

Phuket Gazette

February 6-12, 2016

Now inside **THE NATION** every Saturday

56 Pages / 20 Baht

‘UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS WERE STOPPED FROM LEAVING’

Fishing slaves

■ Dozens saved after being held captive, forced to work on boats

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

PHUKET and Bangkok officials raided a dormitory in Koh Sireh on January 28 to rescue 31 illegal Myanmar workers being held captive and forced to work without pay.

Officials were alerted to the dormitory after a worker, named only as Nai, escaped from the fishing boat they were forced to work on and swam ashore to call relatives in Myanmar.

“Mr Nai’s relatives contacted the Myanmar Embassy and the Labor Rights Promotion Network Foundation,” said Phuket City Police Deputy Superintendent Khunnadet Nanongkhai. “When we were alerted to the situation, we joined forces with the Anti-Human Trafficking Division and the Royal Thai Police to search the dormitory.”

The raid netted Myanmar nationals Ma Yo, 38, who is one of two suspects accused of holding the 32 men captive. Further investigation revealed that only 31 of the 32 men found at the dormitory were being held against their will. One of the men was legal reg-



A total of 31 of the men were undocumented and unable to leave the compound. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

istered and confirmed to officers that he had agreed to work on the boat.

Ms Ma Yo and her husband, Ko Pae, 36, face charges of unlawful gang detention, as well as a barrage of human-traf-

ficking charges.

“Ms Ma Yo confessed that she and her husband collaborated with another agent in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province to recruit laborers to work in the fishing industry in Phuket.

Her husband, who evaded arrest, deals with customers, while she maintains the books and cooks for the workers,” said Col Khunnadet...

Story continued on Page 4

Scuba divers mangled by speedboat off Phi Phi Island

A RUSSIAN diver lost his leg and another was seriously injured after being hit by a speedboat near Maya Bay on Wednesday.

The men were rushed to Phi Phi Hospital.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



Aussie business launches ID Tracker bracelet to help medics save tourists’ lives.

PROPERTY



Desmond Hughes warns foreigners about new rules and regulations for condos.

LIFE&STYLE



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British national nabbed at HKT for stealing cash

POLICE charged a British national, after he found and pocketed an envelope of mixed currency cash, at Phuket International Airport on February 1.

Darren Chapman, 49, was arrested while checking in at the Bangkok Airways counter after having taken US\$320 and CA\$100 cash from the envelope, which had been left at an Air Asia counter.

The money belonged to Tunisian tourist Issam Barhoumi, 40, who reported it missing after misplacing it.

The cash was returned to Mr Barhoumi while Mr Chapman was charged with theft.

– Winai Sarot

CCTV catches ladyboy serial robbing homes

POLICE arrested a 28-year-old ladyboy and their partner on January 29 for the burglary of foreigners' homes in Kamala and Kathu.

Boonrit Anchaisiri, 28, and Teerawat Boonampol, 29, were arrested in their rental house in Srisoonthorn in possession of more than 300,000-baht worth of stolen goods.

The pair confessed to having robbed more than 10 houses,

Construction of underpass unaffected by rain damage



Heavy rains on January 28 left sections of the road running alongside the Samkong Underpass, as well as one of the underpass walls, heavily damaged. The severely damaged sections, which have already been repaired, have had no effect on underpass construction, confirmed a Phuket Highways Office official. For the full story, visit PhuketGazette.net. Photo: Phuket City Police

claiming that tourists often forgot or refused to lock their doors. They also admitted to using the money for travel and drugs.

Reports of house robberies in Kamala started trickling into the police station in December, but it wasn't until good CCTV images were received that police could identify the pair and track them down.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Possible ancient burial site found in Krabi cave

THE discovery of human skulls, bones, pottery and cave paintings in Krabi could mark a fishermen's burial site dating as far back as 700 years ago, experts announced on February 2.

The items were found in a cave about 56 meters above sea level and about three kilometers from Ao Naam Port.

Human vertebrae found at the site are similar in density and weight to those found in Trang Province, which were dated to be 500-700 years old.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Navy seizes two IUU vessels

THE Royal Thai Navy seized two fishing vessels for illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) fishing when the ships returned to Phuket after tuna fishing in the Indian Ocean.

Mook Anda 018 and Mook Anda 028 arrived at the

Phuket Deep Sea Port on January 30, where Rear Admiral Kittipong Rumakom, deputy commander of the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command, was waiting for them.

All relevant officials are now investigating the case after the boats failed to report during departure at Phuket's Port-in Port-out center. They are additionally being investigated for illegally fishing in international waters.

– Chutharat Plerin

Chinese tourists injured in Phi Phi boat crash

FIVE Chinese tourists were injured after two speedboats crashed off Koh Phi Phi on January 28.

Banthita 9 and Leeloo 3, carrying a total of 80 tourists, collided near the cape of Phi Phi Lay at about 5pm, confirmed Phi Phi Police Chief Jetsada Junphum.

Suwit Saithong, the driver of Banthita 9, rushed to get his boat to Phi Phi Don as it was taking on water, Col Jetsada explained.

Though the driver of Leeloo 3 allegedly confessed to running into Banthita 9, police have yet to charge him for the incident.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Vice Gov clears Laem Sing of illegal vendors

PHUKET Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat last week removed all the beach chairs and umbrellas set up by illegal vendors on Laem Sing Beach – one of Phuket's 'virgin beaches'.

The Vice Governor ordered the beach to be cleared after overhead photographs of furniture strewn across its sands were published by the *Gazette*, and went viral on social media.

However, the issue of accessing Laem Sing Beach remained muddled.

Officials are still trying to decide whether the entrance to the beach is privately owned or not.

– Kongleaphy Keam

Serial burglar expected to surrender soon

A SUSPECT wanted for a series of burglaries that led to the arrest of his girlfriend on January 25 will surrender to police, confirmed a family member.

Mac Kotter, 27, is behind a number of thefts in Phuket, alleged 23-year-old Soraya Chantasri after she was arrested.

Police apprehended Ms Soraya after she fell from her third-floor balcony and through the roof of her neighbor's bathroom in an attempt to evade officers.

Police searched the couple's room and found more than 300,000 baht worth of stolen electronics.

– Winai Sarot

Tour company hunted after tourist's death

POLICE are hunting representatives of a tour company after a Chinese tourist died on a snorkelling trip off Koh Racha Yai on February 2.

The company that booked Weidong Lu, 49, and his family on the boat, did not appear to have provided a tour guide.

Mr Weidong was spotted floating unconscious by a crew member of the speedboat he was on. The crew pulled Mr Weidong out of the water and started administering CPR. However, he was pronounced dead on arrival at Chalong Pier.

– Winai Sarot

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Foreigner among those arrested for Sirinath land encroachment

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

SIX people, including a foreigner, were charged by the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) for falsifying land documents to steal Phuket national park land.

"This particular encroachment case is about 92 rai of Sirinath National Park land that was stolen using a flying *SorKor1*," explained Lt Col Prawut Wongseenin, the director of the DSI's Bureau of Consumer Protection and Environmental Crime.

Flying *SorKor1* are title deeds that have been legally issued for a specific plot of land, but are then applied to another plot of land.

"We have clear proof that the *SorKor1* that was used to obtain a *Chanote* for national park land was in fact for a plot of land in the Thalang community," said Lt Col Prawut.

Though police declined to name any of the suspects, they did confirm that one of them was already serving a prison term in Phuket for check fraud.

The suspects who have already presented themselves to police to face the encroachment charges denied culpability.

"They say that they will



Lt Col Prawut alleged that a flying *SorKor 1* was used to obtain national park land. Photo: Gazette file

bring in further documentation to clarify the situation," said Col Prawut.

The DSI has handed the case over to the National Anti-Corruption Commission for further investigation.

"We supplied evidence that might be used to prove that government officers knowingly issued a *Chanote* for a flying *SorKor1*," Col Prawut said. "Most of those officers under investigation are high ranking."

This is just one of many cases involving Sirinath National Park land that has been brought to light in recent months.

Allegations of officials pilaging the national park land, dividing it and then illegally selling it, were brought to the attention of Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha last month.

"I have obtained and passed on information incriminating officials who abused their power and sold off about 1,200 rai of

Sirinath National Park," said Damrong Phidet, a member of the National Reform Steering Assembly and former director general of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

The land, which is valued at about 50 billion baht, was divided up into 178 plots. *NorSor3Kor* land-usage documents were issued for the plots, explained Mr Damrong, who filed the complaint to PM Prayut.

Diver struck by speedboat loses limb



The divers were transferred to Krabi Hospital. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

A RUSSIAN diver lost his leg and another diver was seriously injured after being hit by a speedboat near Maya Bay on Wednesday.

The Russian nationals, named by police as Sergei Dmitriev, 30, and Dmitry Kurynov, 48, were rushed to Phi Phi Hospital. Mr Dmitriev lost a leg in the accident, confirmed Phi Phi Police Chief Jetsada Junphum.

"The men were originally taken to Phi Phi Hospital by the diving boat they were with. I can't remember the name of the boat at the moment, but it was a local Phi Phi operation," said Lt Col Jetsada. "There was not enough blood at the hospital, so both men were transferred to Krabi Hospital."

As the *Gazette* went to print, police had yet to charge the driver.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong



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Slaves rescued from Koh Sireh

From Page 1

...“The men were prohibited from leaving or going outside, as they were undocumented.”

Officials are searching for Mr Ko Pae. However, a third suspect was arrested on January 31.

Myanmar national So Mo, was arrested for his alleged role in the operation, which consisted of driving the captives to and from the boat.

The 31 men are now in the care of the Phuket Provincial Social Development and Security Office. Though originally housed at the Baan Mit Maitree Foundation in Phuket, the men were moved to Ranong Province due to space restrictions.

“They will need to testify in court. Once that is done, they will be deported,” confirmed Capt Srisuda Mueangkaew of the Anti-Human Trafficking Division.

Tentative solution handed down in Rawai sea gypsy land dispute

By Kongleaphy Keam

PRIVATE land owners have temporarily allowed Rawai sea gypsies access to a traditional ceremonial site, pending consideration of donating the land to the seafaring nomads.

The issue was brought to a head after more than 30 sea gypsies were injured in a violent confrontation with private business owners last week.

On Tuesday, Baron World Trade Lt Co representatives offered to give the sea gypsies 2 ngan of land on a different portion of the property to perform their ceremonies. The offer was turned down.

With this in mind, Baron World Trade agreed to allow the sea gypsies use of the ceremonial site during the decision making process. However, the company remained stern in its



Gov Chamroen (right) reviews a chanote map. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

stance against allowing access to the site via the private property.

“Sea gypsies must now use the public beach to access the area or else face trespassing charges,” confirmed Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipaya-

pongada.

Backing their claim to the property, Baron World Trade presented *Chanote* land titles, as well as other documents showing that the original deed was issued in 1968 and subse-

quently sold three times.

However, a complication arose when it was noted that the *Chanote* did not specifically designate the beachfront as public land, a necessary clause.

“The beach is public land. However, we will try to provide a *NorSorLor* land document for the beach in order to avoid any further problems,” Gov Chamroen said.

Nonetheless, the error further fueled the gypsies claim that the deeds were issued illegally, a case that is already being dealt with by the courts.

The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) backed the gypsies claim to the land with DNA tests on skeletal remains unearthed at the sea gypsy village in 2014, which confirmed that they have called Phuket's southern beach home for more than 100 years.

All rock climbing banned on Phi Phi

ALL rock climbers, including independent climbers, are banned from scaling the bolted rock faces on Phi Phi Don as officials look to regulate safety standards.

“We have already explained to nine tour operators offering climbing tours in the Noppharat Thara - Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park area that they must suspend their services until they gain the necessary permission from us,” Sorayut Tansathian, the chief of the national park, told the *Gazette* last month. “I am sure other operators, as well as individuals, are also using the rock faces for climbing. They all must stop climbing until they comply with regulations.”

Mr Sorayut explained that he was currently in discussions with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) about what criteria should be part of the necessary qualifications to secure permission to climb in the park.

“Tourist safety is our top priority, so we are thinking of what needs to be done to guarantee climbers' safety,” Mr Sorayut said. “We would like qualified staff to oversee climb-



From the top. Photo: Ben Kucenko

ing tours. However, we've yet to establish what qualifications will be necessary.”

Mr Sorayut took over as the park's chief after the previous chief was removed to allow officials to conduct an investigation into hundreds of millions of baht disappearing during the collection of national park fees.

“I have been set against this since I took up my position. We have yet to clear any company or climbers for the activity,” Mr Sorayut said.

— Kongleaphy Keam

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THOUGH an exotic beast to most foreigners when they first find their footing in Thailand, it takes very few interactions with monkeys to realize that they are rather aggressive, arrogant deviants. This sort of Monkey Business, far different than the mafia muppeteering that destroyed our public transportation system and deflowered our beaches, made page one in the February 4-10, 2006 *Gazette* issue.

"Two rogue monkeys are wreaking havoc atop Rang Hill, where they have been terrorizing tourists, stealing food from diners in a hillside restaurant – and even biting people," reported the *Gazette*.

These actions sound like the typical monkey shenanigans that forced officials to recently post signs on Rang Hill asking people not to feed the fat primates, at least until they get to the 'feeding location'. Though not great news for tourists, off-beat monkey business was a welcome break to a year of heavy-hitting stories following the tsunami on the front pages of the *Gazette*. However, like nearly every issue after the disaster, some pages soaked up ink on the topic.

Though it had been more than a year since the waves struck the Andaman coastline, then-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's government had yet to follow through on promises of helping Phi Phi Don recover. One sign on the island, posted by frustrated locals, read, "You promised within one year Phi Phi Island would be restored. This has not happened and we are very worried. On the anniversary [of the tsunami] may we question your promise? The plans are always changing and we are always waiting."

A starker reality about the damage caused by the tsunami was presented by Elizabeth Cameron of the Empower Foundation on page 12 of the issue.

"There were a lot of sex workers lost in the tsunami, who have not yet been found, because they were exploited and not registered," she said. Founded in 1985, the Empower Foundation opened a center in Patong after the tsunami, to ensure that sex workers were

aware of their rights and fought for them. A quick phone call ten years later, sadly confirmed

that the agency was no longer functioning in Phuket, despite the clear need.

A jump in 'The Time Machine', an ancient column of the *Gazette* that brought you news from the past – sounds familiar – and we find the February issue of 1996, worried about sex workers in Tai Muang. The area was awash in the flesh trade and unabated drug use, forcing local people who were not directly involved in the city of sin, to call on responsible officials for help.

Though I cannot confirm or deny that Tai Muang has cleaned up its act in the last twenty years, the recent plea from the Rawai sea gypsies has proven that not all such calls for help will go unanswered. The Department of Special Investigations' efforts in helping the sea gypsies establish the necessary links to valuable beachfront land, which they claim to be residing on for more than 100 years, is a shining example of officials helping to protect those most in need of it, rather than looking to line their pockets and look the other way.

– Isaac Stone Simonelli

The gift of hindsight

Mean monkeys in reign of terror
Ensuring that sex workers know and fight for their rights

The Phuket Gazette
Volume 13 Issue 5 News Desk Tel: 076-236555 February 4 - 10, 2006 Daily news at www.phuketgazette.net 25 Baht

MONKEY BUSINESS

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Top artists working on tsunami sculptures

Last call for alcohol ads

Since the beginning of the year, an average of 2,000 day-trippers a day have visited Phi Phi – the demand is clearly there

Patong Empower Burmese woman found beaten to death

RAMPANT VICE HITS TAI MUANG

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Trial of Brit's killer to begin in December

Gov steps into fray over yacht recovery fee

Princess to attend prayers at Big Buddha site

Elephant kills Scottish tourist

A SCOTTISH tourist was killed and two others were injured after a rutting elephant went berserk at safari park on Koh Samui on February 1.

Police rushed to the local safari park, where they found the body of a 36-year-old Scottish man. The two other injured people had already been sent to the hospital.

According to the police investigation, a Myanmar mahout was leading the male elephant, which had three tourists on its back, when it suddenly shook them off, stomped on them and fatally gored the 36-year-old man.

Teens charged for gang rape, assault, murder

PHATTHALUNG police arrested four teenagers for the murder of an alleged friend, as well as the gang rape and assault of the victim's pregnant girlfriend.

All four men allegedly confessed to police.

The body of the victim was found in a shallow grave in a secluded forest area near Trang Province, where they were allegedly lured to sort out an argument.

Police say that the three-month pregnant woman was pushed off the side of an embankment after being raped. The woman survived the attack and got help from a nearby village.

Safety fears tumble onto Pha Taem

CONCERN is mounting over the safety of tourists at Pha Taem National Park in Ubon Ratchathani following the rockslide in December at a nearby spot, which could possibly lead to a visitor ban in the area.

The park features famous prehistoric cliff paintings that



have been noted on the Fine Arts Department's list of historical sites since 1968.

The site needs thorough inspection by geologists and geo-hazard experts, said Tawsaporn Nuchanong, acting director-general of the Mineral Resources Department, on February 2.

Govt hits back at scathing HRW report

THE government on February 27 hit back about the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report for 2015, which detailed a repression of basic rights and a deepening of authoritarianism in Thailand.

"The Thai government feels deeply disappointed in the report. It is not accurate and does not reflect the progress of reform and the government's determination to stick with road map to strengthen democracy," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Sek Wannamethee.

In the 659-page World Report 2016 released on January 27, HRW reviewed human rights

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

situations in 2015 in 90 countries around the globe.

"Despite initial promises to restore democracy within one year, the junta in 2015 exercised increasingly dictatorial power and continued to systematically repress fundamental rights and freedoms," said the report in its chapter on Thailand.

"Instead of paving the way for a return to democratic civilian rule as promised in its so-called 'road map', the junta has created a political system that seems designed to prolong its grip on power," it said.

Mr Sek argued that the government had committed to holding a general election in June next year, with an elected government to start working in July.

The HRW report detailed many cases it claimed were rights violations, including the junta ban on political gatherings, the arrest of dozens of people on charges of sedition, and the sus-

pension of media outlets.

Mr Sek maintained the government's line on the matter: "We affirm that the government respects freedom of expression and human rights as it is evident that the media can freely criticize the government."

"But in a few cases, it was necessary to take action to safeguard peace and order and prevent division in society as we are reforming our country and bringing about reconciliation."

Ladyboy tosses dog out window, receives prison sentence

A COURT sentenced a 22-year-old ladyboy to two months in jail on January 28 for killing a Chihuahua by throwing it out the window of her fifth-floor rented apartment in Bangkok.

The court initially sentenced Yollada Champasri to four months in prison, but halved it on grounds that she pleaded guilty.

Ms Yollada confessed to tossing the small dog out the window because it had defecated in her room. The dog belong to a friend who had come to stay with her for a few days.

Court sentences massage-parlor tycoon Chuvit

CHUVIT Kamolvisit, a colourful massage-parlour tycoon turned headline-grabbing politician, has gone to jail for two years over the 2003 demolition of bars on Sukhumvit Road that put him in the spotlight more than a decade ago.

Leveraging that spotlight, Mr Chuvit transformed himself into an outspoken politician with sharp comments and an anti-corruption stance.

"If I am sentenced to jail, I will serve my term as an inmate," Mr Chuvit said on January 28 as he walked into the Supreme Court to hear the verdict.

He insisted that he would respect the court's decision because he had never thought of fleeing justice.

Silence shrouds Tiger Temple

OFFICIALS are tight-lipped about events at the world famous but highly controversial Tiger Temple, following reports that at least five tigers were removed from the monastic compound on January 28.

An informed source disclosed yesterday that cages containing five tigers were loaded onto two six-wheeled trucks at the temple, officially known as Wat Pa Luangta Maha Bua Yannasampano, in Kanchaburi's Sai Yok district on Thursday and driven away.

Officials from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) were involved in the operation with representatives from the temple's foundation also on hand, the source said.

Erotic erection gets northern village in Thailand wet

VILLAGERS in Phetchabun Province believe they have been blessed with rain following an unusually long drought, after placing an erotic sculpture depicting an amorous menage trois in front of the village entrance.

The clay sculpture of a man and woman performing a sex act while a

third man looks on was made by residents of Baan Na Krud, who said they did it in order to call on higher powers to end the worst drought to hit the area in 20 years, reported *Prachachat*.

The clay sculpture and the ceremonies that surround it are a 100-year-old tradition that symbolizes fertility. The

characters in the threesome represent clouds (Mr Mek), rain (Ms Fon) and fog (Mr Mork). The picture is symbolized by the man watching the couple make love.

The pornographic nature of the sculpture is deliberately explicit in order to shock the gods into making rain

fall to wash away the unsightly sculpture, say the villagers.

Shortly after placing the sculpture in front of the village, rain fell continuously for three hours for the first time in many months.

Gleeful locals rushed to fill water containers with the downpour.



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Baron vs sea gypsies

THE ongoing land dispute between the Rawai sea gypsy community and a powerful real estate investment firm needs to be resolved peacefully and equitably. Working out a solution will certainly not be easy and will require concessions from both sides.

Phuket certainly has a long, rich history of land rights disputes between some of the richest and poorest elements of Thai society.

Let us not forget that it was the Democrat Party's National Agricultural Land Reform Program (*SorPorKor*) land scandal here in Phuket that eventually led to the downfall of then-Premier Chuan Leekpai's government.

That scandal saw vast tracts of degraded forest land earmarked solely for agricultural use by the poor, somehow slip into the hands of some of Phuket's wealthiest landowning clans, many of which had close ties to the ruling Democrats.

But that is just the tip of a much larger iceberg. Many large communities in Phuket have been developed on encroached-upon state land. One of the largest, the Soi Kingkaew community in Rassada, is home to many hundreds of households. These were established by squatters from off the island who came to Phuket to find work. While officials turned a blind eye, they encroached on protected mangrove reserves by setting up the shanties that have, in some cases, now been transformed into what could be described as luxury homes.

Despite this background, no previous land dispute can match the sea gypsy versus Baron World Trade confrontation about seaside land in Rawai, which just happens to be the sea gypsies ancestral home, their monsoon season foothold on terra firma.

The David and Goliath narrative almost sounds too perfect, as if it had been penned by an over-reaching Hollywood script writer.

In one corner, we have the sea gypsies, the ultimate underdogs. In the other corner, we have the aptly named Baron World Trade company.

Though a tentative, tense agreement was reached this week in meeting headed by Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongthada, the resolution fails to get to the heart of the matter, which can only be decided in the courts – are the chanotes for the land, originally issued in 1968, legal. If so, will the Barons make a concession to help preserve the culture of the seafaring nomads?



Where money is bound, permits are found

THE safety record of climbing in Thailand is exemplary.

In the West, people don't start banning things until there is a history of things going wrong. In Thailand it's the opposite – the activities which have the highest accident potential (motorcycling, bungee jumping and zip lines) are allowed to carry on unhindered.

I hate to sound cynical but where there are permits required, there's money.

I don't think safety is in their minds at all.

David Tapp
Letter to the editor

We need to lead by Bali's example

Re: V/Gov clears Laem Sing Beach of illegal vendors, January 29

I cannot understand why a select portion of the beaches are not leased to operators to set up sunbeds and umbrellas as they do in Bali.

It provides employment and caters to the needs of tourists.

If they are legally licenced, then illegal operators can be controlled. Many jobs were provided when they used to provide this service (I realize they were illegal then).

It should not be too hard, as they already allow mats on the sand under umbrellas on select portions of the beach. What would be so different about putting sunbeds under those mats, under the same umbrellas? Not that hard to figure out.

Michael Baker
Facebook

Letters to the Editor

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

that nobody is quite sure where the documented land lies? No borough or council area on the plan? No nearest street name?

I am truly confused as to how this happens.

Chob
Gazette forum

What happened to the initial survey?

Re: Southbound bypass closed at Samkong underpass, January 30

It would appear that when the initial survey of the site was conducted no one noticed it was a swamp.

At least this latest crisis occurred before the underpass opened and could possibly collapse on the occupants.

An overpass should have been built there – to claim aesthetics is ridiculous – it's a purely commercial corridor. Massively delayed and hardly any workers ever on site – an embarrassment.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Sympathizing with sea gypsy troubles

Re: Chanotes issued in 2005 for Rawai sea gypsy land, January 23

I sympathize with the gypsies. My understanding is that land that is used by someone as a road or through-way for ten years has established a right to use the land. No one would collect all the documents that BWT has, unless they expected problems.

How many people get a letter of understanding from the police or the government when they buy land? Where does one apply?

Chill
Gazette forum

Flyovers would be a better solution

Re: Phuket underpass damaged, roadway cracked, January 29

Ahhh the genius that came up with the underpass instead of the overpass (flyover) on an island only meters above sea level and a history of heavy rains and flooding.

How many millions did this brain take home?

Meanwhile in Phuket 'can you take a detour'?

Gary L C Shannon
Facebook

How can land titles be easy to transfer?

Re: Foreigner among six charged for stealing Phuket national park land, January 30

What is it with *Sor Kor* documents that they can be issued for one piece of land and then used as 'proof' of ownership of another entirely different piece of land?

Are they truly that poorly labeled and lacking in information

Phuket Gazette

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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The views expressed in the Phuket Gazette are those of the writers and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher, the Editor, the shareholders or the directors of The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd.

Volume 23 Issue 6

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Creating a World Heritage Site

FIRST PERSON

ACCORDING to UNESCO's World Heritage standards, Old Town must be divided into three zones: an old center zone, which includes old, traditional buildings together in one area; a barrier zone, such as a garden or canal; and a developed Old Town zone that includes renovated buildings that maintain old traditional architecture.

Among not being able to find a proper barrier zone, another issue we are having is ensuring that we have a unique identity that is different from surrounding World Heritage cities, such as Melaka and George Town, Penang.

However, some parts of our architecture are similar to both cities. Therefore, UNESCO has suggested to negotiate and coordinate a partnership among us.

The type of architecture found in George Town and Melaka is called 'Colonial', whereas we use the term 'Sino-Portuguese' in Phuket.

And though the style is similar, Phuket and George Town have very different details in traditional dresses, which we call 'Baba-Yaya' and they call 'Baba-Nyonya'.

These issues have made our attempt to separate ourselves from George Town and Melaka difficult.

Presently, we are trying to strengthen the Old Town community and make sure that local people understand our old traditions, as some do not quite grasp certain concepts, such as how to preserve the buildings.



Kosol Tang-Uthai is a Phuket native and is currently deputy mayor of Phuket City and president of the Thai Peranakan Association, a group dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Phuket's unique Chinese culture. He earned his

doctorate from Mahidol University and has been serving as president of the association since 2007.

Here he talks about the difficulties involved with making Phuket's Old Town a World Heritage Site.

Some locals have changed the look of the buildings by installing air conditioners, painting buildings in nontraditional colors, or even adding enclosures to the front, which prohibits tourists and locals from walking in the shade or shelter when it rains. These things can all affect our chances at becoming a World Heritage Site.

I am not saying these things can't be done, as one zone that UNESCO would like to see is the developed Old Town Zone. However, it requires a certain style and tact.

Another weak point in our case is that we have very little archaeological and historical research to show UNESCO that we are, in fact, worthy of being a World Heritage Site. We have to acquire specialists from Bangkok to help us by providing further information.

We have a lot of homework to do, but I think it will be worth it in the end. We have to promote our own unique architecture, or somehow find the similarities with George Town and Melaka. The

International Council on Monuments and Sites has already given us suggestions on how to handle both situations.

In theory, it would be easier to just combine Phuket with George Town because we are already sister cities with Penang. I think they would be willing to support us and help us in any way.

Should we decide to combine both cities, we would have to invite them in for a formal conference.

However, we also have to communicate with local Old Town villagers to see whether they would like to combine the cities to become a World Heritage Site or continue to prove ourselves as unique.

It is essential to have public and private sectors come together to make the decision, just as we did when we were nominated as a City of Gastronomy.

Together we can make Phuket a unique and appealing place for tourists and a World Heritage Site for future generations.



Tourists should be taught the basics of snorkelling by trained instructors before going into the water. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

Snorkelling safety snafu

THE recent death of Chinese tourist Weidong Lu, 49, who died while snorkelling off Koh Racha Yai, further exemplifies the need to provide tourists with fully trained and certified tour guides.

Though it is uncertain whether or not a tour guide was present on the speedboat that was hired to charter Mr Weidong and his family, it still raises the issue of properly instructing tourists on how to snorkel before they are sent out in the water to fend for themselves.

Among the eight new guidelines highlighted by Santi Pawai, director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MOTS), is the requirement of all tour guides to be registered with the government, as well as tour companies to provide insurance in the event of the injury or death of a tourist.

However, I feel like there is a big gap between making sure the guides are legal and making sure tourists are covered by insurance. What about training the guides in the specific realm of tourism they are employed in to better take care of and inform tourists in their care?

I don't mean to belittle the hard work that the government or MOTS have put into the new tour regulations. There are many well thought out and important points made.

Island View

By Debbie Adams

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

It is just a little unnerving that the only sector of the tourism industry getting any flack over this is the diving industry, which yes, has had its fair share of accidents but also has a reputation for very strict guidelines on who is allowed to dive as well as those certified to train and accompany the tourists.

I believe that if the government is taking a hard line on regulating the dive industry, then it is absolutely imperative that they look into regulating snorkelling as well. The number of deaths due to ill-informed tourists is staggering.

It is not enough to have them throw on a life jacket and think that they won't drown. Proper breathing techniques and preventative measures need to be taught. And, in order for them to be taught, a certified tour guide or instructor must be present at all times to ensure safety.

It would be a simple and easy step to implement into all of the other guidelines and could save countless lives as Phuket attempts to promote its brand of tourist safety internationally.

Words from the Wise

"The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun."

— Christopher McCandless

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence."

— Vince Lombardi

Issues & Answers

Are there laws against unsafe loads on roads?

I OFTEN see big trucks delivering goods without having proper protection to ensure that other vehicles and the road do not get damaged during transport.

A lot of the time it is trucks carrying dirt, which flies out of the vehicle and hits the car behind them or falls on the road, which is dangerous for motorbike drivers. Sometimes it is a truck transporting metal rods that scrape along the road

while they drive, damaging the surface.

Are these things punishable by law, and if so, who do I report them to?

Alex Manning
Koh Kaew

Lt Col Rungrit Rattanapagdee of the Phuket City Traffic Police replies:

Transporting anything without proper protection or care is a punishable offense.

Any person caught doing so

will be fined up to 1,000 baht and be held responsible for paying for any damaged property.

Please note that you do not have to wait for property to be damaged in order to report a vehicle in violation.

If you see a vehicle transporting goods without the proper protection or safety measures in place, please call the police immediately or take a photo and take it to a police station to file a police report.

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IDTracker to save lives

Aussies launch product to help medical staff provide quicker, better care

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

AUSTRALIAN-BASED company IDTracker was launched to tackle the frightening number of unidentified foreign patients arriving unconscious or incoherent at Phuket hospitals.

The simple, durable wrist bands provide a unique emergency identification code number that is linked to the wearer's secure profile and can be used by medical staff to access insurance details, emergency contacts, medical history and other information pertinent to the care of the user, should they find themselves needing medical treatment.

"These are not GPS or RFID operated, we wanted to ensure our system worked anywhere in the world, and be water-proof, shock-proof and never ran out of batteries. Since it's critical for your safety, we wanted to make sure it always worked," said entrepreneur Maurice Behan, who is a partner in the project with fellow Aussie Steve Mansfield.

The product, available for about 500 baht, is a wrist band in various designs and colors that is marked with a universal medical symbol of red medical vectors with a caduceus overlay. On the side is typed: MEDICAL

+ ID INFO INSIDE BAND. On the inside is a website address and the unique ID and PIN number for the user. Medical staff only have to go to the website and enter the person's ID and pin, and in a matter of seconds they will obtain all the data required to identify the patient and begin treatment.

"There are similar products out there but nothing as comprehensive, secure and cost-effective as ours and we hope that travellers will start realizing the importance of wearing one.

"We believe our product will be the leader in this market. We are concentrating on the tourism industry in particular the southeast Asian travel market, as this is where a lot of young Australians are travelling and being injured. However, this product works anywhere in the world and is now going global" said Mr Behan.

Mr Behan recognized the need for the product, especially by young Australian schoolies, full moon partygoers and those on a gap year, after witnessing an emergency medical incident, where a man was separated from his friends, severely injured and eventually found untreated in a local hospital in



The band allows quick identification of the owner. Image: IDTracker

2004.

"Absolutely we think it's a great idea, as long as the major medical providers are made aware of it," said James Cawood, the international coordinator (HOD) at Phuket International Hospital. "The benefit of the bracelets, as I understand it, is that they can be worn at all times – even when swimming – which is not the case with wallets and mobile phones. Near drownings are one of the most common incidents that may lead to a patient being brought to us unconscious. Mo-

tobike accidents where the driver was wearing only a pair of swimming shorts with no wallet or mobile phone, would be another example of such a situation."

Mr Cawood was introduced to IDTracker earlier this month, but is already aware of its potential benefits in Phuket. He noted that it will help doctors and nurses gather a patient's medical information, allowing doctors and nurses to give treatment that may otherwise be withheld due to unknown complications. It will also stop them

administering commonplace treatment if it is known that the patient is allergic to a certain type of medication.

"The insurance information that we would be able to access would also allow us to confirm insurance coverage for a patient even before they are conscious, so that expense is not an issue and we are able to provide the required care without needing to wait for them to wake up," Mr Cawood said.

Additionally, at a single press of a button, medical staff can send out an emergency email to predetermined contacts the patient sets up on the IDTracker website ahead of time.

Mr Cawood confirmed that the bracelets provided a realistic, practical approach to the problem of unidentified patients.

The bands, which are available online at www.idtracker.com.au can be sent anywhere in the world. However, the company envisions that the bands will soon be available at retail outlets, such as travel agent offices. They are already available in Phuket at Raya Divers.

"This is a real problem. One that can be life or death, and one we have a solution for," said Mr Behan.

E-commerce driving Thailand office demand

ONE of the key sectors that has been driving office demand in the past two years is e-commerce. The tremendous growth in the value of e-commerce in Thailand, from 768 billion baht in 2013 to 2.1 billion baht in 2015, has led to the growth in demand for office space from this sector.

In 2013, e-commerce businesses accounted for only 5% of CBRE's office lettings transactions. This increased to 15% in 2015, accounting for over 20,000 square meters of office space let through CBRE. The exponential growth in this sector is not surprising given the growing popularity of online shopping in Thailand.

The four key characteristics e-commerce businesses look for in an office building is location, quality, efficiency and lifestyle, whichever location they choose, access to mass transit is a mandatory requirement.



Open office layouts are preferred by e-commerce businesses, making new facilities highly sought after. Photo: Nimbuzz

To project the right image for their companies, e-commerce businesses tend to prefer high-quality buildings with extensive facilities, hence the preference is for Grade-A offices. The image factor is also important in terms of attracting young talent and Generation-Z employees who tend to be more lifestyle and image conscious. Several e-businesses that have

bigger space requirements have also opted to shift to newer buildings. For example, Lazada shifted from One Pacific to Bhiraj Tower @ EmQuartier.

The building and floor plate efficiency is another important consideration. E-commerce businesses tend to have open-plan offices and cleaner space, therefore an efficient and column-free floor plate is

important, as it allows flexibility in the fit out. This is also a reason why new buildings are preferred, as older buildings are not column free and often pose restrictions.

The working environment in e-businesses are typically less formal than corporate offices and many look to replicate a Google-style workspace, which offers extensive recreational facilities and activities interspersed within their workspace. Meeting rooms and work spaces are often set in a semi-casual environment as this is believed to encourage idea sharing. All of these design features require a column free and flexible floor plate, but the degree to which each company spends on the fit out and decoration tends to vary. Given these are technology companies, the wiring and internet system is another key consideration.

– The Nation

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Lighthouse Market back at Boat Lagoon

Families and friends flocked to the first Phuket Boat Lagoon Lighthouse Market of the year last weekend. Visitors enjoyed new attractions at the dockside market, including an outdoor theatre, fireworks and of course lots of fun food.



An outdoor movie theatre was one of the new attractions at the popular weekend market.

Howling good time

Back by popular demand, Xana Beach Club with Attica hosted its Full Moon Party – Volume 3 on January 22 for the island's night owls and fans of glam, who were treated to Live DJ vibes, stage performances and fire spinning.



Glamorous guests gleam and beam at Xana Beach Club's Volume 3 Full Moon Party.



Thai Restaurant



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ents in Paradise

Feeling the heat at Paradise Beach

The full moon party Spin on Paradise was a fiery affair at Paradise Beach Phuket, near Patong Beach. A gang of the island's top DJs turned up the heat with their beats, including DJ VaiShiYas from Spin Twist Records and DJ Bassforscher.



Fiery fun was had on the sand at Paradise Beach Club's full moon party last week.

Welcome to the House of Walker

Johnnie Walker hosted the House of Walker Dinner at Mom Tri's Villa Royale with a view over Kata Noi Beach on January 28.



(From L-R) Mom Tri's Villa Royale Wine Director Georges Ciret; Diageo Moet Hennessy Thailand Ltd Senior Brand Ambassador Chennarong Bhumichitr; and Mom Tri's Villa Royale GM Adisak Pitakrojanont.

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Thailand Yacht Show anchors in

By Nicola Tyler

THE very first state-sponsored Thailand Yacht Show promises a whole lot of fun on the water showcasing the latest luxury yachts available for charter and aquatic toys plus the latest offerings from the region's top boating industry specialists and suppliers at Ao Po Grand Marina from February 11 to 14.

As well as exhibitions and displays on the water there will be parties and tours on board some of the world's top yachts. Here are some of the highlights not to be missed.

MOTOR YACHT TITANIA

One of the largest motor yachts available in the Burgess fleet, the 73m M/Y Titania is ideal for fun family charter with two master suites, a massage room and beauty salon staffed with professional massage therapists and beauticians, a large Jacuzzi with swim-up bar and beach club style seating.

YACHT SALUZI

With five voluminous decks the Saluzi is the largest charter yacht based in south-east Asia with a full range of on-board entertainment including an open-air cinema and pro dive center. Her shallow draft allows her into smaller coves where other yachts would struggle, making her ideal for exploring small islands.

SUPERYACHT OCEAN EMERALD

The futuristic 41-m superyacht designed by Norman Foster is a



Get a taste of the uber luxury on board the 73-meter pleasure cruiser for charter, Titania. Photo: Burgess

modern masterpiece of five spaciouly designed suites for up to 12 guests, making it the perfect yacht for family adventure, parties and even corporate events.

WIDER 42 YACHT

From Boat Lagoon Yachting, the Wider 42 can expand at the flick of a switch, widening to comfortably hold 12. This slick Italian designed cruiser can reach up to 50 knots and has an average range of 350 miles at 40 knots.

MCY 70 BY MONTE CARLO YACHTS

Showcased by Simpson Marine, the MCY 70 designed by award-winning Nuvolari Lenard combines innovation and high-quality engineering with the classic elegance of teak, oak and grey sycamore

trim and furnishings. Powerful twin MAN V8 1200 diesel engines give her a top speed of 32 knots.

PERSHING 92

With a top speed of 40 knots, the Pershing 92 from Lee Marine is the fastest fiberglass yacht of her size, perfectly combining speed and luxury with accommodation for eight guests and a crew of three plus a tender garage and various water toys.

PRINCESS YACHTS 72

From Boat Lagoon, the Princess Yachts 72 is a spacious party cruiser with an expansive fly-bridge, a large wet-bar, barbecue and generous seating. The cockpit doubles as an exterior entertainment deck and the foredeck has even more seating.

HYPE LUXURY BOAT CLUB

Watch the show from the comfort of this floating VIP lounge catamaran with finger food and drinks served to guests while live DJ vibes complete the trendy lounge ambiance.

AQUATIC ACTION

Adventure on the water includes daily jet-surf, jet-ski and paddle-boarding demonstrations at the Demo Platform, where every night glamorous and vibrant social events are planned.

See the social calendar online for more details at www.thailandyachtshow.com/show/programme. To register online as a visitor visit www.thailandyachtshow.com/tickets.



Aquatic action includes daily jet-surfing, jet-skiing and paddle-boarding shows at the Demo Platform. Photo: TYS

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February 6. Whose line? Improv Comedy Show

The Comedy Club Bangkok is coming to Phuket with the Whose line? Improv Comedy Show at Royal Phuket Marina featuring multi award-winning improviser Drew McCreddie and the best of Bangkok's improv comedy community. "It's like making comedy gold right before your very eyes!" Tickets 500 baht in advance or 750 baht on the night. Doors open 6:30pm. For more info call 086-9437840 or email jayw@royalphuketmarina.com

21 February. Siriroj Mini Marathon, Royal Trophies

The 4th Siriroj Run for Health Run for Charity Mini Marathon will be held at Phuket International Hospital. The event will feature a 12 kilometer mini

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

marathon for men and women for an entry fee of 250 baht. Winners will be awarded HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Royal Trophies. There will also be a 4km fun run for men and women (entry fee 200 baht) as well as a 3.5km three-people-team family fun run (entry fees 500 baht). VIP runners may register in any category for an entry fee of 2,000 baht. Top finishers will be awarded Phuket International Hospital trophies. Registration is at 4:30am. The race starts at 6am. This event is sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*.

February 22. Makha Bucha Day Falls on the full moon of the third lunar month and commemorates the Buddha's ordaining of 1,250 monks who had arrived unannounced from afar only seven months after the Buddha began his teachings. It is also the date the Buddha delivered his Fundamental Teachings just months before his death.

26 March. Thailand Beach Volley Festival

International amateur beach volley tournament with teams from Asia Australia Europe and the Americas competing. Classes are divided into Men's 2 x 2 women's 2 x 2 and mixed 4 x 4. Players of all levels are welcome to compete. Entry fee is 2,000 baht. Free admission for spectators.

Serenity in the heart of Patong

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

STRESS, lack of sleep, an unbalanced diet, air pollution, smoking – most of us are affected by one or more of these on a daily basis. So let the crew at Ryn Spa, Grand Mercure Phuket Patong Resort & Villas, melt them away for you.

Every aspect of the service, from the soothing welcome drink to the lighting and décor, is designed to offer a modern, comfortable and personalized experience to clients.

“Ryn represents the gentle motion of streaming water, and is symbolic of peacefulness and purification of the mind and body,” says Guest Activity Manager Pintusorn (“New”) Thongtan. Their philosophy of ‘Premium Organic Body Care’ is centered on helping clients to achieve a healthy body and mind, challenging the common notion that spa services are just an indulgence. Most people are



Chose from four signature wellbeing treatments. Photo Ryn Spa

in a rush and want a quick fix before heading back out, but Ms New suggests that in order to achieve maximum benefit from their services, guests should utilize the recommended treatment time.

“Before commencing services, guests are required to fill out a consultation card providing their medical history, which will help the therapist to gauge what services will suit them

best, or what they should avoid,” Ms New says. “Our therapist will always consider your skin type or body needs and then design a service for you; even if two people choose the exact same treatment, we may use different techniques on them, depending on their particular needs.”

Ryn Spa’s newly designed menu offers four signature wellbeing massages. ‘Only

sleeping’ is a sandalwood and rose sleep therapy massage that involves the use of long, slow strokes to sedate anxiety and restlessness. ‘Let it flow’ is a stress therapy massage that adapts the use of acupressure and stimulates the release of pleasure hormones in the body. ‘Free as a bird’ is a muscle therapy massage that includes gentle stretching followed by firm pressure application using weights. ‘Energy recharge’ is fatigue therapy that relieves body aches and restores blood circulation.

Ryn Spa provides numerous other services including foot reflexology, body exfoliation, scalp massage and various facial treatments. You can also take the Ryn experience back home with you by trying out their range of oils and lotions including anti-aging, skin uplifting, moisturizing and purifying. And if you’re celebrating Valentine’s Day in



Serene surroundings at Ryn Spa

style this year, be sure to check out their special promotion for singles or couples, applicable throughout February. The package provides a 30-minute body scrub, followed by an hour long massage, topped off with a 30-minute mini facial, and is priced at 3,500 baht per person or 6,000 baht for a couple.

For more information or to book an appointment call 076-231 999 Ext: 1969.

Have fun at the fair



Family fun, games and food at Chalong Temple. Photo: Phuket Gazette

It’s that time of year again. Phuket’s biggest annual temple fair, held at Wat Chalong, will kick off on February 7 to offer one week of local fare and entertainment.

There will be plenty of food vendors, circus rides, games and stalls set up at the fair.

Musical artists such as

Ying-Lee Srichumpon, Takatan Chollida and artists from R-Siam will be performing during the week-long event. There will also be the traditional Southern Thai *nang talung* [shadow puppet] shows each night, starting at 7pm, as well as traditional southern manohra dance performances.

Old Town Culture

THE 17th annual Phuket Old Town Festival to be held from February 13 to 15 highlights Phuket’s unique culture and traditions.

The festival will be held on four roads in the heart of Phuket Town: Thalang Road, Thepkrasattri Road, Soi Romanee and Krabi Road.

Organized by the Phuket City Municipality and the Ministry of Culture, the festival is

held in conjunction with Phuket’s Chinese New Year celebrations. Performances will be staged throughout the town and stalls selling local fare and other items will be set up in the area.

Among the events will be concerts by local celebrity singer ‘Gam The Star’, winner of The Voice, as well as Thai dance performances, Chinese opera, martial arts and much more at Queen Sirikit Park.



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At last, good news for our oceans



OCEAN trash is growing. It's an important issue that gets a lot of attention, at times, but little is actually done about it. Two Spain-based Aussie surfers, Pete Ceglinski and Andrew Turton, are about to change that.

In a former life, Turton was a product designer who realized that the plastic products he was designing were sources of pollution. As surfers he and Ceglinski were very aware of the waste problem and teamed up to fix it. They quit their jobs and moved to live in Spain, where they have taken it upon themselves to bring their Seabin prototype into reality.

"We are two normal guys who quit their day jobs to try and turn their dream into reality, and with everyone's support it's really happening," Ceglinski explained.

Ceglinski and Turton have designed an automated rubbish bin that catches floating rubbish, oil, fuel and detergents. At this stage, it's designed for marinas, private pontoons, inland waterways, residential lakes, harbors, water ways, ports and yacht clubs, but the potential is huge.

Marinas, ports and yacht clubs, however, are an ideal



Pete Ceglinski (left) and Andrew Turton, with their Seabin prototype, and their dog. Photo: The Seabin Project

place to start, because having no huge swells or storms, they provide a relatively controlled environment and ultimately Mother Nature will bring the rubbish in and the Seabin will catch it.

So how does the Seabin work?

The Seabin is connected to a water pump on the dock/shore and sucks water from the surface into the bin, bringing with it debris and liquids. The catch bag inside is made of natural fiber and collects all the debris. The marine worker then simply empties the bag and disposes of the rubbish. Working 24/7, the Seabin is set to be an

effective tool for reducing ocean trash.

Through crowdsourcing, in early January, Ceglinski and Turton reached their target and are now taking their current working prototype into production.

"Our aim is to be both as sustainable and responsible as we can be, in making the Seabins. They will not be mass produced in China, then shipped all over the world just to obtain a cheaper price," said Ceglinski, explaining that they will be built in the most sustainable and responsible manner possible.

While Ceglinski and Turton

both accept that, they also explain that the marinas that will install and operate the Seabins, and the local businesses that will help produce Seabins, are also amenable to the higher price.

"We aim to have Seabins produced on a variety of continents to help boost local economies and reduce shipping costs, which in turn reduces the price, and reduces the carbon footprint of the Seabins," Ceglinski added.

While some have questioned the possible impact on marine life, Ceglinski and Turton are talking with scientists to incorporate fish

deterrent technology into the Seabins and are also working with a marine biologist to study the effect on microscopic sea life.

"While it is possible that sea life could get trapped in the bins, in the four years of testing we haven't caught anything. Sea life simply stays away from the surface and the current the Seabins produce, in the same way that fish stay away from the water pump in a home aquarium. If a fish or marine animal makes its way into the Seabin then it will be caught by the natural fiber catch bag, then simply thrown back into the water when the bag is changed by the marina worker," added Ceglinski.

With their dream to improve the world's oceans, these two surfers are about to leave a lasting legacy for the marine world that so many of us take for granted.

For more information, visit www.seabinproject.com.

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

BROADCASTING PHUKET TO THE WORLD

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

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

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

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It's really just a name, after all



MOST tongue-twisting Latin names of plants are associated with so-called 'discoveries' by Western botanist/explorers. For example, the plumeria is named after Charles Plumier, the bougainvillea after a certain Monsieur Bougainville, the allamanda after Switzerland's Frederick Allamanda and so on.

The original classifier of plants, Sweden's Carolus Linnaeus, based his *Systema Naturae* (1735) on shared physical characteristics. Most of his findings have stood the test of time. But to this day, botanists are still re-christening plants and changing the orders, families or genera to which they belong.

Not so with Thai plant names. With few exceptions, they carry the same monikers used by generations.

However, one exception is the aforementioned frangipani or plumeria. For a long time, it was called the *lantom*, a word which connotes sadness or sorrow. Why? Because it was associated with ghosts, Buddhist cremation grounds and Muslim cemeteries.

Nowadays, the Thai name for the plumeria is *leelawadee*, a graceful and upbeat name that



Leelawadee is the Thai name for the plumeria, also known as frangipani. Photo: Renesis

does justice to an elegant shrub which is now cultivated everywhere.

The plumeria is related to the *nerius* or *oleander*, sharing with it the same poisonous milky sap. There resemblances end, for the plumeria's young growth is round, green and soft (hence the Australian name of 'dead man's finger'), only later turning to the familiar, thick grey branches. The shrub has a very open structure, and the large, handsome leaves tend to appear at the ends

of branches. For this reason, it is a good choice for the mixed border, allowing plenty of light and air to filter through to smaller shrubs. And the root system is compact, so it will fare well in a container.

Its glory is the beautiful clusters of five-petalled flowers that burst forth from the branch ends. They carry the most intense fragrance, especially at dusk, when the flowers attract the sphinx moths that seek to pollinate them. Traditionally used in Hawaiian

leis, these individual blooms are used throughout Phuket to decorate water-filled bowls and vases in hotel foyers and spas.

Though there are four distinct species, most popular cultivars derive from *plumeria rubra*. The commonest color is creamy white, but newer varieties can be pink, yellow, or even deep red. Another popular, so-called 'rainbow' hybrid has pinkish petals that shade to yellow at the center. With hybridization have come larger blooms and lusher

foliage as well as a greater range of sizes: there are now dwarf forms as well as vigorous varieties that may reach four meters in height.

Plumerias are one of the easiest shrubs to grow here. They are unfussy about soil and enjoy sunshine. And because Phuket gets such intense sunshine, they will do fine in filtered shade. The one thing plumerias dislike is wet, cold soil. Put one in a dank spot and it will 'throw in the towel.'

They are equally straightforward to grow from cuttings. Use a light potting medium with plenty of sand to permit rapid drainage, and store your cuttings for a few days to allow them to dry out. Then plant them about three inches deep in your soil mix. That way, as with euphorbias, you will minimize the risk of root rot.

Despite its exotic looks, it is an easy flower to look after. The plumerias's only shortcoming is that it has a period of dormancy when the leaves tend to discolor and fall. It is also prone to a disease called rust.

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



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DISCOVER
NEW HORIZONS

Foreigners: beware of condo laws



Property Watch

Desmond Hughes

EVERY year I learn a host of new rules and regulations, which impact property investors in Thailand, sometimes positively but often detrimentally. This year I learned something new, which either by chance or good fortune, my clients over 13 plus years here have never experienced. Unfortunately, I view the situation as being severely detrimental and anti-foreign investment in nature.

If you are foreign, and you marry a Thai, and you agree between you that all of your marital assets will be split 50:50 and designated as such, the Thai Government has found a way under which even post marriage, part of this agreement can be completely excluded.

This does not relate to the well-known exclusion of land, but to condominiums. Condominiums are much heralded as generally being available and favorable for foreign investment. Unfortunately, this is not always so.

Most of my clients over the years have bought their condominiums outright with cash from overseas, or had the cash in Thailand and due to the quirky rules on ensuring you have a 'Foreign Exchange Transaction Form' had to move monies out and then move monies back into Thailand again with the bank fees and potential foreign exchange



Foreigners should know condominium laws in Thailand before committing to buying. Photo: DES Daughter

losses thrown in for good measure. I took out a loan many years back for my first condominium purchase in Thailand and the monies were loaned in foreign currency through HSBC Thailand which had its retail banking in Thailand taken over by the Bank of Ayudhya.

My wife and I agreed on 50:50, for our own private reasons.

We then decided to buy a condominium for rental investment purposes in Bangkok. We went through the mill when it came to applying for and obtaining a loan. We applied through seven banks. The first was the 'favored' bank of the well-known developer in Bangkok. They took literally

every piece of financial information imaginable about me and my wife and looked at my various companies' assets and credit history; tax payments and even the number of employees in my business. After three months, we were told we could obtain a loan only for an amount 20 per cent of the outstanding balance due on the condominium. We then rushed out and made six further applications. One bank came through but the conditions were:

(i) we had to take out a loan for furnishing the condominium

(ii) we had to take out the hefty insurance premium through the bank's 'preferred'

insurer

(iii) the loan had to be taken out by my wife because "she is Thai and you are a foreigner"

Notwithstanding this, I was still expected to sign all the loan documentation and be involved.

Fast-forward, and we were close to the transfer date. All of a sudden, I am informed that I must sign a 'declaration of *Sin Suan Tua*' (personal property). What is all that about I thought – I have already made my agreement with my wife when I got married. Also *Sin Suan Tua* is by definition supposed to apply to all matters before marriage.

Then the reality of the situation became apparent. Due to the fact my wife was borrow-

ing the money from the bank, regardless of who would pay the mortgage payments, the authorities have found a way to exclude a marital asset from the marriage and adjust the entire concept of *Sin Suan Tua*.

The Land Department insist that a foreigner must declare that a condominium belongs entirely to his/her spouse and they have absolutely no rights or interest in such condominium unless:

(i) He/she pays for the unit and obtains a Foreign Exchange Transaction form. An impossibility if the monies are loaned in Thailand

(ii) He/she has Permanent Residency – and many long term expatriates know how long and difficult that process is

(iii) He/she is permitted to enter Thailand under the 'Investment Promotion Act' – which is very rare.

So... if you believe being married to a Thai is somehow advantageous when it comes to investing in property as a foreigner, the reality is quite the reverse. The Land Office I attended in Bangkok was very helpful; efficient and polite while I signed the document confirming that our condominium would have nothing to do with me notwithstanding being married and having paid the down payment.

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

GH Bank to issue low-interest mortgages

THE Government Housing Bank has prepared 32 billion baht to support three low-interest mortgage packages this quarter for low-to-middle-income earners.

"The three packages will help the bank achieve its new housing-loan target of 157bn baht this year," acting president Laiwan Pongsangium said on January 25.

The first package will carry interest rates of 3.25 per cent for the first year, 4.75 per cent for the second year and minimum retail rate (MRR) minus one per cent per year for the remaining years.

This package targets state employees and social-welfare recipients without deposit ac-

counts.

The second package is designed for retail customers. It charges 3.5 per cent interest in the first year, 4.75 per cent in the second year and MRR minus 0.50 per cent per year throughout the remaining term.

The third package is aimed at retail customers with interest rates of 3.40 per cent in the first year and 4.75 per cent in the second year. Starting in the third year, retail customers will be charged MRR minus 0.50 per cent per year and welfare recipients MRR minus one per cent per year.

Applications for the packages will be taken until March 31 and borrowing must be completed by April 29.



The packages will aid low-to-middle income earners. Photo: Alan Cleaver

Another initiative by the government has been to aid cassava farmers. Since cassava prices weaken during the harvest season, the government has come up with measures to help farmers delay production by releasing soft loans for them.

Commerce Minister Apiradi

Tantraporn noted yesterday that the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives had provided 5bn baht for the program. From now until April, farmers can get a 50,000-baht loan with a 4 per cent rate of interest.

The government will also

crack down on cassava smuggling. The ministry will ask for cooperation from the Interior Ministry, border checkpoints and governors of border provinces to monitor cassava imports strictly and limit the cassava carried by each truck coming in through border passes.

Central Pattana (CPN), the country's largest retail developer, is going all out to capitalise on the expected mass arrival of Chinese holiday-makers by launching the 40 million baht 'Great Chinese New Year' campaign.

CPN manages shopping complexes under the CentralWorld, CentralPlaza and CentralFestival brands.

– *The Nation*

Old Town architecture inspires

By Sukwin Tanthavanich

EVEN today, the Sino-Portuguese architecture of Old Phuket Town is an excellent example of practical designs that have stood the test of time. The simple and ingenious designs of shop houses and mansions built during Phuket's tin-mining rush, and the influx of Chinese migrants in the 17th century, are often a source of inspiration for local and international architects.

The centuries-old buildings along Dibuk and Yaowarat roads rank among some of the region's best known showcases of old architectural methods and practices that are still considered practical today.

So it was fitting that the recently built Limelight Avenue in Phuket Town was the venue for the Southern Architectural Expo 2016 held January 29-31. The event attracted architects from around the region to share their latest innovations and listen to guest speaker Dharaj Shivapakwajjanalert, who is a highly respected Phuket-based architect and founder of Dhamarchitects, a firm that has



Association of Siamese Architects (ASA) Southern Office Chairman Wiwat Chinuan (left) and Vice President Prachya Sukkaew during the Southern Architectural Expo 2016 in Phuket Town.

overseen several renovations of buildings in Old Phuket Town, including the On On Hotel and recently built the Little Nyonya Hotel. Mr Dharaj encouraged architects at the expo to travel in order to learn about building styles of days gone by. He recounted tales of his experiences in India, where he traveled for six months, learning about the roots of the country's architecture.

Getting up close and personal to these ancient buildings is the best way to appreciate the scale of these magnificent structures, and there are many similarly inspirational designs throughout Asia, said Mr Dharaj, who stressed that he wanted to inspire others to find their own style by learning about ancient styles. Studying architecture from other cultures

can help remove obstacles in the architects' mind.

Organized by Prachya Sukkaew, vice president of the Association of Siamese Architects (ASA) Southern Office, the exposition brought together notable architects and designers from around the region to network and share ideas, and learn from the region's leading architects about adapting an-

cient architectural styles for contemporary designs.

"It was great to see architects from all over Thailand come to Phuket for the expo. They came from the North, Isan and even Laos. There were a lot of smiling faces and plenty of new ideas were shared," said Mr Prachya.

Newly renovated buildings of Phuket Town that still retain their old charm such as the On On Hotel are excellent examples of timeless building designs that continue to inspire contemporary architects, he added.

The expo featured architectural workshops as well, including one for creating sketches of buildings in the Old Town.

One of the younger participants, architectural graduate Thammasak Masapsomboon, said the event was very useful for upcoming architects.

"I gained some good knowledge from inspirational speakers and learned about different ways of approaching projects. They shared solutions to design problems that I have been having and also gave me some good ideas for the future," said Mr Thammasak.



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Villa Maid (1 position)

House keeping and cleaning residential villas (with no resident)

- Experience working for luxury villa estate or hotel is preferred

Mechanical & Electrical Technician (operation and maintenance 1-3 positions)

In charge of service for the operation and maintenance of MEP equipment and common area facilities for residential villa estate property.

- Experience working for luxury villa estate or hotel is preferred.

Landscape Engineer / Supervisor (on site) (1 position)

In charge of landscape development and maintenance program for 100 rai luxury residential villa estate

- Experience and knowledge of landscape / horticulture / irrigation

Applicant must :

- ◆ Be Thai national
- ◆ Have 3 years or more experience at same or similar position applied for
- ◆ Speak and write English fairly / well

Please send your curriculum vitae by email to
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(All applicants will be treated in strict confidence)

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SM 26 FEET 2014 KBL

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DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS

Of the marriage of Gary Andrew Turner and Jintana Turner (Nee Chanin) take notice that the petitioner, Gary Andrew Turner, has commenced divorce proceedings in England, UK. A copy of the petition can be obtained by the respondent from LHT Solicitors, 298 Clifton Drive South, St Annes On Sea, Lancashire FY8 1LL United Kingdom. Tel: 0044 1253 782 808 (Reference AT/Turner 21508.1). Email: gat61@btopenworld.com

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Legend of Phuket's Green Man

By Bruce Stanley

HOWARD Digby-Johns presides over the most interesting estate on Phuket. His 'Green Man Pub' on the road between Chalong and Kata Hill looks like a gracious English manor from the outside. But upon exploring the extensive landscaped grounds, one finds a subterranean wine cellar, a temple to the Egyptian god Osiris, shrines to the Hindu god Ganesh, a parlor for bridge players, and a studio for weekly Latin dance classes, in addition to a full service pub with a menu of British cuisine incorporating Indian colonial influences.

As the British pub often serves as a community meeting place, the Green Man hosts Phuket's definitive weekly quiz each Thursday evening and is the performance venue for most local amateur theatrical productions.

Howard can often be seen chatting with guests or exploring the internet from the pub's main floor where he works on one of four novels he is writing, roughly outlining the

history of the world. He is a world class authority on the early religious evolution of mankind coupled with the development of the nation state.

He has had an impressive career over 30 years as an international business consultant with such prestigious accountancy firms as Price Waterhouse and PA Consulting Group. He has worked on development projects in Africa, Central America, the Caribbean islands, and extensively on the Indian sub-continent. He currently plans to provide some consulting inputs for a project in Bhutan.

"I've worked on numerous challenging projects. I was often sent to the more obscure destinations. For example, in Sudan, the country was faced with declining productivity with their cotton crop. It had been 12 sacks per acre during the colonial era and when I arrived, it had fallen to 1.2 sacks per acre. This was due to an inability for various sectors to coordinate and work together. I was able to boost production to six sacks per acre."

In 2000, he decided to semi-retire to Phuket and open the Green Man.

"I had been vacationing on Phuket since around 1990 and kept a place at the Boathouse on Kata Beach. Eventually, it occurred to me I could buy a house and set up a more permanent arrangement. As time passed, I found spending the more time on Phuket increasingly enjoyable, so I decided to build the Green Man."

Howard chose the name 'Green Man' as a result of his abiding interest in British history and myth and due to the many references to this name in religious architecture and pubs in his native England.

"The Green Man basically represents the god of uncontrolled Nature. This demi-god is thought to have been born on May 1 and died on November 5.

When I consulted the local Buddhist monks about an auspicious date to begin construction for the Green Man, they were unanimous that con-

struction should begin November 5 and the pub should open on May 1. I designed the buildings myself and the six months of construction became a labor of love, blood and tears," Howard recalls.

In the past 15 years, the Green Man has provided Phuket with a warm, inviting place to enjoy the company of friends often animated by Howard's great love of fun.

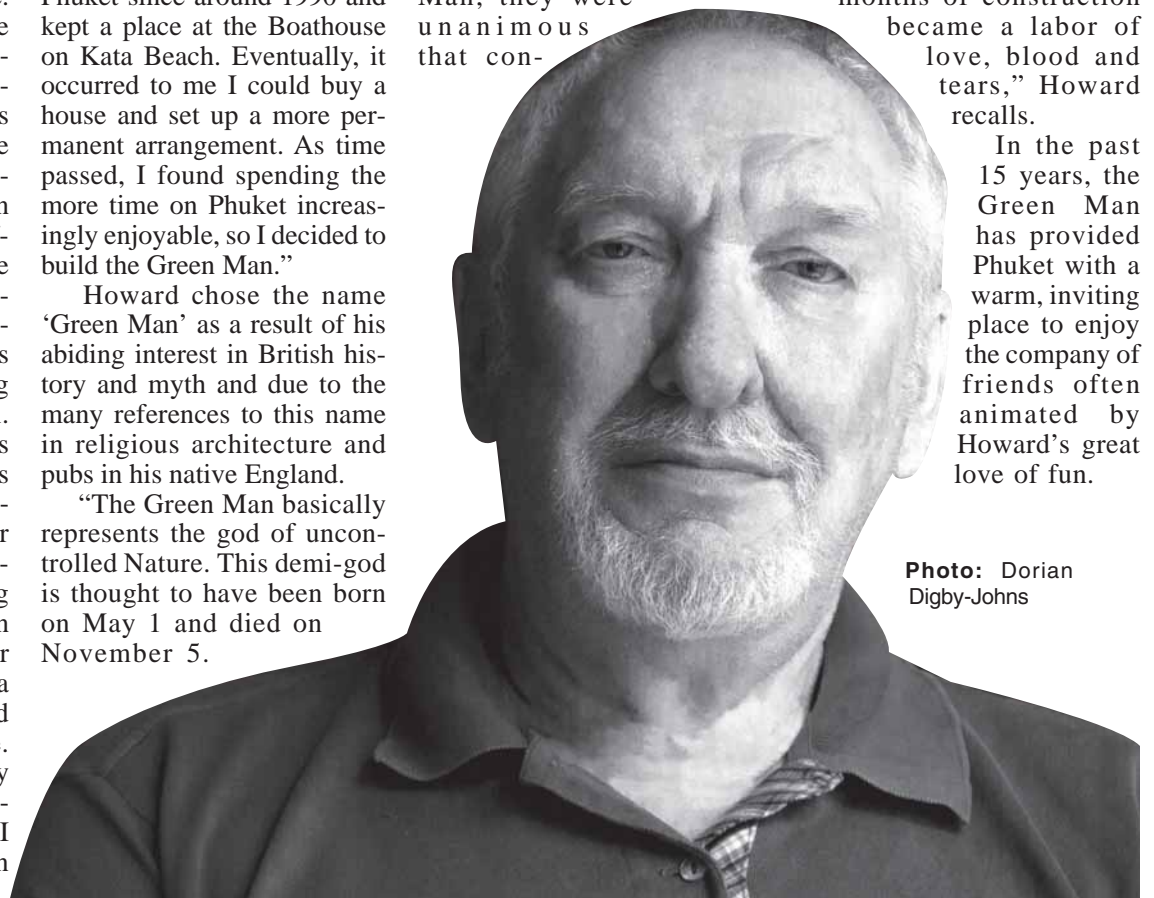


Photo: Dorian Digby-Johns



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