

Phuket Gazette

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'WE ARE RETURNING THE BEACH TO ITS PAST BEAUTY'

Surin surrenders

Backhoes destroy iconic clubs along popular beachfront

By Chutharat Plerin

A NUMBER of iconic beach clubs on Phuket were crushed during the demolition of the shop houses along the Surin Beach boardwalk on Wednesday.

"We are not ruining Surin Beach, we are returning it back to the unobstructed, beautiful beach it once was," Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat said, attempting to explain to a group of stunned tourists, who claimed that the government officers were destroying the beach. "It has been a very long process to clear these buildings from the public land. We have been very careful, taking it step-by-step."

Ahead of the demolition of the beach clubs, the Twinpalms Group held a 'One Last Time' beach party on April 16, just days before staff would be scampering out of the facility before it was torn down by a pair of backhoes.

"It was our last chance to say 'thank you' to those who have enjoyed, over the years, the utopia that rose along the Surin Beach shore, as well as the incredible dedication from all our employees who made it possible," Twinpalms Group General Manager Olivier Gibaud said.

With the opening of Catch Beach Club by Twinpalms more than a decade ago, Surin Beach became well-known as Phuket's most exciting and fashionable beach, with Catch leading the way in bringing fabulous dining and seaside experiences to beach lovers from around the world, Twinpalms explained in a statement to the press.

The closure of Catch and Bimi comes as part of a government drive to honor and



Military personnel were on site as the demolition began. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

celebrate the Royal Family. Surin Beach was dubbed a 'Beach of Honor' by Vice Governor Chokdee at the end of last year, making it the third category of beach in the island's management system.

Though the beach is unique for being the only one in this category, it is managed in the exact same way as a virgin beach; umbrellas, beach chairs and vendors offering any other services or goods were

banned on these beaches.

"This third category is set aside only for Surin, as HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej and HM Queen Sirikit visited its sands in 1959," explained V/Gov Chokdee.

"This is one of the reasons we are working so hard to ensure that Surin...

Continued on Pages 4-5

Three deaths on island roadways during campaign

THREE deaths marred officials' attempts to keep the road-death toll at zero for the entire Songkran 'Seven Days of Danger' safety campaign.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) Phuket Office recorded 57 accidents and 62 injuries in total.

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BUSINESS



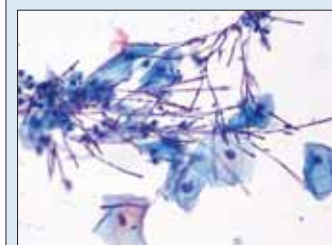
The buzz on social-media marketing says that video content is the way to go.

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ISAT

Arson suspected in speedboat blaze

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

POLICE suspect arson may be the motive behind a fire that engulfed five speedboats at Chalong Pier on Tuesday.

Firefighters operating from five fire trucks spent three hours battling the flames due to the massive amount of fuel on board, explained Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana. The fire wasn't completely out until about 6am, he added.

Forensic officers believe the fire started on the middle of the row of boats, quickly spreading to those around it. The boats were removed from the scene for further examination.

"There are two possible scenarios. Either someone set the boats on fire or the flames were caused by a short circuit in the electrical system. As the boat was pulled up onto the sands with the engine turned off, the possibility of it being a short circuit is quite low," said Chalong Police Superintendent



Firefighters spent three hours battling the flames that engulfed five speedboats at Chalong Pier on Tuesday night. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Noppadon Thiraprawat.

"The only eyewitness we know of, Donsafat Pormin, is still at Vachira Phuket Hospital, as he was severely burned in the incident. We have yet to question him. However, we are

checking CCTV footage in the area for more clues."

Mr Donsafat, who is part of the speedboat crew, was on board at the time of the fire.

Pisit Papakityospat, the owner of Nikorn Marine, esti-

mated the combined damage to the company's speedboats to be about 25-30 million baht.

"We have never had any problems with anyone. We are doing our best not to let this incident affect our tour program.

Our partner has agreed to help us share the work load, so we can continue conducting business as usual," said Mr Pisit.

Mr Pisit confirmed that Nikorn Marine would cover Mr Donsafat's medical expenses.

Patong operators wary of untreated wastewater

PATONG operators are concerned that untreated wastewater is seeping into the bay after a one-kilometer swath of beachfront water turned brown earlier this month.

"It is very likely to be the same phenomena as last month – a plankton bloom," said Suphasit Boonpeinphol of the Phuket Marine Biological Center.

Plankton blooms are often caused by excessive amounts of nutrients, in the form of nitrogen and phosphorus, spurred on by days of bright sunshine. In the past, algae blooms in Patong Bay

have been directly linked to untreated wastewater pouring into the popular tourist area via Klong Pak Bang at the southern end of Patong Beach.

Officials have recently collected samples of water in Patong Bay and sent them to Bangkok to determine whether or not untreated wastewater is flowing into the ocean, turning the water brown.

Officials insist the change in water color is due to an annual algae bloom. However, many local residents believe that the sudden explosive growth in algae has occurred as the result of large

accumulations of untreated wastewater.

"With the water like this, tourists are afraid to enter the bay, which could be devastating for our businesses," said a jet-ski operator who declined to be named. He also expressed his concerns about what damage the water could be doing to the marine life in the bay.

"The operators have very valid points and concerns. We are doing our best to determine whether the bloom has been caused from untreated wastewater being discharged into the bay," Mr Suphasit said. – *Sukawin Tanthavanich*



Patong operators expressed their concerns about the effect on their businesses if untreated wastewater is being discharged into the bay. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Text messages may offer clues in fatal fall of Finnish tourist

POLICE investigating the death of a 19-year-old Finnish woman, who fell from the rooftop of a Patong guesthouse last month, have so far ruled out foul play in her death. However, they are hoping that her final text messages will reveal clues about her state of mind that night.

Ida Maria Bexar fell from the rooftop of the Good Dreams Guesthouse onto the roof of a nearby building, after a night out with friends.

"I have asked the embassy to translate the messages on her mobile phone, which might give some clues about the situation."

"Footage from the ground floor camera shows that Ms Bexar was crying while talking



Ms Bexar fell from the top of a hotel. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

to her friend Robert Dahلمان," said Capt Yingyong Chuoykij of the Patong Police.

"Ms Bexar was reportedly quite emotional that night. We will keep investigating until we uncover the truth," Capt Yingyong said.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Package Lady Check

Cervical cancer is the most common cancer of women in Thailand. The cause of cervical cancer is caused by an infection with HPV types that cause cancer. Cervical cancer can be prevented by avoiding risk factors and regular screening, at least every one year.

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Officials pump petrol into big bike licence legislations

A SPECIFIC driver's licence for those wanting to mount a big bike is still in the works, officials told the *Phuket Gazette* on April 18th. If implemented, the new licence would require drivers to be at least 18 years old and to have completed a training course from a qualified driving center.

"I know that there are ongoing discussions about the possibility of creating a separate driver's licence for motorcycles with engines that are at least 400cc," said Jaturong Kaewkasi, chief policy adviser at the Phuket Land Transport Office (PLTO).

According to a report in Kom Chad Luek last month, Police Traffic Division Deputy Commander Ekkarak Limsangkas noted that there has been a spike in big bike registrations with Land Transportation offices throughout



Drivers take smaller bikes to the motorbike driving test, but then use larger motorcycles on the streets. Photo: Isaac Simonelli

the country. Currently, driver's licences are issued for youth 15-17 years old to drive motorbikes with engines smaller than 150cc. Those wanting to drive bigger bikes must be at least 18 years old."

"Once they have obtained the driving licence, they use it for big bikes, which is very danger-

ous because riding the big ones requires completely different skills," Col Ekkarak said.

"Though discussions for separating big bike licences from regular licences have been in the works for more than a year, Col Ekkarak doesn't expect the plan to come to fruition until the end of this year.

— Chutharat Plerin

New plan

Continued from page 1

...is a beach basking in pure natural beauty.

"It will also be the perfect location for us to hold activities or exhibitions honoring the Royal Family."

The beach clubs were among a number of businesses swept up in the National Council for Peace and Order's (NCPO's) campaign to 'clean up' Phuket beaches, demanding that local officials remove any and all illegal establishments from the beaches. The campaign saw dozens of businesses receive eviction notices with a deadline date of June 2014.

Originally, only the parts of the clubs and businesses that extended to the beach side of the boardwalk

on Surin Beach were demolished, with government assurance that the remaining structures would 'most likely' go untouched.

"The buildings were illegally modified, turning the entire area into a mess. It got to the point that it was impossible to even see the original structures," V/Gov Chokdee said. "They started out as small businesses, but then it got completely out of control."

The beach clubs, as well as the restaurants and other busi-

nesses on the east side of the Surin beachfront path, were occupying units originally built by the government.

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

The buildings were leased out to locals, who then allowed private businesses to operate at the facilities.

"The local government built the small stalls so that villagers could earn some money after the tsunami, back when

Surin Beach was just a small, local beach," said V/Gov Chokdee. "As time passed, more and more tourists came and the locals broke their contracts by leasing the shops to third parties. Suddenly, most of the buildings housed businesses backed by foreigners. It totally contradicted the intentions of the original agreement."

Officers have not provided the *Gazette* with the original agreements, which allegedly state that locals were not to sub-

The buildings were illegally modified, turning the entire area into a mess. It got to the point that it was impossible to even see the original structures. /

— Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat

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HAAD THIP

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brings ruin to Surin clubs

lease the buildings.

“There were even venues selling alcohol, which is completely illegal, as the buildings are in a public park,” V/Gov Chokdee said.

“We admit that it comes down to a lack of law enforcement. However, we are working very hard on managing Phuket’s beaches,” he said, despite having already made it clear that the structures were not on the beach, but in the public park adjacent to Surin’s sands.

OrBorTor President Ma-ann Samran confessed to the Gazette last year that lease contracts to the locals had ended years ago. He pointed out that the government had not collected rent for years.

Twinpalms Group, which had been operating Twinpalms Phuket adjacent to Surin Beach for almost 12 years, has continued to comply with government requests since the beginning of the saga in 2014, explained Mr Gibaud.

“Everything in life comes, lives and goes; we are very thankful to have had the op-



Zazada was one of the beach clubs uprooted at Surin Beach on Wednesday. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

portunity to delight and be in the memory of many Catch and Bimi Beach Club guests

over the years. This chapter of Catch Beach Club has drawn to a close, everyone should be

excited and look forward to the next,” he said.

The group has already gained

traction with Palm Seafood Restaurant, Lounge and Bar on Bang Tao Beach and will be opening HQ Beach Lounge on Kamala Beach soon.

“I am extremely sad. I’ve come [here] on holiday 16 times in four years. I love Thailand. I love the people. I just think that it’s so sad that these people will have no work anymore. I feel very emotional about the people who are working at Twin Palms [Catch and Bimi] as well as the small shop owners. Where will they go?” asked Karin Mackiy, a 60-year-old Australian who witnessed the demolition.

V/Gov Chokdee assured those on Surin Beach Wednesday morning that the government wasn’t going to abandon the locals.

“Impacted locals have been informed that they can register with the provincial government. We will find a place for them to earn a living,” he said. “Please be aware that the sacrifices we are making now are for the betterment of Phuket’s future and the happiness of the public.”



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Region 8 nets more than 1,500 suspects



Police seized 165 guns. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

MORE than 1,500 arrests related to drug, illegal firearms, gambling and other criminal activities were made in Phuket and the surrounding provinces between April 1 and 17.

"In the raids, a total of 171 suspects were arrested for firearms offences. A total of 165 unregistered guns were seized along with 750 rounds of ammunition, as well as two bombs and two war weapons," said Royal Thai Police Deputy Commissioner Srivara Ransibrahmanakul on Wednesday.

A total of 692 people were arrested in drug-related cases. "We seized 453,274 methamphetamine pills, 4kg of crystal meth, 5kg of marijuana and 260kg of kratom," Gen Srivara said.

A total of 85 suspects were arrested in gambling cases, while 775 suspects with outstanding arrest warrants were caught.

The general said that a number of 'influential people' involved in 16 criminal cases were also captured and taken in for questioning during the Songkran dragnet, under orders from the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), for crimes related to loan shark operations, casinos, human trafficking, illegal weapons trading and other fraudulent activities.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Deaths stain safety campaign

By Kongleaphy Keam

THREE deaths marred Phuket's attempt to keep the road-death toll at zero for the entire Songkran 'Seven Days of Danger' road-safety campaign.

The province slipped past April 13, typically the most deadly day in the annual campaign, without a single death. However the next day, 41-year-old Swedish national Johnny Daniel Soederstroem died after losing control of his bike, while crossing Thepkrasattri Bridge.

"He was riding a Honda CB650F, which crashed into the concrete railings along the bridge. When rescue workers arrived, he was in critical condition," said Capt Thanom Thongpan of the Tah Chat Chai Police. "He was rushed to Thalang Hospital, but doctors were unable to save him."

The next night, motorcyclist Narong Jarut, 44, died in a head-on collision with a Russian driving his car in the wrong lane in Rawai.

The last death recorded for the campaign was on day six, when Boontan Sonthong, 34, crashed into a utility pole in Cherng Talay. According to police, he was driving under the influence of alcohol and was not wearing a helmet.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) Phuket Office recorded 57 accidents and 62 injuries in total. Last year there was 58 injuries, but no deaths. The stats from 2016 and 2015 are both significantly higher than those of 2014, which saw only 22 injuries – though there was one death recorded in that year.

Two out of the three motor-



Swedish national Johnny Soederstroem's big bike crash caused the first fatality on Phuket's roads during the Songkran road-safety campaign. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

cyclists that died during this year's campaign were not wearing helmets. One of the three people killed was reportedly under the influence of alcohol.

As part of the National Council for Peace and Order's (NCPO's) 'No Drink Driving' initiative during the Songkran holiday, Phuket officers confiscated 231 vehicles, impounding them until the end of the campaign on April 17.

"We are very sorry for the families of those who died during this campaign," said Sirisak Skoonsorutchta, chief of the DDPM Phuket Office. "We will do our best to learn from these cases and see what can be done next year to ensure that there are fewer deaths and accidents on our roads."

Traffic violation stats

THE final statistics issued by DDPM for traffic offenses during the entire campaign are as follows:

- Riding a motorbike without wearing a helmet – 4,871 people
- Riding an unsafe motorbike – 46 people
- Driving under the influence of alcohol – 245 people
- Driver and/or passengers failing to use seat belts – 486 people
- Driving without [carrying] a valid driving license – 2,422 people
- Speeding – 0 people
- Failing to stop at a red light – 55 people
- Driving on the wrong side (ghost-riding) – 93 people
- Overtaking in a restricted zone – 21 people
- Using a mobile phone while driving – 132 people

'Fire jellyfish' invade islands in Krabi

NATIONAL Park officials on Monday erected signs warning visitors of venomous jellyfish at Koh Hong, Koh Lao Lading and Koh Pak Bia after thousands of purple-colored jellies appeared in the water off the islands in Krabi.

"The signs are in English and Thai. They have been put up to warn the public about the venomous jellyfish," said Jampen Pormpakdee, chief of the Koh Hong protection zone of Than Bok Khorani National Park.

"We are clearing the dead jellyfish from the water and on the beaches. They are a few centimeters long, and known locally

The 'fire jellyfish' deliver a serious sting. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

as 'fire jellyfish'. They are venomous, causing irritation and pain if touched," he said.

"If you are stung by one, pouring vinegar on the wound can help relieve the pain. However, some people may have allergic reactions to the stings

and will have to see a doctor."

Officers believe the jellyfish have been washed toward the shores due to a change in wind direction.

"They belong to the Pelagiidae family, but we are not certain about the exact species," said Charatsee Aungtonya, a marine expert from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR). "It is best to avoid them, especially their tentacles."

"There are no jellyfish inside the lagoon, so tourists can swim there if they want," Mr Jampen said.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Officials dig into rotting whale carcass for clues

MARINE biologists are hoping that the rotting carcass of a five-tonne whale, found washed up 14 April on Lampi Beach, Phang Nga, will reveal clues about how it died.

"It is a Bryde's whale, about 13.45 meters long. It has probably been dead for about two weeks, so the body is already in an advanced state of decomposition," said Rachawadee Chantra from the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC).

Despite the state of the rotting carcass, Dr Rachawadee is confident that they can deter-

The dead whale washed ashore. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

mine the cause of the whale's death once it's transported to the PMBC facility at Cape Panwa, where biologists will perform an autopsy.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Hits: Computer Crimes Act used for video post of holiday nude dancing

POLICE filed a charge under the Computer Crimes Act against a man who posted a video clip shot during last Songkran of topless female dancers.

Jakpatsorn Akaraphokinan's 'obscene' video clip undermined the police campaign for traditional Songkran celebrations and could cause copycat actions, said Acting City Police Chief Sanit Mahathawon on April 15.

Chief Sanit said that the clip was also posted with false information, as it claimed that the topless dancing had taken place this year, when in fact it occurred last year.

Mr Jakpatsorn maintains that he made the post to serve as a cautionary tale to others.

If found guilty, Mr Jakpatsorn could be jailed for up to five years, fined up to 100,000 or both.

He was released on 100,000 baht bail.

'Suicide prank' could put man behind bars

POLICE are preparing to summon Makharin Phumsa-art for a video clip that convinced many watchers that he put a gun against his temple and shot himself on April 16.

The investigation into the 'attempted suicide' suggests that it was unlikely that Mr Makharin Phumsa-art, known as 'Ne Wat Dao', really shot himself.

"None of his relatives or neighbors heard a gunshot and there is no trace of a bullet inside his room either," said Lt Gen Sanit Mahathavorn, acting chief of the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Makharin sustained minor injuries in the incident.

Lt Gen Sanit said that if Mr Makharin and people close to him were found to have played a prank via the video clip they could face legal action.

"Spreading false information on the internet is a computer crime punishable by up to five years in jail, a maximum fine of 100,000 baht or both," he said.



zone covering the upper part of Thailand, many provinces have witnessed record-breaking temperatures this month.

Thai badminton player best in the world

THAI badminton sensation Ratchanok Intanon made the country proud on April 17 when she unofficially claimed the world number 1 spot following a magnificent come-from-behind victory over title-holder Sun Yu.

The world body governing the sport was due to announce world rankings on April 21 (after the *Gazette* went to print). It was the third consecutive win in the past three weeks of the World Superseries.

She is the first Thai badminton player to become world number one.

Thief says media buzz embarrassing, not crime

A MAN who ran into some bad luck with his cock was furious to find out that the CCTV footage of him stealing a hospital donation box from a hospital in Nakhon Ratchasima went viral.

"I had taken a bus to Sikhio from Pak Chong to deliver a fighting cock to a friend. I then spent all of my money on alcohol, and couldn't afford the bus home," said that police only identified as 'Mr Panya'. "So I nicked the cash form the donation box."

Mr Panya explained during a press conference that he then continued to fuel his drinking habits, reported Sanook.com.

What upset Mr Panya wasn't being caught stealing from a hospital so he could maintain a drunken stupor, but that the CCTV video of him doing so was released.

The confessed petty thief vehemently blamed hospital staff for releasing the CCTV footage, which had been handed over to police. The video was later leaked and went viral on Facebook.

"There is nothing embarrassing about stealing, just the fact that it has been made so public," he said.

Mr Panya was charged with theft.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Temperatures near record high

FORECASTERS warn of heat stroke as mercury nears a record high.

THE mercury in thermom-

eters in the northern province of Sukhothai, Thailand's former capital, shot up to 44 degrees Celsius this month, the highest the province has ever registered.

The temperature is only 0.5 degrees behind the highest temperature ever recorded in the country.

Weather forecasters have warned people against staying in the sun too long, given the risk of potentially fatal heat strokes.

Because of a low-pressure

Air pollution hits Chiang Mai

THOUSANDS of people in Chiang Mai have developed symptoms that can be linked to air pollution this month.

Air-quality tests on April 18 confirmed that pollutants in the northern province have hit unhealthy levels.

Authorities have now asked people to wear facial masks while going outdoors.

Clubbing beach venues

THE demolition of the government-built buildings along Surin's beachfront, which once housed a number of iconic Phuket beach clubs, marks the end of an era on the island.

Unlike numerous other beach venues that have been demolished since the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) started to sweep opportunistic, mafia-style businesses from Phuket's sands, tearing down these buildings breaks new ground.

The standard justification for this has been that they belong to the public and are not to be a source of profit for the few who have illegally laid claim to them. However, a balance was necessary as the government juggled its desire to return the beaches to their natural state and the need for locals to support their families, which ushered in the 10 per cent rule.

Nonetheless, the buildings demolished were not on the beach. They were constructed in the adjacent public park after the 2004 tsunami by the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) and the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO) to provide economic opportunities to locals and boost tourism in the area.

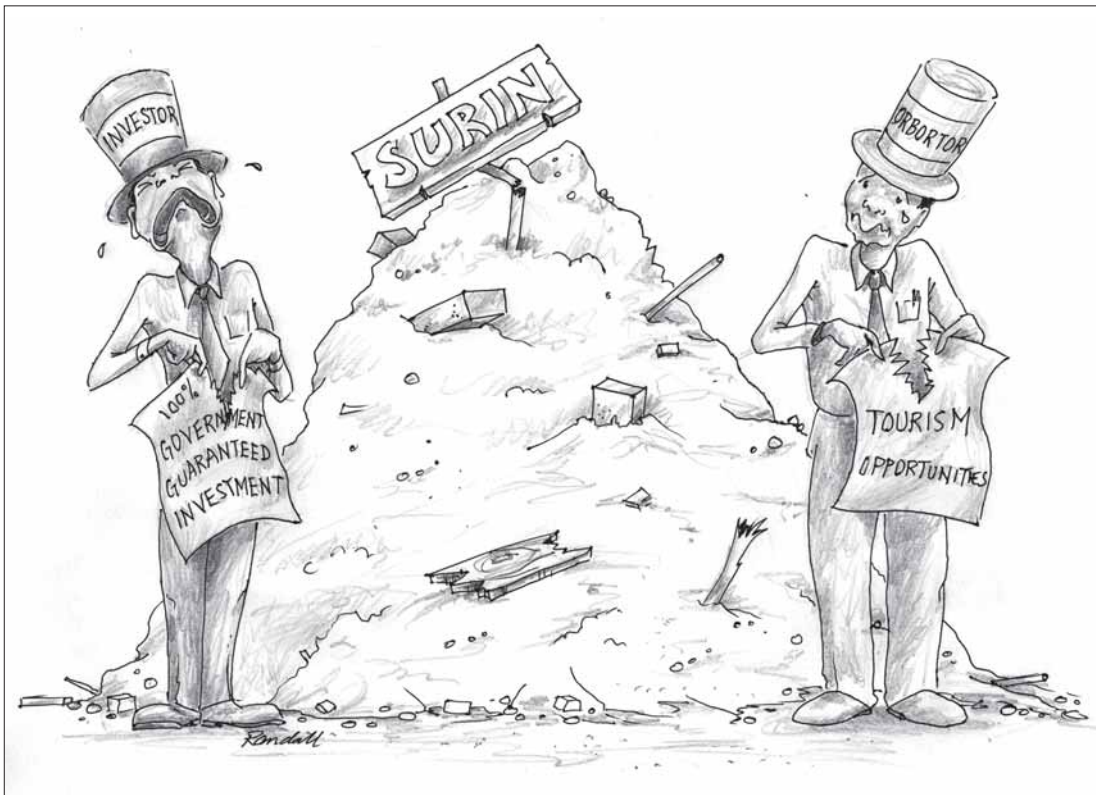
The demolition in 2014 of structures associated with the venues that stretched onto the sands of Surin seemed well within the lines of the NCPO's plan. However, the destruction of these government-built facilities is taking the effort to an entirely new level, as millions of baht of domestic and foreign investment had been dumped into what is now just a pile of rubble.

Given that the buildings housing the clubs were built legitimately, and that it has taken officials nearly two years to undo the due diligence undertaken by the well-intentioned investors, it is no wonder investor confidence has been shaken.

Despite the quakes and tremors though, established businesses on the island, such as the Twinpalms Group, show no hesitation to reinvest in Phuket. Though Twinpalms lost both Catch and Bimi, they pushed ahead with the opening of Palm Seafood on Bang Tao Beach last year and will be opening another beach club in Kamala soon.

As with nearly everything that would be expected to shake the island's investors and bring foreign investment to a trickle, Phuket's tourism industry persists.

We join the public in hoping that officials will follow through with the NCPO's plan by ensuring the beautification of the park so that it can be put to good use in honoring HM The King. Failure to do so would squander an unique opportunity and bring to light any dark motives that may have been behind the destruction of highly profitable, iconic and legally built venues.



Time to end farce of deadline extensions

Re: Surin beachfront operators make one last plea, April 19

End this farce of extensions. It's time to put the foot down.

The fact that one has been working illegally for a number of years does not justify continuing to work illegally.

The murky history of what is and is not legal lies completely on the *OrBorTor*'s shoulders. 'Our lives depend on them' – what a crock; they have had ages to seek out other opportunities but I sense another 'compromise' will occur to drag this out.

*Mister Ree
Gazette forum*

What will be done about this cruelty?

Re: Milo the orangutan on the mend [video], April 15

And what are the powers that be going to do to prevent this sad case of animal cruelty?

Is this the end of this matter, or just the beginning?

I find it very difficult to understand that the Phuket Zoo has shown little cooperation. We need answers as to why they've lacked any willingness to help in any of the inquiries?

What is it that they are trying to hide?

*harry
Gazette forum*

Won't catch speed demons from a tent

Re: Governor concerned about failure to arrest Phuket speed demons, April 14

Of course you will not catch

Letters to the Editor

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

speed demons by sitting in a roadside tent. You won't see 10 of the dangerous practices.

The only way to be serious about curbing the road carnage is to have police mobile every hour of every day actually enforcing all the road rules.

I watch the Kamala tent and see endless numbers of motorcycle riders and passenger pass without helmets and there is no reaction from the tent.

*Frustrated
Gazette forum*

Ignoring red flags is very irresponsible

Re: Swimmer succumbs after leaving ICU, April 19

Yes, it is sad when someone loses their life, but also sad when people ignore the red flags and choose to swim.

Six people had to be rescued by lifeguards that day because those six ignored the red flags, which then put the lifeguards in danger.

*Sandra Stout
Facebook*

Credible reporting, the way it should be

Re: Across the land: Unusual times in Phuket tourism, April 18

I like this story for its candor – reporting on things the way they are, no matter how

'bad' this might be (in the short run) for those of us with a vested interest here. The fact that Ms Koh is a property broker makes this kind of report all the more credible.

*Art Anderson
Gazette Forum*

A moment is all it takes to lose it all

Re: Swede dies in big bike crash, first death in Phuket road-safety campaign, April 15

RIP Johnny. A moment's inattention, that's all it takes. Tragic.

*seht1912
Gazette forum*

Sad to see so much rubbish in Rawai

Re: Dumped in Paradise - Round One, April 19

We stayed in Rawai for 3 weeks in January, I was saddened to see the amount of rubbish left at the side of roads.

The beautiful view from our accommodation across the bay was marred by the plastic debris washed up on the beach with each tide. I spent time clearing plastic bottles, food trays and old footwear on a daily basis. Amongst the trash were many black liners, which indicated that maybe rubbish had been dropped into the sea?

To see people sifting through the debris early morning reminds me how much we take for granted in our home countries.

*Janis Broadhurst
Facebook*

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Phuket needs planners

FIRST PERSON

THE rapid growth of property, investments and mega projects in Phuket has made it necessary to educate locals about how to handle the ever-expanding landscape.

The most important role is played by educational institutions, such as Prince of Songkla University and Phuket Rajabhat University. These institutes need to produce town planning experts who can pave the way to help manage Phuket in the best way possible.

Several universities in Thailand have a faculty of architecture, but none of them focus on city planning. It is a shame that Phuket's educational institutes do not offer these courses, as they are quite valuable.

Initially, town planning courses can be incorporated within the broader course work of technology, environment and civil engineering. This is a good start, which may eventually lead to the establishment of a faculty of architecture and town planning.

Presently, Phuket students are more focused on language, business and tourism related courses, since these are the courses that educational institutes mainly offer. They don't see town planning as important, because they are not offered the choice to study it and there is no emphasis placed on it.

We must communicate to



Rakkiet Deedpin, a native of Patthalung, is the City Planner for the Public Works and Town and Country Planning, Phuket Office, after previously worked for the office as a policy analyst. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Architecture and

Planning from Thammasat University.

Here, he talks about ways to educate Phuket locals about town planning.

students how important it is to bring Phuket toward sustainable growth. City planning and discipline is the base of every local economy and also reflects how civilized a city is.

Presently, town planning experts need to be brought to Phuket from outside. If we have our very own local architects

and town planners, they will be more passionate about creating the best city plan for their home town. Additionally, they will have a better idea of what is suitable or unsuitable for Phuket, than outsiders, who have not been exposed to the specific problems and issues of Phuket in the past.

Thailand acquired all of its town planning knowledge from developed countries, but when we try to implement foreign knowledge in local situations, we find that the two are not easily compatible.

The ideal approach to town

planning is to delegate the responsibility to local authorities in each area. The government should give the power to determine the layout of cities to locals. It will save a lot of time that would otherwise be spent waiting for approval from the department of town planning.

Some current laws do not take into account special attractions like mega shopping malls and the Ferris wheel. Therefore, the height limit under the law is not up to date and relevant. The height limit law was passed in 2011 and updated last year. However, sections of the law still need revision to incorporate the needs of the rapidly changing landscape of Phuket.

If Phuket gains more local town planners, they will be able to appreciate these nuances and negotiate with government experts to reach a compromise that works best for both parties.

We need to motivate Phuket students to learn this subject and incorporate it into the current curriculums taught at schools and universities, so that we can grow as a society and do what's best for Phuket in the future.



I discovered Thailand on my own terms. Photo: Zohaib Sikander

Decide for yourself

Island View

By Mark Patterson

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

THAILAND is to Asia what Vegas is to America, or at least it's thought to be. The sin-capital of Asia where 'anything goes', or at least that's what I was told.

When I first decided to visit Phuket, it set off alarm bells for everyone around me. I received calls from friends and family members who I hadn't heard from in years. My Facebook profile became cluttered with over-the-top articles on everyday calamities tourists face in Thailand, which also included 'meeting' women who I'll eventually discover are not really women. Drugs were to be slipped into my pocket and I was going to go to jail for a very long time. My friends started teasing me with chants of 'massage, massage, massage', every time they met me.

I didn't know what to make of all this and, with the same stigma on every travel website, I began to seriously question my own decision. Hundreds of people could not all be wrong, could they?

Then I landed here. With an overwhelming sense of apprehension, bags clutched to my body, I looked at every local as if they were out to get me, ready to prove everyone who warned me right. I was pleasantly surprised at how wrong they were.

The Thais smiled their warm-

est smiles at me and welcomed me everywhere I went. They were more than happy to guide me in the right direction or offer me a ride to my destination if I looked lost.

I rented a bike and began to discover the island myself. The crisp morning air always put me in a good mood. I rode to beaches, national parks, roadside cafes and the like, always greeted by the most pleasant staff and hospitable locals, not to mention the breathtaking scenery.

Yes, I was asked by beautiful women if I wanted a massage more times than I can remember. And yes, many vendors offered me 'special prices' for a variety of items in the market. But if I didn't want a massage, I politely refused. If I thought something was overpriced, I bargained.

So yes, hundreds of people can be wrong about Thailand, and they're definitely wrong about Phuket. You are free to get what you want out of it, but you can always move away from what you don't. It's that simple, really.

Words from the Wise

"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark."

– Aristotle

"If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

– Wayne Dwyer

Issues & Answers

Will the traffic light at Koh Kaew be removed?

I LIVE in Phuket Town and have to travel to Mai Khao for work. The traffic light in Koh Kaew causes a huge traffic jam everyday. Will this traffic light still be there when the Bang Ku underpass is completed a few months from now?

I don't think it's reasonable for people taking the underpass to be stopped by the traffic light. Is there a plan to relieve traffic congestion at this junction?

Susan Carpenter
Phuket Town

Samak Luedwonghad, director of the Phuket Highways Office, replies:

We have been considering

our options about the traffic light and aim to have a public hearing after the Bang Ku Underpass and u-turn flyover are completed to figure out how to manage this junction.

Currently, the underpass is 38 percent complete, after which the flyover construction will begin. Once the underpass is complete, there is likely to be less traffic at the junction.

Please rest assured that we will plan ahead to manage Phuket traffic as best as possible.

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Patience is the best investment



Finance

By Don Freeman

WHILE all of my long term clients (and myself) have been in cash for some time, there will be a time to get back into the stock market, but when will that be?

To recap recent market action: major United States and global indices have already moved higher off their panic February lows, led by retail, gold, materials and oil stocks. In fact, last year's big sector and stock losers (down 50 per cent or more) have been among some of the biggest gainers during the recent four or five-week rally that has moved markets back up to December levels.

However, you need to keep the following key market indicators in mind before you get overly excited about this 'rally'.

The 200 day moving average is still sloping down in all US indices. When this occurs, the probability of 'bad things' occurring in the future is higher than if the moving average were sloping upward.

The 2,100 level on the S&P 500 Index needs to be watched, because if the bulls can move the index above this level, strong leadership stocks will develop and the recent rally might actually be sustainable.

The US Russell 2000, a small cap index, along with the Financial Select Sector



Patience is an important factor in the current stock market environment. Photo: Dave Dugdale

SPDR Fund (NYSEARCA: XLF) technical chart, also need to be watched, because (as of mid-March), both were sitting at a levels that had been key supports. However, both plunged through their support levels earlier this year, before recently bouncing back, with the bears hoping that both run into resistance and roll over to retest recent lows.

Oil charts continue to show a down-trending mess, albeit there has been a recent short-term double-bottom with prices moving higher off of that. It remains to be seen

whether oil is actually in recovery, or about to roll over and head still lower.

I will replant cash back into long-term stocks and funds only when the market clearly transitions back into a healthy uptrend. That will be when the 200-day moving average is sloping upward, leading stocks are forming sound technical bases, and strong sectors begin to emerge or lead the defensive industries.

Keeping an eye on the price action of leading stocks and sectors during the next one or two months will also be important to determine whether the

market heads higher or once again rolls over.

Of course, there are still a number of risks that could hit the markets in the form of an unusually volatile US Presidential election (between a populist and an establishment figure who are both widely disliked); North Korea launching more nuclear missiles; the seemingly endless mess in Syria (along with the refugee crisis it has helped to fuel); and global monetary policy.

The latter in particular is worth a closer look, especially with European Central Bank President Mario Draghi's re-

cent announcement of new monetary measures designed to fight sluggish growth and the now-chronic threat of deflation.

Watching European bank stocks like Deutsche Bank AG (NYSE: DB), Exchange Traded Funds such as the SPDR STOXX Europe 50 ETF (NYSEARCA: FEU), and the price of European markets, will be the only way to know if these central bankers have the right policies, or if their policies will continue to backfire.

Whether their policies are right or not, Europe is still a mess and the technical charts for key European banking stocks like Deutsche Bank AG look worrisome. The banks grapple with the fallout from, or prospect of, negative interest rates.

Again, patience is important in the current stock market environment, as the price action will tell us what the next market move will be, along with what your next move should be as an investor.

Don Freeman, BSME is president of Freeman Capital Management, a Registered Investment Advisor with the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), based in Phuket. He has more than 15 years' experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. Call for a free portfolio review. Don can be reached at: 089-9705795 or freemancapital@gmail.com.

Surge in registrations of new companies

NEW company registrations set a two-year high in March, which the Commerce Ministry attributed to the government's investment promotion measures and strong tourism growth.

New business registrations reached 6,176 in March – up 8 per cent year on year and 10 per cent from February.

Pongpun Gearaviriyapun, director-general of the Business Development Department, said on April 11 that new enterprises were encouraged to set up shop by the government's measures to promote investment, special economic zones and tourism.

The department's measures to facilitate start-ups and expectations that GDP could expand by 3.3 per cent this year



New business registrations are on the rise. Photo: Public Domain

have also spurred this growth.

The department expects about 60,000-65,000 companies to be born this year.

In the first quarter, new registered companies increased by one per cent from the same quarter last year to 17,523, but were up sharply by 35 per cent from the final quarter of 2015.

Most of the new companies

are engaged in construction, property development, machinery wholesaling, food service and food retailing, and consulting.

There are still some risks weighing on enterprises' decision to expand, including the drought, sluggish exports and fluctuating oil prices.

– The Nation

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Back to the video stars



Digital ad spend is projected to be 9.9 billion baht this year, up almost 25 per cent from last year as a direct result of advertisers shifting from traditional media like print and television to digital media and online marketing.

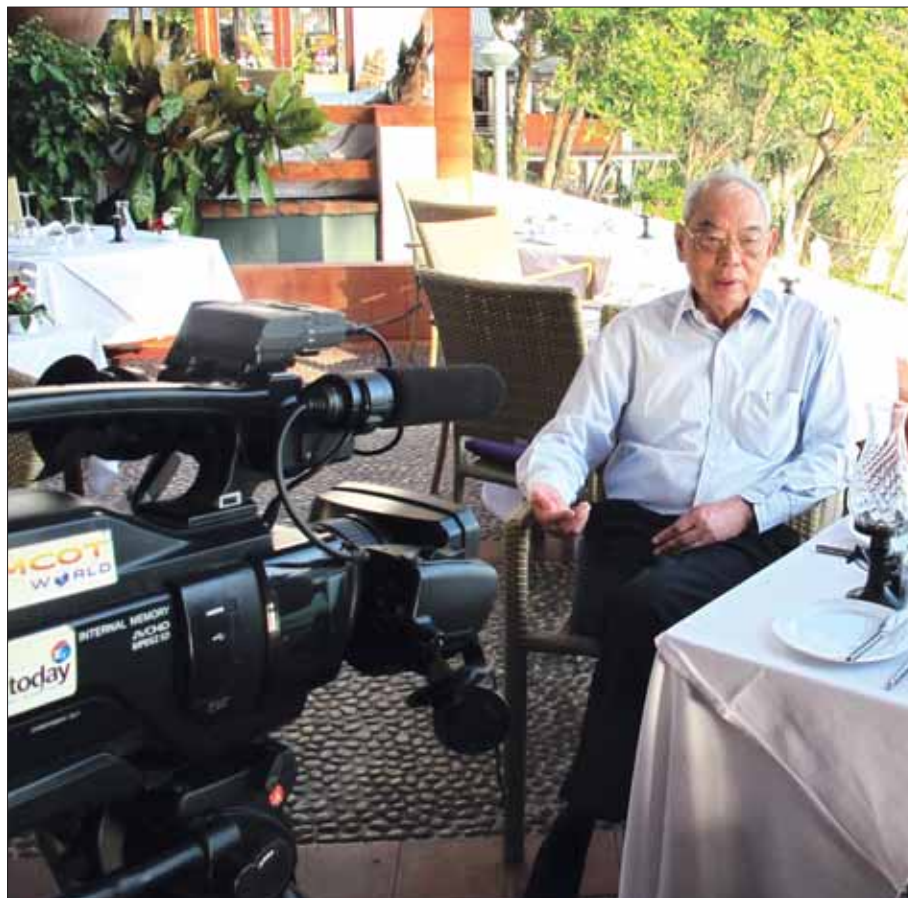
This is partly believed to be because of the cheaper cost of digital advertising and partly because it is much easier to target the correct audiences. With formats such as banner advertising, ezines, pop-up and pop-under ads on Google, Yahoo and Bing Pay-per-click, there is now an extensive list of marketing options.

This year, it is expected that the highest advertising spending will again be on Facebook and YouTube.

So the question that all advertisers should be asking themselves is: are you going to stand out from the crowd in this new age of advertising?

Video is the way of the future. There is little doubt that this trend is going to continue, and given the reduction in audience's attention spans over recent years, this is definitely the format to use.

The great thing about video is that once you create an ad message and load it up to YouTube (or even film it directly on the site, depending on the format and purpose), it is then searchable through engines like Google. You can also embed it into other social me-



PGTV continues to feed the video machine with Phuket specific content, such as the recent interview with ML Usni Pramote at Mom Tri's Royal Villa. Photo: Gazette file

dia platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Previously, I wrote about the fact that Google owns YouTube, which means it rates videos there very highly in its search results.

YouTube now allows for some extra features that assist you in your market-

ing reach. These include the ability to have 'icards' that allow smart phones to link directly to your details, as well as the direct advertising placed on your videos and in your description space.

You can also pay them to have your ads appear on videos that directly re-

late to your business and match your target market.

We have covered Facebook enough in the past, but the simple reality is that with laser-targeted leads at very low cost, and a simple and easy format to create ads, this is always going to be a winner. You can also get leads loaded directly into your autoresponders in order to automate a highly-targeted marketing campaign, which almost guarantees very high levels of success.

Combining video with Facebook is almost the ultimate marketing tool and there are easy ways that this can be set up and automated.

Now that Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter platforms also allow videos in their advertising mix, the choice comes down to the demographics of the users for each of the respective platforms, depending on preference of age, sex and nationality.

The same fundamental rules apply to all of these formats: know the voice and image you want to portray, be consistent, respect your viewers and be honest.

Finally, stand out – think about how you can get your message out while not being the same as everyone else.

Simon Wetherell is a social media expert, trainer and lawyer. He now resides in Phuket where he trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the social media industry. For more information, visit <http://PhuketOnlineMarketing.com> or call 095-085 3355.

Installing economic operating system Thailand 4.0

THE 12 public-private steering committees under the Pracha Rath project have proposed 'Thailand 4.0', a master plan to establish an innovation economy within a decade.

Under the Thailand 4.0 plan, the country will be turned into a regional innovation hub by developing human resources, research and development and innovative products, as well as reforming the educational, legal and other systems.

The focus will be on 10 business clusters, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said on April 18, as the steering committees reported their progress to Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The 10 clusters are robots for industry, medical hubs, logistics and aero-industry, biochemical industry, digital industry, alternative auto industry, innovative electronic industry, high value and health tourism, innovative agriculture and bio-technology



PM Prayut is reviewing the suggestions for what is to be included in Thailand 4.0. Photo: The Nation

and food processing, he said.

"They will drive Thailand out of the middle-income trap to become a high-income country in 20 years under the country's strategic-economy

master plan," he said.

To achieve the country's goals, the public and private sectors have to collaborate on the Pracha Rath project, he said.

Legal reform is one of the

ways to help the country achieve its targets, said Kan Trakulhool, co-chairman of the Pracha Rath steering committee on legal reform.

He said the legal reform group planned to propose the revision of 5,000 bills that affect business investment and long-term national development. This will be complete by August next year.

Meanwhile, the country needs to boost investment in research and development to one per cent of gross domestic product by next year from 0.47 per cent in 2012, said Mr Kan, who is also co-chairman of the Pracha Rath steering committee on innovation and productivity.

"I will consider all of the proposals and also cooperate with all of the ministries to support the 12 Pracha Rath groups, in order to drive the country to achieve its goals," Gen Prayut said.

–The Nation



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Trendy Chabana resort opens

The newly built Chabana Kamala Hotel held its grand opening on April 1 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by guest of honor, Ex-Permanent Secretary Ministry of Justice Chatchawan Suksomjit. The trendy boutique resort near Kamala Beach features 69 colorful, contemporary Thai guest rooms, an exotic spa and a restaurant serving international and fusion cuisine.



(From L-R) Guest of Honour, former Permanent Secretary Ministry of Justice Chatchawan Suksomjit; and hotel owners Phom Sinla; Wanna Sinla; and Peepot Sinla.

Congratulations for champion 140-km swim around Phuket

Swedish Ultraman World Champion Jonas Colting was met with applause and a bouquet from Bangkok Hospital Phuket on Mai Khao Beach after being the first person to perform a circumnavigational swim around Phuket. Mr Colting completed the 140-km swim in seven days, swimming about 17 km each day between Mar 30 and April 6. The swim was jointly organized by Thanyapura Phuket and Apollo Sports Sweden.



Bangkok Hospital Phuket managing director Dr Kongkiat Kespechara – also the Swedish Honorary Consul for Surat Thani, Trang, Krabi, Phang Nga and Phuket – congratulates Swedish Ultraman Jonas Colting with a bouquet after the swimming champ completed his circumnavigational swim of Phuket at Mai Khao Beach.



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Events in Paradise

Fiesta of flavors at Lighthouse Market

The April edition of the Lighthouse Market was held on Apr 1-2. Each edition attracts new, unique vendors and both new and returning guests for whom something new and surprising always awaits at the Boat Lagoon.



Acqua Restaurant's Chef Alessandro Frau was one of three culinary masters who added exotic flavors to the April Boat Lagoon Phuket Lighthouse Weekend Market.

Open for monkey business

Eco-adventure playground Hanuman World Phuket held its grand opening on April 8. The treetop ziplining zone, situated in a rainforest near the Kathu Waterfall, offers visitors a bird's-eye view across the green vista while 'flying' like Hanuman between tall trees in the stunning forest canopy.



Hanuman World Phuket Managing Director Chanintat Pachantabutr (2nd left) and family. Photo: Phuket Best Event

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Portraits of princess go on show at exclusive Phuket Town Exhibitions

AN EXCLUSIVE collection of portrait photographs of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn is on display at two exhibition venues in Phuket Town throughout April.

Photographs by esteemed national artist Nitikorn Kraivixien, who is the president of The Royal Photographic So-

ciety of Thailand, are on show at the Baba Museum and the On-On Hotel on Phang Nga Road until April 30 to celebrate the 61st birthday of Her Royal Highness.

"This is the very first time these very special and unique photographs have been exhibited in Phuket," said museum curator Pawan Archariyabout.

"Everyone is welcome to come and view the photographs. This is a rare opportunity, so we hope both locals and tourists come to enjoy them, especially as the exhibitions are being held in two of Phuket's most notable landmarks," said Ms Pawan.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich



A portrait of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on display at the On-On Hotel. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

Bronze invention award for bright young minds



Pimphan Sompranon with her smart watering controller. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

TWO home-schooled youngsters from Phuket won bronze medals at the Malaysian International Young Inventors Olympiad (MIYIO) this month, for their innovative automated plant-watering invention.

Nattaya Sompranon, 14, and Pimphan Sompranon, 10, invented the 'Smart Watering Controller', which automatically waters plants when the humidity in the soil is low.

The young Phuket-based inventors were among more than 280 teams competing from seven countries; Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Indonesia, and Singapore.

The aim of the competition was to encourage application of the latest scientific and engineering technology to solve everyday problems, while protecting the environment and reducing power consumption.

"The machine can both work automatically and manually. If set to 'automatic', it will water the plant by itself when the humidity in the soil is low. The unique aspect of this machine is that unlike other watering devices, it waters your plants based on soil humidity, rather than timing," said Ms Pimphan.

She added that a device functioning on a similar premise could be adapted for use by farmers as well.

The inventors' mother, Papatsorn Sompranon, said she was delighted with their achievements.

"As a mother, I am glad to see the creative and bright sight of my children. With some further technological development, this device can be helpful in many situations," Ms Papatsorn told the *Phuket Gazette*.

– Kongleaphy Keam



Colorful fragrant rice is a must-try regional speciality at the food festival. Photo: Phuket PR

Tickle your tastebuds at Saphan Hin

MORE than 100 food stalls are cooking up delectable local delicacies for the 18th annual 'Phuket Good Taste Food Festival' at Saphan Hin until April 26.

Organized by Phuket Municipality to promote re-

gional cuisine, the week-long festival celebrates the induction of Phuket as a 'UNESCO City of Gastronomy'.

The festival also marks the 23rd anniversary of the Phuket Food Sellers' Club.

Food aficionados can tuck in

to a fantastic range of culinary creations by the first generation of Phuket food vendors, who have been making mouth-watering dishes for more than 30 years, said the club's head Wipada Teeranittayapap.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Patong Girl tryst premiers in Phuket

STARS from the award-winning movie *Patong Girl* flew into Phuket for the premier of the tri-lingual tryst at

Jungceylon on April 18.

The tri-lingual tryst about a young German lad who falls in love with the mysterious, native

beauty Fai while on holiday in Thailand with his family is the latest production by Thailand-based producer Tom Waller.



(From L-R): Actors Vithaya Parnsrigarm and Ayasawanya Ariyawattana; SF Corporation Marketing Director Supat Ngamwongpaiboon; Phuket Square Co Ltd CEO Prawit Janyasittikul; Producer Tom Waller. Photo: Nick Davies

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Another great Thai heroine

Looking Back

By Anand Singh

THAO Suranari is one of the great heroines who left a mark in Thai history. Formerly known as Lady Mo, Thao Suranari was born in 1772, during the reign of King Taksin the Great. When she was 25, she married Thong Kam, who would later be elevated to deputy governor of Korat.

During the reign of King Rama II, a hill-tribe rebel, Ai-sa-kiet-gnong, claiming to possess magical powers, was quickly gaining thousands of militant followers. The rebels had joined him on the eastern side of the Mekhong River and were poised to attack Champasak, a Laotian city. During that time, Laos was a vassal state of Siam. The governor of Champasak, seeing that his troops were outnumbered, fled the city to save himself. The rebels, under Ai-sa-kiet-gnong, easily took Champasak and made it their stronghold.

In Vientiane, the Laotian capital, King Anuvong of Laos received news from Bangkok that the rebels had taken over Champasak. Anuvong was ordered to assemble his men and march on Champasak to liberate the city.

He ordered his son, Yo, to lead the Laotian forces to Champasak before Siamese reinforcements could arrive from Korat. Anuvong wanted to defeat the rebels before the Siamese could reach the city.



Thao Suranari, one of Thailand's great heroines, was originally known simply as Lady Mo. Photo: Yakuzakorat

When they reached Champasak, they launched a ferocious assault. Ai-sa-kiet-gnong and his band of rebels could not withstand the siege for long and the city soon fell. Ai-sa-kiet-gnong was captured, bound in chains and sent to Bangkok. King Rama II was pleased, and made Yo the governor of Champasak.

After his death, King Rama II's son, Prince Jetsadabhodin, was crowned King Rama III. At this time, King Anuvong decided to attack Saraburi, a Siamese town on the border of Laos in the year 1825. Anuvong ordered his second son, Gnow, to lay siege on Saraburi.

Gnow and his troops sur-

rounded the city and convinced the governor to join forces with him against Siam. The governor of Saraburi agreed.

When King Anuvong heard this, he quickly marched his army to Saraburi. Over the next few months, Laotian forces under King Anuvong and his viceroy attacked Kalasin, Khemaraj, Roi-Et and Suvarnabhumi. The governors of Kalasin and Khemaraj, refusing to side with the Laotians, were brutally executed. The governors of Roi-Et and Suvarnabhumi surrendered to Anuvong.

They next decided to conquer Korat. Unfortunately for the city, its governor and deputy governor were on a mission to

Cambodia. Korat, it seemed, was leaderless.

Panic and fear began to spread when the enemy appeared at the gates. To make matters worse, most of the troops that could have fought the invaders had followed the governors to Cambodia. The city was down to its minimal defences.

When Anuvong reached Korat, he sent Gnow to meet with the city's governor. Gnow was to try and convince the governor to join forces with the Laotians. If the governor did not cooperate, the Laotians threatened to launch an attack that very evening.

The people of Korat flocked to Lady Mo to discuss how best

to defend the city. Lady Mo realized that Korat's meager defences would be easily overrun if the Laotians decided to attack the city, so she devised an alternative plan.

Lady Mo rode out of the city to meet with Gnow. She told the invaders that Korat's governors and defensive troops were on a mission to Cambodia and the city was filled with women, children and old people. Lady Mo told Gnow that Korat would surrender to the Laotians if they promised not to harm anyone. However, his advisors cautioned him that the Siamese governors might return at any time from Cambodia.

King Anuvong ordered his troops to move into Korat so they could use the city's walls as defenses. Lady Mo allowed his troops to enter – she had little choice.

Lady Mo secretly sent word to Lord Thong Kam informing him of the surrender. Lord Thong Kam forwarded the news to Bangkok and asked the king for immediate assistance in liberating Korat and the other Siamese cities. That night, the governor Lord Thong Kam and other nobles of Korat marched out of Cambodia and headed home.

When they arrived home, they realized the situation was a lot worse than they had imagined. King Anuvong commanded an army of ten thousand soldiers. Without reinforcements from Bangkok, it would be hard to defeat him.

To be continued...

Walking fish provides evolutionary insight

A SPECIES of fish discovered in the 1980s has recently provided new insight into the limbs that evolved in our aquatic ancestors, reported the *GlobalPost*.

This eyeless, translucent pink fish is only an inch long, and is known as the 'waterfall cave-climbing fish'. It uses its four fins as legs to walk.

"Its pelvic bone resembles that of a mammal's, somewhat close to a human being's," Apinun Suvarnaraksha, a zoologist from the University of Chiang Mai, told the *GlobalPost*.

It is currently only known to exist in a remote cave system



The walking fish. Photo: Chulabush Khatancharoen

along the Thai-Myanmar border, with its population believed to be only a few thousand.

"The government needs to take care of this area. Tour guides need to be more careful. There's a lot more conservation that needs to be done," Dr Apinun said. – *Phuket Gazette*

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Fungi: Hidden health danger



Excuse Buster

By Craig Burton

“IT IS ironic that this humble fungus, hailed as a benefactor of mankind, may by its very success prove to be a deciding factor in the decline of the present civilization”, said Dr John I Pitt, in *The Genus Penicillin*, 1979.

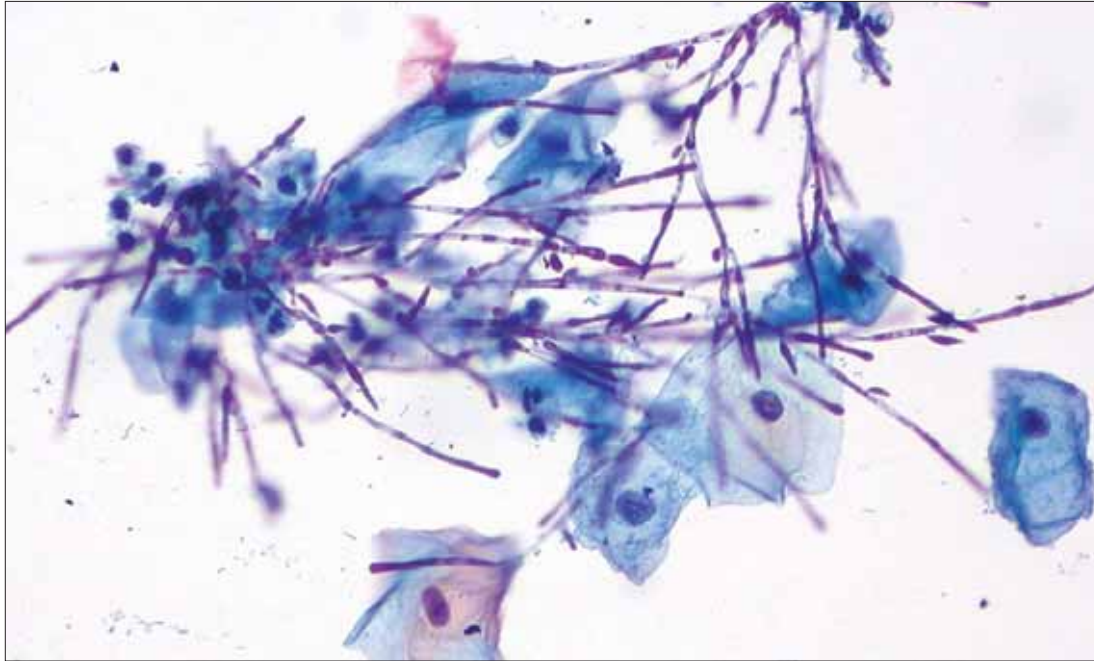
‘Antibiotics save lives.’ But has our overuse of antibiotics for killing bacteria contributed to creating a dangerous internal environment for the growth of another pathogen – fungi?

The Fungal link by Doug Kaufman is one of the books that transformed the way I approach clients, and his message was revolutionary. He believes that the simple fungus is behind most of our health ills today from obesity, to hormone disruption, skin disorders and mood imbalances.

Is he being too general – could one group of organisms really cause so much disease? After many years using his protocols including his anti-fungal diet, and many of his supplement plans, I’m convinced there is strong a foundation to his belief.

If the overuse of antibiotics leads to intestinal imbalances and fungal infections, why don’t doctors know this? Kaufman says it’s because fungal infections were rare 50 years ago when pharmaceutical drugs were also rare.

The most common organism implicated in fungal infections is *Candida*, which is found in the human digestive tract, mouth, and genital region. Under normal circumstances, levels of



The most common organism implicated in fungal infections is *Candida*. Photo: Ed Uthman

Candida are controlled by beneficial bacteria. However, if the bacteria-fungus balance is upset by the use of antibiotics, cortisone, birth control pills, a compromised immune system, or living in a moldy environment, this can lead to an overgrowth of *Candida*.

Fungi grow in a plant-like way, sending roots into the intestinal wall looking for food. These roots bore holes through the intestinal tract causing a condition now known as “leaky gut syndrome”. This means that damage to the intestinal wall is allowing bacteria, bacterial debris, food, pollens, environmental pollutants and many other materials to bypass the normal protective barriers and enter the body. Could the rise of fungus have anything to do with the current allergy epidemic?

I think they definitely play a role.

What about hormone disruption? Could *Candida* be responsible for the current epidemic of hormonal dysfunction, from thyroid disease, adrenal fatigue, and sexual health disorders? Many experts think so.

Fungal overgrowth can cause so many different symptoms, that the best way to know if you are suffering from it is to review your environment, diet, lifestyle and stress.

ENVIRONMENT

Humidity and mold go hand in hand. Living in Phuket we need to be vigilant in reducing mold exposure in our home and work environment. Regularly check areas that may be damp as these spots often harbor mold growths. Use vinegar or bicarbonate of soda to clean surfaces, as both are natural, non-toxic

products that also remove mold.

DIET

You will essentially need to follow a low carbohydrate diet for three to 12 months depending on severity. This includes the removal of grains, sugar, most fruits and starches. So it is a diet high in protein, with lots of good fats, nuts and seeds, and plenty of vegetables. Cultured dairy such as yogurt and kefir can also play a good role in the diet, providing a natural source of probiotics that fight the fungi.

LIFESTYLE AND STRESS

Stress and quality sleep play a greater role than most people think when it comes to healing the body. If the adrenal glands are fatigued, then the ability to heal the damage caused by fungi

is compromised. Also lifestyle and how one spends free time (at the pub, in front of TV, or moving about outdoors) often play key roles in health.

BATTLING THE FUNGI

Consuming Probiotics can help. I recommend taking an anti-oxidant supplement which includes vitamin A, C, E and zinc or selenium, as they are antifungal. Vitamin D plays a key role in many physiological functions including immune system strength and metabolism.

Two of my favorite fungi fighters are Colloidal Silver (found in most health stores in Phuket) and garlic (a favorite in Thai cooking).

WHEN YOU START WINNING

This is such an important aspect of this process. So many people have embarked on an antifungal regime only to stop due to the symptoms of the detox. When the fungi start to die off, you can experience symptoms like nausea, headaches, colds, flu, mood swings, depression and joint/muscular pain. So I recommend people who feel they suffer from mold or fungi, to work with a professional and always take it slow. You need to give your body the chance to remove the poison the fungus is releasing as it dies.

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

Police ‘forcing bid’ calls for calming bridge’s troubled waters

THE Contract Bridge League of Thailand (CBLT) moved to tighten regulations for the game, in order to prevent further confusions among officers and players concerning the legality of the game.

“After a tiring but enjoyable weekend of bridge I’m happy to say that Phuket has taken care of issues over playing bridge here, with the help and cooperation of all parties involved,” said Derek Priest, director of BridgeWebs, about the Phuket Bridge Open held from March 26-27.

A raid in Pattaya on February 4 forced CBLT to meet with Suttipong Juljarern, deputy permanent secretary of the Ministry of Interior, to figure out what their organization can do now be-

fore having to take up the matter to the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT).

CBLT Vice President Vallapa Svangsopakul has announced that the CBLT is now working on making sure bridge will be categorized as a sport, using playing cards as their main equipment. The league will provide playing cards for sale to all members.

In order to run smoothly, the clubs simply need to fill in registration forms with their full details with the CBLT. They will also need to provide beforehand the specific days of the week on which bridge meetings will be held as well as the payment slips of the memberships.

“Elderly bridge-playing foreigners who arrive in Phuket each year will be able to look forward to playing their



Players can only be playing for the love of the game, not money. Photo: Erin McConnell

usual recreational game in peace,” Mr Priest added.

As soon as the CBLT receives all the required information, they will issue a letter to local authorities in the area to inform them about upcoming bridge-related activities.

The CBLT has asked for cooperation from all associations and clubs to avoid

any problems with local authorities and police by putting posters or signs publicizing bridge activities.

Ms Vallapa also called all the clubs to make sure only bridge will be played in the clubs, as other card games are still illegal. “No cash on the table, no matter what,” she noted.

– Chutharat Plerin

Three for the price of one



“THE problem with cycling is it’s all legs and lungs boyo,” so said someone who really ought to know. I was cycling with a member of the Welsh national team some thirty years ago in the lung-bursting Brecon Beacons in Central Wales, and his comment has always reminded me of how important it is to balance pedal-pushing with other activities, particularly those that exercise the upper body.

However, for a well-rounded fitness program, cycling needs to be complimented with upper body exercises, ideally combined with stretching and weight lifting.

Science has also discovered a lot about the effects of continuously exercising in the same way without variation over extended periods. Basically, the human body is very clever at adapting to regularity, and eventually becoming lazy and taking short cuts in reducing the work it has to do if it knows what exercise is coming every day.

In other words, by doing a variety of exercises, rather than just one sport, your body’s athletic and fitness levels have no choice but to grow. Cross-training workouts aren’t tailored to a single goal, such as gaining strength, or getting faster, but rather cater to these needs simultaneously. With cross-training,



It is important to engage both your upper and lower body during exercise. Photo: Baz Daniel

it’s possible to gain muscle, lose fat, increase aerobic capacity and quicken your reactions all in a single workout. This comprehensive style of fitness training is one of the many great benefits of cross-training.

You will get a better training effect and be much more fit overall, if you keep your body guessing by mixing up your exercise routines.

Moreover, repetition often leads to injury as joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons throughout your body are under

a tremendous amount of stress, and it’s important to give them the occasional break. By mixing up your routine, you give the overused parts of your body a chance to rest and the underused parts a chance to strengthen and catch-up. By cross-training you gain greater overall health and rounded fitness.

Active recovery is the practice of using an alternative type of exercise to recover from your main exercise such as cycling. In addition to the conditioning and injury pre-

venting benefits of cross training, it has been shown to actually speed up recovery, by increasing blood flow and delivery of nutrients to stressed or damaged muscle tissues.

In Phuket we are blessed with cross training opportunities as we have plenty of cycling routes that take us into hilly areas for walking and climbing. Of course, being on an island, the chance of a sea-swim and a beach-jog are never far away.

My own particular perfect

cross-training workout takes in a bike ride to one of the island’s truly iconic landmarks, a hike or jog along a sea-lashed headland with stunning views, and a swim at a beach which TripAdvisor has just voted the sixth best in Asia.

The key to enjoying this experience is an early start to beat both heat and traffic. I usually set off from home in Chalong into the heart of Rawai and along the waterfront, getting there no later than 7am. Then it’s up Prom Thep Cape on the quieter back road to the famous lookout with its iconic lighthouse and elephant shrine.

It’s important to get there early, as fume-belching tour buses arrive from 8:30 am onwards, disgorging hundreds of selfie-taking Chinese tourists. Lock up your bike and do the hike (or run if you are really fit) out and back along the southernmost promontory with its fabulous sea, and island views all around you.

Gulp down a copious amount of water and head down the hill to Ya Nui Beach, then up and over the lookout hill to Nai Harn Beach for your swim and a walk or jog along the sands.

The whole trip will take you about two and a half hours, and gives you a very thorough cross-training work out combining cycling, jogging/walking and swimming. To round it off, cycle back to Delish Cafe in Chalong for poached eggs on toast and a coffee!

Bangkok to Yangon – on bike



The cycling trip to Yangon is 827km long. Photo: yeowatzup

YOU’ll need the adventurous spirit of Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell – not to mention a well-padded backside – to participate in the upcoming 827-kilometer Bangkok-Yangon bicycle tour.

Organized by Spice Road, the trip takes 14 days and heads out of Bangkok on November

13. The route takes cyclists to Mae Sot, Thailand’s gateway to Myanmar. Once inside Myanmar, participants will explore the beautiful countryside around Hpa An, the Golden Rock, Mawlamyine and Yangon’s famed Shwedagon Pagoda.

– The Nation

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AccorHotels lands historic year in 2015



Grand Mercure, Patong is one of the many Accor Hotels on the island. Photo: Phuket Gazette

ACCORHOTELS opened two hotels every three days last year, the group said on April 12. It was a record year for AccorHotels, which operates more than 3,900 hotels in 92 countries. It opened 229 new hotels at a rate of two hotels every three days.

At this year's International Hotel Investment Forum", Gaurav Bhushan, global chief development officer for AccorHotels said 2015 'was a historic year for AccorHotels' expansion'.

"We crossed the symbolic milestone of half a million rooms with a 20-per-cent increase in the number of openings last year. We will maintain profitable expansion, strengthen our presence in the countries where we are leaders and rapidly acquire market share in emerging markets. After opening 23,000 rooms in 2013, 30,000 in 2014 and 36,000 in 2015, the expansion will continue at a robust pace.

— *The Nation*

Utility of 'For Sale' signs



By The Book
Kevin Hodges

LET people know your home is on the market with a 'For Sale' Sign!

In real estate markets all over the world it is common practice for property sellers to erect a 'For Sale' sign when putting their property on the market, as it increases the chances of selling. The majority of the time the sign will be provided by the seller's real estate broker so that potential buyers can clearly see a property is for sale and know who to contact if they are interested.

Here in Phuket 'For Sale' signs are much rarer and this is detrimental to an owners' prospects of selling their property.

Even though much of today's real estate marketing is done online, one thing all real estate agents still use is the house for sale sign. Simple, yet very effective.

A real estate 'For Sale' sign is a calling card to all potential homebuyers, letting them know your home is on the market. Without it you are missing out on attracting people that are passing right by your house.

Allowing the broker to erect a sign is very important, the broker's brand name and reputation may draw in the passer-by



All real estate agents still use the house for sale sign, simple yet effective. Photo: Mark Moz

as they understand they will be dealing with a professional company that can assist with the buying process and represent their interests. It also avoids property visits without appointments and as the broker is the first point of contact, they can vet the potential customer first and check whether the property matches their requirements and then arrange an appropriate time for a visit that is convenient to you.

A major part of your broker's role is ensuring that you have a genuine buyer, who actually has

the purchase funds available. Many times private sales end in disaster and wasted effort due to misunderstanding between the parties and the potential buyer's lack of knowledge of the buying process in Phuket. This is where brokers earn their fee. Here in Phuket we see many homemade signs which look unprofessional and result in many phone calls from buyers whose criteria do not match the property being sold.

Real Estate Brokers will provide a 'For Sale' sign as part of their service at no additional

cost to the seller. If your property is listed for sale, we would recommend that you contact your real estate broker and request a sign be erected at your property. This will only increase the exposure of your property and chances of getting a sale, with no extra costs or hassle for you as the seller.

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

Government punts residential market

THE RESIDENTIAL property market witnessed strong growth in the first quarter, thanks to the government's stimulus package cutting transfer and mortgage registration fees, and its recently introduced "Baan Pracha Rath" financial package for the purchase of homes priced up to 1.5 million baht.

"Our presales in the first quarter came in at 9.36 billion baht, thanks to the latest financial package for homes priced under the 'Baan Pracha Rath' campaign," said Lersuk Chuladesa, chief operating officer of Pruksa Real Estate.

LPN Development, transferred homes worth 4 billion baht of homes in the first quarter. "This was because of the government's measure reducing mortgage registration and transfer fees," said managing director Opas Sripayak.

Golden Land Residence recorded presales worth 3.1



'Baan Pracha Rath' financial package for the purchase of homes has helped residential market make millions. Photo: The Nation

billion baht in the first two months of the year, putting the company well on track to exceed its presales target of 3.5 billion baht for the first quarter.

"We believe presales will grow thanks to strong residential demand among home-buyers, especially among those speeding up their decision to purchase before the measure to cut transfer and mortgage fees to 0.1 per cent expires on April 28," said managing director Saenphin Sukhee.

NC Housing, meanwhile,

recorded presales of 600 million baht in the first quarter, about 20 per cent higher than the same period last year, deputy managing director Sumnuet Tanthathodtham said.

"The 'Baan Pracha Rath' campaign will help property firms reduce their inventory. It helped drive the market to strong growth in the first quarter, and will continue to do so in the second," said the director-general, Samma Kitsin.

— *The Nation*

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Marina raises concerns

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

RESIDENTS in Pa Khlok are worried that a new marina for superyachts to be built in the area will have a negative impact on the environment and their livelihoods.

The Kung Bay Marina is one of four new marinas slated to be built along the Andaman coast as part of a government-supported initiative to develop marine tourism in the region. Covering 108 rai, the Kung Bay Marina is one of the larger marinas planned for the area, and is suitable for superyachts because its depth is at least eight meters.

A group of about 50 residents expressed their concerns, at the first in a series of public hearings held on April 5, headed by local officials and representatives of the companies assigned to oversee construction and management of the new marina.

Chairing the meeting was Kanok Khemnark, managing director of Enrich Consultants Co Ltd, which was hired by project owner Seaview Land Co Ltd, to conduct research on the environmental impacts of the marina on the area.



A group of about 50 residents expressed their concerns about the proposed marina. Photo: Gazette file

Project manager Prapong Saelim was keen to assure the concerned residents about its benefits on the local community.

“The marina will bring revenue to the people of Pa Khlok, much like locations such as Patong, Kata, Karon and Bang Tao,” he said.

“We are also concerned about the environmental impacts of the marina, but this will be taken care of with the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report,” said Mr Prapong.

Speaking on behalf of the locals, Pa Khlok resident Soonthorn Tohtip said that many who made their living by fishing in the area, were concerned that construction of the marina would negatively impact their livelihoods, if the channel leading to the marina was changed.

“We need to be properly informed about the development, and ensure that locals are involved in the process to ensure benefits for all concerned,” said Mr Soonthorn.

Mr Kanok promised transparency and reassured the residents that more information would be made available by the end of this month.

“This was a preliminary meeting, followed by another in August. In the meantime, more studies will be done to assess the impacts on the local community, including an assessment by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP),” said Mr Kanok.

Hilltop Hotel relaunched



Affordability with five-star appeal. Photo: The Lantern Group

PHUKET-based developer The Lantern Resorts & Residencies aims to attract a new wave of trendy travellers with the re-launch of its hillside property, following a complete renovation of its facilities to offer ‘four-star affordability with five-star appeal.’

Formerly the Sky Dream Hotel, the Hilltop Hotel was relaunched earlier this month under new management, following completion of a new accommodation wing.

We aim to offer convenience and comfort for travellers who want to stay close to the airport and Phuket’s central business district, said hotel manager Somchai Pantong.

The renovation includes a three-story wing, bringing the total number of guest rooms to 42, said Mr Somchai.

–Nick Davies

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Please call 093-539 6665. Email: krisdphil@gmail.com

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Note: the images are people and industry the actress has worked with.




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Phuket Gazette

Reaching for her dream

By Simon J Hand

IF YOU have recently wandered along Karon Beach in the late afternoon, you will have seen a considerable number of volleyball courts stretched across the sandy lot between the road and beach.

No, it's not an international tournament coming to town – that was last month – this is the daily beach volleyball games instigated by one of Thailand's top players, Yupa Phukrongploy.

Now 34 years old, Yupa's pro career took her around the world. She represented Thailand on the beach volley courts of Asia and the Americas, and brought home a wealth of gold and silver medals.

Introduced to the indoor version of the game by her sister, she fell in love with volleyball at the age of ten. But it was her elevation at the age of 15 to Thailand's volleyball Dream Team – under the stewardship of legendary Thai volley coach Kiattipong 'Ott' Rachata Kriangkrai – that set her on the

sandy path to the beach volleyball courts.

"I want to thank Coach Ott. He helped me join the Dream Team when I was 15 years old and he was the one who suggested that I try beach volleyball – because I'm so tall. So, I gave it a try, and I've been addicted ever since," Yupa says with a smile.

"Beach volleyball is quite a lot harder than indoor volleyball because it's harder to move fast on the sand. We have to play under the sun on big fields with only two players per team, instead of the six-player teams I was used to for the indoor volleyball matches," she explains.

"Even though it's hard, it was the challenge that interested me. And that's why I love it."

Originally from Kalasin, in the Northeast of Thailand, Yupa now calls Phuket home and is endeavoring to share her passion for beach volleyball with anyone who happens by the courts she has set up with permission of the local authori-

ties in Karon.

"I played for the national team for 12 years, but when I retired I still needed to play for fun. That's when I came up with the idea of setting up these courts on the beach in Phuket," she says.

Karon has been the beach of choice for volleyball tournaments over the years, hosting both FIVB events and the recent pro-am Volley Fest, so it was an easy choice for Yupa. The local authorities were also accommodating to the idea of the star player bringing some fun back to Phuket's beaches.

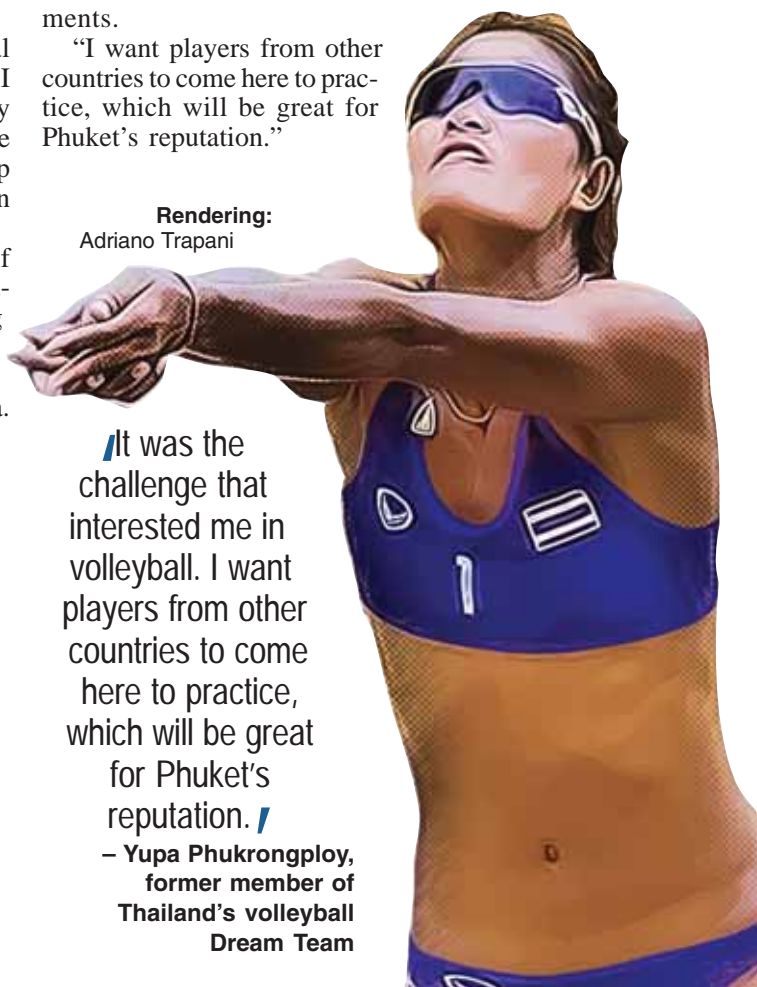
Yupa plans to pay back the local council's support for her project by giving local youngsters the opportunity to discover the joys of the game in the same way she found them.

"My main purpose for setting up these courts is that I want others to experience the fun of playing and also to understand what a great place Phuket is for playing – it's good for training, as well as staging matches and tourna-

ments.

"I want players from other countries to come here to practice, which will be great for Phuket's reputation."

Rendering:
Adriano Trapani



It was the challenge that interested me in volleyball. I want players from other countries to come here to practice, which will be great for Phuket's reputation.

– Yupa Phukrongploy,
former member of
Thailand's volleyball
Dream Team



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