

Phuket Gazette

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‘THE ANDAMAN SEA IS FILLED WITH FARANG FECES AND TRASH’

FISHED OUT

Weather, over-fishing and pollution deplete fish stocks across the Andaman

By Chutharat Plerin

AS FISHERMEN across Phuket and Krabi returned to shore after the July 1 reopening of the season, their meager catches furrowed foreheads and drew exasperated sighs.

Fish stocks are dwindling, and many of western Thailand's captains and deck hands are worried as a fog of uncertainty obscures the future of their industry – and livelihoods.

“Every year it keeps getting worse and worse,” said Maren Boonroat, captain of the Krabi trawler Nam Thawee. “Usually, we catch a lot of fish on opening day. It's very strange we couldn't find as many fish as we have in previous years.”

Large fishing vessels were allowed to return to fish in the Andaman Sea after 4,696 square kilometers between Phuket and Trang were closed off so as not to deplete fish stocks during the spawning season from April 1 to June 30.

Conservation officials believe the scarcity of fish is due to a combination of pollution, overfishing and natural weather phenomena.

The paltry hauls seen across western Thailand are problematic for the country's fishing industry, which employs an estimated 300,000 and contributes over \$3 billion in exports to the GDP, according to the Thai Frozen Foods Association.

Fishermen in Phuket and Krabi are concerned that the diminishing catches seen at the beginning of July may con-



Workers sort through undersized catches at a fishing pier in Phuket. Captains reported low yields and undersized fish during the opening days of fishing season. Photo: Gazette file

tinue throughout the rest of the season, as they struggle to get back in the black after the three-month moratorium.

Many fishing companies are still reeling from the industry's collapse after the 2004 tsunami devastated the Andaman coastline.

“We're seeing that this year, the numbers have decreased quite a lot,” said Somyos Wongbunyakul, president of the Phuket Fishing Association. “Most of the fish being caught are too small to make the hauls commercially viable, and that's not something that's unique to this year. We've seen the fishing getting worse for the past several years. More than 20 to 30 percent of local fishermen have been

bankrupted so far,” Mr Somyos said.

Fishery officials in Krabi and Phuket told the *Gazette* they are aware of the declining yields across the region, but need more time to gather statistical data before they would be able to implement a plan of action. As for now, they are advising fishermen to be patient.

For his part, Mr Somyos remains skeptical of governmental involvement.

“I don't think the situation will get better, I think it will only get worse and worse. We always have to help ourselves, nobody out there is going to help us.”

Rewat Boonsop, who owns the Krabi...

Continued on Page 4

Investigations into Tranlee Co continue

POLICE seize dozens of boats, buses and documents in raids against zero baht tour company accused of falsifying profits, after one director was arrested and another went on the run.

Full story Page 3

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LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Teen begins giving birth while in traffic

A HEAVILY pregnant teenage mother almost gave birth while stuck in traffic at Chalong Circle on July 1.

Ms Bee, the 18-year-old mother-to-be, called a relative to take her to the hospital when she felt labor pains.

"By the time we reached Chalong Circle, the baby's head was already out," said Royah Kiewsoot, the relative who accompanied her to the hospital.

"I asked the police for help and they cleared traffic from the road to make way for us. We managed to reach Chalong Hospital just in time."

Ms Bee safely delivered a 3.8 kilogram baby girl.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

Man plummets from scaffold

A THAI laborer fell to his death at a construction site in Phuket Town on the morning of July 1.

Final demolitions hit Lay Pang and Layan beaches



The last of the buildings found to be built on public beachfront land in Phuket were demolished at Lay Pang and Layan beaches on June 28. OrBorTor officials said they had previously demolished 100 buildings across Lay Pang and Layan beaches, but had been unable to complete the demolitions after business owners filed a motion in administrative court to avoid demolitions. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Kraisorn Kongngam, 49, died after falling from scaffolding while working on a three-storey building in Talad Yai about 9am.

Medics pronounced him dead at Phuket Provincial Hospital, after he succumbed to severe head injuries.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

Water transport safety measures go international

PHUKET Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada, government officials and representatives from six tour agencies based in provinces along the Andaman Sea, ratified an agreement to adopt additional water transportation safety measures in Phuket on June 27.

The agreement aims to establish a water transportation safety center and purportedly would align provincial safety regulations with international standards.

The National News Bureau of Thailand, the government's official mouthpiece, stated that the regulation reviews were made in an attempt to foster tourist confidence.

— **Phuket Gazette**

Teen admits to fatal stabbing

THE self-confessed killer of the 18-year-old who was stabbed 18 times in Koh Kaew surrendered to Phuket City Police on June 28.

Manasanan Bunga was stabbed to death just outside his house on Soi Han Farang late at night on June 26.

The teenage perpetrator said that he and the victim were friends but they were arguing when Mr Manasanan took out a knife and attempted to stab him. The two then fought over the knife.

Police said that when Mr Manasanan lost his grip on the knife, the teen grabbed it and stabbed him repeatedly before fleeing the scene, leaving his friend's body lying on the street.

He has since been charged with murder with intent.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

Tout making the rounds at Karon Beach

A TOUT carrying a slow loris was spotted approaching tourists to have them pay to be photographed with the animal on Karon Beach on the afternoon of June 28.

The slow loris is a protected species and their use as props by touts is illegal.

The penalty for possession of a protected animal is a maximum fine of 40,000 baht, four years imprisonment, or both.

A tout arrested on Phi Phi Don last year said he could make up to half a million baht a month.

— **Sukawin Tanthavanich**

Motorbikers flee and shoot after police checkpoint

TWO men were arrested in downtown Phuket on the night of June 29, after allegedly firing at police as they sped away from a checkpoint.

The Chiang Mai men were on a motorbike on Phoonpon Road when police ordered them to stop. While fleeing the checkpoint, one of the men, identified as Wuttichai Rattanaputiwong, 31, allegedly fired a shot into the air from a .38 revolver.

Police pursued the men to a rented house in Suanluang Chaofa village. A police unit, dressed in tactical gear, then stormed the house.

Phuket City Police reportedly found an unregistered revolver with four bullets as well as 2.86g of heroin when they arrested Mr Wuttichai and his 22 year-old accomplice, Surat Saeyang.

Mr Surat and Mr Wuttichai have been charged with illegal possession of a gun and bullets and carrying an unregistered weapon in public. Mr Wuttichai faces additional charges for discharging a weapon in public and possession of a category 1 drug.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**

BBTV blocks beach, charges

BANGKOK Broadcasting & Television Co Ltd (BBTV), the company that broadcasts Thai national television Channel 7, and now claims to own access to Laem Singh Beach, started charging beachgoers 100 baht in entrance fees on July 1.

BBTV installed a sign at the entrance to the beach, stating that the company owns the land and that the entrance fee is 100 baht per person from 7am to 7pm.

The sign also lists land title numbers and cites court case reference numbers.

The company said they will send security guards to collect fees from beachgoers.

They also said they would issue identification cards to the owners of businesses on the beach and their local workers to ensure that they will have access to the public beach free of charge.

— **Chutharat Plerin**



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Tranlee nominee fiasco continues

INVESTIGATORS seized buses, boats, land and millions of baht on the morning of July 6, as they begin to delve into the operations of Phuket-based tour operator Tranlee Travel Co Ltd.

As of July 6, three teams of police simultaneously seized 33 boats and 57 buses in Phuket, while also raiding Racha Spa Co Ltd, located in Phuket Villa 5 housing estate in Chalong.

Tranlee Travel Co Ltd is a well established tour service provider in Phuket. It is one of the largest tour providers on the island with 17 companies under its umbrella.

Police said they believe that documents found at Racha Spa will reveal a paper trail of money being siphoned out of the country by the company.

"Tourists will not be affected by the seizures as there are plenty of vehicles still available for them from other operators," said Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol Thipjaroen, who led the raids.

In 2014, the company came under fire from about 100 Thai guides who protested outside their offices for allegedly hiring illegal Chinese tour guides.

Deputy National Police Commissioner Srivara Ransibhramanakul warned on July 5 that other such companies found to have been established illegally would face similar fates, as investigations continued to turn up Tranlee Travel assets in Phuket and Phang Nga.

A Tranlee Travel senior director and shareholder, named



Gen Srivara Ransibhramanakul briefs members of the press on the state of Tranlee Travel Co investigations. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

only as Kritchakorn Roong-mongkolnam, reportedly a foreign national, was arrested last month on suspicion he had passed himself off as a Thai national using counterfeit credentials to establish the company.

His partner, named as Weerachai Kampaiprapankul, is still on the run. He is still believed to be in Thailand.

Police said they believe that the two foreign directors hold more than 51 per cent of the company's capital, which is illegal in Thailand.

The company reportedly earns more than 160 million baht annually, but police allege their financial records show more than 150 million baht in expenses, amounting to only a few million baht of income, and only a few hundred thousand baht in taxes.

"Six of the 17 companies operating under the Tranlee Travel umbrella have been or-

dered to shut down while they are investigated," said General Srivara, who vowed to continue hunting down 'nominee' companies, no matter how big they are.

"Searches of Tranlee Travel properties have turned up hundreds of millions of baht worth of assets. 117 buses, 35 boats and three plots of land," said Gen Srivara.

Investigations into the 330-room Blue Bay Resort in Phang Nga revealed that permission was given for the property to have only 76 rooms. Working there illegally were 21 tour guides and some of the staff were inappropriately dressed, said the general. Some boat operators were also found to be using unlicensed radio communications equipment.

The Crime Suppression Division is also investigating how the company allegedly moved money out of Thailand.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

More delays in light rail plans



An artist's rendering showing the light rail line (in purple) and its relationship to surrounding roadways and traffic circles. Photo: OTPP

PHUKET'S multi-billion-baht light rail project is being given another month to revise its plans yet again.

Planners are revising arrangements that would ensure the safety of motorists using roads running alongside the proposed track routes and the airport's connecting train station.

The delay is the second in a row, as planners continue to review roadway-railtrack safety features.

The Ministry of Transport has requested that the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTPP) modify the numerous road crossings planned along the route between Phuket International Airport and Phuket Town, in order to reduce the possibility of accidents at intersections.

"I, along with other officials from the Highways Department, met with Ministry of Transport Deputy Permanent Secretary Peraphon Thaworn-supacharoen on July 4 to discuss the drawing plans,"

Sirigate Apirat, project manager and OTPP secretary, told the *Gazette*.

The plan has been given another month to be revised, but has been listed in the Ministry of Transport's 2017 Action Plan.

"The plan was not approved by Mr Peraphon, as we only reviewed it yesterday," Mr Sirigate said. "It may take time to finalize the best plan for Phuket. However, since the project has been listed in next year's plan, I am sure progress will be made on it, as the government fully supports it."

Initial plans for road crossings with barriers along the tracks were scrapped in March, forcing the OTPP to draw up new plans for underpasses instead.

At this stage, the Ministry of Transport has yet to announce a total cost estimate for the project. They have, however, scheduled an inspection of the proposed route next week.

— Chutharat Plerin

Enraged bull elephant kills mahout

AN ENRAGED bull elephant crushed his 64-year-old mahout to death while working at a rubber plantation in Krabi on July 5.

The 26-year-old elephant, named Plai Khai, was in musth and had been chained to a tree for two days before the attack. He turned on his mahout, Sawai Lantee, when he went to check on the chains.

"The elephant lunged at Mr Sawai, and crushed him into the ground with his trunk," said Yuttapong Chaisit, 24, another

mahout working at the plantation, who tried to save his friend from the elephant's violent outburst.

"I stabbed the elephant with an elephant hook to distract him so I could drag Mr Sawai away, but the elephant turned on me and I had to drop him and flee for my own life."

Plai Khai then resumed his attack on the already unconscious Mr Sawai, tossing and trampling the mahout's body.

It took police, 10 mahouts, several locals and a team of na-

tional park officers armed with tranquilizer guns three hours to calm the enraged elephant so that they could eventually retrieve Mr Sawai's body, which the elephant had by then torn to pieces.

Mr Yuttapong said the elephant and Mr Sawai had been working together at the plantation in Baan Huai To, Thab Prik sub district, for the past three months.

During musth, an elephant's testosterone levels can increase to 60 times their usual level.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr

PHUKET'S Islamic astronomers spotted the moon on the night of July 7, marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The sighting of the moon marks the end of Ramadan, during which practicing Muslims do not eat, drink, smoke and refrain from engaging in sexual activity while the sun is up.

In Phuket, when any mosque representatives see the moon, they report it to their cleric, who sends word to the Phuket Islamic Council. If the Council confirms the sighting, word is sent to the Central Islamic Council of Thailand in Bangkok, who ultimately make the decision to declare the end of the lunar month of fasting.

The Bangkok Council checks the time of the lunar sightings with the Thai Royal Navy Science Department. If the time of a lunar observance is consistent with Navy records, the fasting period is officially



Muslims gather during a Ramadan service. Photo: Maann Samran

declared over and Muslims can look forward to the celebration of Eid al-Fitr the next day.

The moon's appearance signalled the beginning of Eid al-Fitr, or 'the festival of the breaking of the fast,' on July 8, as Muslims across the world and here in Phuket celebrated the beginning of the month of Shawwal. Eid is typically a three-day festival, during which the entire community comes together for additional

prayers. The rest of the holiday is spent visiting friends and family.

"Representatives at mosques throughout Phuket were on the lookout for the moon," Piyadet Chuachalard, Secretary of the Phuket Islamic Committee told the *Gazette*. "Since they've spotted it, we've begun to celebrate this year's Eid." Eid al-Fitr in Thailand ends on July 9.

— Chutharat Plerin

Andaman fish vanish

From Page 1

...fishing port, said lower than expected yields were also reported by fishermen across that province.

"The fishermen had been out at sea since before midnight on June 30, but returned home with very small catches the following morning," Mr Rewat said. "Most of the fish that they managed to bring in were also very small."

Mr Somyos blames three factors for the scant harvest and Thai fishermen's woes: man-made activities, the law and the weather.

"The natural factor is the one I consider the most important, and it's the only one completely out of our control," he said. "For example, last year, the fishing was better because of El Nino. Actually, before that year, the situation was the same as this, not many fish."

Mr Somyos was afraid that this year fishermen in Phuket and around the Andaman Sea will suffer a La Nina event.

"A La Nina event will make the fish even more scarce," he said.

The weather patterns referred to as La Nina generally result in wetter-than-normal rainfall conditions in Southeast Asia from June to October.

During El Nino events drier-than-normal conditions occur, according to the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Center.

"Conditions were harsh this year. Normally, strong storms and rain stirs up the ocean floor around Phang Nga Bay. The rain also washes leaves and other debris out to sea, which becomes fish food, helping to grow fish populations," Mr Somyos said. "But this year, we've seen a lot of wind and not much rain."

The changing coastlines and economies in Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga may also have negatively impacted fish stocks in the Andaman, Mr Somyos said.

"There are now many hotels and tourism businesses along our shorelines, both on Phuket island, and the surrounding region. Over my 30 years in this industry, I've seen these businesses increase by 10 fold," he

said. "The Andaman is an open area. Some fish are born here, and some move into and through this sea from other areas," he said. "If the sea becomes polluted from waste and human activity by those hotel businesses, the fish will disappear."

"Before, the sea was full of plankton and naturally-occurring food for fish. Now, there is only farang feces and trash," he added.

Mr Somyos complained that law enforcement and government officials should spend their time limiting the pollution and waste coming from hotel businesses in the Andaman, rather than limiting fishing seasons or restricting fishermen.

"Because of the Tier 3 human trafficking and illegal, unreported, unlicensed fishing vessels, our fishermen have been under a lot of government scrutiny. They keep blaming the human trafficking situation on fishermen and force Bangkok to impose a great number of strict laws regulating our industry," Mr Somyos said.

On June 29, the United States issued its Trafficking in Persons report (TIP) which, saw Thailand upgraded from a Tier 3 status – among the countries with the worst human trafficking records – to Tier 2.

The upgrade in status was controversial among human rights groups, including the Environmental Justice Foundation, which published a 44 page expose on the state of human trafficking in Thailand's fishing industry last year.

Mr Somyos said the over-regulation of the industry has forced a majority of small fishing boat owners and operators to sell out, as fishing bans push them further out to sea, where bigger boats are needed to ply the deep waters.

"Officials are not helping us. They're actually putting more pressure on us," he said. "Please, they need to understand that we're losing our livelihoods and they need to help us," Mr Somyos said.

Krabi's Fishery office echoed Mr Somyos' statements.

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Till death do us part: honeymooners drown

A KOREAN couple on their honeymoon are dead after a domestic dispute reportedly lead them to fling themselves into the sea on June 28.

Locals discovered the body of a woman washed ashore on Patong Beach after 1am and alerted Patong police.

"At the scene, we found the body of Garam Hong, a 28 year old Korean national, stripped down to her bra," said Lt Col Pattapee Srichay of Patong police. "Red flags warning against swimming were posted on the beach. Ms Hong was identified by tattoos on her right hand and on her lower back. There was no evidence on her body of a struggle."

"According to witnesses, including a hotel guard, Ms Hong left her hotel, followed by a man we've identified as Siwoo Park, 28," Col Pattapee said.

"Mr Park followed her and the pair sat on the beach, arguing. Ms Hong then flung herself into the sea, and Mr Park dragged her back out and the pair sat down again," Col Pattapee said.

"They then resumed arguing



Rescuers haul aboard the body of Korean national Siwoo Park, which was found floating 7 nautical miles off the west coast of Phuket. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

and Ms Hong plunged into the sea again, but this time the pair were washed away. Ms Hong's body was found later, some 300 meters away from the spot where they entered the water."

Col Pattapee said there was no evidence of violence or a struggle in the couple's hotel room. They checked in on June 26 and were scheduled to leave on the 30th.

A police search, assisted by

Kusoldharm Foundation personnel and lifeguards was initially unable to find Mr Park's body, due to heavy wind and surf.

Five days later, a body believed to be that of Mr Park, was discovered floating seven nautical miles off Phuket's northwest coast.

A relative of Mr Park confirmed that the body found in the sea belonged to the Korean

national, Thalang police Lt Watcharin Jirathikanwiwat told the *Gazette*.

Fishermen found the body floating in the Andaman Sea off the shore of Sirinath National Park and radioed police.

Authorities dispatched a rescue boat and transported the body to Thalang Hospital to determine cause of death.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong and Winai Sarot**

Russian ignores red flags

A RUSSIAN tourist died at Nai Harn Beach on the evening of June 30, after he ignored red warning flags and went swimming.

"We found the body of Leonid Petrov, 28, lying face up on the sand, with no other signs of struggle or injury on his body" said Capt Wuthiwat Leangboonjinda of the Chalong Police.

"We questioned his friend, Vladimir Avdeev, 23, after the incident. He said that they had gone swimming about 100 meters away from the shore."

Witnesses said waves were about two meters high at the time, and that the pair saw the flags, but went swimming anyway.

"Mr Avdeev said that Mr Petrov was suddenly dragged away by waves. He called out for help and within five minutes, with the help of other people nearby, they dragged Mr Petrov out of the water. They performed CPR, but could not revive him," Capt Wuthiwat said.

Mr Petrov's body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for autopsy.

— **Kritsada Mueanhawong**



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Drug sting snares 52,000 meth pills



One of the suspects point to the vehicle police searched that allegedly contained 48,000 ya bah pills. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

A STING operation in Krabi yielded more than 10-million-baht worth of hard drugs and led to the arrest of two suspected drug dealers on June 29.

The two suspects were named as Amnat-ittirit Lueanloy, 34 and Yuthana Sangkachoti, 39. Both men are from Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

The operation was led by Region 8 Police Headquarters Commander Lt Gen Tesa Siriawato and his team.

"We seized 52,000 pills of ya bah (methamphetamine) from a pick-up truck at a gas station in Khao Phanom sub-district," Gen Tesa said.

"This was part of an ongoing investigation. On June 27, we arrested Piyarat Lanpok

with 178 pills of ya bah," he said. "Ms Piyarat told us that she bought the drugs from the two suspects, so we got her to arrange another meeting."

The men were first caught with 4,000 ya bah pills, but after checking their truck, police found 48,000 more pills stashed in the back.

Both suspects reportedly confessed and were charged with possession of Category 1 drugs with intent to sell.

The suspects told police they had acquired the drugs from Nakhon Sri Thammarat to sell in Krabi.

"We will broaden the case and try to penetrate their network further," Gen Tesa said.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Driver plows into shops



A local points to the crash site. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

RESIDENTS in Krabi Town had a lucky escape when the driver of a pick-up truck fell asleep at the wheel and slammed into a row of shophouses on July 3.

The driver, Surin Sukkawit, 54, a Krabi native, caused extensive damage to the row of shops along Krabi-Kaonthong Road when he lost control of his vehicle after nodding off around 7am.

Mr Surin told police he had been arguing with his wife and hadn't slept enough. He awoke in time to swerve to avoid an electricity pole, but ended up plowing into the shops instead."

No one was injured in the collision.

Mr Surin has been charged with reckless driving causing property damage.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Bombings strike restive South as Ramadan ends

TRAIN services in Narathiwat's Sungai Kolok district were suspended on July 3, following a blast that hit railway tracks in Ruesoh district.

The attack tore apart tracks in about a 20-meter radius. No one was injured as there were no trains in the vicinity at the time of the explosion.

Station chief Manop Muenpreecha, Tanyongmas, said the attack affected six trains running through Sungai Kolok station.

Workers were delayed in repairing the damaged tracks after they had to wait for soldiers to clear the area. Mr Manop said the repair took about two days to complete.

Violence in the neighboring Yala province continued unabated, with two people killed in a bomb attack in Bannang Sata district as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan drew to an end.

Residents and government officials had hoped the ongoing insurgency in the restive Deep South would halt during Ramadan, but such hopes were dashed by the killing of Mahamayuding Puteh and Assuwan Yusoh, along with other attacks across the region.

Both men, who were active in fighting militants in the area, were riding a motorcycle on their way home from a mosque when they were killed by an explosive.

The attack took place in the



Army personnel examine the scene of a bomb detonation in Yala Province that killed two men. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

early hours of July 3. Military officials said bomb squads had to wait until morning before inspecting the scene near a bridge in the district.

Police found a damaged motorcycle as well as debris from a fire extinguisher and electronic circuits.

They estimated that the explosive used in the attack weighed about 10 kilograms.

Police said the victims were linked to Pol General Sompnen Eksomya, a former Bannang Sata police chief killed in an attack in 2010.

Also at the weekend, a

bomb squad destroyed an explosive device that was found beside an electricity pole near Yaha Crown Prince Hospital in Yala's Yaha district.

They used a high-pressure water gun to disable the device.

In Narathiwat province, a bomb hidden near a road was triggered in Yi-ngor district on July 2, as a team of 15 soldiers passed by on the way back to their base.

The explosion wounded two soldiers who were travelling in the back of the vehicle.

— The Nation

Insurgents killed, rangers wounded

TWO suspected insurgents were killed and two paramilitary rangers slightly wounded in a clash on the morning of July 2 in Narathiwat's Rusoh district.

Colonel Hanpol Phetchmoung, commander of the 43rd paramilitary regiment, and Colonel Pasit Chanlekha, commander of the 46th paramilitary regiment, led 24 armed rangers to search a house in Ban Uyi, Tambon Laloh, where suspected insurgents including Abdul-asae Sika - wanted for at least five national security cases - may have been hiding.

As officers surrounded the house, two men inside opened fire with M16 and AK-47 rifles

in an apparent bid to get away. This resulted in several sessions of short gunfire.

Deputy head of the Fourth Army Region Major General Chinnawat Maendech and Narathiwat Taskforce chief Colonel Ekarat Changkaew hurried to the scene along with police to observe the stand-off, while relatives of the suspects and local religious leaders were also on hand to negotiate their surrender.

After three hours of talks that failed to yield any result, and the suspects reportedly still shooting, officers decided to storm the building. This ended with the two suspects being killed. The deceased were identified as Abdul-asae and

another man named Ali Sulong - both allegedly Runda Kumpulan Kecil operatives. Officers also seized an M16 rifle and an AK-47 rifle from the scene.

It was also reported that, following the clash, officers also brought several people into custody for questioning.

The two officers who were slightly wounded in the clash were identified as Sergeant Kampol Wisit and Sergeant Sabidi Bula.

The operation was part of the authorities' response to the March 13 seizure of Cho Airong Hospital by insurgents, who used it as a base to attack Ranger Company 4816.

— The Nation

BKK students arrested for violence

TWO vocational students have been arrested for allegedly shooting at rival students in a bus in Bangkok's Min Buri District on June 27, injuring four people, said deputy police chief General Pongsapat Pongcharoen..

Natthapong Sangthong and Pakhawat Tanma, both 20, were presented to the media at the Min Buri Police Station along with a shotgun, four bullets, a Honda Wave motorcycle and the clothes the two were wearing on the day of the incident.

Both students' parents brought them to surrender to police after the incident.

Pakhawat has reportedly confessed to driving the motorcycle while Natthapong, riding pillion, shot at the bus.

They said that they had exchanged verbally abusive remarks with other students on the bus, whom they pursued when Mr Natthapong opened fire, wounding three students and a Myanmar bystander.

PM disagrees with enlisting unruly students

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha has changed his mind about conscripting students caught brawling or motor racing into military services in the restive deep South, arguing the move would put other soldiers' lives in danger.

He said he had not yet thought of other potential solutions to solve problems associated with wayward students.

It is compulsory for all qualified Thai men aged 21 to 30 who have not voluntarily joined the military to draw lots annually to determine who is conscripted into the armed services.

It had been proposed that students charged with brawling or motor racing would be conscripted automatically, without drawing lots.

Deputy PM Prawit Wongsuwan said he supported the proposal, but that some laws would need to be amended if the proposal were adopted.

National police chief General Chakthip Chaijinda also threw his weight behind the proposal. He said they would take legal action against students who misbehave and that offending students should be sent to live in the south so they received 'life experience'.



Customs dept aims to 'reduce human error'

THE Customs Department is upgrading its IT system to reduce judgement calls on product price-setting and other elements, with the implementation slated to begin on 144 major import items later this month.

The department will begin with goods shipped through the country's two largest deep-sea ports, Laem Chabang Port and Bangkok Port, said Kulit Sombatsiri, its director-general.

The measure came after the department found it might miss its fiscal 2016 tax-collection target by 6 billion baht.

Of the amount, B2.4bn is earmarked to come from free-trade agreements the country signed with trading partners, which would be about 9 per cent short of this fiscal year's revenue target of 120bn baht.

Public calls for death penalty for alleged rapist, murderer

CALLS for the death penalty against rapists are growing in the wake of the murder of a young female teacher, who died at the hands of a former convict.

Chatri Ruamsoongnern, 27, has confessed to slitting the throat of a 26-year-old teacher to steal her valuables in Saraburi Province. He has denied attempting to rape her, but evidence at the scene reportedly suggested otherwise. Tests

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

are ongoing to determine whether the teacher was sexually violated.

Mr Chatri emerged as the prime suspect because he and the victim were neighbors, and he had been previously convicted of raping a friend's wife.

The victim's family was joined by many social media users in demanding that the harshest penalty be meted out in the case.

BMA blind to acknowledge Bangkok's water flooding

THE Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has been accused of misrepresenting Bangkok's chronic flooding problem by continually labelling floodwater as "water to be drained away".

"It's definitely flooding and it reflects that the BMA has failed to draw up efficient flood-prevention systems,"

Assoc Prof Suwatthana Chittalakorn said on June 30, in his capacity as a member of the Engineering Institute of Thailand's water-resources engineering subcommittee.

Many parts of the capital were under water last week, when rainfall was recorded at slightly over 60 millimetres per hour. "With that rainfall, all rainwater should have gone away within 10-15 minutes. If you can't do that, you must admit that it's flooding," Suwatthana said.

The committee's secretary, Asst Prof Sitang Pilailar, said the BMA had spent billions of baht on flood prevention since 2014, but to date had failed to deliver any impressive results.

The expert said the BMA should know which parts of the capital were low-lying and flood prone but it still lacked efficient plans to prevent flooding.

PM tells rivals to set aside their enmities

PRIME Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on June 30 called on politicians to set aside rivalries to allow the country to move forward.

He said politicians should be engaged in 'constructive talks' that focus on reconciliation, instead of creating more conflict.

"Old problems must be put aside so the country will be able to move forward. No reform will happen this way," the prime minister said.

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Phuket Gazette

Last resort for Thai hoteliers

DESPITE the additional damage it may inflict on Phuket's long moribund property market, the Thai Hotels Association (THA) is justified in pushing the government for better enforcement of the Hotel Act.

This legislation was intended to create some semblance of a level playing field over the vast and varied Thai lodgings industry, but its reasonable objectives have not been met due to lack of enforcement. In fact, the unfair situation it was meant to redress has only worsened since its enactment back in 2004.

One of the key measures of the Act was the requirement that rooms in condos, apartment blocks and similar establishments no longer be rented out on a daily basis (see story, page 19.)

This restriction is justified given all of the safety measures and other requirements that legally-registered hotels must adhere to. These include the need to report all foreign guests to the Immigration Bureau within 24 hours, to mention just one. In Phuket, hotels are also required to pay the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization's 1 per cent tax on rental income.

Being totally 'off the grid' when it comes to paying tax, their illegal counterparts are not burdened by such expenses and safety requirements. This allows the owners and agents of the gray market rooms to easily undercut the legally-registered hotels, at least in terms of price. While this may be good news for budget travelers, paid sex practitioners and criminals on the lam, it is patently unfair to the minority of accommodation establishments that actually play by the rules.

The proliferation of unregistered accommodation establishments has very significantly changed the landscape of the Thai lodgings market. Even now, it is possible to find 500-baht-a-night accommodation in no-questions-asked 'resorts' that may as well be located on former planet Pluto, for all the Revenue Department knows of their existence.

But the warnings to Phuket condo owners that they risk prison terms for renting out rooms on a daily basis come from, among other agencies, the corruption-tainted Phuket Land Department (PLD). For the sake of the minority who do play by the rules, we hope that the PLD's impending enforcement effort is a bit more sincere than some of its previous work – such as the vetting of land title applications.



Beaches in Thailand are public

Re: Bangkok Broadcasting charging for beach access, Jul 4
What a shocking story.

The governor's office has announced repeatedly – over and over again this year – that all beaches will be cleaned up and that all furniture and shops will be removed from them.

Also, all beaches in Thailand are public and no one can charge anything for access to them.

So how is this broadcasting company able to get away with this?

*Investigator
Gazette forum*

Letters to the Editor

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

simply leave the red flags in place all the time.

Thus people have come to understand that red flags just mean 'No lifeguard on duty', and not the clear warning of 'Dangerous Conditions – Do Not Swim' that it needs to be.

Beach-goers, regardless of their experience, then simply make their own assessment of the surf conditions.

*CaptainJack
Gazette forum*

must be considered. Stocks are not limitless and damage to breeding stock can be catastrophic.

Money, unfortunately, can override sustainability.

*Shaun Toomey
Facebook*

A little respect for the departed, please

Re: Raging bull elephant tears apart owner, Jul 5

My condolences to Khun Ta's family. And yes, I also wish that elephants and monkeys get treated better. But the kind of *schadenfreude* I've read in the comments section made me sick to my stomach. If we enjoy the death of people just to prove a point, then there's no wonder we live in a crappy world.

*Valérie Gouverneur
Facebook*

Why were there no safety precautions

Re: Construction worker killed in scaffold fall, Jul 1

No harness, not clipped on, manual handling where automation should have been implemented. Had he been involved in a JRA, were the hazards identified before starting the work? No, then the family should take the company to court and not for 5,000 baht. When will things change in this country?

*Graeme Ian Smith
Facebook*

Seems like nothing will change after all

Re: Thailand to raise water transport safety standards in Andaman Sea, Jul 4

Bla bla bla, and nothing will be enforced.

There will also be no tougher training and exams for captains and no change in boat-crew mentality, so nothing will change.

*sh
Gazette forum*

Need to have 'no lifeguard' signs to warn swimmers

Re: Russian tourist dies in red flag zone at Nai Harn, Jul 1

Unfortunately, our lifeguards, when we are lucky enough to have them, tend to

Favorite breakfast in Thailand still

Re: Ministry of Farang Affairs: Worship Thai basil pork, Jul 3
Pad Kaprow Moo Kai Dao Rad Khao – one of my favorites for breakfast.

Still going strong after living here for 20 years.

*Fritz Penguin
Gazette forum*

Numbers and wastages must be duly considered

Re: 'Fish are scarce' report Krabi fishermen, Jul 2

Fish stocks all over the world must be treated like a herd.

Numbers, ages and wastage

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Clearing cluttered cables

FIRST PERSON

AS WE all know, the problem of tangled overhead cables has been going on for so long that it seems to have become a part of our everyday lives and we have learned to ignore it. Recently, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft and the richest man in the world, posted on his Facebook account about the lack of proper management of wires in Thailand.

The post went viral and generated a lot of interest. In response, the government proposed a plan to reorganize all the wires and bury them underground within five years. This project is to be carried out in several major cities, such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket, with a total budget of 43 billion baht.

We must acknowledge that this tangled mess is not just because of electricity wires, but mostly telephone and internet cables. Only one of the wires is for electricity – the rest are from more than 10 different telecommunication companies. Some of these wires are unused, but they haven't been removed due to a lack of resources.

Another reason for this mess is that we don't have a long term plan for infrastructure, building projects or a road map to prevent future problems. Each company has individually installed lines without cooperating or coordinating with the others, which has led to the mess we see now.

The PEA has issued strict orders to these companies to sort out their wires, but it hasn't worked so far because of the lack of cooperation, as I just mentioned. Only a handful of companies paid heed, and we don't have the authority to man-



Wichan Praenam is a Phuket native and the manager of the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA), Thalang Office. He has been working in this position since 2014. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management from Phuket Rajabhat University.

Here he talks about unorganized overhead cables and the progress the PEA has made to improve the situation.

date it. Some companies even installed wires without notifying us or seeking permission.

Last month, some wires in Bangkok caught fire and caused a blackout in the surrounding areas. The fire brigade had to get there and put out the flames, causing a huge traffic jam. Similar situations have arisen in several provinces, including Phuket, in the past.

Some areas in Phuket, Bangkok, Hat Yai and Chiang Mai have started burying their cables underground to clean up the area. Phuket has an ongoing project to bury the unsightly power cables stretching along Patong's beachfront road this year. The project was announced during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Patong Municipality and the PEA last year.

The PEA chose to work with Patong Municipality because it is a primary tourist destination and drives the economy of Phuket. At present, tourists see messy, disorganized cables that destroy the beauty of the area and are difficult to maintain.

This 230-million-baht project, which will cover the three kilometer stretch of Thawee-wong Road, will be jointly funded by both groups, with the

PEA providing 153mn baht and the municipality adding the rest.

Another ongoing project is in Phuket Town, which is jointly funded by the PEA and the Phuket City Municipality.

The PEA has already finished burying the electricity mains cables on Krabi and Dibuk Roads. We are now focusing on burying the mains supply along sections of Yaowarat Road. The road will then be resurfaced and the obsolete concrete poles will be removed.

When the project is done, Phuket Town will look more beautiful and attract more tourists. We are glad that the reaction to the completion of our wireless projects so far has been positive. A lot of areas still have overhead cables, but the best we can do at the moment is to combine all the wires together.

In developed countries, we don't see messy wires because they spend a considerable amount of money on going wireless. However, due to the cost of underground maintenance and construction, this can be very expensive.

We are slowly, but surely, making progress on this front. The government plans to manage this problem step by step and we will support them all the way.



A year ago, Mai Khao was breathtakingly beautiful. Photo: Gazette file

Phuket beaches need tender, loving care

Island View

By Zohaib Sikander

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

IT'S been a year since I came to Phuket and I have managed to discover a lot more of the island than many others who've been living here a lot longer than I have. This is mostly because I didn't fuss or spend hours reading reviews or deciding where to go. I simply opened up Google Maps, 'dropped a pin' onto a water body I hadn't seen before and hopped onto my bike to discover what lay there.

So far, every single trip has been worth it. However, I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to do that, given the rate at which we're destroying nature. Marine life is dying, wastewater is flowing freely into the ocean and now private companies have stepped into the mix and started charging for beach access. I, for one, am at a loss to keep up with the whole mess.

However, I'm sure the authorities know best and have planned accordingly, and unlike numerous visitors and expats who are constantly complaining about how the beaches have become inaccessible and how greed drives everything here, I trust that the authorities are going to do what's right for Thailand, not just what the tourists want.

Tourists are guests and their

needs deserve attention, but they don't realize how much damage they cause during their short stay. A few weeks of shenanigans in Phuket has an adverse impact on both the people and the place. Why is it that tourists feel that the locals owe them a good time? Why do they 'deserve' unlimited access to beaches that they trash and never look back on?

I visited Mai Khao Beach about a year ago, and then again a few months ago. The difference was appalling. There were used condoms, empty beer bottles, discarded slippers, just bags full of trash strewn about on a beach that I had, not many months ago, seen in spotless condition. The difference seems to point to low season versus high season crowds.

It's pretty clear what needs to be done, yet we beat about the bush and point fingers, but never really seem to do anything about it. I wish the authorities well on their mission to 'reclaim' Phuket beaches for the locals and for others who truly care about preserving it's pristine beauty.

Words from the Wise

"The trouble with having an open mind, of course, is that people will insist on coming along and trying to put things in it."

– Terry Pratchett

"We are all here on earth to help others; what on earth the others are here for I don't know."

– W. H. Auden

"I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by."

– Douglas Adams

Issues & Answers

Are weighing scales checked by officials?

I USUALLY visit the fresh market behind Anuphas Golf Ville in Kathu. On most days, it seems that the vendors make up the price according to where they think the customer is from.

Are local fruit and vegetable markets required to show prices per kilo? Are weighing scales checked by any sort of official weights and measures office?

G Horne
Kathu

Phuket Commerce Chief

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Decha Petchwong replies:

Officials from the Central Bureau of Weights and Measures are scheduled to check

weights and measures at every local market this week.

If you suspect that you are being charged an unfair price, you can ask the vendor directly. If they refuse to answer you or you feel you are being cheated, don't buy from that vendor and choose another one. However, we can assure you that we keep a continuous check on their activities.

Thank you for informing us. We will specify that this market be checked during the inspection.

It doesn't take an adviser to trade

Finance

By David Mayes

YOU DON'T need a brokerage account or a financial adviser to get involved in the market.

Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) are index funds that can be accessed through a low-cost online platform and give an almost identical return as those of the underlying market they represent. However, you can still lose a fortune very quickly if you don't know what you are doing.

Keep in mind that markets crash; if you buy at a peak, even with an ETF, you could still lose your life savings. I wouldn't recommend simply throwing a massive chunk of money straight into ETFs without considering where we are in the market cycle. Even then it would be inadvisable without at least breaking that money into several chunks and averaging in.

The best strategy would be to patiently wait for a crash and then start averaging in. Playing the waiting game can be frustrating, and I'm sure I sound like a doomsday evangelist telling the whole world that a crash is coming. But in the long run, markets always crash and patience pays off big time if you can wait for those



Performance charts for exchange traded funds on American markets. Low-cost trading tools and platforms have democratized trading, but you can still lose your shirt if you're not careful. Photo: Gazette file

super sale discounts on your ETF purchases.

For most people who are in long-term planning mode and will simply be looking for a place to safely stash away some cash every month for retirement; use a world index. You don't need to get fancy. Find a safe MSCI world index ETF and put a little bit in every month regardless of what the markets are doing.

Now comes the hard part: ignore it. Don't let your emotions get the better of you

when, eight years into a bull market, it looks like you have averaged 30 per cent a year. Most people project this kind of performance perpetually into the future and then are crushed when the crash inevitably comes.

Don't panic when the markets crash and your retirement nest egg goes from 300K to 175K. If anything, simply scale back the amount you invest if it's been more than six or seven years since the last crash, put that money in a

separate cash account, and when the crash comes put this in over the course of a year in four equal chunks.

That all sounds very easy, but it's the most difficult thing to do as an investor. They call it "sitting on your hands" and advisers almost never can do it.

For one, clients feel like you aren't doing any work for them, so most advisers feel the need to constantly make small changes in portfolios, even if it's to the client's detriment. Of

course these changes make the client feel warm and fuzzy and if an adviser does what is actually in the best interest of a client they'll often lose them. Understand that and it'll be much easier to sit on your hands with your portfolio.

Start liquidating your ETF's when you get to within a decade of your retirement. Something like 10 per cent per year should work just fine. Of course if markets have just crashed I would give it three to four years to recover before beginning to average out.

Hopefully, we will be in an environment in the future where interest rates are at normal levels and you can put the proceeds into high quality bond funds that pay you a dividend you can live on. Unfortunately for those needing income right now, bonds are extremely dangerous, but in 10 to 20 years let's hope things get back to normal.

David Mayes MBA, resides in Phuket and provides wealth management and life coaching services to expatriates around the globe, specializing in UK pension transfers. He is a regional representative of Faramond Group, located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Faramond UK is regulated by the FCA to provide advice on pensions and taxation. He can be reached at 085-335-8573 or david.m@faramond.com

Gov't to offer prizes to encourage e-payments

THE Ministry of Finance announced it will offer a monthly 5.5 million baht prize to shoppers in an effort to encourage the adoption of an electronic payment program and to discourage shoppers from using cash.

The PromptPay program is a part of the government's National e-Payment Project,

which is part of its infrastructure development strategy.

The money transfer service requires users to link their national ID or mobile phone number to their accounts. Banks will accept registrations through ATMs, online banking, mobile banking and branches.

Some banks will begin pre-registration between July 1 and

14, and on July 15, all banks across the country will officially launch the PromptPay registration service.

By signing up for PromptPay, users will be saved the trouble of remembering account numbers while the transferees will enjoy greater security by not having to disclose their account details, Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong said.

The Prompt Pay system was introduced by the Bank of Thailand (BOT) in June, in collaboration with the Government Savings Bank, the Government Housing Bank, the Islamic Bank of Thailand, the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives, along with 15 other financial banks.

To further promote the use of e-payments, Mr. Apisak said



Users can register for PromptPay through ATMs. Photo: Mattes

stores that have been registered with the Department of Business Development will be asked to install an electric data capture (EDC) machine in September, to let shoppers pay without using cash.

A lucky drawing will also be held once a month to award 5.5 million baht to a lucky shopper

who has paid via an e-payment method and another 1.5 million baht to a lucky store owner who has installed the EDC machine. The Finance Minister claimed the money will come from organizations that support the Prompt Pay system not the government's budget.

— *Phuket Gazette*

Aging population threatens demographic, economic shift

FINANCIAL constraints and dramatic changes in employment numbers are expected to hit Phuket over the next 15 years, as an increasing percentage of the province's population grows old.

The Phuket Statistical Office estimates about 34,000 out of the 379,000 registered residents across the province are aged 60 years or older. That 9.2 per cent of the island's population is growing and changing the economical outlook of the province.

Thailand as a whole is growing older. According to the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, nearly one-third of the Kingdom's population will be over 60 years old by 2031.

The Thailand Research Fund organized a forum on June 1 in

Phuket addressing the ramifications of the demographic shift and its economic implications. At the forum, experts presented ways for the province to prepare for the eventual societal shift and to cushion the economic impact. "This does not mean that the elderly population is growing, but instead that the percentage of young people at work is shrinking," said Deputy Prime Minister Prajin Juntong last month.

With the ratio of young working people decreasing and the number of older retirees increasing, Mr Prajin said it is imperative for the Thai economy to find a way to allow the elderly to continue contributing to society and the economy.

Thailand's aging population is a delicate political issue, with

retirees comprising some 15 per cent of the country's population, they represent a substantial political bloc, should they galvanize. Recent proposals by central government officials to raise the retirement age from 60 have been shot down in seeming deference to that power, even as the National Council for Peace and Order considers eliminating government payouts to retirees that earn 9,000 baht a month or more.

Estimations from Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Economics show that the proposal to extend the mandatory retirement age would only be able to stall the economic impact of the retirement population by about ten years.

At the forum in Phuket, Chulalongkorn University

Dean Worawet Suwanrada said that instead of kicking the proverbial can down the road, the government and private sector need to integrate retirees into the national economy, particularly those who are dependent on government payouts of 600 to 1,000 baht per month.

"The first challenge Thailand has to tackle is how to ensure the quality of life for the elderly," Mr Worawet said. "The second challenge is to ensure economic vibrancy in the aged community, while the third is to prevent and reduce the number of elderly from being abandoned."

Surveys revealed that many of Thailand's 7.8 million retirees do still work, operating small, home-owned businesses such as shops and restaurants.

— *Phuket Gazette*

BOT begins asset-based lending plan



The seal of the Bank of Thailand.

THAILAND'S central bank is relaxing its lending requirements for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups, the government's media arm reported on June 30.

The new criteria would allow borrowers to put up bank deposits, investment shares, inventories and intellectual property for asset-ensured loans.

The National News Bureau reported that the BOT worked with the Department of Business Development to streamline business registrations and guarantees, as well as with valuers' associations to determine the framework for business and intellectual property assessment in preparation for the new credit system.

The scheme was launched as a supplement to the 2015 Business Security Act, which took effect on July 2.

— *Phuket Gazette*

Brexit to cost Thailand B44bn

ECONOMISTS are predicting that Thailand's gross domestic product and exports will be lower this year due to Britain's decision to leave the European Union.

The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce reports that the Thai economy could expand by as little as 2.7 to 3.2 per cent this year, instead of the forecasted three to 3.5 per cent growth predicted before the June 23s 'Brexit' referendum.

"Although the Thai economy is still strong, the gloomy forecast for global economic growth will affect Thai trade and tourism," said Thanavath Phonvichai, director of the university's Economic and Business Forecasting Center (EBFC).

The lackluster economic outlook was seconded by the Thai National Shippers Council, which sees exports suffering a two per cent decline, rather than the previously forecasted flat growth rate for this year.

Economists are predicting that the government's investment programs will be a key economic engine, with an expected 400 billion baht to be injected into the economy over the second half of 2016.

The EBFC predicts that the total economic impact of the Brexit vote on Thailand will



A freighter enters Laem-Chabang, the 22nd busiest port in the world, near Bangkok. Photo: LOC Group

amount to 44.85 billion baht.

Of that, 24.85 billion would come from a drop in exports, as exports to Europe decline by 14.2 billion baht, and to other countries by Bt10.65 billion.

Thanavath said that with the impact from the reduced trading with the UK, the EU and other markets, Thai exports would face a contraction of 1-2 per cent this year, down from the previous growth projection of zero to 1 per cent.

Lower exports will be the result mainly of the depreciation of the pound and the euro against the baht and US dollar.

The university's survey of

businesses found that they had high anxiety over the long-term impact of the Brexit decision, as it could trigger global economic stagnation.

Most enterprises were concerned about higher debt.

Enterprises in the export sector were concerned that direct investment from the EU and the UK to Thailand would soften, while domestic traders were worried that their debt would rise because of lower profit and liquidity.

Ten billion baht is expected to be lost across the Kingdom's tourism sector, with an estimated 120,000 fewer European

travellers – including from the United Kingdom – coming to Thailand, along with an estimated 80,000 fewer travellers from other countries. That puts the number of foreign arrivals to 33.3 million this year, which is expected to cost another 10 billion from slowing domestic spending as consumers fret over future growth.

Thanavath said Thailand should urgently study the possibility of launching talks with the UK on a bilateral free-trade agreement as well as resume FTA negotiations with the EU itself.

— *The Nation*



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HQ Beach Lounge launch party

HQ Beach Lounge at Kamala Beach staged its grand opening party on July 1. Guests from around the island and beyond filled the fun new venue, which is operated by the Twinpalms Group. Photos courtesy of The Guide Phuket.



Sittichai Jitnatham, Twinpalms Phuket's Hotel Manager (second left) and Somjai Tungkoo (third left), Twinpalms Phuket's Group Executive Manager greet guests arriving at the party.



Eric Smulders (center) proves that red tiger print trousers never went out of fashion, with his partner Uraiphan 'Oe' Saesin (left) and Prof Dr Nabil Samman from Hong Kong.



Rose and Hajo von Keller enjoying the grand opening celebrations.



(L to R) Sin Ling, Freya Eve and Pongsapak 'JJ' Upatising take a moment to relax during the grand opening festivities.



Nattanit Suwit, CEO of International Villas Phuket (center) joins the party.



(I to R) Atchara Kaewmuneerat, Srisoonthorn Kindergarden School director, Srisoonthorn Mayor Worawut Songyot and Mayor Worawut's secretary.

Phuket kids join Hatyaivichakarn



Srisoonthorn Kindergarden School director Atchara Kaewmuneerat (back row, third left) with staff and some of her lucky students, who brought home many medals from the 12th Hatyaivichakarn educational camp, held in Hat Yai, June 22-24.

ents in Paradise

Coca-Cola pledges support for Taekwondo Association

Companies under the Coca-Cola (Thailand) umbrella pledged their support for three athletes from the Taekwondo Association of Thailand to help finance their appearances at the 2016 Olympics in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. A part of the funding provided by Coca-Cola will be used to help develop the next wave of Thailand's taekwondo athletes.



(L to R) Veera Akaraputhiporn, Advisor of Thai Namthip Ltd; Sedef Salangan Sahin, General Manager of Coca-Cola (Thailand) Ltd; Major General Patchara Rattakul, Chief Operating Officer of Haad Thip PCL; Pimol Srivikorn, President of the Taekwondo Association of Thailand; and Dr Somkid Pinthong, Secretary, Taekwondo Association of Thailand.

Phuket Raceweek 2016 ready to roll

Media invited to Cape Panwa Hotel on July 1 were pleased to learn that the 13th Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek is ready to welcome more than 400 sailors and friends from 30 countries, visiting the island to take part in four days of sail racing. Races will take place off Phuket's southeast coast from July 20-24.



(L to R) Poomiphat Navanukroh, Travel Industry Group Director of Cape & Kantary Hotels; Byron Jones, Managing Director of Media Business Services Co Ltd, organizers of the Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek; Assoc Prof Dr Chavane Tongroach, Vice Minister of Tourism and Sports; Phuket Vice-Governor Dr Prajiad Aksornthammakul; and Uthit Limsakul, Assistant Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Phuket Office.



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Suffering for a worthy cause

By David Mayes

JUST by reading this you are doing something 611,000 children in Thailand cannot do, which is read at the most basic level.

The Asia Center Foundation is a well-established organization doing great work here in Phuket. They provide basic education as well as safe houses for the poorest of the poor – helping not only Thai but Burmese children as well. They received a generous donation of 12 rai of land in Kathu to build a permanent pre- and primary school (including a youth center), however they have not been able to raise enough funds to even get the first phase of the project off the ground.

This is where we come in. They are currently 3 million baht short of what's needed to get the first school building, capable of educating up to 80 pre-school children, built and operational. My job is simple. I just need to do a half Ironman every day for 39 days.

Your job is to reach deep and help me spread the word. A half Ironman is a short 1.9 kilometer swim, 90km bike ride, and 21km half-marathon run. I won't pretend this isn't a shameless way to generate



At least 611,000 children in Thailand cannot read at the most basic level. Photo: Masae

publicity for my various businesses, but I intend to form a long-lasting partnership with the foundation and continue to support them with my new learning center; not only by raising the funds to build them a school, but with ongoing support on the instructional side as well. Hopefully the fact I am willing to suffer a bit will allow you to overlook my selfishness.

I also want to show my own children, those who come to study with us, and my other team members in my supplement business that I run, that

they should walk the walk, dream bigger, step outside their comfort zones, and aim to achieve their goals, even if they seem big and scary.

I want them to not only listen to my words, but watch what I do. I will continue to teach my children a few hours every morning during the challenge before heading out each day around lunch time.

This challenge came about as a result of others doing much bigger endurance challenges – I have simply been inspired, and am walking in the shadows of others. I have

a tremendous support base for this, from my Unicity family supporting my nutrition, to all of the children at the Asia Center Foundation and my own learning center supporting my spirit, which will be crucial in helping get me through the 39 grueling days.

I will start from my house on my 39th birthday, which is on July 25, and cycle over to Anthem Wake Park where I will do the 1.9km swim.

After that, I will do three 30km loops on quiet back roads between Cherngtalay and Baan Pruchampa, before

transitioning to the run from my house. The run will go out and back twice along the Bang Naew Reservoir, a beautiful hidden paradise near the Heroine's Monument.

Anyone is welcome to come and tag along during the 39 days, but I have planned this to be unsupported. All I ask of others is to give generously to the Asia Center Foundation.

Any emotional support that pops up will simply be an added bonus.

Find me by searching on Facebook for 'half iron x39'. I am the only dummy that will turn up in the search results. Follow me as I drag myself around my personal half ironman course, and more importantly please share and encourage your friends to share further. Encourage them to ask their friends to share as well.

This is the key to getting the message to spread quickly. The more people we reach out to, the faster the foundation can get 80 new children into their program.

To learn more about the Asia Center Foundation, visit asiacenterfoundation.org. Donations can be made online at youcaring.com/halfironx39forasiacenterfoundation.

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Indulge your cheesebuds

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

THREE hungry *Gazette* editors with a craving for cheese descended on Only Cheese in Kathu for lunch last week, and much to the annoyance of other team members' couldn't stop talking about it for a week afterward.

Whether you are a cheese lover (as the three of us certainly are) or not, there's something for everyone on the menu. At first glance, it looks like an after-school hangout with a bold orange sign out front and an entire wall lined with Instagram pictures inside. Even the menu, hotplates and décor inside are orange. But don't let any of that put you off. Just think about all the thick, gooey cheese you are about to consume.

Everything on the menu is surprisingly cheap and the por-



You can watch your food being cooked on a hotplate at your own table. Photo: M Aijaz Hussain

tions are generous. Between the three of us, we had seafood, ham and spinach, mashed potatoes, lasagna and a big bowl of piping-hot cheese with garlic bread.

The selling point for me is having my food cooked right at

the table in front of my own eyes, on my very own hotplate. Another is the fact that the food is surprisingly light, considering everything is cooked on a bed of cheese.

However, nowhere on the menu does it say what kind of

cheese it is, delicious though it may be. Perhaps it didn't make the cut in the Thai-English translated menu, or perhaps it's a genuine oversight.

In any case, it's value for money and a good choice for a quick bite during lunch.

Get on the wagon for Thai lent

THE GOVERNMENT is calling on all Thais to join in a no-drinking campaign to be held for three months during the upcoming Buddhist Lent starting July 19.

Minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office, ML Panadda Diskul Panadda, said the number of drinkers in Thailand is rising sharply. The government has designated Buddhist Lent Day of every year as Thai Anti-Alcohol Day to encourage drinkers to stay off alcohol throughout Lent.

According to Mr Songkran Pakchokedee, director of the StopDrink Network, the 2015 campaign was successful in keeping over 31,000 participants sober and helped save as much as 112 million baht in spending on liquor. — NNT

Coconut cleanser



Coconuts have been shown to have a variety of health benefits. Some of these include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Preventing obesity | 6. Antibacterial properties |
| 2. Improving digestion | 7. Antifungal properties |
| 3. Reducing sweet cravings | 8. Gluten free |
| 4. Quick energy boost | 9. Boosts immune system |
| 5. High in dietary fiber | 10. Low glycemic index |

Ingredients for a cleansing coconut smoothie:

- 1 young Thai coconut
- 1 handful of green kale
- 1 handful of spinach
- ½ banana

Instructions:

1. Crack open coconut (using a cleaver and extreme care) and pour the coconut water into a blender.
2. Remove coconut meat with a spoon and add to blender.
3. Add kale, spinach, and banana. Blend on high for 30 seconds.
4. Pour the smoothie into the coconut and serve chilled.



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Counting the cost of the Brexit



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

RATHER a lot has changed since my last column, at least in Europe. BREXIT. Lots has been said and written – lies, assumptions, crystal ball gazing and all the political back-biting that comes with such a momentous decision.

I won't go through the details here – there are many better qualified than myself for that – but I will take this chance to polish my own crystal-ball and look at how this could affect Phuket's marine industry.

At first glance, we might think 'it's over there in Europe, nothing has changed here'. That would be a convenient view, but unlikely to be completely accurate.

Right now the UK economy is in turmoil, politically and economically. Granted, the word 'turmoil' is perhaps a little harsh but the fall-out of the public decision, the yet-to-be-taken-if-at-all action by government, and lack of any sensible political leadership, does shine a negative light on the country and creates instability.

Instability equals uncertainty, and uncertainty means delayed decision-making across the board.

It is this instability and cur-



Brits using Pound Sterling to charter or buy yachts in Thailand will be spending more in fees and related costs. Photo: MY Norma by Monte Carlo Yachts

rent drop in currency value that are likely, in my opinion, to have an impact on Phuket. This may take time to filter through. Individuals or businesses may already be feeling it, but from a marine industry perspective, I see three possible areas that will be impacted.

1) Yachting holidays: Anyone with a Pound Sterling (GBP) income is going to have to spend more in Thailand right now for products or services priced in Thai baht. That will apply to charter fees as well as all the peripheral travel costs of on-shore accommodation, food

and beverage, possibly inter-region travel and more."

Those who have already booked and paid, are unlikely to change their charter plans, at least not in any significant number. However, those researching now and planning a charter from Phuket may think twice or delay their decision for more favorable economic times.

2) Yacht purchases: A similar scenario as above may be seen for those purchasing yachts in Thailand. Again, this will be limited to those with GBP income/ savings. If the product is priced in GBP then

the impact will be minimal, possibly only one of confidence what with everything happening in the UK right now, but the financials will still make sense. However, if a yacht is priced in Thai baht, for example a pre-owned yacht, then in GBP terms, said yacht is now more expensive for the buyer, thus likely to result in a delayed decision. Or if the buyer has access to such, the use of an alternative source of non-GBP funds.

3) International yachts basing themselves in Phuket: In the case where overseas yacht

owners choose to base their yachts in Phuket, berthing, maintenance and management fees are all likely to be in Thai baht, thus will appear more expensive to a GBP-holder right now. However, with the significant savings of keeping a yacht in Phuket as opposed to the UK, for example, the owner will still be in a better position. Just not as good a position as they were in a few weeks ago.

These areas of possible impact are all currency-related. While an economist can give a more detailed analysis, I see the GBP correcting itself in due course. Thus, the medium- to long-term impact on Phuket's marine industry should be small.

In terms of the now and the immediate future, the currency issue appears to be limited to the GBP, and thus just one source market for Phuket. However, the bigger impact could come if the EU starts to tumble like a house of cards, as some predict, and with it the Euro. If that happens, the impact on Phuket's marine industry and Phuket as a whole, is likely to be much more significant.

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

Gazette Crossword

Test your word power and local knowledge.

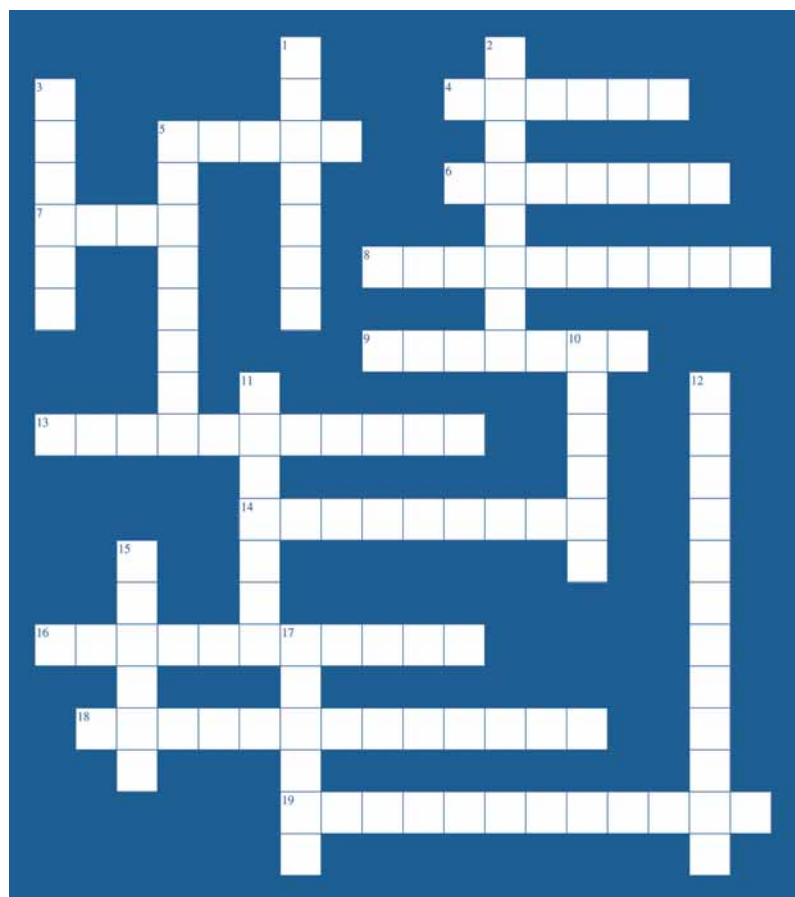
Across

4. Spicy Isarn salad
5. Unrefined
6. Ready to fall apart
7. Traditional Chinese wedding style
8. Phuket on first maps
9. Moderately slow tempo (a walking pace)
13. Chalong Circle and Heroines' Monument
14. Phuket High Commissioner in 1901
16. One-sided battle
18. Phuket FC's new team name
19. Royal cuisine found here, former Governor's Mansion

Down

1. Surrounding body of water
2. Suu Kyi won't say
3. Lacking in strength
5. Current governor's first name
10. Planned short-cut to Patong
11. Carriage for hire
12. Showing or representing unfavorably
15. European expat
17. Showing wear and tear

Solution on opposite page.



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Living in a country of contrasts



Keep It Green

By Patrick Campbell

I WAS once sitting in an open-air Chalong eatery when six uniformed girls arrived for lunch.

Obviously part of a team, they ordered a communal dish, which duly arrived: a large steaming bowl of “tom yam kung” and six smaller bowls. One girl took it upon herself assiduously to clean each bowl by rubbing it with three pink tissues. The bowls were soon positively gleaming, but the crumpled tissues – all eighteen of them – were casually discarded on the floor where the wind immediately began to blow them in all directions.

One small anecdote, it neatly illustrates a fact of life here. There is, laudably, a massive preoccupation with personal hygiene. The girls always look immaculate, and cases of food-poisoning, even in the tin shacks and mobile ‘samlors’ laden with food, are rare.

But there is no corresponding concern for the natural environment. In fact, it appears that trees are there to be hacked down as encumbrances to so-called ‘progress’, proper wastewater and land-fill facilities are low on the list of governmental priorities, unused land is a place to dump rubbish, buses and ancient pick-ups are allowed to spew out toxic fumes, herbicides are used with impunity. I could go on...

Today I drove past Nai Harn



If only people were as concerned with the environment as they were with their own appearances and hygiene, Phuket would be a much more beautiful place. Photo: Gazette file

Beach. In fairness, it is one of the better kept beaches on the island, but there are still no public toilets or showers, and no adequate facility for rubbish disposal. Ironically, there are two prominent visual signs beneath the casuarinas trees – mercifully spared from the axe – which state at what rate different materials degrade. So far, so good. But one of the signs had toppled over in the recent storms, and below each sign were only two containers for rubbish. Two were missing, presumed stolen. Surrounded by plastic bags, they were clearly inadequate.

One finds similar examples all over Phuket: wire cages or plastic bins overflowing with rubbish. It would be much worse were it not for the army

of human scavengers who sift through these smelly piles to salvage glass and plastic bottles, paper and cardboard, aluminum cans and anything remotely recyclable. They are a wonderful asset to the community, and we should all support them by saving our re-useable cast offs for them.

The worst aspect of this mindless dumping is what in the UK is called ‘fly tipping’. As Phuket grows, so do its mounds of rubbish. And since Mr Average shows so little concern for the environment, and does not want to pay for garbage collection, why not find a quiet place, preferably at night and unload all your builder’s rubble, broken glass, plastic and polystyrene packaging, dirty oil, kitchen waste and the rest.

My own residential area in Saiyuan has recently become a focal point for ‘fly tipping’. Since there are green areas – they are getting less green by the day – they are ideal places for plonking a truck load of indigestible and often foul smelling trash.

Unfortunately, even the best intentions don’t always work. The boss of a prominent resort here with impeccable ‘green’ credentials, which converts all its organic rubbish into compost, and separates waste into viable categories, followed the weekly garbage truck to its destination. Instead of being kept separate, the bags all ended up being dumped together.

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

Tip of the week:
Empty Those
Saucers



Cacti don’t do well in water-logged soil.

MANY recent tips have been weather related. But there’s a reason. The storms have been particularly relentless, and gardens that were parched for several months are now saturated.

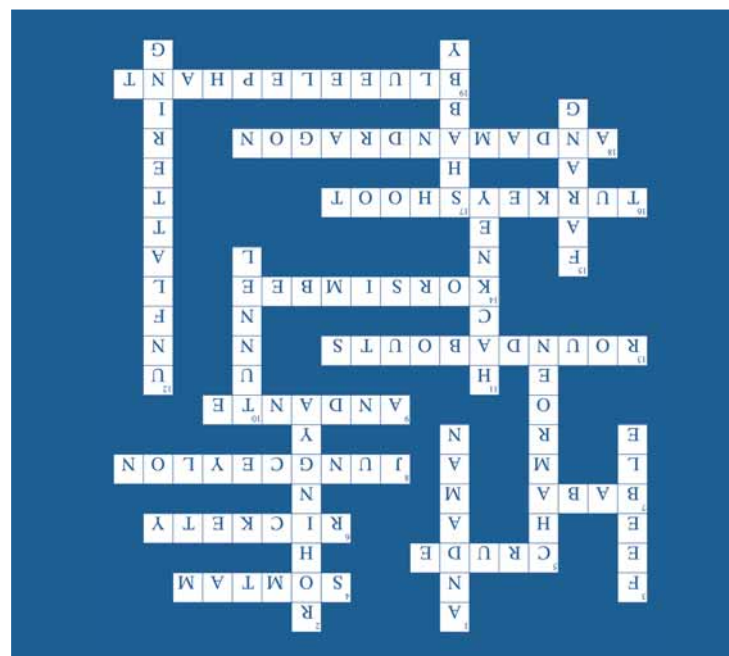
Most soils are pretty effective at self-draining, and Phuket’s sandy, gritty subsoil is no exception. Little horticultural attention is required for free-standing shrubs, except to support overweight branches or prune away excessive growth.

Pots are a bit different. Normally they have platens or saucers which conserve water in the dry season and prevent staining of the tiles or sandwash beneath, but now they are full to overflowing, which is a mixed blessing.

The rain is good for plants that like a lot of moisture, such as heliconias, irises and gingers and most underbrush. However, not so good for lovers of dry or well-drained conditions such as cacti and succulents, yuccas, adeniums and euphorbias. Their roots rot in sodden soil, so empty their platens regularly. You will, in the process, be depriving those pesky mosquitoes of ideal breeding grounds.

Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



Market ripe for the picking



By The Book
Kevin Hodges

"THE time to buy is when there's blood in the streets." – Baron Rothschild.

"You pay a very high price... for a cheery consensus." – Warren Buffett.

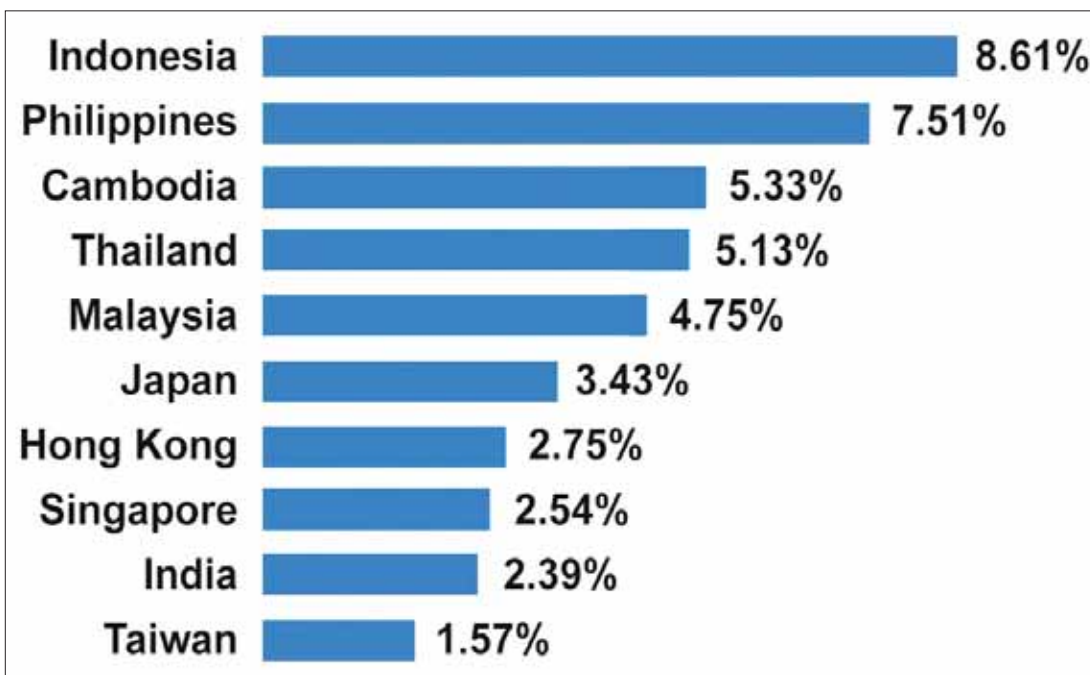
While there certainly isn't blood in the streets here in Phuket, the property market remains slow with a consensus to wait on the side lines. A faltering global economy, the weakness of the European currencies and politics have all contributed to the softness of the market here.

Phuket's rental market has suffered too and is weaker than in recent times. There are less Russians seeking rentals, more hotel rooms and low oil prices mean fewer people from the oil industry seeking rental properties.

However, should we really be feeling so pessimistic about the future?

The answer is no, Phuket's future is very bright. All economies have their peaks and troughs and Phuket will surely rebound soon. With the expanded airport due to open this month, strong and increasing arrivals, improving infrastructure, leisure facilities and continued high season rental demand are just some of the reasons for a positive outlook and expected rebound.

When any market has a cor-



The Asian gross rental returns (or rental yields) figures published by the Global Property Guide are based on the Global Property Guides proprietary in-house research. Image: Global Property Guide Research

rection, opportunities will arise and Phuket's property market is no different. In the resale market, we are now seeing sellers reducing prices, in some cases quite heavily. There are buyers and investors around who are picking up these bargain deals. Property at these lower prices will produce higher than average rental returns but they won't be around forever.

For instance, a 130sqm, foreign freehold 2 bed condo with a partial sea view in Rawai was recently sold for a heavily discounted price of 4.5 million baht. Using conservative rental rates and even at only 60 per cent occupancy, net returns are

projected to be nearly 6 per cent per annum.

The rental rates in the chart above can be compared with the average rental yields throughout the Southeast Asian region. The chart shows the average gross yields for Thailand are 5.13 per cent versus Singapore and Hong Kong where yields are less than 3 per cent. The properties are 120sqm apartments located in premier city centers.

The findings by Global Property Guide Research match those of our in-house research into the average rental returns from properties in Phuket.

The downturn in current mar-

ket conditions has created opportunities for buyers / investors to achieve above average income returns on property purchases. Property is an important part of an investment portfolio and can generate a steady income return through rental incomes and capital gains upon eventual sale and it seems that now is the time to be buying into Phuket. Why wait to pay a higher price once the cheery consensus is that the market has recovered?

For more information about this article contact Kevin Hodges, Siam Real Estate Tel: 076-324042 Email: kevin@siamrealestate.com, siamrealestate.com

Roadshows to offset slow sales



Sales staff with customers at a roadshow. Photo: The Nation

LEADING property developers have turned their attention to overseas roadshows as a means of generating sales at their residential projects, during a period of low overall purchasing power and only slight growth in domestic demand.

One of the main drags on the domestic market is the fact that banks are continuing to severely restrict the approval of mortgages to potential buyers in the middle- to lower-income market.

Despite the baht having appreciated 2.41 per cent from last year, residential prices in Thailand still present an attractive proposition for foreign buyers, especially investors from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Europe, many of whom wish to expand their investment in Asean by using Thailand as the base for their head office in the region.

Some foreign buyers also see residential property in Thailand as a good investment for the long term, especially in Bangkok, where prices are still lower than those in their own country.

– The Nation

Phuket to benefit from Phang Nga airport

A NEW airport in the works in Phang Nga will help ease air traffic issues in Phuket, Phang Nga Governor Pakkapong Tawiphat told the *Gazette* late last month.

"The airport is set to be located in Thai Muang District. The project is backed by a private company that has asked to remain nameless for the time being," the governor says. "The airport will be situated about 40 kilometers from Phuket International Airport (PIA). Its dimensions and other details have not yet been disclosed."

The site is roughly 10km north of Thai Muang and 27km south of Khao Lak.

The governor noted that the traffic going through PIA is now about 12 million travellers per year, while its current capacity



The site is roughly 10km north of Thai Muang and 27km south of Khao Lak. Image: Gazette file

is only 6.5 million. He added that public hearings would be held to determine whether locals support the idea or not.

Airports of Thailand Plc President Nitinai Sirismat-

thakarn told the *Gazette* that any further expansion of the domestic terminal building in Phuket will not be possible due to the limitations of the land on which the airport is built. The only op-

tions remaining for further airport development would be extension into the sea or removal of the surrounding hills, he said.

"A lot of people ask the AoT, 'what are we going to do after the last phase of Phuket Airport is complete for [a capacity of] 18 million passengers?' I just ask them back: 'what is Phuket City going to do about the traffic?' The bottlenecks are in the city, not at the airport," said Mr Nitinai.

Environmental experts have shot down the runway expansion plans due to concerns about the negative impact on the environment.

"The expansion of the runway is not the only option we have," said marine expert Dr Thon Thamrongnawasawat.

"The sea is the heart of

Phuket; to expand into the sea means to attack the heart. We must think about the consequences before we do anything further."

Dr Thon also warned that if construction begins, he would consult with environmentalists to oppose the project.

"I completely disagree with the idea as it will harm the environment. Nai Yang and Mai Khao beaches are also home to turtles, who will be adversely affected by the construction," said Dr Thon.

"I am not trying to prevent economic growth, but rather suggesting that growth should come from abundant natural resources, and that they should be kept safe for our future generations as well."

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Crackdown on condo owners

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

CONDOMINIUM owners in Phuket caught renting out their units on a daily basis face fines and jail time if they do not register their properties as hotels.

Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat reaffirmed on July 5 that there would be a renewed crackdown on owners of condominium complexes and individual unit owners, after the provincial land office issued a warning letter to condo owners in Phuket on June 9.

The letter, signed by Phuket Land Office chief Wisit Chokchai, warned that anyone found illegally running hotel-like accommodation faces fines of up to 20,000 baht and prison terms of up to one year, possibly both.

"Phuket officially has about 50,000 hotel rooms but we know that there are in fact close to 100,000 rooms in the province that are being operated like hotels through rentals on a daily basis," said the vice governor.

"We aim to make Phuket a model province in this respect, so all those rooms must be registered under the Hotel Act BE



Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat reaffirmed that there would be a renewed crackdown on owners of condominiums and individual unit owners who are operating illegally as hotels. Photo: Gazette File

2004, which was a directive issued by the Interior Ministry."

The vice governor said the reasons for this were twofold; safety issues for foreigners and loss of income for the government.

"Government officers are carrying out monthly inspections to ensure all such

properties in Phuket are properly registered. Unregistered condo owners who rent their rooms out on a daily basis are doing so illegally and are damaging the industry for those who do follow the rules.

"Above all, we are concerned about tourist safety, as those staying at illegal hotels do

not get officially recorded with the government," he said.

In December last year, the director of the Thai Hotels Association Southern Chapter, Kritsada Tansakul, filed a complaint with Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul stating that more than 70 per cent of the rooms in Phuket operat-

ing as hotels and resorts were illegal.

"There are at least 200 hotel owners operating their businesses without the proper hotel licence," Mr Kritsada said at the time.

V/Gov Chokdee said that all rental accommodation in Phuket would eventually be classified under one of three categories. The first is for properties that fulfill all the requirements to be registered immediately as hotel accommodation.

The second category is for properties in need of minor improvements to meet public safety standards in order to register as a hotel.

The third category is for properties that fail to meet any of the requirements and are therefore not fit to be officially registered as hotel accommodation.

The vice governor assured the *Gazette* that he would be talking with the Interior Ministry to ensure flexibility for accommodation owners who go by the book to register their property as hotel accommodation.



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Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV to Khun Anna (General Manager), by email, fax or post to:

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- Female Filipino, 25-35 years old
- Bachelor's degree
- Able to make professional calls to potential clients in Thailand and oversea to buy Advertising packages to advertise with us on www.igospa.com
- Fluent in English, has full experiences of telesales skills
- Able to work under pressure and reach target set each month
- Be on time and responsible on your job assignment

Benefit:

- Salary: 20,000 - 30,000 Baht, good commission
- Work permit, Social Fund, inbound or outbound staff trip, staff party
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Phuket Gazette

Trailblazer in Phuket journalism

By Kongleaphy Keam

JANJIRA Sittabutr, originally from Songkhla, is the president of the Phuket Reporter Club. She has been working at Manager Newspaper for more than 20 years. She's written many articles about Phuket, especially in-depth and developing stories during and after the 2004 tsunami.

"I never expected to end up being a reporter. But it's been so long that it feels like this is what my life is about now," says Ms Janjira.

"I never saw the benefits of the profession until I got involved in it. I started loving it when I realized that my job contributes a lot to society. Reporters, and the media in general, are the mirrors of society, and this is one career where you never stop learning."

She graduated from Ramkhamhaeng University in 1992 with a Bachelor's degree in Finance and Banking. She then started her first job at Manager Newspaper in Bangkok.

"My degree was completely unrelated to my professional life. I worked as a secretary for the regional news editor for a

few years," says Ms Janjira.

"I was not a reporter, but sometimes I got the opportunity to go out into the field with other reporters. That is when I started to love the news. When the company opened up a new office at Khon Kaen, I was offered the opportunity to work as a reporter and I grabbed it."

Ms Janjira started off reporting business, finance and investment related news about the stock market in Thailand and Laos. "I really loved this part of my job. I got the opportunity to visit Laos quite frequently and I learned a lot in the process," Ms Janjira says.

After working there for about two years, Ms Janjira moved to Hat Yai, and a few months later, to Phuket. "In Phuket, I was given the responsibility to cover a much broader range of news, as there were very few reporters here at the time," she added.

Ms Janjira says she is very proud of her journalistic work during the tsunami. "During a disaster like this, not many people want to risk their life to get the news. I was here in Phuket at the time, and was determined to get the news to

everyone," Ms Janjira said.

"People from around the world wanted to know what was happening in Phuket during and after the tsunami. If we didn't have reporters, how would people get that news?" she asks.

During the tsunami, Ms Janjira realized just how valuable her job was to society. She then dedicated her life to working on tsunami-related stories. "I went to the scene with the team, without thinking about whether or not it would strike again," she says.

She could feel the pain and sense of loss during the tsunami, seeing what exactly happened to people in the area.

"I did numerous stories about the tsunami, but my job did not end when the tsunami did. I kept updating stories about the effects on people's lives, as well as restoration projects by the government. I kept at it until Phuket was once again restored to its original stage. It took about a year, but we got there," she says.

Ms Janjira feels that being a reporter is not just about yourself, but about helping society to take notice of problems that have

been ignored in the past.

"We even help to solve seemingly unsolvable problems. When journalists and media spread the news, it nudges relevant officials to take faster action due to the pressure from the public. We work as middlemen in a sense, taking the message from the public to the government, and vice versa. I'm proud of my career, as it contributes to society," she says.

"We are the representatives of society and what we re-

port will affect many people, so we must stick to the facts, and prevent any form of bias and stereotypes from creeping into the story. These are the qualities that a responsible reporter must have. It's a continuous learning process," Mr Janjira says.

"Not only are reporters always abreast with the situation in the country, they also get to meet new people and experience new things. It's a very interesting and important job and I am privileged to be a part of it."





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