

Phuket Gazette

December 12-18, 2015

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‘WE WANT TO BE THE DIGITAL BUSINESS HUB FOR ASEAN’

Billions to build new Smart City

■ B10bn state-of-the art office proposal hopes to draw Google, Alibaba and other major tech company offices to Phuket.

By Chutharat Plerin

A 10-BILLION-BAHT digital real estate project was revealed this week, as the private sector prepares to team up with government agencies in order to draw big name technology companies – such as Microsoft, Google, Alibaba, Samsung and Facebook – to Phuket.

“We want to capitalize on the island’s potential for becoming a digital-business hub for Asean by teaming up with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology’s ‘smart city’ program,” said Surin Bamrunghol, founder and president of the Phuket Anti-Corruption Network.

The idea of a smart city is to utilize information and communication technology to enhance quality, performance and interactivity of urban services. Additionally, it is supposed to reduce costs and resource consumption, and improve contact between citizens and the government, explained Pracha Asawteera, manager of Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA), last week.

Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada was quick to get on board with Dr Surin’s proposed 10bn-baht ‘Work with View’ technology hub to be established in Pa Khlok.

“I have confidence that Dr Surin has the knowledge, re-



Dr Surin garnered the support of Phuket Governor Chamroen.

sources and vision to make this project a reality. This is the answer we have been searching for in the development of a ‘super cluster’ as Phuket gears up to become a ‘smart city,’” said Governor Chamroen. “We have the world-class ‘Phuket brand’ to sell to these companies. I believe they will not hesitate to set up offices on the island once the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place.”

Earlier this year, Cabinet approved the setting up of six ‘Super Clusters’ in the country to increase Thailand’s production, industrial and export competitiveness.

The six industrial cluster types were named as automo-

bile and parts; electronics; appliances and telecommunications; petrochemicals and other environmentally friendly chemical products; digital, garment and clothing; and processed food.

The Ministry of Industry will set up the clusters with support from the Board of Investment (BOI), which will provide tax and non-tax related incentives for targeted industries within the clusters. The incentives are expected to roll out in the first quarter of next year.

Dr Surin’s proposal, designed to work with...

Continued on Page 5

Gov calls for calm following Islamic State memo leak

THE Phuket governor called on everyone to remain calm following the publication of a leaked police memo warning of two Islamic State (IS) terrorists being dispatched to Phuket.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



Understand why having a China-based marketing partner is essential.

PROPERTY



Desmond Hughes answers the question: Real estate agents – good, bad or ugly?

LIFE&STYLE



Magnificent boats arrive in Phuket for the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous.

Raging minivan driver turns self in to officials

THE road-raging minivan driver caught on tape threatening a fellow motorist handed himself in to police on December 3.

What originally appeared on camera to be a long-knife, was in fact an iron bar, confessed 33-year-old Damrong Pramno.

Mr Damrong was charged for threatening the motorist and was forced to pay a fine.

He now has a record with the Phuket Land Transport Office, confirmed Col Chanuchan.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Task force takes down illegal Phuket casino

A JOINT task force arrested 40 gamblers during a raid on an underground casino in Chalong on December 6.

More than 100 people were found at the facility. However, arresting officers only managed to apprehend 40 offenders, which included a number of government officers.

Gambling paraphernalia was seized and all those arrested were taken to the Chalong Police Station to be charged.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Hijackers hired to collect debt

MALAYSIAN Maritime Enforcement Agency arrested Madyusup Jimaan, 60, and Ta-een Taokloy, 61, on board the

One more 'last warning' for Surin jet-ski operators



As part of a long series of 'last-time' threats, Phuripat Theerakulpisut, who was recently promoted to acting chief of the Marine Office Region 5, vowed that if jet-skis were spotted at Surin Beach again, the operators will have their licences revoked. Last month, jet-ski safety issues were raised by the Dutch ambassador to Thailand, who claimed that jet-ski businesses were damaging Phuket tourism. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Gazette file

Chok Boonmee 5 in Malaysian waters on December 3.

The suspects told police that they were hired to hijack the vessel by the original owner who had not received full payment for the ship.

The men were charged with Section 340 and 310 of the Criminal Code: gang robbery and depriving a person of their liberty. – *Chutharat Plerin*

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Six saved from sinking vessel

PHUKET Marine Police coordinated the rescue of six fishermen from a sinking boat after it was hit by a large rogue wave near Kata Beach on December 7.

Officials quickly assembled a rescue team comprising members of the Royal Thai Navy, Karon tourist center and officials from the Phuket King's Cup Regatta.

A nearby fishing vessel was also contacted to drag the sinking ship to shallower water in Patong Bay.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Handbag thief is local teacher

A PHUKET teacher confessed to police that he had committed multiple counts of snatch theft while under the

influence of *ya bah* (methamphetamine).

Locals apprehended Sakkarin Potiwatt, 40, after he snatched an 18-year-old woman's handbag from the basket of her motorbike on December 7, causing her and her passenger to crash.

Mr Sakkarin was charged with theft and his school's director has been notified of the incident.

– *Winai Sarot*

National park officers dispute abrupt transfer

SEVEN senior park officers and employees were given urgent transfer notices on November 27, forcing them to depart the renowned Similan National Park just as high season kicked off.

The order was given by the DNP Protected Area Regional Office 5 (PARO).

Boonchoo Paeyai, Similan national park adviser, protested the transfers saying that the timing could be potentially harmful to the services offered by the park.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Highly disputed movie museum moves location

THE much-protested 'Hollywood Movie Museum' originally slated for Nai Harn could very well end up on Karon or Mai Khao, confirmed officials on November 30.

The plan to construct the controversial Nai Harn Movie Museum was dashed following local protests – once the community realized that a grove of much-loved beachside trees would be cut down as part of the construction process of the 40-million-baht facility.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

Small shrine to be removed from Chalong

A BODHISATTVA image will be removed from a small waterway in the hills of Chalong following an investigation by the Phuket Damrongdhama Center (ombudsman's office).

A Facebook user, named in Thai as 'Sajadham Tang-sai-klang', sent a complaint directly to Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada stating that the image of Guan Yin was blocking a natural waterway.

The shrine was built on a half rai of land that had been donated to the Namtok Wang Than (Wang Than waterfall) meditation center.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Spanish-flagged vessel's SOS found in Krabi

KRABI officials are contacting international agencies about a Spanish fishing vessel last reported in Somali waters in November. The move followed a discovery by Phi Phi National Park officers on December 5 of an SOS device believed to be from the ship.

'Elai Alai 74537' was written on the emergency position-indicating radio (EPIRB) device.

The Spanish-flagged fishing vessel's last signal was sent from Somali waters on November 19 at 3:07am.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Officials urge clam after Russian warning of Islamic State presence

By Chutharat Plerin

DESPITE the recently leaked memo from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) warning that Islamic State (IS) terrorists had been dispatched to Phuket, Thai authorities had been aware of the situation since October, confirmed the Russian Federation Deputy Honorary Consul to Phuket.

"Myself and some Thai officials were made aware of the situation in October," Santi Udomkiratak, the Russian Federation Deputy Honorary Consul to Phuket, told the *Gazette*.

However, it wasn't until November 27 that Thailand's National Security Council issued a warning that ten possible terrorists had entered the Kingdom between October 15-31. According to the warning, the group split on arrival, with four heading to Pattaya, two to Phuket, two to Bangkok and two to unidentified locations. The warning did not name the suspects.

Mr Santi explained that after receiving the warning, he immediately made contact with the Phuket Provincial Police and the Phuket Governor to ensure all necessary security measures were put in place.



Ten members of IS, which claimed responsibility for a number of terrorist attacks throughout the world, landed in Thailand. Two were sent to Phuket, according to a FSB warning. Image: Islamic State / YouTube

"The warning specifically noted that security should be increased around Russian buildings and personnel, so we have installed more CCTV at the consulate and increased the frequency of our security rounds," he said.

The memo also urged authorities to increase security around facilities and people whose home countries are in alliance with Russia, such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium and Australia.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol

Thipjaroen confirmed that he is aware of the memo.

"There is no reason to make a big deal about this and cause panic. We have been on full alert and are taking all necessary actions to prevent any attacks," Col Teeraphol said.

"Authorities are doing their best to hunt down the suspects. Nonetheless, we still need the cooperation of the community. If anyone sees any suspicious activity, please inform the police."

Col Teeraphol called on landlords and hotels on the island to ensure that they are

reporting foreign guests to immigration, as is required by law.

Additional security measures were put in at key locations following the governor's emergency meeting over the leaked memo.

"There is absolutely no need to panic. Phuket is not anyone's enemy," said Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada. "Nonetheless, we have increased security measures at beaches, crowded community centers and other tourist attractions to ensure that all Phuket visitors are confident in their safety."

Russian busted selling condos without permit



Ms Spirkina was caught selling condos without a work permit. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

A POLICE sting operation netted a Russian real estate agent illegally selling condominiums in the Rawai area on December 2.

"A concerned employee at the condominium project contacted us after witnessing 30-year-old Anastasia Spirkina selling the units at extraordinarily low prices." Tourist Police Chief Urumporn Koondejsumrit said.

An undercover officer contacted Ms Spirkina and made an appointment to see a unit.

"Ms Spirkina was unable to present a work permit, but allegedly claimed to work for a property company in Thalang. However, she was not able to produce any evidence of such a company, not even the name," explained Maj Urumporn.

Ms Spirkina was charged for working illegally in Thailand. - Kritsada Mueanhawong

Judge dismisses lawsuit against OrBorTor head

A PHUKET judge on December 3 dismissed the 10-million-baht dereliction of duty lawsuit filed against Ma-ann Samran, the controversial head of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*).

"The case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. Additionally, Mr Ma-ann followed all legal procedures during the eviction and demolition process," Public Prosecutor Jessada Banditmongkolkul said.

The owners of two establishments, Beach Bar and Paul Restaurant, located on Laypang Beach, claimed that Mr Ma-ann had ruined their businesses by forcing them to close.

Following the verdict, Mr Ma-ann vowed to end his political career.

"My four year term as president ended last month. However, I have continued on under the orders of the National



Cherng Talay OrBorTor President Ma-ann Samran. Photo: Gazette file

Council for Peace and Order. I am now working until further notice," Mr Ma-ann said. "However, I will not enroll in the next election. I have done my work here and returned beauty to the beaches of my home.

"They are my masterpieces. I am immensely proud of them."

Mr Ma-ann explained that he would be returning to the private sector to focus on his own business interests.

- Kongleaphy Keam

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Chalong Mayor Samran Jindaphol.
Photo: Gazette file

Construction on new hospital to begin this month

GROUND will be broken for the Chalong Hospital project before the end of the year, confirmed Chalong Mayor Samran Jindaphol.

The push to upgrade the public health clinic in Chalong into a fully equipped hospital comes with the hope of reducing the number of people dying en route to emergency wards at major hospitals in town.

Clinic Director Ruedee Suriya told the *Gazette* in 2012 that, on average, two people die every month while on their way to one of the main hospitals in town. – *Kongleaphy Keam*

Phuket officials target biker gangs after Aussie Hells Angel slaying

By Chutharat Plerin

POLICE in Phuket ramped up security measures geared toward tracking international bike-gang members following the gunpoint abduction and slaying of Australian Hells Angels motorcycle gang member Wayne Rodney Schneider in Pattaya last week.

“We have been given specific orders to focus on bringing to justice foreigners committing violent crimes, as well as those operating as members of a mafia or gang,” Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen told the *Gazette*.

“We are not working alone to deal with these types of criminals. We are coordinating our efforts with the Tourist Police and Immigration Police.



Phuket Police are on the lookout for any criminal activity being conducted by biker gangs on the island. Photo: Roy Lister

Our task is to collect records of who is coming on and going off the island and who is living here.”

However, the records aren’t enough, Col Teerapol said.

“We need the help of local

residents. If you see anyone suspicious, please contact police immediately,” he said.

Col Teerapol also called on landlords and hotels on the island to ensure that they are reporting foreign guests to im-

migration, as is required by law.

“Even if you are just hosting a foreigner on your property, you need to inform immigration of their presence,” he noted.

Phuket Immigration Inspector Napat Nusen confirmed that any private home owners who failed to report a foreigner staying with them within 24 hours of their arrival could be fined 1,600 baht per unreported person.

Granted, Phuket does not have the same reputation for foreign biker gangs as other parts of Thailand.

“We cannot take it easy on these types of criminals. We live in a small town environment, so we need to be vigilant and make it clear to the world that Phuket is not a place for criminals,” added Col Teerapol.

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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 symposiums.

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Community Chanote plan stalled in Bangkok

THE Community Chanote plan that would guarantee 18 impoverished communities on Phuket the right to live where they have been squatting for generations has stalled out.

“There is no further information about the plan,” said Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul. “Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do until we get word from Bangkok.”

In 2013, then-Phuket Governor Maitri Inthusut led a team to one such village to hear their top concern: they have been waiting for years to be issued a Community Chanote land document.

“Eighteen communities [in Phuket] have requested a Community Chanote,” Governor Maitri explained to the villagers at the time. “So far, three communities – Klong Koh Pee, as well as the Tah Sak and Ao Yon communities in Pa Khlok – have passed the fourth and final step in the process.”

However, the applications are now in the hands of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Bangkok. The officials there must vet the applications and present them to Cabinet for final approval.



Former Governor Maitri Inthusut heard complaints about the Community Chanotes in 2013. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Neither Vice Governor Prajiad nor Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada know where in the final stages of approval the plan came to a silent halt.

“There is a lot of focus on Phuket becoming a world-class destination. However, we must not forget about local people who still need our help,” Governor Chamroen told the *Gazette*. “There are, in fact, 20 communities on the island that don’t even have electricity or portable water. I have sent officers out to check on these communities, even if there is nothing we can do about the Community Chanote situation at the moment.”

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Battle to become Asean digital hub

From Page 1

... the synergy of the incentives to be provided by the BOI, is to build a central facility with an additional five, high-end, turtle-shaped luxury office clusters on 200 rai of land.

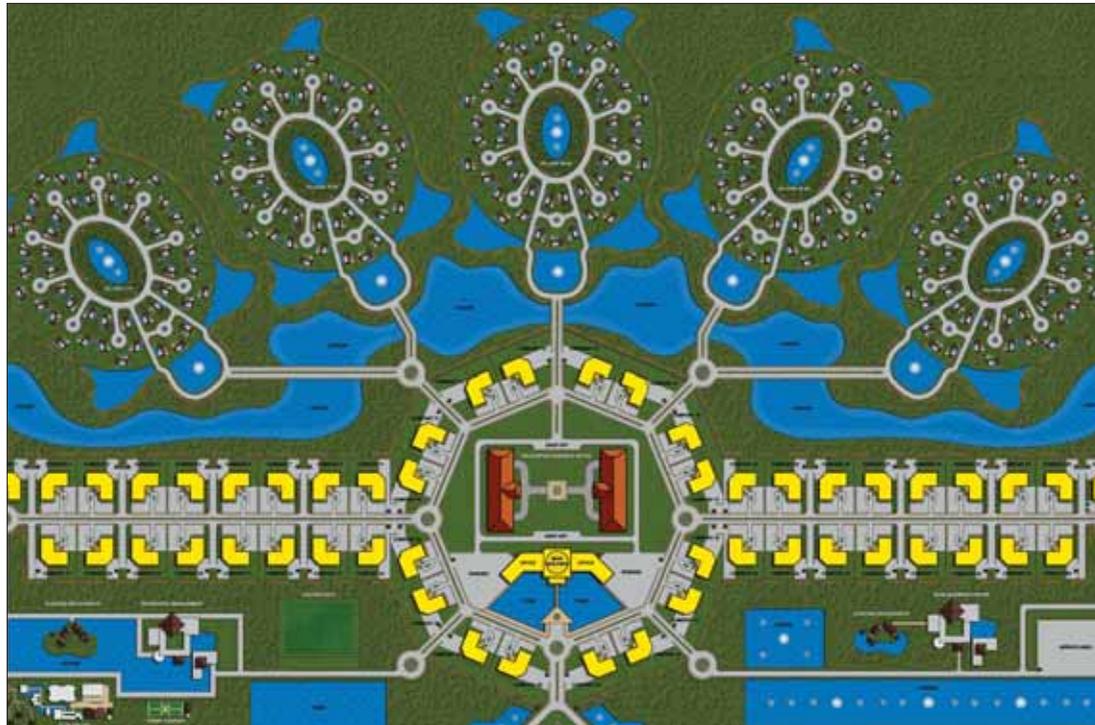
“There will be a total of 300 individual units, as well as a common reception area in the main building, a helicopter landing pad and hangar, a clubhouse, a residential club house and shops,” explained Dr Surin. “We will also provide high-quality security, guaranteed zero blackouts and digital housing systems.”

Dr Surin vowed that companies getting on board would be given VIP express services for customs, immigration and employee work permits, as well as all other necessary licences and permits.

“We are looking to make Phuket a world-class digital city by providing state-of-the-art office space, with stunning 180-degree views of the beauty that surrounds us on this island.”

Dr Surin’s plan is in line with Phuket and Chiang Mai being selected in September as ‘smart cities’, which are to focus on developing technology start-ups as part of a move to turn Thailand into the digital hub of Asean.

“For the Phuket Smart City,



The proposed digital-technology cluster will have five turtle-shaped complexes, each with 50 offices that offer 180 degree views of the beautiful Phuket landscape. Image: Surin Bamrunghphol

we will focus on two main ideas. The first is ‘Smart Economy’, that will bring new types of businesses to Phuket, and wean the province’s economic dependence off tourism as we develop the digital technology sector. The second is the ‘Smart Living Community’, that will see new technology implemented to improve the quality of life for both locals and tourists on the island,” said Mr Pracha.

Though Dr Surin’s 10bn-

baht plan falls in line with these goals, the location of his proposed facility is not ideal, according to the research results presented by Mr Pracha.

“From our research, foreign technology-startup companies are more likely to prefer locations in Chalong, Rawai or Thalang. However, Thai-based companies will most likely want to be in Phuket Town,” Mr Pracha explained. “What we are doing now is developing aspects of

‘smart economy’ by building an ‘innovation park’ at Saphan Hin. We will also build a research center and other facilities for the IT sector.”

Mr Pracha understands that larger information technology companies are unlikely to use the facilities SIPA is setting up, as they will probably want to set up their own offices.

“What we have to do now is create enough incentives and highlight what makes Phuket

uniquely advantageous to these companies, so that we can compete with neighboring technology hubs, such as Singapore and Malaysia.”

“Increasing internet speed is essential to drawing companies to the island,” Mr Pracha said. “We aim to cooperate with CAT Telecom to increase high-speed internet levels on the island from 15 megabytes to 30MB, and see those jump to 100MB within the next three years.”

In accordance with the ‘smart city’ plan, an additional 1,000 CCTV cameras will be added to the current government bundle in order to better control traffic violations. Additionally, there will be a push to bring free WiFi to the island as part of an island-wide improvement in information-technology services, explained Mr Pracha.

“These projects have my full support,” said Gov Chamroen on December 9. “I am confident that the central government will continue to do what is necessary to support the ‘smart city’ plan. I also trust that we will receive continued support from people, such as Dr Surin, and other members of the private sector who are willing to spearhead these advancements for Phuket.”

Additional reporting by Sukawin Tanthavanich



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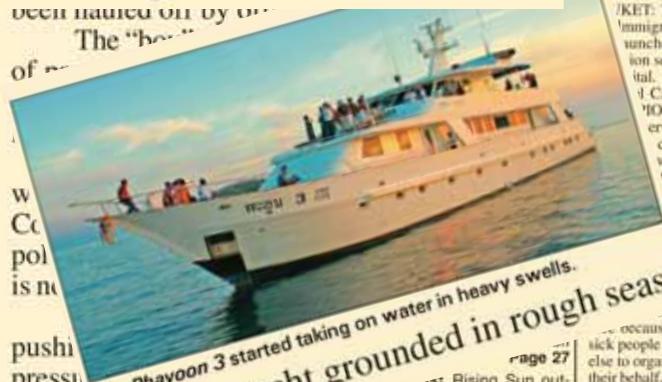
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Queer News

When R&R can also stand for Russian Roulette

Aussies take top three in Laguna Triathlon



The Phayoon 3 started taking on water in heavy swells. Luxury yacht grounded in rough seas

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Immigration launches hospital visa service

Sangkhae Leelanaporn PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Immigration Office (PPIO) launched a new free visa service for foreigners...



KING'S CUP DRAWS 85 YACHTS

ON A CHARGE: The crew of Switchblade prepare to round a mark during race 1 of the first day of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, on...



"We served the person last week at hospital Phuket..."

Out with loutish touts

We must ensure children do not become victims

THE recent push in Phuket for a national-level policy to force foreign travellers entering Thailand to have some sort of health insurance is just the latest drive in ensuring better hospital experiences for those who do succumb to misfortune on this island of wonder...

There have been accounts of the system not going as smoothly as it should. Nonetheless, the idea was simply to prevent foreigners who are too unwell to leave the hospital from overstaying their visas.

In a sweeping wave of technology on the island, which must have included the internet, expats and travellers were warned that 'all information on foreigners living in Phuket is now being computerized'.

More isn't always a bad thing, at least when we get away from the context of Nineteen Eighty-four and United States National Security Agency. A perfect example is the steady growth of the King's Cup, which also found itself on page one of the December 10-16, 2005 issue of the Gazette with 85 yachts lining up for the honors.

However, the heart of the Gazette in December 10, 2005 was the Inside Story: We must ensure children do not become victims. In the aftermath of the tsunami, there were persistent rumors of children who had survived the disaster being preyed upon by pedophiles.

The gift of hindsight

(ECPAT) network put together a seminar in Patong - an appropriate choice. The battle against sexual abuse of children rages on, ten years later. On December 8 of this year, three additional clauses were added to the Thai Criminal Code to tackle child pornography.

The new offences include the possession, sharing or distribution of child pornography.

Though the new clauses are clear steps in the right direction - although perhaps a bit late, as they are just now coming in line with the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Thailand ratified in 1992 - documenting and prosecuting cases of sexual exploitation remain extremely difficult, even under normal circumstances, which was a chief concern for the ECPAT executive director at the time.

Though Phuket has a reputation for not tolerating pedophiles, who have been known to seek refuge in Southeast Asia, the risks for child abuse remain. Those who have been on the island only a few years might still remember the arrest of British national

Hugh Glass, who was wanted for multiple sex crimes involving children, and arrested in Patong in 2013. Just last year, a pedophile confessed to raping a 14-year-old undocumented Myanmar migrant worker with the help of his wife in Khao Lak, north of Phuket.

"In general, sexual violence has been a neglected area of research. The available data are scanty and fragmented... Many women do not report sexual violence to police because they are ashamed, or fear being blamed, not believed or otherwise mistreated," the World Health Organization stated in the World Report on Violence and Health, the first comprehensive review of the problem of violence on a global scale, published in 2002.

However, this young teen had the courage, and fortunately the community backing, to seek justice. Our community must continue to support those assaulted, instead of ostracizing them. It can only be hoped that a decade from now, a writer looking back on these pages for modern parallels will have no recent cases in the region to draw a comparison to, not through lack of reporting the crime to officials, but through prevention.

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

Gambling tops crime stats again

Reality show takes pledge during triathlon

Interpol arrests couple wanted for fatal blast

INTERPOL has arrested Thai and foreign suspects for their alleged role in the Bangkok bombings in August that claimed 20 lives and injured many others, confirmed Deputy Police Chief Srivara Ransibrahmanakul on December 3.

A reliable police source identified the suspects as Phang Nga native Wanna Suansan and her Turkish husband Emra Davuloglu.

Challenge to consume 3kg of chicken, rice

MANY a seasoned *farang* likes to boast about how many chili peppers they like in their *som tam* and how they can put away two servings of *khao man gai* – what about *khao man gai jan yak*?

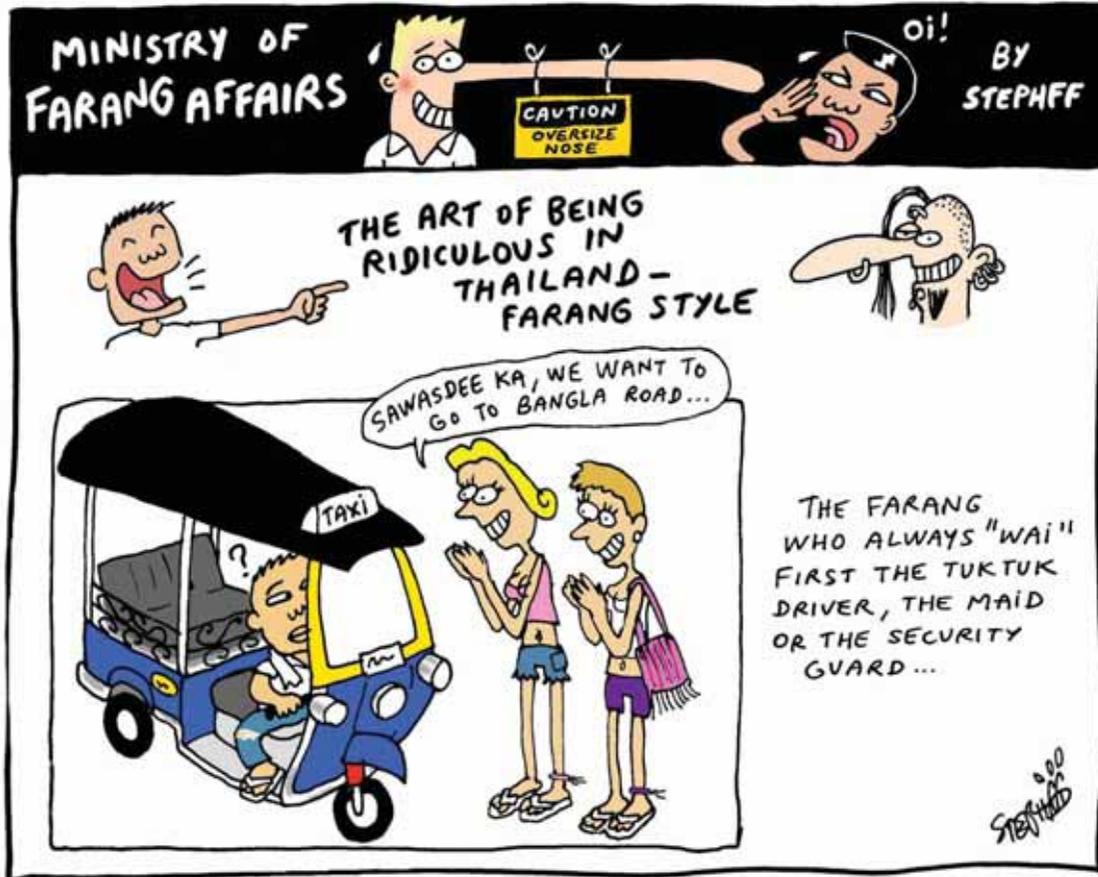
A restaurant in Nakhon Sawan has picked up on the American tradition of celebrating excessive eating – see Quadruple Bypass Burger at the Heart Attack Grill – with their three kilogram giant plate of chicken and rice challenge, reports Sanook.com

The traditional Thai dish costs about 40 to 60 baht in Phuket and is significantly cheaper elsewhere in the country. However, those who fail to pack away the enormous amount of rice and chicken at Midnight Hailum located at Soi Vachara, have to cough up – better than throwing up – 500 baht. However, if there isn't a single piece of beautiful white rice left on the plate, the meal is on the house.

The rules, posted in front of the entrance, give a single person only one hour to gorge on the plate of food.

Since October, only one man has had the guts to even give the challenge a go. However, Sompong Chuenchob couldn't stomach it and handed over the money without having cleared even half of his plate.

The special pile of food was originally named *Puen Kin Ha Yak* (hard to find friends to eat with you) and was designed to be gobbled up by 14 people.



Two held over murder of Aussie 'Hells Angel'

THE prime suspect in the murder of an Australian former Hells Angels member was arrested in Cambodia, police said on December 4.

Wayne Rodney Schneider, 37, was kidnapped earlier that week by several men outside his house in Pattaya.

Security guards saw the Australian beaten unconscious and thrown into the back of a van.

A day later police discovered his corpse in a hastily dug grave in woodland outside of the city. His neck was broken.

Cambodian police said the prime suspect Antonio Bagnato, a 27-year-old Australian national, was arrested in Phnom Penh where he is thought to have fled after the murder. They also confirmed a 21-year-old American man identified as Tyler Gerard has been charged with the kidnap and murder of the Australian.

More than 8,000 illegal boats forced to stop fishing

TO DEAL with issues regarding illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing vessels, authorities have terminated the operation of more than 8,000 illegal fishing trawl-

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

ers, the Command Center for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) said on December 4.

The CCCIF also noted that it settled a conflict between a local fishing community and big commercial trawlers by marking out borders for them. The borders are about 10 kilometers from shore in the Gulf of Thailand and about 5km into the Andaman Sea.

Trawlers larger than 6 gross tonnes must be equipped with a surveillance system, the CCCIF said, adding that this system has already been installed in 4,968 fishing trawlers.

Clauses added to tackle child pornography

STARTING on December 8, the Criminal Code covered three additional types of crimes related to child pornography. The new offences include the possession, sharing or distribution of child pornography.

The additions to the Criminal Code are in line with the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Thailand ratified in 1992.

Social-media users will not be convicted of child-pornography possession simply because someone else sent the

offending files to them. Nonetheless, if they downloaded the files onto their devices, they would face legal action.

Bill approving GMOs will damage nation's agriculture

THE Biological Safety Bill will allow genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to damage the nation's ecology and those who will suffer the most are farmers, a law professor warned.

Somchai Ratanasuesakul, a law lecturer at the University of the Thai Chamber of Com-

merce, cautioned that the bill, which recently received Cabinet approval, will cause ecological damage and severely harm agriculture.

"This bill is not drafted to prevent the possible harm of GMOs as its title indicates; instead, it will intentionally open many legal gaps for biotechnology businesses to open up the market in Thailand and escape without any punishment if their products turn out to be environmentally harmful," Dr Somchai said in a recent interview.

Syrian sues over leaked IS allegation

FOUR Syrians, whose photographs went viral on the internet, were found to have no connection with Islamic State, national police spokesman Dechnarong Sutticharnbancha affirmed on December 7.

One of the four, Hagop Kassanbian, 57, has reportedly filed libel charges against the person who leaked his passport photo and information onto social media.

Soldiers in gunfight with Yala militants

A FORCE of 50 soldiers and rangers clashed with a group of suspected insurgents in the mountains of Bannang Sata district in the southern border province of Yala.

Two of the suspects escaped, while two were caught and dispatched to a military base for interrogation.

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Romrawin Jungceylon Patong Beach Phuket

Sense of Wellness Zone, 3rd Flr.

076-600-148

Flames of intolerance

WITH so much media attention being placed on developments surrounding terrorism and the Islamic State (IS), it is important for us here in Phuket not to get sucked into all the anti-Islamic fear-mongering and religious intolerance sweeping through many western nations these days.

As this edition went to press, firebrand United States presidential candidate Donald Trump had once again managed to put his name at the top of news search engines with his controversial call for a blanket ban on allowing any and all Muslims to enter the US.

That such a ridiculous and unenforceable call as Mr Trump's could gain traction in a country that was founded on the principle of religious freedom says a great deal about the level of fear in the US following a slew of terrorist incidents globally for which IS has claimed responsibility.

Here in Thailand, we have also seen over-the-top, anti-Islamic rhetoric by a well-known monk who made a Facebook posting calling for one mosque to be burned to the ground for each Buddhist killed by insurgents in the Deep South region. It is indeed sad to see the leader of a religion that is supposed to focus on introspection, non-violence and inner peace, fanning the flames of war with the same fury as the IS propaganda machine.

Of the more than 6,200 killed in incidents related to the insurgency since it flared up in January 2004, the majority have been Muslims – not Buddhists. In fact, the conflict has little to do with religion apart from the fact that the insurgents happen to be Muslims.

The insurgents themselves largely admit that the Thai state has not hindered their ability to practice Islam, which holds social cohesion as sacred. Indeed, Thailand is one of the few nations on the planet that provides financial support for Muslims making the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.

Here in Thailand, there is little or no evidence that IS has infiltrated major separatist groups like the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) or had any significant recruitment of radicalized Muslims to travel to the Middle East to take part in the war on behalf of IS.

Nonetheless, the threat of an IS attack in Thailand is a legitimate concern that the authorities have to take seriously. However, from a broader perspective, we cannot allow any actions by IS, no matter how deplorable, to fan the flames of hatred and religious intolerance – because that is exactly what the terrorists want.



Age of accountability has arrived in Phuket

Re: Road-raging minivan driver surrenders in Phuket [video], December 7

According to other sources, it was a fine of 1,000 baht.

Quite often these events end up in stabbings, shootings and sometimes death. With the advent of smartphones and dash cams, these thugs with attitude problems cannot hide forever.

Also, security guards cannot beat up everybody taking video of beatings outside clubs and bars. The age of accountability has arrived in Phuket. Mr Joe Public will expose these cowards.

*skip
Gazette forum*

Not hopeful with smashing quotas

Re: Phuket police smash drunk driving quotas, December 5

It's easy to 'smash' quotas that are set so low.

I haven't seen a single checkpoint at night in Kamala and drunk driving is rampant there. Although, it is easy to dodge a checkpoint.

I welcome any attempt to cut down or eradicate dangers, but I know that's not going to happen with drunk driving.

*Mister Ree
Gazette forum*

Ferries in Patong Bay is sheer madness

Re: Opinion: Scrap the airport

Letters to the Editor

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

ferry fallacy, December 6

Well said. From the very start I have been incredulous about the plan.

One only has to understand the reason for the lack of large ships in Patong Bay during any period of swell or 'seas' to know that the plan for smaller ferries to run all year round is sheer madness. But that idea is even less crazy than thinking that Mai Khao Beach is even remotely a possible embarkation point. It's a totally wide open beach.

*Chob
Gazette forum*

No restaurants, no clubs, no people

Re: Vice Governor vows to demolish Surin Beach clubs, December 1

No restaurants, no beach clubs, no umbrellas, no deck chairs. Thanks for the gift to the world.

But how are visitors going to appreciate it? You can't sit, you can't have a drink, and without umbrellas, there is only a very limited time you can spend on the beach, a few minutes or so, before your skin starts burning.

But it might look nice for the

governor when he flies over the area in a helicopter.

*Michael
Gazette forum*

No difference if people follow rules

Re: Seven Similan National Park employees dispute transfer, December 3

'We know how to work with them and are not sure whether or not we will have the same understanding with new officers.'

Rules are rules, and there should be little latitude for interpretation, as this is the path to corruption. Park staff should see little difference to visitors or tour operators since they should all follow the same protocol, assuming no corruption.

*Anon
Gazette forum*

Shifting goal posts isn't the solution

Re: Mai Khao, Karon could suffer contested Hollywood Movie Museum, December 3

Have the powers that be actually conducted a survey or poll from the local, expat, and more importantly, tourists?

Local opinion suggests that this project is completely out of touch with tourists' needs, so why is there no public debate to find a better way of spending public funds to attract tourism?

Just shifting the goal post elsewhere isn't the solution.

*Harry
Gazette forum*

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Government school obstacles

FIRST PERSON

GOVERNMENT schools face a number of obstacles as they attempt to provide a necessary, high-quality education to their students. The biggest of these is simply a lack of budget to improve facilities and hire more teachers, which is necessary to create smaller-sized classrooms.

Those going to private, international schools have access to many more opportunities and learning aids, such as quality libraries, science labs, sporting facilities and so much more. We simply don't have enough money in our budget to cater to students' needs in the same way.

The situation at government schools forces teachers to rely on rote-based methods of teaching theory, instead of students being allowed to fine-tune their education based on their own needs and wants. This is exactly the problem that the Ministry of Education is attempting to solve with the 'Moderate Class, More Knowledge' program.

The program gives students between six to seven hours a week outside of the classroom to participate in arranged activities that meet their interests. These activities can be related to music, sport, literature, debate, community service and other fields. It will help them improve academically, in their practical lives or in developing a new skill. This way, students can learn from real-world experiences rather than only from classroom work and theoretical



Anurak Rungrueng is the acting director of the Phuket Primary Education Service Office. He took on the position on November 23, after having worked as the deputy director since 2012. He graduated from Thaksin University with a master's degree in

educational management.

Here he calls on the private sector to help shore-up the biggest issues facing government educational institutes.

knowledge.

Without a doubt, students will be more likely to be attentive and learn when they are participating in this program, as they have control over what they are learning. When people are fascinated, interested and engaged in something, they not only have more fun, but they genuinely retain more of what is being taught.

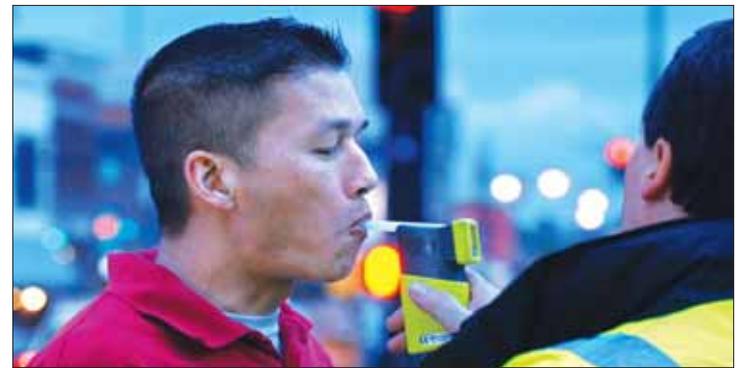
This new policy is a step in the right direction and will help to solve some of the problems we face, but not all of them. With the new policy comes a small increase in our budget to help facilitate these additional activities. We have also been given the opportunity to hire a few more teachers to help with practical subjects such as sport, art and vocational training. This does help. However, it is vital for the private sector to also help out.

Phuket is a tourist province that generates enormous amounts of money for the private sector. I think these tourism and hospitality businesses must step up and

help shoulder the weight of educating Thailand's future generations. Donating modern equipment and funding quality facilities is just one of the many ways these companies can help out. If each company makes a small contribution to Phuket's education system, the overall change will be enormous.

Another way they can help is by supplying staff as volunteer teachers. All major hotels and resorts on the island have native-English speakers. If they came into the classroom, the training that they could give the kids would prepare them for the real world. These businesses could also provide students the opportunity to participate in a 'Moderate Class, More Knowledge' program focused on hospitality or other aspects of business on the island.

Not only does this improve our educational system, but it will, in fact, benefit these companies down the line, when they become reliant on a new generation entering the job market. It is a win-win solution.



There needs to be fear of lawful repercussions. Photo: KOMUnews

Perfect drunken storm

IT IS wonderful to see local police instilling a little fear of the law in those who are tempted to down a few alcoholic beverages and then get on a motorbike or inside one of the deadliest weapons in the world – a four-wheeled automobile.

Drunk driving is, without a doubt, a culturally acceptable way of getting from one place to another in Phuket. Green and moldy foreigners alike are quick to point fingers at Thai culture when it comes to drunk driving. However, the fact is that it's simply part of the island's culture.

Years of tuk-tuk and taxi mafia rule successfully retarded the growth of efficient, convenient and reasonably priced public transportation. Add to this a Thai mentality of living for the moment, the expat mentality of 'I didn't move to Thailand to follow ALL the rules' and the carefree mentality of the millions of tourists, and you have something approaching a perfect storm. All it needs is a few shots of a lively nightlife and you have the perfect conditions to aggravate the sort of festering wound on society that is drunk driving.

In the United States, and many other countries throughout the world, it is not unreasonable to just knick a mate's keys once he or she has crossed the threshold of sobriety. Here, you're likely to get

Island View

By Alex Stone

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

punched in the face and become ostracized from your group of friends. However, since the announcement and visible enforcement of driving under the influence (DUI) laws, there have been a number of occasions where I've witnessed people refusing to have 'that one last drink', or even drinking at all, out of a fear of being arrested for a DUI.

Mostly likely it comes down to our perceptions of probability. The increased police focus on drunk driving has heightened the probability of a person being arrested for DUIs to the point that it becomes a foreseeable reality, while dying on the way home after a night of drinking just doesn't seem very likely to most.

Nonetheless, the reality that countless lives are needlessly lost to the fatal mixing of automobiles and alcohol remains. Though the Phuket Provincial Police do not want to increase DUI quotas further, I say we dial it all the way up... it's about time people breaking traffic laws fear fair, legal repercussion more than they fear being hit up for 'tea money'.

Words from the Wise

"When you're writing, you're conjuring. It's a ritual, and you need to be brave and respectful and sometimes get out of the way of whatever it is that you're inviting into the room."

– Tom Waits

"My first rule of consumerism is never to buy anything you can't make your children carry."

– Bill Bryson

Issues & Answers

Where can I buy guitar paraphernalia at night?

I AM a guitar player and mostly play gigs at night.

Sometimes a string will break or I will lose guitar picks and need to quickly replace them.

Is there somewhere in Phuket that is open late at night where I can purchase these things in a jam?

Scott Freeman
Kathu

Chainarong Tantiputsapan, owner of Harmonic Music & Studio replies:

Our shop provides a 24-hour vending machine outside of our location on Yaowarat Road in Phuket Town.

There are many different

types of equipment inside, such as guitar strings, guitar picks, tuners, string cleaners and much more.

You can use any banknote and the machine will give you change.

If you need assistance or equipment before 8pm, our shop is open and ready to help you with whatever you may need.

For further information, please contact us at 076-540 975 or 086-691 6740.

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Reduce risk while playing market

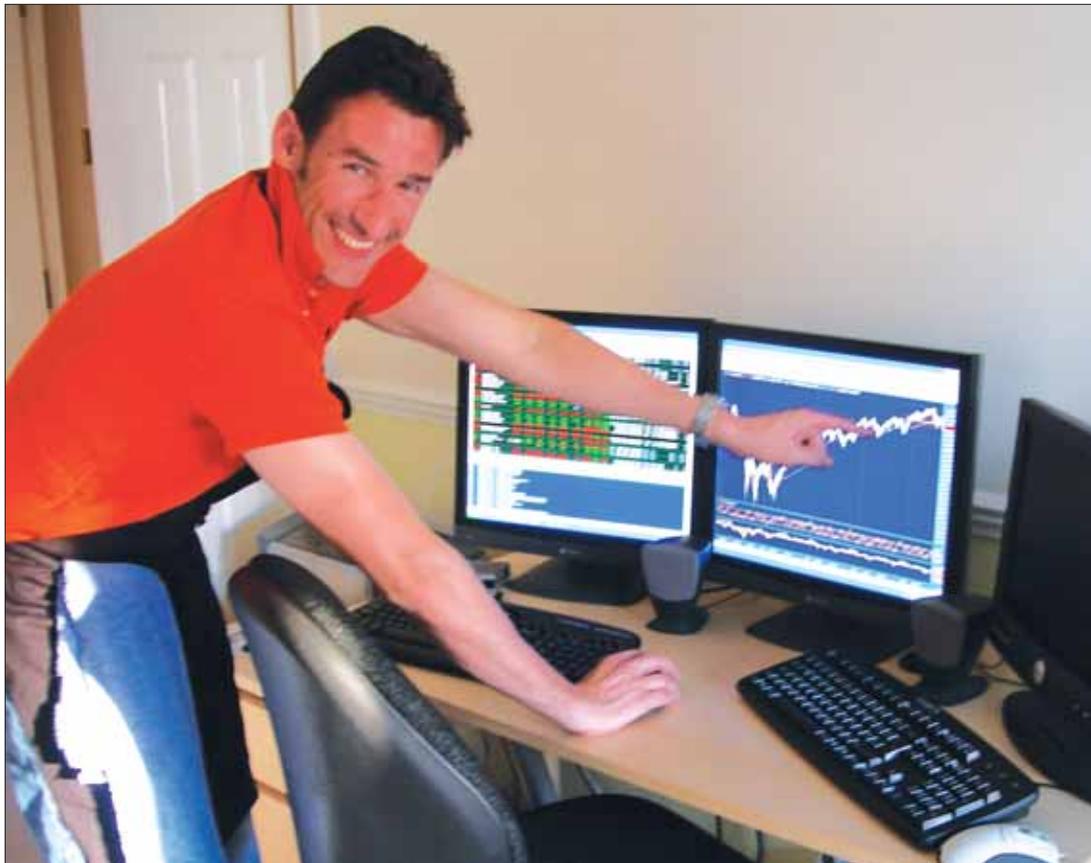
Finance

By David Mayes

I AM asked all the time, by those who know I am patiently waiting for the next crash to re-enter equity markets, if there is some way they can participate now while reducing downside risk. If we are talking about funds that will need to be liquidated any time within the next five or ten years, I would say no. However, if you have a longer timeframe, there is one way to increase yield on a portfolio that effectively minimizes the effect of riding out a crash.

Keep in mind I said 'riding out a crash', meaning that when a crash comes you will still need to stomach sitting through the downside and hold through until the next recovery. If you can't stand to see a 30-50 per cent temporary drop in the value of an investment, then you need to wait for the crash and invest when the market represents real value. However, if you don't need to access capital and wish to draw an income there is a simple strategy that can work.

The strategy consists of creating a diversified portfolio of blue chip stocks to begin with. These need to be reliable dividend-paying companies in industries where they hold a se-



Find reliable dividend-paying companies where they hold a long-term advantage. Photo: Lars Plougmann

rious long term advantage. You might be lucky to get an average dividend yield of four or five per cent, which generally speaking is not worth the current downside risk of watching your account balance drop like a rock in the next crash.

The part of the strategy that helps minimize the risk is increasing the income by writing

'out of the money' call options. You collect a fee, or a premium, for giving someone the right to buy the stock at a higher price in the future. This works best with European-style options, because with these what matters is only the price on the day the option expires. If the price temporarily goes above the agreed upon price, you are not

forced to sell and continue to receive the dividend. Using this strategy you can bring the yield of the portfolio to somewhere between 10-15 per cent. There is no downside risk to someone exercising the options, since that means you are selling out of the stock at a price higher than you paid for it and you also collected a fee in the process.

There is nothing for free in this world, and this strategy does not violate this reality. What you are giving up is the opportunity cost if the stocks go up drastically in the future. However, for those needing yield now, this could be an acceptable trade-off in exchange for the extra yield in a low interest rate environment. There is also the obvious market downside, but if you plan to hold through a crash until the next bull market, you can continue writing out of the money options and generating yield the entire time while also collecting dividends.

I would be extremely conservative in how much of an overall portfolio one allocates to pursuing a strategy like this, probably 20-30 per cent. For those who feel like this is too technical of a strategy to pursue on their own, there are very liquid daily trading funds that pursue this strategy as well. You simply lose a percentage of the yield in management fees.

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.

Cashing in on border demand

THAISRI Insurance will expand its customer base in border provinces via partners including the Thai Chamber of Commerce.

The company will also set up more offices for agents in border provinces, including those with special economic development zones.

This month it will open an agency in Tak's Mae Sot district to ride the logistics route from Thailand to Myanmar.

The company will offer an insurance policy called AEC Easy Carrier's Plus to tap transport and logistics companies.

— *The Nation*

Banks aim to reduce cash usage

BANKS' fees are poised for a change to better reflect actual costs and pave the way for a cashless society.

"The structure is distorted. The fees for paper-based transactions are very cheap, compared to the associated cost. Banks are now cross-subsidizing them with fees collected from electronic transactions," Veerathai Santiprabhob, governor of the Bank of Thailand, said in a recent interview.

While the check fee is only 15 baht, the actual cost is far more. Customers can withdraw money from an ATM without any fee, but banks carry a huge cost for cash management at ATMs, he said.

Anuchit Anuchitanukul, adviser to the Finance Ministry's National e-Payment project, has said that 7 trillion baht is withdrawn from ATMs each year. Banks spend over 10 billion baht on armored vans and



Fees for paper-based transactions are very cheap, compared to the associated cost. Photo: Steven Depolo

other expenses to fill up ATMs.

The project aims to reduce cash usage. This will require the creation of more points of sale across the country, as now there are fewer than 100,000, versus the minimum of 2 million as recommended by the Bank of Thailand's study.

To maintain their retail customer base, banks are expected to compete in reaching out to merchants to establish their own points of sale. Small merchants will also require mobile points of sale or mPos to support their small customers.

— *The Nation*



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China base rakes in FIT market

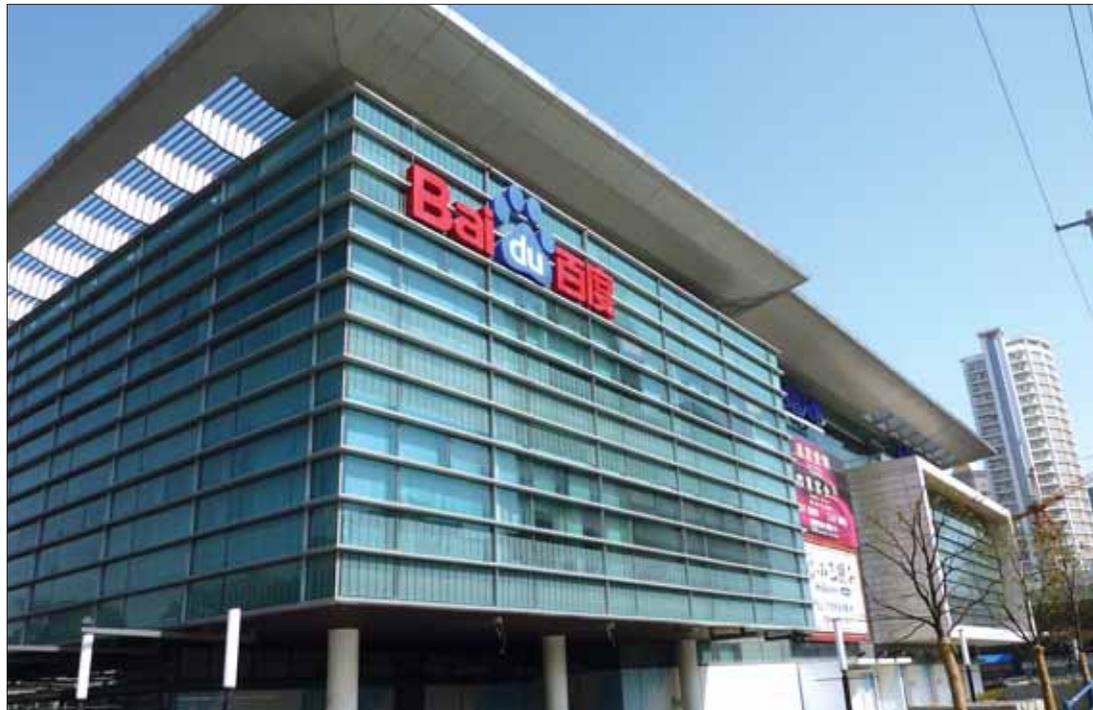
By Isaac Stone Simonelli

IT IS easy to get caught up with how the hospitality industry in Phuket should adjust to a shift in source markets towards a dependency on China. But what is forgotten is that it's not just Phuket – it's a worldwide phenomenon that requires the industry to adopt new marketing strategies and platforms.

“Chinese outbound travel is a key part of the future of tourism globally. It's a size argument – 16 per cent of the world's population. Chinese travellers have unique travel needs, language requirements and booking preferences,” explains Mark Simmons, vice president of sales and marketing – Asia Pacific for Outrigger Resorts.

“As an operator, you need to get close to them, understand them and meet their travel aspirations. We aim to satisfy Chinese traveller needs with unique Outrigger experiences bringing local hospitality with our world-renowned host welcoming. Our team of Chinese market experts with an international outlook help us do that.”

With 40 resorts globally, one way Outrigger is achieving market growth in the free, independent traveller (FIT) Chinese segment is by having a China-based office specializing in sales, marketing and public relations.



Liaising with online travel agencies such as Baidu can boost hospitality businesses. Photo: simone.brunozziing

“You need local experts with connections and full Chinese-language capabilities. It is a necessary investment that we have made strategically, looking long term. A major investment was the development of our dedicated Chinese-language website that importantly is hosted and marketed in China, this is a critical tool to have,” Mr Simmons points out.

China's ‘voracious appetite’ for outbound travel – well chronicled since the late 90s – was a key indicator that led to

the China office being set up in Beijing a number of years ago, explains Mr Simmons.

Such a large investment makes sense for Outrigger Resorts, as it's a global brand. However, many boutique and family-run hotels and resorts in Phuket don't have the same resources available.

“Costs needn't be excessive. They could hire dedicated online marketing campaigns in consultation with a Chinese digital marketing company. Boutique hotels can put their

room inventory on leading Chinese online travel agencies such as Baidu and Ctrip,” Mr Simmons says.

“They can hire an agency to run campaigns for their boutique hotel on Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, Youku and Tencent. The key is to have a local China based partner for distribution.”

All indicators point toward the fact that the rapidly maturing market can't be ignored. Despite the softening of the Chinese economy, the number

of Chinese visitors to Phuket increased by 12 per cent in the first half of 2015 and Ctrip forecasts a 20 per cent increase in Chinese travellers to Phuket in 2016, explains Mr Simmons.

“While you will still see group tours, the future is all about catering to independent Chinese travellers who want unique experiences, nature trips, innovative dining, self drive discoveries, romantic honeymoons or special meetings, if they are business travellers,” Mr Simmons says. “They want holidays tailored to their personal needs.”

What most hotels are already aware of is that it is essential to have a Chinese-speaking guest relations officer, as well as menus, signage, in-room television entertainment and Chinese-language newspapers.

Of course, without a China-based office or China-focused marketing strategy, such investments might be putting the cart before the horse.

“The higher-end Chinese market is 20 per cent of business at the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort, and including Hong Kong, a similar level at Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas,” Mr Simmons says. “Our Beijing office is our bridge and main driving force into the Chinese market. Without it our Chinese business would not be what it is today.”

Local customers key to successful business



Business Buzz

Simon Wetherell

ONE of the common mistakes a business can make in a location like Phuket is forgetting who is really important.

In a holiday location it is very easy to focus on the tourist market, because the perception is they are the ones who are here spending without a care in the world and that there is an endless supply of them. In other words... easy money.

However, as we know tourist demographics have been changing, as is what they consider important and are spending their money on.

So, for businesses, it makes far more sense to have a two-pronged focus, namely a tourist strategy and a local strategy.

I suggest to all of my clients that building a loyal local fol-



Building a loyal local following should be any business owner's priority. Photo: Rapeepop Sompranon

lowing should be a priority, and then when the tourists do come in the high season, it is just a financial bonus.

As business owners, if we can build a local database comprised of resident customers, this can be far more profitable in the long term as they are here

all year round. By looking after the locals you can smooth out the highs and lows of the holiday cycles to have year round cash-flow and profitability.

So consider this, always look after the residents, and then when you really need them they will be around to

look after you.

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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Make my millennium

Millennium Auto Co Ltd hosted a grand opening for its Millenium Auto Phuket showroom on November 27. The Phuket branch includes BMW and used car showrooms.

SHOWING OFF: (From L-R) Viraj Thanissaranont, GM of Millenium Auto Co Ltd; Somkiet Sangkaosuttirak, former Phuket vice governor and president of Phuket Surat Thani Club; Ma-ann Samran, Cherng Talay OrBorTor president; and Sophon Kiemkarn, assistant chief of the Phuket Provincial Public Relations Department.



Prepare for re-launch

Banyan Tree Phuket held a re-launch party celebrating its six-month renovation project that saw its Deluxe Villas converted into full-scale pool villas. Friends and business partners came together to celebrate the return of this world-class resort.



UPGRADED: (From L-R) Ravi Chandran, managing director of Laguna Phuket; Anoma Wongyai, director of TAT Phuket Office; Sriram Kailasam, Banyan Tree Phuket area general manager; Chokdee Amornwat, Phuket vice governor.



LIVING IT UP: Ludovic Gallerne (left), area director of sales and marketing of Banyan Tree Phuket and Angsana Laguna Phuket; Sombat Rattananai (4th from left), area director of revenue management, Banyan Tree Phuket and Angsana Laguna Phuket; Nampetch Tipaxsorn (6th from left), director of marketing communications, Banyan Tree Phuket and Angsana Laguna Phuket with staff.

Lighting up the Festive Season

Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa welcomed in the festive season with their Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 28.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS: Peter Simson (3rd left), hotel GM; Chokdee Amornviwat (2nd left), Phuket vice governor; Anoma Wongyai (3rd right), director of the TAT Phuket Office and Col Sompong Boonrat (2nd right), Karon Police Superintendent, open the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony with resort staff.

Hook, line and sinker

Phuket International Sportfishing Tournament 2015 hosted a prize ceremony at the Tamarind Bar & Grill on November 22, the final day of the tournament.



Lady Angler winner Rosemary Wilcox, from the United States collects her prize.

Events in Paradise

Bangkok Airways aims to fly high

Bangkok Airways recently received the CAPA Asia Pacific Regional Airline of the Year award. The award is given to regional airlines that have strategically established themselves as leaders and demonstrated innovation in the regional aviation sector.



SWEEPING VICTORY: Nathaphat Asavathanachart (left), business development and communications director of Thanyapura congratulates Passapong Jirawattanasak, Bangkok Airways regional and international corporate communication department manager for receiving the award in Singapore.



Bangkok Airways President Puttipong Prasartong-Osoth (right) receives the award from Travelport Vice President, Damian Hickey.



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Phuket Gazette

Win a new car at this year's Red Cross Fair



Vassana Tipayapongtada, president of the Phuket Red Cross. Photo: Phuket PR

THE Phuket Annual Red Cross Fair will kick off on December 26 and run through January 5 at Saphan Hin, offering a multitude of attractive lucky draw prizes, including a Toyota Vios 1.5G.

The popular 11-day fair features hundreds of stalls selling local delicacies, knick-knacks, clothing and a huge variety of other items. Fairgoers can also enjoy performances by some of Thailand's top celebrities.

As usual, the highlight of the festivities will be the main lucky draw.

"In addition to the Toyota Vios first prize, second prize will be a Toyota Hilux Revo Smart Cab pick-up truck. There will be three third prize winners, each will receive a motorbike," said Vassana Tipayapongtada, president of the Phuket Red Cross.

Other prizes include cash, gold necklaces, iPhones and bicycles.

"On behalf of Phuket Provincial officers, I would like to invite everyone to come and enjoy the Red Cross Fair," said Ms Vassana.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*



The Rotary's polio program has benefited children throughout the world. Photo: The Rotary Foundation

Rotary Foundation in 'Top 10'

THE Rotary Club of Patong Beach (RCoPB) is proud to announce that The Rotary Foundation has been ranked fifth in the top 10 charity organizations around the world.

The Rotary was given a score of 96.31 out of 100 by Charity Navigator, an American based service that provides information about charities, such as financial health, accountability and transparency.

"This success by The Rotary Foundation is a tribute to all Rotarians, including those at RCoPB [English language] and the other six Thai language clubs on Phuket for the support they give to our community. We are proud to see the Rotary brand so highly thought of worldwide," said RCoPB President Walter Wyler.

The survey described the Rotary Foundation as a non-profit organization that works to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace. It also noted that the foundation uses its grants throughout its 34,000 clubs to carry out sustainable humanitarian projects

and provide scholarships and professional training opportunities.

"One of its biggest initiatives aims at eradicating polio through its PolioPlus program, launched in 1985. Since then, Rotary and its partners,

including the World Health Organization and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have immunized more than 2.5 billion children, reducing the incidence of polio by 99 per cent and eradicating it from all but three countries," the report reads.

In the 14 years since the RCoPB was founded, they have

upheld the objectives of the Rotary Foundation by creating a scholarship program with the aim of helping victims of the 2004 tsunami continue their education – a

program that is still in existence today – as well as being active in the PolioPlus program.

Other projects that the RCoPB are currently engaged in include the Ban Ya Learning Center, improving water systems for the sea gypsies at Koh Lao in Ranong and a polio inoculation program at the Moken village in Koh Sireh.

"We will continue our work in the Phuket community with these and future projects, guided by the wonderful recognition Rotary receives here and around the world. Our members are all volunteers, which makes the amount of work they do for the community ever more remarkable," said Mr Wyler.

– *Phuket Gazette*



BISP takes medals at SEA Age Championships

THE final day of the Southeast Asian (SEA) Age Championships saw British International School Phuket (BISP) JSA Swim Academy swimmers Chantal Liew, Nicholle Toh and Wong Fu Kang add two additional gold medals and two silver medals to the team's haul.

Chantal Liew (Singapore) took the individual gold in the Girls 50m Backstroke in a time of 30.69, with Nicholle Toh also racing to gold for Team Singapore in the Mixed 4x200m Free relay. Nicholle also won silver in the Girls 200m Butterfly in a time of 2:22 minutes.

Wong Fu Kang also won sil-



Students stand proud after the multi-day swim meet. Photo: BISP

ver for Malaysia, swimming a very tight race, missing the Gold by 0.02 seconds and posting a 2:22.15 in the Boys 200m Breaststroke.

"Now it's time to raise our game further in the coming

weeks with the Patana Feeding Frenzy in Bangkok followed by the Singapore Short Course Championships," said Simon Jones, BISP JSA Swim Academy head coach.

– *Phuket Gazette*

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 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.

Sailing through high season blues



Chartering superyacht SY Lady Thuraya will be gliding into Phuket for the high season. Photo: Jan Verkerk

PHUKET'S high season is underway. It traditionally starts in November, running through to April 30, with the peak consisting of Christmas, New Year and the January period. Confused? The reality is Phuket has visitors all year round and the low season of old is not quite as 'low' as it used to be, at least in terms of visitor numbers (revenue is a whole other debate).

Phuket's marine tourism follows the same seasonal pattern and you can see more and more day-trip boats heading out during the low season, full of Asian tourists.

With Phuket's high season now well underway and vast numbers of tourists coming and going, Phuket's waters and nearby islands are getting busier. Just take a look at the island's two central marinas, Phuket Boat Lagoon and Royal Phuket Marina. More than 50,000 tourists went through those marinas in October – boarding a speedboat and heading out to destinations on a day-trip.

To these numbers add those speedboats and tour boats departing from other marinas, Chalong Bay and Rawai Beach, and the numbers of people on-the-water on a daily basis is truly vast. This of course comes with a downside – pressure on the natural environment and safety.

While it's fair to say safety has improved in recent years on day-trip tours, there is still more that can be done and the relevant authorities are, finally, making an effort.

In terms of the environment – the sea, beaches and islands, plus marine life – very little is being done. The pressure on the marine ecosystem is immense. This writer estimates the number of tourists enjoying day-trips during the high season could be as high as 5,000 per day. That's approximately 150,000 per month. Yet very little is being done to protect and conserve the natural marine environment.

Phuket's marine tourism destinations are reaching fever pitch during this high season, and

there's the peak still to come.

The peak season is a time when, traditionally, many island property owners descend on Phuket to enjoy their second-homes and, in some cases, their private yachts. It's also a time when visitor numbers are at their peak and marinas are nearly devoid of charter boats, as they are all hired out.

December is also the time to enjoy the sport of sailing on Phuket with two iconic events. The Phuket King's Cup Regatta, the island's largest sailing event

held off Kata Beach, welcomes thousands of sailors from around the world. This year the Phuket King's Cup was held from December 5-12 and is followed by another iconic event, the gathering of superyachts for the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous (see page 16).

While Phuket welcomes millions of tourists to its shores each year, common opinion is that the demographics are changing. The majority of Chinese and Asian tourists are not the beach-loving types of old. That being true, the sea experience – boarding a boat to enjoy the waters and offshore islands – is still a very important part of the mix, evidenced by the large numbers departing marinas, anchorages and beaches on Phuket every day.

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



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Rendezvous returns with purpose

By Gazette editors

THE Asia Superyacht Rendezvous will once again celebrate Luxury Yachting at the award-winning Kata Rocks Resort Phuket on December 16 through 18.

“We are proud to be a part of such an amazing event. Sitting pool-side at Kata Rocks, overlooking the magnificent superyachts that attend the event each year is a beautiful sight,” said Scot Toon, general manager of Kata Rocks Resort.

This year, attendance has been confirmed by S/Y *Lamima*, S/Y *Sunshine*, S/Y *Lady Thuraya*, M/Y *Samax*, M/Y *Vie San Soucis*, S/Y *Bliss*, S/Y *Aventure*, M/Y *After 8* and M/Y *Antares*.

The Rendezvous is all about festivities and a highlight to the busy Christmas period in Phuket. However, there is also a serious side to the event, promoting Phuket as a yacht industry hub for the best interests of the local community.

The Rendezvous aims to assist in making luxury yacht visits to Phuket stress free, transparent and administratively consistent, so that the sailing community considers Phuket as a long-term base and viable alternative to other



The Rendezvous aims to help make luxury yacht visits stress free and transparent. Photo: Guy Nowell

locations. The proposed new charter licence is a pivotal factor in the potential growth of the yacht industry in Phuket.

“A luxury yacht hub is one of the many industry spokes connected to the wheels of re-

gional economic development that can propel a country to further success and offer opportunities to its citizens,” said Andrew Davies, event and business development manager for Asia Superyacht Rendezvous.

“We need to expand the yacht market here in Phuket and ensure it remains a sustainable sector with consistent residual growth, the only way to do that is administrative consistency, cooperation and long-term projected think-

ing by all parties concerned – particularly by the key decision makers.

“The instigation of duty-free status and curtailment of prohibitive levies and charges will certainly help yachts flock here, as Phuket is in the perfect position to attract them.”

The Rendezvous aims to give the ultra-luxury sector of the tourism market a formidable and unshakable presence in Phuket.

“The chartering potential here is enormous. With the diversity of the cruising grounds, steady and relatively calm weather patterns and stunning natural scenery, Phuket is a charter client’s dream,” said Captain Will Bagshaw of M/Y *Titania* who attended the Rendezvous in 2014.

Event organizers Charlie Dwyer and Gordon Fernandes are true luxury yacht lifestyle evangelists, introducing the pleasures of cruising to the Asian market, with Charlie being an ex-America’s Cup participant and sailing for more than 45 years.

“The Rendezvous is more than three days by the sea. It’s a way of life, an ethos, a passion – it’s where you can live your dreams,” said Mr Davies.



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Fads and fashions in gardening



WHILE horticulture is not an exact science, neither is it an unchanging one. Hence research sometimes arrives at new ways of tackling old problems. Take tree planting, for instance.

Conventional wisdom decrees that you dig a round hole, a bit bigger than the root ball, and fill it with a combination of compost and loam or top soil. But recent evidence suggests that a compost-rich mixture can have a detrimental effect because it may hinder the root's attempt to colonize the denser surrounding soil. Moreover, such an area can become a waterlogged sump in the monsoon season, or even a desiccated patch during the dry season.

A dressing of soil akin to the surrounding soil will help the plant acclimatize better. Digging



Ruellias have become a fashionable choice for private and public plantings. Photo: Meneerke bloem

a square hole rather than a round one will inhibit the root's tendency to spiral round the hole, acting as though it were still in a container. Apparently, once roots hit a corner, they tend to flare out into the surrounding soil, significantly aiding their establishment. Of course, it is easier to dig a

square hole anyway.

The addition of a small amount of fertilizer is normally recommended, but it is evidently more beneficial to sprinkle a handful of sugar around the roots. Surprisingly, this boosts the population of mycorrhizal fungi, which allows the roots to

absorb more water and salts.

If garden practices can change, so too can gardening fashions. One perennial which has become increasingly popular in recent years is the *ruellia* or three o'clock flower. Apart from its habit of dropping its delicate blooms every afternoon –

hence the name – its a visual delight because of its lavender, trumpet-shaped flowers. Understandably, *ruellias* have become a fashionable choice due to their captivating color and because they are robust growers. Pink and white varieties exist, but lavender is the one to die for.

Another favorite is the *bromeliad*. With its distinctive, spathe-shaped leaves, it is becoming a 'must-have' plant, as it can adapt to most environments and comes in a distinctive range of colors. Moreover, it responds to light and temperature. Move it to face the sun and the green foliage will turn a brilliant chrome yellow.

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

Organic sweetness

AN ORGANIC farm in Phuket, the first to grow local sweet corn, allows visitors to walk around freely and nibble on its fresh produce.

The brainchild behind the idea is Apirag Vanich, chief executive of the Vanich Group. "I've never focused on making a profit. My aim is to produce food that is tasty and safe," says Mr Apirag.

Vanich Farm is also a learning center and agricultural lifestyle tourism destination.



The farm is the brainchild of Apirag Vanich. Photo: The Nation

The farm is spread over 45 rai in Muang district and includes an organic food shopping area.

– The Nation



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Real estate agents: good, bad or ugly?



Property Watch
Desmond Hughes

HAS anybody noticed that the same properties can be listed on different websites with different descriptions and in some cases feel like completely different properties? Well one of our readers did, and has brought to notice two listings about the same property.

Is it fair for a buyer or seller to be subjected to this type of behavior, assuming the listing is not a simple administrative mistake?

Will anyone actually buy a property solely on the basis of just a listing they have seen on a website?

Real estate lawyers in particular have to be on reasonably friendly terms, but remain independent from estate agents. Estate agents also receive a lot of criticism, but the profession itself does tend to draw a lot of commentary because property is something that touches all of our lives. When bad practice manifests itself, society wishes for better regulation. Govern-



Unethical sales tactics frustrate property buyers. Image: nikcname

ments worldwide pay lip service to that, but often fall short of delivering.

REGULATION

Real estate agents are not specifically regulated in Thai-

land. There is neither an overarching regulatory body that imposes codes of conduct and watchdog activities, nor any central point for feedback on agents. There is a hotch-potch of small associations throughout Thailand, but in-

evitably with some agents reluctant to volunteer to be part of any regime, those that do exist are not known or recognized by an average buyer or seller of real estate.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

However, Thailand has a high number of good laws. The issues with laws, as in other jurisdictions, are the manner in which they are enforced. Many enjoy the flexibility of law enforcement but then complain when it doesn't suit them at another time. Setting a good example is one way to encourage others to follow laws and principles of good citizenship. For those that aren't specifically regulated, setting a good example is one way of ensuring the real estate industry in Phuket is not negatively perceived.

CUT OUT BAD PLAYERS

Encourage others to set a good example, and if they don't, ostracize them from the business community. Excommunication

can be a painful punishment in an industry where buzz and knowledge of what's happening is an important part of the sales processes. If agents are dishonest in relation to what they are listing, the only way to react in an unregulated environment is to deny them business where you can.

DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF

If you are an agent, and you know another agent is up to mischief, then attacking each other in an open forum will simply create negative vibes in what can often be perceived as a negative business environment. There is plenty of hype in the real estate market, but honest differentiation expressed tactfully can demonstrate to the potential buyer that your values and business principles are strong.

As that mirror on the wall will show... the truth will out.

Desmond Hughes has been an owner and operator of his law firm in Thailand for 12 years, and is a Senior Partner at Hughes Krupica law firm www.hugheskrupica.com

Border shopping malls to open as Asean nears



MBK plans to open a new mall in Tak province. Photo: Christian Henrich

RETAIL property developers are opening more shopping centers in provinces near neighboring countries, as more shoppers from those nations are expected come into Thailand after the Asean Economic Community (AEC) becomes effective at the end of the year.

"We plan to open a new shopping center that has a total retail space of more than 100,000 square meters in the Northeast of Thailand within the next three to five years with an investment of 3 billion baht," said Pimpaka Wanglee, chief executive officer of Rangsit Plaza Co, owner and operator of Future

Park Rangsit.

Other developers have also expanded their investment in provinces near neighboring countries since last year.

Central Group has opened six shopping centers and lifestyle centers in such provinces, as well as in other Asean countries.

MBK also plans to open a new lifestyle mall through a joint venture with a local property developer in the special economic zone (SEZ) in Tak province. The mall will have a retail space of about 20,000sqm, said the company's managing director for retail operations, Sakchai Kengkijkosol.

- *The Nation*

Developers await govt measures

PROPERTY companies currently considering whether to develop low-income housing under the government's project to provide affordable homes, are waiting to see what measures might be introduced to mitigate losses that they incur under the program.

One of them, Pruksa Real Estate, stands ready to construct up to 10,000 low-price homes to support the program, as long as the government agrees to provide a corporate-tax rebate to alleviate the effect of any losses.

"We studied the matter for three weeks before meeting with Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha," said Thongma Vjitpongpun, president and chief executive officer of Pruksa Real Estate, on December 4.

The proposal could apply to all residential developers interested in participating in the scheme, he said.

There are two possible options for project development under the low-cost program.

The first is building the properties on Treasury Department land, which would enable



Companies need government incentives such as tax rebates to develop reasonably priced low-income housing projects. Photo: mailer_diablo

the development of condominiums priced at 600,000 baht and townhouses at 900,000 baht.

The second option is to develop housing on property companies' own land. This would enable the development of condominiums at 800,000 baht per unit and townhouses at 1.2 million baht per unit.

The normal market price would be 1.2-1.5mn baht per condominium and 1.5-2mn baht per townhouse, Mr Thongma added.

Both options entail the government providing an incentive for property developers to engage in what would effectively

be a loss-making venture, with proposals including a corporate-tax rebate for participating firms; a reduction in special business tax; lowering the transfer fee; and cutting the mortgage fee - all solely for homes developed under the scheme.

Meanwhile, the Government Housing Bank should revise its policy in order to approve more mortgages for the low-income segment by revising its debt-service ratio from 40-50 per cent to 80 per cent, and offering a special interest rate, Mr Thongma added.

- *The Nation*

Dream Beach makes waves

SINGAPOREAN commercial real estate developer Castlewood Group has announced the highly anticipated December 12 opening of Phuket's newest beach club, Dream Beach.

Designed to provide a complete day-to-night beach club experience, the modern decor and contemporary furnishings provide an escape rarely found in Phuket. Set on the pristine white sands of Layan Beach with direct access to the sea, the 2,000 square foot multi-level club is set to be one of the hottest beach clubs in Asia.

"We wanted to maximize impact and set a benchmark for ourselves with fantastic design and outstanding hospitality. With Dream Beach we have accomplished exactly that – a luxurious escape on the most desirable beachfront in Phuket. Along with the opening of Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa, Castlewood Group's flagship hotel, this fantastic inertia has already made us bolder as our next project takes shape, said Chris Comer, CEO of Castlewood Group.

Beachgoers can enjoy views



Castlewood Group prepares to open Dream Beach. Photo: Dream Beach PR

of the Andaman Sea while taking a dip in one of two sparkling pools, the larger of which features a swim-up bar.

Sunbathers are invited to recline poolside on designer chaise lounges and sunbeds, while indulging in specialty drinks. The exclusive rooftop bar and nightclub, PHD will be a top destination for upscale nightlife with a sexy cosmopolitan vibe and is one of only

a few select venues in Asia with a Void Acoustics Speaker System, delivering impeccable beats for sizzling nights on the dance floor.

"Dream Beach has positioned itself at the apex of Phuket's beachfront entertainment, from daytime lounging by the pool to electric parties at nightfall. Every aspect of Dream Beach has been meticulously crafted – attentive

service, delicious libations, and holistic audio, visual and ambient elements. The team has worked very hard to create a complete luxury experience, and we cannot wait to share it with our guests, said Patsada Sattacharoen, director of marketing and communications at Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa.

Dream Beach also promises a calendar of parties and world-

class nightclub events, starting with a black and gold themed New Year's Eve 2015 party.

Entertainment for the evening will include international DJs, live music and sophisticated audio-visuals for an unforgettable night of revelry.

Culinary adventures also await guests with menus that include Asia's most expensive burger experience.

For 30,000 baht, diners can treat themselves to a Wagyu beef burger topped with foie gras and a gold leaf bun, accompanied by a bottle of champagne. The experience is made complete with a one-night stay in a beautifully appointed Sky Suite at Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa.

An all-day shuttle service to and from Dream Beach will give guests unlimited access to Dream hospitality.

Catering to global tourists who appreciate design and bespoke guest experiences, Dream Beach is set to add a new dynamic to Phuket's nightlife and the tourism industry all around.

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