

Phuket Gazette

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Barred for Life

An exclusive look inside Phuket Prison and the lives of two female inmates

By Chutharat Plerin

BEHIND the walls of Phuket Provincial Prison are more than 2,000 inmates. About 350 of them are women; most of them doing time for drug dealing.

The *Gazette* takes you behind the bars of Phuket's cramped prison for exclusive insights into the lives and circumstances of two women, 'Wan' and 'Bee', locked up for drug-related crimes in a facility built more than 100 years ago to house only 800 inmates.

Are social changes and the pressures of modern society to blame? Did these women have a choice or was drug dealing the only way out of poverty?

Wan and Bee's days begin at 6am. They either take part in job training programs or work in the bakery, in which case they get up at 5am. The prison bakery runs every day, making food for the inmates and to sell at a stall in the visitors waiting area.

The female inmates follow a strict daily routine. After rising, they exercise for an hour, then take a shower before breakfast. All the food served at the prison is vegetarian.

Married mother of two, Wan, 28, started selling drugs as a quick cash earner to support her children and husband, a mechanic earning a small wage in a small back-street garage.

"I was a housewife looking after our two children; a 10 year old and a newborn. We were all surviving on my husband's small wage. I wanted more money but I didn't have a job. Selling drugs was the only thing I could think about doing that would al-



'Bee', one of about 350 female inmates at Phuket Provincial Prison, is serving time for dealing drugs. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

low me to make money and be at home with my children. Some friends introduced me to the drug world," said Wan.

Four months later Wan was arrested with more than a kilogram of crystal methamphetamine (ya ice).

"I knew right from the start that one day I would be caught."

At the time of the interview, Wan was still waiting to be sentenced and had no idea how long that sentence might be, yet she was already resigned to her fate of a life behind bars.

"I lost my future. The only future I have now is here, serving time for selling drugs. I can't be with my children or my husband. He is out there working hard, alone, to take care of the kids. I regret what I have done. If I could turn back the clock, I would definitely not do it again," said Wan.

As well as missing her husband and kids, Wan said that seeing her parents happy was what she wanted to see more than anything else.

Continued on Pages 4-5

Another beach club threatened with demolition

PATONG Municipality is threatening to have Paradise Beach Phuket demolished in June under the Building Control Act. Official investigations into the beachfront party venue have revealed a quagmire of land ownership issues.

Story on Page 3

BUSINESS



It's always interesting to see examples of when social media is used really well.

PROPERTY



Local developer The Attitude Club launches new Japanese loft-style homes.

LIFE & STYLE



The Thailand Yacht Show is to dock at Phuket once again in December.



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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Myanmar man washed ashore

A MYANMAR man who was reported missing at Nai Harn Beach on May 15, was found drowned on the same beach the next day, officials confirmed.

Joe Ye Bai, 22, reportedly went to Nai Harn with two of his friends and was washed away by waves.

Nai Harn Chief Lifeguard Jula Nontree warned tourists to only swim where yellow-red flags are placed.

"It was nearly dark and we called everyone to exit the water, but the men ignored the red flags and our warnings," said Mr Jula.

— Chutharat Plerin

Man sets fire to BMW after argument

A DRUNK man allegedly poured a gallon of gasoline onto a BMW and set it on fire in the early hours of the morning of May 15, officials confirmed.

The Kathu Municipality Fire Department rushed to put out the blaze at the entrance to

Charges to be filed in deaths of five women



Police announced that they will press charges against the construction company involved in a building collapse that killed five female workers at the Institute of Physical Education's Krabi Campus in March. Sections of unhardened cement fell on the women working on the floor below. Police said the rebar used did not meet the legal requirements of construction materials, and there was no qualified engineer on site at the time. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Irawadee Kejho village.

Capt Wattanatorn Bumrungrtin of the Patong police said the driver parked the car in front of a motorbike repair shop and had a loud argument with a woman inside, before exiting the shop and setting the vehicle

ablaze.

The vehicle he set alight reportedly belonged to an acquaintance who is currently in prison.

— Winai Sarot

Aussie NGO supports Nai Harn training

ABOUT 60 volunteers took part in a training seminar on emergency life-saving techniques at Phuket's Air Traffic Control Center from May 10-14.

The annual lifeguard training was sponsored by the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO), and was supported by members of the non-profit organization Surf Life Saving Australia.

Phuket Lifeguard Club (PLC) President Prathaiyuth Chuayuan said the PLC has 98 lifeguards manning 38 stations at 12 beaches in the province.

"Between January and April we've rescued 64 people," he said.

The volunteers learned cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED) as well as surf rescue tactics.

— Sukawin Tanthavanich

Taiwanese capt hospitalized after leak at pier

A TAIWANESE tuna boat captain was found unconscious from an ammonia leak aboard his vessel at the Fish Marketing Organization pier in Rassada on May 13.

The victim, named Kuo Yu Chen, 55, was in the vessel's hold when he was rendered incapacitated.

"The entrance was very small and he is quite heavy, so it took some time. It was very difficult to help him out," said Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana.

The victim was rushed to the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization (OrBorJor) Hospital.

Lt Panya said Mr Chen was in the hold to repair a broken refrigerator. Hospital staff confirmed that Mr Chen is in stable condition.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

New police station opens

THE new Sakoo Police Station officially opened its doors on May 11, to oversee Sakoo sub-

district as well as the Phuket International Airport.

The new station, located near Nai Yang Beach in Sirinath National Park, was one of 88 police stations opened nationwide on the same day.

The station will cover five communities (Moo Baan) in Sakoo sub-district, as well as one sub-district in Mai Khao. Approximately 80-100 officers will be employed at the new station.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Ta Chai Island ordered closed indefinitely

TACHAI Island and the surrounding waters were closed to tourists and members of the public, with no scheduled reopening date, on May 16.

Officials said the island was closed in order to allow marine life a chance to restore itself.

According to an official letter signed by Department of National Parks Director-General Thanya Netithammakun on May 10, Ta Chai Island and the area around it will remain closed after the usual reopening date of October 15.

Tour guides, however, say that the indefinite nature of the closure is already forcing some people out of business.

— Kongleaphy Keam

Customs seize unregistered boat engines

MARINE police seized boat engines and other heavy machinery, with a total value of five million baht, stored at a lockup in Rassada on May 16.

Phuket Marine Police Chief Panya Chaichana said police received an anonymous tip that machinery kept in a warehouse had been imported without payment of duty or customs taxes.

"During an early morning raid on the facility, police and customs officers found nine boat engines, 22 generators and 13 boat gears," Lt Panya said.

The owner of the facility, Chanwit Piyapanan, allegedly did not have the import and customs documentation. Mr Chanwit was charged with avoiding import and customs taxes, which carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, a fine equal to quadruple the duty value of the goods or both.

— Chutharat Plerin



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Trouble in Paradise as govt threatens more demolitions

PATONG Municipality is to serve a demolition notice to Paradise Beach Phuket club next week, giving the party venue in Patong 30 days to move off the land it allegedly occupies illegally.

Patong Mayor Chalermluck Kepsup said Paradise Beach Management Co Ltd, which operates the beach club near Tri Trang Beach, will be formally told to remove the buildings said to be built on public land, unless the company can produce documents proving it has the right to occupy that land.

The company will have 30 days to demolish the structures or make an appeal, Mayor Chalermluck said during a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall on May 11.

A complaint was filed at the Phuket Ombudsman [Damrongdharma] office in December of last year. Investigations revealed that the land was registered as owned by Sophon Eakwanit. Paradise Beach Management Co rented the land from Mr Sophon and used a flying *SorKor 1* certificate for the right to occupy and build on the land.

A flying *SorKor 1* is a title deed issued for a specific plot of land, but then used to claim the right to occupy another plot of land elsewhere.

Paradise Beach Management sought permission from



The warning to Paradise Beach proprietors comes after demolitions and property closures on Layan, Lay Pang and Surin beaches. Government officials have been cracking down on tenuous claims to property rights, titles and deeds by beachfront businesses. Photos: Phuket Gazette



the municipality to construct buildings on the land by submitting *SorKor 1* certificate 276, along with a rental contract between the company and Mr Sophon, said Mr Chalermluck.

However, the *SorKor 1* certificate does not specify the plot of land it is for and the company did not provide any other supporting documents to validate their claim, so the Phuket

Land Office was asked to look into it, the mayor said.

It was found that Mr Sophon possessed two land documents *NorSor3Kor* claiming ownership of the 80 rai of land in question. However, it was concluded in court that the land actually belongs to the Phuket Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO), Mr Chalermluck said.

Paradise Beach Management denied building on ALRO

land, but was not able to produce *NorSor 3* certificates to back the claim; only referring to the flying *SorKor 1*. Therefore, the Phuket Land Office was asked to verify whether the *SorKor 1* certificate was lawfully issued.

Paradise Beach Management Co was ordered to halt construction and operations while investigations continued. However, the company ignored

the order, so it was decided to issue the demolition notice to the company under the Building Control Act, said Mr Chalermluck.

Phuket Vice Governor Kajornkiet Rakpanitmanee said the land issue came to light after a complaint was filed, claiming that construction was being carried out on public land.

– Kongleaphy Keam

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Crash claims Russian Dep Consul

THE Russian Federation's Deputy Honorary Consul for Phuket died in a car crash early in the morning on May 18 in Wichit sub-district. Authorities believe Santi Udomkiratak, 50, fell asleep at the wheel after they found no signs of any attempted braking on the roadway.

Police say the crash between Mr Santi's Mercedes and a six-wheel truck occurred near the Jor Soo Kong Naka Shrine intersection, just south of the Weekend Night Market.

Mr Santi's body was pinned in the driver's seat by the rear of the truck during the rear-end collision. Lt Patcharee Wongboon of the Wichit Police said Vachira Hospital staff are checking Mr Santi's blood for evidence of intoxication.

"We are checking CCTV around the area," she added.

Mr Santi was the Deputy Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation for Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga since 2008. The Phuket native also owned apart-



Mr Santi was the Russian Honorary Deputy Consul for Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

ments and other businesses on the island.

Mr Santi's death comes as Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha visits St Petersburg to sign nine Memoranda of Un-

derstanding at the invitation of Prime Minister Dmytri Medvedev. Gen Prayuth said the talks may include a deal to procure Russian military hardware.

—*Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Young lives

From Page 1

"I never did anything to make them [my parents] happy. I never bought them anything, never took them anywhere nice. I was not a good daughter. I did not take good care of them and now I am stuck here. I want to pay them back but I am not sure if I will ever have the chance."

"If I do get out, I will stay away from drugs."

Like many who get mixed up in the drugs, Wan comes from a broken home. However, she does not blame her circumstances for ending up in jail. She accepts that she is now paying the price for the decisions she alone made in the past.

"My parents separated years ago. I was left to fend for myself from a young age, but it's not their fault that I decided to start selling drugs," said Wan.

"It's not like the movies, where drug dealers are forced into selling drugs. It's up to the individual what they choose to do about their circumstances."

"I want to warn anyone thinking about getting into drugs to think twice. It seems like an easy way to make a lot of money very quickly, but please stop and think first. You are about to trade your whole future for some quick cash. You may get away with it for a while but it will not last. You will eventually get caught," said Wan.

'Bee' is 21 years old and is serving a lengthy sentence for drug dealing. It was just 117 grams of crystal meth that changed her entire life. By the time she gets out she will be almost 50 years old.

"I lived with my father but I did not want to bother him by asking for money. I found my own ways to earn a living. I grew up in Phuket and finished secondary school (pratom 6). I have tattoos, which makes it difficult to find a job. Most employers turn their noses up at people like me, with a low education," said a calm and collected Bee, who seemed to have already accepted her future life behind bars.

"I wanted to study more but I never had the chance. We did not have enough money and my father didn't do much to support me."

"I was selling drugs for

about a year before I was caught and sentenced to 25 years in jail," said Bee.

Phuket Provincial Prison only houses inmates serving sentences of under 15 years. Bee however, remains incarcerated in Phuket while waiting for the verdict of another trial on drug-related charges, before being transferred to Nakorn Sri Thammarat Central Prison.

"Money was the only reason I got into the drug business. Just like everyone else, I had to earn a living. Without a good education and nobody to support me, my only option was to sell drugs," said Bee.

"My father passed away not long after I was imprisoned. I didn't see him again. I had a hard time dealing with that.

Just like Wan, Bee looks forward the most to one day seeing her family again.

"The first thing I want to do when I get out is see my younger sister and my aunt. They are both in Phuket. I hope they are still around then."

Even though Wan and Bee are in prison for similar crimes and are now paying with their lives for the bad decisions they made, each has a starkly different outlook to the other. Wan vows never to go near drugs again. However, Bee is much less certain about being able to steer clear of the drug scene in the future.

"I do not want to get involved in drug dealing after I am released but I can't tell what my situation will be in the future," she said.

Options for women in need

The Phuket Shelter for Children and Families in Koh Sireh is one local organization empowering struggling women. Director, Sirumporn Komonsanao, says there are many options for women who are willing to work.

"The shelter is one of a network of shelters in every district in the province supported by the Department of Social Development and Welfare. Each community has someone in charge of helping those women in the area looking for work," said Ms Sirumporn.

"If you need help, just call us on 1300. We are available 24/7. Or you can contact any government office in your community, where job training is

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provided free of charge. Women in the community can make suggestions about the things they want to learn and we will look for experts to train them, and provide all equipment," said Ms Sirumporn.

Ms Sirumporn admitted that despite their efforts, there are still some women in desperate need of help who still fall through the cracks.

They would be people unwilling to share their problems with others or simply don't know that there are people out there ready and willing to help.

"It is our job to help women get back on their feet so they can care for themselves and their family but, ultimately, it is their job to work at it rather than taking short cuts by selling drugs,"

A woman's choice

"A lot of women who live in



Phuket Provincial Prison was built more than 100 years ago to house 800 male inmates. Today, more than 2,000 men and women are incarcerated behind these walls. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Phuket are from other provinces and I believe many end up involved in the drug trade

because of the high cost of living here," said Ms Sirumporn. "Many are single mothers

who are desperate to find a way to provide for their children.

Naturally, any mother will do whatever she can to support her own children. Selling drugs can appear to be a quick and easy way to make ends meet but that is a choice only they can make," she said.

"There are many other ways for women to make a decent living. It is a matter of choice; deciding whether or not to risk the consequences of earning money illegally."

Patong Police officer Lt Col Sutthichai Thianpho has little sympathy for drug dealers.

"Think of all the hard-working people out there, working long hours for a low wage. They don't turn to drugs. They just get on with life, no matter how hard it is," he said.

"Of course, finding a quick and easy way to earn money

can be very attractive, but not everyone chooses to deal drugs. Those who take short cuts by dealing drugs will eventually end up on jail."

Parts of Phuket prison have recently been painted, making it as charming as a prison can be.

The place is clean and the inmates live by daily routines not dissimilar to the lives of those beyond the prison walls.

However, prison warden, Suparat Tantipongwiwat, has firm views on the purpose of the prison.

"We do our best to take care of the prisoners. However, this is still a prison.

It is meant to curtail certain freedoms. This is a place for people who break the law," she said.

"Nobody ever wants to get locked up but the way to stay out is easy.

Don't break the law."

Officials consider closing Maya Bay



Rising sea temperatures put coral at risk. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

MARINE experts are proposing the closure of the popular tourist destination Maya Bay in Phi Phi National Park, as a preventative measure to help restore bleached coral and other marine life.

"Coral bleaching has started to attack many spots, both in the Andaman and the Gulf of Thailand," said marine expert Dr Thon Thamrongnawasawat.

Coral bleaching occurs when the symbiotic algae that lives in coral leaves, making the coral more susceptible to dying.

"This is the first time we've been proactive to coral bleaching," Dr Thon said. "We're closing the island before it's too late, not like in 2010, when we closed the island after everything was already gone."

Dr Thon said the closures

have already begun on Koh Yoong. Other islands may also be closed.

"We expect to close these spots by next month, depending on the sea temperature," he said.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Gen Surasak Karnjanarat said he was concerned over the wastewater management on Koh Phi Phi Don, and that closing Maya Bay may not be enough if waste is allowed to continue discharging into the sea.

In March, Deputy Prime Minister Narong Pipatanasai also visited the island to review a multi-million baht budget that would plug the free flow of untreated wastewater into the marine park. However, that budget has not been approved or rejected yet.

—Kritsada Mueanhawong

Krabi locals answer call for donation



Dr Somkiet treats many patients for free. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

A KRABI doctor, who put up a sign outside his clinic asking for donations of school uniforms for his patients, was overwhelmed by the support he received on social media.

Somkiet Kijjathamachet treats patients free of charge, or a maximum fee of 500 baht.

The clinic has since been visited by several donors since then, leaving used uniforms, shoes, school bags and other items behind.

"I can now ask my patients if they need some of the uniforms for their family members, as most of them are farmers and do not earn a lot of money," said Dr Somkiet. "I am very thankful for all the donations, which will be used to benefit needy students."

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Huge stink from Samui trash

By Suchat Hankij

THE Samui Island Ombudsman, joined by local officials, registered residents' complaints about the smell from wastewater leakage into the nearby Taret canal, on May 14.

Ombudsman Chief Prof Siracha Vongsarayankura and his team, along with Koh Samui City Mayor Ramnate Jaikwang noted locals' complaints about how the water in the canal had become so contaminated that they could not bear to be around it, let alone use it.

Mr Ramnate, who is ultimately responsible as the senior authority for sanitation issues on the island, admitted that the current facilities could not handle the amount of waste piling up and spilling into the stream.

"We cannot take care of the trash by ourselves because our incinerator has broken down," Mr Ramnate said. "The private company we've hired to bury the trash can only process 150 tonnes a day. However, we have about 168 tonnes of trash coming in every day."

Mr Ramnate added that more than 200,000 tonnes of trash have already piled up.

"We've been urging people to separate their trash before throwing it away," he said.

Mr Ramnate stated that he



More than 200,000 tonnes of trash have already piled up, according to officials. Photo: Suchat Hankij

has organized a public hearing on May 23 to see who in the community is being affected by the trash and wastewater.

Raksagecha Chaechai, secretary-general of the Ombudsman Office said that their team would bring this issue up for discussion with higher authorities.

"We have noted the problem with the broken down incinerator and will take this information to the government to look for a permanent solution," Mr

Raksagecha said.

Tuanjai Somwong, one of the villagers who is affected by the smell and wastewater, said that the problem has been going on for 10 years.

"We are suffering from the horrible smell," Ms Tuanjai said. "Especially when it rains, wastewater runs into the canal and we cannot use it. We used to drink the water from our own wells, but it's impossible to do that now."

Ms Tuanjai said that while

residents were concerned with the smell and health effects of the garbage problem, they didn't wish to push the problem onto someone else.

"If the government wants to transfer the trash somewhere else, it must be in a dried form," she said. "I will personally disagree with any decision to take the trash away from the island as it is now. It will definitely affect the environment elsewhere and may also leak into the sea during the transfer."

Possible dinosaur fossils found

FOSSILIZED bones, possibly those of a dinosaur, were discovered in a stream bed in Krabi.

Locals stumbled across the fossils half-buried in the bank of Khlong Paklao in Na Nuea, a sub-district of Ao Luek, after the water level in the stream dropped to about half a meter, following an extended period of drought.

The petrified bones are thought to be vertebrae, jawbones and teeth from a creature or creatures that lived at least 30 million years ago, said a paleontologist from the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) on May 10.

"The fossilized vertebrae, about two feet long and 10 centimeters wide, comprises four pieces," said DMR officer Chertchat Pochaiya.

"The fossils were found in sandstone dating back to the Carboniferous era," she said.

The DMR has cordoned off the section of the stream while samples are collected for further examination.



Locals discovered the fossils after the water level dropped following an extended period of drought. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

"We will try to find out the exact age and other information about these creatures. The bones are at least 30 million years old, but could date back several hundred million years," said Ms Chertchat.

"More fossils have been found about a kilometer north of the site and we are hoping to make more interesting discoveries in the area."

The director of the Minis-

try of Tourism and Sports Krabi Office, Sirawee Waloh, said the latest fossil find, as well as the nearby Pee Hua Toe Cave (Big-Headed Ghost Cave) featuring prehistoric paintings on the walls, made the area one of historical significance.

"The area should be developed into a tourist and educational destination," said Ms Sirawee.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Thai low-cost carriers join global alliance

DOMESTIC low-cost airline carriers NokAir and NokScoot have joined an alliance of budget airlines from Southeast Asia, Japan and Australia to form what they call the world's largest alliance of low-cost carriers, enabling customers to book connections using a shared platform.

The announcement comes at a time of increased popularity for budget carriers in Southeast Asia, which industry players say is a key growth market for low-cost air travel.

"Customers will be able to view, select and book the best-available airfares on flights from any of the airlines in a single transaction, directly from each partner website," said the statement.

Other members include Singapore Airlines' budget wing Scoot, the Philippines' Cebu Pacific, South Korea's Jeju Air, Tigerair Singapore,



NokAir has joined the alliance. Photo: Gazette file

Tigerair Australia and Japan's Vanilla Air.

The alliance will serve more than 160 destinations with a collective fleet of 176 aircraft, the statement said.

Alliance members together served more than 47 million travellers from 17 hubs last year, according to the statement.

The increasing popularity of no-frills airlines, which typically do not offer free meals or in-flight entertainment, is driven by the region's growing middle class, many of whom are travelling for the first time.

– The Nation

Murderers of disabled man may receive death sentence

SEVEN suspects, who allegedly attacked and killed a disabled Bangkok bread-delivery man, may face premeditated murder charges, officials said May 18.

Deputy Permanent Secretary for Justice Thawatchai Thaikhiew said on his Facebook page that a video, showing one suspect making a phone call and waiting for friends to bring weapons, could suggest premeditation.

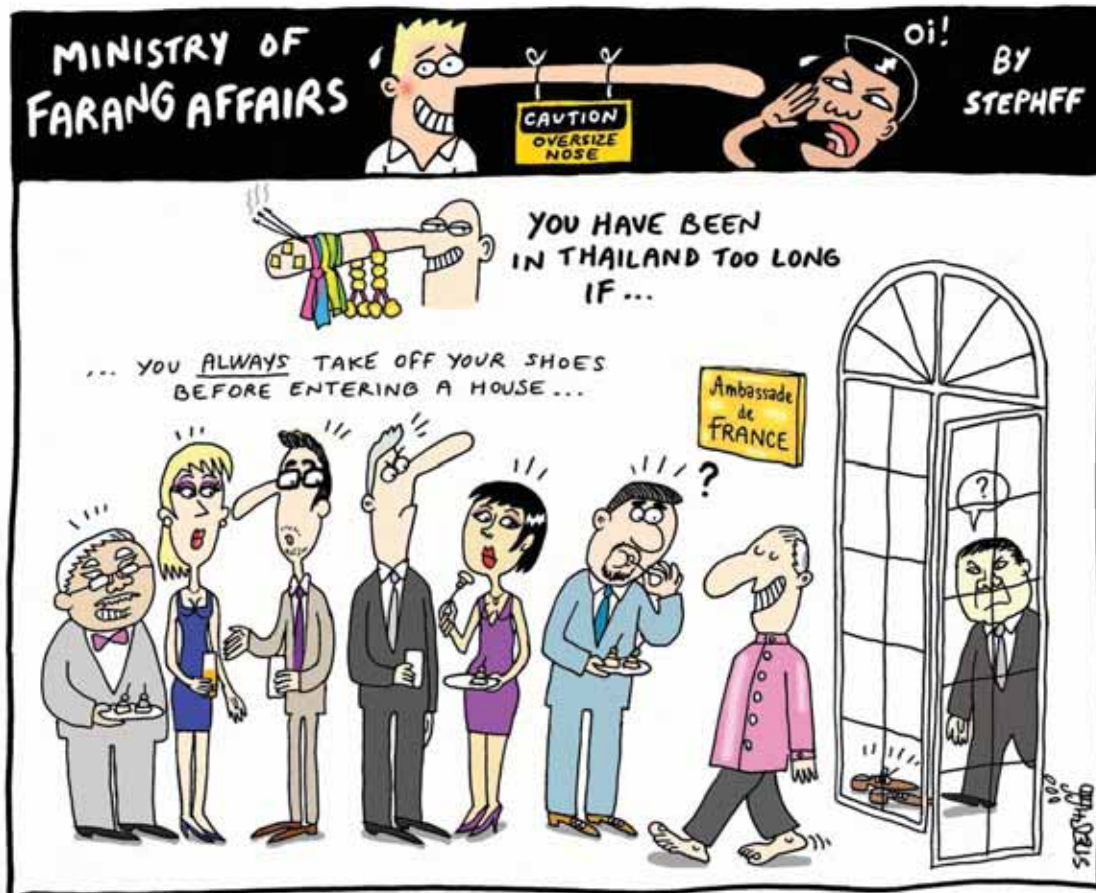
Current charges against the seven suspects range from 15-20 years in jail, life imprisonment or a death sentence. If charged with, and found guilty of, premeditated murder, the suspects will receive only the death penalty.

Possible arms deal after state visit to Russia

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha confirmed his meeting with Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in St Petersburg included deliberations over a possible arms agreement.

Gen Prayuth said the deals would be structured as exchanges of Russian hardware for Thai agricultural goods.

Prayuth said possible purchases were not something out of the blue – They would be in



line with the military's long-term development plan for the next five to 20 years.

Gen Prayuth's bilateral talks, and attendance of a special summit between Russia and Asean, lasted from May 17-19.

The premier refused to elaborate on the specifics of possible deals, including tentative prices.

Education plan amended, PM tells teachers

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha announced that the NCPO will support 15 years of free education for Thai chil-

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

dren, at an event for educators held on May 13.

The announcement comes after increasing criticism of the current draft charter, which only requires 12 years of free public education, as opposed to the current policy, which maintains a minimum of 15 years.

"Some misunderstandings have arisen lately over the educational clauses in the charter draft," Gen Prayuth, who is also the head of the NCPO, said to about 20,000 teachers at the

convention centre in Nonthaburi Province outside Bangkok.

"Rest assured, my government is now looking for a way to put the 15 years of free education as a clause into the law, or at least a ministerial regulation," he said.

Plan to sell off stockpiled rice upsets markets

THAILAND'S plan to accelerate sales of 11.4 million tonnes of rice in government stockpiles within two months has sparked concerns that it would

hurt prices and exports in Vietnam.

The plan would reportedly net 99 billion baht (US\$2.8 billion), with an average price of \$245 per tonne, in what would be the biggest rice clearance for the country. Thailand currently exports an average of 400,000 to 500,000 tonnes of rice per month.

The stockpiled rice would mainly be grains that the government had purchased under the 2012-13 rice pledging program. Since May 2014, Thailand has auctioned off five million tonnes of rice, worth US\$1.5bn.

Backlash after govt proposal to limit welfare

ORGANIZATIONS across the country lambasted a government proposal to limit monthly subsidies to only the needy elderly, not all Thais aged above 60.

Citing budget constraints, the government has been considering excluding elderly people who have no less than three million baht worth of assets or a monthly income of 9,000 baht, from the right to claim state subsidy.

This year, the government has allocated a 63 billion baht budget of monthly subsidies to 7.99 million elderly Thais. The number accounted for 74.5 per cent of the country's elderly population. Pensions for 600,000 retired government officials cost the government an additional 1.4bn baht.

The government started giving monthly subsidies to elderly citizens in 2009.



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Phuket Gazette

Chronic drug problem

DESPITE the recent effort to 'restart' Thailand as a more civil and corruption-free society, continued reports of drug-related arrests indicate that our nation still has a long way to go in curbing the chronic problems of illicit drugs.

The reflections of two female inmates serving lengthy sentences at the dangerously overcrowded Phuket Provincial Prison should serve as cautionary tales for anyone tempted to try their hand at dealing drugs as an 'easy way' to make money.

When it comes to drug dealing, the risks simply do not justify the rewards. In few countries is this truer than Thailand, which has particularly harsh sentencing for convicted drug dealers. Even those caught in possession of as few as 20 *ya bah* (methamphetamine) pills typically get a minimum three-year prison term.

Given the apparent popularity of meth among Thais and the role of poorly-educated young women in our country's notorious night life industry, it comes as little surprise that some 42,000 Thai women, about 14 per cent of the total prison population, are behind bars.

This puts Thailand among the nations with the highest percentage of female inmates anywhere in the world. The scale of the meth problem is further indicated by the fact that more than three-quarters of all inmates in Thai prisons are serving sentences for drug-related convictions.

According to an estimate by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, about 1.4 per cent of Thais are addicted to amphetamines or related stimulants, among the highest national percentage in the world. From 2009 to 2014, the number of drug cases nationwide more than doubled, from about 151,000 to about 347,000. Over the same period, the number of registered drug offenders increased from nearly 168,000 to almost 366,000, according to official figures.

Yet, out-and-out addicts appear to make up only a small portion of the much larger 'iceberg' of recreational drug users in the country. This is evidenced by the fact that authorities seize about 100 million *ya bah* pills annually, not to mention a metric tonne of the even more potent *ya ice* (crystal meth).

It is difficult to imagine why anyone would roll such dangerously loaded dice by selling drugs, putting not only their own future, but also that of friends, family and loved ones, at risk.

Despite the harshest of deterrents, many young people still take to drug dealing with reckless abandon. If any of their number happens to be reading this column to its conclusion, please take this advice and quit while you're ahead.



What is to become of Rawai sea gypsies

Re: *Opinion: Tourism's impact on Phuket's sea gypsies, May 18*

The best article I've seen here in a long time.

These people are living history and are getting squeezed out of their livelihood and land.

With no job or land what shall they do?

DC Chris
Facebook

Better to close Maya Bay for good

Re: *Maya Bay tourist ban proposed to save marine life, May 16*

In my opinion, Maya Bay should be closed for good. The hype that Leonardo di Caprio and the movie 'The Beach' brought, caused massive damage to the bay with thousands of tourists every day.

Longtail and speed boats are throwing their anchors onto the corals every day and tourists are stepping on it as well.

The bay and its ecology and marine life are too fragile to absorb the impacts caused by mass tourism.

Werni
Gazette forum

Will paradise owner pay rent to ALRO

Re: *Paradise Beach venue threatened with demolition, May 14*

So what happens to Mr Sophon?

Does he have to pay back rent to the ALRO on the land he has unlawfully occupied these past years [if indeed such

Letters to the Editor

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

is the case?]

Will he be charged with fraud for leasing out land he purported to own when he did not [if such is the case?]

The people that controlled this beach, I, recall are an arrogant lot. Years back, to swim there, you 'had' to rent a 200 baht deckchair, even if you had eaten there.

Chob
Gazette forum

Frustrating lack of good coffee around

Re: *Island View: Wherefore art thou coffee?, May 17*

Welcome to Phuket. The lack of reasonably-priced coffee beans is a long-standing problem here. Locals are sugar addicts, not coffee connoisseurs, which explains using coffee and tea as a way to justify high-carb binging.

The only shop I know of that sells robusta beans from Chumphon is near Robinsons.

Phuketsub
Gazette forum

Action needed from govt and police

Re: *Elderly woman killed in hit-and-run, May 12*

Very sad to see stories like this. I hope she rests in peace. When are we going to see

some action from the government or police regarding road safety in Phuket?

It seems there are fatalities every day, and still police checkpoints target farang not wearing helmets.

Two weeks ago, I was talking to three kids on a motorbike. When I asked them why they weren't wearing a helmet, they just gave me the strangest look.

Mick
Gazette forum

Fully support the Ta Chai closure

Re: *Environmental damage shuts Ta Chai island indefinitely, May 16*

I fully support this move. I was there a few years back and the reef surrounding the island is more or less completely dead.

The place is still stunning but the marine life needs a chance to recuperate. With day trip operators heading there on a daily basis, it's on the way to destruction.

I see now they're heading to Surin Island as well. Let's see how that fans out.

Kit Chothitthamaporn
Facebook

We need guides who understand us

Re: *Two Russians arrested for working as illegal tour guides May 12*

Perhaps it's time local tour guides became fluent in Russian, then.

Alexander Volkov
Gazette forum

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Phuket's not the same

FIRST PERSON

OUR lives started to change when Phuket changed from a tin mining city into a tourist destination. People abandoned Phuket Town and moved to the beach instead. Development and construction started to get bigger and bigger on the beach side areas.

This had a major impact on those who had shops in Phuket Town. A lot of people relocated their businesses away from the town, in close proximity to the beach, as they had lost a lot of income due to the lack of customers.

The advent of shopping malls has had an even bigger impact on our lives. It started off with local malls such as Ocean Mall and Phuket Shopping Mall. Then came bigger chains like Robinson, Tesco Lotus, and Central Festival, among others.

This was a huge blow to locals who sold the same merchandise in their shops. Those who couldn't survive had to close shop and find other ways to get by.

The changes did not stop here. As tourism boomed, the cost of living kept getting higher, especially the price of land. This ultimately meant higher prices for everything else too – food, clothes and other products and services. It also brought in an influx of labor from other provinces.

As the number of people increased, problems such as traffic jams and congestion erupted, something that Phuket had never seen before. It also led to other man-made problems such as uncontrollable trash, wastewater, water shortage, crime, drug abuse and accidents, which is all



Don Limnunthaphisit, 52, is currently the president of the Old Phuket Town Community. He was born and raised in Phuket and graduated from Prince of Songkla University with a bachelor's in science.

Here, he talks about the changes Phuket has been

through, which drastically changed the lives of the locals. He also talks about what the 'ideal' version of Phuket would be in his opinion.

you see in the news these days.

To some extent, the beauty and charm of Phuket Old Town remains unaffected by the developments on the beach. Our way of life is quiet, but we still enjoy it. However, what tourists get to see now is a mere shadow of what Old Phuket Town was originally like.

I am not blaming these changes – change is inevitable, and we must learn to adjust our lives accordingly. Additionally, these changes have also brought in a lot of money for Phuket and Thailand. What I regret, though, is that Phuket Town has never had a chance to use that money to become what it should be.

Phuket has a lot of local authorities, such as municipalities and OrBorTors, but there is a lot of income disparity within the municipalities themselves.

For instance, the Mai Khao OrBorTor makes a lot of money from the big hotels there. However, they do not have a trash incinerator, so all their waste is managed by the Phuket City Municipality, which earns much less income from hotels. This results in a trash overload there, and the municipality doesn't have enough money to build a

new incinerator.

Another example is the waste treatment plant in Rassada Municipality. The municipality does not have the budget to carry out repairs and has submitted a request to the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (PPAO), which in turn has asked the provincial government, which is waiting to hear from the central government. In the meantime, our people are suffering from bad smells and unhealthy living conditions.

Phuket still has to submit all its revenues to the central government, which will then allocate a portion of the country's total revenue back to us, depending on the registered population, which is about 350,000. This doesn't seem fair, as there are countless tourists and other unregistered citizens in Phuket.

My suggestion is to combine these municipalities together, and hand over the control and responsibility to one person, who can then manage the budget for each area. We should also be allowed to use the money we earn ourselves. That is the ideal way to run things in my opinion.



Phuket has its fair share of problems, but its beauty never ceases to amaze. Photo: Sahar Aftab Paliwala

It's easy to criticize

Island View

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

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

I MUST admit that my knowledge of Phuket is limited to what I've experienced in the year that I've been here, but I can easily say that I like what I've seen so far. Admittedly, Phuket has its fair share of problems, but for an island with a rapidly growing population and countless visitors all year round, that is to be expected.

That is why it bothers me when people take a stab at anything and everything they encounter here. Take the governor's letter published a few weeks ago in the April 30-May 6 issue of the *Gazette*, for instance. The governor spoke of how tourists should learn to respect Thai culture and avoid going around shirtless. It's a simple and reasonable request, so I expected people to understand, if not appreciate, where he was coming from. But the backlash of criticism genuinely surprised me.

People were quick to point out all the issues they felt the governor should focus on rather than criticizing foreigners for everything. My point is, he's using this forum – the voice of the *Gazette*, that is – to send a message about respecting Thai cultural values and I feel we should learn to just take criticism where criticism is due, rather than just voicing our discontent all the time. Yes, I know the traf-

fic in Phuket is bad and jet-skis are a nuisance, but that's besides the point here.

Tourists are just that at the end of the day – tourists. They certainly have all the rights and privileges that are their due, but they cannot expect to get away with things that are simply not to be stood for.

If the powers that be say you must not sunbathe in a bikini in a public park, then you should just respect that and put some clothes on. I know that my more experienced counterparts will pin me down as being naive and new. "When you've been on the island as long as we have, you'll see what we mean. Things simply don't change around here," I've heard many a time.

Well, I say things might change if we change. Next time you shake your head at a pile of garbage somewhere, think about the role we might have played, however small, in bringing that about. It's easy to lay blame at someone else's door, but far harder to acknowledge that perhaps there's something we can do to rectify the situation.

Words from the Wise

"I wash my hands of those who imagine chattering to be knowledge, silence to be ignorance, and affection to be art."

– Khalil Gibran

"It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere."

– Voltaire

Issues & Answers

Can I pitch an overnight tent at Khao Rang?

I WANT to take photos of day-break at the Phuket Town viewpoint from Khao Rang in the morning. However, I don't want to travel there early in the morning.

Are we allowed to have tents and sleep on Khao Rang? Or do we have to ask permission to do this from anyone first? If yes, it would be helpful to know where to solicit this permission from.

Adrian Cooper
Phuket

Mr Thawon Ruengrook of the Phuket City Municipality replies:

For the sake of safety and

caution, we do not allow anyone to pitch tents and sleep on the hills at Khao Rang under any circumstances.

However, if you really need to pitch a tent overnight for a specific and important reason, you may submit a letter to the Phuket City Municipality, and request special permission from the mayor.

We cannot guarantee that you will receive permission, as the final authority lies with the mayor.

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

Where are the markets now?



Finance

By Don Freeman

ON APRIL 11, Alcoa Inc (NYSE:AA) started the first quarter earnings season by reporting a lower quarterly profit (\$US16 million or zero cents per share versus \$US195 million or 14 cents per share a year earlier) on lower revenue (down 15 per cent) as results were hurt by low commodity prices, the strong US dollar and plant closures.

Alcoa's results tend to be viewed as a benchmark setting the tone for the earnings season, as well as being the first company to publish their earnings. Its results can give investors a clue about the direction key industries it supplies are heading.

This time around, Alcoa's management said they still expect aluminum demand to grow faster than supply this year, with global sales in the aerospace industry to grow in a range of six to eight per cent (as backlogs for the airline industry were cited), while global automotive production will grow between one and four per cent this year.

On the same day, French luxury goods giant LVMH posted first-quarter sales below forecasts as tourist shopping in key markets such as France and Hong Kong remained low. However, the company also stated that the US market is strong; Europe remains "well oriented except for France" (which, of course, was affected by a fall in tourism after the re-



Alcoa's management expects aluminum demand to grow faster than supply this year. Photo: Eduard Hueber

cent terrorist attacks); and that Asian markets are varied, but Japan "continues to progress."

With those early earnings reports in mind, here are some other things to consider as the first quarter earnings season gets further underway:

Price action in mid-April has been very bullish as the major US indices moved higher, while emerging markets and other non-US markets helped lead global markets higher. Oil also looks to have bottomed out. These market actions, along with improving breadth, are all

positive changes and bullish signs for higher stock prices.

On April 19, the S&P 500 finally broke the 2,100 mark and I am watching for it to break above the 2,150 level for an added measure of safety as there is still a chance the index will roll over again.

The beaten down small-cap Russell 2000 index has also broken out into a series of new short term highs, and closed above the 1,140 level on April 20th. However, the index still needs to break above the 1,200 level for added comfort.

The technical charts for the SPDR KBW Bank ETF (NYSEARCA: KBE) and the Financial Select Sector SPDR Fund (NYSEARCA: XLF) have both begun to stabilize, but the former still has work to do to break above its previous high. Good or better than expected earnings reports from bank and financial services stocks could be enough to trigger some breakouts on technical charts for these ETFs, or the individual stocks they are invested in.

Accommodative central bank policies coupled with relative

improvement in earnings may result in a breakout to new highs for major stock indices and leadership stocks during this earnings season. Moreover, maybe earnings this season will come in better than expected; maybe oil has bottomed; maybe China is not as bad as people think; and maybe the credit markets have stabilized.

With so many 'maybes', it's the price action of the major indices along with individual leadership stocks reporting their earnings that will tell us whether the stock market will just rollover again. Likewise, all winning stocks (and ETFs for that matter) need to be hitting new highs – if not, they are probably not leadership stocks and you should probably not be invested in them.

This means conservative investors will want to give the market some room this earnings season while watching how individual stocks react to their earnings reports, before getting fully back into the market.

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: free mancapital@gmail.com.

CFP banks on shrimp growth

CHAROEN Pokphand Foods (CPF) plans to invest 50 billion baht with a growth target of 10-15 per cent between 2016 and 2020.

The plans follow a 27 per cent rise in net profits year-on-year due to the shrimp industry rebounding domestically and overseas after declines in prof-

its due to Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS) in shrimp.

Overseas sales made up 60 per cent of CPF's total revenue in the first quarter of 2016. The turnover in 13 vibrant markets, including China, Vietnam, India, Russia, the Philippines and others reportedly grew 12 per cent.

– *Phuket Gazette*

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Foreign investors see no incentive to stay

THE Thai baht slid to 35.27 per US dollar after the Bank of Thailand stayed pat on the policy rate.

Without a hike in the Thai rate, foreign investors did not have an incentive to maintain their investment in Thailand on expectations that the US rate would rise soon, according to economists.

The Thai bond and equity market is now subjected to a foreign sell-off. Given that May and June are usually the season of capital outflows from Thailand, both Tisco Securities and Maybank Kim Eng Securities said this year would not be an exception.

Leslie Tang, senior foreign exchange analyst of Maybank, said that the Thai baht should be traded in a wide range of 34.80-



The Thai baht appears to be an unintended victim of the carry trade unwind. Photo: MCOT

35.37 for the two weeks ahead. The bank expected the baht to end this year at 37 per dollar.

"The Thai baht appears to be an unintended victim of the carry trade unwind currently taking place as manifested in the sell-off in equities and government debt since mid-April," he said.

All seven members of the

Bank of Thailand's Monetary Policy Committee on May 11 voted to maintain the policy rate at 1.5 per cent.

It repeated the view that monetary policy should remain sufficiently accommodating, and stand ready to utilize an appropriate mix of available policy tools in order to ensure that monetary conditions are conducive to the economic recovery.

The International Institute of Finance (IIF) estimated a net US\$25.5 billion flowed into emerging markets in April, against \$37.1 billion in March.

Manop Udomkermongkol, analyst of United Overseas Bank, expects the rate to stay unchanged in June 2016 as inflation pressure should remain low.

– *The Nation*

Social media on the rise



I HAVE been talking about the power of social media for over a year now, but there is no better way to showcase this power than to look at the US Presidential circus that is unfolding right before our eyes.

As an avid follower of social media and how it is used both successfully and unsuccessfully, it is always interesting to see examples of when it is used really well. And the ongoing US election campaign provides us the best current example. This is not the first time that social media was successfully used in electioneering, with the current president owing a lot of his political success to it.

Donald Trump, who it seems is generally hated by traditional and mainstream media, has however, taken the deployment of social media to a completely new level.

President Obama had a brilliant social media campaign and spent millions of dollars on both his campaigns (reportedly about \$US600 million prior to the last election). This year Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have reportedly already spent over \$US150 million each, and Ted



As an avid follower of social media and how it is used both successfully and unsuccessfully, it is always interesting to see examples of when it is used really well. Photo: Jason Howle

Cruz a reported \$US70 million.

But Trump has reportedly spent less than \$US50 million, far less than any of his serious rivals. And given the success he has had, especially taking into consideration the negative press that mainstream media has published – he must be doing something right. And that appears to be his social media footprint.

Trump has over seven million Twitter followers, and has

been using this, as well as other social media such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube to his advantage.

To be fair, it also seems to be a case of Trump being in the right place at the right time, as people seem to be getting annoyed with the big institutions and the information they spread, believing that it may be somehow biased or false. This has built mistrust, and a general feeling of resentment

which also fuels the conspiracy factor.

So Trump has managed to create and market his own version of Donald Trump, and there have been a constant flow of “Meet the real Donald Trump” posts and content that has been very well received by the masses. Content that has been carefully designed to show a very genuine, real and caring Trump has been plastered over the internet, and has

been shared and spread like wildfire. Yet there has been none of the normal fact checking, or filter of BS from truth. It has all been accepted as gospel.

Also with his Twitter-feed, Trump has been able to almost create his own reality, and the New York Times recently reported that he has thereby generated almost \$2 billion worth of free Twitter exposure. So what can we learn from all this?

Firstly, social media works. Secondly, if you create the right content and branding, and put it into the right market segments, you can create your own image or reality. Finally, and most importantly, this can be done far more cost-effectively than via any other option.

So if your business is not engaged in social media, or you are not using it professionally, isn't there enough evidence to suggest it is time to get serious?

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

Aeropostale has arrived



Aeropostale now open in Jungceylon, Phuket. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

THE American franchise Aeropostale opened up shop in Phuket on May 10, making this their 7th shop in Thailand.

The outlet is located on the second floor of Jungceylon mall, with its 2016 summer collection on display.

“Some Thai people may not know the brand, so it might take some time to gain local customers,” said Robinson Jungceylon General Manager Denpong Buntum.

“However, Aeropostale has

over 700 branches in America and Canada, so tourists are aware of the brand since it is recognized internationally.

“We currently have our summer collection in stock, including singlets, t-shirts and dresses.”

The manager also noted that this is the first branch in Thailand to house the collection.

“Our clothes are light and comfortable, and suitable for beach wear,” he added.

– Chutharat Plerin

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Introducing Phuket to the famous flavors of France

TO CELEBRATE the grand opening of Good Spirit South, the company staged a wine tasting on May 7 at Centara Blue Marine Resort & Spa, hosted by Good Spirit's Southern Thailand representative, Napatwong Niyomadul. The company is the exclusive distributor of boutique French wines from many famous regions, including a variety of champagnes and wine for high-end restaurants and resorts. Good Spirit's aim is to promote quality French wine among consumers and businesses in Krabi, Phang Nga and Phuket) and is looking for opportunities to establish a wine lovers club in Phuket.



Brice Laval, Good Spirit Co Ltd GM (left) with Napatwong Niyomadul, Good Spirit's Southern Thailand representative, and his wife, Supparhat Niyomadul; and Sittikorn Soontornnont (right) from Wyndham Seapearl Resort & Spa.



Pakdee Tanapura, MD of Good Spirit Co Ltd (left) and his wife Pachaisawat Sophie Tanapura,

Tiger Kingdom stages Roar Party

TIGER Kingdom staged the Roar Party at Duangjit Resort and Spa Patong on May 6, as a 'thank you' to customers and agents. The company also presented prizes to the 10 tour agencies that had made the most sales.



The Tiger Kingdom management team (from left): Yuttapong Chaiyabutr, Deputy Managing Director; Sorawoot Chaiyabutr, Deputy Managing Director; Kochakorn Chaiyabutr, Managing Director; and Siripol Yongyoothvichai, Assistant Managing Director.

Lighthouse Market saves the best for last

CROWDS of happy, fun-hungry people gathered at the Boat Lagoon Marina for the final edition of this season's Lighthouse Market, May 6-7. The theme for the market was: Best For Last – Flavors of the World and offered a cornucopia of taste from around the island and the world.



(From L-R): Saranyu Suwannasoonthon from Mezzo Forte Academy; Chawalit Rattanachinnakorn; Boon Yongsakul, Deputy Managing Director of Boat Development Co Ltd; Kaniittha Prasopsirikul from By Kaniittha and ML Sirinthip Yongsakul.

ents in Paradise

Miss Thailand World contestants visit Phuket

ANGSANA Laguna Phuket Resort recently welcomed the Miss Thailand World 2016 contestants. The bevy of beauties visited the resort as part of a training camp and took the opportunity to get involved in activities around the resort. The final of the contest will take place on May 28 at the Bangkok Convention Centre. The winner will represent Thailand at Miss World 2016.



Ravi Chandran, Laguna Phuket's MD (front row left) with Claire Chiang, Senior Vice President Banyan Tree Holdings Limited and Angsana Laguna Phuket's GM, Brian Connelly, greeted the Miss Thailand World 2016 contestants as they arrived at the resort.



Pongpant Wongnongteoi, BEC TERO Strategic Planning Director (left); Wen Mo, Angsana Laguna Phuket Food and Beverage Sales and Marketing Manager; Supon Vichienchai, BEC TERO Deputy Managing Director; Brian Connelly, Angsana Laguna Phuket GM; Suwida Tanghom, Bangkok Airways Chief of Corporate Affairs; and Thitima Hoongcharoenwong, BEC TERO Account Manager.

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First Pracharat Marine Protection Institute opens



A total of 60 people will be trained as staff from forest and marine preserve organizations: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment head, General Surasak Kanjanarat. Photo: Brocken Inaglory

GENERAL Surasak Kanjanarat, head of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, chaired the opening ceremony of the first marine protection institute in Thailand on May 15.

The Pracharat Marine Protection Institute, located in Sirinat National Park, is based on the 'Pracharat' ideology of economic partnerships among the people, the government and the private sector.

"The institute is located inside the tourist and youth service center of Sirinat National Park in Nai Yang beach area," Gen Surasak said.

"The institute will train staff to become experts on marine preservation," he said. "Trainees will work toward marine protection in the public, private and governmental sectors."

Gen Surasak said the institute will offer 160 hours of training in the areas of marine natural resource identification and preservation, forest preservation, sustainable diving, reef maintenance and marine life rescue. A total of around 60 staff members are expected to undergo training as the first class of the Pracharat Marine Protection Institute.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Thailand Yacht Show dates announced



The Thailand Yacht Show returns to Ao Por Grand Marina in December. Photo: Phil Blake

THE dates for the second edition of the Thailand Yacht Show (TYS) have now been confirmed for December 15-18, with the massive event to be held once again at Phuket's prestigious Ao Por Grand Marina.

In making the announcement, managing director Andy Treadwell of show organizers SYE Pte Ltd, noted that as a joint venture with the Government of Thailand, it was important for the show to avoid clashing with the dates for the King's Cup Regatta (December 3-10, this year), and that most stakeholders in the show had agreed that "there is a better chance of getting more of our

targeted high net worth visitors from overseas to come to Phuket just before the holiday period really starts."

He also noted that the organizers had been working hard with various Thai Government departments, along with other colleagues in the industry, "to attract many more of the Mediterranean-based charter yachts to Thailand for the winter instead of [seeing them] going to the Caribbean." Thus, "it would not make sense in the long term to hold the [Thailand] show right in the middle of the international charter season," he said.

He said that the organizers would soon announce "two or

three exciting ancillary events" which would turn the show into a major festival of yachting and boating, and noted that because it comes right on the heels of the King's Cup this year, the TYS would now attract even more international visitors than it did to the show's launch edition in February this year.

The *Phuket Gazette* and The Nation multimedia groups are proud to continue as national media partners for this show, which is already counted among Phuket's 'Top Three' annual events, alongside the King's Cup and the Laguna Phuket Triathlon.

Business and pleasure go hand in hand at Coboat

IMAGINE running your business from almost anywhere in the world. Now imagine being on an 82-foot electric-powered catamaran and sailing around the world while doing that. That's the idea behind Coboat, which combines the idea of co-working with sailing, travel and adventure.

Many of us may be familiar with the concept of co-working, or sharing a rented office space with others who usually don't work for the same organization, or even in the same field. Coboat, however, goes much beyond that.

Catering to those who identify themselves as 'digital nomads' or 'location independent', they aim to bring together entrepreneurial, innovative and creative people who want to give back to whichever part of the world they're in, explained Becky Mellor, a marketing professional who has



The Coboat community takes part in beach cleanups to prevent rubbish going back into the ocean. Photo: Coboat

booked nine weeks on Coboat.

The idea was hashed out by four friends who kick-started the project in 2015. Two of them are still on the team: Gerald Schombs and Karsten Knorr.

"You can buy tickets in weekly slots and in return you get to work and sail with like-minded individuals, often 'skill-swap-

ping' areas of business expertise with those on the team. The concept is to spend three to six months in one region and then move on to another location," said Ms Mellor.

"We believe Coboat serves as a platform for much bigger things. Karsten has sailed most of his life and has seen first

hand the impact of ocean pollution. It is one of the biggest threats facing our planet. As a co-working space, Coboat will be home to very creative, entrepreneurial minds and so the opportunity we see, is to invite the community to contribute towards protecting our home - the ocean. Coboat will serve as a platform to connect, educate, innovate and kick start social businesses in regions we visit."

The Coboat community also takes part in beach cleanups to prevent rubbish going back into the ocean. So far, they have organized three beach clean ups on Mai Khao Beach and collected more than 50 bags of rubbish in the region.

"On one of our recent sailing trips we stopped at one of the islands near Phi Phi. It was a tiny little beautiful bay, but

covered in rubbish. So we dropped anchor there that night and used the 20 bin bags we had on board to swim over, pick up as much rubbish as we could, and take it back to Phi Phi to dispose of it," said Ms Mellor.

To further their mission on cleaning up the oceans, they also collaborate with Trash Hero, which has a chapter based in Koh Lanta.

"They [Trash Hero] are trying to encourage hotels to stop using plastic by providing refillable stainless steel containers. We are collaborating with them to establish Coboat as a Trash Hero Chapter" said Ms Mellor.

For information about their events, application process and more, visit www.coboat.org.

– Sahar Aftab Paliwala

Phuket International Academy to join global United World College network

PHUKET International Academy (PIA), located within the grounds of Thanyapura, in the north of Phuket, is set to become the first and only United World College (UWC) in Thailand, after two years of preparations and discussions with the London-based organization.

With an alumni represented by more than 55,000 graduates from all around the globe, UWC has gained a worldwide reputation for developing young people who have a desire to work towards achieving peace and sustainable future.

We are excited about the direction in which the school is moving, said Julian Whiteley, Chief Executive of Phuket International Academy.

“We aim to challenge our students in all areas of our educational program and encourage them to take the initiative, exercise self-discipline and accept responsibility for their actions. By so doing, they will develop the skills and qualities necessary for them to live happy and successful lives,” said Mr Whiteley.

“The decision to create a UWC in Phuket will transform the educational landscape on the island and promote growth in the north, particularly with the school being so close to the airport.

“Already, I have talked with some parents who are changing their life plan because they want their children to be educated at a UWC. We have also had a number of people contacting us from Bangkok as they have heard the news and intend to move to Phuket to be part of our community,” added Mr Whiteley.

Julian Whiteley, formerly the Head of the United World College of South East Asia, Singapore – widely acknowledged as being among the top ten international schools in the world – moved to Phuket because he shared the vision of the founder of Thanyapura and Phuket International Academy.

“Not only are the aspirations of UWC and Phuket International Academy very similar, they align perfectly with my own philosophy of education and life,” said Mr Whiteley.

“At the heart of this is a deeply held belief that education is about the personal development of all aspects of a



Metinee Kingpayom reads and bonds with her son Skye. Photo: PIA

child, it is not just about academics. While it is possible to learn a certain amount in the classroom, so much more can be learned by interacting with the world outside school. Hence the emphasis we place on outdoor education and service to the community,” said Mr Whiteley.

In August, the school will welcome 25 scholars from around the world who have been selected, not because of their academic ability, but for their leadership skills and desire to be change-makers of the future.

They will add to the cultural diversity of the school.

Metinee Kingpayom, top model and commentator of *The Face and The Star*:

“I am very glad that I decided to choose PIA for my son, Skye, as the school has a great environment. The school provides a wide range of excellent facilities for children and parents, as well as activities that help us all bond.

I’m really excited to hear that PIA will become a United World College of Thailand (UWCT), which has an excellent reputation across the world.

The United World College is well recognized for its unique curriculum offering a broad spectrum for the students. We are living in a modern world so only studying textbooks is not



Phuket International Academy (PIA), due to become United World College Thailand in August 2016. Photo: PIA

enough to make a person successful these days.

There is already a healthy mix of nationalities in PIA and there will be even more diversity after it becomes UWCT.

I believe the mix of nationalities, race and cultures along with the smartly designed UWC curriculum will enhance our children’s learning, helping them to understand others and respect their differences.

These children are growing up to create a bright and peaceful future; to make the world a better place.”

Boon Yongsakul, Chairman of Boat Development Company:

“PIA was my choice because the school has a great environment. The surroundings are natural and the people are nice. I want my kid to grow up in this kind of friendly atmosphere.

I heard about PIA getting chosen to be a UWCT. It is a really great opportunity as I recognize that UWC is a very well-known educational network with an academic program that makes students learn more about the wide world.

I am keen to see the great changes when it completely becomes UWCT as I believe in the UWC brand. I am confident the UWC network will continue to grow across the globe.”

Anthony Gould, Director of Galileo Maritime Academy:

“When we moved to Phuket we visited all the leading international schools and were particularly impressed by the atmosphere at PIA.

The friendliness of the staff and students to all of us and the attitude of the head of school towards our daughter Victoria was warm and genuine.

The location is stunning and the facilities are amazing, so it was an easy choice for my wife and I and also for Victoria.

I was quite excited to hear that PIA was to become the Thailand UWC because the UWC movement appeals to my sense of humanity, i.e. that openness, awareness and sharing throughout education and in a transnational context are the keys to living a valuable life and creating a better world.

So I am happy that my daughter will be part of that movement and we hope that she will grow up with an open mind and worldly understanding way beyond that of pure academic achievement.”

Garry Kirkland, Project Director, Marriott Vacation Club, Asia Pacific:

“I chose PIA for my children because of the IB program. By teaching children to consider their learning in both local and global contexts, IB supports a strong international view of the world.

When I heard that PIA was chosen to be a UWC school I knew that the PIA student’s international view would develop to an even higher level.

The diversity of students provided by the UWC connection will provide learning experiences for the children to consider all questions from an even more diverse global context, important for educating the international leaders of tomorrow.

I welcome the UWC and look forward to the new energy that will be created by the diversified student mix.”

Phuket International Academy is located at Thanyapura, 115/15 Moo.7, Thepkasattri Rd., Thalang, Phuket and can be reached via phone at +66 76 336 076. Or through their website phuketinternationalacademy.com.

The link between fungi and depression



Excuse Buster

By Craig Burton

COULD the fungus *Candida* play a role in mental health?

Lawrence Wilson MD believes that a yeast overgrowth is a common cause of brain fog and in some cases dementia, because this fungus produces substances that directly affect the brain.

Acetaldehyde is one of these substances and is a common neurotoxin affecting the lives of tens of millions of people. There are four main routes that bring acetaldehyde into the human brain. These are alcohol consumption; *Candida* – ‘the yeast syndrome’; exhaust from cars and trucks; and cigarette smoking. Think about that for a moment, *Candida* produces the same toxins as those derived from smoke and alcohol. These acetaldehydes then promote damage to brain structure, spinal cord, joints, muscles and tissues through numerous pathways.

Could this neurotoxin then be a cause of depression too? This seems to be a possibility when you connect the dots. But sadly this is never even considered in standard ‘mental health’ treatments. One recent example I had of this connection was from



Candida produces the same toxins as those derived from smoke and alcohol. Photo: david pacey

a client who saw me last year. His girlfriend actually contacted me to thank me for helping her boyfriend and said I did more to help than three years of antidepressants and therapy. This client came to lose some weight and get fit when we started, but after six months he achieved his weight loss and fitness goals and was a whole new person physically and mentally. Yes, seeing a body you like in the mirror and feeling healthy can go a long way to helping your mood, but he and his girlfriend described

his transformation as being lifted out of a ‘dark cloud’. Could the clean anti-*Candida* diet that I recommended have played a role in improving his mental state? As I am not a medical doctor, I can’t say, but being poisoned daily can’t help your sense of well-being.

I recently read ‘*A Mind of Your Own*’ by psychiatrist Kelly Brogan MD. Dr Brogan believes that depression is not a disease, but a symptom caused principally by systemic inflammation throughout the body,

along with hormonal issues like thyroid dysfunction, gut issues (like fungal infections) and blood sugar imbalance. I believe this is a ‘must read’ for us all, as depression is now an epidemic – what if diet and lifestyle could make a big difference?

In Dr Brogan’s opinion, in order to reduce inflammation we should eat a paleo (hunter-gatherer) style diet with lots of vegetables, plenty of good fats (like olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds, butter, coconut oil and eggs), plus high quality clean

(grass-fed, free-range, wild) proteins at every meal.

Again, the culprits in producing all this inflammation, in her opinion, are processed foods high in sugar and additives, plus alcohol and grains (especially wheat). She also recommends taking probiotic-rich foods (like kim chee, sauerkraut, natural plain yoghurt and kefir) in order to fight the bad bugs like *Candida*. Neurologist Dr David Perlmutter shares these exact thoughts in his books ‘*Grain Brain*’ and ‘*The Brain Maker*’. He says if you want to have a healthy happy brain watch out for those gluten grains especially wheat, and don’t forget to eat plenty of good fats and bacteria (probiotics) to keep the pathogens under control.

Seems like the word is spreading – our old food pyramid, which told us too load up on grains and cut the fats is thankfully dying a proper death. RIP along with other nonsense like margarine is good and butter is bad for our health.

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

Chronic body aches, be gone

PATONG Hospital has recently launched a new physiotherapy technique for the elderly, called *Methode Mezieres*, in collaboration with a French physiotherapist named Eric Lon. Mr Lon, now 65, works as a physiotherapist in France.

Mr Lon explained that the origins of the *Methode Mezieres* technique dates back to World War II, when millions of people in France were adversely affected. It has been in use for more than 60 years, to heal chronic back pain and aches, especially for the elderly.

The traditional physiotherapy technique focuses on an ‘analytic’ approach to healing, working the body part by part, said Mr Lon. This was the method taught at all schools of physiotherapy and used at hospitals and clinics in France. It had a shortcoming, though – it did not work well for those suffering from chronic aches.

In 1947, an experienced French physiotherapist named Francoise Mezieres modified this technique to work for pa-



Mr Lon is a regular visitor to the island. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

tients with chronic pain. A female patient, over 40 years of age, had been suffering severe back pains for years and years, to the point that she couldn’t move her arms and legs at all. The classic analytic physiotherapy technique was useless for her, so Ms Mezieres decided to treat all the problems together by stretching her back, legs and arms at the same time.

This innovative method of treatment was successful and soon began to be used on other

patients. Ms Mezieres also published a book about it, called ‘*A Revolution in Physiotherapy*’.

Mr Lon specialized in the *Methode Mezieres* technique in 1977 in his home town of Toulon. He has also studied different kinds of Thai massage in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. A tsunami survivor and a regular visitor to the island, Mr Lon has published two books about his life and is currently writing a third.

– Chutharat Plerin

Childhood obesity on the rise in Thailand

ONCE rare in Thailand, childhood obesity is today on the rise, with figures released by Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health in 2013 showing obesity growth rates of 36 per cent in pre-school age kids and 15 per cent in school age children.

Obesity increases the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol, which in turn heightens the risk of kidney failure.

Some obese children may have a darkening skin around the neck, which does not wash off no matter how hard you scrub. Known as acanthosisnigricans, this skin change indicates the body is resistant to insulin action, which increases the prevalence of diabetes.

Other hormones that regulate energy use are also affected. Acanthosisnigricans is caused by an abnormality in a related hormone that over-regulates skin pigmentation.



Processed sugar is one of the leading causes of childhood obesity. Photo: Christian Haugen

Insulin resistance is one of the key factors leading to kidney failure in obese children even if there are no other complications.

Hormonal disorders cause high blood pressure and abnormal filtration, thereby damaging the kidneys and altering the kidney tissue.

Long-term complications in the form of heart disease and kidney failure in most adults can be traced back to childhood obesity.

– The Nation

Tackling angling and cycling



Blazing Saddles

By Baz Daniel

MY PASSION for cycling evolved at about the same time as my passion for fishing, when I was a slip of a lad of around ten summers. I was lucky enough to find myself in a family of keen anglers and spent many happy boyhood hours with my grandfather, father and sundry Scottish uncles trying to entice trout onto the end of a line, and subsequently into a frying pan.

I quickly realized that the most efficient way to get from one pool to the next on rivers and streams was on a bicycle with a sturdy frame and big, fat tires. This harmonious alchemy, combining cycling and fishing, has remained one of my most enduring passions.

There is something primal about being outdoors all day in beautiful riverine surroundings, hunting an elusive quarry and expending abundant energy in the clean, fresh air. So, when I moved to live in Phuket 10 years ago, I looked for a place where I could follow this passion, and discovered the pleasures of Khao Sok National Park.

Here, the fishing in the eponymous Khao Sok River and quarry includes the legendary Mahseer, the Floyd Mayweather of piscine denizens, being the strongest kilo-for-kilo fishy fighter in the world.

It was to Khao Sok that I recently took my trusty mountain



After cycling to the Tongararo River in New Zealand, Baz caught a rainbow trout for supper. Photo: Baz Daniel

bike for a bit of riverside cycling and fishing, in pursuit of this elusive quarry.

We stayed at the wonderful Our Jungle Guest House (khaosokaccommodation.com), who are able to help with all sorts of jungle trips including cycling and fishing adventures.

I had packed a telescopic fiber-glass spinning rod and a short section fly rod, both of which fitted easily into my backpack. Replete with shorts, an old pair of sneakers in which

to both cycle and wade the river, copious lashings of mosquito repellent and my somewhat bewildered dog 'Polar,' I was set to go.

We left Our Jungle House after a sensational breakfast, and then pedaled and paddled past the visitor center and across the bridge over the Sok River, following the left-hand fork of the track as it climbed steeply into the body of rain forest.

This is most definitely mountain biking territory, and the trail

abounds in steep, often rocky climbs and descents. The local fauna includes elephant, tiger, leopard, gibbons, barking deer, Malay sun bears and scaly anteaters, some of which can be seen along this trail.

I rode along the four kilometers of trail, as sweat poured and gibbons hooted, until we reached a deep pool below overhanging trees.

I waded out into the current of the cooling river and flipped both fly and spinner with dedi-

cation, but they were in uncooperative mood, quite possibly due to the low water levels.

Despite drawing a fishing blank on this particular occasion, we still had a fabulous day of invigorating exercise in immaculately clean, fresh air.

And just to show this method of cycling with an angle really does produce results, here's a photo of a rainbow trout I caught by exactly this method on New Zealand's Tongararo River last November. Tight lines!

Simple spicy seafood sauce



Burst your tastebuds with this simple spicy Thai-style seafood sauce. Photo: Nick Davies

ONCE you have caught your fish and decided how best to cook it, serve it up Thai style with a spicy seafood sauce.

Bursting with flavor, this hot 'n' sour citrus sauce (naam jim) is a mouthwatering dip to go with any kind of seafood dish. Serve it with grilled shrimp, crab, steamed muscles or a whole charcoal-grilled fish. Prepare in the traditional way

in a stone pestle and mortar or throw the lot in a blender.

Ingredients:

6 tablespoons fresh lime juice
3 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons fish sauce
1 tablespoon sugar
½ teaspoon of salt
15 cloves of garlic
20 chilies
Fresh parsley

Method:

Peel the garlic gloves and pull the stalks off the chilies then throw them in the pestle and mortar together.

Pound away until the mixture is mushy then add everything else. Stir it all up for an even consistency and serve in small dipping bowls. Add sprigs of parsley for that final touch of finesse.



High cost of land results in raised prices



The company believes that demand for homes is still strong. Photo: Gazette file

PRUKSA Real Estate is raising the prices of its homes by 5 per cent this year because of the higher cost of land, said Piya Prayong, the company's president of value business.

The company has also raised its revenue target to 53 billion baht, thanks to the government's temporary stimulus measures for the real-estate market, he said. The stimulus expired last month.

He said land prices have risen by 20-30 per cent since last year. This extra cost was mitigated somewhat as construction-material prices did not go up, but Prukksa still sees the need to raise its residential prices.

"Although the economy is not expected to grow much this year, the company believes that demand for homes is still strong enough to target 8 per cent growth in the value of the Greater Bangkok residential market to 383.18bn."

— *The Nation*

Water education helps



Across the Land

By Amy Koh

EVERY April, the weather is blistering hot in Thailand, and it's been no exception this year if not hotter. According to reports, it has not been as hot as this in Thailand for 65 years. Intense heat, attributed to the El Nino weather phenomenon, is causing a severe drought and water shortage throughout the region.

No exception for Phuket and driving around the island will show how the effects of climate change have affected the lakes and ponds, which are dry and barren.

The lush tropical green gardens are now brown and dying if proper care has not been diligently given over the long heatwave this year. Gardeners are no doubt being kept very busy this year – watering and trying to keep the grass, plants and trees alive as much as possible.

There have also been constant disruptions to the water supply for domestic use to most areas on the island this year, and the hire of water trucks as an alternative source is a common sight in many developments. With the ever increasing number of hotels,



Water scarcity is one of the main risks to businesses on the island, and exposure to it can be minimized if it's turned into a manageable risk. Photo: Andrew Hart

housing estates, condominiums and apartments on the island, water supply can and will be a serious problem in the future.

The water management cycle is quite interesting, starting with the source of water from rivers, lakes, oceans, wells and dams. Water is then treated through one or some of the following methods namely filtration, disinfection, clarification, conditioning, softening (not always in that order). Then the water is either used

domestically in homes for cleaning and washing, or commercially reprocessed. After that, we have the waste treatment cycle, where the water goes through one or more of these cycles of filtration, disinfection, bio-treatment and recycling. Wastewater is then released to the river, ocean, irrigation and sewers.

Water scarcity is one of the main risks to businesses on the island, and exposure to it can be minimized if it's turned into

a manageable risk. Educating locals, staff members, clients, and tourists to conserve and be diligent with the usage of water is a way to lessen the worsening problem.

There are now many new technologies in recycling water such as rainwater and wash water, to water plants and gardens, which help to re-use treated wastewater and also save money.

Improving sewage systems promotes proper sanitation, and water is then cycled back to being clean drinking water. Moves to improve irrigation practices by planting plants and trees that require less water will also help.

There are many things that have to be considered when it comes to water scarcity and conservation, and it would be good to see the commercial sector taking collective steps towards this cause. If everyone on the island starts to take a step towards improving and making a difference no matter how small, we might not have to wait for the water truck to come by just to take a shower.

Amy Koh is the sales manager of Engel & Voelkers Phuket. To contact Amy or for more information, visit www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket

Residential prices boost along the Purple Line

RESIDENTIAL prices of new projects along the Purple Line could rise up to 50 per cent when the mass-transit route begins its operations at the end of 2016, according to a survey by property agency Collier International Thailand.

Associate director Surachet Kongcheep said new condominium projects being launched around the Purple Line from Bang Sue to Bang Yai would offer prices between 30-50 per cent higher than those in existing projects.

This follows increases of up to 30 per cent in land prices in areas around the mass-transit route since the start of last year.

"The price of land around Tao Pun station has been recorded at up to 500,000 baht per square wah (4 square meters) because the area from Tao Pun to Bang Sue station will be a new commercial hub and logistics center when the

mass-transit routes – the Blue Line extensions (Hua Lumphong-Bang Khae and Bang Sue-Tha Pra) and the Purple Line – are linked in 2020," he said.

According to a survey by the Agency for Real Estate Affairs (AREA), the price of land around the Purple Line route has been recorded at between 85,000 baht and 250,000 baht per square wah, about 25 per cent higher than 2015 levels.

The area around Tao Pun station has seen the highest prices, at more than 250,000 baht per square wah, because the location still has land for the development of residential projects when compared with Bang Sue, where most of the land around the station is state agency-owned and there is limited space for either residential or commercial development, the AREA and Collier surveys both stated.

According to a survey by *The*



Some projects have been completed, with transfers to customers starting last year through to 2018. Photo: Stock.tookapic.com

Nation, the total number of condominium units launched around the Purple Line route from Bang Sue to Bang Yai, a 23-kilometer stretch, is nearly 50,000.

There are 16 stations along the route: Tao Pun, Bang Son, Wong Sawang, Yaek Tiwanon, Public Health Ministry, Nonthaburi Civic Centre, Si Phon Sawan, Yaek Nonthaburi

1, Phra Nangklao Bridge, Sai Ma, Bang Rak Noi-Tha It, Bang Rak Yai, Bang Phlu, Sam Yaek Bang Yai, Talat Bang Yai and Khlong Bang Phai.

Some projects have already been completed, with transfers to customers starting last year and running through 2018.

Both listed companies and small and medium-sized prop-

erty companies are developing residential projects in this location. For example, Prukksa Real Estate has launched five condominium projects with a total of 5,796 units worth 11.04 billion baht.

Supalai has launched three condo projects worth up to six billion with a combined 2,877 units, and AP (Thailand) has four projects worth up to six billion, with 4,658 units.

Eastern Star Real Estate's two billion Amber condominium will contain 563 units, while SC Asset Corp has launched the Centric Tiwanon, offering 1,063 units.

Sansiri, meanwhile, has launched the dcondo Rattanthibeth with 1,325 units.

Pacific Star Thailand's latest condominium, The Posh Twelve, is located close to the MRT Public Health Ministry station, with 1,394 units.

— *The Nation*

Surin Beach returns

By Kongleaphy Keam

AFTER years of delays and last minute attempts to save illegal beach businesses from the wrecking ball, Surin Beach has finally been restored to its 'natural' state. In what seems to be a rather quick rise from the rubble, officials have announced the beach's grand opening set for June 9.

It is now being called the 'Beach of Honor' or Rajabhakti Park, following the honorable visit by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1959. "The opening next month is to celebrate the success of the beach management project in Phuket in addition to leading up to Surin's 'Beach of Honor' status," stated Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat.

A number of projects are to be presented such as a photo contest and exhibition in the theme of royal duties in modern-day and historical Phuket, a Phuket gastronomy food contest, an exhibition and information booth for sail boats, local sports, cultural local performances, and many other activities to honor the King.

The 'Love the beach community' project to take care of all beaches will also be presented and launched at the same event.



The 'Love the beach community' project to take care of all beaches will also be presented and launched at the grand opening of Surin Beach. Photo: Gazette file

"We have done beach management since 2014 up until 2016, and want Phuket to be a model for other provinces," V/Gov Chokdee said. "Currently, we have a budget of about 60 million baht for the Surin Beach development plan in order to make it the 'beach of honor', but it is still being reviewed with relevant officers for ideal execution," he added.

The following is a list of projects for Surin Beach development:

- Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden
- Exhibition center of projects initiated by His Majesty the King in 76 provinces
- Exhibition of favorite sports of HM the King, including a sailboat museum and golf course
- Photo exhibition center of royal duties in Phuket
- King's pavilion
- Seven King of Siam statues
- Others, depending on the

budget and planning "Every building included in this project will be designed in Sino-Portuguese style. We have currently set up meetings with all relevant officers, and are having discussions about the budget to make these plans shape up as soon as possible," Vice Gov Chokdee said.

"We want Surin to be the second Rajabhakti Park or 'Beach of Honor', in addition to the one in Hua Hin," he added.

Revealed: Loft style houses



The project is Mono Phuket. Photo: The Attitude Club PR

THE Attitude Club Phuket has revealed its first Japanese loft home. The company is well known for its 'Foto Hotel', one of the finest resorts in the region.

"The project is named 'Mono Phuket', and will be located in Koh Kaew near British International School and Soi Palai near Phuket Zoo in Chalong," said Real Estate Director Kanokpan Pranveerapaiboon.

"Both single and twin houses will be available in a unique, simple Japanese loft style home," he added. "Each house will be two-story with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a kitchen and a living room, with an attached backyard in a total area of 160-400 square meters. Each home will be priced from 4.49 million baht."

Construction will begin in June and will be finished by December 2017.

- Sukawin Tanthavanich

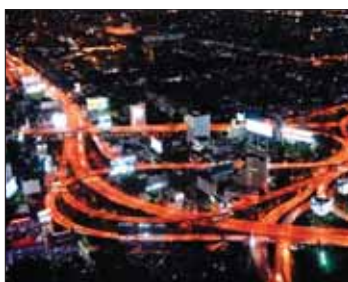
New hotel aimed at officials

BEST Western Hotels and Resorts has opened the Best Western Plus Wanda Grand Hotel to serve officials and MICE travellers.

Located on Chaeng Wattana Road north of Bangkok, the hotel is close to the government complex, Impact Convention Center, World Medical Center, several major retail and entertainment areas and Don Mueang International Airport.

Best Western's fifth property in Bangkok joins the Best Western Plus at 20 Sukhumvit, Best Western Premier Amaranth Suvarnabhumi Airport, Best Western Klassique Sukhumvit and Best Western Premier Sukhumvit.

The group plans to expand further, with the first two Vib hotels entering Bangkok in 2018. Olivier Berrivin, managing director of Asian operations, said on May 17 that the new hotel would bring a



The hotel is expected to become a hub for the meetings and events market. Photo: Mark Fischer

vast array of international amenities to north Bangkok.

"With Thailand's largest convention center and the seat of the Thai government nearby, we expect this exceptional hotel to become a favorite with the corporate, government and meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) and medical and retail services," he said.

The 30-square-meter superior king and twin rooms are ideal for short-term business

and leisure stays. They are equipped with floor-to-ceiling windows, large work desks with power outlets, flat-screen TVs with satellite channels and complimentary WIFI.

With a wide range of fully equipped function spaces spread across four floors, it can cater to corporate and social events of all types and sizes.

It offers a choice of eight function rooms, ranging in size from 95-130 meters, plus the vast 927m Wanda Grand Ballroom for large events of up to 900 people, including lavish weddings.

For families, long-stay guests or those who simply desire a little more space, the hotel also features one and two-bedroom suites, ranging in size from 58-88m and featuring spacious living areas.

- The Nation

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Phuket Gazette

Aiming high in community hospitality

By Nick Davies

WHEN he was first posted to Phuket for six months as a management trainee with the Sheraton, Luxembourg national Claude Baltes wasn't too keen on the idea of living and working on an island.

Instead, after an introduction to the hospitality world with a stint at the Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur, he had visions of working in the food and beverage division of a large five-star city hotel in Southeast Asia.

Nevertheless, it was an opening all the same, so he took the job and gradually came around to the reality that a few years' experience was in order to kick start his career.

After a couple of weeks in Phuket, Claude spent an evening relaxing on the beach with colleagues and some sundowners, from whence came the realization: 'Maybe this place is not so bad after all'.

Since then, this resilient Luxembourger has gone through all the country's big crises: the 1997 financial crash; the 2004 tsunami; and the

SARS and bird flu epidemics, to name a few.

During his tenure at the Sheraton, Claude walked into the Banyan Tree lobby and ended up working there for six years. Then, after a three-year stint in Indonesia, Claude returned to work at Phuket's Six Senses Resort in Rawai for seven years.

Now, armed with at least a dozen years experience at some of the world's best resorts, he turned his hand to projects and pre-opening works – overseeing four hotel openings in as many years; one in Krabi, one in Bangkok and two in Phuket.

In 2010, Claude formed the Rawai-Nai Harn Business Community, reaching out to a handful of hoteliers and business operators at the southern end of the island with the aim of collaborating to improve and promote the area as a tourist destination.

The task set for the business community was for members to collaborate on a destination marketing campaign aimed at promoting the local flair of Rawai and Nai Harn among locals, tourists and expats.

Membership fees were agreed upon – 9,000 baht a year for small businesses such as dive shops and restaurants, and 18,000 baht a year for larger outlets – to fund a collaborative marketing drive and community activities such as beach restoration and charity events to help local school children.

The community also came up with a discount card to drive customers to members' outlets. They jointly promoted Rawai and Nai Harn as a tourist destination at trade shows and created the web portal rawainaiharn.com.

The business community is growing in members – comprising boutique resorts and restaurants in the area, including Friendship Beach, Atmanjai, O2 Beach Club, Serenity Resort & Spa, The Mangosteen, Old Dawg Coaching and Sunsuri Phuket, where Claude has been the general manager since 2014.

Sunsuri Phuket, near Nai Harn Beach, is a 150-room hill-

side retreat owned and operated by a family from near Bangkok. With Claude at the helm as General Manager, the resort won several Trip Advisor awards in 2015.

The business community's most recent collaborative community service activity was a mass cleanup of Nai Harn Beach involving about 130 people.

With the high season over, Claude is calling on other movers and shakers in Nai Harn and Rawai to join the business group

ahead of some big events planned over the next few months – an opportunity, he says, for local businesses to collectively make a difference by giving back to the local community with their brand.

Claude Baltes.
Photo: Nick Davies







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