

# Phuket Gazette

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'MY JOB IS DONE. THE ISSUE IS AMONG OTHERS, NOT ME.'

# Artist defaced

## Controversial mural on museum wall to be removed after outcry

By Chutharat Plerin

ALEX Face, the artist who painted the controversial mural depicting a three-eyed child on a wall of one of Phuket Town's most historic buildings, the Peranakan Nitat (Baba) Museum, was set to return to Phuket on May 6 to remove the artwork himself.

The Thai artist, whose given name is Patcharapol Tangruen, has been commissioned to paint buildings all over the world, but this is the first time, to his knowledge, that he has been told to remove one.

Amid public outcry following the unveiling of the mural on April 10, he agreed to remove it himself. Residents criticized the artwork's placement through social media on what was formerly the Chartered Bank building, the only international bank in Phuket and a marker of the island's industrialization.

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

Old Phuket Town Community President Don Limmunthaphisit said community members were shocked to find the painting on the Baba Museum.

"The core of this problem is that people are questioning why modern art is painted on the side of a 100-year-old building," Mr Don said. "It's simply in the wrong place. It's like making a 100-year-old person get a tattoo. I am personally not against the art. I'm glad people enjoy taking photos with it and would have suggested that the art stay there for another three months so they can enjoy it before it is removed."

"However, the authorities have made their decision, and I'm fine with that," he added.



A notice next to Alex Face's mural on the wall of the Baba Museum lists community grievances while admirers take selfies. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

The mural was initially approved by Deputy Mayor Kosol Tang-Uthai, the former president of the Thai Peranakan Association, which aims to preserve Peranakan cultural heritage.

During a highly-charged debate at Phuket City Hall on April 12, chaired by Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana, Dr Kosol admitted that although he had backed plans to paint parts of the Old Town, he was not aware that a mural would be painted on the museum wall and offered to hand in his resignation over the 'miscommunication'.

Mr Patcharapol was unruffled by the controversy and was happy to remove the art himself.

"I have been working in this field for more than 10 years, and I have seen a lot of things, good and bad," Mr Patcharapol said. "Some-

times, people who disagree with my work chase me away before it's even finished."

"I understand the issue here in Phuket. I have no problem removing my art, but what I do not quite understand is why the authorities and relevant people did not discuss this before it became an issue," he said.

Mr Patcharapol said the removal afforded him the chance to create a stop-motion movie of him taking down the artwork.

"I spent a lot of time researching the culture of Phuket," Mr Patcharapol said. "I always study the places where I work, and in this case, I'd say I've done my job. The issue is among others, not me."

"Working in Phuket has been one of my most impressionable experiences. The art has done its job. It forces people to talk and resolve issues."

## Surin project wins governor public support

Hundreds of supporters gathered outside Phuket Provincial Hall on April 28, flowers and appreciative messages in hand, to thank the governor of Phuket for returning the island's beaches to pristine condition.

Full story Page 3

## BUSINESS



Largest Yamaha marine service center in Thailand opens in Phuket.

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LOCAL NEWS  
Briefly

Manhunt for murderer after body revealed

POLICE have launched a murder investigation after the decomposing body of a Myanmar national was found on May 3, wrapped in a mattress and dumped in a mangrove forest in Rassada.

The body was identified by locals as a 52-year-old fisherman named Tai Jor. Police estimate Mr Tai died about a week ago.

A resident said he was involved in a violent dispute with a contractor who had paid him unfairly.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Police help Krabi woman give birth at sea

TWO Krabi police officers helped deliver a baby at sea on May 1, when the mother could not make it to hospital on time.

The Krabi woman was already in labor when she arrived at the Suan Satarana Thara Pier in Krabi Town. The woman

Drug mule busted with 1.8kg of chocolate cocaine candies



A 21-year-old Thai woman who attempted to smuggle cocaine disguised as chocolate through Phuket International Airport was arrested by customs officers on April 28. With a 5.4 million baht estimated street value, the cocaine was molded into pellets and disguised as candy in individual wrappers carried in a duty-free bag from Dubai Airport. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

from Baan Talay was on her way to the hospital with a family member aboard the ferry when her water broke.

"It took us about five minutes to deliver the baby boy," Lt Rawi Praekpan said. "We

called an ambulance from Krabi Hospital to come pick them up before returning to work."

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Crackdown on 'slovenly' tour guides

WHAT began as new regulations aimed at curbing cheating and poorly dressed taxi drivers has now turned into an additional island-wide action to improve tour guides' dress codes.

"If I see any tour guides without uniforms, I will seize their guide permits," Vice Governor Prajiad said. "Torn or inappropriate clothing at Phuket International Airport represents us poorly."

- Sukawin Tanthavanich

Narrow escape for family after car flips

FOUR people escaped serious injury after their car skidded off the road, smashed into trees and flipped over in the early hours

of May 4.

The accident occurred on Thepkrasattri Road during a rainstorm. The driver said he lost control of the car as he took a bend on the road during a rainstorm.

Police charged Mr Somchai with reckless driving and causing damage to public property.

- Winai Sarot

Gov threatens social media malcontents

PHUKET Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada threatened legal prosecution against social media users who share negative comments or rumors.

"They will face at least a charge of violating the Computer Crimes Act if the information is not true," Gov Chamroen said on April 28.

The governor cited rumors on social media about the recent demolition of Surin Beach structures as the impetus behind his threats.

The threat comes after the April 27 arrest of ten civilians by the National Council for Peace and Order under the provision of Article 44 of the

interim constitution.

- Kongleaphy Keam

Drug-crazed man charged with killing grandmother

A PHUKET man allegedly murdered his 74-year-old grandmother while high on drugs and was arrested on April 28 after a violent confrontation with police.

Jintana Chairab died at Vachira Phuket Hospital after suffering severe head injuries when her grandson repeatedly banged her head on the ground at her house in Kathu, according to eye-witnesses.

Narupon Sopapan, 25, accepted the charges, saying he was high on methamphetamines (ya bah) at the time of the assault.

Police charged Mr Narupon with assault causing death, resisting arrest with a weapon, and carrying a weapon in public without reasonable cause.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Drug addict arrested for Family Mart robbery

POLICE arrested a drug addict wanted for the April 22 armed robbery of a Family Mart convenience store on Thepkrasattri Road.

Police captured Krittanai Maneechote, 20, for the alleged knife-point theft of 5,000 baht, four packets of cigarettes and a bottle of alcohol.

When police arrested Mr Krittanai, they found him with 760 grams of fresh kratom leaves and 64 pills of the anti-anxiety medication Alprazolam.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Gas attendant fuming after fill 'n' run

HARUTAI Kriangtapong, 25, who works at the PTT petrol station in Krabi Town, had to pay 1,000 baht to cover the cost of the driver's gas.

"It may not be a lot of money for some people, but it covers my family's expenses," Ms Harutai said.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

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# Surin demolitions garner massive support for Gov

HUNDREDS of supporters gathered outside Phuket Provincial Hall on April 28, flowers and appreciative messages in hand, to thank Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada for reclaiming illegally-occupied beachfront and restoring it to the public.

The controversy and delays surrounding the illegal business demolitions came to a head when a local seafood restaurant at Lay Pang Beach was demolished despite a final effort by the owner to save it from being razed.

On April 21, Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat and Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor) President Ma-ann Samran oversaw the demolition of the last remaining buildings along Surin Beach.

“He may be a little strict, but he puts all his energy into working for our benefit,” said Akkarachai Tanlim, a supporter from Chalong. “I completely agree with the beach manage-



Supporters of the recent demolitions at Surin Beach throng around Gov Chamroen at a rally on April 28 outside Phuket Provincial Hall. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

ment campaign, as it will restore our beautiful beaches to us.”

“We have gathered here from all over the island because we want to show those who are

expressing their dissatisfaction that there is an equal number of us who support this initiative,” said another supporter from Chalong.

Governor Chamroen said he

was moved by the large number of supporters who turned up.

“I am extremely thankful for all the support today. I was born and raised in Phuket and I’m glad that I and other officials have a chance to give something back to our hometown,” he said.

“We have been working very hard on reclaiming this land and returning it to the public. In the near future, Surin Beach will be turned into a beautiful beachfront park to honor and celebrate HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej and HM Queen Sirikit,” Gov Chamroen said.

The governor also noted that he was not against people expressing different points of view.

“It is okay to think differently, but everything must be done above board. If something is legal and benefits Phuket, then I have nothing against it,” Gov Chamroen said.

- Chutharat Plerin

## Social media sleuth busts smokey bus



Facebook user Joke Moodie reported the bus. Photo: PLTO

A TOUR bus was banned from service after a Facebook user posted a video showing clouds of thick, black smoke emanating from it, officials confirmed on May 1.

Phuket Land Transport Office Chief Policy Adviser Jaturong Kaewkasi said the exhaust emission test showed pollution levels at 99 per cent when measured.

“By law, black smoke emissions cannot exceed 45 per cent of the exhaust,” he said.

Mr Jaturong urged citizens to notify authorities of any such vehicles on social media by posting number plates, as well as pictures and/or videos.

— Chutharat Plerin

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## Road stoning leaves family hospitalized

A PHUKET man who allegedly threw stones at a car, making it lose control and crash, is being charged with assault resulting in serious injury, police confirmed on May 4.

"We found a white Mazda car on Thepkrasattri road, which was heading northbound when it struck an electric pole," Lt Col Chaleow Taihu of Phuket City Police said.

The driver Jatuporn Kanpai, 25 and his wife were taken to Vachira Hospital, while their one-year-old daughter was rushed to Phuket International Hospital.

Anucha Yeemuda, 21, turned himself in to police after finding out there was a child in the car. Mr Anucha said he was on his motorbike with his wife when Mr Jatuporn's vehicle allegedly cut him off multiple times.

—*Kritsada Mueanhawong*

# Aussie dies after fall from Patong balcony

AN AUSTRALIAN man fell to his death from the 19th floor of a high-rise hotel in Patong as he reportedly attempted to take photos of fireworks.

Major Pattapee Srichai of the Patong Police was alerted at 11:37pm on April 28 that Jamie William Brown, 30, had fallen from the balcony of his room at a high-rise hotel on Rat-U-Thit 200 Pee Road, landing face down by the third-floor swimming pool.

Mr Brown's body was taken to Patong Hospital where he was pronounced dead. Police questioned Rosemarie Ann Watson, Mr Brown's sister-in-law, who said that she tried to save him as he clung to the balcony.

"They were staying in the same room on the 19th floor,"



Andrew Brown fell 16 stories to his death. Photo:Kritsada Mueanhawong

Maj Pattapee said.

"Ms Watson said that Mr Brown saw fireworks and tried to take photos by leaning over the balcony. She said she warned him not to get too excited as he could fall off the balcony. Then she went in the bathroom for

about ten minutes."

When Ms Watson came out, she saw Mr Brown hanging from the balcony railing, Maj Pattapee explained.

"She said she tried pulling him up, but claims she could not do it because of his weight

and watched him fall 16 stories to his death."

Ms Watson said she then ran to hotel staff, calling for help.

Pratuang Iadprapan, a member of hotel security who was the first to find Mr Brown, said he was on the first floor when he heard the sound of something falling to the ground.

"I ran to see what happened," Mr Pratuang told the Phuket Gazette. "I believed [Mr Brown] was dead, so I informed the other hotel staff and the police of the situation."

Maj Pattapee confirmed that a police investigation team inspected the room and found no signs of a struggle. However, he declined to name the hotel while investigations are ongoing.

—*Kritsada Mueanhawong*

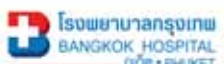
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## Power poles move for road work cost B27mn



Workers from five districts moved 4.5 km of power lines in a single day to facilitate construction of the Bang Khu underpass. Photo: Nick Davies

RESIDENTS along Thepkrasattri Road in Koh Kaew were without power for the entire day on April 29 as Phuket Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) shut off electricity in the area to move power poles back from the road.

Cranes, trucks and more than 50 workers from five districts, as well as a team from Phang Nga, worked throughout the day along a 2.25 kilometer stretch of road to facilitate construction of the new Bang Khu underpass.

"The power poles and lines were moved so that the road can be widened as part of the Bang Khu underpass construction project," PEA engineer Eakkaphop Katpathom told the *Gazette*.

The costs incurred by the PEA fall under the Highways Department's budget for construction of the underpass by the said Mr Eak-kaphop, who

confirmed that moving the power lines was completed by the end of the day.

Residents and businesses ended up waiting a little longer than the 4:30pm deadline issued by the PEA for power to be turned on again.

Mr Eakkaphop acknowledged there was slight delay in returning power but was pleased to confirm that the entire job was completed within a single day.

"We called in PEA staff from all over to get the job done as quickly as possible and with the least inconvenience to local residences and businesses as well as motorists."

According to the Highways Department, construction of the Bang Khu underpass is almost half way done (40.9 per cent complete) and expected to be completed by July 2017.

—*Kongleaphy Keam*

# Locals lament climbing bans

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

LOCAL tourism business operators this week blamed the rock climbing bans in Koh Yao Noi, Koh Phi Phi and Koh Poda for the savage drop in hotel and resort occupancy rates at Thailand's climbing meccas, Tonsai and Railay Beach.

"Bungalow resort owners on Tonsai Beach saw occupancy rates drop by 50 per cent year on year in March, as various climbing bans drive climbers away from Krabi," Elke Schmitz from Basecamp Tonsai rock climbing tours told the *Gazette*.

"While the four-month-old climbing bans on Koh Yao Noi and Koh Phi Phi initially seemed to affect only a small group of climbing tourists, the ban on deep water solo climbing at Koh Poda on February 24, brought a sudden and early end to high season to this small bay between Railay West and Ao Nang," said Mr Schmitz.

Initially, hundreds of climbing tourists arriving in Krabi, just to learn that they had travelled to one of the world's most famous deep water solo sites in vain, explained Mr Schmitz.

"As anger and disappointment were vented online, the fact that 90 per cent of climbing routes in Southern Thailand are located in Railay and Tonsai and could be enjoyed as always, was not registered anymore," Mr Schmitz said. "Three bans were enough to persuade most climbers to take their holidays elsewhere."

The damage done by the bans



There has not been a single case of serious injury or death of a tourist due to neglect on part of a climbing guide, confirmed the chairman of the Railay Rock Climbing Club. Photo: Riccardo Mereu

is also being blamed for drops in the number of domestic tourists at the more upscale Railay Beach, located next to Tonsai. "I have never seen a season so bad for my business," said Julamane Subhate, who runs three of the 17 resorts in Tonsai.

Though more than 500 climbers signed a petition to lift the various climbing bans, many in the industry fear that the majority of climbing tourists are heading for Vietnam and Laos instead.

Worapot Lomlim, the Ao Phang Nga National Park chief, moved to ban climbing walls under his jurisdiction. The effort killed local guides' ability to profit and effectively killed some of the top off-the-beaten-path climbing destinations.

"Climbing is an extreme sport

and a risky activity. Even though there are safety regulations and well-tested equipment, there is still the possibility of someone falling and dying," said Mr Worapot said at the time.

"Normally, climbing can be done in a park if the operators get permission from officers. In this case, it doesn't matter if they do apply to designate the area as a climbing zone, as I have already decided to ban this activity."

Sorayut Tansathian, the chief of Noppharat Thara - Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park told the *Gazette* that the safety of tourists was their primary concern. "Climbing will remain banned on Phi Phi and Koh Poda until further notice," he said.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a member of the National Reform Council and policy

adviser at the Hat Noppharat Thara - Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park, was able to provide more insight into the matter.

"We are still in discussions with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) about exactly what qualifications a business must have to secure permission for offering climbing trips in national parks," Dr Thon said. "One of the rules is having a national park officer as an escort; they will be on site to ensure that those taking part in the activity aren't damaging our precious natural resources."

Dr Thon explained that his chief concern was ensuring the protection of the natural parks. However, climbing communities throughout the world have a long history of environmental conser-

vation efforts and awareness.

"This type of climbing is done by a segment of tourists who are keenly aware of the importance of partnering with local authorities for nature conservation, both in Thailand, and in their home countries," said Mr Schmitz.

Prior to Dr Thon highlighting his concerns about the possible damage inflicted on national parks through climbing tourism, the main concern voiced by officials had been the safety of tourists, which has raised a number of eyebrows in the climbing community.

"Climbing is not a traditional Thai sport, which explains the often astonishing lack of understanding that most Thai officials have of 'farang' sports, such as climbing or scuba diving," said Mr Schmitz. "This can also explain why the local climbing community was neither consulted nor informed about the bans. However, what infuriates local Thai climbing guides the most is the repeated insinuations about lack of safety."

There has not been a single case of a serious injury or death of a tourist due to neglect on the part of a climbing guide, said Abdultalep Janjit, chairman of the Railay Rock Climbing Club.

"All legitimate tourism activities must be accommodated by the authorities," Dr Thon said. "We will establish rules for rock climbing in national parks in the next two months. Nonetheless, the temporary ban remains until ground rules are established. This does not mean it will be banned forever."



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IF YOU weren't in Phuket ten years ago, you might not even know what the Crown Plaza was. Nonetheless, it stole page one of the *Gazette* in the May 6-11, 2006 issue when it was bought by Kingdom Hotel Investment, which was headed by Saudi Arabian billionaire Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud – the 8<sup>th</sup> richest man in the world at the time. Originally the Karon Villa Resort, the hotel complex was built in 1984 and then rebranded as the Crowne Plaza in 2003. Despite the unfamiliar name, the property itself is one that many socialites and tourists on the island will recognize, as it is now Movenpick Spa Resort Karon Beach.

Though Prince Alwaleed praised the opportunity to get his hands on a fully refurbished hotel in a pristine site on Phuket's west coast, the big news for most readers was a little sidebar story on page one: Labor Chief speeds up work permit procedures.

It's hard to imagine that the sometimes painful process of getting a work permit in Thailand was once even more torturous.

"Now, people do not need to come to our office two or three times. We will have their work permit renewed in just 15 minutes, and new work permits approved in just one week," said the

Phuket Provincial Employment Office (PPEO) chief at the time. Though optimistic time frames for receiving a work permit might not have endured over the last 10 years, as the number of foreigners and migrant labors has continued to rise, the system put in place by the chief definitely has helped with clarity. Instead of details being handwritten into work permits, they are now printed by a computer to make them more legible – to those who can read Thai.

It is not hard to imagine the doors for corruption and confusion that slammed closed with this change – not saying there aren't other doors still cracked open. Nonetheless, clarity in work permits continues to be an issue in Phuket, especially within the diving industry. This New Year's Eve, seven dive instructors based in Phuket were arrested and jailed for working in Krabi province, apparently something not covered in their work permits. Unfortunately, the current PPEO chief is dead set against further clarifications inside work permits – shooting down the idea of providing English translations that would allow people to accurately understand what exactly they are permitted to do.

### The gift of hindsight

Worse than a couple of nights in jail for a work permit infraction, however, is underestimating the dangers of a sunny day in a tropical paradise, which prompted lifeguards to queue up 'please-don't-ignore-red-flags' loop tape to warn locals and tourists about the dangers of Phuket's west coast rip currents, which have already claimed the life of one person this year.

Ten years ago, the rips and other dangers on the island that killed three Chinese tourists in Phuket between January and May, prompted China's consul-general in Songkhla to call for help in protecting what has since become the island's top source market.

"The Chinese government recognizes that the most important thing for tourism development is safety, and so we urge Chinese tour operators to take very good care of tourists. We also want the Thai government to help prevent Chinese tourists from getting into unsafe situations," the consul-general said.

Despite safety being a priority for tourism development, neither the deaths of those three Chinese nationals – two by drowning – nor the

dozens who have died in the following ten years seems to have hampered the explosive growth of this market.

Though Chinese regularly drown on snorkeling trips in our waters, it seems that etiquette has come to the frontlines for Chinese-tourism management. In March this year, tour guides working with Chinese tourists were invited to join an etiquette course, in the wake of a video clip that went viral of Chinese tourists in a disgusting, wasteful feeding frenzy at a buffet in Chiang Mai.

Thailand isn't the only country trying to school Chinese tourists: a tourism guide imploring Chinese visitors in Japan to stop belching and passing gas in public has had to be republished in multiple languages – not just Chinese – so as to lay the blame for uncouth behavior on 'foreign' tourists generally, rather than guests from China alone.

Given the stink being raised, perhaps other tourists will just have to move or pick a different part of Phuket to explore if they are worried about being swarmed by those arriving by tour buses. May I suggest the Crowne Plaza? There weren't nearly as many tourists on the island ten years ago – though the dangers in the waters and the roads were just as real.

## Thailand to get investment for solar energy

THAILAND'S latest solar energy project is expected to spur investment of around 18 billion baht (US\$512 million) this year, which should help support the slowing economy, the country's energy regulator said on April 27.

Some 67 farm cooperatives along with several listed companies won the right to sell a combined 281.32 megawatts (MW) of solar power to the national grid last month.

The move, after a delay of almost a year, is seen as a crucial step for Thailand to go ahead with other renewable energy sources such as biomass in southern Thailand, analysts said.

Among the winners are Global Power Synergy Pcl, Superblock Pcl, Bangchak Petroleum Pcl and Solartron Pcl.

## Healthcare to obtain B11.7bn

THE Public Health Ministry has formulated what it says is a comprehensive, nationwide health plan covering 2018-22 to boost access to healthcare.

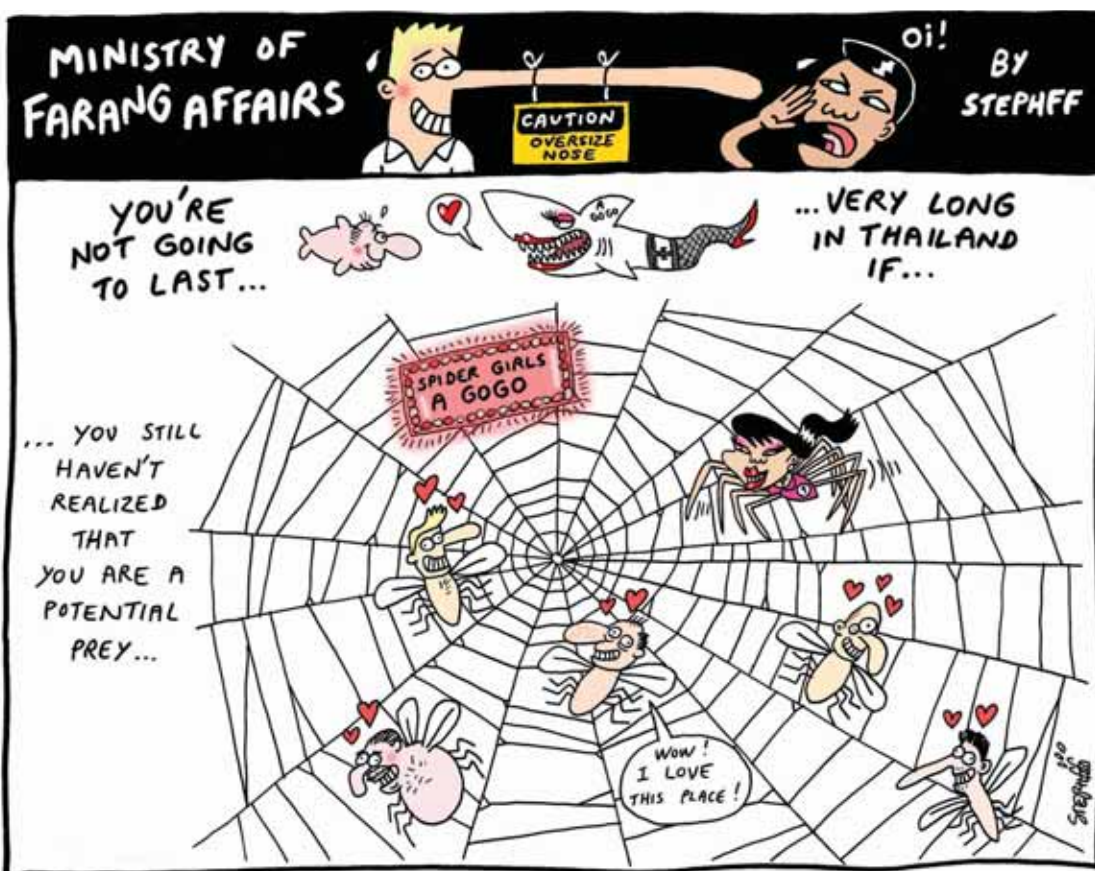
The budget for the plan is almost 11.7 billion baht. The move also aims to reduce the number of people with ailments, the death rate and the long queues to get health services, while at the same time promoting a sustainable healthcare system.

## Mummy with branded shoe discovered

ARCHAEOLOGISTS have discovered the partial remains of a female who is believed to have died some 1,500 years ago, nearly 10,000 feet up in the Altai Mountains.

So far, experts have found only one hand and the woman's feet. But it is what is on them that has created shock – a pair of German sportswear brand Adidas, complete with the iconic stripes.

One person wrote on Live Leak: "Didn't know they had Adidas back then..." While another questioned: "The mummy had on some Adidas in the first pic?"



## Extreme heat claims 21 lives

THE heat has claimed the lives of about 21 people this year, say officials.

Dr Amnuay Kajina, director of the Department of Communicable Disease Control, said Thailand's heatwave has affecting many parts of the country.

"People must take extra caution against illnesses caused by the sweltering heat," he said.

He said 56 people died as a result of the heatwave last year, most of whom were men and 33 per cent were laborers. Another 33 per cent died while doing activities or work in the sun.

## Four civilians wounded in bomb attack

TWO spontaneous small-bomb attacks near a market in Yala's Kabang district on May 3 slightly wounded four civilians in an attempt by insurgents to create chaos in this restive region.

The double explosions took place 10 minutes apart from one another at Ban Bala Market at around 11am and left three women and a boy injured, and damaged a grocery shop, a pickup truck and a motorcycle.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan dismissed rumors that an unofficial meeting between Thai negotiators and MARA Patani representatives in Kuala Lumpur, brokered by the Malaysian government, had failed to make any progress because of a disagreement.

## Nine activists charged with sedition

EIGHT activists were detained by the military on Wednesday over Facebook posts criticizing the draft charter and junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha. They were charged with sedition, computer crimes and two of them face charges of breaking the royal defamation law – Article 112.

"The court has approved the first phase of their jail term of 12 days," Winyat Chatmontree, a lawyer for the group, told Reuters.

By law, suspects can be detained for up to 12 days, extended seven times, before they are formally tried in court.

## Cambodian smugglers intercepted

SA KAEW police intercepted two pickup trucks on May 3, with 26 undocumented Cambodians on board hoping to find jobs in the Central region.

They were caught after a tip-off about a Cambodian smuggling gang which transports illegal workers through Sa Kaew's Aranyaprathet district.

The Cambodians said that they had paid to go to Bangkok for employment. Sa Kaew Immigration Police called on their Cambodian counterparts to pick up the 26 people.



## Fire a rocket if you want death

THE governor of Ubon Ratchathani has threatened a life sentence for anyone who fires a rocket and causes damage to an aircraft during the upcoming Bun Bang Fai Festival.

The Rocket Festival, celebrated in Northeast and Laos, takes place this year from May 6 to June 4. Ubon Ratchathani

Governor Somsak Jangtrakul said his province would step up security for the festival by issuing 22 regulations.

Somsak said the regulations included a restriction that would allow each village to fire rockets for only one day, but if more than three villages hold the festival together, the time can be extended to two days, with a limit of 15 rockets per day.

"Rocket firing will be restricted in all districts from May 15 to 18 because the Royal Family will visit the border-patrol police schools," he said.

He warned that those who violate the rocket-firing bans or cause damage to aircraft would face the death penalty and an 800,000 baht fine.



## Phuket Gazette

# Courting controversy

THE persecution of artists has been a popular past time for people in power since the first paintings were commissioned by the courts and Counts of the Renaissance.

Caravaggio was run out of Rome by angry clergymen who disagreed with the artist's stylistic leap towards the visceral vulgarities of humanity, while many nobles and critics celebrated his work as groundbreaking.

Even Michelangelo suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous censorship. His alter piece, The Last Judgment, caught the attention of a group of uptight Bishops, who condemned the incidence of genitalia in the painting, accusing Michelangelo of immorality and instigating the infamous "Fig Leaf Campaign". More recently, however, attempts by po-faced politicians to shut down the freedom of exhibited expression has garnered quite the opposite results than they intended. They did not manage to stop the dissemination of art among the masses, but in fact helped promote it.

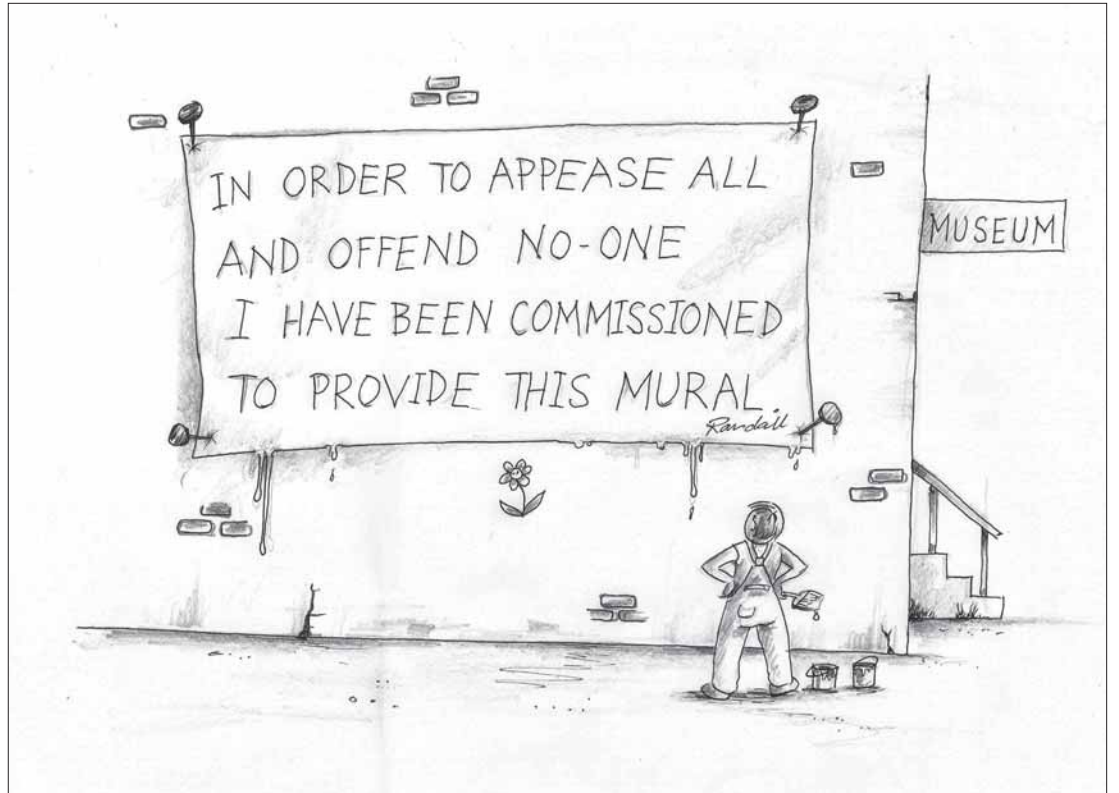
Robert Mapplethorpe's outrageous homo-erotic bondage photo exhibition, "The Perfect Moment" was relatively well received among the artsy clique as it toured the US in the late eighties. But it was only once Senator Jessie Helms had rallied most of Congress to bar the exhibition from Washington DC that Mapplethorpe's work became a cause celebre.

Even more recently, modern artists have actively courted controversy – think of Banksy's Dismaland or almost everything by Damien Hirst. Getting banned from a DC or London gallery would most assuredly make their day.

For up-and-coming artists, conservative condemnation along the lines of "I don't know art, but I know what I like!" is almost guaranteed to set their star on the rise – as we are witnessing right now with the controversy over a rabbit-pyjama'd baby grimacing out from the window of the new Peranakan Nitat Museum.

Artist Alex Face has agreed to scrub away the cute three-eyed baby artwork after several local officials deemed it inappropriate for the ambiance of the Old Town.

The artist's acceptance that he must scrub away his own artwork shows a keen understanding of how art works today, because it's a good bet that more people have selfie'd themselves with the furry baby than have actually gone into the museum. And so – even as he washes the paint from the walls – Alex Face knows that this particular iteration of his three-eyed baby will live forever.



# Need to keep beaches clean now

*Re: Massive public support for reclamation of illegal land, April 28*

Congratulations, Governor. Can I make a small request that there is a properly conducted plan to clean the beaches after the high tide, and that the beaches have garbage bins supplied plus a plan to see that they are regularly emptied. Already rubbish is being left along Surin Beach.

Chob  
Gazette forum

## Don't put the lives of others at risk

*Re: Phuket lifeguards warn of deadly rip currents, May 2*

Simon the TPV volunteer distributed multi-lingual broadsheets to all lifeguards last year. I hope they are still available for use.

Interesting comment from a Thai friend the other day when asking her why people didn't like to follow the rules – 'we are freestyle' was the reply, and this is an educated lady.

Not good when it puts the lifeguards at risk.

Mister Ree  
Gazette forum

## Not naming the hotel is quite unusual

*Re: Australian in fatal fall photographing fireworks from Patong balcony, May 2*

I would like to know exactly why the policeman declined to name the hotel?

## Letters to the Editor

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

This is extremely unusual. He must think that somehow the hotel or one of its staff is responsible for this death.

Otherwise, it seems there could be no reason to hide the identity of the place.

Investigator  
Gazette forum

## Attendant should not be penalized

*Re: Fill 'n' run leaves gas attendant fuming, April 30*

PTT should be ashamed of themselves.

Not only did they charge the poor girl, but she even had to file the police report herself.

Is this normal operating procedure for this transnational petrochemical giant? Shameful.

CaptainJack  
Gazette forum

## Chasing foreigners will hurt economy

*Re: Phuket tax-dodging nominees for foreigners to face charges, May 4*

The sad thing is they dress all this up as a crime, the solving of which will benefit the community somehow.

The reality is that the law is poorly written, cannot be understood because the judges here do not use the system and vary greatly in their capability so any case is a toss up. Clearing out foreigners with businesses here will definitely result in damage to the community.

Ian Rance  
Facebook

## Impossible to see the warning signs

*Re: Phuket lifeguards warn of deadly rip-currents, May 2*

How should tourists see danger posters when there is a shop in front of every one in Kata?

Bjorn Ronningen  
Gazette forum

## There is some hope for Phuket yet

*Re: Video report: Home-schooled siblings claim bronze at international competition, Apr 29*

Stories like these re-affirm my belief that there is some hope for Phuket and Thailand, yet.

Such a beautiful country with so much potential, on the verge of ruin by ignorant policymakers and inadequate law enforcement.

It is very encouraging to see such reports in the news. These young people deserve more attention and encouragement.

God knows they are our only hope.

Sarah Garcia  
Gazette forum

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# Homeschooling mother

## FIRST PERSON

THERE are 30 families homeschooling in Phuket, and not all have children with special needs. Some parents just want their children to focus on whatever interests them.

I do not think 'normal' schooling is bad. In our case, our daughter Phimphan was just not doing well in school.

She was struggling with Thai language skills and couldn't keep up with the other kids in class, even though she excelled in other subjects.

Even so, the school put pressure on her to increase her performance, which I couldn't stand. After three years, I pulled her out. She was eight years old.

I understand that teachers do their best to teach all their students. They are under pressure to have the class perform well, and don't always have time to help individual students. Then, if the children can't perform as expected, they and the parents are judged for not being able to fit within the system.

The most important benefit of homeschooling is that we, as parents, instinctively know the needs of our children. We have more freedom to focus on subjects that our children need work at.

Although Phimphan doesn't speak Thai well, she is good at art, English and engineering.

At home she also learns important life skills, like cooking, which actually involves disciplines in several areas.

In 'normal' schools though, students do the same thing at the same time and memorize facts.



Homeschooling mother **Papatsorn Sompranon**, 44, from Trang is the proud parent of daughters Nattaya, 14, and Phimphan, 10, whose Smart Watering Controller for house plants invention won them a bronze medal at the Malaysian International Young Inventors Olympiad in April.

Mrs Papatsorn graduated with a nursing degree from Prince of Songkla University and worked as a nurse for four years before setting up a business in Phuket. Here she shares advice on home schooling, especially for children with 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) and other learning issues.

What's the point? It limits their imagination and creativity, whereas homeschooling focuses on personal development.

There are, however, many criteria and standards that need to be met for a parent to be allowed to homeschool their children.

Homeschooling comes under the purview of the Phuket Primary Education Service, in order to ensure that all children receive a proper education. It is a legal requirement to get permission before homeschooling. You can't just take your children out of school and teach them whatever you want without informing anyone.

Officers assess the parents' educational background and their ability to teach, as well as financial circumstances. I have to keep detailed records to ensure my daughter passes each grade. Then I take everything to the education office once a year for approval. Everything has to be under the control of the Education Service.

The most challenging aspect of homeschooling is making sure our children develop social skills. I send Phimphan to join in sports, English classes, art lessons and other activities so she will meet and interact with new friends.

As a result, Phimphan seems mature for her age. She interacts easily with older kids and she is still comfortable mixing with kids her own age.

Each child has unique skills and abilities. Phimphan has definitely benefited from having her particular needs addressed. I hope other parents with children in need of a more flexible education system will have the confidence to consider homeschooling as a viable option and worthwhile investment of time and energy.

Phuket's first generation of homeschooled students have now gone on to university and are doing well.

I just want the same for my kids without the pressure and limitations of a conventional classroom education.

– **Kongleaphy Keam**

# To bike or not to bike?

## Island View

By Andrew Nicholson



Island riding is fun but dangerous. Photo: Sami-Hasib

A FRIEND of mine recently arrived in Phuket. It is his very first time in Thailand and he intends to hang around for a while so, within the first week of his stay, he bought a motorcycle.

Admittedly, anyone who wants to get around Phuket needs some form of independent transport, unless they have the time and patience to wait for a bus or 'songtaew' or enough money to hire a private limousine.

Alarm bells went off in my head when I heard about my friend's new (for him) purchase of a second-hand 250cc Kawasaki off-road bike.

Sure, buying a bike was a smart thing to do in order to save time and money in the long run, instead of long-term car rental or forking out for taxi fares every day, but it was certainly not the safest option in my opinion.

I didn't doubt my friend's riding skills. It was everything else that I was worried about. Here we had a young man who, for starters, learned to drive on the right hand side of the road in his country, where the road rules are easier to follow, because everyone else is mostly obeying them.

Now, after a few days in Thailand, he was going to immerse himself in an entirely different and frankly, highly dangerous, driving culture; one in which he certainly would not have had enough time to become close to understanding that there is method in the madness.

Mind you, on a recent trip home to the UK, I was surprised how fast people

drove over there. I noticed that drivers are confident when they know they have the 'right of way'. They zoom along with not the slightest worry that someone might just drift out of a side road into their lane without even a glance at the oncoming traffic.

It wouldn't occur to a British motorist that someone would stop dead on a roundabout. Nor would it occur to an American that everyone else stops a few seconds after the traffic light turns red and then sets off again before it's turned back to green.

As a rule, when driving in the west, you just don't expect someone to pass you on the inside, or suddenly come face to face with a noodle cart heading towards you in your lane.

Predictably, my friend, despite being a good rider, came off his new bike a few days after he had bought it. He lost it on a patch of gravel, and now has a nasty graze on his neck.

Thankfully, his driving culture of wearing a good helmet might well have saved him from a more serious injury that day. Of course I hope that was the first and only accident he has while he's here.

Personally, after coming off motorbikes three times while buzzing about in the Big Mango, I decided it was time to trade in the bike and make a down payment on a car.

It might take longer to get places on four wheels, but it's certainly a lot safer.

## Words from the Wise

**"The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well."**

– **Sir William Osler**

**"Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice. Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work."**

– **William Arthur Ward**

## Issues & Answers

### I want to donate my hair to cancer patients

I HAVE very long hair and I am planning on cutting it short.

Instead of throwing away the hair that is cut off, I would rather donate it to help make wigs for a cancer patients that have lost their own hair through treatments such as chemotherapy.

Is there somewhere in Phuket where I can donate my hair?

**Silvia Thompson**  
Phuket

**Registered Nurse Anchalee Boontanon, of the National Cancer Institute, replies:**

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

Submit your issue at:

[www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers](http://www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers)

Thank you for your kind offer to donate your hair.

Unfortunately, there is not a facility in your region. However, you can send your hair by post to the National Cancer Institute in Bangkok.

They require 12 inches or more of dry hair in order to make a wig. Please mail your hair to:

National Cancer Institute  
268/1, Rama VI Road,  
Rachatavee, Bangkok 10400.

# Waiting on techs and industrials



Finance

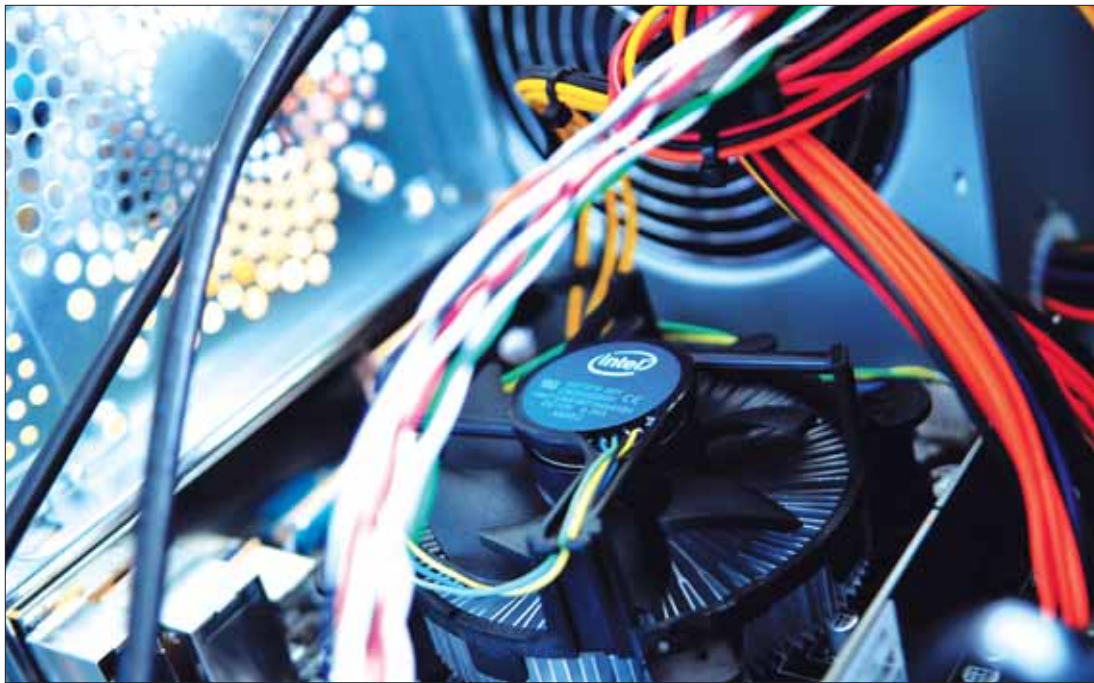
By Don Freeman

AS OF the end of March, US stock markets hit some overhead resistance on their technical charts and pulled back a bit, with the rally that started in February looking similar on the technical charts to the rally of September, which ultimately rolled over.

There is a strong possibility that the market (or at least the S&P 500) has been in a shallow ten to 15 per cent correction and may be trying to finally break the downtrend. However, many stocks over the past two years have lost between 20 and 70 per cent of their value, much more than broader US indices, making the market very challenging for investors.

For that reason, it's worth taking a closer look at some key market indices:

The S&P 500 needs to break out above the 2,100 level. However, there continues to be a risk of another low, because the index peaked last summer, then rallied again in December to a lower high and is now in another rally. The problem is that the last rallies were followed by new lower lows – the very definition of a downtrend. If the bulls continue to buy and leadership stocks start to emerge, we could still see the



Tech stocks are expected to lead the market, particularly the tech-laden NASDAQ. Photo: Marcin Milewski

S&P 500 above that 2,100 level and perhaps finally break the downtrend. If that were to happen, it could be time to start investing in stocks again.

Where tech stocks go is where the stock market (especially the tech laden NASDAQ) will ultimately go and that's why I am watching the technical chart for the Technology Select Sector SPDR ETF (NYSEARCA: XLK). This ETF needs to take out its old high, but the technical chart shows a lower high with sellers gaining control back in January, and now a

countertrend rally is underway. Since the jury is still out and the ETF could end up rolling back over again, investors need to remain patient and watch its technical chart.

The Industrial Select Sector SPDR Fund (NYSEARCA: XLI) is actually looking very bullish as the technical chart shows the ETF taking off again and breaking above a downtrend line. However, we need to see buyers step in to get XLI back up to the US\$58 level. If the ETF can clear this old high, we can cross out the last peak on the technical

chart. For that reason, I am watching XLI very carefully as one sector I might take a position in, if I see follow through.

The Financial Select Sector SPDR Fund (NYSEARCA: XLF) has begun acting well after being really punished in January. Despite a nice four-week rally since then, XLF is starting to hit overhead resistance on its technical chart as some key financial stocks are in critical care right now. And while central banks are doing everything they can to prop up their respective economies, the US Fed will be out of moves to

help the financial sector should XLF roll over again. XLF was up three per cent last week (April 24) and continues to improve and now sits above its 200 day moving average, a positive sign.

The SPDR STOXX Europe 50 ETF (NYSEARCA: FEU) and European markets have not recovered all that much over the last six years. Although FEU has tried to rally, the recent terrorist attacks have further hit performance and it remains in a bear market with an ongoing downward trend. Until FEU can produce a higher high, I would completely avoid European stocks.

Some leadership stocks are starting to emerge and I will be ready to take new positions if the Dow Jones can continue to break higher. However, I will also be sticking with the US markets – if and only if they can get going to the upside.

*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 over 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: 089-970-5795 or email: freemancapital@gmail.com.*

## SCB eyes partnership solutions to boost units

SIAM Commercial Bank is exploring partnership solutions to strengthen its subsidiaries as doing business alone is not the way to meet the increasing requirements of customers, said Arthid Nanthawithaya, chief executive officer and deputy chairman of the executive committee on May 3.

Arthid stressed that the part-

nerships will result in policies focused on delivering financial services that customers want.

"SME customers with a lot of money may want to invest in world-class products, and we should allow them to move their wealth into our portfolio, and offer them better investment opportunities," he said.

– *The Nation*

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## Phuket ranks in world's top-ten

PHUKET this year ranked eighth among the world's top-ten islands in a reader's survey conducted by travel review website TripAdvisor, giving local tourism-related businesses a boost for the low season.

Until recent years, Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as Expedia, Booking.com and Orbitz dominated the online booking market, forcing their customers into bidding wars to ensure a high search-engine ranking for search terms such as 'Patong hotel'. Even Britain's House of Lords has criticized OTAs for jacking prices up when people view a particular listing multiple times.

However, review sites like TripAdvisor put power back into the hands of the public, allowing them to collectively elevate the reputation of an establishment with honest reviews and genuine feedback, as well



Phuket beaches rank highly on TripAdvisor. Photo: Robert Haandrikman

as allowing business owners to respond and react accordingly.

Pachara Chumkaew, the owner of a seven-room guest house and restaurant at Kamala Beach, Lillo Island Resort, said about 60 per cent of her bookings for dining and accommodation are a result of positive TripAdvisor reviews.

According to TripAdvisor, Phuket is the second-best island in Asia after Bali, Indonesia, which was ranked fifth in the

survey. Regionally, Koh Samui and Koh Tao are ranked third and fourth respectively.

The world's top 10 islands for this year are: Maui in Hawaii, United States; Santorini, Greece; Jamaica, Caribbean; Providenciales, Turks and Caicos; Bali, Indonesia; Mallorca, Spain; Mauritius, Africa; Phuket, Thailand; Bora Bora, French Polynesia; and Fernando de Noronha, Brazil.

– *Nick Davies*

# Nominees to face charges

POLICE in Phuket expect to arrest a number of people in the province who are acting as nominees for foreigners doing business illegally in Thailand.

The nominees for Phuket businesses operated by foreigners are among more than 1,000 Thais set to face charges in a large-scale crackdown, including legal firms and accounting companies that help companies avoid taxation.

Phuket Provincial Deputy Police Commander Colonel Samarn Chainarong said on April 29 that police had gathered seven large dossiers about suspected offenders.

Col Samarn said in some cases one Thai served as the nominee for foreigners in up to 20 companies.

He said police were awaiting court approval for arrest warrants for suspects. The arrests could be made within the month.

Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul chaired a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on April 29 to check the progress of the operation to prevent Thais from acting as nominees for foreigners.

Ms Kobkarn said that at the cabinet meeting on February 23 Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha instructed the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Interior, the Tourism and Sports Ministry, as



Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul. Photo: Phuket PR

well as other concerned agencies, to crackdown on businesses being illegally operated by foreigners, such as tour operators and guides.

Ms Kobkarn said Phuket needed to build a new tourism base in order to grow tourism development and to compete with neighboring countries.

The minister said that at the Cabinet meeting, ministers and aides discussed offences committed by legal firms and accounting companies to help foreign clients avoid taxes.

"We have a blacklist of

these companies and the people involved," Ms Kobkarn said. "We are targeting major players and continuing to gather key evidence before taking action."

Ms Kobkarn said that state agencies capable of revoking business licences had been instructed to follow the government's guidelines in cracking down on the illegal operations.

She said government ministries must monitor the movement of registered companies in the future, and that

those caught committing offences must face revocation of their business licences.

She said government agencies must learn how newly registered companies commit offences and continue monitoring businesses before attracting more investors.

Ms Kobkarn said the concerned agencies have taken action against illegal workers, suspended tourism-operation licences and cracked down on companies avoiding taxes in the past.

- *The Nation*

## Yamaha opens B70mn marine service center



The B70mn facility in Koh Kaew. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

THE largest Yamaha marine service center in Thailand opened for business in Phuket on April 30.

The grand opening of the 70-million-baht Yamaha Marine Service Center, covering three rai in Koh Kaew, was attended by Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul.

Watchara Marine's managing director, Tanate Satiapan, said facility marks an ambitious expansion into the marine and tourism markets for the company.

"Due to Phuket's strong economic growth, we aim to provide the best service and greatest convenience to our customers in Phuket supporting marine tourism," said Mr Tanate.

First established in 1971 as a motorbike dealership, Watchara Co expanded into the marine sector in 2001.

"We saw this segment as one of the fastest growing and most vital to Thailand's economy," Mr Tanate said.

- *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

# Japan reaffirms Thailand trade

JAPAN's foreign minister arrived in Bangkok on April 1, aiming to reaffirm economic ties after Japanese investments in Thailand slumped last year amid political concerns as well as stiff competition emerging from more nimble neighbors.

Japan has historically been the largest investor in Thailand, Southeast Asia's second biggest economy, which it sees as an important production base.

However, Japanese investments in Thailand nosedived by 81 per cent last year, according to official data, something analysts say mirrors concern about Thailand's economy, which continues to struggle under prolonged military rule.

Increased competition from the region's newer economies,

such as Vietnam and Myanmar, is posing another threat to foreign investment in Thailand.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told a news conference, after meeting his Thai counterpart at the beginning of a two-day visit, that Thailand remained an important stakeholder.

"Thailand is a stakeholder that Japan cannot be without as many big and medium-sized Japanese firms from over 4,500 companies are based here," Mr Kishida told reporters.

Japan still came first in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Thailand last year, with total approved investments valued at more than 144 billion baht (\$4.13 billion).

- *Phuket Gazette / Reuters*



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# Traditional Thai at Thanyapura

Creative staff at Thanyapura Phuket sports hotel show off traditional Thai costumes that they made for the facility's annual staff party on April 8 with a 'Fantastic Thai Night' theme.



Thanyapura Phuket President and CEO Philipp Graf von Hardenberg with Thanyapura team members dressed in traditional Thai costumes they designed themselves.

# Romrawin on call

Beauticians from Phuket-based aesthetic beauty treatment center, Romrawin Clinic, gave beauty tips and advice to shoppers in Jungceylon, Patong, April 23-25. The clinic is situated on the third floor of the shopping mall, offering a range of innovative, high-tech skin treatments.



The Romrawin Clinic troupe at Jungceylon shopping center in Patong.



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**Events in Paradise**

# Mecca clocks for southern mosques

Bottler of Coco-Cola soft drinks for southern Thailand, Haadthip PCL, donated 30 time pieces depicting Mecca to Islamic leaders in Songklah on April 19. The wall clocks, to be hung at mosques in the southern region, display seven time zones.



Haadthip PCL sales director for the lower southern region, Taweelat Chan mee-on (2nd from left) presents clocks to Thailand's leading Muslim cleric Arkis Pitakkumpol (seated).

# Cyclists meet for criterium

Hundreds of cyclists saddled up at Saphan Hin on April 23 for the Phuket Criterium 2016, supported by Singha Corporation and Vittoria. Cyclists set off on 1.85km laps of the Saphan Hin circuit in fixed-gear, road bike and mountain bike categories competing in races over distances of up to 27.75km.



Singha Park Chiangrai Co Senior Advisor Piyaphan Thanasophon (left) with Advisory to the Phuket Mayor's office Wuttichai Seakam as cyclists prepare to race.

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# The other kind of bends

## Diving

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

AS PROMISED, let's dig into two of the biggest 'am I following PADI regulations' questions professionals in the industry are faced with in Phuket: can we bend the rules to take photos on a Discover Scuba Diving (DSD) course and does this really count as a 'confined water environment'?

Before diving in, it's necessary to understand why the questions are being asked in the first place. Despite living costs in Phuket skyrocketing, the salaries for those in the dive industry haven't really budged in more than a decade. However, snapping a few photos of a DSD student while underwater provides an instructor with some additional revenue, allowing them to make more than 3,000 baht a day in some cases.

One such example of bending the rules that was aired at the PADI seminar on March 8 was whether or not a DSD student could be loaned a camera or bring their own camera on the dive – thus not violating the rule that states that instructors should not bring a camera while managing uncertified divers in a foreign environment.

The simple answer provided



Handing a camera to a novice will likely not be regarded as 'prudent' in a court of law. Photo: Gazette file

by Robert J Scammell, a PADI instructor examiner, at the seminar was, "No". Having been an expert witness for the prosecutor in diving related cases in the past, Mr Scammell illustrated how easy it is to decide on whether or not something is in line with regulations.

Simply ask yourself, if there was an accident, how would these actions appear in the black and white of a police report? Are any of the justifications going to hold up as 'prudent judgment' in a court of law?

An instructor's first priority

should neither be making more money, nor having a happy client – it is the student's safety. The instructor taking pictures of a student on a DSD course is in violation of regulations, as it puts the uncertified diver at an increased level of risk. Additionally, handing a camera to someone who has just learned to breathe underwater and has no sense of buoyancy is just as irresponsible. If an accident does occur underwater, it would be very hard for a judge and jury to see such an action as 'prudent'.

So, if pictures are essential to a customer enjoying their underwater experience, an instructor is better off coordinating with an on-boat photographer and just skimming commissions off the top.

The same process can be applied to whether or not a dive site is a 'confined water environment'. A closed water environment required for a DSD course is a pool or site that offers 'pool like conditions' in regards to clarity, calmness and depth – it should be shallow enough to stand in.

Of course, this means DSD courses could easily be held in some of the bays along Racha Island. However, a dive site such as King Cruiser, with a max depth of about 30 meters, would require an extremely tall student for it to be considered 'deep enough to stand in'.

"Standards for ratios and depths are listed as maximum limits. This means that you must apply sound judgment in determining what is appropriate for training each time you conduct a course or program," the PADI Instructor Manual states. So even if something isn't clearly banned by the manual, the responsibility to know that it is an unsafe idea comes back to the dive instructor.

However, the tough reality of the industry is that if you turn down the work, there is always someone else willing to step in. Change must come from dive operations, which can ensure that DSDs are being taken to appropriate dive locations and instructors are paired with cameramen on the dives. This way, everyone gets a little more cash and the budding scuba divers have a safer, more enjoyable experience, perhaps getting hooked on the underwater wonders that has drawn countless thousands below the surface of the Andaman.

## Mobile cinema coming to Phuket

A MOBILE movie theater will be touring Phuket this month, airing free film screenings to school children and members of the public.

The Cine Mobile, sponsored by the Thai Film Archive, will be on the island from May 26-June 1, before continuing its tour of the southern provinces. The mobile cinema will screen five films per day – at 9:30am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm and 3pm, in addition to a public screening at 4:30pm.

Thai Film Archive specialist, Wuttinun Chamchoi, said that the Cine Mobile seats up to 100 people.

"This is a great opportunity for those people in Phuket who never get the chance to see cinema, to experience it free of charge," Mr Wuttinun said. "The Cine Mobile is the only mobile theater in Asia, and is one of just 15 cars in the world honored by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn."



The Cine Mobile will tour Phuket from May 26-June 1, providing a free cinema experience to up to 100 people at a time. Photo: Thai Film Archive

The Cine Mobile will make stops at the following locations:

May 26: Saphan Hin Park

May 27: Wat Sawang Arom

School in Rawai

May 30-31: Ban Kathu Community School

June 1: Cherng Talay Wittayakom School

"If there are any available seats, the host schools can invite students from other, smaller schools to join as well," Mr Wuttinun said. "For public showings, there will only be

enough space for 100 audience members. However, if there are enough people, we might choose shorter movies so we can get as many people to experience the theater as possible."

The Cine Mobile will be showing: Babe; A Bug's Life; Stuart Little; Hugo; Dolphin's Tale; Eight Below; Lesson of a Dream (German); Juno; and The King of the White Elephant (Thai).

– Sukawin Tanthavanich



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# Be wise to cardiovascular risks

SEVERAL hospitals have recently set up new departments to deal specifically with a cluster of diseases known as cardio-metabolic illnesses.

These are diseases that impact cardiovascular and metabolic functions and can lead to serious long-term morbidity and premature mortality. This includes high blood pressure (hypertension), high blood lipids, obesity and diabetes. They are among the most frequent medical problems in adults over 45 years old and especially the elderly.

Cardio-metabolic illnesses are also referred to as 'cardiovascular risk factors', because they favor an excessive and early development of an extensive vascular disorder known as arteriosclerosis, which is a common underlying complication of all these diseases.

Atherosclerosis results from the build-up of cholesterol, fats and calcium deposits on the inner linings of arteries. This creates atheromata or atheromatous plaque, which gradually restricts the diameter of the vessels and impairs blood flow and normal functioning of the affected organs.

Moreover, it can trigger a rapid clotting process that can abruptly interrupt blood flow and thus the crucial oxygen and nutrient supply to the cells. A heart attack can result if the clot is in a coronary artery, a stroke



The goal of weight loss needs to be realistic and achieved over a reasonable period of time. Photo: Jeff Kubina

if it is in a cerebral artery, and peripheral artery disease if it is in the leg.

Atherosclerosis primarily damages the heart, kidneys, eyes and brain, and may lead to heart and kidney failure, poor eyesight, blindness and weaker cognitive and intellectual function. Thus, it is a major contributor to poor life quality as we grow older.

Importantly all these diseases evolve without noticeable symptoms, so you need to have regular routine check-ups to detect them. Symptoms only occur when the lesions are already severe and often irreversible.

Hypertension is one of the world's most common diseases, afflicting close to one billion people worldwide. Blood pressure (BP) is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the vessels. BP is assessed in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) with two figures.

The first or higher number (known as systolic BP) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart muscle contracts. The second or smaller number (known as diastolic BP) quantifies the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between beats and being refilled with blood.

Normal blood pressure is below 129/84 mm Hg. High blood pressure ranges from 130 to 139 for systolic BP and 85 to 89 for diastolic. Hypertension occurs when your BP is higher than or equal to 140/90. Treatment focuses on lifestyle modifications, namely the return to healthy body weight, low salt diet and exercise. If BP remains high despite healthier lifestyle, then medications are often required.

Obesity, defined as having an excess proportion of total body fat, is increasing worldwide in all age groups. Doctors often use the Body Mass Index (BMI) to determine weight status. BMI

is the weight in kilograms divided by the square of your height in meters. This ranges from low (less than 19), normal (20-24.9), overweight (25-29.9) and obese (over 30) and extremely obese (over 40).

Excess weight is primarily a lifestyle issue and one that is essentially related to the quantity of food ingested – not 'a diet' issue per se.

The goal of weight loss needs to be realistic and achieved over a reasonable period of time. Whatever the chosen medical or surgical option, reduction and then maintenance of an acceptable body weight is a lifetime commitment.

Interestingly, a 10 per cent weight loss already leads to significant health benefits, so further weight reductions can only bring a more positive outcome.

The focus in term of life's pleasures needs to be realigned to other worthwhile interests, such as returning to a more active, physical and outgoing lifestyle.

*Dr Gerard Lalande is managing director of CEO-Health, which provides medical referrals for expatriates and customized executive medical check-ups in Thailand. He can be contacted at gerard.lalande@ceo-health.com.*

– The Nation

## Big prizes on offer at fine art photo contest



Participation in the contest is free and open to all. Photo: StockSnap

THAI Beverage Public and The Royal Photographic Society of Thailand are calling for submissions for a fine art photography contest.

This year's theme is 'Social' and submissions can be made from June 15-30. Participation is free and open to all, regardless of age or nationality.

Candidates are required to send pictures in sets of 3-5 photos sized between 1024 by

4,000 pixels. All photos have to be centered on the theme.

The prizes for first, second and third place are 300,000, 100,000 and 50,000 baht respectively. Ten additional prizes of 10,000 baht each will be awarded to honorable mentions.

For more details, visit the website of The Royal Photographic Society of Thailand at: [www.rpst.or.th/changfineart](http://www.rpst.or.th/changfineart)

– Kongleaphy Keam

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## Devilishly simple trifle

A recipe by Peter Webber

Master pastry chef at Les Diablos Patisserie & Restaurant, in Phuket Boat Lagoon Peter Webber shares his recipe for good old sherry trifle with a devilish twist. Mr Webber is one of the island's chefs who showcased his culinary creations at the Boat Lagoon Lighthouse Market May 6-7.



The secret is to make trifles in layers, preparing the ingredients as you go. First is the bedding, then the jelly, followed by the vanilla custard topping, plus any decoration you want to add. For best results we are going to make our own jelly from scratch.

You can make individual trifles in small bowls or cocktail glasses, or make one in a large glass bowl (9 inches). Sherry trifle is the ideal dessert to adorn the dinner table and is guaranteed to impress your guests.

### Bottom Layer Ingredients

Sponge fingers (Savoardi / Biscuits a la cuillere)  
Sherry  
Frozen mixed berries (or fruit of your choice)

### Method

Place the sponge fingers in a bowl and then put the frozen mixed berries on top. Now douse it all in sherry. Leave it to soak while we make the raspberry jelly.

### Second Layer Ingredients (Raspberry Jelly)

125 grams raspberry puree  
125 grams water  
25 grams sugar  
1 sachet of gelatin

### Method

Mix in a pan and heat the raspberry puree, water, sugar and gelatine. Boil and stir the mixture until it dissolves.

Pour all of the liquid jelly onto the bed of fruit and sponge fingers and let it soak. Then put the bowl in the fridge for two hours to allow the jelly to set.

### Top Layer Ingredients (Vanilla custard)

4 egg yolks  
1 whole egg  
65 grams sugar  
45 grams flour  
20 grams custard powder  
375ml of milk

### Method

Whisk the egg yolks and sugar in a bowl until it turns a light, streaky color. Then mix in the flour and custard powder and whisk well.

Boil the milk in a pan and pour in the egg mixture while continuously whisking until it thickens. Then remove from the heat and pour the mixture into a bowl so it can cool down. Sprinkle sugar on the mixture or add a dab of butter to stop a skin forming as it cools.

When the jelly and fruit have set and the custard is cool, spread the custard onto the jelly and smooth it over.

The Trifle can be wrapped and stored in the fridge or freezer until needed. To serve, add whipped cream, sprinkles, nuts, fruits, berries or chocolate if desired.

# Dice Travels: Home is where the dice lands

OUR managing editor, Isaac Stone Simonelli, has had enough. He's quitting his job at the *Phuket Gazette*, and taking his chances on the road – quite literally.

After upgrading his motorcycle, emptying his bank account, going through the bureaucratic nightmare of obtaining a Thai driver's license as an American, and finalizing a few other preparations, Isaac will be at the mercy of chance.

"The premise is simple: allow rolls of the dice to determine the majority of decisions faced while motorbiking throughout the world with a limited budget for an entire year," Isaac's blog reads. "It's 365 days of tempting fate, enticing serendipity and letting go of free will – if such a thing exists at all."

For many of us, picking where to go and what to do based on rolls of the dice sounds like absolute lunacy. But for a thrill-seeker who has made most (and lost much) of his savings on games of high-stakes online poker, the proposition isn't too worrisome – stagnation is.

"If I don't do it now, there won't be a better time in my life to do this," Isaac told the *Gazette*. "I have a lot of things that I'm attached to and care deeply about here, but I'm in a unique position where I don't have anything really keeping me here."



The entire premise of the dice rolls is based around the concept of decision fatigue. Photo: Julia Kukushkina

At the fundamental level, Dice Travels is as much an experiment in probability as it is the last cry of freedom for a 30-year-old American on the cusp of settling down; the entire premise of the dice rolls is based around the avoidance of 'decision fatigue.'

"The closer we get to a 50/50 line, the more information we need to accurately weigh options and the more perceptive we must be," Isaac's blog reads. "If a decision is a 49/51 split, making the right choice will lead to a 2 per cent gain, let's say, of happiness. However, the energy expended in making that decision could be better used for a decision of greater importance."

Set to begin in under two weeks, Isaac's trip will consist of rolling the dice and seeing where that takes him.

"The first morning, I'll wake up and roll a four-sided die which will tell me my destination: Myanmar, Malaysia, Cambodia or Laos," he said. "For the next 365 days, I'll let the dice make the decision about where I'm going, what I'm doing, what I'm eating, as long as it's all within the range of my moral code."

"There's something very cool about letting go of having any control," he added.

After spending nearly five years at the *Gazette*, Isaac says he's ready to take his chances elsewhere. We wish him the best of luck. You can follow Isaac's blog at [dicetravels.com](http://dicetravels.com).

– *Phuket Gazette*

## Kid City Summer Cruze at QSI

QSI International School held its fourth annual 'Kid City Summer Cruze' races on April 24.

The afternoon of family fun gave children aged 18 months to six years old the chance to try out special 'Cruze' bicycles, which are specially designed to be safe for young riders as they do not have any chains or pedals and can only be pushed along.

QSI director Brian Gerbrach said the aim of the event was to teach children to



The participants 18 months to six years of age. Photo: QSI

experience competing in a fun way, enable them to learn to cope with winning and losing,

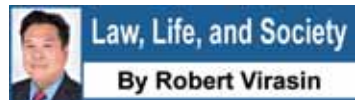
and that losing is just an opportunity to improve.

– *Phuket Gazette*



# ‘I do’ with eyes wide open

## The ins and outs of making a prenuptial agreement with a Thai spouse



Law, Life, and Society

By Robert Virasin

IN THAILAND, it is not unusual to see established men marrying younger Thai women. There are also instances where couples are in their second relationship and both bring their own assets into a marriage.

In these circumstances, it may be prudent to sign a premarital agreement.

A premarital agreement outlines the division of the property, debts, and spousal maintenance in the event of a divorce.

While setting the division of financial assets is not romantic, it does help to preserve the couple's expectations during the marriage.

In Thailand, premarital agreements are allowed, but they have to be signed and concluded prior to the marriage. The agreements also cannot be contrary to the "public order or good morals."

While premarital agreements are generally concerned with the couple's assets, there have been instances where bad moral behavior such as adultery has resulted in a dilution of assets for the offending party.

Unlike most western countries where a premarital agreement is private, Thai courts will only recognize a premarital agreement that has been filed at the local government district office where the marriage will be registered.

The premarital agreement is not valid if filed after the marriage has occurred. The premarital agreement will also not be valid in Thailand if it is drafted, signed, then kept privately by both parties.

A properly prepared and filed premarital agreement is legally binding. Neither of the concerned parties can file an amendment to a premarital agreement with the local government district officer after it has been agreed upon.

Changes to the premarital agreement require a petition to modify it at a court. It cannot be altered, modified, or canceled without the authorization of a court.

If the court alters or cancels the premarital agreement, the



Love is a strong inducement for couples to be together, but marriage is a legal contract that binds two people financially and legally under the law. Photo: Petar Milosevic

court will notify the local government district where the agreement and the marriage were filed.

Post-marital agreements between a husband and wife are much weaker than a premarital agreement.

Any agreements between a husband and wife during the marriage can be made void at any time by either party during the marriage, or within one year after dissolution of the marriage, as long as an innocent third party is not affected.

For a premarital agreement to be recognized, the agreement must satisfy certain requirements.

The premarital agreement must be in writing and both parties must understand the contents of the agreement.

For practical purposes, premarital agreements should be written in the language of both parties.

However, it is highly recommended that the agreement be submitted in Thai. Generally, if there is a conflict between an agreement written in two languages, the Thai-language version will take precedence.

All parties should be given enough time to read the premarital agreement and should not be pressured into signing it.

It is best practice for each party to review the agreement with their own attorney prior to signing it.

An attorney can explain the legal repercussions of each clause to ensure that parties understand the agreement.

Two independent witnesses have to be present at the signing of the agreement to verify

that it was not signed under duress.

A prenuptial agreement is generally not needed for a

young couple who are just getting started in their life with minimal assets.

However, for individuals

who are entering their second marriage, or are entering a marriage with substantial assets, a premarital agreement can remove or reduce the financial concerns of getting married.

While love and attraction is a strong inducement for couples to be together, marriage is a legal contract that binds two people financially and legally under the law.

It is prudent to enter into a marriage with an open knowledge of the other person's finances.

Mr Robert R Virasin is a licensed US Attorney and the managing director of Virasin & Partners. Mr Yutthachai Sangsirisap is a licensed Thai Attorney at Virasin & Partners. They can be reached at [info@virasin.com](mailto:info@virasin.com) or at [www.virasin.com](http://www.virasin.com).

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## Hilton eyes Phuket for expansion



Hilton Worldwide in California, USA. Photo: Bernard Gagnon

HILTON Worldwide is looking for the right partners and locations to introduce its Hilton Garden Inn properties in Phuket in the near future.

“We hope to have Hilton Garden Inns in Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya,” said William Costley, vice president for Hilton’s Southeast Asia operations.

The company plans to add a five-star hotel on Patong Beach.

The 300-room Hilton Phuket Patong, set to open early 2018, will be operated under a management contract with Q Hospitality Development.

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the country welcomed more than 29 million tourists in 2015. Costley said Hilton Worldwide believes that number will increase to more than 30 million by the end of this year.

# Wherefore art thou balcony?



Property Watch

By Bill Barnett

LIFE on the edge is never easy, as Romeo and Juliet would’ve told you. One of my many (and growing) property nightmares is the great debate over condominium and hotel balconies. Is it really a balcony, terrace, veranda or even that exotically-titled Hawaiian tropical lanai? Let’s just stick to balcony for now.

Through the ages, architects have struggled to define, refine and reinvent the balcony. Switch back to the age of Willy Shakespeare and you, of course, start to see his inventive mind deploy the balcony, or what was later to become the “Juliet Ledge.” From the outside it looked like a ledge, but of course was just tarted up window dressing in the end.

Over the years in hotel design meetings I have sat through endless debates about the balcony and whether it was meant to be, or not to be? Let me now address my rants on that subject for a minute. Form and function remain a key element of architecture and I remain amazed why designers spend so much time inside the four walls, and entirely forget about the balcony.

Most annoying of all for me are those ultra-small ledge-like



Balconies haven’t evolved over centuries at the same pace as other parts of houses. Photo: 2dweb

things attached to resort buildings with two chairs and a table jammed into the narrowest of spaces. The only purpose served is to create more work for housekeeping to clean the dirt or else more places for ugly swimsuits and underwear to disgracefully deface the outside of a building. Do I really care to know if the woman in room 224 prefers to wear a pink Hello Kitty thong, despite having a rear end nearly reaching my own epic proportions? No, thank you.

We do, of course, have the issue of smoking. Yes, folks can go outside and smoke on the ledge, but in reality many hotels are pushing into more smoke-free zones and, let’s face it, if

it’s four degrees outside, or monsoon rains are falling, will you really choose to follow the rule? No way. Why not just have a smoking area on an attractive rooftop bar, where you can actually gain more revenue from drinking and smoking, which is a wonderful combination anyway?

Still, the idea of sprawling verandas, daybeds and even outdoor plunge pools, do make splendid unique selling tools for real estate agents. I’m writing this from Niseko, where onsen dot the balconies of many high-end projects and value is indeed created by an endless stream of hot water in the frigid winter.

Yin, Yang, Romeo where are

you? Perhaps the biggest gripe here is why haven’t balconies evolved over the centuries and decades at the same pace as say kitchen design, or even bathrooms? Where is the killer game-changing design? Sadly, nowhere in sight.

For now, it seems we are left to debate the subject, and try to find a way to black out the corners of the room where the curtains can’t quite cover the all too small ledge outside that serves little to no point at all.

Bill Barnett is the Founder and Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks (C9Hotelworks.com), a leading Thailand-based hospitality and real estate consulting firm.

## Habitat for Humanity accompanies volunteers helping local fishermen

HEALTH giant Cigna International partnered with the Habitat for Humanity Foundation, a non-profit organisation with a global network, to build houses for Phuket locals.

Cigna brought over 50 volunteers from Europe, America, the Middle East and Asia to Mai Khao municipality, in Phuket’s Thalang district. The volunteers built homes for three underprivileged fishermen’s families.

Preecha Phusimma, one of the Cigna Thailand volunteers, recalled his experience saying, “I know the tsunami hit Phuket many years ago, causing misfortune for the people of Phuket, especially in the area of housing, and I felt the urge to help by joining the Cigna program.”

“Throughout my four days



Habitat for Humanity volunteers building houses for Tsunami victims in Thailand. Photo: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Chelsea Kennedy

as a volunteer, I was impressed by the energy of Cigna volunteers while building homes for the underprivileged,” Mr Preecha said.

Julian Mengual, the CEO and country manager of Cigna Thailand, explained the significance of the “Cigna – Habitat For Humanity Recognition Build” program in Thailand.

“Cigna’s corporate social-

responsibility activity in building homes for the needy is in line with the brand’s position ‘to enhance people’s health and well-being’, as well as reflecting Cigna’s disposition to uplift Thai society,” Mr Mengual said.

“Cigna will continue to improve Thai peoples’ lives through such CSR programs.”

– The Nation

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## B7bn to be invested in nine hotels



Cape Panwa Phuket hotel. Photo: Roderick Eime

CAPE and Kantary plans to open nine hotels by 2020 with an approximate investment of 7 billion baht to cash in on the growing tourism industry in the long term.

Poomiphat Navanukroh, the group's director of travel industry, said that 2016 would see the biggest expansion for the company.

Cape and Kantary owns 18 hotels under three separate brands. The Cape Hotel Collection offers luxurious hotels such as Cape Panwa Phuket.

The Kantary Collection provides high-standard rooms for guests in Kantary Hills in Chiang Mai, Kantary Bay in Phuket, and Kantary Beach in Khao Lak.

- The Nation

# Chillva Market kicks off

By Kongleaphy Keam

AFTER a successful soft-opening, Phuket's newest container market is officially open to the general public.

Located off of Yaowarat Road, the 20 million baht Chillva Market's *pièce de résistance* is a shipping container park, situated around a central bandstand and pond. Phakanan Daowatthanakij, the owner, has said that the market is arranged into three zones by stall type: a tent zone sells homemade goods and local art, container shops sell trendy clothing and cocktails, while hawkers feature eateries serving Thai street food as well as food from upscale cafes in Phuket Town.

"We have local snacks, Thai food, Western food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, clothes and accessories shops," Mr Phakanan said. "But the highlight is definitely the containers bars, which have two floors, and make a great place to chill out with friends with a few beers or a couple of cocktails."

Mr Phakanan said the cost to



Customers are drawn to the new market for its relaxed atmosphere and novel approach. Photo: Chillva

rent a container was 5,000 baht per month, while the rental price for a stall was 270 baht per day.

"We have been receiving positive feedback so far within this space, and should get a return on the investment back within two years," he said.

Mr Phakanan's private investment into the Chillva market, however, hasn't been without its setbacks.

"The first day, we had some problems with our parking area

being too small," Mr Phakanan said. "However, we've solved that problem by renting 1.5 rai of land for additional parking."

Despite opening the same day as Indi Market in Phuket Town and the Naka Weekend Market, Mr Phakanan said he expects customers to be drawn to Chillva for its relaxed atmosphere and novel approach.

"It's a unique idea, using containers to highlight selling booths," Mr Phakanan said.

"We designed the space to have a pond in the middle of the market, and a stage with live music nearby with a sitting area."

"Location is also very important. We're located in the middle of the city, so people can easily reach us from anywhere, whether they live in Kathu, Phuket Town, Sam Kong."

Chillva Market is open from 4-10pm, Thursday-Sunday and the container shops open daily.

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**Phuket Gazette**

# Toiling for her hometown

By Chutharat Plerin

PHUKET City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana, 64, is a true Phuket native, born and raised in the heart of Phuket Town.

Ms Somjai recalls her childhood fondly, but frankly admits that she wasn't an outstanding student in her school years.

However, she still chose to further her education after completing her basic education. She went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in Marketing from Bangkok University and then a Masters in Social Development from Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus.

Her life turned around when she was introduced to the world of local politics by former Phuket City Municipality Council President Wiroj

Bumroongwong – a man she says is the true inspiration for her craft.

She has worked for the municipality since 1980 and was elected to be the mayor in 2004.

"I became a member of the Phuket City Municipality Council in 1980, and didn't know much about the field at first," said Ms Somjai.

Her first job as a councilwoman was in the Welfare and Education Department, which helped her take time to grow as a councillor.

Ms Somjai said she managed to pace herself, without taking on too much to work at her own pace, and without taking on too many responsibilities all at the same time.

"I make sure I always keep in touch with my staff, meet with officials, keep myself in-

involved with the community and remain up-to-date, so people can see that I have proven myself by taking the necessary actions and not just by making empty promises," said Ms Somjai.

One of the aspects of her job that she stresses as being the most important is planning ahead of time.

"I believe in long-term long planning – at least 20 years into the future – not just a few years at a time," she said.

Ms Somjai says that traditions are very important to her and makes sure she represents them by wearing the local Phuket dress called a 'Baba'.

"My dress represents who I am; when I wear my traditional dress, people recognize me and that makes me proud. Phuket has a unique generations-old culture and I hope to see it last forever," Ms Somjai said.

Although the problems facing the city add more than a few complications to her job, Ms Somjai said she tries not to be overwhelmed by them, instead striving to meet every challenge head-on.

"Thinking positive and look-

ing ahead are both key elements of my job. It's extremely important to keep developing yourself, your work and your thought process," Ms

Somjai said.

"I will never stop learning and will continue to do whatever needs to be done to improve my beautiful hometown."

Rendering: Adriano Trapani



My dress represents who I am; when I wear my traditional dress, people recognize me and that makes me proud. Phuket has a unique, generations-old culture, and I hope to see it last forever /

– Somjai Suwansupana, Phuket City Mayor

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