

Phuket Gazette

November 28 - December 4, 2015

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72 Pages / 20 Baht

‘WE MUST STOP ANCHORS BEING DROPPED ON REEFS’

Hope for Phi Phi



Development and mass tourism are having a devastating effect on Phi Phi National Park's marine ecosystem. Photo: Jeremie Schatz

Management plan put in place to protect marine treasure

THE snowballing environmental disaster at Phi Phi will be curbed once new measures and additional funding come through, confirmed national park policy adviser and environmental expert Thon Thamrongnawasawat.

Damage done by the tourism industry was seen at 13 of the 14 marine areas studied within Hat Noppharat Thara – Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park.

“There were 12 spots where the corals were seriously damaged and one spot where the damage was mid-level,” said Dr Thon.

“Only one spot still supports a healthy marine ecosystem, and that’s because it is a secret spot. Otherwise, it too would have been ruined by the tourism industry.”

The first step in saving the marine eco-

system within the national park is to put an end to boats dropping anchor on coral reefs and tour operators allowing clients to feed fish, explained Dr Thon.

“In order to manage the park effectively, we have established six zones,” Dr Thon said.

The management areas are defined as: protective, where no boats or tourists are allowed; marine life improvement, for coral restoration and coral...

Continued on Page 4

Beaches need 24-hour help centers, says vice governor

PLANS are underway to establish 24-hour tourist service centers at more than a dozen popular Phuket beaches.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



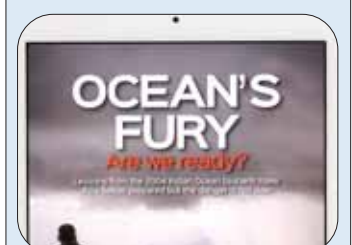
Figuring out ‘what SUP’ in niche market, independent retail on the island.

PROPERTY



Value of renting luxury holiday villas vs staying at resorts and hotels.

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Asia News Network / Phuket Gazette tsunami publication wins gold.





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LOCAL NEWS
Briefly

Honeymooner dies after Koh Hei dive lesson

OFFICIALS are investigating the death of a Korean honeymooner who died after an introductory diving lesson at Koh Hei on November 17.

Hyunju Ahn, 36, informed instructors that she was having trouble in the water and fell unconscious shortly after being brought to shore.

Ms Ahn was pronounced dead on arrival at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

More than 100 guns seized in crackdown

REGION 8 police seized more than 100 firearms in a week-long crackdown ahead of the Loy Krathong festivities.

In total, police collected 119 firearms, 732 rounds of ammunition and arrested 864 people for drug and firearms related crimes.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Triathletes dominate at Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest



VIDEO REPORT: More than 1,300 athletes crowded Laguna Phuket last weekend to participate in the 22nd Laguna Phuket Triathlon. Germany's two-time Ironman 70.3 world champion Michael Raelert took the top position for men with a time of 2:30:14, while Swiss pro Simone Braendli took home the win for women, finishing in 2:48:04. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Laguna Phuket

UK Ambassador still concerned with tuk-tuks

TUK-TUKS and taxis continue to undermine the progress being made in Phuket's tourism

industry, the British Ambassador to Thailand Mark Kent told the *Gazette*.

"Some of the behavior and prices we've seen from the tuk-tuk or taxi drivers has led to a fall in confidence and a drop in the number of tourists because they're a little bit scared about

what is happening [with public transport]," said Amb Kent.

- Chutharat Plerin

Riot suspect apprehended

A SECOND police station riot

suspect was arrested for unrelated crimes on November 19.

Noppon Songkram, 31, was netted in possession of an illegal firearm during a police raid in Srisoonthon.

He was charged with possession of an illegal firearm, creating an illegal blockade and gathering 10 or more people together for violent acts.

- Chutharat Plerin

Police bust 13 during drug-bus delivery pickup

PHUKET Provincial Police arrested 13 suspects as they picked up 41 kilograms of kratom on November 17.

Officers waited at the office of Srisuchart Transport (1989) Co Ltd after receiving a tip-off that packages of kratom would be transported from Bangkok on one of the company's buses.

All were charged with possession of a Category 5 drug.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

OrBorTor boss sees big lawsuit

Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor) President Ma-ann Samran shrugged off a 10-million-baht lawsuit filed against him for alleged dereliction of duty.

A judge will hand down the sentence on December 2.

- Chutharat Plerin



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Tourist help centers to open on Phuket beaches

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

PLANS are underfoot to establish 24-hour tourist service centers at more than a dozen popular Phuket beaches, Phuket Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul announced on November 20.

"We all know that millions of tourists visit our island every year. It is our responsibility to come together and ensure their safety and security while they are on holiday here," said V/Gov Prajiad.

"We cannot deny that there have been incidents in the past when tourists were being targeted by criminals, leading to loss of property, injuries or even death.

"The establishment of these 24-hour tourist service centers will help visitors to get in touch with the proper authorities and hopefully reduce the number of issues tourists face when on holiday here."

The vice governor proposed the centers be set up at the following locations: Kata Beach, Karon Beach, Nai Harn Beach, Nui Beach, Patong Beach, Kamala Beach, Kalim Beach, Tri Trang



V/Gov Prajiad plans to open 24-hour tourist centers at more than a dozen beaches. Photo: Gazette file

Beach, Naithon Beach, Nai Yang Beach, Bang Tao Beach, Surin Beach, Layan Beach, Saikaew Beach and Mai Khao Beach, as well as Koh Racha, Koh Hei, Koh Maithon and Koh Naka.

Orders were given to local government bodies to inspect

the proposed areas in their jurisdiction to establish which spot on the beaches or islands would be best for the center. They were to submit their findings to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Phuket Office by November 25.

"Once we have a more con-

crete plan, we can start moving on getting the budget necessary for the project," V/Gov Prajiad said. "I am sure the centers will help decrease crime in the areas where they are established and boost tourists' confidence in their own safety."

Jet-ski touts are harming tourism, says Dutch Amb



Ambassador Karel Hartogh

JET-SKI safety issues were again pushed to the front line as they remain a serious concern on the island, explained the Netherlands' ambassador to Thailand.

"Most people on the island are not fond of jet-skis. They want to know if Patong is going to change its policy. If not, they will look for different beaches," said Karel Hartogh, the Netherlands' Ambassador to Thailand.

"I think the number of tourists coming from the Netherlands – which has always been huge – is dropping year after year. It's a shame."

Mark Kent, British Ambassador to Thailand, backed Amb Hartogh's position.

"The important thing is not just to have regulations. You must ensure that these regulations are enforced and that jet-ski owners act in an appropriate manner," Amb Kent said.

– Chutharat Plerin



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Attempt to save Phi Phi national park

Continued from Page 1

...nurseries, which will see only limited boat traffic; special tourist, where only five or six mooring buoys will be established to limit visitor numbers; tourist; crowded tourist; and super crowded tourist.

“We divided up the park into these areas based on the tourist numbers we are already seeing at these locations,” Dr Thon said. “With established areas, officers will know exactly what measures need to be implemented and maintained at each location. Tourists will still be able to come and enjoy the beauty of Phi Phi and we can still earn money, but it will all be well controlled.”

In addition to drafting and submitting an action plan to the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), Dr Thon has requested more boats, buoys and staff.

The proposal requests that three additional patrol boats, 125 buoys and about 15 more officers be dedicated to the care of the park.

“The national park covers more than 200,000 rai. However, they currently only have four officers and two small boats, which is just unbelievable,” said Dr Thon.

Dr Thon’s efforts follow a two-month, national-level investigation by the DNP launched in May that uncovered unnerving discrepancies in the number of visitors to the park and the amount of money collected as entry fees that could officially be accounted for.

“On May 17, only one day before DNP officers arrived, the amount collected for the Phi Phi National Park entrance fees was recorded at only about 80,000 baht,” Dr Thon said. “However, just one day after that, the amount rose to more than half



The tide runs out at one of the most popular beaches on Phi Phi Don. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

a million baht. During the two-month investigation in June and July, we even saw days where the amount collected was about one million baht.”

As part of the investigation, Chaithat Boonphupantanti, chief of the national park, was transferred to the position of Director of Watershed Conservation. The new park chief was named as Sorayut Tansathian.

Dr Thon has requested that a new national park fee system be implemented throughout Thailand in order to prevent money from disappearing into the hands of so many corrupt park officers.

“By doing this, we can ensure that all fees are being collected properly. Also, the DNP can better regulate the number of tourists visiting cer-

tain fragile ecosystems in national parks,” said Dr Thon.

“Local national park officers will still be sent out to check that tourists have bought tickets, but will not be permitted to sell tickets.”

Dr Thon confirmed that he will continue his research at the national park and push forward further proposals to the DNP as necessary.

The Second COLORECTAL DISEASE SYMPOSIUM
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Phuket is hosting yet another international conference with worldwide participation. Numerous world-class speakers will converge to break new ground in colorectal disease care through hands-on workshops, live surgery, interactive lectures, panel discussions, and multidisciplinary symposia.

Highlight topics include:

- Multidisciplinary approach to colorectal cancer
- Advanced therapeutic colonoscopy
- Colorectal imaging
- Minimal access colorectal surgery including robotics and laparoscopy
- Advanced surgical management of fecal incontinence and constipation
- Debates in the treatment of hemorrhoids

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Governor hosts five ambassadors

PHUKET Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada sat down with ambassadors from five countries this week to review a number of issues affecting citizens from their nations.

The ambassadors in attendance were from Canada, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Some of the major issues raised included marine and road safety, prison conditions, drug use and visa overstays.

“It was a good atmosphere,” said Philip Calvert, Canada’s

ambassador to Thailand.

“We discussed a whole range of issues that were put on the table. Tourists’ safety is a big issue for all of us, and of course we want our own tourists to respect Thai laws.”

“We want to see our tourists wearing helmets, but sometimes we want to see stricter enforcement of these laws.”

Gov Chamroen confirmed that the ideas and suggestions put forward by the ambassadors were going to be taken on board.

– Chutharat Plerin

100 YEARS OF PHSST, FIZZZZ CLINK CLINK GLUG, GLUG...AHHHH

HAADTHIP

Locals victorious in fight to save Nai Harn trees

By Chutharat Plerin

THE plan to construct the controversial Nai Harn Movie Museum was dashed at a public meeting last week, confirmed Rawai Mayor Aroon Solos.

“We of course listened to what the community had to say,” Mr Aroon told the *Gazette*.

Mr Aroon explained that after the public hearing, it was clear that a new location would need to be found for the 40-million-baht facility.

“Though I was not able to attend the meeting, I understand that the consensus was that the community did not want the project to move forward, despite it having already been approved,” said Santi Pawai, director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Phuket Office.

More than a hundred Thai and foreign members of the southern Phuket community joined the meeting at 7pm on November 20 to voice their concern about the project,



Locals wrapped saffron cloth around the trees. Photo: Sayjai Mueller

which had been slated to start earlier this month.

The project came into the limelight when a number of trees in the beachfront grove at Nai Harn were marked to be cut down to prevent their roots damaging the yet-to-be con-

structed facility.

The fast growing trees are about 30 years old and very important to the community, explained 41-year-old Sayjai Mueller. Locals set out to prevent the destruction of the trees by wrapping them with pieces

of saffron-colored fabric and protesting the planned construction.

In response, Mr Santi agreed to have the construction company redesign the building in order to avoid harming to the trees. However, even this did not meet with local support.

“Both Thais and foreigners joined the meeting to tell the government that we don’t want any changes to our beautiful beach,” said Ms Sayjai.

“If the museum was built, our narrow roads would be inundated with buses and cars. I don’t want to see our community end up like Promthep Cape, which is overcrowded.

“Think about it. Even if only five buses a day came to our beach, it would be ruined. Who in the community could enjoy it then? We would no longer be ranked as one of the best beaches in Asia.”

In February, Nai Harn Beach made TripAdvisor’s list of the top 10 beaches in Asia.



Divers collected 80 per cent of the trash. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Gov takes hard line on sea trash

PHUKET Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada demanded that action be taken against sea dumpers following divers removing more than 400kg of rubbish from the seafloor off Karon Beach.

“About 80 per cent of the trash was removed from the sea on Monday. We will clean up the rest on December 3 as planned,” said Governor Chamroen. “I understand that this particular trash was washed up from somewhere else due to the currents. Nonetheless, we must put an end to sea dumping, and must hold those responsible accountable.”

In response, Phuripat Theerakulpisut, chief of the Phuket Marine Office, offered a 10,000 baht reward for any tip-offs that lead to an arrest.

– Chutharat Plerin



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Happy New Year: Rules on alcohol sales tightened

The Phuket Gazette

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Not for Phuket: the US's Lindsay Davenport. Photo EPA/Eddy Risch

Lack of funds kills tennis tournament

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Bang Tao site sold to Jakarta giant

By Alasdair Forbes

BANG TAO: A 123-rai plot of land next to the beach at the northern end of Bang Tao Bay has been sold by Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels (HSH) to Indonesian property giant PT Jakarta Setiabadi Internasional Tbk (JSI). JSI bought the land through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Cayman Islands-based Durham Holdings, for just under 865 million baht - about 7 million baht a rai.



The beach at the north end of Bang Tao Bay is well away from the crowds and frequented only by those few 'in the know'.

Zero in on high-end, not zero-dollar tourists



"We have seen the pendulum always swinging this way and that way - Phuket or Bali, Phuket or Bali."

He added that JSI looked at Phuket as long ago as 1986. "That was when we decided to develop the Grand Hyatt in Bali because we came to the conclusion that Bali was ready but Phuket was not."

"Now the infrastructure in Phuket is really there and the reality is that Phuket is only nine hours from Europe, and socially and politically Thailand is more stable."

JSI is a major player in the two large shopping malls - one in Bali and one in Jakarta - three apartment blocks in the Indonesian capital, where it also has a considerable land bank that it is developing for housing estates. In the year to September 30, 2005, it recorded sales and revenues equivalent to 1.7 billion baht and assets equivalent to 10.7 billion baht.

In a statement following the signing of the sale agreement, HSH explained that the funds would be used to reduce debt and as "general working capital". CEO Clement Kwok was quoted as saying: "The sale of

Disgraced tycoon survives shooting

By Sangkhae Leelanapa

BANGKOK: Disgraced tycoon Boonkeng "Ko" Srisansuchart, evicted from land in the Pantarat along the bypass road, wounded in a gun attack Bangkok on November 19. An associate of his, Pokaphol, a former civil servant in the Phuket Provincial Office (PPLO), was killed in an attack by a round from a 2.2 arm.

K. Boonkeng, 57, was once in the neck and spent under police guard in a Ba hospital before returning to two days later.

K. Boonkeng and K. had traveled to Bangkok to with the 80-year-old Deputy

Region Pakpai they w District meetin

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Phuket still high in HIV rankings

Police told to probe further in tsunami aid theft case

1 alcohol

That's some feat: 8-year-old boy is eating only sole food

The father of an 8-year-old boy who eats nothing but dirty shoes and sandals is worried about his son's health and seeking donations for medical treatment to cure him. After neighbors brought the

Queer News

Police to take softer line over traffic violations

The gift of hindsight

FREQUENT readers of the news are familiar with the 'long-awaited' light-rail project, whose tracks will guide dramatic change in the desolate Phuket public transportation landscape. Now what exactly does 'long-awaited' mean? Months? A year? Five years? A decade?

In this particular case, a decade ago seems most appropriate, as the topic dominates page 2 of the November 26 - December 2, 2005 issue of the Gazette. Though the originally proposed system would link the airport and Phuket Town with a west-coast route to Patong, only a whopping 80 people were expected to attend the first public hearing.

"Phuket's roadsides are lined with parked motorcycles and peddlers selling their wares, as well as tuk-tuks parked one after the other in Patong. There is no parking space. Phuket is an international city, so visitors have high expectations as to the quality of life and services they will find here," public transport expert Dr Tawatchai Laosirihongthong said at the time. Such a statement could easily be lifted and

dropped into any cafe conversation on the island now - assuming the speaker has factored in the boom in private cars on the island following Thailand's first-car buyer scheme, which has resulted in endless bumper to bumper traffic during rush hour.

Tawee Homhuan, a committee member and engineer at the Phuket Public Works Office, said at the time that the number of people in attendance should in fact be closer to 800, but in his experience only a few dozen people would actually attend the hearing. However, once the actual work started on the project, hundreds turned out to protest its perceived negative impacts on their lives.

Such form of protest, of course, wastes time and money. However, the recent success of protests by the Rawai community in stuffing a movie museum construction plan that threatened a grove of trees at Nai Harn beach, is without a doubt a great

success. The movie museum plan had gone through all community hearing stages. However, the impacts of the plan on the beach community were not fully understood until trees were marked for the ax with a great big 'X' on their trunks. Post-approval, pre-construction protests clearly remain a double-edged sword.

Jumping into the decade old column 'Time Machine' to take us back to the November 15-30, 2000 issue, one is faced with a startling revelation. The headline reads: Police to take softer line over traffic violations. Fast forward 15 years, and police are scrambling to curb drunk driving, speeding and a number of other traffic violations that are witnessed on Phuket's roads daily. However, fifteen years ago police decided that they would be issuing fewer tickets for traffic offenses.

This led to a 70 per cent decrease in traffic violation citations.

Lt Col Teeraphol Thipjaroen,

deputy superintendent at the Phuket City Police Station at the time, said most offenders would be given verbal warnings. However, those who broke the law in ways that endangered other peoples' safety would still get tickets. Please remind me what traffic laws are put in place that aren't designed to ensure the safety of the driver, passengers and other motorists? Sadly, the relaxing of enforcement all stemmed from riots in the streets of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, after motorcycle riders went on a rampage over what they perceived to be excessively strict enforcement of traffic laws.

Well, there you have it Phuket... indifference to desperately needed infrastructure projects (at least the light rail project has the backing of Bangkok and is full-steam ahead now); protests for good causes (got to save them trees); and protests that have ultimately resulted in the deaths of thousands due to relaxed traffic policing unbelievable that it really took 15 years to realize this wasn't the best way forward.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

Govt under fire for deporting dissidents

THE government's forced deportation of two Chinese dissidents recognized as refugees has put the men at grave risk of torture and other mistreatment, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on November 19 in a letter to Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The authorities forcibly returned Dong Guangping and Jiang Yefei, despite the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) informing key government agencies on November 10 that the two had been accepted for refugee resettlement in a third country.

"These actions blatantly contradict the pledge to uphold rights the prime minister made before the UN General Assembly. It's deeply alarming, if not surprising, that the junta's deference to abusive neighbors takes priority over the rule of law," said Sophie Richardson, HRW's China director.

Returning the two refugees to China – where they are at risk of persecution, arbitrary detention and possibly torture – constitutes refoulement, which is prohibited under customary international law and violates Thailand's obligations under Article 3 of the Convention against Torture, HRW said.

Baby boar has nose for Thai massages

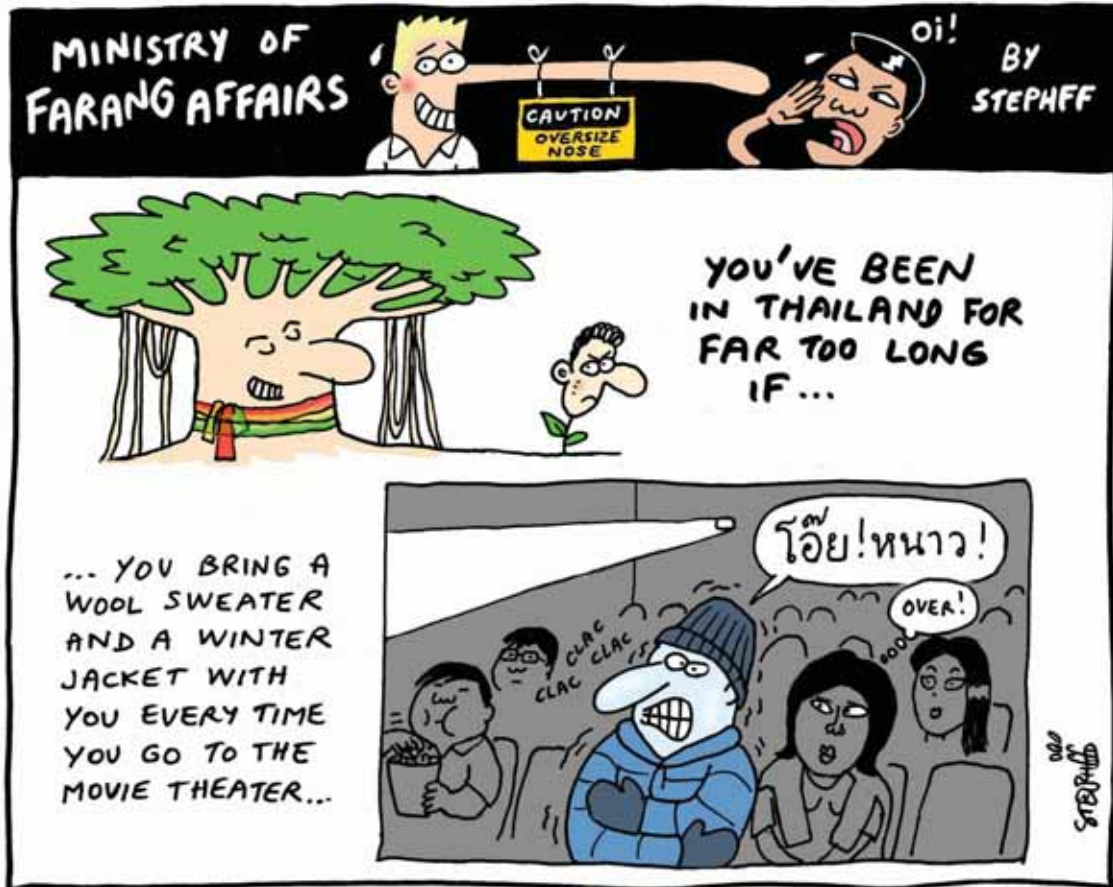
A PET boar in Pichit province has the locals enthralled with his massage skills, reports Sanook.com.

This talented 4-month-old animal is a black boar named 'Look Kork', who belongs to farmer Sompong Yordying.

Look Kork allegedly gives Thai massages with his snout, pressing it into people's arms and legs – not boring them at all.

Most people who have received his very un-boorish massage said they felt relaxed afterward, the website reported. Those who have witnessed the animal at work even claim that he appears to be smiling as he gives the massage.

The little runt, only 2.5 kilograms, while most his age are 14kg, in fact prefers human company to that of other boars. Lucky for him, he's not a bore to Ms Sompong.



Police uncover plot by political cronies to incite unrest

THE authorities have uncovered a plot to incite unrest, as people with political connections are making moves aimed at provocation, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan said on November 23.

A number of people suspected of being involved in the alleged plot had been summoned for questioning by the authorities, Deputy PM Prawit said.

In response to rumors on social media of possible security issues, he said that relevant authorities throughout the country were monitoring the situation.

Deputy PM Prawit confirmed that preparations had been made to ensure public safety and security during upcoming events, including the Bike for Dad cycling event next month and the New Year celebration.

Cairns banned at national park

THE small towers of rocks left behind by tourists on Koh Hin Ngarm only spoils the island's natural beauty – they do not make people's wishes come true, Tarutao National Park Chief Panapon Thirasereechon said November 20.

Mr Panapon said the na-



tional park, which includes Koh Hin Ngarm, in the southern province of Satun, has banned tourists from piling up rocks, adding that the practice was spurred by a tale spread by tour guides.

Two arrested for extorting BKK motorbike taxi drivers

A MAN pretending to be a police inspector named 'Jo' has been arrested along with a female accomplice for allegedly extorting money from motorbike taxis around Esplanade Cineplex Ratchadapisek in Bangkok.

Putiset Soisuwan and Nataya Klinpatum were arrested at a house in Bang Khen district on November 21 by officers from the Crime Suppression Division while allegedly in the process of committing extortion.

Bribery hotline established for foreign investors

FOREIGN investors affected by state officials seeking bribes

now have more channels to seek recourse after the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) set up a center to accept complaints.

The center has opened with a 24-hour hotline (092-668 0777) and Line ID (FD.PACC), explained PACC Chief Prayong Preeyaji.

The center was launched because the Board of Investment (BOI) had revealed that many foreign investors were pressured for bribes by officials, but had no channel to

speedily file complaints. The service will be provided to companies that win tax incentives from the BOI.

500 top teachers able to attend English course

TO IMPROVE the quality of English-language teachers, the Education Ministry is selecting 500 Thai teachers to undergo a six-week intensive training program. After completion of the program, their teaching methods will be studied and assessed.

This performance review will assess the teachers classroom management and their English-language teaching methods. They will be compared with their peers who did not attend the training.

Alleged French bank robber caught in BKK

SPECIAL Investigation Bureau police officers on November 20 arrested a Frenchman who allegedly was involved in a bank robbery in his home country.

The man, in possession of a fake passport, reportedly confessed that his real name was Cabau Andre Espiasse.

Mr Espiasse was initially charged with illegal entry and stay in Thailand.

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Continued pressure

ALL stakeholders in Phuket's future should thank five visiting ambassadors who kept the pressure on the provincial government to do something about the island's notorious jet-ski rental industry.

As opined in this space many times, this particular industry seems to possess a curious ability that allows it to somehow pass undetected through all barriers of law, order and simple common sense.

Multiple polls by the *Gazette* confirm that the vast majority of residents and tourists on the island would like to see these loud, dangerous and intrinsically obnoxious marine conveyances banned from local waters altogether.

Over the years, many tourists have lost their lives in jet-ski accidents. Many more have been injured, or had their Phuket holiday experiences completely ruined, by the various extortion scams run by jet-ski rental operators – most notably those who make excessive demands for compensation for minor or even non-existent damages to their vessels.

But these are just initial costs to the island. What also needs to be factored in are the numerous other ways this industry is ruining Phuket's reputation as a safe tourist destination.

For a start, anyone who enjoys swimming will inevitably hate having to be confined to the small swim areas set up for them, so that jet-skis, parasail speedboats and other vessels can rule the rest of the bay.

Anyone who has ever swum in the 'open ocean' and had a jet-ski approach at above-the-head level knows the true meaning of the word 'helplessness'. No wonder beach tourists are increasingly opting for jet-ski free vacation destinations. As the visiting ambassadors correctly pointed out, jet-skis are hurting our tourism industry in a big way.

Though many beach vendors have been forced off the sands and parts of popular beach clubs have been demolished, the jet-ski rental industry persists.

As has been mentioned numerous times in this space, The National Council for Peace and Order has done an admirable job of imposing some semblance of order on our beaches, affirming the sands' status as public property.

This may be the last chance Phuket has to rid itself of jet-skis, so at the risk of sounding like a broken record, we again call for an immediate island-wide ban on all jet-ski rentals – as well as an official investigation into the personal finances of public officials who have brazenly allowed this dangerous and sad situation to fester.



Preserve the sea for future generations

Re: Phi Phi management plan tackles anchors on corals, feeding fish, November 23

The trouble with involving 'experts' is that they end up telling the government to 'shut it down' and then only the rich can afford to go.

We have seen this in beautiful USA areas and exotic areas around the world. The wonderfulness of Thailand is the availability of these areas to all. However, greed is very short-sighted. So greedy tour operators go to these beautiful places, drop anchors and destroy the environment.

Self-restraint is the answer. When any government gets involved, the money simply moves out of the hands of the locals and into the pockets of the rich.

Please Thailand, love your land and your seas or you will destroy them and not have anything to pass onto your children or the tourists who love your beauty.

*William Moynihan
Facebook*

Deal with jet-skis before its too late

Re: Jet-skis threaten Phuket tourism industry, says Ambassador, November 23

Of course they say the jet-skis are under control.

The operators pay the right people enough money on time every month. Money stolen from tourists. Tourists strongly dislike them – tourists leaving the beaches, locals losing money, all be-

Letters to the Editor

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

Re: Brokers: Condo market is bouncing back, November 20

This is nonsense. The condo market is not improving. There simply are no buyers.

It used to be the Russians, but the ruble took them out of the market.

Global economic conditions are to blame.

What I find frustrating is that the relentless new construction continues. Water, sewage and power have been completely overwhelmed. Unsold inventory is enormous, yet more new projects are launched every week.

Rent, don't buy; maybe it will slow them down.

*Pinot
Gazette forum*

Market needs to prep for Myanmar

Re: Phuket RevPAR takes hit with source market transition, November 17

Forget Bali! Our government needs to wake up and be prepared for competition that's likely to spring up from Myanmar in the next few years.

Specialist package tours aimed at Chinese tourists could decimate arrivals here. I very much doubt Myanmar will be banning beach weddings and photographers – or the consumption of food and alcohol.

There's an enormous market in this sector just waiting to be tapped into.

*Agogohome
Gazette forum*

New construction regardless of market

How much is there actually to see?

Re: Phuket locals victorious in battle to save Nai Harn trees, November 21

I can't imagine why anyone would want to go to a museum like this. How much 'memorabilia' can there be, and who remembers or cares anyway?

I certainly wouldn't pay to see it, especially in light of other 'attractions' that have little-to-no value.

The proposed new museum would have been nothing but a pseudo-attraction putting money in the pockets of some people and ruining a prime natural location.

*Anon
Gazette forum*

Phuket Gazette

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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Helping those in need

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR

PHUKET already has strong private sectors driving the tourism industry forward. I have faith in them, as we have very high standards for tourism marketing and services. I have no doubt about that.

However, one thing that I want to do during my time as governor is help people in need earn a better income, so that they can have a higher quality of life. They are often overlooked in this regard.

We need to support these people in order to make their communities stronger and help them move forward.

I am not just saying that I want to start a project – I am actually going out into the communities and talking to the residents. If they have anything to say or complain about, they can just talk to me directly.

November 16 was my second time visiting Phuket's less fortunate communities since I took office last month. I call them my 'Evening Home Visits'.

One such community is the sea gypsy village in Sapam.

There are 44 families with about 240 people in total. I had a chance to talk to them about how they can generate sufficient income in their everyday lives.

I have also talked to the community leader about supporting and developing the community's



Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada, is a Phuket native with a master's degree in political and administrative science from the National Institute of Development Administration, and served as the island's vice governor from 2012 to 2014.

Here he talks about his mission to help local people in need live a better life and work together to establish the island's image as a world-class destination.

products to enable them to make more profit. This will supply the locals with additional income from something other than fishing.

Relevant officials also go into the communities with me, such as those from the Provincial

Electricity Authority and the Phuket Water Authority. They can talk to people about how to take care of the community. I do not want to see poor people using more expensive utilities than other people.

I have assigned officers from the Phuket Non Formal Education Center to take care of their education. Their children deserve the chance to study just like other children, so that they grow up confident and become contributing members of society.

Officers from the Phuket Provincial Health Office have also come to educate villagers about the risks of dengue fever

and give free physical check-ups. They were also provided with food from the Phuket Commerce Office.

Additionally, we talked to them about drugs and drug use in the community and how damaging it can be for the village.

I need to thank all of the officers who have become involved with my mission and helped make it happen, as I cannot do it alone. This is something that I will continue to do and I appreciate all of the help and support I have been given.

And, in the spirit of building stronger communities, I am initiating a 'one month one day' project that will see every community coordinating with their local government to do volunteer work, such as cleaning the roads or cutting trees. They must volunteer themselves and may even be able to receive a budget from their local government.

Everyone deserves a better quality of life. Some people are not fortunate enough to be able to do it by themselves, so it is up to us to think about what we can do to help others.



Phuket Town always has something for you to do. Photo: Gazette file

Much needed change

AT FIRST I was very hesitant to make the move from Chalong to Phuket Town.

When I first came to Phuket, everyone told me that Chalong was the best place to be, as it is central to the beaches and Town. And I have to agree, it is a really great location. However, to get anywhere requires a motorbike and the traffic is becoming worse by the week.

With the high season coming up and tourists riding around like they are in a video game, I decided that it was time to make a move.

Although I love the beaches and would have loved to relocate toward Nai Harn, my job in Chalong Talay would have made a very long and difficult commute, not to mention that it most definitely would not solve the traffic problem.

The decision to move to town was made very rapidly.

I had spent the weekend with my friend who lives in a condo right in town. Throughout those few days, we were able to walk to different bars, shop at both the Indie and Walking Street markets, eat brunch at different coffee shops, and wander around the different stores.

It reminded me of the old college town where I spent time in my early twenties.

The traffic was surprisingly

Island View

By Vicki Bennett

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

not bad when we did have to drive anywhere and parking spaces were always available.

After the weekend was over, I knew that I had found my new Phuket home.

It was closer to work, not much further from the beaches, and always has something to do.

I also found during my weekend adventure that people in town were exceptionally nice and willing to speak in Thai with me. Whenever I have tried to speak Thai before, I have often been met with snide comments or rude looks that scream 'I can understand English'. But the fact of the matter is, I want to speak Thai and have found it very difficult to learn, as a lot of people are not willing to speak it with me.

I think that Phuket Town will be a good fit for all of my needs. I hope that it will be able to maintain its charm through the influx of tourists and growing population on the island.

Until then, I will sit back and enjoy all of the things it has to offer me.

Words from the Wise

"If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month."

– Theodore Roosevelt

"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking."

– Marcus Aurelius

Issues & Answers

Can you dump wastewater into a public canal?

I DROVE through Koh Kaew the other day and saw a cement truck dumping water onto the roadside near Inizio estate, the route toward British International School (BIS). The man was washing the truck, letting the cement filled water go down the drain.

I was wondering if this was okay to do. Do I need to file a formal complaint or let anyone know about this?

Jessie Watkins
Kathu

Sathita Jitmate, chief of the Department of Public Health, Koh Kaew Administration Organization

(OrBorTor) replies:

Thank you for the information. We will find out what is going on and who is responsible for doing that.

At this stage, please be informed that nobody is allowed to release wastewater into a public canal or ditch. We will send our staff to check the area and see what can be done.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at 076-239 263, Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm.

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Stick with basic principles

Finance

By David Mayes

THIS is something I often write about but so often find ignored by what is done in practice. When it comes to planning your financial future, there are only a few basic principles that you really need to follow. As long as you stay within these guidelines, you can make the odd mistake and still easily recover.

The first simple rule is that you should always save a minimum of ten per cent of your earnings and set them aside for your future. While this seems like common sense, it is amazing how many people spend every penny they get regardless of their income level. If their income goes up, their expenditures go up. Make a firm commitment to yourself to save regardless of your income level and it only takes a few years before you see how this can add up.

Once you start saving, ideally into a dedicated bank account separate from the one you use for your everyday discretionary spending, you should build up a minimum of six months' worth of expenses before even considering making any investments. You also should obviously pay down any serious outstanding debts like unpaid credit cards. Credit cards should always be paid off in full every month.

Once you begin to accumulate significant savings, you need to plan ahead, which will help determine what kind of plan to make. Your first investment may be a down payment on a condo or house to live in, or you may begin making



No matter how much money you make you should save 10 per cent of your earnings. Photo: 401kcalculator.org

monthly contributions to an investment account of some sort. Make sure you know what time horizons the various asset classes have.

For example, real estate and stock market investments generally require a holding period of 10 years on the conservative side of planning. Of course you may be able to sell at a profit much quicker than this, but you need to realize

that you may also need to hold them this long just to avoid losing money if you time it wrong. Some alternative investments have had faster recovery periods than the stock market and could be ideal for 5-10 year investments. If you already have a significant overall investment portfolio of financial and real assets, you can speculate with a small chunk in properties or

stocks.

Thus, you should never invest money you expect to spend in under five years. For instance, if you expect to put a down payment on a house in a year or two, you should not throw this money into the stock market to try to attain a return greater than a fixed deposit for the period. If you are twenty years or more away from retirement, you can place a greater

part of your investment portfolio into more volatile stocks, such as tech companies, which could be expected to have capital appreciation over a long time frame, but make sure you can stomach the swings.

As you get closer to retirement you should rebalance towards fixed income, such as old and boring established companies that pay dividends and investment grade bonds. Of course, in the current environment, fixed income pays next to nothing, but this environment will not last forever.

The final basic principle not to be ignored is diversification. Never put more than ten per cent of your net worth into any one investment. The exception here is your home when you are starting out in the world. Even then, be careful of taking on too much debt with a mortgage that has a variable rate. It is better to pay off a smaller home first and then leverage that later into a second investment property.

Some people avoid financial markets completely and prefer the security of brick and mortar. Other people move around so much for work that they have the bulk of their investments in financial assets. Whatever you do, you should be alright in the long run as long as you follow these basic principles.

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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Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

WE ARE coming into the high season and the tourists will be coming, so no matter what their numbers, this is the time to take advantage.

There are a couple of things that we can do as business owners to protect our profits and position ourselves for the coming year.

The first is to try and avoid the price wars that invariably start. You are much better off trying to differentiate on service or quality to maintain your pricing.

Even if this means fewer customers, it will probably maintain the same profits, meaning less stress on your resources for the same rewards.

Secondly, given the high level of potential customers around, make sure you have a system in place to collect de-

tails to build your customer database.

Also, if you can capture referrals from happy customers, they can help feed you for the quieter months to come.

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, visit PhuketOnlineMarketingSchool.com or call 095-085 3355.

Cash in on high season

Staying afloat in niche market

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

BUSINESSES that are called 'labors of love' are referred to this way because the profit margins, if any, don't justify the investment. Nonetheless, these business – often small retailers – are the building blocks of unique communities. So is the case with Longtail Paddlesurf Co Ltd.

Though the sport of standup paddleboarding (SUP) is still in its infancy in the region, it has boomed in North America. So, despite delayed growth, there is clear potential.

"In early March we will host the 4th Annual Phuket Paddle Festival down at Bliss Beach Club. The week prior to the race we will be hosting a paddle clinic run by a top level professional paddler from the United States."

Though the health benefits of SUP are well documented, it remains a niche market, even within the water sport segment. The key for a retailer to stay afloat is increasing brand awareness.

"Today, life as an independent retailer is tough, so I think the short answer [to how to market the business] is be true to yourself and focus on what you are best at. We are a shop that is truly passionate about the sport. I paddle almost every day. This gives us great insight into local places to

paddle and what equipment works in our market. Building our brand is achieved by a consistent effort to promote the sport and the amazing paddling environment that we call home," Mr Smart explained.

Mr Smart has seen two major changes in the SUP market within the last five years.

"For us, the two biggest changes have been around design and production costs. Most boards are now being designed using CAD and flow dynamic software and the result is a significant improvement in terms of speed and stability," he explained.

The other major change is production costs.

"Today, it is reasonably easy to find a factory in China to build you some SUP boards. This has meant that the price of an entry level board is very low. In the US you can buy a board at Walmart or COSTCO for less than US\$350 [12,500 baht]. Sadly this board is an environmental disaster, paddles poorly and won't last.

"For us, this has meant that we focus on a quality product that is going to exceed our customers expectations. By carrying four to six different brands we are able to provide our customers with a range of options and price points."

Thailand is the largest pro-



David Smart has been running Longtail Paddlesurf for two years. Photo: Longtail Paddlesurf Co Ltd

ducer of SUP boards in the world, which would, at first, seem to be a competitive advantage for Longtail Paddlesurf. Additionally, the Bangkok-based company Cobra is a world leader in composite fabrication, allowing for Starboard, SIC, Fanatic and others top brands to be built in the Kingdom.

"Despite the boards being

built in Thailand, we still have to pay a high tax. If we import boards from Vietnam, China or the US, the import duty is well... let's just call it variable. This makes having consistent pricing very challenging, not to mention the headaches of logistics," Mr Smart explained.

Though there are challenges, the five-year-old company,

which has been paddled forward for the last two years by Mr Smart, is churning a profit.

"The shop is profitable, but it is more a labor of love than a logical investment vehicle. What makes it worthwhile is when we take visitors for a paddle or we are teaching kids and we see the smiles on their faces. That makes it all worthwhile."

Going green makes business sense

EMERGING markets are expected to continue expanding along with the rising global population and urbanization, which means there are still tremendous business opportunities. However, things have to be carefully designed to reduce the environmental impact, said Paul Polman, Unilever's chief executive officer.

In 2010, Unilever announced its '2020 sustainability plan' to buy 100 per cent of its agricultural raw materials from sustainable sources, to reduce the environmental impact of everything it sells by one-half while doubling its revenues. Mr Polman has revealed that, as of a year ago, this goal had been accomplished.

"Our main focus is to help develop... these markets, and we have a big business here in Thailand. If our global business is a little bit north of 50 billion euro,



Sustainable farming provides long-term benefits. Photo: Nils Aguilar

the Thai market is 1 billion euro, which is quite sizeable."

He explained that 3.5 billion people currently live in cities, which accounts for around 50 per cent of the world's population. The global population is expected to reach 10 billion in the next 30-40 years, of which 70 per cent will be living in cities. This means that the population of cities is predicted to double in that period.

The investment that goes into urbanization, in the next 15 years alone, would equal around US\$90 trillion and that is a tremendous business opportunity. But then you have to think carefully how to design these cities in terms of density, public transport and building efficiency as these are big carbon emitters.

Meanwhile, besides combating air pollution, climate

change and deforestation, the transition toward sustainable development and going green can actually lead companies of all sizes towards new technologies, financing, help save costs and allow them to generate economic growth.

Mr Polman explained that some small and medium-sized companies, such as those in the palm oil industry or forestry sectors, have to be supported by large companies and the government for training and financing their green transformation. This is because the move towards sustainable farming might mean that they need two to four years of reduced income from replanting in a sustainable way.

By taking these actions [going green] it does not mean that we gave up something. It is actually an engine for economic growth and job creation, Mr Polman added.

– The Nation

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Meeporn Oeawpanich, director of marketing and communications, presents an award at the ceremony.

Living in the lap of luxury

Sofitel Krabi Phokeethra Golf and Spa Resort was recently awarded 'Best Luxury Family All-Inclusive Resort' at the 2015 World Luxury Hotel Awards Gala Ceremony.

Gazette meets the Gov

Members of the Phuket Gazette team headed down to Phuket Provincial Hall on November 20 to meet Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU: (From L-R) Isaac Stone Simonelli, Phuket Gazette managing editor; Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada; Oranee Hildebrand, Phuket Gazette managing director; and Simon J Hand, PGTV producer.

Open and ready for monkey business

The new playground at Boat Lagoon's Boat Arcade is open and ready for action. Children can play at the fun, new facility free of charge every day from 8am until 10pm.



JUST PLAYING AROUND: Simon J Hand (left), PGTV producer; Chawalit Rattanachinakorn (right), owner of HOCK Noodle Bar; and Isaac Stone Simonelli (bottom), Phuket Gazette managing editor.

Seeing stars at Amatara

Amatara Resort & Wellness (formerly known as the Regent Phuket Cape Panwa) was honored to host famous Hong Kong film director Wong Jing and a slew of superstars as they worked on an upcoming film.



Brice Borin (5th from right), general manager of Amatara Resort & Wellness, and his team welcome Asian superstars Andy Lau (right), Chow Yun-Fat (4th right), Nick Cheung (left), Jacky Cheung (2nd left) and film director Wong Jing (4th left).

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>PC Phuket Cable Coverage: All of Phuket Channel: 1 Monday-Friday: 10.30am, 6pm, 9pm Saturday-Sunday: 10.30am, 9pm</p> <p>RC Rawai Cable Coverage: Rawai, Kata, Karon Channel: 1 Monday-Friday: 10am, 1pm, 7pm, 10pm</p> <p>KDTV KDTV Coverage: Phuket's West Coast from Patong to Cherng 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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Events in Paradise

Jungceylon gives thanks

Jungceylon Phuket invited the island's media to their 'Thanks Press – Chill Out Party 2015' on November 13 at the Uzenmaya Hotel in Patong. Everyone enjoyed fun, food, lucky draws and a mini concert from popular Thai singer Thanakrit 'Wan' Panichawith.



Wan Panichawith (left) joins the fun with Prawit Janyasittikul, CEO of Phuket Square.

Amari Estates' new phase lifts off

Amari Phuket, along with Amari Estates Co Ltd and the team at Headstart Commercial Co Ltd recently collaborated in organizing a Magnificent Beach Lift Party to launch the most recent phase of Amari Exclusive Residences.



READY TO LAUNCH: (From L-R) Pierre-Andre Pelletier, vice president and area general manager South Thailand of Amari Phuket; Pitsupee Ployinpet, sales manager of Amari Estates Co Ltd; Palakorn Wongphati, general manager of Headstart Commercial Co Ltd; and Ken Jyn Wee, regional director of Headstart Commercial Co Ltd.

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Catching wind. Photo: King's Cup

Dinghy Series runs fast ahead of King's Cup

THE Phuket Dinghy Series 2015 wrapped up at 3rd Naval Area Command beach off the coast of Cape Panwa, with Optimist and Laser sailors from Phuket and Songkla in competition at one of the best sailing areas of Phuket.

Following earlier series races, a total of 53 young sailors hit the water to compete in stiff winds and manageable swells. Among the Optimists, boy sailors from Phuket Youth Sailing Club took the three top places, with Nattapong Yongram overall winner.

The girls' competition was won by Keeratika Klongboon from NAC3SC, while Teerapong Torkratoke from PYSC took class honor for the Laser fleet.

The Phuket Dinghy Series was introduced in 2010 as part of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, creating a network between sailing clubs to inspire more youth in Thailand to take up the sport, especially the Optimist challenge for children under 15 years old.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Asia News Network, Phuket Gazette win gold for tsunami publication

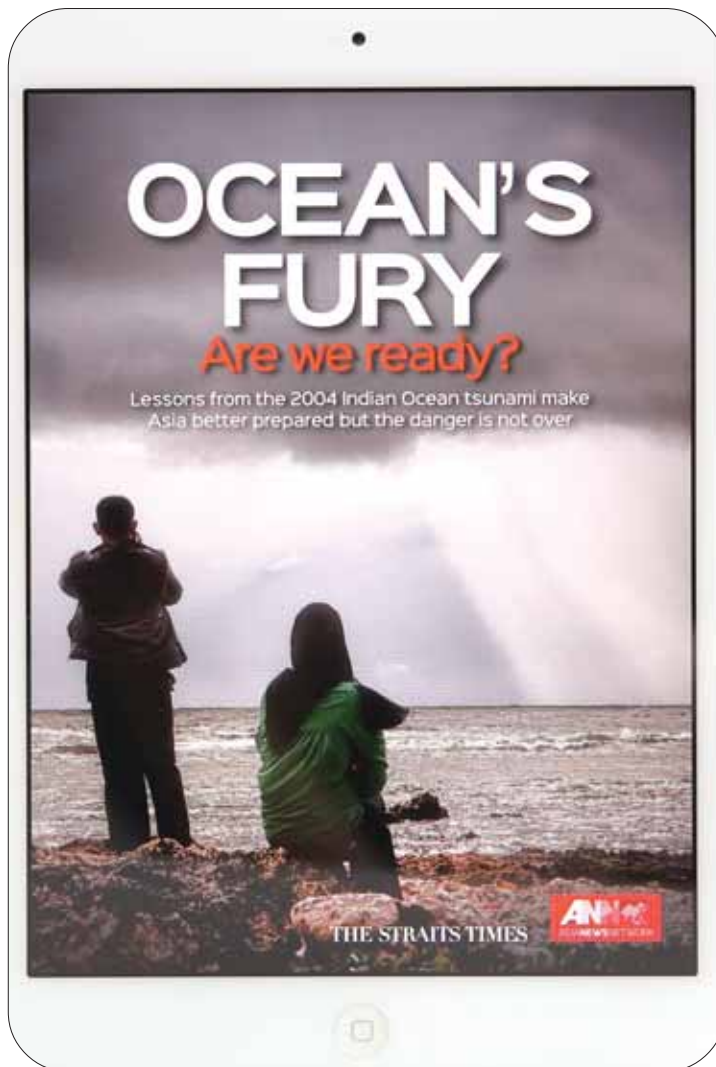
THE Asia News Network / *Phuket Gazette* joint publication on the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami has won a gold medal at the 6th Digital Media Awards, presented in Hong Kong last week by Google and the World Association of Newspapers and Publishers.

The publication, entitled "*Ocean's Fury: Are We Ready?*" was presented and submitted by *The Straits Times* of Singapore, which collaborated with *The Jakarta Post* from Indonesia, *The Island* from Sri Lanka, *The Star* from Malaysia, and *The Nation* and the *Phuket Gazette* from Thailand.

Ocean's Fury won the gold award in the Best Data Visualization Project category. Close to 100 articles and hundreds of photos and graphics were produced for the publication, and some 50 writers, photographers, designers, artists and editors were involved.

"The tsunami was a disaster that hit people all round the region. When tragedy struck, the way the people of the region responded brought them closer together. So it was fitting that a project to commemorate those collaborative efforts should be done collectively by ANN partners," said *Straits Times* Editor Warren Fernandez, who is an ANN board member.

ANN initiated the *Ocean's Fury* project last year, not only to recount what had happened, but also to see if indeed the prom-



ise to help rebuild communities and lives had been delivered, said Mr Fernandez.

"We also wanted to ponder the lessons that might have been learned from the traumatic experience," he added.

Because of the international

media's focus on Phuket in the wake of the tsunami, which killed more than 230,000 people across 14 countries, the *Gazette's* reporting played a key role in the joint publication as *Gazette* journalists explored the status of the current

tsunami warning system, survivors' stories and the role of local media when confronted by such devastation.

"Though Phuket and Phang Nga were not the worst hit areas, the tsunami did destroy entire communities and broke apart countless families in these two Andaman region provinces. The publication wasn't just about returning to the devastation; it was about exploring the lasting effects and the beautiful resilience of the local people and places affected," said *Phuket Gazette* Managing Editor Isaac Stone Simonelli. "It was an honor to get to work with members of ANN in commemorating an event that had such massive impacts on our community."

The *Gazette* stories were combined with content produced by a number of ANN members for both print and website publication. The content was edited by *The Star* and an e-book was put together by *The Straits Times'* digital team. "It took some effort to get everyone together, but I am glad we did. The award shows just what we can achieve together," said Pana Janviroj, executive director of ANN and president of *The Nation*.

Founded in 1999, ANN is an alliance of 22 media in 19 Asian countries seeking to promote coverage of Asian affairs.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Thanyapura Junior Challenge returns

JUNIOR athletes and sports enthusiasts throughout the region will face off against each other at Thanyapura's third Junior Challenge Triathlon.

Following the success of last year's event, the 2015 competition will be held on November 28 and will be staged alongside the Challenge Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest, which attracts thousands of avid triathletes every year.

This year's participants for the Junior Challenge will be divided into three age group categories – Junior (6-8 years old); Intermediate (9-12 years old); and Senior (13-18 years old).

The estimated 250 athletes will compete in the Junior Challenge. Swimming dis-



Athletes will once again hop on the saddle for the Thanyapura Junior Challenge. Event will be held on November 28. Photo: Thanyapura

tances ranging from 50 meters to 300m; biking 3km to 12km; and running 500m to 3000m.

There will also be several team races held for each age group.

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

November 22-29. Challenge Laguna Phuket Tri-Fest

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

The Laguna Phuket Triathlon (Nov 22) has already come to a spectacular close. However, there is still time to catch the Challenge Laguna Phuket (Nov 29).

For more information, visit challengelagunaphuket.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.

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.

December 16-18. The Asia Pacific Superyacht Rendezvous 2015

The Asia Pacific Superyacht Rendezvous invites luxury yachts over 100ft, their owners, guests and VIPS for 3 days of unforgettable fun.

This is an exclusive invitation-only event that celebrates luxury yachting.

Discover La Gritta at Amari

By Katie P Arnold

WITH a beautiful panoramic beachfront view of Patong Bay, La Gritta Italian restaurant offers contemporary Italian dishes with a hint of home cooking.

Tucked away in the beautiful Amari Phuket, one may feel apprehensive going into such a posh resort just to dine, but rest assured that both hotel guests and outside diners are welcome.

Chef Patrizia Battolu creates an eclectic menu and an overall wonderful dining experience for Amari and La Gritta guests.

One such experience to be enjoyed is her discovery menu. It is an affordable, adventurous dining experience that would make a beautiful meal for one, romantic date for two, or even a memorable family outing for all.

At only 1590 baht++, the menu consists of six dishes, and while the menu changes from



The crostino with red capsicum peppers and Thai sardines is the perfect way to start your culinary adventure.

time to time, the quality never wavers.

To start your adventure, the *crostino*, which is grilled ciabatta bread topped with Thai sardines, red capsicum peppers and olive oil, is quite unbelievable. Even for those who have never tried sardines, this is a truly decadent starter. Not a hint of fishiness – only salty,

oily, melt-in-your-mouth flavors on top of a perfectly toasted slice of ciabatta.

Currently offered as the antipasto is a wonderful plate of marinated bell pepper, eggplant, artichokes, *Mortadella* with pistachio, buffalo mozzarella, pesto sauce and grissini sticks. All the ingredients are full of flavor and offer the

charm of Italian dining – food from the earth.

If that wasn't enough to wet your appetite, the *risotto con salsiccia e pisille* (risotto with crushed fresh pork sausage, green peas and Manchego cheese) followed by a refreshing orange sorbet with Campari and mint will do the trick.

Each dish has been carefully

thought out and set in an order that fully complements the others, which is why the main dishes are so fully anticipated.

With your choice of baked black cod fish with kalamata olives, red onions, fresh Roma tomato and roasted potato (*baccala al forno*) or stuffed chicken breast with cheese, wrapped with Parma ham served with broccoli, crispy beetroot and a creamy mushroom sauce (*fagottini di pollo*), there really is no wrong choice.

To finish off your culinary adventure, Chef Patrizia has selected a perfectly indulgent cannoli filled with ricotta cheese, chocolate chips and sugar icing.

While people travel to Phuket for various reasons – beaches, nightlife, shopping – it's safe to say that if you've come to discover Phuket, then you must discover the wonderful experience of dining at La Gritta.



The antipasto is a wonderful plate of marinated vegetables, Mortadella with pistachio, buffalo mozzarella, pesto sauce and grissini sticks.

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Preparing to set sail with AEC

On Deck
By Duncan Worthington

AS WE near the end of the year there's more and more talk about the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Set to be implemented in December 2015, the details are sketchy at best, but don't let that dampen your optimism. The AEC is a work in progress.

I'm going to gaze into my marine industry crystal ball in a moment and make some wild guesses as to the possible impact the AEC will have on the industry here in Thailand, but first let's take a simplified look at what this AEC thing is all about.

In its broadest sense, the AEC will usher in a single market and production base that will allow free movement of goods, services and skilled labor. The idea is one of economic co-operation, expanding trade and investment within the region.

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam are the ten countries that make up

ASEAN, and one of the AEC's aims is to spread wealth creation more equally across the member states, whereby the poorer less developed nations benefit from dealings with richer more developed nations.

On paper, it seems to be a good idea, but the devil will be in the details and, with the December 2015 deadline looming, it's safe to say at this stage that implementation will be fragmented.

What does the AEC mean for Thailand's marine industry? Well, here's my take on a few key areas where I expect to see the AEC having a significant impact – perhaps not immediately, but certainly over time.

CHALLENGING THAILAND'S POSITION

Thailand's marine leisure tourism is the envy of most countries in the region. The country's natural assets, as well as its well-developed tourism and marine infrastructure, make it the leading light of ASEAN. While Singapore is well-developed in terms of tourism and marine in-



The AEC will be a single powerful market. Image: Astore International

frastructure, the two don't combine to create a well-established marine leisure tourism sector and they are simply not comparable to those of Thailand.

However, where Thailand will face increasing competition is from countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar. Combined they have thousands of kilometers of stunning coastline and natural sea assets.

SINGLE MARKET

The single market concept is

most definitely a work in progress and will perhaps never live up to some expectations. However, what gains can be made in this area are likely to benefit marine businesses in Thailand.

Lower trade barriers and lower tariffs are at the heart of creating the AEC single market, and in the case of Thailand's established refit and repair industry and homegrown boat building industry, being able to move marine products and parts between ASEAN nations more easily and cost-

effectively has to be a step in the right direction.

This, together with improving the flow of capital by removing or relaxing restrictions on the movement of money and where investment rules, policies and regulations are expected to become more transparent, consistent and predictable, will make ASEAN countries more attractive to international investment.

The AEC will be a single market of more than 600 million people. It had a combined GDP of US\$2.5 trillion in 2014 and in some corners it is predicted to be the fourth largest economy in the world by 2030. That can't be such a bad thing, can it?

I believe it's time for Thailand's marine industry and individual businesses to focus on specialization to increase their long-term competitive advantage.

Duncan Worthington is a long time Phuket resident and through Infinity Communications consults leading consumer brands, hospitality and marine clients in Thailand. #OnDeckPhuket

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Your photos can save mantas

Diving By Isaac Stone Simonelli

PHUKET divers have been regularly asked to participate as citizen scientists over the last several years, helping Spot The Leopard Shark to better understand shark populations and to collect data for Project Seahorse as they determined the sustainability of fishing practices for seahorses in Thailand.

Now, a new project is afoot in the Kingdom, one destined to improve conservation efforts and our understanding of one of the most iconic fish in the sea: manta rays.

Oceanic and reef manta rays are on every diver's bucket list. Their gracefulness as they effortlessly glide through the water and the intelligent curiosity in their gaze is captivating. And for those not instinctively drawn to the gentle giants, it should be noted that mantas generate more than 5 billion baht per year in ecotourism revenues worldwide.

In an effort to preserve their presence in Thai waters, the

Manta Trust recently diversified their scope by adding a Thailand project to their global research campaign, which already has projects established in a number of countries including Mexico, Fiji, Indonesia, the Maldives and the Philippines.

"We are only starting to learn about the population structure of oceanic manta rays. While they were previously considered highly migratory, recent research by Manta Trust scientists suggests that oceanic manta ray populations are also highly structured and vulnerable to local and regional impacts," Manta Trust Assistant Director Josh Stewart explained to the *Gazette*.

The majority of threats to manta rays come from local impacts, such as targeted capture by fishermen and bycatch from gillnets, as well as ship strikes and local habitat degradation.

"We believe that these issues are best addressed by bottom-up, grassroots conservation efforts. So, our organization has local initiatives – typically with project leaders from the local communities – working on local-scale



For identification purposes, photos need to be of the manta's underside. Photo: Lwp Kommunikacio

and regional-scale issues to support manta research and conservation," Mr Stewart says.

Taking the reins in Thailand, after becoming involved with Manta Ray Project in 2014, is Jamie Monmaneerat.

"Currently, we have 70 plus individuals in our database," explains Ms Monmaneerat, who is coordinating her efforts with Department of Fisheries and Department of Marine Coastal Resources. "Few manta rays in our database have been spotted several times over the year, which

indicates that we do have a population that needs protection."

The spots on the underside (ventral surface) of each manta ray are completely unique, much like finger prints, allowing scientists to establish accurate databases of populations. Because of these unique markings, divers are able to play a crucial role in data collection.

New and old photographs of the ventral surface, even if taken from a sharp angle, can be submitted through an online form at MantaTrust.org or emailed to

IdtheManta@mantatrust.org.

Additional information, such as when the manta was spotted and what it was doing, as well as depth, visibility, water temperature and the current all provide helpful clues for those crunching the numbers.

However, even if you only have a picture and a general location, such information can be extremely helpful as Thailand plays catch-up in better understanding its manta population, says Ms Monmaneerat.



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Phuket tourism must innovate or die



Property Watch

By Bill Barnett

AS PHUKET takes the sharp left turn into yet another high season, one constant source of chatter online, in bars and in the media, is the meteoric rise of the cult of the doomsayers. Call it bling, or just plain nonsense, but our island telegraph remains ripe with tales of rampant chronic failure.

Yes, the once maligned Russian tourism contingent is largely missing in action, and has been replaced by a surging bottomless bucket of Mainland Chinese visitors. While the errant sun-lounger debate blossoms on the internet and supposed 'long time' locals bemoan the fact that their snow-blind brethren from the West will no longer visit these shores, the harsh reality is very different.

After a short pause due to the Bangkok bomb blast, airline arrival numbers across the Kingdom and to Phuket have rebounded in such a dynamic fashion that it echoes from the rafters.

I read a recent piece on a popular online news site giving a stern rebuttal to the doomsayers about island businesses going down the drain. The points made were profound and well versed. For



Tourist numbers have shown a remarkable recovery since the Bangkok blasts. Photo: Marufish

wide-eyed foreign investors who land here and immediately buy a business, or get into investments, the lure of speed seems to bemoan an absolute lack of common sense.

Phuket's tourism scene is changing, as it is in most places in the world.

In terse terms, does Phuket need another guesthouse in Patong with no views, no product difference, or any facilities other than a sad wooden platform bed, small refrigerator with the promo sticker left on and the in-

evitable window air-conditioner that ranges from freezing to a new hellfire inferno, depending where in the room you happen to be standing.

The same goes for beer bars, nameless real estate offices, or the worst offender of all, the deadly combo Thai-Western Seafood Pizza restaurant. Really, if you invested in any of these, you'd have been better off walking up to Cape Promthep and throwing that wad of cash off the cliff.

There is the reality that busi-

nesses like Borders Bookshop, Tower Records, Netscape and even IBM never understood, it is that business can't stand still. Folks in the trade have to evolve, change and understand that if you stand in one place for too long, you run the chance of being hit by the out of control bus called life.

Do I have sympathy for those who lose their money, or see fortunes turn as tourism evolves? Of course, but at the same time with every threat there is an opportunity lurking in the shadows. You

can get caught up and immersed in self-pity, hatred for the changing faces, or the urbanization of the island, or a thousand other things, but reality bites if you come to the understanding you are simply speaking out to fellow zombies who can't quite make out the very clear writing on the wall.

It's been said that whatever doesn't kill you, only makes you stronger. We all have had failures and so many of life's evolutions have come from that climb back up the mountain after falling off. I remain a big fan of reinvention and change. For every doomsayer out there who feels the changes at the beach have robbed them of their livelihood, I'd say shut down your computer, stop complaining, be constructive and become a master of your own future.

That's my take on the changes taking place before our eyes. Nostalgia is nice for time spent in a rocking chair, but if you close your eyes too long, the world around you will continue to revolve in mad chaos. Believe in change, but never embrace the old ways and believe the world owes you a living. It doesn't.

Bill Barnett is the Founder and Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks (C9hotelworks.com), a leading Thailand-based hospitality and real estate consulting firm.

Brokers: Phuket condo market is bouncing back

PHUKET'S residential property market is showing signs of recovery following two years of decline, according to research by real-estate agencies.

The latest survey by Plus Property, an agency subsidiary of residential developer Sansiri, shows sales of high-end condominium units priced at about 100,000 baht per square meter or more are continuing to grow.

Completed unit prices have risen 5 per cent thanks to positive factors such as government policies on transportation and tourism, as well as the recently announced stimulus package.

Demand for luxury villas priced above 35 million baht with hotel branding has continued to recover from the decline of the last two years, according to CBRE Thailand, the local unit of international property agency CB Richard Ellis.

Phuket continues to attract its fair share of extremely



Sales of high-end condos are continuing to rise. Photo: Stan9999

wealthy foreigners and property investors, but those willing to spend 100mn baht or more for a luxury villa have dwindled, according to research by Knight Frank Thailand.

Poomipak Julmanichoti, managing director of Plus Property, said the company's survey of the Phuket residen-

tial market found that while the overall market had experienced slow growth, high-end beachfront condominium units priced at 100,000 baht per sqm or more were still performing well, as they were attracting interest from buyers with high purchasing power who are largely unaffected by the economic downturn.

The market slowdown can be seen as a temporary trend that will quickly be reversed once the economy improves, Mr Poomipak added.

Demand for completed units has risen by 38 per cent according to the company's latest findings.

Meanwhile, the limited number of new luxury villas in Phuket has doubled the price of resale units, as demand is relatively strong in this niche market, said Aliwassa Pathnadabutr, managing director of CBRE Thailand.

Top-end villas on the island were part of an exclusive market characterized by a limited number of high-value transactions, she said. Major players used to be small foreign developers with limited financial backing, but they have been replaced by large operators.

This is positive in terms of reduced risks for buyers and

improvement in the quality of villas and designs.

Most villa sales are in the entry-level segment, with prices below 15mn baht.

Despite ongoing demand in the luxury segment, buyers face limited supply, Ms Aliwassa said.

In recent years, buyers preferences in the luxury sector have shifted towards hotel-branded products that offer five-star services and facilities, and the ability to generate rental income, Ms Aliwassa added.

With the completion of Phuket airport's expansion next year, CBRE expects to see further growth in resort sales.

Villas are still selling but in modest quantities, still priced beyond the means of most buyers, said Risinee Sarikaputra, research and consultancy director of Knight Frank Thailand.

— *The Nation*

Lowdown on holiday villa rentals

By The Book
Kevin Hodges

WHEN planning a holiday, location is usually the first consideration. Having chosen your destination, the next decision is accommodation. Traditionally, holiday makers would look for hotels, with the idea that they will provide the best value for money and more facilities. However, these days, renting villas has become a popular and flexible option.

A family of five with two parents and three children would have to book at least two hotel rooms. Possibly a parent would have to stay in each room if the children were small, which is not the most ideal situation. Now imagine the same family booking a villa for the same price. They now all have their own bedrooms, the security of being together, as well as indoor and outdoor space to spend time together.

Renting a villa is not only a great idea for families, it works well for friends, honeymooners and group holidays. As villas in Phuket are available with two to



Luxury villas offer more convenience, flexibility and privacy, as well as picturesque views.

eight bedrooms, it is easy for everyone to find a suitable property.

Villas also boast the most stunning locations, and provide guests with complete freedom. Being detached means there are no other guests in your personal space and gardens and pools are solely for your own use.

Some villa developments are designed like resorts with tropical gardens, communal pools, spa facilities, restaurants and

full management service. You can choose to be near the busy tourist areas, in a prime hillside location or in a quieter, out of the way area for a peaceful and relaxing stay. There are villas available all around Phuket, near all of the major beaches, inland amid the jungle and dotted along the picturesque east coast.

Renting a holiday villa also provides the option of self-cater-

ing, reducing the cost of dining and eliminating the restrictions of fixed restaurant hours. Some villas also provide an in-house chef. The majority of villas have security measures, such as guarded entrances, CCTV and alarm systems. Extra services including maids, laundry, babysitters and airport transfers are often available as well.

A villa owner or management will often provide more

personalized services and make your stay completely stress free. A car and driver or vehicle rental is often offered and staff can provide ideas of where to go and what to do.

When looking for a villa to rent in Phuket, using an agent such as Siam Real Estate is not only better for comparison of properties, but also provides peace of mind that your booking is guaranteed. There are so many villas available that a search tool is invaluable, you can choose which features are most important to you, such as number of bedrooms, sea views, proximity to beach or accessibility.

Most villas offer high speed internet connection in the price, whereas many hotels still charge for it.

An agent will deal with the villa owner, making booking fuss free and more convenient without time difference or language constraints.

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THE DECK

Project Owner : Amewat 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. Sreetha Thavisin. The Project : The Deck, Land title deed no. 15589, approximately area 5-0-40 Rai, Located at Rai-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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