

Phuket Gazette

April 30 - May 6, 2016

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‘SWIMMERS IGNORING RED FLAGS ARE RISKING THEIR LIVES’

Rips arrive

■ Swimmers ignore rip current warnings: one dead, 94 rescued

By Chutharat Plerin

SEASONAL changes have brought strong rip currents to the shores of Phuket. With them comes a sharp rise in the number of rescues this month, prompting lifeguards to issue stern warnings to would-be swimmers.

“Swimmers who ignore warning flags are risking their lives and those of the lifeguards,” said the president of the Phuket Lifeguard Club (PLC), Prathaiyut Chuayuan.

Unlike previous years, which saw lifeguards walk off the sands as the PLC and Phuket provincial government haggled over the next contract, guards will remain on duty during this dangerous time of year. There were no delays as the guards quickly signed the 22-million-baht contract on April 20.

The club, which has 98 lifeguards manning 38 stations at 12 beaches in the province, recorded 35 rescues in April; 15 Thais and 20 foreigners.

However, despite the successful rescues, the lethal currents off Phuket did claim one life in April. Lifeguards doubt it will be the last, if people don't take heed of their warnings.

The first swimming-related death recorded by Phuket lifeguards this year was



With the increase of rip tides off Phuket's beaches in April, lifeguards have had to rescue 35 swimmers in a single month, most of them foreigners. Photo: Isaac Stone Simonelli

a woman in her twenties from Bangkok, who died on April 18. She and five friends ignored the red flags warning people not to swim. The group of six were swept out of their depth and all had to be rescued by the lifeguards, but only five of them survived the ordeal.

“The woman's death was a direct result of swimming in the red-flag zone and ignoring the lifeguards' warnings,” said the head lifeguard at Nai Harn Beach, Jula Nontree...

Continued on Page 5

Island water management under review

FOLLOWING recent inspections of local water treatment facilities – and with water shortages after a lengthy dry season – Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada aims to tackle several water management issues with a new plan of attack.

Story on Page 3

BUSINESS



Local nut cases cashing in on Phuket's flourishing cashew business.

PROPERTY



Another beachfront eatery bites the dust as authorities take back public land.

LIFE&STYLE



Monkeying around in the jungle at Phuket's newest adventure playground.



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Only Bangkok Immigration wants social media data

A PHOTO of immigration forms asking foreigners to detail their regular hangouts, social media accounts, bank accounts and other personal information caused a social media frenzy earlier this month. The form is only being used in Bangkok, according to a source in the local provincial Immigration office.

News of the somewhat aggressive form comes in the wake of tighter visa overstay regulations announced last month as part of the Immigration Bureau's cordially-named campaign: 'Good Guys In, Bad Guys Out.'

– Chutharat Plerin

Tourists escape Karon bus fire

A GROUP of Chinese tourists narrowly escaped serious injury after fleeing a burning tour bus in Karon on April 21.

The fire, which is believed to have started due to a short circuit in the engine, took firefighters about 20 minutes to put out.

"We have to confirm the exact cause of the fire and have yet to press charges," said Lt Col Sathid Noorit of the Chalong Police.

The bus was taken to the garage for further investigation, confirmed Col Sathid.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Volunteers needed for island suicide hotline



Founder and president of the Phuket Anti-Corruption Network, Surin Bamrunghol, is asking for volunteers to help establish a 24/7, English and Thai-language suicide helpline in Phuket. Those wanting to make a financial donation to the project or volunteers can contact Dr Surin at 084-450 7777 or email surin2008@gmail.com. For the full story, visit Phuketgazette.net. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Driver wrecks 8 motorbikes

A PICK-UP truck driver, who fell asleep at the wheel, flipped his vehicle into eight motorbikes and another truck parked along Thepkrasattri Road in the early hours of April 22.

"Wasan Wjitwithayakul, 46, confessed to having dozed off while heading home to Thalung from Bang Neow Shrine in

LOCAL NEWS Briefly

Phuket Town," Lt Col Chaliao Thaihoo of the Phuket City Police said.

Mr Wasan was slightly injured in the incident, while his truck, and the three motorbikes that it landed directly on, were severely damaged.

Mr Wasan was charged with reckless driving causing damage to property.

– Winai Sarot

Illegal migrant camps must go, says V/Gov

LOCAL officials must prevent illegal migrant camps from popping up along construction sites throughout the province, Phuket Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul said on April 20.

"Foreign workers build their shacks in and around local communities. They live in unhygienic conditions that spread disease, and indulge in the illegal trade of vegetables, fish and drugs," said Vice Governor

Prajiad.

Last year, the island was home to 226 migrant worker camps – 108 in Phuket Town, 16 in Kathu and 102 in Thalung, housing more than 10,000 workers, explained Gov Prajiad. There are now more than 74,000, confirmed Pitoon Damsakorn, director of the Employment Office.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Thousands cross Krabi bridge on foot

THE official opening of the recently completed Lanta Bridge in Krabi drew a crowd of thousands wishing to make the crossing on foot between Lanta Noi and Lanta Yai islands on April 23.

"It is the first bridge in Thailand's history to be constructed between two islands," Krabi Governor Pinit Boonlert said.

The 400-million-baht bridge aims to decrease the congested ferry-way between the two islands, which locals say was particularly crowded during the high season, when an influx of tourists drove up waiting times.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Worker camp raids turn up guns, drugs

PHUKET police arrested three suspects for possession of drugs and illegal firearms during a raid on a worker camp on April 22.

Two of the suspects were named as Chatchana Pooangka, 29, and Nattapong Rithidet, 19. A 16-year-old minor was not named.

Police seized a homemade firearm with 21 rounds of ammunition, a .22 Smith & Wesson handgun with three rounds of ammunition, an additional seven bullets, 100 grams of kratom leaves, kratom juice and other paraphernalia.

All three suspects were charged with possession of a Category 5 Drug. Mr Chatchana was also charged for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition.

– Winai Sarot

New reef for Tri Tang Beach

CONCRETE structures were lowered into the sea off Tri Trang Beach on April 22 as part of a sustainable tourism initiative backed with private funding.

The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources placed more than 120 cement cubes and cones on two rai of seabed to become homes for marine life and attract divers to the area.

– Kongleaphy Keam

One tonne of dead fish in Phuket park

A LARGE number of fish and shrimp died in a pond in Suan Luang Park in Phuket Town from either a rise in temperature or polluted water, officials confirmed on April 22.

Phuket City Deputy Mayor Thavorn Jirapattanasophon headed the clean-up project, directing officials to collect water samples from the pond, so the water quality could be tested.

"Our initial tests suggest that the water is safe," said Mayor Thavorn.

Similar incidents have taken place several times in the past.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Water system overhaul

Gov calls for island-wide review of water systems

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

FOLLOWING recent inspections of local water treatment facilities, and with some parts of the province facing water shortages after a lengthy dry season, Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada aims to tackle water management issues head on with a provincial-wide water management plan.

A number of districts in March reported running out of potable water supplied by the same sources as the Phuket Provincial Waterworks Authority (PPWA); having to buy extra supplies of water from private suppliers, prompting the governor to demand why water should run out in some areas while the PPWA was reporting sufficient supplies for the island through Songkran and beyond – at least until the onset of the rainy season.

“There is enough water in the reservoirs to last until May or June,” said PPWA manager Pisak Chonlayut.

Water shortages have been reported in some areas under Phuket City Municipality, which has also implemented water rationing, using trucks to ferry supplies in the spots hit hardest by the shortages.

In Cherng Talay, water re-



Governor Chamroen has urged all leaders for long-term solutions to water problems. Photo: Gazette file

serves are low, but still being supplied to users. However, Thepkrasattri sub district and Chalong are facing similar issues as well, it was confirmed. When sea water in Patong Bay turned muddy brown in mid April, locals blamed wastewater run-off from the densely populated area.

Samples of sea water were collected for testing – the results of which have yet to be revealed – and an inspection visit to the local wastewater treatment plant revealed that although the plant was running efficiently, it was only treating about 80 per cent of all the wastewater produced

in the area.

“About 20 per cent of the all the wastewater flowing from Patong doesn’t reach the plant to be treated,” said engineering consultant Phanuphong Wasasiri. On April 19, Governor Chamroen called on all district chiefs to re-assess their water management facilities and come up with plans and budgets to effectively conserve fresh water and more efficiently treat waste water to avoid similar water supply issues next year.

“Given the ample supply of potable water from the PPWA, there shouldn’t be water short-

ages anywhere, so local leaders need to find ways to manage their water management systems and infrastructure,” said the governor.

“We need to make long-term plans to ensure efficient water management across the island and ensure there is always enough fresh water for the number of inhabitants in each district,” said the governor.

“This means possibly hiring professional technicians and reconfiguring underground supply lines in a way that ensures more effective water conservation and treatment,” he said.



Suttitaste Tuekkuntis sustained scars on both calves. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Boy survives jellyfish sting

A KRABI boy is recovering from jellyfish stings, sustained while fishing with his father in Ao Nang Monday evening, confirmed doctors at Krabi Provincial Hospital.

Suttitaste Tuekkuntos, 12, suffered scarring on both his calves, after diving into the water from his boat to disentangle fishing tackle.

The boy’s life was saved by his quick-thinking father, who hauled him out and treated the wounds with vinegar.

“Applying vinegar to jellyfish stings prevents the poison from spreading through the blood vessels,” said visiting Associate Professor Lakkana Taicreau from the Department of Community Medicine, Chiang Mai University.

“One of the worst things you can do is pour water onto a jelly fish sting, because water further spreads the poison into the blood,” said Dr. Lakkana.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Dispute over Naka Noi land



The alleged owners of the disputed land. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

THREE people who allegedly owned land documents for chunks of Naka Noi Island, off Phuket’s eastcoast, challenged the family of Thai actor Puri Hiranpruk that all parties involved in a recent land dispute, should donate their property as a conservation area for wildlife.

Jeya Tonkhleng, Dolmanap Tonkhleng and Jessada Thorthip stepped forward today to explain the tangled history of the ownership of the lush tropical island.

“My father didn’t inform the Land Department that we

owned the property, so we never had land title deeds for it,” said Ms Jeya.

None of the three people who met with the press presented the necessary documents to back their claims.

The same day that the land document was upgraded, it was sold to Six Mountain Co Ltd. Mr Puri filed the complaint following the sale of the property.

A counter lawsuit was filed against Mr Puri. The owner of Six Mountains Chanwit Kitlersiriwattan claimed that allegations made by Mr Puri could cause serious damage to his, as well as the company’s reputation.

“If his family is truly worried about the wildlife, they should donate their land to the public. We will do the same,” said Mr Chanwit.

Despite his pledge, Mr Jesseda, who sold the property to Six Mountains, was not able to legally guarantee the donation of the plot of land he sold.

No representatives of Six Mountains chose to comment.

–Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Milo's health at critical level



Milo was transferred to Kanchana Buri. Photo: Vicki Kiely

AN ORANGUTAN recently confiscated from Phuket Zoo was in critical condition, as the *Gazette* went to print on Wednesday.

The beloved 13-year-old orangutan 'Milo' was moved from the Phang Nga Wildlife Nursery Station to the intensive care unit of the Pasupalun Livestock & Wildlife Hospital in Kanchana Buri on April 21.

"Whether or not she suffered a stroke or is having brain function issues, we simply don't know yet," Sirinhip Kemthong, a veterinarian at the hospital said.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Army asks Baron to stop building following meeting with sea gypsies

By *Kongleaphy Keam*

THE Royal Thai 41st Military Circle will ask Baron World Trade Company to halt construction on a long-disputed Rawai development, Commanding General Teenachat Jindangen told the *Gazette* on Tuesday.

The general made the remarks after meeting with sea gypsy community leaders in an effort to mediate between the two sides and avoid any further conflicts from erupting.

The land dispute between members of the sea gypsy community and Baron Trade Co has escalated to violence in the past, as both groups claim ownership of the Rawai property.

Members of the sea gypsy community and human rights activists met with commanders



Gen Teenachat speaks with the press. Photo: Phuket PR

from the 41st Military Circle in Phuket Provincial Hall on Tuesday, after receiving a summons on April 20.

"First of all, I want the public to understand that we are not threatening the sea gypsies at all," Maj Gen Teen-

chat told the *Gazette*. "We just want to talk to them and understand their side of the issue – what they need and their way of life."

"The sea gypsies have cooperated with us and we've heard their stories. Next, we'll need details from Baron as well, which we expect to receive soon," Maj Gen Teenachat said.

"First, we want Baron to stop developing the land in question. The provincial government has already spoken with them, and I think there is a high likelihood they will cooperate with us. That is the best way to stop this conflict at the present time," said the general.

Rawai sea gypsy representative Nirund Yangpan, 40, echoed that cooperation was at the forefront of the talks.

Baba Museum artwork to be removed amid outcry



Alex Face will be 'allowed' to remove the controversial artwork himself. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

A CONTROVERSIAL mural painted on the wall of the Phuket Baba Museum will be removed by the artist following public outcry.

Painted on one of the city's most historic buildings, the 'Three-Eyed Kid' garnered mixed public opinions since its unveiling on April 10. Through social media, residents criticized the artwork's placement at what was formerly the Standard Chartered Bank, the only international bank in Phuket and a marker of the island's period of industrialization.

Criticism of the project was also leveled at municipality support for the project through an engagement organization called So Phuket.

"It seems only fair that we respect the artist, Alex Face, by

allowing him to remove the artwork himself," Weerachai Pranweerapiboon, a representative of 'So Phuket', confirmed on April 22. "He will be available to do so between May 5-15, meaning that the artwork will be completely removed by then."

Three other artworks sponsored by So Phuket have failed to garner the controversy surrounding the 'Three-Eyed Kid'. Mr Weerachai said his organization will exercise greater caution during the installation of eight future projects, scheduled to be completed by October.

Mr Weerachai said So Phuket will create a Facebook page in order to notify the public of future installations and to receive feedback.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

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Rescues on the rise in April

From page 1

...“The friends were standing in water only a meter deep when waves knocked them over and they were dragged out to sea,” he said.

Although April’s death was a Thai national, it is foreign visitors that are most likely to fall victim to the vicious under-currents at popular beaches.

Last year, Phuket’s lifeguards saved the lives of at least 44 Thais and 269 foreigners.

Between January and March this year, lifeguards rescued 59 swimmers. Out of the 52 people pulled from the surf in January, six were Thai and 46 were foreigners.

Four foreigners were rescued in February, then in March, one Thai national and two foreigners.

Following the arrival of the rip currents in April, the number of rescues so far this year has jumped to 94, according to figures from the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO).

“Please adhere to red-flag warnings at beaches, which are placed when the rip-currents are particularly strong,” urged Mr Prathaiyut.

“Understand that we have only two or three lifeguards at each station. The red flags are placed in spots that are danger-



Despite prominent flags and warning signs put up by Mr Uten and other lifeguards, visitors still enter dangerous waters. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

ous to swim in, so it’s just best to avoid them,” he said.

Uten Singsom, the head lifeguard in Kata-Karon, said foreigners often ignore the lifeguards’ warnings and have even become violent.

“We always try to warn people but sometimes fights break out with those who

don’t understand English. They end up ignoring us,” said Mr Uten.

“Things got so bad last year with people ignoring us that the police ended up getting involved to prevent people getting in the water. I’m thankful to the police for their help but they have better things to

do so we try not to get them involved,” he said.

If people really want to swim, they should do so near lifeguard stations, which are marked by yellow and red flags, Mr Uten advised.

He also warned against wearing long-sleeved shirts and jeans in the water, as the clothes

become heavy and make it difficult to swim.

Mr Prathaiyut repeated his plea for tourists to obey red-flag warnings at beaches, stressing that even though the lifeguards are well trained to handle the risks, they may not be able to save every single swimmer that ignores the flags.



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FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND
By Barry Singleton

BIG BOY RETURNS
Phang Nga wave victims 'have all been helped'

TRASHING Phuket

Anchalee raps Gov over delay on hospital deal

Saving for an (un)rainy day

'Live with it,' TAT tells complaining hoteliers

Samui set for regatta

Phuket Gazette

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It's back to the polls - again




PHUKET Palimapan came Phuthai (TR) liament, only 7,89 to just 8, ate in Ph Bui TRT part running failed to ment of 20% of A round o today (tempt h district. D ette a would! otters acted : Phub es I na s 7 or the 2,456 votes.

'Mick the Pom' jumps bail



Furious monk clobbers dog-lover

How much observing did observers do?

Songkran road death toll totals five - or six

Princess opens tsunami aid center

Queer News

ELECTION polls were again on page one of the Gazette at the end of April 2006, after the first round of voting failed to meet the necessary requirements to nominate Phuket representatives to Parliament.

The election followed the decision by then-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to dissolve the House of Representatives.

Five citizens, angry with the government and the Election Commission for attempting to rush forming parliament, publicly tore up their ballot papers in protest. All five were arrested and charged with vio-

lating Article 108 of the Elections Act.

Now, ten years later, there aren't even ballots to be torn up by those who have yet to be 'Returned to Happiness' by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). The NCPO continues to face increasing international pressure over when they will hold general elections, and delays in the official election continue due to the failure to ratify a draft constitution.

Assuming they are even aware of Thailand's elections, most tourists

The gift of hindsight

That familiar grumble made ink in the April 29-May 5, 2006 issue of the Gazette in Graham Doven's column, 'Larger Than Life'.

"They planned to do what a lot of people do on holidays in a tropical paradise - lie around on the beach or around the pool and go to local pubs and restaurants at night," wrote Mr Doven. However, four of the seven

hardly seem to care. However, election-day alcohol bans dampen tourists' moods faster than the southwest monsoon season.

nights of tourists' stays were marred, as night venues closed due to elections.

"It is not the business of tourists or any foreigners to interfere in the sovereign rights of another country. However, it is high time that archaic laws that do not take into account the fact that Thailand is an international destination and earning good money from such be reformed."

Perhaps the silver lining to the lack of elections at the moment then, is the fact that there is no need to re-work such laws - at least not at the moment.

Vote counts for the other candidates in the race were:

- an 6,431
- ongseer 2,531
- arm 2,005
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- indawong

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ble voters,

By Sangkhae Leelanapom

Of the people, by the people, for the people?

Road rage and rash responses

Family give grave robber a sharp lesson in respect

Princess opens tsunami aid center

Queer News

- Isaac Stone Simonelli

'Tiger temple' gets zoo licence

THE world famous and highly controversial 'Tiger temple' has now won a licence to operate a zoo, which will be developed with a budget of 120 million baht.

The temple, known as Wat Pa Luangta Maha Bua Yannasampanno, is in a remote part of Kanchana Buri province, but has come under the spotlight in recent years because of its large tiger population.

The temple maintains that wild tigers have sought sanctuary in its compound and reproduced at the site, while critics point out that the temple is not a zoo and has no facilities to properly handle animals.

Last year, the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) demanded the temple hand over its 147 tigers to authorities because it lacked permits to keep them.

"We will construct facilities for the zoo over 25 rai of land. Construction should be completed in six months," said Col Supitpong Phakjarung, vice chair of the Wat Pa Luangta Maha Bua Yannasampanno Foundation and managing director of Tiger Temple Company Ltd.

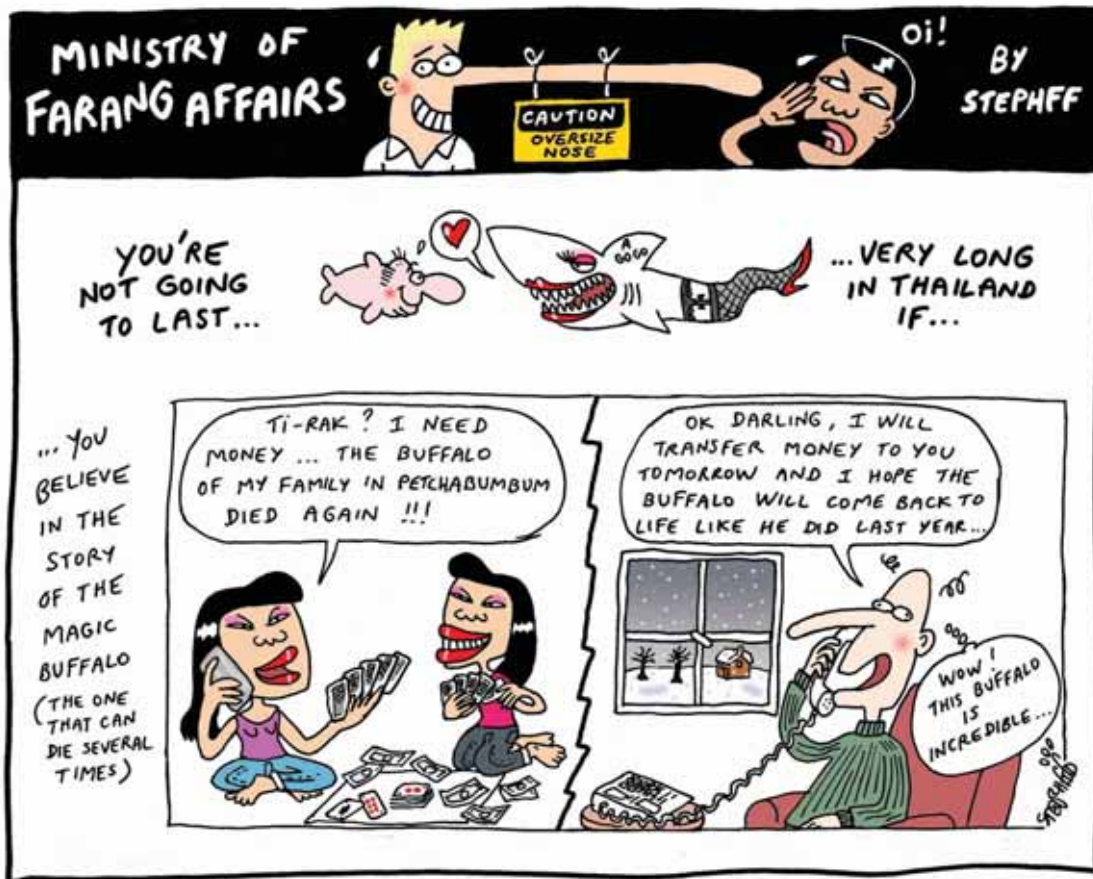
Drone search continues for Loch Ness Monster

A HIGH-TECH marine drone hunting for Scotland's Loch Ness Monster found the fabled beast – well, at least a replica, reported Reuters.

The survey by Norwegian company Kongsberg Maritime discovered a nine meter replica of the monster that was used in the 1970 film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. The not-so buoyant beast, however, sank nearly 50 years ago after its humps were removed.

Undeterred, the monster-hunters continued their two-week survey with the Munin drone for any evidence that might prove the existence of Nessie.

The Munin drone is capable of mapping vast areas down to 1,500 feet and is often used to locate downed aircraft.



Thailand hopes US will notice anti-trafficking recent efforts

THAI authorities have implemented various measures to tackle human trafficking and illegal labor issues over the past year in hope of an upgrade on the country's ranking by the US State Department, which is due to release its annual report in June.

Last year, Thailand was left in Tier 3, the lowest level in the US Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report.

Fishery chief sacked as IUU deadline nears

AMID the approaching deadline for Thailand to meet the European Union's requirement on solving the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing issue, the director-general of the Department of Fisheries has been abruptly transferred to an inactive post after a key indicator showed the agency's work was behind schedule.

An order issued yesterday by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha under Article 44 of the interim charter transferred director-general Wimol Jantrarotai to the PM's Office with immediate effect. Deputy premier Prawit Wongsuwan told reporters the agency chief was

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

removed because he could not finish the work as per schedule.

NLA approves e-payments for traffic fines

THE National Legislative Assembly (NLA) yesterday in principle approved a bill that would make it possible for traffic-law violators to pay fines via electronic transactions at convenience stores as well as at banks.

The NLA has now set up a committee to vet the proposed bill, which is slated to complete its work within a month.

"This way, officials won't have to handle cash," Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam explained.

Court accepts libel case over surrogacy

THE Criminal Court on April 21 accepted a libel case against a surrogate mother and her legal adviser over their comments on a gay couple engaged in a bitter custody dispute with the Thai woman.

Gordon Alan Lake III, an

American, and his partner, Spanish national Manuel Santos, have sued Patidta Kusolsang and Weeratai Maneenuchnet for allegedly suggesting during TV interviews last year that the couple engaged in human trafficking. Patidta carried the child for the couple under a surrogacy contract, but refused to hand her over.

"The comments may damage the reputation of the plaintiffs and subject them to hatred," the court announced.

However, the court refused to take action over the allegation that the defendants committed computer crimes after their comments were went viral online.

PM dismisses demand for autonomy

THE prime minister on April 21 played down the idea of greater autonomy for southern Thailand, a key demand of rebels who have fought in the region for 12 years.

The government has said that it is ready to talk with insurgents, but has failed to launch full-scale negotiations or drastically curb violence. More than 6,500 people have been killed – mostly civilians – since 2004 in clashes between militants and security forces.

The culturally distinct area bordering Malaysia was annexed by Thailand more than a 100 years ago.

Bomb kills one, 12 injured

TWO motorcycle bombs were detonated minutes apart in the downtown area of Narathiwat Town on April 25, killing one person and injuring 12 others.

Five police and eight civilians were injured in the attacks.

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Phuket lifeguards need more muscle

AFTER years of contractual disputes leaving Phuket's beaches devoid of essential life saving services, as the annual southwest monsoon season whipped up deadly rip currents along our westcoast beaches, we applaud the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO) and the Phuket Lifeguard Club (PLC) for quickly re-signing their contract and breaking this vicious cycle.

Officials consistently blamed the failure to have lifeguards on the beaches on bureaucratic red tape as well as the necessary deposit that the PLC had to pay to make the bid.

It is a great relief that the PLC was able to quickly find the funds to rebid on the contract for another 10 months.

The PLC agreeing to the exact same remuneration as the previous two years, despite rising costs of living in Phuket, also played a factor in fast tracking the signing of the contract. In 2014, Phuket Lifeguard Club President Prathaiyut Chuayuan cut lifeguard staff by about 20 per cent due to the constraints of the 22-million-baht budget. With lifeguards only making between 15,000 and 18,000 baht a month, he was still forced to have only 88 guards on duty throughout the island, instead of the previous 108. Since then, only 10 more guards have been added to the PLC's ranks.

In years past, efforts to prevent people from swimming in dangerous areas were focused on signage. Signs in various languages, including Chinese, Russian, English and Thai, were erected on beaches. A local expat even designed multi-lingual beach-safety advice cards, printing them at his own cost and distributing them for free. Nonetheless, Phuket's waves and rips continue to kill more than a dozen people every year.

The next step is to empower lifeguards with the ability to remove beachgoers from the sands if they fail to heed warnings.

At the very least, clear communications between lifeguards and police should allow guards to call in a fast-response team to remove people from the beach if necessary.

No lifeguard should be forced to risk his or her life twice on the same day for the same person who simply refuses to use common sense by ignoring red flags and warnings. Giving guards the power to remove such people from the beach, not only ensures the safety of the tourists (though they may not see it that way), it also ensures the safety of the lifeguards themselves.



Not many tourists left to fill invasive forms

Re: Phuket Immigration not demanding social media account details – yet, April 25

Have they completely lost touch with reality?

Why don't they just say non-Thais not welcome.

Phuket won't have to worry soon; there just won't be many visitors to fill in this invasive form.

*Frustrated
Gazette Forum*

Not the right way to develop resources

Re: Artificial reef sunk off Tri Trang Beach, April 26

"Now almost the entire reef has disappeared...or from man-made issues, such as construction site runoff."

Yes, such as from the construction of the gigantic Emerald Bay Resort, which also cleared a huge area of natural woodland and now tries to claim the entire beach as private.

This is how they 'develop our natural resources' is it?

How 'noble' of them to fund this artificial reef, having destroyed so much natural beauty.

*CaptainJack
Gazette forum*

Few hundred baht over people's lives

Re: Tourists escape Phuket bus fire, April 22

Just a joke now. These bus companies are more worried about a few hundred baht than the lives of both tourists and

Letters to the Editor

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

locals alike.

Fires and no brakes can kill and do kill all the time but to save money the companies wont fix them.

More interested in standing on street corners collecting 300 baht from tourists than saving the lives of both farangs and Thai alike.

*Simon Lomas
Facebook*

Lifeguards get less than their due share

Re: Phuket lifeguard club signs B22mn contract ahead of monsoon season

So, 22 million baht for a 10 month contract, covering 38 areas with 2-3 staff per zone, we should get 23,150 baht per guard per month.

Knowing that they get much less than that, the company is sadly making a lot of profit.

*Stefano Colombo
Facebook*

Four of the best beach clubs ruined

Re: Opinion: Will clubbing Phuket's beach venues prove to have been worth it?, April 24

Westerners like sandy virgin beaches therefore it is all right to wipe away the sunbrellas,

but we like also music and dancing... therefore we love places like the Catch club.

It is not a matter of social class of tourists. What differs is the overall quality of the entertainment.

In Surin they destroyed 4 of the 10 best clubs of Phuket. This is very sad! This used to be our best beach.

The real problem of the beaches in Phuket is trash. Everybody should focus on that instead of tearing down high-class facilities using bulldozers.

*Claudio
Gazette forum*

Sea gypsies been here for generations

Re: Military summons Phuket sea gypsies, activists over land dispute, April 22

Leave the sea gypsies alone – they have been there for generations. Phuket already has more than enough development without this bullying.

*James H Miller
Facebook*

Quick and speedy recovery for Milo

Re: Phuket orangutan in critical condition, April 23

You would assume that a zoo would be a safe haven for wild life. Serious questions need to be answered as to why this is not so.

Let's hope that Milo can make a full recovery.

*Harry
Gazette forum*

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Show a little respect



AS WE all know, foreigners die very frequently on the island, which creates a very negative image of Phuket as a tourist destination. Subsequently we get a lot of pressure from the international community, telling us that we do not take enough safety measures to protect tourists. This matter always comes up in consulate meetings.

Firstly it's important to categorize the deaths of foreigners based on the circumstances before any action is taken.

The first category is deaths resulting from accidents, such as road deaths or unpredictable crimes. We cannot control the accidents people have, except for encouraging people to drive safely. For this we have launched many road safety drives, such as the helmet campaign and the 'No Drunk Driving' initiative, as well as many others.

These are ways we can help you, but you, the public, also have to help yourselves.

When people die from a crime then it is partly our fault, as we should be doing whatever we can to prevent those crimes. However, many people die because of their own misadventure, such as tourists who disobey red flags on the beaches warning people not to swim in dangerous areas.

There are signs in many different languages at the beaches, so understanding the dangers shouldn't be a problem. Red flags are internationally recognized as meaning 'do not swim', yet people still end up swimming there and dying as a result. Frankly, such tourists



Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada started his first day as the Phuket Governor on September 30, 2015. He is a Phuket native with a master's degree in political and administrative science from the National Institute of Development Administration.

Here he talks about a list of dos & don'ts aimed at preventing so many tourists dying on the island and improving Phuket's reputation as a tourist destination.

deserve some kind of punishment.

We do respect tourists, but they are not gods. The concept of 'the customer is god' cannot be used all the time, and we have to take strong action against those tourists who blatantly disobey our laws.

Thailand is just too kind to tourists. They are often allowed to do whatever they want, just to keep attracting more tourists.

For example, some tourists wear only shorts and roam around shirtless in shopping malls or when riding motorbikes. Most Thais understand that foreigners do not always understand cultural differences and enjoy more freedoms in their own countries.

The question is: are they really doing this in their own countries? Do they walk around shirtless in their shopping malls? Although this is not strictly illegal, it simply isn't acceptable in some places.

Even if visitors don't know about our culture, I would like them to at least obey our laws. If you obey them in your own countries, it is also important to

do the same in this country.

It's time to get strict with people who disobey laws, in order to protect the deaths of other innocent people.

I plan to have local authorities strengthen the list of dos and don'ts for tourists. We are doing our best to attract tourists to have a peaceful time while on the island and ordering officers to take strong action against lawlessness.

This ideology has led to the setting up of tourist security and service centers in every municipality. Officers at these centers will safeguard tourists, and also stop those who disobey the law.

The CCTV system on the island is now being repaired and new equipment is also being installed. This technology will help authorities keep an eye on tourist safety and catch more perpetrators.

While we do our best to ensure you do not die from accidents and other crimes, I ask all to be responsible for their own lives and help make Phuket a more pleasant place to visit for everyone.

Arriving with baggage

Island View

By Nick Davies

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



Culture is like baggage.

WHEN I learned that Thailand's former Prime Minister Banharn Silapa-archa passed away last weekend, I began recalling events around the time Mr Banharn led his party to victory and enjoyed just over a year as prime minister from 1995 to 1996.

That was 20 years ago and things certainly have changed since then; for the country as well as my personal outlook on life. I was living in Bangkok as Mr Banharn's premiership ended and the country plunged into the economic crisis of 1997, while at the same time trying her best to be taken seriously by other nations already experienced players in the international arena.

My own life was no doubt in turmoil at the time too, but it's all a bit of a blur, now that our first child has already finished school and is doing her own thing in the big wide world.

The point is, whether you are talking about the country as a whole or one's own path of personal development, issues that were humongous headaches in the past, usually fade into insignificance as the years go by. We chalk up those experiences as lessons in the school of life, hopefully a little better prepared to deal with the next unforeseen adventure.

Learning as we go is especially true for any of us living in another culture, if one is to weather the turbulent times; when we come face to face with the reality that not everyone thinks the same way as us.

"Culture is not your friend," a wise man once said. It conditions us to expect individuals and entire nations to behave a particular way, and then all sorts of problems arise when things don't go *our* way.

Our cultures are like baggage; and some of us are carrying around more than a family of four that has just arrived for a two-week holiday. Yet, we become so accustomed to the weight of our baggage, that we don't even realize it's weighing us down.

When faced with a situation that confounds us, it's easy to start playing the blame game, because it has to be someone's fault, right?

In the west, we boast of social systems that tirelessly toil to achieve such things as 'equality' in an unfair and very diverse world, where justice is meted out and we expect that, whatever is wrong, 'someone will do something about it' and the guilty party, whomever it may be, will be duly punished.

Whose fault is it when someone meets their demise falling down drunk or driving too fast?

Who should take the blame when someone refuses to listen to sound, local advice, or the water stops running or the power goes out?

Often it is impossible to point a finger of blame in a single direction. Sometimes it's more a case of remembering that we are still holding on to our old cultural baggage.

The trick is, knowing when to let go.

Words from the Wise

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass... It's about learning to dance in the rain.."

– Vivian Greene

"Despite everything, no one dictate who you are to other people."

– Prince

Issues & Answers

Can I feed & adopt dogs from the dog shelter?

LAST week, I spotted lots of dogs which seem to have been abandoned in a shelter near Suan Pa Bang Kanun.

I live alone and was thinking of adopting one of the dogs. If that's possible, what is the criteria for adoption?

Also, I sometimes pass through the area, and want to ask if I can feed them.

Andrew Smith
Phuket

from the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office replies:

Yes, the dogs at the shelter are abandoned and it is possible to

adopt one. We first have to interview the person wishing to adopt one, to ensure they can take care of the dog. We also have a contract, asking that the dog be returned to the pound if it turns out the new owner cannot take care of it anymore.

You are welcome to drop by and feed the dogs with instant dog food (not human food) between 8am-4:30pm everyday. For further inquiries please call us at Phuket Provincial Livestock Office on 076-216 934.

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.
Submit your issue at:
www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Chonnamat Walayapetch

Evaluating gap years, sabbaticals

Finance

By David Mayes

AS THE *Gazette's* managing editor is imminently departing on his possibly crazy adventure to wherever the dice will take him, I thought it might be a good time to discuss gap years and how they tie in to your long-term financial well-being.

There are two main types of gap years. The first is either before, or immediately following a university degree, and the other is mid-career and typically known as a sabbatical.

Gap years during university studies are very common in Europe, but not so much in America. In fact, even though I did take gap years myself, travelling around the United States living out of campsites and a converted van, it is not something that is encouraged. Typically, the fast-paced American culture views time off for traveling simply as a waste of time. I obviously disagree, for reasons I will list later on.

Taking a sabbatical mid-career is a little trickier from a financial perspective if you already have many fixed overhead costs in life. Obviously most of these tend to arrive with marriage and children, but taking a gap year and bringing the family along is something I intend to do myself in the future. I consider it



Financially speaking, a gap year probably won't ruin your retirement plans. Photo: Julia Kukushkina

one of the best investments in my children's education that I will make. So how do these gap years fit into life planning and affect our overall financial trajectory in life?

From a purely mathematical perspective, it would appear on the surface that a gap year is usually a total financial loss. Very rarely does anyone work above and beyond what is needed to finance the trip, if

they even work at all. Many live off of savings during this period. So there's not only opportunity costs associated with losing your income during the period, there is also often a chunk of savings wiped out in the process. The benefits mathematically are very difficult to quantify, so it appears on the surface to be a loser.

However, the benefits often come over the long term. For

myself, a benefit of travelling the US during university made me more mature and ready to settle down when I got back into studying. This allowed me to graduate at the top of my class. I also developed a love of travel and a desire to explore, which led to me taking some of my most successful risks in life.

My second gap year came when I was burning out from

trading. Initially I intended to spend a year in Thailand, teaching mainly to get a visa and earn pocket change, before going to do my MBA and switch into a different side of business back in the US. Well, that was eleven years ago. I did leave for my MBA after a year, but I came straight back here and never left Thailand again. My entire life here, with a wife and children, is the result of a gap year. How can you put a price tag on your entire life working out beyond your dreams?

It may be that my experience leaves me slightly biased about the value of gap years, but anybody will gain from meeting new people, experiencing new cultures, overcoming adversities, reflecting on life and making personal changes. In the long run I don't think anyone has ever regretted a gap year unless they experienced some kind of crisis. Financially speaking, I have never come across anybody who said "If only I hadn't taken that gap year, my retirement would be so much better".

David Mayes MBA resides in Phuket and provides wealth management services to expatriates around the globe, focusing on UK pension transfers. He can be reached at david.m@faramond.com or 085-335 8573. Faramond UK is regulated by the FCA and provides advice on pensions and taxation.

Singapore to inject B24.6bn to boost tourism industry

THE Singaporean Government is investing 24.6bn baht during the next five years to boost tourism through strategies that tackle short-term challenges, such as uncertainties in the global economy, while positioning Singapore for long-term growth, said Minister for Trade and Industry S Iswaran.

The third tranche of the Tourism Development Fund will focus on developing Singapore's tourism products, improving productivity through technology and investing in manpower, he said on April 25.

Speaking at a tourism industry conference at Suntec Convention Centre, Mr Iswaran noted that Singapore



Singapore's iconic Merlion Lion. Photo: Lenny K Photography

has seen overall growth between 2010 and 2015, but the recent two years have been more challenging.

"On the one hand, there is the promise of significant long-term opportunities. On the other hand, we must contend with periodic fluctuations caused by uncertainties in the global

economy, adverse developments in key source markets, growing competition in the region and domestic resource constraints," he told 1,000 industry executives.

"Against this backdrop, we need two types of responses – strategies that will best position us to benefit from long-term growth opportunities and tactical measures to deal with volatility and challenges in the short term."

The aim is to transform Singapore into a single, unified 'mega-attraction' for visitors – enabled by a one-stop mobile application and smart kiosks at key visitor hot spots.

– *The Nation*

Kbank launches FinTech unit

KASIKORNBANK hopes to start seeing financial innovation streaming from its new subsidiary Kasikorn Business-Technology Group (KBTG) within the next few years.

The bank held the grand opening of KBTG on Chaeng Wattana Road yesterday, as the bank hopes to see returns on its foray into the financial technology market.

Based on data compiled by KBank, digital banking transactions via mobile phones and the Internet grew from 168 million in 2011 to 1.13 billion in 2015, and are expected to reach 7.9 billion in five years.

The value of digital banking transactions at KBank is expected to grow 10 times from 4 trillion baht in 2015 to 30 trillion baht by 2020.

The bank will set aside about



Banthoon Lamsam, chairman and chief executive officer of KBank, unveils his vision on FinTech. Photo: The Nation

10 per cent of its net profit, or about 4 billion baht a year, for its IT budget, of which 1-2 per cent will be earmarked for innovative products and services.

KBTG is also eager to support the government and the national e-payment master plan.

– *The Nation*

Local nut cases cashing in

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

METHEE Company Phuket Ltd's unique cashew-nut cooking process and new packaging is bringing the company international recognition and larger revenues.

The Chalong-based company is just one of several local businesses that have changed the quality of their products and branding in order to compete in larger markets. The company has since been accredited by the Ministry of Commerce as a One Tambon One Product (OTOP) supplier.

Methee General Manager Arpa Warapiwattanukul told the *Gazette* the company's new cooking methods results in oil-free products and, in January of last year, Ms Arpa presented the company's products to the Chalong-based company King Power. That meeting resulted in Methee being chosen to be King Power's premium cashew supplier.

Since then, Ms Arpa said, Methee has reported a 15 per cent higher revenue stream with its induction into luxury shopping centers and new packaging, catering to international customers with product information in Thai, English, Chinese and Japanese.

"King Power has a lot of



Methee General Manager Arpa Warapiwattanukul reports a 15 per cent higher revenue stream with its induction into luxury shopping centers, such as King Power. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

experience marketing products in domestic as well as international waters," Ms Arpa said.

Ms Arpa has encouraged other local businesses to improve

their products and packaging to make them more appealing to international customers.

"We have to show how wonderful our products are," Ms

Arpa said. "We, for example, have presented our products by printing a handmade painting of Phuket's iconic Promthep Cape on our packaging."

Japanese group buys Thailand nursing school



Putting people before product. Photo: Kyle Taylor

ITABASHI Hospital subsidiary Keisokai, along with its Thai partner Yindee Co, spent 20 million baht to acquire Ramborirug Chiangmai Nursing Assistant School in September.

Yindee, part of Bangkok Shuho International Co, holds 51 per cent of Ramborirug, with the rest of the balance taken up by the Japanese hospital group.

Keisokai Managing Director Kazunori Aoki said the acquisition was Itabashi's first overseas investment and, to his knowledge, the first Japanese investment in the Thai nursing school sector.

"Previously, we had planned to set up a nursing home here, but did not realize we would not have [qualified] personnel to take care of the residents," Mr Kazunori said. "Japanese clients are rather mindful about the quality of care, so we decided to go by the concept of 'people before products'."

- *The Nation*

Facebook's next frontier: chatbots, live video

FACEBOOK is opening its Messenger app to developers creating "chatbots," hoping that by simulating one-on-one conversations between users and companies it will expand its reach in customer service and enterprise transactions.

Chatbots are automated programs that help users communicate with businesses and carry out tasks such as online purchases. While chatbots have existed in some form for years, they have recently become a hot topic in tech business, as advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning make them far more capable and potentially able to assume a key role in the way customers communicate with businesses.

Facebook isn't the first company to make the foray into chatbots. Several industries, including Shopify, an e-commerce site, and cable TV news network



Ready for Facebook chatbots to help? Photo: Pixbay

CNN have already begun using chatbots on their websites.

The chatbots are part of Facebook's effort to build out its Messenger instant messaging app as the go-to place for customers to contact businesses - a strategy that threatens traditional call cen-

ters and may cut personnel costs for some businesses.

"You'll never have to call 1-800-Flowers again," Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said during the company's annual developer conference in San Francisco.

Though messaging platforms

including Kik, Slack and Telegram already have chatbots, Facebook is seen as having several distinct advantages.

"From the enterprise or developer perspective, access to those 1.6 billion people is very exciting," said Lauren Kunze, principal at Pandorabots, which has been building and deploying chatbots for companies since 2002.

"People like a personalized experience and when the chatbot can remember personal details and follow up," Ms Kunze said.

Tech companies will have to approach chatbots more carefully, however, after an experimental Microsoft Corp bot, called Tay, unleashed a barrage of racist and sexist tweets after being manipulated by Twitter users last month. The company quickly pulled Tay from the internet.

- *Reuters*

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Amari Phuket holds Songkran ceremony

Celebrating the Thai New Year on April 15, staff at Amari Phuket took part in a traditional Songkran ceremony – ‘Rod Nam Dam Hua’ – pouring water over the hands of senior team members.



(From L-R) Amari Phuket's Deputy General Manager Tipaporn Koonphol; Hotel Manager Richard Marco; and Marketing Communications Manager Penprapa Chooklin.

Maikhao Dream marks 5th birthday

Maikhao Dream Villa Resort & Spa, Phuket, pulled out all the stops for a fifth anniversary celebration at the beachfront resort on April 2. Some 100 guests were treated to an evening of entertainment, including stage performances along with the resort's speciality tapas and canapes.



Maikhao Dream Villa Resort & Spa's Assistant Director of Sales Sarayudh Sanwa (left) and Director of Sales & Marketing Vivian Ng (right) flank Hot Tours CEO Mr Golenkov and his wife.

Beach clubs get wet 'n' wild for Songkran

Xana Beach Club threw a star-studded wet 'n' wild pool and beach party for Songkran on April 13. Thai Premier League soccer star Charyl Chappuis, Midfielder for Suphanburi football club, paid a surprise visit to get a soaking as the sun went down and club goers got down to some serious Songkran partying.



Xana staff and guests give each other a Songkran soaking.



Fun in the foam at Paradise Beach.

Paradise Beach boasted the biggest Songkran bash on the island with a foam party on the sands at Patong Beach on April 12 featuring a line-up of international celebrity DJs pumping out happy holiday vibes through the night.

Events in Paradise


Catch Beach Club bids fabulous farewell




Twinpalms' iconic Catch Beach Club on Surin Beach threw a 'One Last Time Fabulous Farewell Party' before closing down on Apr 16.





ABOVE: Twinpalms Phuket General Manager Olivier Gibaud and wife Sovorod Gibaud.


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Four courses at Da Maurizio



Tuna carpaccio. Photo: Da Maurizio

IT WOULD best be described as a celebration of good friends sharing great cuisine when Rose Maitland-Smith, brand ambassador for Pommery, hosted an evening of fine dining at the beautiful Da Maurizio Bar Ristorante.

Situated adjacent to Joe's Downstairs and Baan Rim Pa off Patong Beach, Da Maurizio offers patrons a stunning seaside location in which to enjoy the perfect Italian lunch or dinner.

Invited guests included famed vintner Pascal Jolivet, who flew in from his Loire Valley estate in France to taste Chef Songka Saikang's four-course menu.

"For more than 20 years, I have worked with some extraordinary Italian chefs from every region of Italy here in the kitchens of Da Maurizio," Chef Songka said.

The appetizer was tuna carpaccio flavored with fennel, pomegranate and pink pepper.

Chef Songka then presented fresh, traditional homemade taglierini with black truffle cream for the first course, that left diners enthralled.

The main course was an elegant presentation of rack of lamb with herb and mint sauce, served with roasted vegetables.

A dessert of crepes with fresh strawberry and vanilla ice cream put a perfect finish to a great evening. **—Bruce Stanley**

Heading for the tree tops

By Zohaib Sikander

ZIP-LINING, abseiling and sky walking are among the adventurous activities on offer for thrill-seeking nature lovers at the recently opened Hanuman World, located in a forest off Chaofah Road in Wichit.

The family-oriented treetop attraction is an opportunity for adventurous visitors to 'fly' through the forest and take in a bird's-eye view, and if lucky, spot a rainbow across the bridge, which is a spectacular sight in itself.

Friendly staff are on hand to help you choose one of the packages, each with a time limit in which to experience a combination of tree-top platforms and zip-lines at specific 'play times' throughout the day.

An easy entry option for the faint-hearted is a simple sky walk with an additional abseiling option for under 1,000 baht. For those who want a real rush, the Roller Zip-line is the for the most daring option. It's much faster and longer than any of the other zip-lines. Each participant is geared up with safety equipment to hang on for dear life, as they are rushed through an exhilarating course through the entire forest – non-stop.

A one-time ride on the Roller Zip-line only costs 1,700 baht, but can be combined with other activities for an all-in adventure. The top package, 'World A', features 30 platforms, the Roller Zip-line, as well as a meal at the venue's open-air Wanon Restaurant, which serves authentic Thai cuisine under the tropical canopy.



Zip-lining is just one of the many adventures at Hanuman World. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

There are seven zip-lines in total and 30 elevated platforms. Zip-lining from one platform to the other is a breeze. A short 'honeymoon zip-line' spices things up a bit, allowing couples to hold hands as they zip-line across part of the forest. The longest zip-line is 400 meters long, from where the view is breathtaking. The guides make the experience even more exciting by doing upside-down stunts on some of the zip-lines.

The guides help you put on safety equipment and accompany you to the first zip-line platform. They are very helpful, and allow your group to feel at

ease before starting the course.

While waiting for your turn you can relax in the seating area, where staff serve thirst-quenching herbal drinks.

The 250-meter long Sky Walk is elevated 45 meters from the ground and provides great views across the forest canopy to snap photos along the way. Guides lead visitors across the bridge and will a few stories about the history of the area.

Along the way you can try hugging a massive 100-year-old tree and chill with a fresh fruit juice at the high-rise bar, while soaking up the ambience on a big cushion.

Before you leave, stop off at the souvenir shop, where you can buy T-shirts, shoes and a variety of other knick-knacks. You can also take home memories of your adventure by purchasing official photos of your trip.

Parents will have to sign waivers for minors wishing to try their hand at zip lining. Hanuman World is a fun, back-to-nature adventure for the whole family, with activities suitable for all ages.

The park is open daily from 8am to 5pm. For more information visit www.hanumanworldphuket.com

Team sets rowing world record with transatlantic journey

AFTER 3,400 miles and 55 days at sea, the four extraordinary rowers on the Row2Rio team set a world record after powering their way across the Atlantic.

"We departed Portugal and have landed safely in Brazil to an emotional reunion with family and friends," wrote Luke Richmond, Aussie expat and head coach at Unit 27 in Phuket, on April 24.

In the past five years, Mr Richmond has climbed the biggest mountains on six continents, been held captive in West Papua and has endured many 'suffer-fests' on expeditions around the world.

"This was by far the toughest challenge I have ever undertaken and to come out the other end 15 kilograms lighter, but mainly unscathed and with a world record, is a true blessing," he wrote.

Mr Richmond was invited to join the rowing challenge after one of the team



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: Row2Rio team make it to Brazil. Photo: Row2Rio

members was struck with appendicitis, just two weeks from their scheduled departure from Portugal. Without hesitation, Mr Richmond jumped on a plane to meet with Susannah Cass from Ireland, and Mel Parker and Jake Heath, both from the UK.

After 55 days of two-hour cycles of rowing, followed by two hours of rest, the crew waddled off their boat after landing 35 miles north of Recife, Brazil, this weekend.

They are now claiming the world record for completing a new ocean

rowing route, for mixed crew and a team of four.

Though the trip paid tribute to the athletic feats of the Olympics, as the Olympic stadium moved from London on to Rio de Janeiro, it was also designed to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

In fact, the journey for Ms Cass, Ms Parker and Mr Heath started with a cycling trip from London to Portugal. These three original members of the Row2Rio team will be resting up before getting back into the saddle to finish their journey to Rio.

"Thank you to everyone for their support over the last two months, but most of all, thank you to my amazing Row2Rio team. We got through it together and I thank you for allowing me to suffer through it with you," wrote a grateful Mr Richmond. **—Isaac Stone Simonelli**

Phuket clinches Boating Awards



IT WAS a big night at the recent Asia Boating Awards for Phuket and Thailand, with many of the country's leading marine personalities being nominated for an award. In total, 12 Thailand businesses and events made it onto the shortlists, vying against companies from all around Asia for the 25 awards.

Organized by Asia-Pacific Boating and China Boating magazines, the 12th Asia Boating Awards were presented during a luxurious gala at ONE°15 Marina Club on the opening night of the Singapore Yacht Show this year.

Showcasing Asian builders and international brands, as well as Asian regattas and marinas, organizers explained that a number of new categories were introduced this year, including Best Multihull Motor Yacht, Best Multihull Sailing Yacht, Best Asian Yacht Refit and Best Asian Boat Show, due to popular demand and industry trends.

Phuket's big winners on the night were the Phuket King's Cup Regatta for 'Best Asian Regatta,' and Yacht Solutions,

who won 'Best Asian Yacht Refit' for their work on MV *SuRi*.

It's not the first time the Phuket King's Cup Regatta has won at the Asia Boating Awards. This is the third time Asia's premier regatta has been honored and it's no surprise. Regularly attracting the top racing fleet from around the region and beyond, as well as a huge number of charterers from all around the world, the Phuket King's Cup – which will celebrate its 30th year this December – has become the regatta others strive to emulate.

Over the awards' 12-year history, Phuket regattas have won a grand total of four times, with Cape Panwa Hotel P h u k e t

Raceweek winning in 2010. Phuket's track record of success underscores the Thai government's aim to establish Phuket as the leading marine leisure destination in Asia and marina hub of Asean.

In recognition of the growing importance of Asia as a refit and repair hub, the 'Best Asian Yacht Refit' award was introduced this year and it was the superyacht marine consultancy Yacht Solutions, that took the inaugural award for their work on the 64-meter expedition yacht MV *SuRi*.

Phuket's track record of success underscores the Thai government's aim to establish Phuket as the leading marine leisure destination in Asia and marina hub of Asean.



Simon James (center), of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, receiving the 'Best Asian Regatta' award from Glen Watson (left), editor-in-chief of Asia-Pacific Boating magazine, and Foong Seong Khong (right), managing director of Blu Inc Media (HK) Limited. Photo: Gazette file

While headquartered in Phuket, Yacht Solutions also have an operating base in Bangkok and it was at their centrally located shipyard, at the Bangkok Dock facility where Yacht Solutions undertook a 3-month refit of MV *SuRi*. After being relaunched, it was featured in the blockbuster movie 'Mechanic: Resurrection', with an all-star

cast, headlined by Jason Statham and Jessica Alba (set to be released August 2016).

Phuket-based businesses representing international brands that won at the awards include Go Boating Thailand (Gulf Craft), Sunseeker, Boat Lagoon Yachting (Princess and Jeanneau), Simpson Marine (Lagoon), Lee Marine (Ferretti Group), Azimut Yachts and

Northrop & Johnson.

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

Northrop & Johnson net consecutive wins

PHUKET-based chartering company Northrop & Johnson won Best Charter Company in Asia for the second year in a row earlier this month.

The 12th annual Asia Boating Awards were created in 2005 by China Boating and Asia-Pacific Boating magazines to recognize the best of the marine industry around the world. Now, these awards are viewed as a benchmark for the industry in the Asia-Pacific region.

"Northrop & Johnson is the only international charter company with a ground presence throughout the Asia



Northrop & Johnson won Best Charter at the Asia Boating Awards for the second year in a row. Photo: Northrop & Johnson

region.

The Northrop & Johnson presence now extends all the way down to Australia," said Phuket-based Charter Broker Systske Kimman.

– *Phuket Gazette*

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Phuket Gazette



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Notes on the art of palmistry

Not reading lifelines, but growing healthy fan palm trees



WHEN I was a boy I had to endure long waits on sooty railway stations – yes, it was the age of steam – whose walls were plastered with gaudy and incongruous posters of seaside resorts with azure seas, golden sands, bronzed maidens and palm trees. Of course, no beach in the UK actually looked remotely like that, and it was only years later that I glimpsed my first grove of real palms as I drove a rickety car across southern Spain.

With global warming, things have changed –there is now a *licuala spinosa* palm not a hundred yards from my London apartment. But palms remain quintessentially tropical trees, not only graceful additions to almost any Phuket garden, but among the easiest trees to grow. The range is simply vast. One collector in Thailand, I recently read, has no fewer than 90 different *licuala* palms.

And when you consider that the family of fan palms is only one genus - and that at least 15 of these are native to Thailand, you begin to appreciate the enormity of the task of classifying palms in general.

Fan palms are a good choice for the small garden since they rarely grow more than a few feet tall, and are neat and com-



Palm frowns are inseparably linked to the tropics in our minds. Photo: Mokkie

compact in habit. Mostly a lustrous shade of green, they boast huge, semi-circular leaves which are either divided into segments, or are pleated like the folds of a concertina. In the wild – and species are still being discovered – they are usually found around the margins of swamps or in

rainforests. In cultivation they have great potential, not only as landscape subjects in the garden, but also as pot plants. Slow-growing, fan palms prefer part shade and a well-drained, friable, but moist soil. You can try them indoors, but like all houseplants, they will need periodic relief from

indoor conditions. Outdoors, they require a sheltered spot with protection from strong winds, which will play havoc with their sail-like leaves.

Spinosa, an Asian variety sometimes found growing wild near native river banks, is bigger than most, with large roundish leaves divided into

square-ended segments, and attractive pendant clusters of red fruit. *Grandis*, also known as the ruffled fan palm, has pleated leaves on a single stem.

Johannesteijsmannia altifrons – which must hold the record for the most unpronounceable plant name, is generally classified as a separate species, but it resembles a fan palm with its broadly diamond-shaped foliage and glossy, undivided leaves up to five feet across. It deserves to be better known, and it is gaining in popularity.

Much more mundane, but exceedingly useful is the rhaps or lady palm. Usually planted in clumps – although it can be purchased singly - it has slender trunks covered with fibrous hair, and distinctive fan-shaped leaves, divided into separate leaflets. Capable of enduring dense shade, rhaps will do well in most conditions provided it has adequate moisture at its roots. Deprived of water, some of the fronds will turn brown. Growing to about two meters, rhaps is useful both as a dense screening hedge and for providing lush green cover under taller shrubs and trees.

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

Tip of the week: When to prune

SINCE trees and large shrubs grow so quickly in our climate, pruning becomes an important procedure. Left untouched, many trees become unmanageably large. My avocado tree is a case in point. Not a notably big species, mine is already thirty feet high, and requires drastic trimming. However, now is not a good time, since the growth is heavy with sap. Better to prune either after the rainy season when trees are more-or-less dormant, or just before the monsoon so the plant can

recover rapidly once it is growing again.

The usual rules apply whenever you decide to cut back growth. Remove any dead or infected branches, thin the crown of the tree to allow the passage of additional air and light, and try to retain the natural shape of the tree. As a general rule, never remove more than one third of the existing foliage. Remember too that fruiting trees will crop more consistently if they are given an annual prune.

Tourism brings long-term value to land



Property Watch
Desmond Hughes

STATISTICS are regularly reported by tourism organizations – public and private, which break down the number of visitors arriving in Phuket.

Are Phuket visitors domestic travelers, or business-people commuting? Do we count arrivals and departures, or just arrivals? How do we know the information received is accurate and are people leaving Phuket by other means? Just as this information is difficult to analyze, so is the influence of visitors on the value of Phuket property. However, make no mistake, tourism does affect property values.

The hunger for information on tourism mostly emanates from hoteliers and tourist service providers of which there are many in Phuket. There is absolutely no doubt that many types of businesses in Phuket thrive due to either a direct or indirect effect of tourism. Even businesses that don't target tourists can receive a boost when a tourist goes off the beaten path and decides to put their hand in their pocket for something out of the ordinary. Anyone seriously interested in Phuket's development will be observing and reading reports on the changing dynamics of the island's tourism.

Much debate over recent



Tourism brings long-term gains in property values, if you are prepared to wait. Photo: Isaac Simonelli

years has involved the 'quality' of tourists. The very nature of this debate could be considered by some to be a little bit crude, because it puts humans into an economical equation, but actually that is what economists do all the time and it is a worthwhile exercise. Analyzing which nationality of visitors spend the most money in the local economy when they visit, and then trying to manage that expenditure, benefits the country. There is also an element in many commentaries on social media, of something I personally detest, racism combined with hypocrisy, which appears when describing the different cultural behaviors of visitors as the litmus test as to whether

they are 'welcome'. Unless your business is absolutely exemplary and perfect in all respects, with the rules clearly explained and enforced, don't expect your visiting customers to necessarily understand your requirements of behavior, and if you want their expenditure, welcome them.

So, how does tourism impact real estate?

1. Basic infrastructure is upgraded, such as electricity, water and internet; so that Phuket's standards become higher.

2. Hotel services and choice of amenities, such as hotel restaurants, force independent restaurants to be competitive and this improves standards

and choices on the island.

3. The number of tourists who shop means that the choices on offer for residents improves and the furniture and fittings available for property becomes more diverse.

4. The variety of nationalities of tourists that 'convert' into part time or full time residents means that when new properties are built, architecture can diversify too.

5. A mixture of visiting nationalities can also create a better attitude in those interacting with them that possess an international mindset.

6. Extra activities taking advantage of the beautiful surroundings of Phuket are created: marinas; sports and

recreational facilities as well as international schools with world-class grounds.

7. Private roadways are improved.

8. The area then attracts a general 'buzz' which simply means Phuket becomes more of a desirable place to live. Those that moved to Phuket for the quiet life and empty beaches 20 years ago, either adapt or fail to manage the change.

When I see a large floating market being erected at the bottom of my road with a car park fit for a hundred or more coaches, I admit there is a part of me that worries I simply won't be able to drive to my home any more. But then I look at the size of my garden and property, and I realize that at some point, space in Phuket will become a premium, in the same way that once upon a time people only ever wanted to live next to the beach. We only have to look at our Asian neighbors to see what happens to prices when a place becomes crowded.

If you don't like tourists, Phuket isn't the place for you. If you are a property speculator, then I believe tourism brings many positive attributes and long-term potential gains in property, if you are prepared to wait.

Desmond Hughes has been an owner and operator of his law firm in Thailand for 14 years, and is a Senior Partner at Hughes Krupica law firm. www.hugheskrupica.com

Beyond Resort wins 2016 Luxury Travel Award

BEYOND Resort Khaolak by Kata Group Resorts Thailand, a leading hotel management company, was awarded the highly coveted Luxury Travel Award 2016.

The beachfront adults-only resort, situated in Phang Nga, has been named the 'most romantic resort' in Asia and Australasia in this year's high-profile honors.

The Luxury Travel Awards highlight the best luxury hotels and resorts across the globe, celebrating the creme de la creme of the high-end hospitality industry.

The resort was built in 2012 and designed around the concept of providing light, space and a sense of intimacy – enticing lovers with the tranquility and sparkling sands of Pakweek



The Phang Nga resort, built in 2012, won this year's award for most romantic resort. Photo: Supplied

Beach, as well as the elegantly designed villas and grounds.

The individual villas feature private jacuzzis and pools, outdoor bathtubs and private terraces. The resort also offers a 'just for two' romantic package, complete with gourmet hamper, couple's massage at Kanda Spa and a private beach dinner.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Krabi to get B650mn stadium

KRABI is to get a brand new 650-million-baht sports complex, Ao Nang officials have confirmed.

"We drew up the plans for the 3,000-seat stadium about six years ago and have recently received partial funding of 87.4mn baht from the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT)," said Ao Nang Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) President Pankum Kittithonkun on April 26.

"Preliminary plans for the complex include a football field, a running track and stadium-style seating along one side of the field."

Located about 200 meters from Ao Nang Beach, the stadium is set to be completed by the end of November 2017.

"There is a lot more to come after this portion of the project



Mr Pankum said the completed facilities will make up Krabi's first dedicated sports center. Photo: Ao Nang OrBorTor

is completed," said Mr Pankum. "A swimming pool, tennis court, accommodation for athletes and a variety of additional facilities are to be built to make it a fully-fledged sports complex."

Mr Pankum inspected a football stadium in Sisaket Province over the weekend. He noted that the Krabi football stadium would be built along

the same lines.

Krabi currently has only one football stadium at The Krabi Institute of Physical Education – Krabi Campus.

"We hope to host international events in order to boost tourism in Krabi, so it is important to have a separate stadium of our own," Mr Pankum said.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

Phuket property demolished

By Chutharat Plerin

A LOCAL restaurant at Lay Pang Beach was demolished on April 27, despite a final effort by the owner to save it from being razed.

Tony Restaurant was torn down after a lengthy explanation by Thalang District Chief Wikrom Jakthee, who read out a court order approving the demolition by the Nakhon Sri Thammarat Administrative Court.

This was the second demolition attempt on the establishment by authorities. In December last year, Tony restaurant was saved from a last-minute demolition by an order from the Ministry of Interior.

In attendance were Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat, Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Saman Chainarong and Cherng Talay Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) President Ma-ann Samran, as well as armed personnel and dozens of onlookers.

“Restaurant owner Kanokpon ‘Tony’ Somrak asked the court to cancel the *OrBorTor* demolition order, based on his two complaints against them. First was a dereliction of duty complaint against the *OrBorTor* for not providing the building permit, which he



Mr Wikrom (right) in discussion with Restaurant owner Mr Kanokpon (left), and others at the meeting, before the scheduled demolition at Lay Pang Beach. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

had filed for last year. Secondly, he filed a complaint against Mr Ma-ann, stating that he did not follow the legal demolition process,” said Mr Wikrom.

“The first complaint regarding the alleged dereliction of duty must be pursued in court. As for the second complaint, the court has dismissed it because the *OrBorTor* did, in fact, inform Mr Tony by issuing official letters and following the exact requirements of the law.

However, Mr Tony failed to appeal in time.”

Mr Wikrom also clarified that Mr Kanokpon’s call for protection while the case is ongoing was dismissed by the court, as it was ruled that the *OrBorTor* was not proceeding illegally in the matter.

Mr Ma-ann also responded to the ‘dereliction of duty’ allegations by saying that he was willing to take up the matter in court.

“I was only doing my job by

following the official order of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). I never intended to target anyone and always followed the law at every step,” said Mr Ma-ann.

“Tony Restaurant is the biggest one that still stands on the beach. Most of the remaining illegal venues on Lay Pang and Layan beaches are shacks. Once we demolish this, the rest should be done in a few days,” stated Mr Ma-ann.

However, two restaurants on

Lay Pang Beach – Beach Bar and Paul restaurant – have survived so far.

“These restaurants are yet to be demolished as their appeals are being processed in court,” Mr Ma-ann said.

Last November, Mr Ma-Ann was slapped with a 10-million-baht lawsuit filed against him for alleged dereliction of duty by the owners of the two establishments, who claimed that Mr Ma-ann had ruined their businesses.

“Last week, the Phuket Court dismissed their request. However, they have another month to appeal to the Administration Court in Surat Thani. We will, of course, wait for the court’s decision before taking any further steps,” Mr Ma-ann added.

Vice Governor Chokdee reiterated that the demolition had to be carried out as per the NCPO’s directive, and the law would apply equally to all parties involved.

“Local authorities had ordered Mr Kanokpon to evacuate the premises in 2013, but he has continued to operate his business till now,” said the vice governor.

“It shouldn’t be this hard to get everyone to obey the law. We have demolished most of the other illegal buildings already, and this one should be no exception,” he said.

Shifting trends in Phuket tourism

TOURISM and real estate are – and have always been – the key contributors to Phuket’s economy. Today, they remain the heartbeat of the island, but trends have shifted in terms of tourist profile and real-estate demand, *The Nation* explained in a Special Report.

Tourist arrivals have consistently grown despite Thailand’s political situation and the Erawan Shrine bombing in Bangkok last year.

A notable change is the increase in the prominence of Chinese tourists. Last year, Chinese tourists in Phuket reached 1.3 million, a significant growth of 34.8 per cent from last year.

This growth has helped offset the decline in Russian tourists, and we expect this to continue further into 2016.

The top five feeder tourist markets are China, Russia, Australia, South Korea and Malaysia.

Another significant trend is an expansion of the tourist base



Tourist numbers have consistently grown, despite the Erawan shrine bombing last year. Photo: The Nation

for Phuket, as well as the growing number of affordable accommodations.

There is a clear shift towards investment properties with guaranteed yield offerings. The key is to provide a fully serviced property that minimizes ownership hassle and a rental management program that ensures maximum income.

There is a niche portion of the market that looks for ultra-luxury resort villas and is attracted by what Phuket has to

offer – the blend of quality beaches, yachting, golfing, food and entertainment.

Top-end villas were originally launched in the 104-174mn baht range and are now priced in excess of 280mn baht.

This makes luxury villas a very niche market accessible only by high-net-worth individuals. Therefore, the shift toward more affordable investment products makes financial sense and is more in line with current demand. – *The Nation*



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Phuket Gazette

Behind the lens of Phuket Paparazzi

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

ADRIANO Trapani left Kamala Beach and was heading up the steep northern hill when the tsunami struck Phuket's west coast.

"When I looked down from the hill, all I saw was the frothing water full of floating debris," says Mr Trapani, an established 43-year-old photographer and founder of 'Phuket Paparazzi', best known for his 'Bohemian' photography workshops on the island.

However, in 2004, Mr Trapani was still a tourist who had taken a long leap off the corporate ladder he had climbed back in Milan, Italy.

His Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Master's degree in Marketing and Foreign Commerce landed him a job in the marketing department of IT-multinational Fujitsu-Siemens Computers. Then, after a short stint at Toshiba Computer Systems, another Master's degree in Brand Communication (on a full scholarship) and working two years at an Italian gas company, Mr Trapani asked himself a very

simple question: Why was he doing all of this?

"After thinking very deeply about it, I decided to take a one year 'sabbatical' to really understand what I wanted to do with my life," Mr Trapani explains. However, he had no idea how completely the trip would transform his life.

Mr Trapani joined thousands of people in the clean-up efforts along the Andaman coast.

"I read an article in the Bangkok Post explaining that the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources was looking for experienced divers with their own equipment to volunteer," Mr Trapani says.

He spent the next several weeks cleaning up the seafloors of Phuket and around other Andaman Islands.

It was during this time that Mr Trapani found himself suddenly side-by-side with Thais who did not speak much English, but who he joined for fried rice provided by the authorities as they all worked toward the same goal. He realized that the course of his life was not to flow back into the mainstream corporate world, but instead something spectacu-

lar and extraordinarily different.

Mr Trapani became a full-time dive instructor in Phuket, with a passion for capturing the underwater world on a film camera—just as underwater film cameras were becoming passe.

Armed with a Konika Minolta and an underwater housing, he began to build his stunning portfolio as he documented the wonders of the Andaman.

"My camera was producing astonishing results; I could see some of the most beautiful details and patterns that could not be seen with the naked eye."

As he upgraded his gear and built his portfolio, having several images published in prominent diving magazines, Mr Trapani began his iconic evolution towards land photography.

Having spent several years developing his own style – always searching for new ways to understand and improve his craft – Mr Trapani brought in a playboy model and her male counterpart for the launch of the first of his four Bohemian photography workshops. The most recent workshop organized by the Italian brought in Sony's ambassador for the

Philippines, Manny Librodo.

Now, with his new wife Katia by his side, Mr Trapani is soaring to new heights in the world of aerial drone photography and videography. Though aerial photography might appear to be the last step for Mr Trapani in the evolutionary 'March of Progress', there is a lot of room to grow just beyond the ionosphere.

Rendering: Adriano Trapani

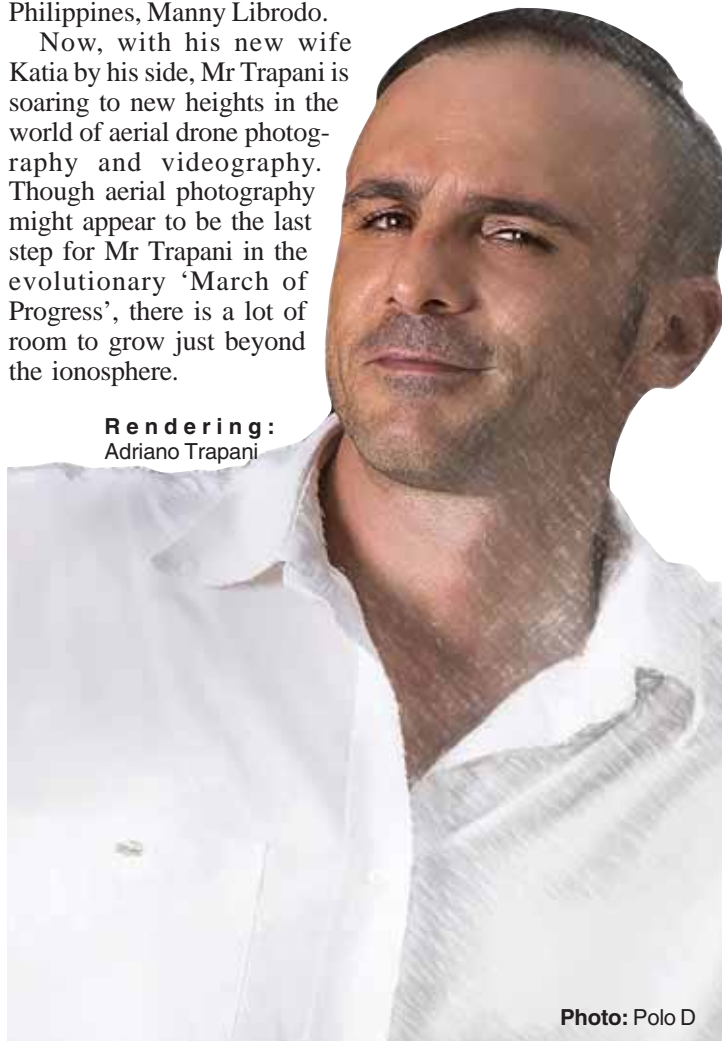


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