

Phuket Gazette

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‘THEY WILL BE DESTROYED BY NEW YEAR’

Demolition

Beach clubs will be cleared off Surin sands

By Chutharat Plerin

WHAT was once arguably Phuket's most famous stretch of beach clubs will be demolished by New Year, vowed Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornrat on Tuesday.

"It will take about two weeks to clear all the buildings and broken construction materials from Surin Beach boardwalk," explained V/Gov Chokdee. "This needs to be clearly explained to the English-speaking community impacted so that they understand that what we are doing is returning the beach to its former, natural beauty – a gift to the world for New Year."

Only one man's signature is preventing the government from establishing a start date for the demolition of Bimi Beach Club, Catch Beach Club and a number of other iconic establishments.

Watcharin Patomwattanapong, acting chief of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO), is required to sign off on the destruction of a number of buildings which are owned by the PPAO and were leased out to locals, who then allowed private businesses to operate at the facilities.

Mr Watcharin was expected to return to Phuket this week, but had yet to do so as the *Gazette* went to print, confirmed a



Surin Beach business expansions on the westside of the boardwalk were destroyed last year. Now, the government buildings housing some of the island's most popular beach clubs are to be taken down, vowed Vice Governor Chokdee Amornrat. Photo: Gazette file

PPAO representative who declined to be named.

"I do not have the authority to say yes or no with regards to the demolition of those buildings. I will report the meeting minutes as soon as he returns," said the representative.

V/Gov Chokdee vowed to follow up

with Mr Watcharin to ensure that the demolition was made a priority.

The beach clubs, as well as the restaurants and other businesses on the east side of the Surin beachfront path are occupying units originally built by the...

Continued on Page 4

Happy Birthday
Your Majesty



BUSINESS



Ferrari 488 Spider makes Southeast Asia debut in 'Blu Corsa' in Phuket.

PROPERTY



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LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Airport staffer caught stealing duty-free items

A PHUKET Air Catering employee confessed to stealing duty-free items while transporting food to a plane bound for Finland at Phuket International Airport on November 30.

Sitthichai Srirat, 28, stole a total of 18 duty-free items.

Cabin crew noticed that the items were missing and immediately contacted airport security.

Mr Sitthichai was charged with theft.

– Winai Sarot

Drug runner arrested with B1mn of meth

PHUKET Provincial Police arrested a drug dealer in possession of more than one million baht worth of *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) on November 27.

Paitoon Asirametee, 26, claims that he was hired by an inmate at Phuket Provincial Prison to pick up the drugs and deliver them to customers.

He was charged with posses-

Locals protest US Amb's lese majeste comments



About 100 Phuket locals gathered at Provincial Hall on November 30 to protest comments made by the recently appointed United States Ambassador to Thailand, Glyn Davies, about the increase in lese majeste sentences under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

sion of a Category 1 drug with intent to sell.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Phi Phi struggles with illegal touts

UNAWARE of officers failing

to find and arrest an illegal gibbon tout regularly operating at a specific time and location on Phi Phi Don, the recently appointed Phi Phi Police Chief Jetsada Junphum has taken matters into his own hands.

The video, sent to the *Gazette* by a reader, clearly shows the culprit's face and was forwarded to Phi Phi Police earlier this month.

Restaurant owners in the area were told to immediately inform police if the tout resurfaced.

– Chutharat Plerin

Russian woman robbed near BISP

POLICE are hunting two sus-

pects accused of robbing a Russian woman near British International School Phuket on November 28.

Olga Shnyreva, 35, was kicked off of her bicycle and robbed of 400 baht and an iPhone 6 by two men with tattooed faces, confirmed Lt Col Sanit Nukong of the Thalung Police.

Police hope to make arrests soon.

– Winai Sarot

Security guard returns 400,000 baht to owner

A LOCAL security guard received media attention after he

returned a bag containing 400,000 baht to its owner.

Nattapong Rithidet, 19, was in the bathroom at Tesco Lotus when a customer came in to use the facilities and forgot to take his bag with him when he left.

Mr Nattapong immediately took the bag to customer service.

The owner returned two hours later to find his bag containing 400,000 baht at the counter waiting for him.

Mr Nattapong received the 'Value Award' from Tesco Lotus, 3,000 baht from the bag's owner and was invited to meet Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada on December 3.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Police search for serial bag thief

POLICE are hunting a possible serial snatch thief who made off with a woman's purse on November 25 in Thalung.

Namthip Kritkarom, 22, was on her way back from the Loy Krathong festival when the suspect grabbed her bag from the front of her motorbike while driving past her on a black Honda Click.

The same bike was reported as used in a similar incident the night before in the same area.

– Winai Sarot

Massive python removed from Thalung home

A MONSTER python, six-meters long, was caught trying to beat the heat under a house in Samkong on November 26.

It took several rescue workers about 20 minutes to remove the 60-kilogram snake.

It was later released at the Khao Phra Thaew Wildlife Sanctuary in Thalung.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Married couple caught with meth

POLICE arrested two Myanmar nationals in possession of more than 250 grams of crystal methamphetamine (*ya ice*) on November 27.

Thiha Soe, 32 and his wife were apprehended after officers received a tip-off from Rassada Subdistrict Chief (Kamnan) Chanchai Tantawacheerapan.

Both have been charged with possession of a Category 1 drug with intent to sell.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong



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Scuba diver found dead

Unresponsive diving tourist recovered from Koh Bon

By Chutharat Plerin

A CHINESE diver died on November 27 during a dive trip with Similan Seven Sea Co Ltd to Koh Bon, Similan National Park.

Zhang Lin, 23, was found floating unresponsive at a depth of about 11.9 meters by divers from another dive tour.

"Ms Zhang was found with her regulator no longer in her mouth by divers from Khao Lak Scuba Adventures," said Phang Nga Marine Police Chief Jakkree Mekumphonsuit.

The divers pulled Ms Zhang onto their boat to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and administer oxygen, while staff contacted the dive boat that Ms Zhang was with.

"Staff from Similan Seven Sea Co's Peter Pan didn't seem to know that the woman was even missing," said a Khao Lak Scuba Adventures staff member, who asked not to be named. "As far as we know, Ms Zhang became separated from her buddy when they went out diving without a dive master."

It is unclear where Ms Zhang's diving buddy was at the time of the incident. However, diving standards require certified recreational divers to always dive in teams in case of



The waters of the Similan National Park draws thousands of divers each year. Photo: Fred Von Lohmann

an emergency.

"After analyzing her dive watch, it seems that Ms Zhang had been struggling in shallow water for quite a long time before sinking down to the depth where she was found," the staff member said. "Her tank showed a remaining pressure of about 15 bars, an indication that she may have been panicking and breathing deeply before

she passed out."

Ms Zhang was transported to Tai Muang Chaipat Hospital where she was pronounced dead on arrival by doctors.

Police contacted Similan Seven Sea Co Ltd owner Tongkan Worapanya in order to question him about the incident and check on the company's documentation.

As of November 27, at-

tempts made by the *Gazette* to contact Mr Tongkan for comment were unsuccessful.

"We are now trying our best to investigate what happened," Col Jakkree said. "We do know that Ms Zhang signed a waiver with the company stating that she had no underlying health issues." Col Jakkree added.

Doctors have yet to verify a cause of death.

Sunbathers kicked out of park



Those wanting to soak up the sun are advised to do so at the beach. Photo: Gazette file

PHUKET City Police forced three bikini-clad sunbathers soaking up the sun at Saphin Hin to re-dress themselves on November 25.

"I am aware that officers took this action to ensure the safety of the women," Capt Chatchai Choonoo of Phuket City Police told the *Gazette*. "We do not have officers set up at this park, or other similar parks, to ensure the safety of women who might be sexually harassed while sunbathing in bikinis."

Tourists and residents are better off sunbathing on the beaches, said Col Khunnadet Nanongkhai, Phuket City Police Deputy Superintendent.

— Chutharat Plerin

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Last days for Surin Beach clubs, says Vice Gov

From page 1

...government. However, many of the units had been modified, while other structures unassociated with them had been built.

Post-tsunami, the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor) established 10 buildings on public park land next to the beach, each with two units, while the PPAO constructed 16 buildings paid for by the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan.

"Demolishing all the buildings along Surin Beach is not that easy. Some of them are government property. We need to talk about it and bring other government departments into the conversation," Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada said last year while still acting as vice governor.

"We need to see what needs to be done in order to do everything legally. We need to follow the law and examine leases and contracts.

"Part of that will be looking at who was originally given the non-transferable permission to use the buildings, and who is currently using them under what



The clubs, which lost some floor space last year, will now be completely demolished, as will all other beach businesses along the boardwalk. Photo: Gazette file

conditions."

Despite some of the buildings being legal and some of the modifications made to them being sanctioned by the local government, OrBorTor President Ma-ann Samran remains firm in his desire to see them demolished.

"I admit that we were the ones who gave them permission to modify the buildings, to make them beautiful and

to maintain them," Mr Ma-ann said.

"I feel sorry for the people who used to have their businesses on the land, but the situation has changed. I believe that they have earned enough to just move on now."

The only exceptions to the demolition orders will be a public stadium and a building that was built in honor of a visit by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej

in 1959.

Mr Ma-ann assured the *Gazette* that if he is able to have the area cleared, no new structures would be allowed to be built there.

At a meeting about the Surin Beach businesses on Tuesday, Mr Ma-ann called for military backing when it came time to start the demolition. The move was quickly approved by V/Gov Chokdee and confirmed by Lt Sompop Kamkana of the Royal Thai Navy.

"I already have a team of 40 officers ready to be dispatched with backing from the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)," Lt Sompop told the *Gazette*. "I would expect Provincial Police and civil volunteers to be present as well, so no less than 200 men to ensure that the work goes smoothly."

Last week, Mr Ma-ann banned umbrellas and other vendors from Surin Beach after they disobeyed the recently implemented 10 per cent beach zone.

"We have to follow through. We have come this far. If we do not get rid of those buildings, our job in implementing Phuket's beach management policies will not be finished," said V/Gov Chokdee.

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Art Hiranyakas, M.D.
Director of the Bangkok-Phuket
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Mariana Berho M.D.
Program Co-Director

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Mandatory travel insurance tabled at Phuket meeting

THE Phuket Governor vowed to raise tourist travel insurance issues to those capable of making changes to national legislation following the honorary consul meeting on November 25.

"If a tourist is not covered by insurance in their home country, they are setting themselves up for a difficult situation if they get injured while on holiday here," said Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada. "This is a very important issue, that I will raise with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports."

The topic of travel insurance was tabled at the meeting by Pornphan Sittichaiwitt, the Royal Norwegian honorary consul.

"Travel insurance is one issue that is getting worse and worse, because Phuket has no way to deal with those who are unable to pay their hospital bills," said Ms Pornphan.

The cost of treating uninsured tourists at Patong Hospital totals about one million baht every year. At Vachira Phuket Hospital, the total is about three million baht. In total, foreign tourists' unpaid medical bills cost the country more than 200 million baht annually, explained Somsak



Sean Kenzie is just one of thousands of tourists who struggled with hospital bills. Photo: Chaiyot Yongcharoenchai

Pureesrisak, Thailand's Tourism and Sports minister in 2013.

Authorities have made attempts in the past to promote travel insurance for tourists.

In 2013, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports was ready to implement a regulation to cut down on foreign tourists' unpaid medical bills by imposing a compulsory travel insurance fee for all tourists entering Thailand. Such unpaid bills were putting a huge strain on cash-strapped public hospitals in major destinations, particularly Phuket, explained Dr Sirichai at the time.

Though the 500-baht on-arrival insurance scheme never came to fruition, it was picked up and dusted off in August this year.

— Chutharat Plerin

Cops chase credit card theft gang

Thieves were targeting tourists using public transport

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

THE 'purchaser' for a nationwide credit card theft ring that targeted tourists was arrested on November 29 in Phang Nga after he escaped Phuket in a dramatic car chase.

Pitawat Akarathiveerakul, 53, explained to police that he was part of a criminal network that stole tourists' credit cards when they put their luggage on buses and other forms of public transport.

"The stolen credit cards were then sent to Mr Pitawat, who used them to purchase expensive items that could be resold in other locations in the country," explained Lt Col Prawit Engchuan of the Phuket Provincial Police. "The profits were then split among those involved, with the original thieves getting a flat rate of

10,000 baht per credit card."

Police were tipped off to the operation after Kasikorn Bank informed them of the suspicious card transactions.

"We had the time and place of the transaction, so we were able to review CCTV footage and get a clear image of the suspect. Mr Pitawat had a criminal record for this type of fraud, so we were able to find him in our system," said Col Prawit. "We placed him under surveillance in order to catch him in the act and hopefully net others involved in the crime as well."

On November 29, police witnessed Mr Pitawat make a fraudulent transaction at Tesco Lotus Chalong. They followed him out of the store and into the parking lot, where they saw him get into a car being driven by Rakrob Daroonphan.



Mr Pitawat already had a criminal record. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

"When we presented ourselves, Mr Rakrob sped away with Mr Pitawat," Col Prawit said. "Officers gave chase, and even shot out one of the tyres

of the car. However, he was still able to escape."

Police tracked down the escaped car on Soi Palai. However, according to wit-

nesses, the suspects had simply switched cars and continued to flee the scene.

By the time police provided officers at the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint with a description of the car, the suspects had already crossed the bridge into Phang Nga.

"Nonetheless, officers eventually caught up with Mr Pitawat. He was in the car with a different driver, who was not connected to the crime," Col Prawit said. "In his possession we found five ATM cards that were not in his name, 300 packs of cigarettes, three Samsung phones, a Gucci watch and a camera worth 30,000 baht."

Police are still hunting for Mr Rakrob, as well as attempting to identify other members of the criminal network.

Mr Pitawat was charged with credit card fraud.

'From The Boat to The Plane' project swings B25mn budget



The project is the brainchild of Phuket Marine Office Chief Phuripat Theerakulpisut. Photo: Gazette file

A 25-MILLION-BAHT budget was approved for the Phuket International Airport pier project, which will allow tourists to take a ferry down the west coast to Patong, confirmed officials on November 25.

The budget for the 'From The Boat to The Plane' project, which was tabled in 2013 by Phuket Marine Office Chief Phuripat Theerakulpisut, is set to cover the costs of the design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

"We want to help alleviate the traffic problem and offer tourists a better way of travelling by opening up a boat route," Mr Phuripat said at the time.

Though the plan is moving ahead, the location of the pier

has yet to be approved.

"The problem is that the chosen area belongs to the Phuket branch of the national air traffic control authority 'Aerothai' [Aeronautical Radio of Thailand]. We are in the process of requesting four rai of land in order to build the pier," Mr Phuripat said. "We hope that the Ministry of Transport will approve the request soon."

In January last year, officials had to squelch rumors that a 240-million-baht budget had already been approved for the project.

Officials expect to have designs drawn up while the EIA is being approved, setting the construction start date for sometime in 2018.

— Sukawin Tanthavanich



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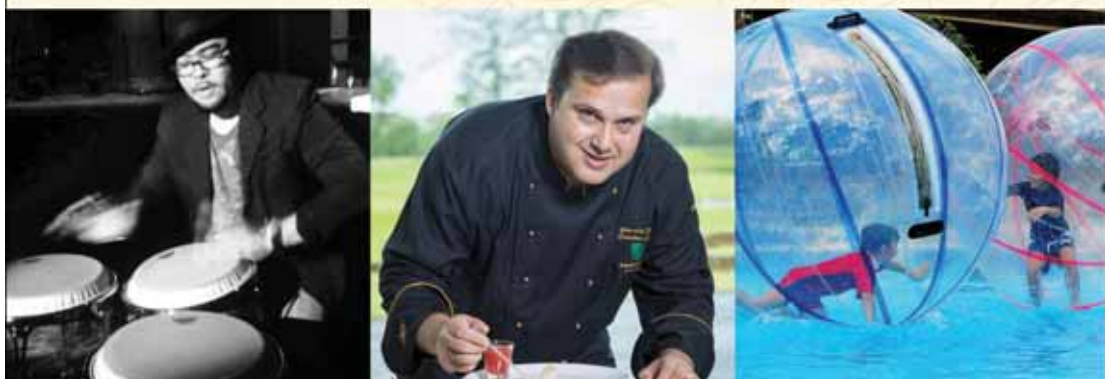
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Abducted Aussi Hells Angels gang member found dead

THE kidnapped 38-year-old Australian Hells Angels motorcycle gang member, Wayne Rodney Schneider, was found dead in a shallow grave in Chonburi province on December 1.

Mr Schneider was kidnapped by five masked men driving in a pick-up truck in Pattaya on November 30.

Police have issued an arrest warrant for 26-year-old Australian Antonio Bagnato for allegedly conspiring with four others to kidnap Mr Schneider.

The wanted suspect was Mr Schneider's partner in a Sydney fitness business.

'Fast and Furious' French drug runner arrested

A FRENCHMAN, sentenced in France for conspiring with others to move illicit drugs around Europe, was arrested in Bangkok.

Andre Cabau, 39, who reportedly copied tactics used in the Hollywood blockbuster 'Fast and Furious' when moving the narcotics, will be deported to continue serving his sentence in France.

Mr Cabau and other members of his gang used a caravan of fast sports cars to smuggle four kilograms of cocaine and 10,000 packs of ecstasy pills from the Benelux economic union (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) into France. However, they were caught in 2005 and sentenced to 10 years jail.

After serving seven years, he was granted parole in 2011, which required him to remain in France. However, he fled to Thailand.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Four red-shirt leaders detained

THE military detained two red-shirt leaders, Jatuporn Promphan and Nattawut Saikuar, on November 30 over

their plan to visit the scandal-plagued Rajabhakti Park. Officials stated that the duo's actions were aimed at causing public confusion instead of checking on corruption as claimed.

Two more red-shirt leaders, Somwang Asrasee and Thanawut Wichaidit, were arrested later that day.

Mr Jatuporn and Nattawut were released the same night after signing a document stating that they had been taken care of while in detention and would not stage any further political rallies.

Critics doubt PM's climate pledge

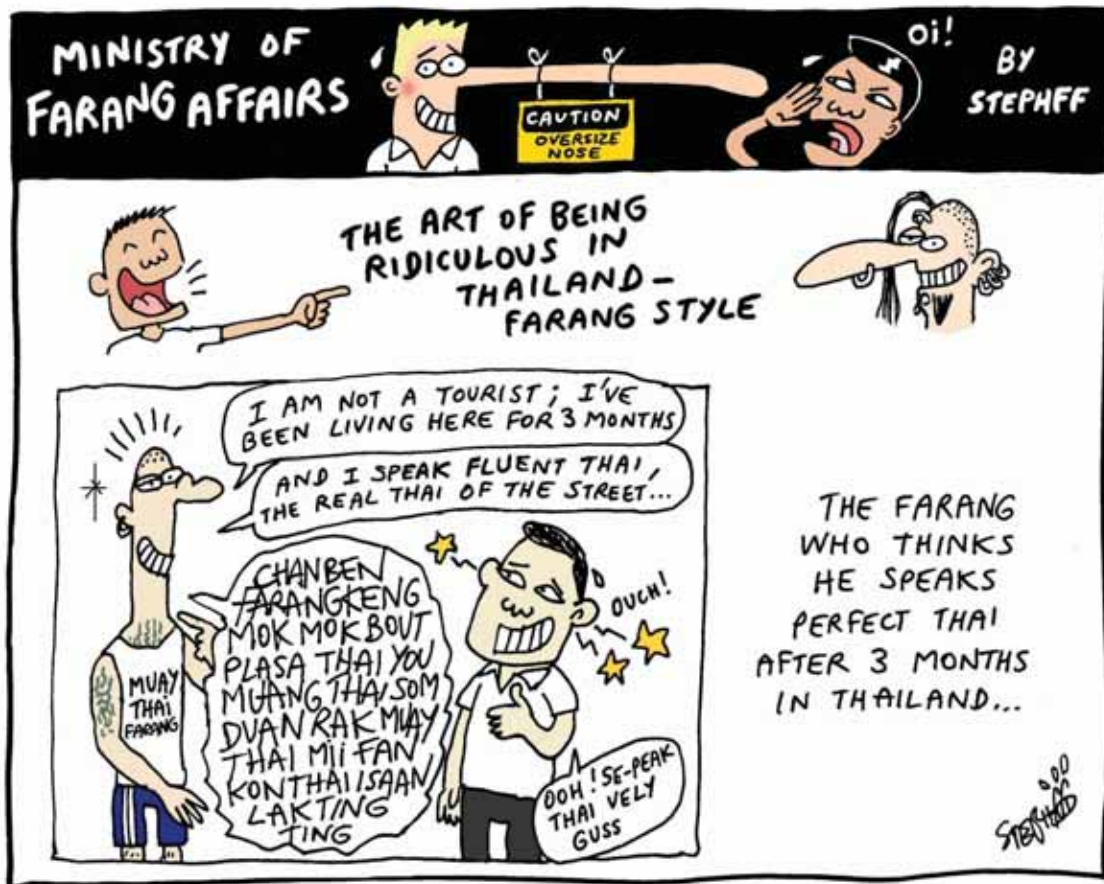
PRIME Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on December 1 declared in front of the world community that Thailand would slash greenhouse gases by 20-25 per cent within 15 years. However critics panned the plan, saying it was just for show, as it looked unrealistic.

Facebook apology ends libel case

THE Criminal Court has successfully mediated a defamation case linked to baby 'Carmen' - a case that involved a couple struggling to bring their daughter home after the surrogate mother claimed that she was not aware that they were gay.

The defendant, Kusuma Kwankiaw, who was charged with defamation under the Computer Act, reached an understanding with plaintiff Patidta Kusolsang, the surrogate mother of baby Carmen.

In an apologetic Facebook post, Ms Kusuma said she had realized her mistake in posting defamatory messages and made the apology public to show it was sincere. She also expressed her deep gratitude for Ms Patidta's kindness.





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Scrap ferry fallacy

IT'S hard to believe that 25 million baht in funding has been approved for the design and environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the proposed 'From The Boat to The Plane' project.

There is certainly no question that public transport from Phuket International Airport (HKT) to the island's west coast resort towns is in dire need of improvement, but the answer lies in tackling onshore issues.

The list of serious concerns and drawbacks to the controversial project is far too long to be listed in this space. What appears to be clear, however, is that none of the project's proponents seem to have taken the time to view how the project would be viewed in the eyes of inbound tourists disembarking at HKT.

Upon arrival, the vast majority of tourists – especially those on long-haul flights – simply want to clear customs and immigration and get to their hotels as quickly and efficiently as possible. A good number of them will inevitably be grouchy, airsick and jet-lagged. Worse, many flights arrive in the dead of night. It is already bad enough that they are greeted at the arrivals area by swarms of smarmy taxi touts, but now we are asking them to be taxied to a pier with all their luggage and take a hair-raising 25 minute speedboat ride in the monsoon season?

The project is the brainchild of Phuripat Theerakulpisut, chief of the Phuket Marine Office and staunch supporter of the island's infamous jet-ski rental industry, who now has successfully sold his vision to the point where his office will be able to oversee the lucrative EIA process and project design.

But rest assured, this project will never see the light of day. It will just be another addition to the long list of projects on which millions of baht of taxpayer money is needlessly wasted in the study process.

One overwhelming drawback that has gone largely unmentioned is that you simply cannot build a permanent pier anywhere along Mai Khao Beach, which gets hammered by Phuket's strongest currents and heaviest waves most of the year. Some readers will remember the fate of the Coral Reef Squadron dive site in the relatively sheltered Bangtao Bay; it was completely obliterated in the course of just one monsoon season.

We hope the Office of the Auditor General of Thailand and other agencies with jurisdiction and oversight authority will carefully monitor funding on this latest and most egregious public works fallacy.



Sun loungers are needed by many

We are six tourists from Denmark, all aged in our 70's, returning from Phuket, and after some 10-12 visits to Phuket, Krabi, Koh Samui and Hua Hin over the past five or six years, we are leaving rather disappointed, as there seems to be a ban on lounge chairs on the beaches.

At our age with fragile and tired bodies, we have difficulty getting up and down and sitting on just towels on the sand.

We will report this unacceptable situation to our travel agency (although they should know), and we will not return to Thailand or Phuket until the situation has been rectified.

We understand from local newspapers that even the Governor and the Deputy-Governor have different opinions of the situation, and we wonder what is causing such a problem that should be easily solved, as we are willing to pay the daily rent for the lounge chairs.

I suggest that the *Phuket Gazette* carry an explanatory report on the situation and a complaint of little action from the authorities.

Karsten Willerup
Denmark

Airport pier not a year round solution

Re: Airport pier project sails forward with multi-million-baht design budget, November 26

This is an admirable idea, but without a proper harbor

Letters to the Editor

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

near the airport it will not work – at least not all year round.

Anyone who has seen how wild the sea can get on the west coast in low season will realize a pier would be nearly destroyed every year. Perhaps Nai Yang has a bit of shelter somewhere, but it would probably need constant dredging.

Have a look – no boats can anchor near the west coast in low season.

Chob
Gazette forum

Sunbathers should be banned in general

Re: Foreign sunbathers get boot from Phuket park, November 27

It would be nice to see this happen on all beaches, not only to protect the women but also to let foreigners know that they are being disrespectful to Thai culture.

Recently I have seen on three occasions where foreigners are changing their clothes on the beach completely nude. That is disrespectful to all people and should have a consequence.

Reality Check
Gazette forum

A better plan needs to be implemented

Re: Mandatory travel insurance tabled in Phuket, November 26

What about those of us who live here and have local health insurance? Will we be turned away for not having insurance from our 'home country'?

I haven't been in my home country for over ten years. There needs to be something that differentiates between tourists and those on long term visas.

Travel insurance is not normally valid for continuous periods of over 45 days anyway.

This needs to be thought through better.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Allow jet-skis on one beach only

Re: Opinion: Keeping up the pressure to rid Phuket of jet-skis, November 29

Since jet-skis will never be banned island wide, here's an extremely simple solution that could be put into place almost immediately. Allow jet-skis at only one beach that is relatively far from other beaches. Maybe, down by Promthep Cape.

Keep them there 24 hours a day, guarded in rotation, by the 'companies' that rent them.

This would eliminate all the nuisance traffic of them being towed through town, too.

Bigfoot
Gazette forum

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Saving natural beauty

FIRST PERSON

AS A community member and leader, I like to see people come together and stand up for what they believe in.

In a developing world, protecting our communities is one of the most important things we can do. If we, as members of the Phuket community, do not protect it, then who will?

Recently, we all came together to protest the Nai Harn Movie Museum project. However, I do not want people to misunderstand our intentions. The community does not have a problem with Nai Harn being developed, it's actually nice to see people interested in the area. Nonetheless, there are real issues when these proposed developments threaten to destroy the natural beauty that we love. Not to mention the fact that it is this beauty that draws thousands of tourists to our beaches every year.

We are the ones who planted the trees that were to be chopped down for the project. It takes years for these trees to grow to the size they are now. And not only do they provide us with clean air, we have grown old together with them, sharing many memories with members of our families as we eat and relax in the shade.

It was so nice to see that the people in, and beyond, our community understood how important these trees are. I urge people in other communities to also stand united and protect the areas that they live in. When speaking with a single voice, a community has much more impact than when



Sin Polrob, 58, was born and raised in Rawai. He has been a community leader since 1999 and currently serves as the Rawai Kamnan (subdistrict chief).

Here he talks about the importance of communities standing up against projects that threaten to destroy the natural beauty of Thailand.



It was community action that saved the trees at Nai Harn Beach from being cut down. Photo: Voratuss Intasee

only a handful of people try to make a difference.

Nai Harn is one of the most beautiful beaches in Asia and I support the local government in developing the area, but they must listen to the community. We are not just doing this for ourselves, but for everyone who enjoys the natural beauty at Nai Harn.

A lot of people travel here from overly developed countries just to get back into nature. We should do everything in our power to keep such precious nature alive in our homes, so we too aren't forced to travel to be surrounded by such beauty.

We can use the power of our community to protect what we have, so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the beautiful nature that we have today.

Business owners must think about the consequences of their actions when developing real estate, as well as listen to the community's concerns before moving ahead with any plan.

A local community will always know the area better than anyone else. They also have the most time and energy invested in it. So, only by working together can we move Phuket forward.



Signs should be clearly visible for all parties involved. Photo: Tom Page

Mark smoking zones

IT SEEMS to me that people in Thailand, particularly Phuketians, have forgotten that there is a law that bans smoking in certain areas or while driving. I even Googled it to make sure that the law is still in place.

The law states that you are not allowed to smoke in public parks, school and university perimeters, hospitals, government offices and even in vehicles. The punishment for breaking this law is a fine of 2,000 baht. But how many people break the law and never get fined?

When I was younger, I remember seeing the governor talking about 'No Smoking Areas' on television, and the applicable punishment if you were caught smoking in them. To this day, I am sure that people are still smoking wherever they please and are never fined.

I know this for a fact, as I was a smoker from the age of 16 until the age of 28. I often bought cigarettes before I was legally allowed to and I always smoked them in public places, including while driving in my car or riding my bike. I was never caught or fined even once.

I now find it extremely annoying when I am riding in a car with someone who is smoking or while driving behind someone who is smoking on their bike. The ash flies in my

Island View

By Pruth Kulprasit

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

face and people just throw the cigarette butts on the ground when they are done. It is sad to see so many discarded cigarette butts littered everywhere on the ground and in the streets.

Now that I am older and have a child of my own, I feel upset when I go out in a supposedly 'No Smoking Area' and people are smoking around my son. I understand that they feel that it's their right to smoke where they want, but I don't think it's fair to my child to have to inhale their cigarette smoke. I am sure there are many former smokers who feel the same way I do.

In heavily populated areas, such as the Naka market and Bang Wad Dam, there should be clear, visible signs that it is illegal to smoke there. And if there is a designated smoking area, there should be visible signs indicating this as well.

I feel like the law needs to be strictly enforced, both for smokers and nonsmokers. Signs will help minimize the inconvenience for all parties involved.

Words from the Wise

"Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength."

— *Arnold Schwarzenegger*

"It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things."

— *Theodore Roosevelt*

Issues & Answers

Can I travel with an unopened bottle of wine?

I'LL be travelling on a domestic flight next week from the Phuket International Airport and have a bottle of wine that I would like to take with me when I go.

However, I want to make sure that the bottle will be able to pass through security, as I am afraid that they will throw it away.

Alex Schuster
Surin

Phuket International Airport

Director Monrudee Gettuphan replies:

Thank you very much for your question.

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Yes, of course you will be able to take your wine with you.

However, you will only be able to put it in your checked luggage and not in your carry-on bag.

Please make sure that your bag is well packed to prevent your bottle from breaking. You can also ask the check-in officer to put a 'Fragile' sticker on your bag just to add some extra care.

For further information, please contact 076-351 166.

Is Priceline right for your portfolio?



Finance

By Don Freeman

GROWTH stocks can power your portfolio to new highs, with one such stock being the Priceline Group Inc (NASDAQ: PCLN), which can also double as your one-stop online destination to serve all of your travel needs. Priceline.com is the Priceline Group's flagship hotel and airline travel site with the company's other brands including Agoda.com, Booking.com, Kayak.com, Rentalcars.com and OpenTable.com (an online restaurant reservations service).

The Priceline Group was founded in 1997 and had a 1999 IPO where the company's market value reached US\$12.9 billion on its first trading day – the highest first day market value for an IPO at the time. Shares then took a beating during the dot.com crash (losing 99 per cent of their value) and largely drifted for the next several years.

In 2007 when the Priceline Group showed signs of taking off as the next growth stock, I began adding shares to the portfolios of my clients. Several years later in 2014, I exited them from the stock



Priceline.com is the Priceline Group's flagship hotel and airline travel site, with other brands including Agoda.com and Booking.com.

with a 1,000 per cent gain and watched shares undergo a 28 per cent correction for roughly the next 18 months.

In late October 2015, the Priceline Group broke above my targeted buy price of US\$1,400 to enter growth stock territory and I am once again a buyer for some of the following reasons:

Europe accounts for roughly half of the Priceline Group's total bookings and the travel market there has gained strength with the stabilization of the Euro.

The Priceline Group's online travel brands will now participate in TripAdvisor's instant booking platform. This will give the Priceline Group an opportunity to gain an information edge over Expedia and to test out TripAdvisor's platform with

little risk involved.

In October, Amazon.com abruptly killed Destinations – the travel site it launched just last April to challenge the Priceline Group and Expedia. With Amazon.com's exit, there's little risk of a new online travel entrant becoming a serious threat.

While Airbnb should be considered a travel industry disruptor, analysts estimate it will only generate US\$7.5 bn in bookings and nearly US\$1 bn in revenue for fiscal 2015, well short of the US\$51 bn in estimated bookings for the Priceline Group and the US\$23 bn in estimated bookings for Expedia.

In September, the Priceline Group acquired AS Digital – an Australian restaurant reservation system provider. The move will help accelerate OpenTable's en-

try into the Australian market plus expand its operations in Japan and across the Asia Pacific region.

With that in mind, there are a couple of other key takeaways for would-be investors in the Priceline Group. For starters, its shares are not exactly a bargain given a price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio at the 32 level and a price-to-book ratio around 8.50. Then again, growth stocks are usually more expensive than non-growth stocks because they typically have earnings that are expected to grow at an above-average rate relative to the overall market.

Moreover, the performance of growth stocks like the Priceline Group will often take a break before resuming in an uptrend during a bull market.

The Priceline Group is also in the travel business and it's an S&P 100 stock, the stock's performance should be considered as an important bellwether for both the health of the global economy and for the overall stock market.

Does a growth stock like the Priceline Group fit in your portfolio?

Don Freeman, BSME is president of Freeman Capital Management, a Registered Investment Advisor with the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), based in Phuket. He has over 15 years of experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. Call for a free portfolio review at 089-970 5795 or email: freemancapital@gmail.com.

First duty-free opens IKEA opens first Phuket store

KING Power Group launched the island's first ever duty-free complex in Chalong on December 1.

The 4.5-billion-baht, 48,000 square meter complex on Chao Fa West Road is the group's fourth addition to their already successful outlets in Rangnam, Srivari and Pattaya.

"King Power Phuket has been opened in order to cater to the increasing demand [for luxury shopping experiences] from tourists, King Power members and domestic shoppers," said Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, group chairman of



King Power complex in Chalong. Photo: King Power PR

King Power.

The complex houses more than 100 luxury brands and has a modern, iconic design that reflects the charming traditions of the South, Mr Vichai added.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

THE first IKEA Pick Up & Order Point in Asia was officially launched in Phuket on November 27, providing service to Thailand's southern provinces.

The newest addition to the Swedish retailer's furniture and home furnishings business, located on the bypass road in the Biz Town estate, aims to cater to the island's growing business, real estate and tourism sectors.

"Phuket has enormous growth potential. It is the center of tourism and economy in the south," said store manager Takurung Banjongruk, at the opening ceremony. "We are excited to launch in Phuket in order to reach clientele outside of Bangkok.

The wide variety of items offered through the IKEA website and catalog make it easy for customers and businesses to create their own unique design style, Mr Takurung added.

Phuket Governor Chamroen



Gov Chamroen expresses support for IKEA. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

Tipayapongtada voiced his support and appreciation for the new store's contribution to Phuket's economy and tourism sector while chairing the event on November 27.

"Phuket is growing rapidly. There are several projects underway to help boost the tourism industry and I think IKEA will become a significant part of that," said Governor Chamroen.

To shop at the new IKEA

Pick-up & Order Point customers must:

1. Browse through IKEA's website or catalog to create a shopping list
2. Visit the Pick-up & Order Point to place an order and select a pick-up date
3. Pick up the order or, for a fee, use the delivery service.

Orders will take an average of five days to arrive, the retailer says.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

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TOT

Revving up island's Ferrari market

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

THE Ferrari 488 Spider officially made its debut in Phuket – its first appearance in South-east Asia – following the premiere at the Frankfurt International Motor Show in September.

The 488 is the latest chapter in Maranello's ongoing history of open-top V8 sports cars, a story that started with the targa-top version of the 308 GTB – the immortal 308 GTS – and which ultimately resulted in the full convertible Spider architecture.

The replacement for the Ferrari 458 was showcased in 'Blu Corsa' rather than classic Ferrari Red at the JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa on Friday. The metallic particles suspended in the Blu Corsa paint have an unusual iridescent effect that is created by the two-layer paintwork.

"We are choosing it for Phuket as we are by the sea. And it also reflects that freedom and lifestyle and leisure [associated with Ferrari]," Dieter Knechtel, Ferrari Far East managing director, told the Gazette.

The launch represents preparation to enter the model in the five Southeast Asian markets that Ferrari operates in late next year.

"Thailand is a great place to



The Ferrari 488 Spider made its Southeast Asia debut in Phuket. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

come for Ferrari. We have a very strong partner here [Cavallino Motors Co Ltd] that is very supportive. It's a market that is gaining in importance. So, for this reason we wanted to give back a little," Mr Knechtel said.

Simon Inglefield, head of ASEAN – Far East Ferrari, was also at the launch. He explained that there were a number of reasons that Phuket was an ideal location in Thailand to debut the 488.

"In Bangkok, we found the traffic to be quite heavy, so why not come to a beautiful location like Phuket, which really reflects the car: the blue color with the blue sky you have here and the scenery," Mr Inglefield said. "That's also why Phuket was chosen, because of the roads here. It's the perfect location to test drive the car."

The Southeast Asian region has proven to be a very volatile market for Ferrari, with strong results in one country, while

another goes through a transitional period. However, the last five or six years have seen the Thailand market opening up, confirmed Mr Knechtel.

"We are very happy with Thailand. We are, step-by-step, seeing results in every aspect of the business. The California T [model] is working very well in Thailand. We are confident about any other model coming to Thailand, because the structure [here] is very strong and the customer base is getting

stronger," he explained.

"There are not too many [Ferraris in Phuket], but that is not a reason to do something for them. I think if the situation continues like this, we need to think about building stronger structures in Phuket and other areas within Thailand."

The popularity of the Ferrari 458 Challenge racing event in Thailand continues to help boost the company's presence in the Kingdom. Next season will again see the 458s raced. However, the 488 is expected to take the track for the 2017 season, confirmed Mr Knechtel.

The 488 is the most high-performance Spider built by the Prancing Horse and is powered by the coupé's 3902cc turbo-charged V8, which punches out a maximum of 670 CV with the variable torque management system, guaranteeing smooth, progressive torque delivery in the higher gears.

The car, with blistering acceleration, 0 to 100 km/h in three seconds and 0 to 200 km/h in 8.7 seconds, has a throttle response time of just 0.8 seconds, which essentially eliminates the turbo lag typical of this type of engine.

Though replacement for the Ferrari V12 range is coming soon, Mr Knechtel was unable to confirm or deny whether a similar turbo solution would be put in place for the larger engine.

Make marketing a priority



THERE are a couple of fundamental truths in business.

Generally speaking, people are in business to make money, and to make money you need customers, because they are the people with the money.

Yet many business owners focus on a variety of other activities that they believe to be more important than marketing.

You may have the best product in the world, at the best price, with the best service, but if no one knows it exists, you are going to fail.

So shouldn't your priority be attracting customers?

Yet, more often than not, marketing is the area that gets neglected, and when times are tough it is the first area where budgets are cut, or it is avoided because people are not sure

how to do it.

So here are a couple of key tips:

- Make marketing a priority.
- Commit a consistent and substantial budget to marketing.
- Learn how to market properly, or delegate to someone that can.
- Track your marketing activities and always aim to improve.
- Start slowly and increase your budget expenditure on methods that work.

Now you should be working towards a strategy where every dollar you spend returns five or ten times as much.

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.

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Luxury Trade Meets Amazing Thailand

The Tourism Authority of Thailand Phuket Office hosted 40 leading international travel agents from 10 countries at the Paresa Resort Phuket for the 'Amazing Thailand Luxury Trade Meet' on November 23. Travel agents from Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi met with the group to discuss the growing luxury tourism industry.

MEETING UP: Mingkwan Metmowlee (left), president of the Association of Thai Tourism Marketing; Juthaporn Rerngronasa (3rd left), deputy governor for International Marketing (Europe, Africa, Middle East and America); Srisuda Wanapinyosak (4th left), deputy governor for International Marketing (Asia and South Pacific); Anoma Wongyai (right), director of TAT Phuket Office; Charn Wongsatayanont (2nd right, back row), managing director of Jet Tour; and Phuket business representatives.

Grand Celebration

A team from Bangkok Hospital Phuket made their way to Vachira Phuket Hospital to congratulate them on the opening of their two new buildings, Chalermprakiat 59 Pansa and Baan Khun Poom, on November 9.



SHOWING SUPPORT: (From L-R) Poranee Phoungcjit, head of Bangkok Hospital Phuket's medical affairs department; Wanna Pongrujikhon, assistant nurse division director at Bangkok Hospital Phuket; Narongrit Havarungsri, director of Bangkok Hospital Phuket; and Dr Jessada Jongpaiboon, director of Vachira Phuket Hospital, with staff.

Grand Mercure welcomes Redfoo and crew

Grand Mercure Phuket in Patong recently welcomed Redfoo of LMFAO and friends to the island.



Sumontha Urvois (left), Grand Mercure Phuket Patong executive assistant manager welcomes Stefan Kendal Gordy (aka Redfoo) best known as part of the musical duo LMFAO, and his team to Phuket.

Snacking up media

TSL Auto Cooperation Phuket branch invited the media out for snacks and to display their showroom on November 28.



FULL OF FUN: Kanoksak Rotjanarak (2nd left), TSL Auto Phuket's body paint service manager; Dumrong Nilrungsri (middle), TSL Auto Cooperation Co Ltd's product consultant director; Komson Angkutrothum (2nd right), TSL Auto Cooperation Co Ltd's marketing manager; and TSL Auto Phuket staff.

Lighting up the sky

The Miss Noppamas 2015 contest was a big success at the Loy Krathong Festival on Chalong Pier, hosted by the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization (OrBorJor) on November 25.



Phattamarin Nasawasdhi (middle), Miss Noppamas 2015; Tantanwan Nookeaw (left), second runner-up; and Pattarawadee Noonpakdee (right), Miss People's Choice.

ents in Paradise

Pick up and order with IKEA

The first IKEA 'Pick Up & Order Point' in Asia was officially launched in Phuket on November 27, providing service to Thailand's southern provinces.



OPEN FOR BUSINESS: (From L-R) Mike King, retail manager of IKEA Singapore, Malaysia & Thailand; Patrice Dreano, IKEA store manager at Bangna; Takurug Banjongruk, store manager of the Pick-up & Order point in Phuket; Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada; Boon Yongsakul, chairman of Boat Development Co Ltd; Chaichan Leinghirankul, sales manager at IKEA Bangna; and Benjawon Omark, deputy IKEA store manager, Bangna.



(From L-R) Jaruan Phattarajariyakul, runner; Anothai Puengrang, biker; and Mujirarat Phattarajariyakul, swimmer, showing off their awards.

Gazette team races to the finish line

The Phuket Gazette is happy to congratulate their team on winning 3rd place in the Women's Team Relay and 24th place overall at the Laguna Phuket Triathlon 2015 on November 22.

Let's make a deal

YTL Hotels announced the development of two new management contracts with Marriott International to develop the Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui and Ritz-Carlton, Hokkaido, Japan on November 19.

The two hotels will feature the renowned hallmarks of the Ritz-Carlton with distinguished, personalized services and refined, luxurious accommodation for all travellers.



Craig Smith (left), president and managing director of Asia Pacific Marriott International with Dato Mark Yeoh, executive director of YTL Hotels.



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Tri-champ returns to form at Challenge

A FIELD of over 600 individual pro and age group athletes representing 41 nationalities, crowded Laguna Phuket this weekend to participate in the 2015 Challenge Laguna Phuket triathlon.

Switzerland's Ruedi Wild successfully defended his 2014 title in 3:54:45 (swim 21:29, bike 2:12:17, run 1:18:21), breaking his own record of 4:02:43, despite being out of action for the past few months due to injury.

Belgium's Bart Aernouts, making his Phuket debut, finished in second just under a minute behind Mr Wild, with a time of 3:55:41, followed by Italy's Alberto Casadei, who came in at 3:58:22.

In the women's field, Swiss pro Simone Braendli took home the win, finishing in 4:22:42 (swim 23:37, bike 2:33:50, run 1:22:22).

Following Ms Braendli in second and third were Jodie



Catch all the excitement of the race on the Phuket Today show this week. Photos: Laguna Phuket PR

Swallow of Great Britain with a time of 4:23:25 and Laguna Phuket Triathlon triple winner Radka Vodickova of the Czech Republic with a 4:30:50 finishing time.

"It was a tough competition

today. We were racing in such a strong field of pros," said Mr Wild after the race. "I am very happy coming back here again and defending my title at my favorite race of the season. I want to thank all the people

who support me throughout the year."

Meanwhile, Ms Braendli overcame a huge challenge while on the course.

"On the run course, I followed Jodie Swallow by seven



Ruedi Wild wins the Challenge.

minutes and it was not easy to catch up. I never thought I can win here," she said. "But I believe that pain is temporary, glory is forever, so I just sprinted until the end."

— *Phuket Gazette*

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WHAT'S ON in Phuket

December 5-12. Phuket King's Cup Regatta 2015

One of the standout international sporting events in the Asia region, the 29th Phuket King's Cup Regatta Under Royal Patronage prepares to set sail.

The event will once again swell Phuket visitor numbers and make a large contribution to overall Thai tourism performance.

The Phuket King's Cup Regatta 2015 will be held at Kata Beach Resort and Spa Phuket from December 5-12 and will host international racing classes across which over 150 boats and 1,500 sailors will compete for one of sailing's most prestigious trophies, bestowed by His Majesty the King of Thailand.

For more information email Veerawan Saejao at veerawan.s@vivaldipr.com or call 085-000 1476.

December 9, 5:30pm - 7:30pm. 'A Family Christmas' At Angsana

Get into the holiday spirit at the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) 'A Family Christmas' event at Angsana.

Bring the whole family

down to the Angsana Ballroom to enjoy the Music Corner and the Art and Craft Corner, where there will be face painting, as well as the chance to make bookmarks, cookies and even Christmas cards.

The best part, of course, will be that Santa Clause himself will be in attendance.

Entrance fee for the little ones (2-12 years old) is just 100 baht. So don't be a Grinch, and join in the fun at Angsana.

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.

Father's Day

MILLIONS of people will hold up lit candles in unison on December 5 in honor of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 88th birthday.

Regarded as The Father of the Nation, HM The King's birthday is also celebrated as Father's Day throughout the Kingdom.

HM The King was born on December 5, 1927 at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the United States, to HRH Prince Mahidol Adulyadej (the Prince Father) and HRH Princess Srinagarindra (the Princess Mother).

Taking the throne in 1946, His Majesty is the world's longest-serving current head of state and the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history.

An accomplished musician, His Majesty has written 49 compositions, including marches, waltzes and Thai patriotic songs, and plays the saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, guitar and piano.

In 1967 HM The King won a gold medal for sailing in the

Fourth Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games, together with HRH Princess Ubol Ratana Rajakanya, whom he tied for points.

Father to one son, HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, and three daughters – HRH Princess Ubol Ratana Rajakanya, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and HRH Princess Chulabhorn Valayalaksana – HM The King is also grandfather to 12 grandchildren.

Phuket will hold a Father's Day ceremony at Saphan Hin at 4:30pm, where the evening's itinerary includes homage-paying ceremonies and stage performances, followed by a candlelight ceremony led by Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada at 7:09pm.

Happy Father's Day to all and *Soang Phra Charoen* – Long Live the King.

– *Phuket Gazette*



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Cycling to fight against cancer



LAST year, as I was grinding out the kilometers from Bangkok to Phuket with the Siam Bike Tours eight-day group trip, I was inspired by the robust figure of Rudy Pospisil, a Canadian firefighter and cancer survivor who was also cycling this trip as a small part of his around-the-world epic ride to raise funds for cancer research.

I started doing research into the scientific understanding on the ways in which cycling can play a role in the defence against various types of cancers, and the findings were startling to say the least.

Many people exercise to prevent heart disease, but exercise can also play a key role in preventing cancer, and research has clearly revealed that most cancers are caused by lifestyle factors, rather than by genetics.

It turns out that exercise,

such as regular cycling, is one of the most important actions you can take to help guard against many types of cancer. Up to one-third of cancer related deaths are due to obesity and sedentary lifestyles, including two of the most common cancers in the world, namely breast and colon cancer.

More than two dozen studies have shown that women who exercise have a 30 to 40 per cent lower risk of breast cancer than their sedentary peers.

The female hormone estrogen seems to play a key role. Women with high estrogen levels in their blood have an increased risk of breast cancer. Since exercise lowers blood estrogen, it helps lower women's risk of breast-cancer. Exercise also reduces levels of other cancer stimulating factors such as insulin.

Cycling can also play a dramatic role in preventing cancer of the colon and rectum. Encouragingly, more than three dozen studies now show that regular exercisers



Cancer survivor Rudy Pospisil has just finished riding solo through Australia and New Zealand to raise funds for cancer research.

reduce their risk of colon cancer by 20 per cent or more compared to sedentary people and the benefits are seen in both men and women, although the effect is greater in men.

Changes in digestive acids and other substances also oc-

cur with exercise, and these changes are believed to provide some protection from colon cancer. Decreases in body fat, insulin and other growth factors also may contribute to exercisers' lower risk of colon cancer.

According to the United States national activity guide-

lines, a good target to set for defence against cancers is to moderately exercise for at least 45 minutes a day, at least five days a week, although the benefits increase if you exercise for over an hour on each occasion.

You can see in Phuket how regular cycling can easily fit this prescribed amount of activity. Cycling on the island for an hour a day is best achieved in the early morning, when traffic is light and the temperature is yet to climb.

While cycling always has to be practiced with all due caution in Phuket, we have the wonderful opportunity of combining our rides with an invigorating ocean swim at the end, which does wonders for both your physical and mental well-being.

Rudy Pospisil has just finished riding solo through both Australia and New Zealand on his around-the-world epic ride, which is a powerful testament to the power of cycling as an aid in defeating the scourge of cancer.

A true inspiration to us all.

Rolling victory BMX champ happy in Nong Mek

LOCAL cyclist Daniel Amby celebrated his victory in the 'Tour of Wiengsa Crown Prince Hospital' bike race, held in Surat Thani on November 22.

On a rolling, 85-kilometer course, Daniel was able to break away early with Pichet Puengrang, recent winner of the Thanyapura Classic, and another cyclist. They created a gap of three minutes, but then Daniel was able to escape alone and increase the gap to six minutes on a chase group of 30 riders.

Daniel eventually won with a margin of more than three minutes.

Competing in her second bike race, Daniel's daughter Ebba Amby won the junior division race, riding for the Thanyapura Junior development team.

At the awards ceremony, Daniel was presented with a trophy by Suthep Thaugsuban, former deputy prime minister and self-appointed secretary-general of the People's Democratic Reform Committee.

"It was a great feeling com-



Daniel Amby claimed victory in the 'Tour of Wiengsa Crown Prince Hospital' bike race, against 30 other cyclists.

ing in alone after 35 kilometers," Daniel said. "A big thanks to my family, team mate and to my coach Nick Gates for your support. And also to my sponsors: Fourteen Cycles, Rotor Thailand, Kask Thailand, Swans Eyewear, Revv Energy, Compressport Thailand, Bont Shoes Thailand, Thanyapura Sports and Leisure Club and Jakina Customized."

— Jonathan Fowler

THUMBING through the photos of Thai-American Amanda Carr on her personal website and social networks, any stranger to her accomplishments might get the impression that she's a one-woman Spice Girls.

All that's important to know is that Amanda won the gold medal for Thailand in the BMX bike event at the 17th Asian Games in South Korea just over a year ago.

But her Instagram and Facebook feeds provide quite a charming revelation, even for admirers of her extreme-cycling abilities. We're used to seeing pictures of Amanda in full-metal riding gear on the track – complete with a sleek helmet that wouldn't look out of place in a *Star Wars* movie, presumably working on those thigh muscles.

But here she is – in a photo toting more than 20,000 'likes' and a thousand-plus shares – in farmer garb, harvesting rice.

Well, we did know that half of her roots are in the great Northeast – she 'speaks Isaan' fluently. Her mom's from Udon Thani, her father is a lawyer and US Air Force retiree and Amanda Mildred Carr was actually born and raised in the United States.



BMX champ Amanda Carr in her family's rice field. Photo: The Nation

But she has that Udon taste for spicy food, along with the friendly smile and gentle manners typical of the region.

All these traits combined to make Amanda the 'most talked-about sportswoman' earlier this year on Mthai, the news portal that gets 780,000 views per day.

A BMX enthusiast since age five, she graduated from high school with 17 varsity letters, more than anyone else had ever accomplished in four years, including letters in weight lifting, soccer, track-and-field, cross-country running, tennis, golf and softball. Somehow her two-wheeled ambitions still prevailed and, after training

under USA Cycling for several years, Amanda decided to compete for Thailand in BMX.

For the moment, though, the biking body armor, helmet and knee pads have been set aside in favor of the most advanced uniform ever conceived for picking rice under the blazing Isaan sun – long-sleeved check shirt, sun hat and face covering. Amanda lets the hanky-mask flutter aside to beam at the camera under a hat that's giddy with cartoon characters.

She looks like she's having the time of her life helping the family harvest golden ears of rice in Nong Mek.

— The Nation

Weight loss, without the pain



AH, CHEAT meals! You know what I am talking about? Pizza, ice-cream, popcorn, chocolate – not good for the body in the short term, but they can help your psychology and motivate you to stay on track in the long term. We all need a break from routine and being strict. I often say what you resist persists, but instead of ‘giving in’ to an urge, a more powerful choice is deciding guilt-free to indulge occasionally.

Like many things when it comes to diets, whether you would like to maximize fat loss or increase muscle growth, there are a lot of different opinions about these cheat meals.

Some experts say that even small changes from your diet plan will prevent you from reaching your goals and therefore suggest strict obedience to their programs.

Others belittle the entire concept of cheating, and claim that as long as you stick to eating the right kind of foods, you don't have to pay much attention to your overall intake.

In my opinion, both of these



Indulging yourself once in a while will motivate you to stay on track in the long term. Photo: [puamelia]

directions are wrong.

You can enjoy regular cheat meals, but you need to find the best way to do so.

Success with most things, including diet, comes from consistency and not from seeking perfection. The ideal diet is the diet that gets you results – like losing fat, building muscle, moving you

towards more optimal health, and also suits your personality and lifestyle.

Food serves many purposes today, including:

1. Nourishment
2. Experiencing joy in its taste
3. Enhancing social occasions

Nourishment should ideally make up the large part and life is meant to be enjoyed and not

lived alone in a cave. Sharing a great meal with a glass of wine and then a dessert with friends and family is one of life's pleasures.

However, as I have seen on countless occasions, the cheat meal can quickly turn from being an empowering choice, to a guilt-filled bad food fest when we go too far. So here

are my rules for those indulgences:

1. Do not use cheat meals to help deal with negative emotions (like frustration, anger, pain), as emotional eating can lead to a dangerous addiction.

2. Always indulge in good company – never alone.

3. Eat until satisfied, and then stop – you stay in control.

4. Enjoy it slowly and savor every bite.

5. Avoid foods to which you are intolerant – gluten, for example.

6. Try to substitute better options unless it doesn't feel like a cheat anymore – e.g. go dark chocolate (still has sugar) versus white, or sweeten your whipped cream with Stevia instead of white sugar.

7. Don't cheat more than 20 per cent of the meals – many wanting weight loss can't go beyond 10 per cent however.

8. Keep your house clean – don't leave tempting sweets and foods in your cupboards.

Craig Burton is a Certified Sports Nutritionist (CISN) with a Bachelor of Science Degree (Sports Science) and a National Academy of Sports Medicine (PES) certification.

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Thursday 24 December 2015

Delectable Traditional Christmas Buffet at Rim Talay from 19:30

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Christmas Gala Dinner at La Gritta from 19:00

Savour a four-course set dinner prepared by eminent Chef Patrizia Battolu, complete with festive beverage and carols.

The celebration is priced at **3,000 THB++**.

*Remark: All prices per person, excluding beverage and are subject to a 10% service charge and 7% VAT. Children below 12 years, will receive a 50% discount.

New Year's Eve

Thursday 31 December 2015

New Year's Eve under the Stars at Rim Talay from 19:00

Celebrate with our spectacular gala dinner and entertainment-filled evening, and a fireworks display to welcome in the new year.

The celebration is priced at **5,500 THB++**.

New Year's Eve Gastronomic Dinner at La Gritta from 19:00

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Dinner is priced at **4,900 THB++**.

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The need to invest in our trees



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

THE recent decision by Rawai's mayor to uproot 27 *casuarina* trees next to Nai Harn Beach caused such an outcry that the project had to be suspended and the project to build a Hollywood style movie museum, at least for the time-being, put on hold.

This disturbing and short-sighted initiative is symptomatic of Phuket's disregard for one of its most precious heritages – its trees. Years ago, the specimens along the central reservation and verges of the airport road were grubbed up by backhoes. Mostly mature crape myrtles with leafy canopies and gorgeous pink blossom, they were in part replaced by gaunt sugar palms, trees which offered no shade, little oxygen renewal and left a sticky deposit on windscreens.

Unused to the contaminated air of the freeway, many upped and died. At the time of their deracination, I voiced my concern in this newspaper. The action incurred the wrath of a governor who summoned the *Gazette's* senior staff to his office and insisted that I was sacked forthwith.

Things may be a bit better



It is hard to deny the draw of the lush forests in Krabi. Photo: Evo Flash

now, but they are not good enough. In the last two years, I have witnessed the removal of at least one priceless rosewood and any number of huge tamarind trees in the name of 'development'. In London there were large plane trees in my Highgate garden, which were the subject of strictly maintained preservation orders. Here, there is apparently no such thing, not even a simple initiative of the kind that exists in poverty-stricken Haiti where one donated dollar plants a new tree.

Instead, we have an island where the woodland consists either of secondary growth, from which all the valuable trees have gone, or of monocultures, such as rubber or palm oil plantations. Commercially valuable but ecologically sterile. In fairness, there have been sporadic plantings of mangroves to replace a tiny fraction of those destroyed by building and beach encroachment, but these are frankly – if you'll pardon the pun – a drop in the ocean.

Consider this: three rai of

trees can absorb six tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) over a year and, even better, replenishes our atmosphere with four tons of oxygen. Enough annual life-enhancing O₂ for 18 people. Trees also rid the air of pollutant gases, such as sulfur dioxide, ozone, ammonia, and worst of all, toxic carbon monoxide – the gas that probably did for the Thepkrasattri sugar palms.

Equally important, trees reduce run-off by absorbing rainfall through leaves and through roots, which act as a

sponge. This process of absorption in turn prevents storm water from carrying pollutants to rivers, and ultimately, to the Andaman Sea. Trees prevent soil erosion – many recent landslides around the world could have been averted by the preservation of indigenous forests. And it goes without saying that trees are key providers of food for living creatures from birds to humans.

Why is the temperature in Phuket Town degrees higher than the rest of the island? Because it is almost totally devoid of trees. They would not only provide oases of shade, but would enhance the city's fading aesthetic appeal. Future landslides on Patong's denuded hillsides? You bet.

Look at Singapore, a similar sized island with many times the population of Phuket, its main avenues are flanked by carefully nurtured – yes, you've got it – trees.

Come on Phuket officialdom. Instead of chopping them down, try planting them.

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.com.

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Look to detached housing as condominium market falters

SOME property firms will focus on detached housing and townhouse projects next year amid signs of an oversupply of condominiums.

Supalai plans to launch 20 such projects worth up to 20 billion baht next year.

In the first nine months of this year, the company recorded 8bn baht in pre-sales of detached houses and townhouses, with a target of 10bn baht for the full year.

Supalai launched 19 detached housing and townhouse projects worth 18.16bn baht this year, Deputy Managing Director Trithecha Thangmatitham said.

Areeya Property, meanwhile, has set aside an investment budget of 2bn baht to buy land for detached housing and town



Thailand's condominium market is struggling. Photo: Daveiam

house developments next year. The move follows it seeing strong demand in this market segment, the company's chairman, chief executive officer and managing director Wisit Laohapoonrungrassee said.

Mr Trithecha said that demand for detached houses and

townhouses enjoyed stable growth of 5 – 10 per cent a year, as the demand in the market segment is from those who actually want to live in the homes, as opposed to speculators or investors in the condominium segment.

– *The Nation*

Renovations for market shift

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

AFTER more than two decades as a dominant player in the luxury hotel market on the island, the Banyan Tree Phuket finally became an 'all pool villa' resort, as it completed its most recent renovations in November.

"With a lot of new resorts coming online, it has become almost imperative to get our resort up to where we would like it to be... because at the end of the day you are always going to see a lot of new hotels coming up," Sriram Kailasam, general manager of the Banyan Tree Phuket, told the *Gazette*. "I think Banyan Tree Phuket has been able to maintain its niche because of the quality of service we provide and the innovation that's there, whether it's in the lobby, the arrival experience or turndown experience inside the villa."

The redesign of 34 of the resort's original jacuzzi villas into pool villas took into account the shifting arrival patterns and demographics in Phuket.

"The country of residence for many of our guests in the

old days used to be very Euro-centric, but not anymore. We are noticing that change affecting every part of our operations and you can't run away from the fact that the year-on-year increase of Chinese arrivals has definitely been an advantage to every hotel on the island," Mr Kailasam said. "But besides that, the European-centric high season has somehow diminished and is becoming very much a mix of short-haul markets, as well as long-haul markets."

Chinese travellers visiting luxury locations on the island, such as the Banyan Tree, often arrive with extended family, Mr Kailasam pointed out. To better cater to the growing dominance of the Chinese market and their needs, the new pool villas were designed to naturally provide additional sleeping room.

"They always have a third person, so in the design of our new villas we've incorporated a day bed, which essentially takes away the need to put in a roll-away bed or mattress, which destroys the look and feel of the villa," Mr Kailasam said.



The jacuzzi villas were upgraded to pool villas. Photo: Banyan Tree PR

"Plus, of course, changing the jacuzzi to a pool gives the pool-villa experience at a different price point."

Finished right on time as booking numbers started to pick up in late November, the renovations/refurbishments went beyond the jacuzzi villas to public areas and in-house restaurants.

Though Banyan Tree's signature restaurant 'Saffron' was changed to have an open kitchen, the most dramatic change was made at the 'Water Court', which provides both indoor and alfresco seating. Like the villa upgrades, the Water Court was designed to cater to adjustments in the Phuket source markets.

"With our occupancy levels going up, our capacity for certain meal periods, like breakfast, was getting a little too much," Mr Kailasam confessed.

"The main thing is that the breakfast experience at the Banyan Tree Phuket has always been very, very special, so we wanted to really enhance that with this new location. Right alongside the lagoon, it's a stunning location. We are very, very happy with the results of the renovation."

The extra space created at the restaurant allows the resort to build on its already strong Asian breakfast presence, yet another appeal to the increasingly important short-haul markets.

"We are still one of those properties which maintains its attraction, and we have a lot of repeat guests because they like what they see. They like what they experience," Mr Kailasam said. "At the same time, it's important for us to continue to maintain that freshness, that innovation in service delivery of our product. That's why we've sustained 20 plus years of being on the island."



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Wizard of Oil

By Baz Daniel

I FIRST met the artist Watcharin Rodnit in 2007 when I went to prison in Phuket Town.

Perhaps I should explain that a little... In fact I visited the Phuket Youth and Child Penitentiary for an afternoon to write a story about a couple of artists who gave their time to teach painting to the young offenders behind bars using their own money and resources to supply all the materials.

As a result, I developed a friendship with Watcharin, which evolved into my taking art lessons from him at his flamboyantly creative art studio, Rinda Magic Art on Yaowarat Road.

Watcharin grew up in Surat Thani and the main influence in his life was his grandmother, who used to take him for long walks into the surrounding forest pointing out various fruits and plants. Watcharin was enchanted and the extreme passion for nature he developed frames much of his current

artistic oeuvre.

Like many artists, Watcharin had to go through his 'bad boy' phase, which he did while studying for his five-year Bachelor of Arts degree at Silpakorn in Bangkok, Thailand's premier arts university.

"I probably hated Bangkok deep down and loathed being away from nature, so my art in those early days was a dark and deadly brew of trash and violence," he says.

He enrolled for a Masters Degree after his Bachelors and then taught art for three years in Bangkok, but he says his soul was still troubled by the urban intensity of the city.

On a whim, he visited friends on Koh Phi Phi and fell in love with the natural splendor of Phang Nga Bay. In 2001, he decided to re-locate to Phuket and he at first occupied small shop spaces in Patong and then Kata as his studio.

It was very tough and paying customers for his work were almost nonexistent and he was on the verge of returning to Bangkok when he met Jayda,

a fellow artist and his wife-to-be.

Jayda persuaded him to stay and they opened small restaurants in Nai Harn and then in Rawai, near the Shell Museum, with Jayda cooking and Watcharin painting and teaching art to kids.

They finally moved to Old Phuket Town in 2004 and founded the charmingly eccentric Rinda Magic Art studio, where he still paints.

Watcharin has travelled through an artist's evolution and gradually discovered his signature style of swirling colorful depictions of nature, forests, plants, trees and fruits. He often goes off into the forest on his own to meditate on nature's stunning bounty, then he paints *en plein* like the French Impressionists.

He has increasingly important exhibitions and commissions and next

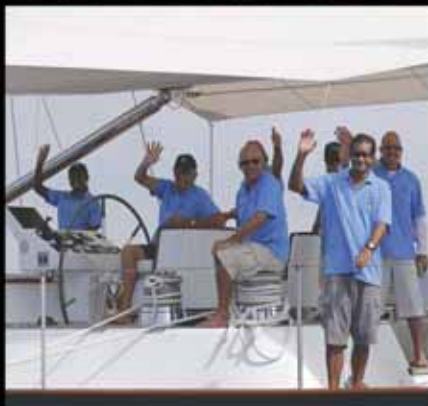
year he will exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Tokyo.

Watcharin continues to conduct art classes at the gallery and it's a revelatory experience to drop in and talk to this inspirational artist and stroll around his veritable magical cave of art and handicrafts.

You can visit this Watcharin Rodnit at the Rinda Magic Art Gallery at 27, Yaowarat Road in Phuket Town. Tel: 089-289 8852 or info@rindamagicalart.com



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