

Phuket Gazette

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‘WE MUST WAIT BEFORE REVIEWING SAFETY MEASURES’

No change in tuk-tuk safety regulations

■ Brit tourist takes deadly tumble from Patong tuk-tuk

By Chutharat Plerin

THERE will be no immediate changes in safety regulations following a British woman falling to her death from the back of a tuk-tuk on December 20.

“The case is still under investigation. Until we have a better picture of exactly what happened, there will be no changes to our rules,” said Jaturong Kaewkasi, the chief policy adviser for the Phuket Land and Transport Office (PLTO). “Tuk-tuks in Phuket are regulated by the Department of Land Transport. We are not ignoring safety measures in the public transportation sector; we just can’t have a knee-jerk reaction and start changing regulations every time there is an accident.”

Elizabeth Corrigan, 29, was allegedly inebriated as she and another foreigner, who police named only as Paul, made their way from Soi Bangla in Patong to their hotel in Surin at about 3:30am.

The driver of the tuk-tuk, Yongyuth Damkong, 44, told us that the pair had argued about which tuk-tuk to take back to their hotel. Eventually, they went with the one she had wanted to take, said Lt Prasert Thongprom of the Kamala Police.

The driver said he was only going about 40km/hr as he ascended a hill between Patong and Kamala, when she fell. He was unsure what caused her to tumble out of



Tuk-tuk drivers say modifications, such as a gate or door, would be an inappropriate reaction to the tragic death of the 29-year-old British woman. Photo: Jeremie Schatz

the back of the vehicle.

Ms Corrigan was rushed to Patong Hospital and later transferred to the better-equipped Vachira Phuket Hospital where she was pronounced dead on arrival.

Police declined to reveal any information procured from the statement of the sole

witness to Ms Corrigan’s death.

We have yet to rule the death a murder, accident, result of reckless driving or anything else at this point, said Kamala Police Superintendent ML Pattanachak...

Continued on Page 4

Battle rages on to keep Surin Beach clear of touts

MORE than 30 officers took part in a beach raid to confiscate illegal beach mats and umbrellas placed on one of Phuket’s ‘virgin beaches’.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



Quattro Design showroom to showcase luxury items to entire AEC.

PROPERTY



Bigger isn’t always better when it comes to investing in a house for retirement.

LIFE&STYLE



UNESCO names Phuket a ‘City of Gastronomy’ in honor of culinary heritage.

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Crash victim hit by oncoming truck survives

A 60-YEAR-OLD man was hit by a truck moments after staggering to his feet from a motorbike crash on Thepkrasattri Road on December 20.

CCTV video recorded Kan Sawaengkaew, 60, attempting to cut across multiple north-bound lanes toward a u-turn point and crashing into 23-year-old Chinese national Chuai Cher. When Mr Kan regained his footing, he was struck by an oncoming truck.

Both victims have been released from the hospital.

The truck driver has yet to be charged.

– Chutharat Plerin

Hilltribe man seeks discounts as 'tourist police'

POLICE arrested a man belonging to a northern hilltribe on December 15, after receiving several complaints about him impersonating a tourist police officer.

Police were informed that Kersiv SaeJang, 35, was going to different hotels in the area and asking for discounts.

He was charged with having radio communication without

Island prepares to light up night in remembrance



The world will be watching on December 26, as Thailand honors the victims of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, which devastated the region's coastline on December 26, 2004. Remembrance services will be held at the Tsunami Memorial Wall in Mai Khao, on Patong and Bang Tao beaches, as well as at Phuket Provincial Hall. For the full schedule of events, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Gazette file

permission and leaving the area designated for non-Thai citizens without permission.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Three killed in Krabi plantation land dispute

ONE police officer and two other people were killed when they attempted to evict a group

of squatters from a heavily-disputed oil palm plantation in Krabi on December 15.

The men were named as 45-year-old Payaprasit Suvannman of the Thungsong Police in Nakhorn Sri Thammarat; Veerasak Kuekaew, 50; and Preecha Kuedam, 44.

The following day, four suspects surrendered to officers at the Khao Phanom Police Station. They were charged for the slayings, as well as the illegal possession of firearms.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Escaped convict surrenders after hospital break

POLICE surrounded the house where an escaped prisoner was hiding, forcing him to surrender on December 18.

Nimit Jindamanee, 45, was on the run after he managed to free himself from his restraints and elude his custodian at Vachira Phuket Hospital. He was admitted to the hospital on September 28 in order to be treated for tuberculosis and immune deficiency issues.

In addition to his current sentence for cheque fraud, Mr Nimit was charged for the escape.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Digging begins at Chalong underpass site

CONSTRUCTION workers started digging drainage ditches on each side of Chao Fa West Road for the Chalong Underpass project on December 18, which saw one south-bound lane of Chao Fa West Road closed.

The digging of the tunnel will commence after drains are in place, street lamps are installed and the road is widened to ease traffic congestion.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Underpass crew dodges fines for Samkong

AFTER months of deadline extensions for the Samkong Underpass project, the Phuket Department of Highways has given the construction company in charge an additional 30-day grace period before it starts to levy hefty fines.

Last month, it was announced that Wiwat Construction Co Ltd had until December 21 to finish the project before the multi-

million-baht fines were implemented.

At this stage, the project is only 60 per cent complete.

– Kongleaphy Keam

Governor tables new route for airport commute

OFFICIALS are looking to build an alternative north-south road, parallel to Thepkrasattri Road, so that those headed to Phuket International Airport can bypass frustrating traffic jams.

The roadway is slated to be constructed below high-power electric poles.

Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada said that the design for the project will be finished by the end of January.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Pre-riot deaths ruled as accident

POLICE have ruled that two men killed in a police chase, the alleged catalyst for the Thalang Police Station riot in October, was an accident.

Both men died at the scene, where police found fifty *ya ba* (methamphetamine) pills in the men's possession.

The circumstances surrounding the deaths allegedly sparked the riot, which caused six million baht worth of damages to the building and nearby vehicles.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Arrest warrants to be pursued for rioters

POLICE are pursuing those named in the 83 unserved arrest warrants issued last month for suspects wanted in connection to the Thalang Police Station riot.

Region 8 Police Commander Tesa Siriwato noted that because many of the suspects are teenagers involved in other criminal activity, police are holding off making arrests at their residences to avoid any further violence.

Police expect most of the suspects to come forward by next month.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong



Officers seize illegal mats, umbrellas from Surin sands

By Chutharat Plerin

IN THE wake of an anonymous complaint to the Governor's Office, officials seized about 100 illegal beach mats and umbrellas from Surin Beach on December 22.

"We sent a team of about 30 officers in a joint mission to the beach after receiving a complaint that vendors were breaking the rules," Cherng Talay Police Superintendent Serm Kwannimit told the *Gazette*.

All beach furniture was banned on Surin Beach following pushy vendors breaching the 10 per cent zone, which had originally allowed them to offer services in designated areas.

"None of the vendors claimed ownership of the items, so nobody has been charged. However, all the beach furniture was confiscated and taken to the police station," said Col Serm.

The *Gazette* received a letter from an anonymous source who claimed to have filed a formal letter of complaint to the gover-



Illegal mats and umbrellas were seized. Photo: Cherng Talay OrBorTor

nor with regards to beach vendors on Surin Beach. The source, who owns a business in the area, asked to remain anonymous 'for fear of influential people on Surin beach road'.

"On Thursday, December 10, our last stop was at Surin Beach to enjoy some swimming. Four of us were spreading blankets on the sand and were told by a care-

taker beach boy from [name withheld*] beach club that we had to rent out the mats and white umbrellas which were spread out the length of 10 meters along the beach, or we had to move farther down the beach," the source wrote.

The letter goes on to cite an employee of another establishment hassling tourists in a

similar fashion.

The beach raid comes fast on the heels of an announcement that the expected end-of-year demolition of buildings along Surin's boardwalk has been delayed, yet again.

"There are many documents that the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization [PPAO] need to review before demolition begins, as some of the buildings were built by the government," said Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat. "There will be an official announcement from Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada on this issue in January."

Earlier this month, V/Gov Chokdee vowed that all buildings would be demolished by the new year, pending the signature of the acting chief of the PPAO.

**The Gazette has withheld the name of the beach club pending confirmation of the allegation.*

Additional reporting by Kongleaphy Kearn.

Officers hunt Ukrainian man for defalcation



Ivan Tretiak. Photo: passport

THE owner of a motorbike rental shop put up a 30,000-baht reward on December 18 for any information that leads to the return of a stolen motorbike.

Chalong Police secured an arrest warrant for Ukrainian national Ivan Tretiak, 25, two days prior.

"Mr Tretiak is wanted for defalcation in two separate cases that I am working on. I believe that he is involved in more," said Maj Thada Sodarak of the Chalong Police.

Mr Tretiak allegedly made off with one of Anyaphach Karaya's Honda PCX motorbikes, valued at about 68,000 baht, which was supposed to have been returned on November 23.

— Chutharat Plerin



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Gov launches rapid response mobile unit

IN AN effort to quickly resolve complaints made to the Damrongdhama Center (ombudsman's office), the Phuket governor launched the 'Rapid Damrongdhama Unit' on December 16.

Currently, complaints filed with the office are forwarded to relevant officials. It then takes anywhere from a few days to a few weeks for residents to see results. However, the new unit is designed to expedite the process.

"We hope that this will ease the workload that piles up at the center by allowing officials to quickly respond to residents' issues," said Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada.

Those who wish to file an anonymous complaint with the Damrongdhama Center may do so by calling 1567 or 076-213 203.

— Panassaya Jaengjamras

Mum denounces teacher for alleged child abuse

THE mother of a student at Satree Phuket School accused a teacher of abusing her 14-year-old daughter on December 14.

Chomphunut Bunsophap claimed in a Facebook post that a teacher, who she did not name at the request of the school, struck her daughter in the back of the head with a hard-backed book as a form of punishment.

Ms Chomphunut goes on to explain that her daughter was hit so hard that it caused the teen's nose to bleed, as well as chest pain.

The girl, who was allegedly punished for her fingernails being too long, was rushed to Bangkok Hospital Phuket.

"I can't even stand seeing



The girl's mother put the photos taken at the hospital on Facebook.

my daughter being bitten by a mosquito or an ant. Who are you to dare hit her so hard that

her nose bleeds like that," wrote Ms Chomphunut.

The *Gazette* was unable to

contact Kosol Saikhaw, director of Satree Phuket School, for a comment. However, a representative from the school, who declined to be named, confirmed to the *Gazette* that Mr Kosol was aware of the issue and had already spoken with the family.

"The director and vice director of the school have both apologized to us. However, the teacher has refused to do so," wrote Ms Chomphunut. "The school has promised to investigate the matter."

Ms Chomphunut, who is an alumna of the school, has yet to press criminal charges against the teacher, but has threatened to do so if the school does not take proactive steps in resolving the issue.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Brit dies returning from Patong in tuk-tuk tumble

From Page 1

...Jakkapan. "We have questioned the witness. Additionally, we have conducted a test on the blood-alcohol content of the tuk-tuk driver. The test came back negative – he was not driving under the influence."

Police are continuing to look for CCTV footage that reveals further information about the case, while awaiting a report to determine whether or not the tuk-tuk was roadworthy.

Though tuk-tuks line the streets on either side of Phuket's infamous party area, Soi Bangla, Mr Jaturong pointed out that catching a ride in the vehicles in an inebriated state could clearly be dangerous.

"Though there are not many cases of people falling out of tuk-tuks, people need to be careful after they have been drinking," said Mr Jaturong. "Of course, I am not placing blame on anyone for what happened. If the police find that the condition of the tuk-tuk is what caused the woman's death, we will look into what can be done to increase safety measures."

Supap Pramkaew, head of the Karon tuk-tuk consortium, was against any modifications to the current design of tuk-tuks.



Tuk-tuks line the streets on either side of Soi Bangla.

"Having the entrance free of a barrier, like we have now, is best. If customers sit appropriately in the vehicles, there is nothing to be worried about," Mr Supap said. "Having a gate across the entrance would not look nice. I think the customer would feel like they are in a pig cage. Additionally, it would not be convenient for a customer to get in or out of the vehicle."

Mr Supap explained that tuk-tuk drivers are often caught between a rock and a hard spot, when it comes to dealing with drunk clientele.

"If at all possible, we avoid taking drunk people, as they are often either unable to communicate clearly or they get into fights with our drivers," said Mr Supap. "However, if we refuse to pick them up, we're called bad guys, which just isn't fair."

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Governor attempts to revive Phuket ICEC

THE Phuket governor is attempting to resurrect the Phuket International Convention and Exhibition Center (ICEC) after the plan was killed during the Yingluck Administration's rule.

"I am willing to breathe new life into this project in Mai Khao; as a member city of Thailand's MICE [Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, Exhibitions], the only thing we are missing to fully comply with this effort is such a facility," Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada said on December 14.

"This facility would not only benefit tourism, but would also help to steer Phuket toward becoming a hub of trade for Thailand. It is time to reconsider this project."

Governor Chamroen established four key points to be addressed: the location of the facility, to see if Mai Khao is still the most appropriate location; the design, to ensure appropri-



Phuket Gov Chamroen Tipayapongtada says he is ready to present the plan to Deputy PM Somkid Jatusripitak. Photo: Gazette File

ate usage of land allocation; the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), to ensure that officials fully understand what impact the facility would have; and investment, to establish a balance between the government

and the private sector.

The failure of the Phuket ICEC to move forward in 2012, while the budget and execution of a similar plan in Chaing Mai received the green light, led to accusations that the project was

'stolen' from the province.

In response to the cancellation of the project, Phuket MP Anchalee Vanich Thepabutra stood in parliament and called for the government to answer why the 2.6-billion-baht project to build a Phuket ICEC had been scratched.

Three days later, Ms Anchalee and Phuket received their answer – laying the project to rest, at least until now.

"We did not 'steal' the project. We cannot continue with it because it failed to pass its EIA requirements; it failed that because the proposed site was at Baan Mai Khao, which is the site of Phuket's last mangrove forest," Woravat Auapinyakul, an official from then-Prime Minister's office, told the *Gazette*.

However, Gov Chamroen was confident and ready to present the plan to Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak.

– **Kritsada Mueanhawong**



Jordan Lewis Jacobs was found safe on Phi Phi. Photo: supplied

'Missing' Brit tourist located

PHI Phi police located a British backpacker, who was reported missing by his family members, as he was signing up for a scuba diving course on December 17.

Jordan Lewis Jacobs, 21, had been travelling since September 2014 and had postponed his return to the UK. Prior to missing his flight home, his family had launched a social media campaign in hopes of finding him.

Mr Jacob's sister, Emily Jacobs, reported to the *Gazette* that her brother's last phone call had been suspicious and that the family was worried. On December 18, she confirmed that her brother had been found, but declined to give further details.

"He said there was a misunderstanding between him and his family," said Phi Phi Police Chief Jetsada Junphum.

– **Kongleaphy Keam**

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TEN years ago, with the Thai Tsunami Victim Identification (TTVI) unit wrapping up its final case, Phuket – along with the rest of the world – stopped to reflect on the devastation caused by, and the recovery from, the Boxing Day tsunami.

The *Gazette* marked the one-year anniversary with a special supplement entitled 'One Year On'. Inside, then Phuket Governor Udomsak Usarang recalled the day of the incident, from the first notification that something was wrong – “there was flooding in Karon” – to the view of the annihilated west coast from a helicopter and the realization that the natural disaster contingency plan was unworkable.

On the next page of the publication is an entire page dedicated to how the new tsunami warning system works. However, it took years for the system to actually ‘work’ as it was intended to, with valuable copper wires being stolen at one point in the island’s history. This system, in fact, was one of the many legacies of the waves that was revisited when the *Gazette* teamed up with *The*

The gift of hindsight

Nation and the Asian News Network last year to produce an award-winning project – not only to recount what had happened, but also to see if indeed the promise to help rebuild communities and lives had been delivered.

Nearly ten years apart, the trajectories of the two commemorative publications are not so different. Though the devastation and reality of the disaster resonated in the core of all those in the region in 2005, it was still balanced out with the hope of recovery, as seen in the words of Franky Gun:

“When I was asked to write about the Khao Lak area in the year after the tsunami, I had mixed feelings. I was directly affected by the disaster, losing my beloved parents, great friends and neighbors, my pets, house, car and almost everything else I owned. I, too, almost drowned. It has not been pleasant digging around my

post-tsunami memories, especially those of the months from January to March...

“This personal account is meant to show the emotional and psychological recovery a tsunami survivor experiences; it is not an exercise in self-pity, but a possible aid to understanding the scope of the tragedy – and to prove that emotional recovery is quite possible. I hope it will help readers who have lost loved ones to gain emotional strength by realizing that they are not alone.”

Though their was a publication dedicated to the tsunami inside the December 24-30 issue, the issue itself was full of tsunami headlines: Wave memorial finalists chosen; 100,000 candles to light up Phuket; Skeleton from Khao Lak is last case for TTVI Phuket; Rain damps tsunami drill.

Even now, a year after having created a publication marking the 10-year anniversary of the waves, the tsunami finds its way into headlines from candlelight vigils on Patong Beach to tsunami warning drills.

– Isaac Stone Simonelli

See Thailand's Animals in the Wild



Book eco-friendly trips to see the majesty of these creatures in the wild.

SAY NO TO CAPTIVITY

14 killed in horrific Chiang Mai bus crash

THE families of the 14 people killed when their coach crashed in Chiang Mai's Doi Saket district on December 20 will receive 1.6 million baht each in compensation from insurance companies.

Twelve others, including the 58-year-old Thai bus driver Somporn Bualuang, were also injured in the crash.

Chiang Mai Governor Pavin Chamniprasart said victims with permanent disabilities would receive the same compensation as that given to the deceased victims' families.

An initial investigation found the accident resulted from Mr Somporn's carelessness and speeding, as well as the coach's less-than-perfect condition. The coach reportedly experienced a brake malfunction at a curve on the mountainous road, causing it to crash into a car, hit a pole and run off the road into a ditch.

Thai internet freedom gets thumbs down

INTERNET freedom in Thailand has been ranked "not free" for the second successive year, as the Thai government has been using its power to restrict



freedom of information and violating Internet user rights, according to the latest Freedom House report.

Following the unsatisfactory ranking, the Thai Netizen Network issued a statement encouraging the public to keep a check on the government and urged authorities to stop using the lese majeste law, defamation law and Computer Crimes Act to suppress its opponents online.

Freedom House, an indepen-

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

dent American watchdog on global freedom, stated in its report that the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) had summoned more than 400 people for interrogation about their online activities this year.

Thai beauty wins 'best costume' with tuk-tuk

WHEN the Miss Universe Thailand organization announced in October that a bizarre tuk-tuk costume, complete with headlights, handlebars and the national flag, had been selected as the Thai national costume for the Miss Universe pageant, social media users responded with

derision and laughter.

Yet, love it or hate it, this strange attire worn by Miss Thailand Universe Aniporn 'Nat' Chalermburanawong was named the Best National Costume at the Miss Universe pageant in Las Vegas on December 21.

Enormous haul of elephant tusks and pangolin scales in Samui

AUTHORITIES confiscated 40 million baht worth of elephant tusks and pangolin scales at Samui International Airport earlier this month.

Customs Department Director-General Kulis Sombatsiri explained that the boxes contained 281 tusks and 12 bags of pangolin scales. The seizure marked the biggest haul of such illegal items this year.

Report prompts change in shrimp industry

THAI authorities have labelled an Associated Press (AP) report on the use of forced labor in the Thai shrimping industry as 'incorrect and misleading'.

However, the report has prompted major changes in the industry's controversial processing practices.



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Long, strange trip

WITH the terms of the highly-trumpeted Asean Economic Community (AEC) to take effect in just days, Phuket is really no closer to having a world-class international conference and exhibition center (ICEC) than it was a few decades back when the idea was first bruited.

Long-term *Gazette* readers know very well the winding and confusing history of the island's ICEC project – the endless studies, plans and even a vote on where such a facility should be located in the province.

However, each time the island comes closer to actually realizing the dream, the greater the disappointment when the vision is dashed at the last minute – almost always due to a change of power at the top in Bangkok.

Additionally, local power struggles among the island's wealthiest land-owning families have also been a considerable hindrance in deciding on an appropriate site for such a complex. Each family naturally has wanted the facility to be in an area near their own landholdings or other assets.

Past efforts to choose an appropriate site at the local level simply 'timed out' when one of Thailand's past governments lost power and everything had to be 'restarted' from scratch, much to the pleasure of the next group of consultants and their paymasters in government.

Conjecture about, and reporting of, the ICEC in all its many manifestations has been a regular staple of local news dating back as long as most of us can remember.

That all ended in 2012, when the government of Yingluck Shinawatra cited concerns over sea turtles and mangrove forests as its justification of pulling the plug on the Democrat Party's already-approved 2.6-billion-baht facility in Mai Khao. It was such a staggering blow that it seemed to knock the ICEC concept out of the news cycle altogether. We were in denial; it was still 'too soon'.

But as the saying goes, 'hope springs eternal' and Phuket's staggering growth in recent years makes the lack of an ICEC more glaring with each passing year.

It's interesting that the re-emergence of the ICEC concept comes at this time of hope and gift-giving across the world, but unfortunately, Santa Claus and crew don't have room to slide megaprojects under Christmas trees or into red envelopes.

It is time to start thinking about an ICEC once again, but in doing so, it feels to us more like Groundhog Day than Christmas.



Grateful for the helpful people of Thailand

I LOVE Thailand.

I left my backpack in a taxi from Phuket airport.

Long story short, I had the police, the taxi meter company, airport security, the tourist assistance center and the army looking for it all night.

The next day, they called me and said it was at the airport police station.

Everyone was so nice and courteous and totally efficient.

Special thanks to Officer Sonkod of the Phuket Police and, of course, the taxi driver.

Dick Balsamo
Facebook

Where did all of the funds go for center?

Re: Governor attempts to revive Phuket International Convention and Exhibition Center, December 19

I remember this project was ok'd by Abhisit and both Phuket and Chiang Mai were given the funds to build the centers. But when the Yingluck administration came into power, the Phuket project was halted.

So where did those funds go? Let's hope that Phuket has better luck this time around.

Harry
Gazette forum

Fines are the way to go for underpass

Re: Phuket underpass construc-

Letters to the Editor

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

tion company dodges fines for another month, December 19

I agree with what will be implemented regarding fines, and so on. The place is a nightmare for all motorists passing there.

The no left and right turns east and west that were promised to be reopened late March have caused havoc for all concerned, and the dangers concerned with doing u-turns to get to your destination.

God help the Chalong motorists with the construction that has now commenced there, but the tunnel at Central is working well.

Skip
Gazette forum

Someone is highly irresponsible here

Re: 'Missing' British backpacker gone diving on Phi Phi, December 18

Someone has been highly irresponsible here. I'm still not sure if it's him or his family.

As farangs we have a tough time convincing the Thais of 'our ways'.

Can you imagine how seriously the Thai police will take a missing farang enquiry next time, however genuine? This could compromise a genuine person's safety.

Shame on someone for sure.

David Warburton
Facebook

Decline in tourists is all homemade

Re: Influx of tourists expected over upcoming holiday season, December 18

If the responsible authorities would stop the stupid 'beach management' ideas and instead clean up the jet-ski and tuk-tuk mafia, the tourists would come back to Thailand and Phuket.

The reasons for the decrease are all homemade. Give the tourists and the local people the beaches back and Phuket will have a new economic wealth.

Action is required now before the next high season is spoiled again.

Tom
Gazette forum

There is more than just electric cables

Re: PEA moves forward with underground cables for Patong, December 17

It's not only the electric cables that look bad. What about the hundreds of other cables haphazardly hung from the poles?

Most of these are not electric, they are TV, telephone, and internet cables.

What are they going to do with these? Simply putting the electric underground won't fix these other cables.

Tim
Gazette forum

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Contact us:

Editorial: news@phuketgazette.net

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net

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General: info@phuketgazette.net

Telephone: 076 273555 (10 lines) Fax 076 615240

79/94 Moo 4, Thepkasattri Rd, T. Koh Kaew, A. Muang, Phuket

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Travelling responsibly

FIRST PERSON

PERSONAL issues between travellers and their families can often lead to tension and miscommunication. It is very important that both parties be responsible and treat each other with respect in order to not let personal disputes turn into a media frenzy.

The latest incident with 21-year-old British backpacker Jordan Lewis Jacobs is a good example.

Mr Jacobs was reported missing by his family after they had lost contact with him for several days. However, he was found registering for a diving course here on Phi Phi, and simply didn't want to go home.

It was very irresponsible of him to let his family worry about him, when all he had to do was communicate with them about what he wanted to do.

People who travel, particularly alone, need to be adults. I don't mean this in terms of age – I mean that they need to be emotionally responsible and mature. However, this goes both ways.

Families of those who travel need to treat their family members as responsible adults as well. They need to understand that sometimes, communication is not easy on the road; family members need to keep a level head, should they become worried.

In cases where family mem-



Here he talks about the importance of travellers and their families being responsible in their communication with each other and the media.

bers panic, the media can get out of hand. This leads to damaging effects on the area in which the situation is taking place.

For example, when Mr Jacobs went 'missing', some media outlets compared the situation here on Phi Phi, to the murders on Koh Tao. It is seriously worrying that people can try and make a correlation based on such little information, and not think of the repercussions that these statements can have on the island's reputation.

We really appreciate the fact that Mr Jacob's family first contacted the embassy, who then, in turn, contacted us. If a family member is worried about their relative, there are ways to deal with the situation responsibly. Causing a media frenzy can spread false rumors that may actually hinder any investiga-

Lt Col Jetsada Junphum has been the chief of the Phi Phi Police Station since September. He graduated from the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School in 1997 and the Royal Police Cadet Academy in 2013.

tion going forward.

Here on Phi Phi, we are very careful to take care of our tourists. It is very rare that there is a serious situation, such as rape or murder.

We are strict with our 2am closing time for all bars. We have officers patrolling the area at the time to make sure that all tourists get home safely, even sometimes helping them get to their hotels if they are too inebriated to do so themselves.

We also continually check in with resident hotel employees and tour operators to ensure that they don't have any drugs or weapons, as that can lead to bigger crimes. We make sure both Thai and migrant laborers are working legally and strictly enforce their curfews.

We take responsibility for our tourists, workers and expats, and all we ask in return is that they take some responsibility for themselves and their loved ones, to keep Phi Phi a safe and respectable tourist destination for all to enjoy.



Phuket may become just another dot on a map. Photo: Benjamin Dobson

Just one more stop

WHEN I first moved to Phuket five years ago, I remember being warned about the increased crime rate during the island's low season. The reason for this is primarily that many people who rely on tourists for income are left high and dry until their return the next high season, resulting in petty crimes such as bag snatching and home robberies.

As the years go by, I find warning people of this issue is less and less relevant, because now it seems that petty crime is a regular occurrence – and not just in tourist areas – it involves Thai on Thai crime as well.

I feel as if the increase in tourists to the area has become both a blessing and a curse – the land of smiles has become the land of indifference. People look the other way when someone is in trouble or needs help. Eyes are rolled when a foreigner asks for help with menu items or directions.

There is no doubt that tourism has helped Phuket's economy blossom. However, rudeness and greed have taken over locals, tourists and expats alike; those who are not rude or greedy are most likely fed up with catering to those who are.

I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that Phuket grew too fast and was left to play

Island View

By Brandy McDonald

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

catch up with the rest of the world's top tourist destinations, forgetting that it's simple charm and nature were the real reason why people were drawn to it in the first place.

Beaches have been replaced with businesses, mountains with hotels and condos, and scenic drives with traffic congestion, leading to road casualties and a breed of road rage that is the next level of ridiculous.

Sadder yet, warm smiles have been worn down to weary frowns, once helpful hands now cover their eyes and ears, and open arms fold in mistrust and frustration.

Granted, it can't be helped how many people visit the island and demand comforts that they would expect from their home country, but there needs to be some sort of balance created between what Phuket can offer and what the rest of the world expects, otherwise it will just become one more stop on the map and not a place to fall in love with and visit over and over again.

Words from the Wise

"One's dignity may be assaulted, vandalized and cruelly mocked, but cannot be taken away unless it is surrendered."

– Michael J Fox

"I'm actually a very bad surfer, which is good because everybody likes a bad surfer. Nobody likes a good surfer."

– Liev Schreiber

Issues & Answers

Where can I cycle safely in Phuket and with whom?

I LOVE to bike and have been looking for a community of cyclists in the area to join for a couple days a week. I was also wondering if there are any suggested cycling routes that are safe to ride in Phuket alone or with a group of people?

Monton Pajantaboot, a member of Phuket Cycling Group, replies:

To be a part of a Phuket cycling community is easy. There

are many groups you can join, such as Phuket Cycling and the Rawai Criterium. Both are available to contact on Facebook.

For professional cyclists, Rawai and Promthep Cape routes are great, as there are many steep hills along the way. Cyclists can enjoy the scenery and the added advantage is a number of great opportunities to take photographs of the beautiful views.

For rookie cyclists, a flat, safe ride around Bang Wad

Dam in Kathu or Laem-Sai Pier in Thalang is available. There are beautiful views of the greenery and the route is enjoyable for both leisurely and more intense bike rides.

There is also a route all the way up to Sarasin Bridge that is safe to ride early in the morning.

Please be advised that the routes to avoid while cycling are Chao Fa East and West roads, as the traffic congestion makes it difficult and dangerous to ride.



Bill Barnett released his newest book in Bangkok

Hospitality insider Bill Barnett launches new book

ONE of Asia's leading hospitality experts and *Gazette* property columnist, Bill Barnett, shines a light on the good, bad and ugly of luxury hotels and travel in his acerbic new collection of twisted travel tales, 'Slave to the Bean: Random Dispatches from the Inferno' which was launched on Friday December 18 at the Bangkok boutique hotel, Ad Lib.

In 'Slave to the Bean' Bill, the ultimate hospitality insider, distills his fear and loathing into a heady brew of dark apocalyptic visions, anecdotes and blunt views, as he takes aim at his pet peeves and villains, from terrorists to backpackers to the ubiquitous bearded hipsters.

— *Phuket Gazette*

Never too old to get insurance

Finance

By David Mayes

IF YOU read my articles regularly you have probably noticed I don't spend much time writing about health insurance. It is not the most exciting topic, and for many of Phuket's ageing expat population getting covered at all is not really an option once they reach a certain age. Also, the cost of local international hospitals used to be extremely inexpensive, but prices have risen rapidly in recent years.

To put things in perspective, when my children were born we paid cash out of pocket with no insurance at all. This was at international hospitals here that are far more luxurious than any hospital back in the 'States. My brother was working as a high-end corporate lawyer in the US with top notch insurance, and his deductible alone when his children were born was more than my entire bill in Thailand.

Sadly the days of cheap international-standard hospitals in Phuket are gone, and the reports of hospital bills I get from many expats on the island are now scary enough to warrant serious consideration of insurance. I recently found out there is one insurer here that will write policies for expats as old as 70, which was a big surprise to say the least. Many simply assume it will be impossible to get insured as you approach this age, but FWD will in fact do it.



Phuket's international-quality hospitals are not cheap, so buy insurance. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

When a friend of mine, whose Thai girlfriend is an agent for this company, told me about them, I had to admit that I had never heard of them. The reason is simple. It's just the new name for the insurance arm of the Dutch bank ING. They have sold the business in Thailand and it has now been rebranded as FWD.

They offer a wide range of policy types to both foreigners and Thais, and are very price competitive. You can even get added personal accident insurance to cover you in the event that, like me, you

enjoy dangerous sports like surfing or sky-diving. Depending on your status in the country, you can even qualify to get higher levels of coverage. If you have a work permit, for example, this increases the types of additional coverage limits you may be allowed.

The truth of life is that we do get sick and we do have accidents. We never know when these events will happen to us and a solid financial plan should include covering yourself for all eventualities. Yet many expats go without insur-

ance coverage because they simply believe they are too old. This doesn't need to be the case and, with hospital costs in Phuket increasing rapidly, it makes sense to do some homework and get covered.

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.

European long-haul, budget airline glides into new market

EUROWINGS, Lufthansa Group's long-haul budget airline, spearheaded its push into Southeast Asia on December 19 as its inaugural Cologne-Phuket flight landed at Phuket International Airport.

The flight marks the first European low-cost carrier to link with Southeast Asia. Eurowings will fly Airbus A330s, with a capacity of 380 passengers per plane, on the route twice a week.

Christian Hein, senior vice president for sales at Eurowings, said air travel in the Asia and Pacific region would continue to grow, thanks to the area's booming economy and a continued increase in the number of international travellers.

Southeast Asia in particular is becoming a true emerging market for low-cost airline business, since all nations in the region will become a single market under the Asean Economic Community from the beginning of next



Phuket's first Eurowings flight lands at the airport, marking the company's move into the Southeast Asian market. Photo: Lufthansa PR

year, Mr Hein told *The Nation*.

Asean is globally the third-largest region in terms of population, the fifth-largest in trading power, and the ninth-largest global economy, Mr Hein added.

German-based Lufthansa Group wanted to expand its low-cost network to Southeast Asia and decided to make Thailand its spearhead for linking Europe and the region, he explained. The move is part of a global expansion fol-

lowing Lufthansa Group's rebranding of the airline from Germanwings to Eurowings, reported *The Nation*.

Eurowings currently flies to 11 overseas destinations worldwide.

— *Panassaya Jaengjamras*

Showroom to reach AEC market

THE dynamic duo behind Quattro Design, one of Thailand's top importers and designers of exclusive furniture, have high hopes for the New Year as they open a showroom at Phuket Boat Lagoon early next month.

"Now is the time for us to open the showroom in Phuket, as the Asian Economic Community takes effect next year, which will affect the market and every business in it," said Quattro Design co-owner Praowphan Laoha-pongchana. "It is not just about reaching local people here in Phuket and neighboring southern destinations, such as Phang Nga, Krabi, Hat Yai and Koh Samui. The island is a hub, a dream destination for people around the world."

Ms Praowphan sees the move as an effective way to reach other markets in the AEC; especially Singapore and Malaysian clientele, as well as the Chinese market.

Aiming to fill a gap in the luxury property sector, where demands and expectations for quality, durability and style are high, the collection of exclusive brands at Quattro Design ranges from vintage to classic art décor, and from contemporary minimalist designs to world-class names such as Prizmic & Brill, Kenneth Cobonpue, Schema and



Quattro Design co-owner Praowphan is the Phuket showroom as a way to reach markets in the southern region, as well as Singapore, Malaysia and China. Photo: Quattro Design PR

Eichholtz.

Following the launch of a pop-up store at the Boat Lagoon in December, the pair decided to move ahead with establishing a full-size Quattro Design showroom, adding another trendy new brand to the growing collection of boutique stores at the east coast marina.

"We want to be the one-stop-shop for luxury, affordable luxury, design. We

are not only able to provide high-quality furniture and accessories, we can handle entire design projects as well. Already, we have done lots of projects for the hospitality industry, the residential sector and commercial space owners," Ms Praowphan said. "There are lots of opportunities in Phuket to work with villa owners and those in the hospitality industry."

As well as bringing the world's leading home and hospitality art decor to Phuket, the Quattro team of concept designers now offer a wide range of turnkey solutions to hoteliers, developers and home decor enthusiasts.

The Quattro Design team specialize in transforming residences, businesses and resorts with a full range of high-quality eye-catching items, in-

cluding sofas, armchairs, ottomans, benches, coffee tables, mirrors and lighting, plus a range of trendy and durable outdoor day beds and recliners.

Ms Praowphan pointed out that IKEA opening a pick-up and order point in Phuket, even though it is the first in Asia, would not make an impact to Quattro Design's move onto the island.

"The opening of IKEA doesn't really affect us, as it caters to a different market. It's totally different in terms of price and quality of work. We focus more on luxury and affordable luxury."

With more than a decade of experience of supplying other designers and top architects in Bangkok with concepts from the Quattro Design flagship store on Soi Thonglor, Ms Praowphan is confident that the push into Phuket will give her, and her business partner Wichada Sritakaran, a platform to showcase their turnkey interior design and décor services to discerning homeowners, villa operators and hoteliers in key Asian markets.

Quattro Design is located in Zone D, Park Plaza, Phuket Boat Lagoon. Find out more online at www.quattro-design.com.

— Phuket Gazette

Target mobile users



AS I reported last week, mobile smart-phone use has been steadily increasing. Analysts expect that more than 51 per cent of the online Christmas sales traffic in the US will originate from smart-phones this year.

So it is with confidence that I predict that the focus for social media marketing strategies will be switched to mobile devices.

Put simply, it is time to either get on board the smart-phone revolution, or be left behind.

Another trend that is increasing is the use of video. Video is becoming the favored way of capturing attention and building rapport. Recent figures show mobile users spend an average of 40 minutes per session on YouTube.

You have also heard me go

on about databases like a broken record. This will become a major focus in 2016, and the wide range of different platforms will make it even easier for marketers. Facebook has recently introduced a new platform to allow marketers to collect contact details from people who 'like' their products, and this will become a trend in all companies.

So for the winning combination, I would recommend a mobile-friendly approach using videos that link to i-cards and capture pages, and any business doing this successfully will have a very profitable 2016.

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.

The Crab House
Patong, Phuket
169/183 Phangmuang Rd., Patong, Phuket Thailand
Tel: 091 839 4953, 076 687065
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Sansiri goes all out to get down

Sansiri PCL hosted their 60s themed 'Sansiri Best Friends Thank You Party' on December 17 at Tu Kab Khao Restaurant in Phuket Town with friends, employees and executives.



Uthai Uthaisangsuk (right), senior executive vice president business development and project development division (condominiums) of Sansiri PCL, hands over a lucky draw prize to Yongyod Preuksarat, reporter for the Phuket Post and Nation Group. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn



Phinyapat Huangnak (middle left), PR senior manager for Sansiri PCL's corporate marketing department, and Kamonwan Prasitwuttivech (middle right), PR manager for corporate marketing department of Sansiri PCL party with the Phuket media. Photo: Pacharawat Wasikarn



Business mixes with pleasure at Amari Phuket

Amari Phuket hosted the Canadian, British and Irish ambassadors to Thailand as guest speakers at the Phuket Business Dinner organized by the British Chamber of Commerce Thailand at Amari Phuket's Rim Talay restaurant in Patong on December 2.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: (From L-R) Dr Philip Calvert, Canadian ambassador to Thailand; Brendan Rogers, Irish ambassador to Thailand; Mark Kent, British ambassador to Thailand; and Richard Margo, Hotel Manager at Amari Phuket.

Scent of Paris

Montale Paris perfume hosted their grand opening on December 10 at Central Festival Phuket. The new shop is located near Phuket Polytechnic College.

Utaiwan Bamrer, managing director of Montale Paris Phuket presents her products.



Live, laugh, love tenderly

Love Me Tender Bangkok hosted an exclusive invitation only sous vide presentation and tasting on November 21 at the Vijitt Resort Phuket in Rawai.



SHOWING THEIR STUFF: (From L-R) Jean-Pierre Guillaud, chief operations officer of Cuisinesolutions Inc USA; Thavee Chantasit, owner of Blue Lotus restaurant in Phuket; Nithas Lertdachachai, owner of Love Me Tender Le Bistro; and Amorn Chuairak, food and beverage manager at the Vijitt Resort Phuket.

ents in Paradise

Chaine des Rôtisseurs get festive at Angsana

The Regional Council and members of the Bailliage Regional de Phuket attended a festive-season dinner at Bodega & Grill to celebrate the holidays with excellent food and wine pairing.



RINGING IN THE HOLIDAYS: (From L-R) Mirko Cappa, Angsana Laguna Phuket's executive chef; Sree Valsan, Angsana Laguna Phuket's director of food and beverage; and Sriram Kailasam, area general manager of Banyan Tree Phuket.



(From L-R) Brian Connelly, general manager of Angsana Laguna Phuket; Ian Lancaster-Bailli, Chaine des Rotisseurs, Phuket Bailliage; and Tony Bridges, owner of Nikita's Restaurant.



Hotel owners Watanyu Asawabenjang (right) and Thanyatorn Tantanatawee.

Celebrate in style

Nook Dee Kata Beach Resort arranged a party and invited local press and travel agents to be a part of their launch on December 14.



GM Adisak Saewanee (left) and Executive Chef Jaiphak Na Chiangmai.

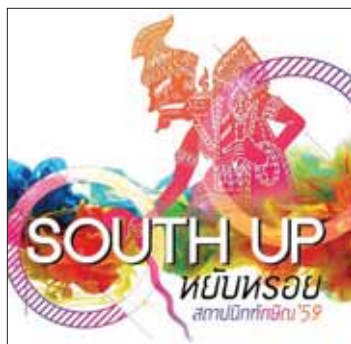
Casanovy Casanova Night

Andara Resort and Villas and affiliates recently celebrated their annual family day with a packed party at Saxophone Pub and Restaurant in Phuket Town. The party was themed 'Casanovy Casanova Night' with staff dressing up as pirates, and bunnies for part of the fun.

PARTYING IT UP: (From L-R) Korkiat Supolpong, Court of Appeals Region 8 judge; Natthakanya Saengpho, managing director and CEO of Paradise Group; and Ariyah Nganwongphanich, Andara Resort property manager.



(From L-R) Thanorm Chanthabut, Villa chef; Kwanjit Sriamporn, Villa attendant; Sarapee Kingkeaw, Villa supervisor; Daniel Josef Meury, Andara Resort and Villas GM - executive office; Yupin Nunchuphol, Villa supervisor; Supattaraporn Mongpraneet, Villa attendant.



South Up. Photo: Limelight PR

Architectural Expo comes to Phuket Town

THE Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) is hosting the 'Southern Architectural Expo 2016' in Phuket from January 29-31.

"The theme of the event is Yapp Roi (South Up) which is meant to reflect and promote the identity of the south," said Prachya Sukkaew, the vice president of the ASA Southern Office.

Mr Prachya explained that education and economic development in the south have contributed to the increasing number of qualified architects in the area, which is why the ASA decided to organize the expo as a way to boost the local architectural industry.

The event, at Limelight Avenue in Phuket Town, will run from 10am-10pm each day, and feature exhibitions, free consultations on building maintenance, and networking opportunities with suppliers and architectural publications.

Entry is free.

For more information, contact Limelight Avenue at 076-213664.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Sun sets on 2015 Rendezvous

ON DECEMBER 18, the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous drew to a close with a grand VIP gala dinner hosted by Kata Rocks Resort, whose Hospitality Team took first place at the fun-filled Feadship Challenge model boat race the previous evening.

Yacht owners and the crème de la crème of Thailand gathered in opulent surroundings to celebrate luxury yachting over three fun-packed days, with the attendance of Phuket Vice Governor Kajornkiet Rakpanitmanee showing that the government is fully supporting the industry.

Guests were treated to sailing on a selection of fantastic sailing yachts which were all 25 meters or longer. The Rendezvous is special because it demonstrates a yacht in 'charter mode' – sailing serenely or anchored with guests being cared for by an attentive crew, in beautiful surroundings.

This year's fleet consisted of three classical yachts.

S/Y Lady Thuraya, a 31m Lubbe & Voss Schooner, S/Y Aventure, a 29m classic wooden schooner cut, and S/Y Lamima, a 65m modern Indonesian Phinisi.

All of the attending yachts intend on applying for Phuket's new charter licence when it is truly finalized.

The Rendezvous was complemented by two ultra-modern yachts – S/Y Bliss a 37m sleek carbon fiber sloop by Dubois and Kings Cup Winner Catamaran S/Y Arabella.

33-meter M/Y After 8, captained by Olly Wingate,



Guests were treated to sailing on a selection of yachts which were all 25 meters or longer. Photo: Supplied

whose owner was onboard, expressed sincere joy at his attendance and witnessing the sailing spectacle and festivities.

Event organizers Gordon Fernandes, Jojo Singhmanee and Business Development Manager

Andrew Davies will once again bring the glittering yachting showcase to Phuket in 2016.

The Asia Superyacht Rendezvous is led by an innovative, creative, forward-thinking team with its finger on

the pulse of the international luxury yacht industry and will help make Phuket South Asia's primary luxury yacht hub. The new year heralds a great evolution for the Rendezvous.

– Andrew Davies

Ironman announces 70.3 triathlon

IRONMAN announced recently that Philippines-based Sunrise Events and Thailand-based SportMaster will team up to deliver Ironman 70.3 in Phuket on November 27, 2016.

The Ironman 70.3 Thailand will offer a US\$15,000 professional prize purse and 30 age-group qualifying slots for the 2017 Ironman 70.3 World Championship taking place in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA.

"This race is further evidence of the growing interest in and development of Ironman throughout the region," said Ironman Asia-Pacific CEO Geoff Meyer. "Thailand has had a long history with Ironman and it's fantastic that we are



A US\$15,000 prize and 30 age-group qualifying slots for the 2017 Ironman 70.3 World Championship will be offered. Photo: Laguna Phuket

back again in Phuket with an Ironman 70.3 triathlon. An improved course and development in Phuket will allow us to grow the event beyond what we could in 2012 and we look

forward to a great future in Thailand."

Registration is now open at www.ironman.com/thailand70.3.

– Phuket Gazette

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

December 27. JW Marriott Phuket's Kabuki Japanese Sunday Brunch

Kabuki Japanese Cuisine Theatre is back with the most elaborate and well-known weekly Japanese Sunday Brunch in Phuket.

The menu includes highlights such as Japanese Sashimi selections, Akami Tuna, Salmon, Red Snapper, Octopus, Japanese King Fish and fresh Oysters. The exquisite Teppanyaki cook-to-order selections feature a lineup of the finest meats, from Tenderloin, Striploin, Lamb Cutlets and Chicken, to

Kurobuta.

2,000 baht per person, including food and free-flow soft drinks, with 50% off for children aged 7-12 years old. 12pm-3pm.

December 31. New Years Eve Celebration and Dinner Buffet

Friendship Beach Waterfront Resort Invites you to join its New Years Eve Celebration and Buffet Dinner featuring a fire show, cabaret show, live DJ, and fireworks.

Enjoy the international buffet with imported beef tenderloin, grilled salmon fillet, BBQ Ribs, appetizers, salads, desserts and more. Adults: 1,900 baht. Kids under 12: 700 baht. For reservations, call 089-728 5304.

Double edged sword of marine tourism



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

IT'S been an 'interesting' year tourism-wise for Phuket, and in my opinion, will go down in history as the one when Phuket's visitor demographics have shifted seismically. The 'Asian Century' is truly here.

In Phuket, the number of people out on the water enjoying the marine treasures, is at an all time high, thanks mainly to the number of Chinese visiting Phuket. But, with this comes added pressure. Let's take a whistle-stop flashback tour of 2015 with regards to marine tourism, along with some key issues.

SAFETY

Thailand's marine safety record is not the best in the world. Boat accidents, fires, sinkings, tourist injuries and even death – these sorts of headlines have been seen regularly. That said, I believe there has been, for the first time in my nearly twenty years on this island, a genuine safety effort from the powers-



Serious attention is needed to limit the damage caused by destructive dive practices. Photo: hostsh

that-be. There's still much more that needs to improve in the safety aspects of marine tourism and commercial marine industries, but let's hope this trend from authorities to try and address the issues continues into 2016 and picks up pace.

JET-SKIS

There have been lots of headlines on jet-skis in Phuket this year and the *Gazette* has covered the issues case-by-case, as the legality of this industry seems paper-thin at best. In principle, a jet-ski is fine when in the right place and

used properly. The issues are with the beach-based jet skis, their 'owners' and the users. Noise, nuisance and safety are issues that will not be addressed. Clearly this is the responsibility of the Phuket Marine Chief, who has said on many occasions that there is 'no problem'; that he's 'never received a complaint'; and my favorite: 'this is their last warning' (again).

SUPERYACHTS

Lots of buzz has been created about the 12-month superyacht charter license. I haven't heard

anyone against it in principle, and in my opinion it is a positive step by central government. However, there's still a long way to go to make the charter license a practical reality, and the magnet we all want to attract superyachts to come and charter here.

While the superyachts have got the 'suits' in Bangkok excited, perhaps it has deflected attention away from other parts of the industry. There are many areas in which the government can help and support Thailand's marine industry and contribute to its growth. What is needed is a long-term vision that goes be-

yond vested interests and encompasses the entire industry.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERIORATION

Sailors, snorkelers, charterers, day-trippers and divers all put pressure on the Andaman's marine environment, yet there is little attention given to conservation of the marine ecosystem which attracts millions of visitors to Phuket each year. When will this change?

These are just a few of the hot topics in Phuket and Thailand's marine industry this year; no doubt there will be more in 2016. Top of my New Year's wish list is for better dialogue between the public and private sectors, which engages all stakeholders, no matter their size. All voices need to be heard.

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.

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City of Gastronomy

UNESCO honors Phuket cuisine with Creative City Network title

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

THE United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dubbed Phuket a 'City of Gastronomy' on December 11, honoring the island's rich culinary history and unique cuisine.

"Being chosen as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a 'City of Gastronomy' is a wonderful honor for Phuket," said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova.

Efforts to collate recipes and historical information of local Baba (Straits Chinese) cuisine in order to have Phuket Town recognized by UNESCO as a City of Gastronomy were undertaken in 2011.

Dr Kosol Tang-Uthai, president of the Thai Peranakan Association, said that 65 local Baba chefs had been involved in the process.

"Phuket Baba food combines recipes from Royal Thai Cuisine, common Thai dishes, Hokkien Chinese food and Malay cuisine, which together create a unique blend of delicate flavors that are not too spicy, not too sweet and not too salty," he told the *Gazette* in 2011.

Among the dishes included in the application were the Baba recipes for *moo hong* (salted boiled pork), *oh-aew* (white jelly made from



It's time to try what makes Phuket cuisine worthy of the title, so dig into some *bue tord*. Photos: Gazette file

squeezed Chinese herb and bananas, served with boiled red bean and shaved ice), *mee hokkien* (stir-fried Hokkien noodle), *mee hun* (stir-fried white noodle served with spare ribs soup), *nam chub yam*

(spicy shrimp paste sauce) and *bue tord* (batter-fried grass with small shrimp).

Phuket will be named the fifth 'City of Gastronomy' as it joins Popayan City in Colombia, Ostersund in Sweden,

Chengdu in China and Jeonju in South Korea.

The Creative Cities Network currently includes 116 members from 65 countries and covers seven creative fields: crafts and folk art, design, film,



NOODLES: mee hokkien



DESSERT: oh-aew

gastronomy, literature, music and media arts.

"All Phuket officials, including myself, are overwhelmed and delighted with this wonderful news," said Phuket City Deputy Mayor Kosol Tang-Uthai.

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Sterling stuff: protective ring of silver

FOUR hundred years ago, long before the birth of the throw away society, high-society travellers, royalty included, would pack up and take furniture and household items with them whenever they moved between their homes.

Proper packing materials didn't exist in those days either but breakage of dinner and tableware was surprisingly low thanks to the clever invention of French silversmiths, who added a sterling silver ring around the edge of plates, saucers and cups to prevent chipping.

Today, the House of Puiforcat, founded in the early part of the 19th century by a family of those silversmiths, has crossed the world and



Packing silver. Photo: The Nation

landed in Bangkok, where it shares a store at Siam Paragon with fellow French brand, glassware and crystal maker Saint-Louis.

"We pay tribute to the days when the finest porcelain was ringed with silver by offering the very finest tableware," says Amelie de Cagny, the brand's communication director.

Offering outstanding functional and art de vivre objects in a variety of styles, Puiforcat largely owes its fame to Jean E Puiforcat, a master silversmith and one of the leading proponents of the Art Deco movement who, in the 1920s applied his modernist thinking and rigorous, geometric design to the art of silversmithing.

In 1993, the brand became part of the Hermes group and has carried on the tradition of contemporary silversmith creations.

— *The Nation*

Introduction of alien invaders



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

ONE hot and dusty afternoon years ago I was driving along a remote Colorado road when I passed a large wayside bundle. Curious, I stopped. It was a huge carp, out of its natural element but still gasping for air under a blazing sun. I picked the slimy thing up, all of thirty pounds, wrapped it in a towel and dropped it into the next river we came to. It may well have survived the ordeal, for carp are tough, one of the reasons why they have become so reviled in North America.

Mostly grass, black or silver carp from Asia, they are indiscriminate feeders, grow fast, adapt to conditions where there is little oxygen, can colonize almost any body of water and compete successfully with more desirable native fish.



An American sheriff dumps out bootleg booze during the US prohibition era. Photo: Orange County Archives

Asians eat carp but Americans do not: doubtless the fisherman who had slung it out of his pickup, had no interest in cooking it for dinner. Indeed, there is a senate-led campaign to try to limit the carp's habitat and especially to stop it from invading the Great Lakes, where salmon and trout

rule the roost.

The story can be repeated literally hundreds of times around the globe. In fact, the real culprits are not the creatures themselves but mankind who, by introducing these alien species, either by accident or design, has played havoc with a fragile biodiversity estab-

lished over millions of years.

In general, Thailand has been less affected by invasive aliens. Part of the reason for this may reside in the Thai predilection for seeing creatures – birds, reptiles, mammals and insects alike – as readily available sources of food.

The presence of invasive

plants, moreover, is rarely critical.

In Phuket, I would only point an accusatory finger at one plant – the water hyacinth (*eichornia crassipes*). Originally from the Amazon basin, it has become a pernicious presence here. In Phuket Town, it has blocked canals by a presence that not only clogs the water, but impedes the passage of boats, provides a prime habitat for mosquitoes, and most importantly, kills off fish by starving the water of life-giving oxygen.

It's an ill wind, as the water hyacinth is used elsewhere for fuel, fertilizer and even for making woven furniture and bags. But the downside, as with most of these invaders, far outweighs the benefit. Meddling man is at it again...

If you have gardening or environmental concerns, contact Patrick at drpaccampbell@gmail.com.

Haze culprits punished

INDONESIA is punishing more than 20 companies for starting deadly forest fires that killed 19 people, a government official said Tuesday.

Three companies have been shut down permanently after having their licences revoked over their role in the blazes that choked vast expanses of south-east Asia with acrid haze and cost Indonesia US\$16 billion.

It is the first time the government has revoked company licences over forest fires, an annual occurrence caused by slash-and-burn land clearance.

The environment ministry also froze the operations of 14 companies and said they face

closure if they do not meet the government's demands over fire prevention.

Several other companies have been given a strong warning and will be put under close supervision.

"We have sanctioned 23 companies in total, ranging from administrative sanctions to licence revocation, while 33 others are still in the process – they could have their licences revoked too if they are found guilty," environment ministry official Kemal Amas told AFP.

The ministry has been investigating 276 companies in total since the fires broke out in September. – *The Nation*

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House hunting: Is bigger always better?



Across the Land

By Amy Koh

IF YOU are planning to buy a home with the intention that it will eventually be your dwelling once you retire, it is advisable to consider a few factors. Firstly, size should be a major consideration. Please be realistic; is it really necessary to own a large home with four or five rooms, if it's just you and your partner who will be living in the property most of the time, with some visiting guests once in awhile?

I have on many occasions encountered owners who eventually put up their home for sale as they have come to realize that it is now just too big for them.

Prior to purchasing their home it's almost always the case that owners consider extra rooms for the children, grandchildren, family and friends who will visit, and so end up buying a large property with the expectation that they do come.

Realistically, once the parents are starting to retire, the adult children are so engrossed with building a career and starting a family, that it becomes



Consider your size needs before committing to buying residential property. Photo: Images Money

very tough for them to find the time to travel long distances just to spend a week or two vacationing. Eventually it is the parents/grandparents who are travelling to see their children or grand children, as they are retired and have all the time in the world.

I knew one property owner

in Phuket who ended up doing all the travelling to see his grandchildren in Europe as travelling out to Phuket for the young grandchildren was too strenuous due to the jet lag and the limited time that they could visit.

As Phuket is such a holiday destination, there is no shortage of accommodation throughout

the island and if the children, grandchildren, family or friends do come for a visit they have a host of choices of where to stay.

Secondly, is it really necessary to have one of the accessories listed below, or is it just nice to have? For example, a games room, pool or

billiards room, theater room, gym, sauna, steam room or massage. Interestingly, most owners I know have never even used their games room or steam room though many have lived in the property for years. The most frequent thing we get told by owners is that they have used the bath tub in their ensuite only once and some of these bath tubs are huge within a bathroom that is about the size of a studio apartment in Bangkok. Eventually these additional rooms become a burden to the owners as appliances or equipment within them breaks down.

Thirdly, of course, are the costs of maintenance of a home whether the owners are living in it permanently or seasonally. This relates to size and the larger the property, the more expenses will be incurred to maintain and run it. Not maintaining the property well would eventually make it more difficult to sell, as it would not present as well as it should.

Amy Koh is the sales manager of Engel & Voelkers Phuket. To contact Amy or for more information, visit www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket

Big C to launch REIT



Big C owns about 800,000 sqm of leasable area. Photo: Groupe Casino

FRANCE based Casino Group has decided to strengthen its financial flexibility with a deleveraging plan next year of more than 78 billion baht, mainly through real-estate transactions and the disposal of non-core assets.

In Thailand, Big C owns almost 800,000 square meters of gross leasable area in its shopping malls, which are located in prime areas all across the country.

On December 16, Big C Supercenter's board approved a plan to issue a real estate investment trust (REIT) to raise funds from the capital market

in the next year, said Robert James Cissell, chief executive officer and president of the Thai-listed company.

A part of Big C's real estate – mostly comprising shopping centres – will be injected into the REIT, the CEO said. Big C is considering several strategic alternatives and the exact portfolio has yet to be completed.

The main objective of this strategic project is to make sure that the organization of the company's real-estate portfolio is optimized, and subsequently to unlock value for Big C shareholders, Mr Cissell added.

– The Nation

Developers foresee housing growth

THE property market will grow by 5-10 per cent nationwide next year, thanks to the government's investment in infrastructure projects, said Thongma Vjitpongpan, president and chief executive officer of Pruksa Real Estate.

"When the government starts to invest in infrastructure, that will open up new land for property firms to develop residential projects. This will challenge them to invest in the new locations," he said.

Meanwhile, investment in infrastructure, such as railway double-tracking, motorways, and 10 new mass-transit routes will make Thailand a regional transport hub after the Asean Economic Community goes into effect at the end of this month. This will boost demand to buy homes in Thailand, as foreign companies invest in Thailand as a gateway to other Asean countries, he said.

Tritecha Thanmatithum, Supalai deputy managing director, is also confident that the property market next year will



Infrastructure investment will contribute to housing growth. Photo: Diliff

grow by 5-10 per cent. This is thanks to such government measures as cutting transfer and mortgage fees, and also the investment in infrastructure projects that will kick off in the new year.

Ananda Development president and CEO Chanond Reunkitiya agreed with the growth prediction of 5-10 per cent. The company plans to launch 10 residential projects worth up to 22 billion baht next year.

Meanwhile, property agencies said the demand for homes close to the mass-transit system

was still growing strongly.

According to a survey by the Real Estate Information Center (REIC) of the Government Housing Bank, demand to buy land for development of commercial and residential buildings in 10 special economic zones is growing strongly.

REIC director-general Samma Kitsin added that the government policy to build SEZs and invest in infrastructure projects worth more than a trillion baht between 2016 and 2019, is going to largely benefit the industry.

– The Nation

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10,900,000 THBMajesty 56 (2011)
USD\$695,000Bertram 60 Convertible (2011)
539,000 USDGrand Banks Aleutian 59 (2007)
1,250,000 USDSilvercraft 34SC (2014)
4,750,000 THB**ON SALE 2015 SEA-DOO RXP-X 260**

On sale brand new 2015 Sea-Doo RXP-X 260. 260hp/1,500cc + supercharge. Promotion on this New Year Festival. Price: 478,000 baht (normally 560,000 baht). Samutsakorn. Tel: 081-754 7599 (English & Thai), 092-269 6099 (Thai). Email: csutivas@gmail.com

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**2004 TOYOTA AVANZA
240,000 BAHT**

Excellent condition 66,500km. 7 seats in gold w/black interior. Automatic. Tel: 076-385909, 087-277 5216 (English). Email: curlyphyl@yahoo.com

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Suzuki Swift GLX 2014 with additional parking assistant. 4,600km. 420,000 baht. Kamala. Please call 089-729 9009. Email: ksenia.kukonos@gmail.com

**CAR + ROOM
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FORD EVEREST 4WD

2004 manual great condition. Urgent sale: 395,000 baht. First to drive will buy. Chalong. Tel: 081-895 7908 (English & Thai), 081-892 6710 (English). Email: peterh@asianwind.biz

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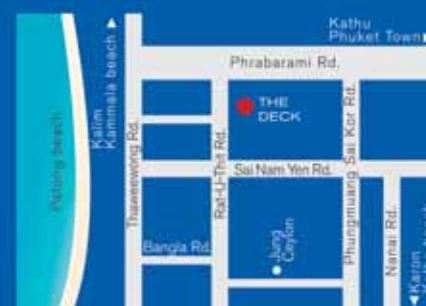


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THE DECK

Project Owner : Anawat Limited. Company's registered no. 0105546144865. Head office : 475 Sri Ayudthaya Road, Thanon Phayathai, Rajthawi, Bangkok, 10400. Registered capital(THB) : 10,000,000.00, Paid up capital(THB) : 2,500,000.00 (as of date 3 Jun 2013). The President : Mr. Sreetha Thavisin. The Project : The Deck, Land title deed no. 15559, approximately area 5-0-40 Rai, Located at Rat-U-Thi 200 Years Road, Patong, Kathu, Phuket Province, as a Condominium of 7 storey(ies), 2 building(s), total of 270 unit(s), (for residential: 270 units, and for commercial: - units). The Land and building have been mortgaged with Siam Commercial Bank PLC, in the process to submit the building permission. Construction will be started in Jan 2014 and expected to be completed in Mar 2015 which will later be registered as the condominium. The unit owner shall pay sinking fund, common fee, tax and other fees as prescribed by the Project Owner or the Condominium Juristic Person subjected to the Condominium law. *Company's conditions apply / Featured photography in the advertisement consists of photography with simulated atmosphere and simulated graphic. Should you have any questions regarding any photography, please contact our customer service staffs or visit our projects' site. Call 1685.

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