices bestowed us with the incredible gift of consciousness in this most interesting, yet precarious, time.



Dolphinarium big step back for tourism

Re: Five dolphins arrive in Phuket for new tourist attraction, October 19

Living in a good environment? Did anyone ever check how small this pool is? It is too small for just one dolphin.

It is a shame. Shame on these people; they only have money on their minds.

It is a big step back to tourism's stone age and has nothing to do with natural tourist attractions.

In the sea around Thailand, there are free dolphins to see still. Don't pay money for cruelty to animals.

*Stephan Hinterberger
Gazette forum*

Marine department needs to step up

Re: Phuket Marine Office to play hard ball with foreign yachts, October 21

The private sector and the central government have worked so hard to establish Phuket as a credible yachting destination, and then along comes a little provincial marine department to ruin it all.

Someone needs to get this operation back under control and to teach them to face their responsibilities to the public.

*Miles Patterson
Gazette forum*

What does religion have to do with it?

Re: Religious leaders to advise in Phuket beach

Letters to the Editor

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

management, October 20

I wonder what religion might have to do with beach tourism.

If you want to sell a product successfully, first you have to ask and find out what your customers would like.

To have a good holiday, it is necessary to provide tourists with lifeguards, proper, safe clean beach facilities like beach chairs, umbrellas, food, drinks, clean toilets – not noise pollution with touts, parasailing and jet-ski rip-offs.

*Tourists needs
Gazette forum*

Willing to pay to use road to beach

Re: Officers investigate land encroachment at prime Phuket locations, October 22

It is about time the Paradise Beach plot is investigated.

They think they have the right to block anyone wishing to use the access road to the beach. They have closed the road for low season, but land owners are required to provide access to the beach.

I have no problem paying to use the road to get to the beach as they built it. But they don't own the beach.

I hope they lose the land and

then people can use the beach freely.

*Skip
Gazette forum*

Someone needs to clarify booze ban

Re: Phuket booze ban confusion comes with officers' discretion, October 24

This needs to be clarified and quickly.

If the Phuket officials are looking at one kilometer safety zones around all educational institutions, then the effects will kill tourism once and for all.

Take Patong, for example. Bangla Road and Jungceylon are 800m from a school, and then you have Phuket Town where Central, Tesco Lotus and Macro are all less than one km from a school. These are just examples of how this will kill Phuket.

*Jon B
Gazette forum*

Asian tourist sector will support Nemo

Re: Dolphins not connected to Taiji, says Phuket GM, October 21

Whilst a small segment of the Phuket expat market might boycott the dolphinarium, the fact is our Asian tourists will not.

I was at a hotel in China recently whose restaurant was selling dolphins to eat. These people will continue to support the atrocity and it will continue.

*Marc Tacchi
Gazette forum*

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Astrological tourism

FIRST PERSON

WHEN most people think of astronomy, they think of things that are very far away from us. What they don't realize is that it is a part of our everyday lives and has the potential to be a positive facet to the tourism industry.

Though the light pollution in Phuket is not as bad as other big cities, in terms of the potential for astronomy tourism, it is very bad, as it is hard to see the stars on most parts of the island.

With this pollution, how can Phuket children describe what the Milky Way looks like? Years ago, when I was growing up in Phuket, it was very easy to see the beauty of the Milky Way. Even during the day, you could close your eyes and imagine what it looked like at night from Phuket.

Now, many people even miss important meteor showers. There are so many wonders of the night sky that children might now only see in a planetarium, on star maps or on their smart phones – they are losing an important connection with the universe.

As a Phuket native, who still very much loves his home, I can see that locals are no longer as happy as they used to be. The



Dr Utane Sawangwit, 33, has been an astronomer at the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand (NARIT) since 2012. He is a Phuket native who earned a PhD in Physics from Durham University, UK in 2011 and his Bachelors and Master of

Science from the University of Cambridge.

Here, he talks about how astronomy should be incorporated into tourism.

environment of the island has changed: the cost of living has increased and our natural resources are dwindling as all forms of pollution are increasing.

The tourism sector in Phuket must branch out in different ways. I think there is a need for quiet, safe places, set far from city lights and nightlife venues. Places where tourists and locals can enjoy the peacefulness of the island under the stars. Somewhere people can go outside with a telescope and view the night sky and appreciate the natural beauty of the light show above.

Developing a facet of the island's ecotourism around astronomy would be very good. The more time people spend outside in nature, the more of a chance they have to witness

the changes that are being made to our planet. People will become more interested in preserving nature and less interested in selling out our beautiful beaches in the name of tourism.

It would be nice to see an area on Phuket, that doesn't already suffer from light pollution, developed in this way, or even see a resort taking the initiative to support astronomy tourism. It would be a good way to remind people how lucky we are to be surrounded by such extraordinarily beautiful nature.

This realization would prompt people to start doing what needs to be done to preserve it.

Because Phuket is rapidly growing, it is difficult to preserve the natural beauty of the island. It all comes down to those who live and work in Phuket, including the local government bodies, to manage the island and help it produce as little pollution as possible.

It is everyone's responsibility.

Stickk with morals



Give yourself two weeks to go without plastic bags. Photo: Wonderlane

Island View

By Tony Kleinschmidt

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

I CHALLENGE you. Yes, you – whoever you are – to go a week in Phuket without using a single plastic bag. The number of foreign whingers who waddle onto this beautiful island shouting about Thais' ignorance about double-bagging that fried sausage on a stick... and then go buy a double-bagged sausage on a stick is dumfounding.

It was heart wrenching to see the photo on page one of last week's *Phuket Gazette* where the dolphin had a blue plastic bag stuck on its dorsal fin – then to learn that so many of the deaths of dolphins and turtles in the region are from plastic bags, disgraceful.

It will be a surprise if any of you who aren't already used to avoiding plastic bags will make it two days, let alone an entire week.

Our lives are wrapped up in plastic bags and most of us don't even realize the level of dependency – like any junkie. Our groceries from Villa

Mart, Big C and Tesco are piled into plastic bags. Our run down to Central Festival for new shoes, socks or pants send us packing home with plastic bags. Our morning, midday or midnight snack from the roadside food vendor leaves us searching for bins to toss a few plastic bags away.

The gauntlet has been thrown, so stick to it. No cheating.

Just to make sure you aren't wrapping anything up in needless plastic, set the goal online with Stickk.com. The site, founded by behavioral economists and reviewed by *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *Huffington Post* and so on, keeps things simple. Set the goal (no plastic bags for a week); set your stakes – that's right you can lose cash, but you're willing to put your money where your mouth is; get a referee; and add some supportive friends.

If it was going to cost you 1,000 baht to use a plastic bag, would you really grab it? Yet, you do grab it regularly... and it's costing Phuket so much more.

So learn the phrase 'mai sai thoong', which means don't put it in a bag – among other things – and stick to the challenge.

Words from the Wise

"It's the game of life. Do I win or do I lose? One day they're gonna shut the game down. I gotta have as much fun and go around the board as many times as I can before it's my turn to leave."

– Tupac Shakur

"I never wish death on nobody 'cause there ain't coming back from that."

– Notorious B.I.G.

Issues & Answers

How can we fix parking on dangerous roads?

HEADING toward Phuket Town on Thepkasattri Road there is a 7-eleven near Baan Keha. There is no parking available, as there is a sidewalk. Unfortunately, cars will park in the street, sometimes taking up two lanes. It's very dangerous.

How can this problem be solved? Can we cut into the sidewalk to make parking spaces?

Samak Luedwonghad, director of the Phuket Highways Office, replies:

The street and sidewalk were designed this way because we did not want people parking there in the first place. It is

a busy road, not a small soi.

I agree that the cars parking there are making it dangerous, so I will talk to the local police.

Sen Sgt Maj Sayompoo Noocharoen, Thalang traffic police officer, replies:

We will go to that location and check the situation, as parking in that area is very dangerous. However, if you need immediate action, call the Thalang Police Station at 076-311 123.

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.

Submit your issue at:

www.PuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Is Neil Woodford a financial genius?

Finance

By David Mayes

I KNOW this has been written about in other media already, but as this fund and manager have a great track record and I believe we are nearing a sale in stocks, it is a good discussion to review. For those of you who don't know the fund or manager, Neil Woodford ran the Invesco Perpetual Income Fund for 25 years and achieved an average rate of return of over 13 per cent. 1,000 GBP invested when he started would be worth more than 25,000 GBP today.

He has recently left the fund and opened his own, vowing to continue the exact same strategy upon which he built his success. His successor at the old fund is Mark Barnett, a former colleague who also has a successful track record, but with less experience. On the one hand, Invesco is a big institution and that helps investors feel safe. I personally have been burned on specialist funds enough by now to prefer the big name fund houses, yet the 25-year track record does speak for itself.

For international investors, it may be difficult to access the new fund on some of the international platforms, but a direct investment may be an option for



The last few bulls went on to silly valuations, but don't forget there is always a bear lurking. Photo: Eva K

those who simply love the manager. In my opinion though, the statistics quoted are a little bit deceiving as they ignore the impact timing would have on the results of investing with either manager. As so many academic studies have shown, asset allocation is far more important than individual security selection. I will explain this in simple terms next, but in my opinion it isn't so important which manager you choose.

If you invested with either manager right before the last of the two big crashes, guess what? Your performance to date would be abysmal. If you bought either manager at the bottom after the last crash, your performance would be way above average. Do you see the picture? In the end you could have dollar cost averaged, for example putting 1,000 pounds per month into either fund, and made an ex-

tremely nice return over the last decades. Or you could have waited for a crash but missed the bottom significantly, and still done extremely well. This matters far more than which fund within an asset class you invest in.

So how will you know when it is a good time to invest in either of these funds? The answer lies in the overall valuation of the developed world's stock

markets, and the S&P 500 is the most watched index by most traders even though the funds we are discussing would be investing in FTSE-based stocks. I would set a target on the price to earnings ratio of the S&P 500 at something like 12 to start nibbling (say 20 per cent or so of a position you hope to build from your cash holdings), and go in heavy when it dips below a P/E of 10. Historically you would have never gone wrong buying at these valuations even if you were still off the absolute bottom a little.

This strategy is good because a bull market always ends with valuations over 20, meaning even if corporate profits stagnated, which they never do over the medium term, you will likely double your money in the next bull market. The last few bulls have gone on to silly valuations, but setting a target to sell say half when the 20 level is reached and then scaling out at levels like 25 or 30 would have never steered you wrong.

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.

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Target your customer, not your competitor



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

WE SEE it all the time in marketing, company X trying to prove they are better than company Y, engaging in tit-for-tat marketing or social media battles trying to out-compete the competition.

Now, while there is the theory that any publicity it still beneficial, I would argue it is far better to engage your potential customers directly and build trust and rapport, than worry about what your competitors are doing.

The economic theory is simple, competition is healthy and leads to better use of resources and better value for consumers. So the reality is competition is going to be around forever.

So instead of focusing on what your competitor does, you



Stop trying to prove you're better than the competition, just focus on your clients. Image: Rosaura Ochoa

should focus on what you do and how you can provide the best service, product or experience to your customer.

Work out what are your strengths, or your Unique Selling Propositions (USP) and what it is that your target market really wants. At the end of the day it is them that make the decision on who they buy from,

so it is much better to align your focus with their needs.

If you can then match those needs with your USP then you are going to be a much more appealing proposition to the end-user.

So don't lose sight of what your goal is or what you are really in business for. Remember the people that make

the most money are solving peoples' problems better than everyone else.

Simon Wetherell is a social media expert and lawyer. He trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the social media industry. For more information: PhuketOnlineMarketingSchool.com or call him on 095-085 3355.

Vanich Farm promotes agritourism

By Chutharat Plerin

THOUGH agricultural tourism hasn't really developed enough fruits to make it a serious market segment on the island, that hasn't stopped the government push for exploring yet another avenue for potential profits.

In 2014, then-Phuket Governor Maitri Inthasut threw his weight behind elephants, goats and pineapples in the hopes of seeing growth in Phuket agritourism and its One Tambon One Province (OTOP) products.

Joining those projects, the island's newest agricultural tourist attraction – an organic sweetcorn farm – opened its doors at a 45-rai plot of land in Rassada on Sunday.

Vanich Farm is a welcome addition to the island's tourism sector, said Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul at the opening ceremony.

/ We do not see much agritourism on the island, as Phuket is known for its beautiful beaches and nightlife. /

"We do not see much 'agritourism' on the island, as Phuket is known for its beautiful beaches and night life," Ms Kobkarn said. "This will be an opportunity for visitors to see different aspects of Phuket."

Apirak Vanich, chief executive officer of the Vanich Group, explained that the farm is the only place on the island that grows sweetcorn.

"It is not easy to grow corn in the south because it rains a lot," Mr Apirak said. "We have ex-

perts overseeing the process to ensure that our corn is organic."

Vanich sweetcorn products are available under the brand name 'Daily Fresh' and provide a variety of goods, including beauty products. They can be purchased at the farm or locations where OTO products are sold.

"There are sheep and rabbits on the farm to entertain tourists. Additionally, visitors will have a chance to plant vegetables, as well as see the agricultural process in the farm's showroom,"



Local officials join Vanich Farm for its opening ceremony on October 25. Photo: PR Dept

Mr Apirak said.

The facility will be a learning center for children and adults to see how the farm-to-table process is achieved, Ms Kobkarn said.

Vanich Farm is located behind the Rassada Municipality Office and open from 10am to 6pm daily.

Tickets are 100 baht for Thai nationals and 200 baht for for-

eigners. Children and the elderly will receive a 30 per cent discount.

For more information, call 076-525 619.



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*Dress Code : Smart Casual

Renaissance five years strong



TEAMING UP TO CELEBRATE: (from L-R) Andy Chalachon, director of rooms; Fann Kulchada, marketing and communications manager; Sander Looijen, general manager; Jocia Ramaye, Jean-Marie Tilleul and Pikun from the Belgium Bakery.

Renaissance Phuket Resort & Spa held its 5th anniversary party on October 22 under the theme of 'Discovery of Art'. The event showcased the work of five different local artists along the beachfront.



Romadon Kosane gave a performance showcasing his unique painting style.

Amari Phuket goes Veg

Amari Phuket recently visited Kathu Shrine to donate food items to local people to celebrate the annual Vegetarian Festival. Among the items were jasmine rice, sugar, vegetable oil and water.



FEELING GOOD: (from L-R) Aekanong Klongthanakom, Amari Phuket's manager of learning and development; Chonnanan Prakarn, director of Human Resources; Tipaporn Koonphol, deputy general manager; Poonsak Tantavech, a member of the Kathu Shrine Committee; Pierre-Andre Pelletier, Amari Phuket vice president and area general manager, South Thailand; and Noppadol Muthaphal, laundry manager.

Tattoo Challenge at The Kee

The KEE Sky Lounge at The Kee Resort & Spa hosted 'The KEE's Tattoo Challenge Season 1 – sponsored by Celebrity Ink Tattoo' on October 23.

Activities included live tattooing demonstrations, tattoo competitions with categories such as, Best Color and Best Bamboo, lucky draws and live music.

FLANKED BY EXCITED GUESTS: Managing Director of The KEE Resort & Spa Surasak Somnam welcomes guests.



BROADCASTING PHUKET TO THE WORLD

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

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

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

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Cassia Phuket Grand Opening

Laguna Phuket held its grand opening of Cassia Phuket, the newest addition under the Banyan Tree Group, on October 20.

The hotel's concept is: Live, Laugh, Love Your Way.

The Cassia brand will also be spreading its wings around the world with projects developing in Indonesia and China.



Founder and Executive Chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, Ho Kwon Ping.



Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Phuket Office Anoma Wongyai (left) congratulates Cassia Phuket General Manager Ilias Vamvakas.

Phuket Classic 2015

World champion female bodybuilder Wilaiporn Wannaklang hosted a press conference at the New Dara Hotel Phuket announcing the dates for the upcoming Phuket Classic 2015. The event will be held on November 8 at Central Festival Phuket.



World female body building champion Wilaiporn Wannaklang (left) and Model Physique competitor Svetlana Svarovskaia. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn

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Rotary sees fruits of fun-raising

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB) is seeing the fruits of their 'fun-raising' event at Centara Karon last November ripen.

The full 900,000 baht raised has been spent on improving the Phang Nga Home and Life Foundation, which was established in 2006 in order to care for children who had lost their parents in the tsunami.

"We spent the money in four parts with the purpose of improving the Home and Life Foundation," said Larry Amsden, when he and fellow Rotary Club member Brad Kenny paid a visit

to the foundation earlier this month to oversee some of the projects that are nearly finished.

"We first built a wall to prevent landslides at the foundation. Then we built the aquaponic garden and bakery kitchen."

The final step in the project will be to improve the landscape surrounding the foundation.

The wall and aquaponic garden have already been completed, while the bakery is expected to be finished by the end of the month when landscaping will begin.

"Using 200,000 baht from the fundraiser, we started to build the 40 meter rock wall to prevent landslides," Bhudit Maneejak, founder and foundation manager, told the *Gazette*. "We started in February and it was completed in March."

The next project that came to fruition was the aquaponic garden, which cost 60,000 baht and was completed in May.

"The bakery kitchen is expected to be finished in October and cost 350,000 baht," Mr Bhudit said.

The remainder of the funds raised have been allocated to improving the landscape surrounding the foundation.

"In November, one year after the [fundraising] event, we will see big changes," said Mr Kenny.

"The reason that we built the



The bakery kitchen is expected to be finished by the end of this month.



Home and Life Foundation founder Bhudit Maneejak (left) shows RCoPB representative Brad Kenny what progress has been made in the projects that were funded by the Rotary Club.

bakery kitchen and vegetable garden is so that the orphans can make money to support their own lives, rather than waiting for donations."

Children who stay at the foundation are able to sell

baked goods in their shop, as well as eat and sell the vegetables that are grown on the property.

"I think it is a good use of money and a good start," Mr Kenny added.

Children who are now 18 years old or older are still welcome to stay at the foundation under the condition that they pay a small accommodation fee that goes toward helping the younger orphans.

Soi Dog full of kittens



The facility will soon be inundated with kittens. Photo: Soi Dog Foundation

HOTTER days signify the beginning of cat breeding season, when thousands of kittens will be born.

Many of these kittens will unfortunately end up in shelters or on the streets.

Every year Soi Dog receives a surplus of kittens waiting to be given to loving homes. All kittens are sterilized and vaccinated with no charge to the adopter. However, donations are always welcome.

If you would like to meet the kittens, you may do so at the Soi Dog Foundation in Mai Khao from Monday through Friday.

Any questions about the adoptions of cats or dogs can be sent to cristy@soidog.org or calling 093 685 1332 to make an appointment.

Tours of the facility run Monday through Friday at 9:30am, 11am and 1:30pm.

– *Phuket Gazette*

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

November 22-29. Challenge Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest

A week-long carnival of multisport fun and tri-related activities for you to enjoy at Laguna Phuket.

Join the Laguna Phuket Triathlon (22 Nov) and the Challenge Laguna Phuket (29 Nov).

For more information, visit challengelagunaphuket.com

November 14-15. Affiliate Marketing Mastery Workshops

Affiliate Marketing is simply making money selling other people's products.

After this training course you will be completely set up and ready to start making money through your own personal websites and sales funnel.

For more information visit <http://bit.ly/AffiliatePhuket> or call 095-0853 355.

Pup of the Week



Maggie is looking for a new owner. Photo: Bodhi Shelter

HELLO everyone, I'm Maggie.

I am a spunky 1.5-year-old scruffy dog who is full of life.

And guess what? I am available for adoption at the Bodhi Shelter in Phuket!

I love other dogs, however it is just too overwhelming for me to be in a space with 130 dogs around me all of the time. I am looking for a new owner or family who would be willing to train, walk and love me

as one of their own.

I am so full of love and just waiting for my perfect home. I would like to find someone who is active, has experience with dogs and maybe even a doggie playmate or two. I am even good with cats.

– *Maggie*

If you are interested in adopting Maggie or another dog, please contact Tina 084-628 8077 or athenatina@gmail.com

Battling through the haze

Aussie navigates Phuket waters in paddle against child abuse

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

AS PART of his battle against child abuse, Damien Rider successfully circumnavigated Phuket on his standup paddle board (SUP) earlier this month, despite the dense Indonesian haze leaving him lost at sea.

Mr Rider, a victim of child abuse, first caught the media's attention with Paddle Against Child Abuse (PACA) when he completed an 800 kilometer prone paddle through the shark infested waters of the Gold Coast to Bondi Beach.

Though not as dramatic as being knocked from his board by a great white shark, Mr Rider faced a number of different challenges as he paddled around Phuket.

"Definitely the most challenging part was absolutely not knowing where to go. When that haze came in, I didn't know what I was aiming for," Mr Rider said.

"The haze was definitely a massive factor. I got lost at sea twice for about an hour. I couldn't see land at all, not at all.

"It was kind of eerie when I was out there, because I'd start hearing these things and the water was making these noises and I was just waiting for some mon-



Damien Rider digs deep as he makes his way around Phuket. Photo: Damien Rider

ster to come out of the mist."

Mr Rider navigated during the trip by going from headland to headland. A single navigational error would more than double the distance paddled as he went around islands on Phuket's calm east coast and was occasionally lured into bays that he then had to paddle back out of.

The community that Mr Rider has found at Phuket Cleanse and in the southern end of Phuket, as well as his own mental space following a newfound pride in himself, set the

stage for a very different game during the paddle.

"It was completely different than my last paddle. Last paddle, there were a lot of hidden demons in my head and emotional baggage that I had to get through," Mr Rider said. "It was good for me to see that all that was gone and my PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] was gone. There wasn't one time that I had a negative thought about my past or anything out there."

Mr Rider's childhood was filled with abuse from the age

of six onward. He regularly attempted to flee it: sleeping in rock caves and under jetties – anywhere that he could escape to.

However, during this paddle, his time was eaten up with thoughts on navigation, looking at the stunning landscape as it appeared from behind the haze, listening to the sound of the water on his board and planning on how to ration his water and food.

Over the four days it took Mr Rider to circumnavigate the island, he spent a total of about

26 hours on the board.

"It was a lot easier than I thought it would be. All the training leading up to the event definitely made a difference. And all that's down to Phuket Cleanse making it easy for me," Mr Rider said.

Now, Mr Rider is hooked on Phuket.

"I've found that it [Phuket] is a really good base for training for me, or anyone really, especially around Rawai.

"There are a lot of people here for the same reason: to get healthy and train – it's that fit, healthy lifestyle."

Since his arrival on Phuket, Mr Rider has become a role model to many youngsters and adults on the island. During his stay, he has visited a number of schools to talk about his personal experiences with child abuse.

"I'm just a regular guy having a go at trying to change a situation that I have experienced. People don't have to paddle all kinds of stupid distances to make a difference," Mr Rider said. "Dedicate something you are passionate about each day to the victims of child abuse. You don't have to announce it. Just start within yourself."



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Asia's growing elite begins to set sail



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

FOLLOWING a successful summer season of boat shows in Europe – Cannes Yachting Festival, Southampton Boat Show, Monaco Yacht Show, Genoa Boat Show and so on – the marine world now turns its attention towards South East Asia.

South East Asia – and Asia as a whole – is seen as the industry's growth engine. The future. It's where marine brands are re-focusing their marketing efforts, opening up new branches and regional offices, and they are targeting the growing middle classes and elite that are developing a taste for the boating lifestyle.

And with this attention comes Asia's boat show season.

Boat shows are not new to this area, but their number has increased considerably in recent



The growing number of elite yachties draw attention to Asia's upcoming boatshow season. Photo: BlueiProd

years alongside the interest in, and growth of, boating in the region. First up in the South East Asian boating calendar is the Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show (26-29 November) in Pattaya, Thailand. Now in its fourth year, the show has grown to become an important regional event and this year the 41-meter *Ocean Emerald* superyacht is the highlight.

Overlapping is the inaugural Malaysia Yacht Show (27-29

November) in Port Dickson – organized by Megawatt (who also organize the Indonesia Yacht Show). Expect to see this show gain traction in the growing Malaysian marketplace.

Moving into early 2016 is South East Asia's longest running show, the Phuket International Boat Show (7-10 January) held at Royal Phuket Marina. Thirteen years on, the show has evolved into a key fixture on the region's marine

calendar and draws visitors and exhibitors from around the world.

Following the Phuket International Boat Show is the newest show on the circuit, the Thailand Yacht Show (11-14 February) at Ao Po Grand Marina. Organized by the people behind the Singapore Yacht Show, the inaugural Show will be held with a strong superyacht charter focus.

Shows will then follow in Singapore (7-10 April), China

(7-10 April and 18-21 June), Hong Kong (29 April - 2 May), Indonesia (30-31 July), all helping to position Asia as the 'new' frontier of the global marine industry.

Even when there is not a show in Phuket, it is still the marine playground of Asia. It's the place where owners come to cruise, or where they base their boats so they benefit from the hundreds of islands surrounding Phuket. Equally appealing are the stunning lifestyle facilities that the island has to offer, which together make Phuket the destination of choice for yachting aficionados in Asia.

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

Yellow card 'unlikely' to be withdrawn this December



Officials search vessels for any illegal activities. Photo: Gazette file

THE European Union is unlikely to revoke the 'yellow card' it issued to Thailand over illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices, when it reconsiders the issue in December this year, according to industry sources.

The 28-member EU was earlier supposed to review Thailand's status this month after having given the country six months – since April this year – to solve the IUU problems. However, the review was recently postponed to the end of this year.

Given the various legal and other measures taken by Thai authorities and the time-consuming process of effective implementation, it is likely that the yellow card will stay for another six months, according to sources.

Another scenario is that the

yellow card will be withdrawn in December if the EU is satisfied with the measures taken by Thailand.

Over the past six months, Thai fishery exporters have faced some impacts from enforcement of the stringent rules on fishing practices, resulting in a shortage of raw materials and a slight drop in export sales.

However, the industry is optimistic, expecting the hard work done so far to solve the IUU problems to bear fruit with the removal of the EU yellow card so that business may return to normal soon.

Poj Aramwattananont, president of Thai Frozen Foods Association, said Thai authorities are heading in the right direction and the EU is expected to withdraw the yellow card soon.

–The Nation

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See through the Indonesian haze



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

TWO days ago as I gazed out from my third floor balcony, I could just make out the familiar silhouette of the Mingmongkol Buddha atop the Nakkerd Hills. Today, shrouded in dense haze, it has vanished from view. Inevitably, as the haze has thickened, so the air pollution levels associated with it have climbed. At the time of writing, they are running at 121 micrograms per cubic meter – above safe levels.

You might well ask “Why is it happening?” although a more pertinent question would be “Why is it allowed to happen?” First a few facts.

Every year in parts of Indonesia, notably South, East Sumatra and Riau, fires are deliberately started in order to clear forested land for commercial plantations. Mostly designated for palm oil, they are also used to cultivate trees such as eucalyptus for the paper industry.

The method is simplicity itself: so-called slash and burn – though often the gangs involved don’t even bother to slash vegetation or chain-saw the trees, as it is cheaper to light fires, indiscriminately, and often at night. Traditionally this arson was practiced by small farmers. Now as big corporations have got into the act, the whole destructive process has intensified. Vast tracts of land are now involved and the smoke has long since blown across to the neighboring coun-

tries of Malaysia and Singapore. Now it has extended to Thailand and even to the Philippines.

Worse, the process is accelerating: As the torched land becomes drier with no trees and roots to retain moisture, it will burn with increased intensity next time around. Add to that the fact that much of the land area consists of peat, which is highly flammable and can burn underground for months, and you have some sense of the magnitude of the problem.

Of course, the haze is an eyesore and an inconvenience, and has led to flight cancellations and school closures. The damage to natural habitats is probably irreversible and already a number of orangutans have had to be rescued. But for humans, the health hazard is the overriding concern. Besides minor irritations to eyes and nose, there are more significant health issues. Measured by indices that gauge the particulate matter in haze and its attendant gases - sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and ozone, these toxic constituents can enter deep into the lungs, causing respiratory damage.

What is being done to stop these conflagrations? Clearly all too little and too late. Indonesia’s attempts to douse the fires by dumping water and sending in the military to help the firefighters are barely scratching the surface of the problem. Both Indonesia and Malaysia have been seeding rain clouds in an endeavor to induce rain.

But despite the President’s



A thick haze brought on by Indonesian fires blankets Phuket. Photo: Phuket Reporter Club

pledge to crack down on the incendiaries, little has happened. Admittedly policing the vast areas of Sumatra is difficult. But there seems to be few effective penalties for illegal burning or for fire damage liability. So far, ten corporations have been named as suspects, not all of them Indonesian. But

where corporations are concerned, you can bet your bottom dollar that corruption and graft are getting in the way of genuine progress.

Ironically, and as if things were not already difficult enough, the haze itself helps to inhibit the heavy tropical rains which, more than anything else,

might douse the wildfires.

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



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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Amari Phuket scores big at TTG

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

TAKING home the 'Best Beach Resort in Asia-Pacific' at the 26th annual Travel Trade Gazette (TTG) Awards 2015 in Bangkok was a clear sign to Pierre-Andre Pelletier, Onyx vice-president and south Thailand general manager, that the Amari Phuket was on the right path as it goes toe-to-toe with other high-end developments on the island.

"This is an amazing recognition from the travel industry for the Amari Phuket and ONYX Hospitality Group. It means that our renovations and recent Ocean Wing extension are well received and that we are doing the right thing," said Mr Pelletier this week. "Today, our resort features 380 rooms or units and has 412 rooms in total. The new Ocean Wing and its clubhouse have received superb exposure and was immediately rewarded by extraordinary feedback and online reviews from our guests."

It is the Amari's unique location at the far southern end of Phuket's well-known Patong Beach that contributed to it winning this particular award, explained Mr Pelletier.

"Amari Phuket is located at the tip of one of the most famous beaches in Thailand. It also has the best location in Patong, which combines the



BEST BEACH RESORT ASIA-PACIFIC DEVELOPED IN PHUKET: (L to R) Michael Chow, group publisher of TTG Travel Trade; Mario Hardy, CEO of PATA; and Pierre-Andre Pelletier, Onyx vice-president and south Thailand general manager, at the award ceremony.

best of accessibility and seclusion," he said.

However, the success isn't only the renovations and 'location, location, location'.

"For us, there is really only one way to stay on top of our market. It is by consistently

providing excellent, quality hospitality to all of our guests and ensuring that every guest is satisfied when staying with us," he said.

Overall, there was a downward performance record for resorts during the first half of this

year, particularly in the high-end segment that the Amari Phuket finds itself in. However, Mr Pelletier explained that it has been out-performing its competitors, enjoying greater occupancy and average room rates.

Nonetheless, the Amari

Phuket and other classic high-end Phuket resorts have had to continue to develop as they cater to emerging markets and older markets begin to dry up.

"Amari Phuket has developed preferred partnerships with key operators from leading source markets such as Australia, the United Kingdom and China. The India market keeps developing, and demand from neighboring Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong have been steadily growing, particularly for short stays of around three nights on average," Mr Pelletier explains. "We are also seeing growth in the South Africa and Middle East markets as the appeal of Phuket as a holiday destination widens."

Following 30 years of success, the Amari Phuket will continue to thrive as Phuket itself grows as a tourism destination, Mr Pelletier stated.

Arrival numbers continue to grow year on year, with leading airlines increasing the frequency of direct flights to the province. Additionally, local authorities are making attempts at developing the island's infrastructure, most notably a light-rail system and a number of underpasses that are hoped to eventually relieve traffic congestion on the island.

"Overall the outlook for Phuket is good," Mr Pelletier says.

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Developers add to govt stimulus with promotional campaigns

PROPERTY firms are launching promotional campaigns to cash in on demand awakened by the government's stimulus package, including discounts of three to five per cent and free furniture.

Sansiri has launched a 'Now or Never' campaign for its 62 residential projects nationwide. Homes range in price from 1.5 million baht to 40mn baht. The campaign offers discounts of .99 per cent, making the homes even more affordable after the Cabinet approved cutting the residential-transfer fee from two per cent to just 0.01 per cent.

Normally, the company has to pay half of the transfer fee, with the rest paid by the customer. When the Cabinet approved the reduction, Sansiri decided to use this to offer a .99 per cent discount. For example,



Pruksa Real Estate CEO Lersak Chuladesa. Photo: The Nation

for a home priced at 1.5mn baht, the company will discount that by 14,850.

The campaign will run from now until November 30.

"We have homes ready for sale worth 9 billion baht for this campaign," said the company's chief operating officer, Wanchak Buranasiri.

Quality Houses plans to launch promotions next month to support the government's

stimulus package, chief executive officer Chatchart Sitthiphan said.

Pruksa Real Estate launched 'Pruksa Best Buy Moment' on Thursday. The campaign offers special discounts to boost sales in the final quarter of the year.

"We are launching this campaign to support the government's stimulus package to boost the property market in the last quarter of this year," said the company's chief operating officer, Lersak Chuladesa.

He added that the company had already transferred 17,585 residential units from 170 projects nationwide, worth 54.67bn baht. The campaign is part of the company's aim to boost pre-sales above the early estimates of 47bn baht by the end of this year.

— The Nation

Ultimate holiday villa opulence



Across the Land

By Amy Koh

RECENTLY we were invited to view a brand new luxury eight-bedroom villa solely for holiday rentals. I was thinking to myself before the viewing, now who would want to rent such a big villa and what purpose would it serve. Isn't a villa with eight bedrooms just a little decadent? Well apparently I was mistaken and that villa is now heavily booked until next year. Mind you, the villa has some interesting facilities and services, much more than a normal holiday villa.

The villa is modern in design and over 3,000 square meters in total and set over four levels. It has one master bedroom with seven guest bedrooms all en-suite with sea views from every room. There is also a glass elevator for guests from the garage right to the top level of the villa. For all those who must stay connected to the internet at all times, they would be glad to know that there is high speed fiber optic Wi-Fi throughout the villa, including



The market for bigger luxury villas is growing while availability remains low.

indoor and outdoor areas. On top of that there's a dedicated office with a 24" Mac computer available for the guests to use.

For entertainment, there is a Sonos/Bose sound system in the dining, living, sala, pool and rooftop areas. The dining area has a table for 16 for a sit down dinner with a chef to cook the meals. There's a 65" LED television with a large sala sofa bed in the spacious living

area, and if that's not enough for the TV/movie/game buff, there is a dedicated home theater room with THX sound system and nine electronically controlled seats with a hard drive of hundreds of blue ray movies as well as a PlayStation 4, complete with games.

For the outdoor kind, there is a 42-meter fresh water infinity swimming pool with a built-in Jacuzzi with six beds

in the water and another 16 around the swimming pool. There is also an adjacent children's pool for the kids with an additional plunge pool on the roof top with a Jacuzzi. On the roof top is also a large open bar and garden with BBQ facilities and a great area for a party. If you are not impressed yet, there's also a golf driving range, golf putting green, a pool/billiard table, profes-

sional bowling alley, table tennis, a professional fitness center fitted with a treadmill, recumbent bike, elliptical trainer and so on.

The villa is also staffed by a professional villa manager, chef, chauffeur, waitress, technician, night security guard and three live-in maids to cater to your every whim.

Funnily enough, after the viewing we started to receive inquiries and requests for villas with 6-8 bedrooms for a small company getaway, a birthday party for a large group of friends, a think-tank seminar for top management and just a weekend getaway among friends. So... there is demand for the bigger villas and, at the moment, there are only a handful of such villas available, so it wouldn't surprise us if there will be a few more 'big' villas coming onto the holiday rental market soon.

For more information, or to book the above villa, email phuket@engelvoelkers.com

Amy Koh is the sales manager of Engel & Voelkers Phuket. Visit www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket.

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FOR RENT**

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**4 / 5-BEDROOM
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Project Owner : Arnawat Limited. Company's registered no. 0105546144865. Head office : 475 Sri Ayudthaya Road, Thanon Phayathai, Rajthawi, Bangkok, 10400. Registered capital(THB) : 10,000,000.00, Paid up capital(THB) : 2,500,000.00 (as of date 3 Jun 2013). The President : Mr. Srettha Thavisin. The Project : The Deck, Land title deed no. 15589, approximately area 5-0-40 Rai, Located at Rat-U-Thit 200 Years Road, Patong, Kathu, Phuket Province, as a Condominium of 7 storey(ies), 2 building(s), total of 270 unit(s), (for residential: 270 units, and for commercial: - units). The Land and building have been mortgaged with Siam Commercial Bank PLC., in the process to submit the building permission. Construction will be started in Jan 2014 and expected to be completed in Mar 2015 which will later be registered as the condominium. The unit owner shall pay sinking fund, common fee, tax and other fees as prescribed by the Project Owner or the Condominium Juristic Person subjected to the Condominium law. *Company's conditions apply / Featured photography in the advertisement consists of photography with simulated atmosphere and simulated graphic. Should you have any questions regarding any photography, please contact our customer service staffs or visit our projects' site. Call 1685.

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