

Phuket Gazette

June 11 - 17, 2016

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BRITISH ENTREPRENEURS OFFER PROVINCE HIGH-TECH SOLUTIONS

A Smarter City

430 million baht to be invested in municipal projects from national govt

By Chutharat Plerin

PHUKET is slated to receive 430 million baht as part of a project meant to transform the island into a 'smart city'.

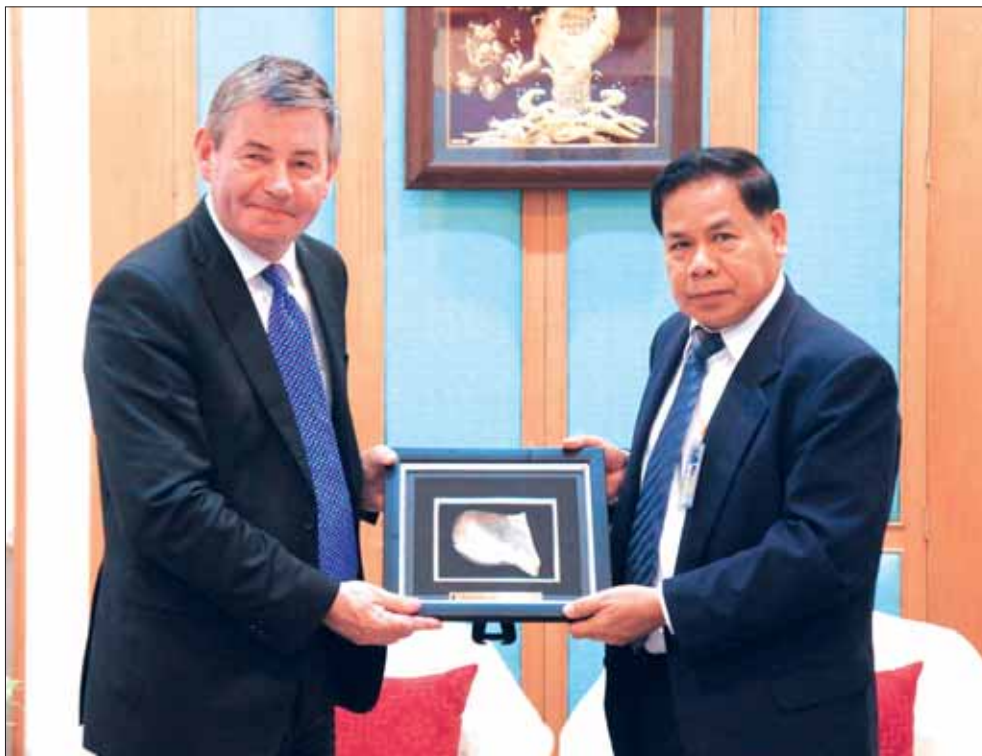
Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak gave the green light on March 21 to launch the pilot project. "The Thai government had been developing a smart-city concept, focusing on information-technology systems, which would become the foundation for the economy, society and tourism," Deputy PM Somkid said.

The same day, Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada and the mayor of Busan, South Korea, inked a deal to adopt digital technologies already in use in some of South Korea's smart cities.

Information and Communications Technology Minister Uttama Savanayana told the *Gazette* that Thailand's Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) was charged with using the 430-million-baht budget to develop the infrastructure for Phuket's smart city status.

The minister initially announced the idea of turning Phuket into a 'smart city' in September of last year, concentrating on environmental concerns, investment-friendliness and tourist safety.

Plans for a 10-billion-baht digital real estate development, billed as a 'digital-business hub with a view' in Pa Khlok were revealed last December as part of a joint government-private sector venture aimed at attracting global technology giants, such as Microsoft,



UK Trade & Investment Department Technology Specialist John Griffiths accepts a commemorative gift from Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Google, Alibaba, Samsung and Facebook.

Deputy PM Somkid said that special privileges would be afforded to foreign investors looking to establish their businesses in Thailand's new special economic zones. He added that the government would support Thai investors in negotiations with those foreign investors.

Last week, Phuket's smart city status took a significant step forward when provincial officials met with diplomats from the British Embassy and representatives from the UK's Trade & Investment Department (TID).

UK TID Technology Specialist John Griffiths said he was enthusiastic about the opportunities for Phuket to adopt inexpensive hardware and software solutions from the UK's tech industry,

when he met with officials at Provincial Hall on June 3.

One of the products of particular interest to provincial heads at the meeting was sensor technology from British-based tech manufacturers.

"If you wish to pick up and use data, traditionally you would go to a mobile operator and say, 'I have a SIM card and would like you to transfer this data to my server.' That's a relatively low-cost option for about 250 baht per month to gather data and send it through," Mr Griffiths said. "But cellular data is restricted by the cellular network. If you have no signal, you have no sensor."...

Continued on Page 4

Phuket FC president infuriated

THE president of the Phuket Football Club, Ma-Ann Samran, is fuming after news reports about the club's alleged financial troubles and outstanding bills went public earlier this month.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



The UK considers leaving the EU, generating hot debate among British expats.

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LOCAL NEWS
Briefly

DSI petitioned by sea gypsies

THE Rawai sea gypsy community, involved in an ongoing land dispute with a developer, submitted a letter to a Department of Special Investigations (DSI) team on June 3.

A sea gypsy representative met with a DSI team in Phuket Town, reportedly urging the team to prove the legality of a walkway that the sea gypsies use to access a ceremonial site, which is often blocked by Baron World Trade Co Ltd, the company claiming ownership of the land.

- *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Naka Noi land claimant pleads with Land Dept

THE owner of a land company claiming 24 rai on Naka Noi Island is petitioning the Land Department director-general in Bangkok, after a committee voted to revoke his company's land documents.

The dispute over parcels of Naka Noi land, 3km off

Mating pythons removed from drains in Mai Khao



Rescue workers removed two four-meter long pythons found mating behind a house in Mai Khao on June 3. The male python weighed about 30kg and the female about 20kg. The reptiles were reportedly hiding in a cement drainpipe behind the house. It took workers two hours to pull them out. The two pythons were later released into the Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary in Thalang. Photo: Winai Sarot

Phuket's east coast, has long been a source of controversy, with reported sightings of armed gunmen, as well as the involvement of Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada and Thai actor Puri Hiranpruk's family in the conflict over ownership.

- *Kongleaphy Keam*

Knife-wielding thief caught in third robbery

POLICE caught a convenience-store robber on June 1, after his third armed hold-up in Phuket.

Police identified the robber as Veerachai Singniew, 26. He was arrested in Pa Khlok after robbing a Family Mart in Baan Lipon, holding up staff with a 28cm-long kitchen knife.

Mr Veerachai reportedly had 3,560 baht in cash on him and the knife used in the hold-up.

- *Winai Sarot*

Russian man found hanging in hotel room

POLICE are investigating the death of a Russian man who was found hanged by the neck in a Patong hotel room on June 6.

Hotel staff found Ivan Romankin, 29, hanging from a steel beam. Patong police refused to release the name of the four-story hotel.

"Earlier this month, Mr Romankin was charged with possession of marijuana, a category 5 drug in Thailand," said Maj Teerasak Boonsang of the Patong Police. "He was due in court on June 7."

If convicted, Mr Romankin would have faced deportation to Russia. Mr Romankin's body was taken to Patong Hospital for a post mortem examination.

- *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Eight Chinese photographers arrested at Wat Chalong

EIGHT Chinese photographers were arrested for working illegally on May 31.

"The suspects were preparing to take photographs of couples for a wedding ceremony being held at Wat Chalong at about 11:30am," said Phuket Provincial Labor Office Chief Suttipong Saisakares.

The men were taken to Chalong Police Station and charged with working without a permit, which carries a fine of up to 100,000 baht, five years in prison, or both.

- *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

Phi Phi littered

PILES of trash and plastic washed ashore on Hat Nopparat Thara Beach in Phi Phi National Park on June 3 due to monsoon season winds and strong waves.

Park officials said they will clear the trash from the 2km-long beach.

- *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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Phuket FC president furious over false reports of club's bankruptcy

THE president of the Phuket Football Club (Phuket FC) is fuming, after news reports about the club's alleged financial troubles went public earlier this month.

Reports stated that management owed club players and staff two months in back pay, amounting to more than 1.6 million baht. Reports also stated that electricity services were cut at the team's headquarters, after 30,000 baht in billings was left unpaid.

"This whole issue is very upsetting to me," Ma-Ann Samran, president of Phuket FC told the *Gazette* on June 6. "I have no idea why these news reports have circulated. This is an internal issue and we are working to remedy it. This news has done nothing but damage the reputation of the whole team as well as that of Phuket."

Mr Ma-Ann officially took over the management of the football club in January, after the resignation of former president Pramookpisitt Achariyachai and other key management members of Phuket FC, after the team was demoted from Division 1 to Division 2.

Mr Ma-Ann said that run-



Phuket FC president Ma-Ann Samran said he is considered suing media outlets that reported that his club went bankrupt. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

ning the club costs an estimated 1.5 million baht per month. Every home game costs the club 80,000 baht and away games cost 100,000 baht.

He does not refute that the club has run into financial difficulties, but said the reports of bankruptcy were patently false.

"I thought we would have sponsors to cover all the costs, but it has not turned out as expected," he said. "All of the companies we have approached about sponsorships have turned us down."

Mr Ma-Ann said the club's other sources of income – ticket sales and souvenirs – are not enough to keep the

lights on. He said Phuket FC has been carrying their balances forward, in hopes of increasing revenues and being able to pay their debts.

"We've talked with players and staff about the payment schedule, and the money issues we're facing," Mr Ma-Ann said.

"We actually owe them one month's salary, not the two months as claimed in local media reports."

Mr Ma-Ann said that the Football Association of Thailand (FAT) has pledged 2.5 million baht to Phuket FC, but so far he's only received 300,000 baht, and he is unsure about when to expect the rest of the money.

Mr Ma-Ann is adamant that Phuket FC is not, despite reports, going bankrupt. "The utility cuts were the result of a simple misunderstanding."

In order to mitigate the club's financial losses, Mr Ma-Ann said he plans to make the team smaller, and to concentrate on recruiting cheaper-to-pay local players, instead of the current roster dominated by professional players.

"By making our team smaller, we can cut out costs down to 500,000 baht from the 1.5 million we're paying now," Mr Ma-Ann said. "Now that we've changed to a Division 2 team, we can be really competitive and host a smaller team with smaller expenses."

Mr Ma-Ann said he'd been considering suing media outlets for the false claims, but decided that it would be better to spread the word that Phuket FC is still in business.

"I didn't want it to be a big deal, but this is really harmful to the team and to Phuket football," Mr Ma-Ann said. "Our lawyer has prepared information for the outlet in question, and we will call them for a discussion and take it from there."

– Chutharat Plerin

Fisherman's body found



Rescue workers located the man's body in Phang Nga. Photo: Winai Sarot

A PHUKET fisherman's body was found in Phang Nga on the morning of June 6, one day after he was reported missing from Mai Khao.

Aroon Singkhala, 63, disappeared during a fishing trip at a mangrove forest at Mai Khao, confirmed Sarit Bootnongsaeng, deputy superintendent of the Tah Chat Chai Police.

"When he did not return in the evening, locals and relatives went searching for him," Lt Col Sarit said.

"They recovered his fishing net, but there was no sign of him."

Rescue workers and police also failed to locate him during their search efforts.

"Locals from Tha Nun in Phang Nga later reported that they had found a body floating in the sea, which relatives identified as Mr Aroon's," he added.

– Winai Sarot

Axe-waving driver fined

AN AXE-wielding taxi driver was arrested hours after a video of him at Phuket International Airport was published on Facebook on June 4.

The video, uploaded by Woratat Wuttikorn, shows 45-year-old Nuttawut Chidjui dropping off a customer at the airport, then waving an axe before putting it back in the vehicle.

Mr Woratat was dropping his family off at the airport when Mr Nuttawut's taxi reportedly blocked his car. Mr Woratat subsequently filed a complaint at the Sakoo Police Station.

"The video portrays a negative image for Phuket tourism," said Deputy Superintendent Bundit Khaosutham of the Tourist Police Region 5. "We followed strict orders to catch the driver as soon as possible."

Mr Nuttawut admitted that it was him in the video, but said he



Mr Nuttawut's license suspension was cut in half after he pleaded guilty. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

didn't mean to threaten anyone.

"I was helping a friend move to a new house earlier and forgot to put the axe away," he said.

Mr Nuttawut was fined 1,000 baht for the offence. His driving licence was also suspended for three months.

Additionally, the Tourist Police charged Mr Nuttawut with carrying a weapon in public without a reasonable cause.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Man killed in Patong brawl

ONE man is dead and another wounded, after they were attacked outside a karaoke venue in Patong during the early hours of June 7.

According to Patong police reports, the fight began in the Mon Can Cafe at 2:30am. "Rachan Banlangsuang, 32, said he was finishing a shift waiting tables at the cafe, when he and the cashier, a man we are identifying at this time as Mr Ble, 26, got into an argument over an amount of money from the evening," said Col Chaiwat Auikam of Patong Police.

Mr Ble reportedly grabbed a knife and cut Mr Rachan's arm. Mr Rachan went to Patong Hospital for the injury, before returning to Mon Can Cafe.

Wichitthep Jomjabok, 28, accompanied Mr Rachan to speak with Mr Ble, who is his cousin.

Mr Ble, evidently dissatisfied with their conversation, gathered a group of friends and attacked the pair, who fled



A crowd gathers outside the karaoke bar, where Mr Wichitthep was killed by the mob. Photo: Winai Sarot.

to the nearby Lanla Karaoke. The group of assailants stabbed Mr Rachan twice; once in the shoulder and again in the back.

Mr Wichitthep was killed in the confrontation. "His body was found shirtless and with his jeans ripped, on the floor inside the venue. He was re-

portedly stabbed twice in the left chest, and slashed, once on the cheek and once on the arm," Col Chaiwat said.

Police confirmed on June 8, they had captured Mr Ble and another man suspected in the attack. They are still looking for another four suspects.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Phuket wooed



John Griffiths (left) and Marcus Winsley (right) at Phuket Provincial Hall. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

From Page 1

... Mr Griffiths said he was eager to set up a data-collecting and analyzing system, called Laura, in Phuket, as a part of the smart city development project.

"Laura is a free-to-air spectrum that is close to an FM radio signal, meaning that the signal can penetrate buildings," he explained. "It can run continuously for four to five years with a small battery."

Mr Griffiths estimated that the infrastructure requirements for a system of sensors across Phuket would be about five radio masts, each with a 7km radius that could transmit data from up to 50,000 nearby sensors.

"It's basically 100 times cheaper than a cellular network," he said.

"The system would allow real-time measurements of things like water levels and water quality. You could have an interactive refuse collection system, which notifies you when bins are full and ready to be collected," explained Mr Griffiths. "For example, sensors powered by small batteries or solar cells at intersections could measure carbon monoxide levels, and that, is your 'smart city'."

The data from the sensors can then be collected and analyzed.

"You may have companies that want to make a traffic app, or the local government could free up that data and have local companies doing a variety of things with that data," Mr Griffiths said.

"In the UK, we have a hospital that has to check 9,000 water

Second endangered sea turtle killed by propeller

MARINE officials are urging boat operators to slow down and take greater care while plying Phang Nga Bay, after the body of a green sea turtle washed ashore in Phi Phi National Park on June 4.

Officers believe the endangered animal was killed by a boat propeller.

"The turtle is about 90 centimeters long and weighs about 40 kilograms. The shell was broken and it appears that the right front flipper was also slashed. Both eyes had also sustained injuries," said Sarayuth Tanthien, chief of the Hat Noppharat Thara - Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park.

Locals found the turtle at Hat Noppharat Thara Beach at about 8pm.

"This is the second sea turtle death most likely caused by



The turtle's shell was damaged. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

boat propellers in Krabi in the past week," Mr Sarayuth said. "Therefore, I would like to urge all the boat operators to be more careful."

During monsoon season, the turtles can be pushed into shallower waters by strong winds and currents, Mr Sarayuth explained.

"Please help each other. We do not want to see more innocent marine deaths," he said.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

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taps every day. That's a job that usually requires two staff members and a manager," he said. "But, with Laura, you can have sensors on each tap, doing the job of those three employees."

Marcus Winsley, Director of Trade & Investment at the British Embassy in Bangkok, said the solutions offered by technology like Laura, provides people and governments with data that allows them to improve their efficiency.

"We are here because we are excited about the ambition that the Thai government has to move up the curve of innovation, to become sustainable and environmentally clean," Mr Winsley said.

"We believe there are technologies and solutions to issues, held by British companies and experts, that directly meet the needs of Phuket, all while building partnerships."

"Phuket is an ideal location to develop as a smart city; as an island, you can control the system better. Also, Phuket is a fantastic base of tourism, which lives on data. There are lots of ideas which British companies can share that would be useful for Phuket."

Patong Mayor Chalermkluck Kepsup said that he's looking forward to finding applications in data collection for predicting his city's annual flash floods.

"My concern is with environmental issues in Patong, like flooding, air pollution and waste management. I'd like to see technology implemented that can detect water levels so we can issue timely flash flood alerts," said Mayor Chalermkluck.

"Patong is an old town. It was once a small village and now it's a heavily populated tourist destination. Our infrastructure was not built to support such rapid growth. We have small pipes, yet more buildings are going up all the time. This is an ongoing problem which affordable technology can help solve."

Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana echoed concerns over water management. "These problems cannot be solved by the City alone," she said. "Sensors would be useful along the canals running through Kathu, Wichit and Rassada."

Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul said he was keen to use the British technology to address island-wide security issues.

CCTV and other technologies could be used to screen people entering Phuket at a 'gateway,' onto the island, and at piers. There, we could gather information about our visitors. /

-Vice Gov Prajiad Aksornthammakul

"CCTV and other technologies could be used to screen people entering Phuket at a 'gateway' onto the island, and at piers. There, we could gather information about our visitors," he said. "This is a good start for Phuket in becoming a smart city, and we welcome the British government's involvement and support."

Phuket branch manager of SIPA, Pracha Asawateera, believes Phuket has excellent potential to compete as a smart city against neighboring technology hubs, like Singapore and Malaysia, but admitted that a priority is increasing the province's internet speed.

"High-speed internet access is essential for drawing companies to the island," Mr Pracha said. "We aim to work with CAT Telecom to increase high-speed internet levels on the island to 100MB within the next three years."

An additional 1,000 CCTV cameras to monitor traffic are also among the smart city plans for Phuket, ostensibly in order to curb traffic violations.

Blinding billboard at junction to dim



The billboard at a major intersection in Phuket City. Photo: Gazette file

WICHIT municipality has asked the advertising company running an LED billboard at the Central Festival Intersection to dim their sign, after receiving complaints from commuters.

Wichit Mayor Kreetha Chotwitpipat said locals have sent in complaints to his office that too much light emanates from the billboard at the Darasamuth intersection, particularly at night.

"At this stage, we have yet to receive an official letter-format complaint from anyone, but we've been hearing informal complaints and know that

we'd better take action," Mr Wichit said. "The billboard advertisement belongs to a company in Bangkok. But, in hopes of solving this problem before anyone gets injured, we've already sent a letter to them, asking them to dim the lights," he said. "Hopefully they'll do that within the coming weeks."

Mayor Kreetha urges members of the public to contact the municipality if they have a problem, and pledged that municipal officers would address their concerns as soon as possible.

- Kongleaphy Keam



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Samui drug addict dies while in police custody



The victim was reportedly heard breathing heavily during the night, before he was found dead in his cell. Photo: Suchat Hankij

OFFICIALS are investigating the death of a man who was being held captive at the Bo Phut Police Station in Koh Samui on June 2.

“Kosin Tongjutha, 44, originally from Nothanburi Province, was found dead in his jail cell with no signs of any violent struggle,” said Lt Col Denduang Tongsisuk of the Bo Phut Police.

“A urine test has confirmed the presence of drugs in his system. He seemed to have been dead for about five hours before his body was discovered.”

A woman being held in a nearby cell said she that heard heavy breathing from Mr Kosin’s cell, which suddenly stopped at about 3am. However, she didn’t make much of it at the time.

“A volunteer from the Samui Rescue Foundation, who picked up Mr Kosin by the roadside on the morning of

June 1, said that he was naked, moaning profusely and seemingly under the influence of drugs,” added Lt Col Denduang.

“He was brought to the station because he was deemed harmful to others. He didn’t talk to anyone here, nor did he eat any food – he just sat and slept,” he added.

Tianchai Nuibankuan, a man who gave Mr Kosin shelter earlier this week, said that he spoke normally and requested to stay with him. Mr Tianchai allowed him to sleep in front of his house.

Gen Taywes Pliumsui of Bo Phut Police informed the *Phuket Gazette* that Mr Kosin had a prior conviction for drug use.

His body was transferred to Samui Hospital to determine the cause of death, which has been confirmed to be a heart attack due to a drug overdose.

– *Suchat Hankij*

Deadly week for Krabi: two killed, two injured



Above: The occupants of the truck succumbed to their injuries en route to the hospital. Below: Rescuers work to put out the fire after Ms. Prapatsorn’s accident. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

TWO people were killed and two more seriously injured in a mid-morning car crash in Krabi on June 2.

“Reports of the accident came in about 10:30am, which occurred near the Nua Khlong junction,” said Lt Col Suthorn Kampaphan of Nua Khlong Police. “A white SUV was wedged into a brown pick-up truck, with two people trapped inside each vehicle.”

Rescuers had to cut the trapped occupants from the twisted metal remains of their respective Isuzu vehicles.

The victims were rushed to Nua Khlong hospital.

“The driver of the brown pick-up, Sabaidee Thongman, 70, as well as the passenger, Kruawan Thongman, 61, were pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital,” Col Suthorn said. “The driver of the white

SUV, Somyos Chinchiew, 51, and passenger Pranee Chinchiew, 51, both suffered chest injuries and bruises.”

Witnesses reported that the pick-up truck was heading from Khao Panom toward Nua Khlong district when they saw it slide on a curve and lose control. The SUV then slammed into the rear of the pick-up truck. The witnesses claimed that heavy rain and slippery road conditions were the cause of the crash.

“At this stage, we have yet to press charges, as we need

to question the survivors and take their stories into account,” Col Suthorn said.

In a separate incident, a Krabi woman was involved in a fiery car crash, after she reportedly lost control of her car while driving home from Phuket to Krabi on June 6.

“The incident occurred on Payla-Prudinna Road, close to Kaosamnuay school,” said Capt Montol Tongma of Klontong Police. “At the scene, we found a Chevrolet car in flames. It had crashed into a palm tree near a curve in the road.”

“Ms Prapatsorn said that she lost control of her car, as she was exhausted from driving all the way from Phuket to Krabi.”



Passersby were able to extract Ms Prapatsorn from the car in time. She reportedly did not sustain any injuries.

“It took 30 minutes for firefighters to curb the

blaze. The car was completely gutted, but thankfully Ms Prapatsorn was not injured” said Capt Montol.

Accidents across the province have been attributed to monsoon-season downpours.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong and Kongleaphy Keam*

Raid turns up B2mn fireworks

POLICE seized an illegal stockpile of fireworks estimated to be worth 2 million baht from a shophouse in Koh Samui on June 6.

Police raided the property on Taweerat Road in the Bo Phut district at 5pm, after a tip off from local officials.

Bo Phut Police Lt Denduang Tongsisuk said the owner, named only as Mr Off, had locked the front and back doors and refused to talk with police.

After breaking in, police discovered hundreds of fireworks stored throughout the three-story building, including firecrackers, large cherry bombs and floating lanterns, which are banned on Samui due to the dangers posed to aircraft.



An officer holds a firework found in the townhouse. Photo: Suchat Hankij

The fireworks were made in China and some of them are even powerful enough to cover

a radius of about 200 meters when they go off, said police.

– *Suchat Hankij*

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Hua Hin thugs sentenced for beating Brits

THE Hua Hin provincial court has sentenced four Thais to two years' jail for viciously assaulting a British couple and their son while they were on holiday during the Songkran Festival.

Rosemary and Lewis Owen and their son were battered by Chaiya Jaiboon, Supatta Baithong, Yingyai Saengkamin and Siva Noksri in the tourist resort of Hua Hin on April 13.

Jail terms for the four men were halved by the court as they pleaded guilty to assault and causing damage to Thailand's reputation as a safe tourist destination.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand said it would inform the victims of the verdict.

Thai sex slave rescued from trafficking ring

TWO women were detained on charges of procuring women to work as prostitutes in Bahrain, police said on June 5.

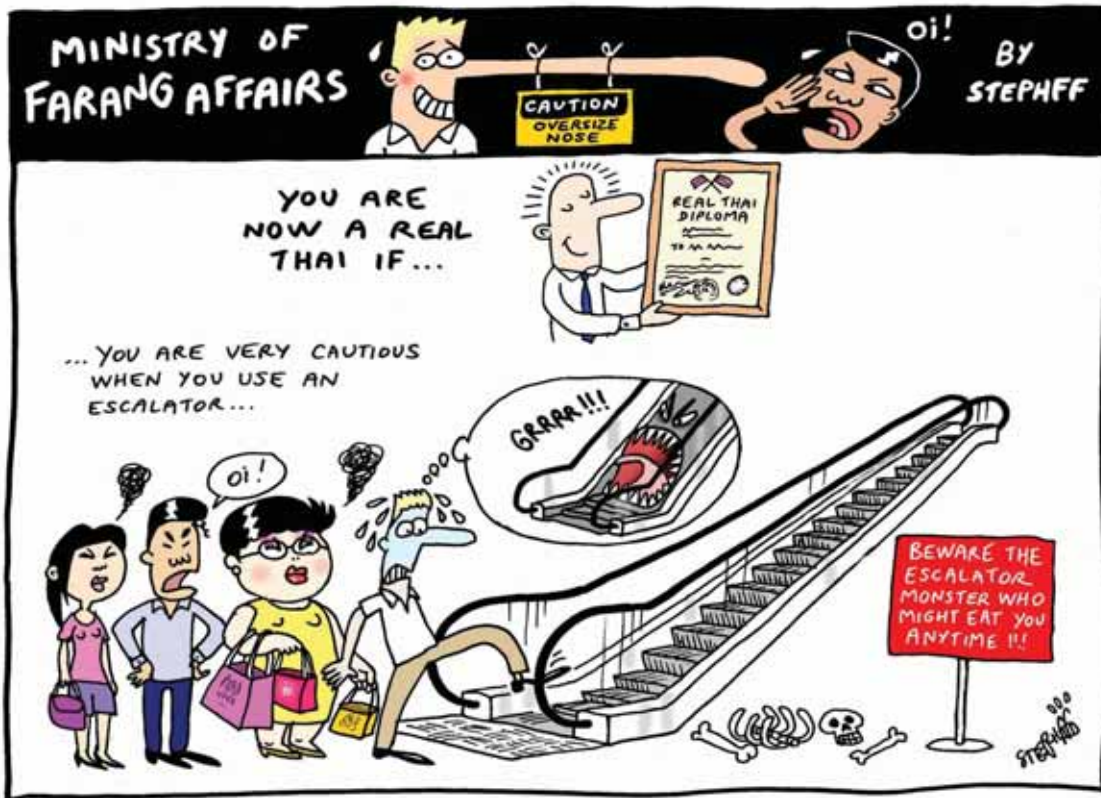
Thanit Preechalert and Suparat Prabkonchua were wanted for allegedly violating the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, Suppression of Participation in Transnational Networked Criminal Organization Act and Labor Protection Act, confirmed officials.

The mother of a victim had filed a complaint that her daughter was kidnapped and forced to service men at many hotels in Manama.

Thai embassy officials and Bahrain police rescued six women, including the complainant's daughter, who were allegedly forced to sell sex in Bahrain. The women were later brought back to Thailand. Pol Maj General Kornchai Klaiklung of the anti-human trafficking division urged the public to give police tip-offs about human trafficking via the 1191 hotline.

28 seriously hurt in Samet speedboat crash

A TOTAL OF 28 revellers were injured, one critically, shortly after a speedboat left the pier



on Samet Island and slammed into a tugboat anchored off the coast of Rayong on the night of June 4, police said.

Twenty-three people were taken to Rayong Hospital, three to Bangkok-Rayong Hospital, and two to Sri Rayong Hospital.

The speedboat was carrying 35 people, most of whom were injured by the impact of the boats. One later required brain surgery and another remained in a serious condition with a cerebral haemorrhage. Others sustained head and facial injuries, broken ribs and shoulders.

Arson attacks launched in Pattani districts

MUSLIM insurgents launched several arson attacks and three bomb attacks in Pattani early June 6, the first day of Ramadan.

No casualties were reported in the attacks in several districts of Pattani from 1-5am, authorities said.

The insurgents fired at power transformers in the villages of Tambon Luboh Yirai of Mayo district. They also burned vehicle tyres and fired gunshots in Moo 1 village in Tambon Mayo of Mayo district.

Officials said the insurgents also set fire to two cell station towers in Moo 2 village in Tambon Krawa in Mayo district and set fire to the office of Tambon Krawa Administrative Organization.

The terrorists also detonated a homemade bomb beside the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives.

Another bomb exploded in

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

a toilet of the public library in Moo 1 village in Tambon Panare of Panare District.

Shortly after, another bomb exploded nearby. The authorities also found a third bomb hidden nearby and disposed of it.

Teen charged with murder of middle-aged gay lover

A 19-YEAR-OLD man has confessed to murdering his 58-year-old lover and burning his body in Bangkok's Prawet district to conceal the crime on June 5, acting metropolitan police commissioner Lt Gen Sanit Mahathaworn said.

Following his arrest at the compound of Wat Kaew Pitak Charoentham, Patthum Yaemkhong, the former temple boy with a Prathom 3 education, claimed he had been pressured by the victim Sompong Boonyeu during their three-week relationship, according to police.

Patthum was captured on CCTV taking a large luggage bag, allegedly containing Sompong's body, out of the victim's condominium, resulting in his arrest.



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Phuket Gazette

Let's be smart

GIVEN its present status as a mass tourist destination, Phuket has potential for development as one of the enthusiastically-dubbed 'Smart Cities'. In the broader sense, however, the real key to our future success in this digital age lies in raising local educational standards.

Previous successive governments have trumpeted similar grandiose schemes, but without adequate funding or ever directly addressing the main obstacles to success.

Given the huge input of money Phuket has pumped into national coffers over the years, and the pittance gotten back in budget allotments, this 460 million baht in sustainable development funding is not only appreciated, but long overdue.

As a cosmopolitan, non-industrial island, Phuket enjoys many advantages over rival destinations in luring start-up companies and the young entrepreneurs behind them.

But there is also a lot holding us back. In addition to low educational standards in key areas, such as computer science and English language, Phuket's embryonic IT sector has long been hindered by restrictive, complicated laws governing foreign investment and immigration of talented foreign workers. Sadly, the status quo is probably more enticing to computer hackers than legitimate IT firms willing to play by the rules.

Poor internet speeds, lack of other basic infrastructure, corruption, political instability and other security concerns are among the other factors that have also held back growth in this otherwise promising sector. However if these issues are addressed in a serious way, as promised, it could be a real 'game changer' for Phuket.

The other thrust of the Smart City campaign involves using IT technology to improve public services. The success of these technologies in some western cities clearly demonstrates the potential for success, but in the hands of the technically inept, they also hold enormous potential for misuse and waste.

A good example is the proposed use of IT monitoring to warn of flash floods in Patong, which makes little or no sense from a hydrologic standpoint given the very small area of the drainage basin involved and the fact that most of the area has been covered over by impervious material.

When it comes to sensing and assessing danger, all the advanced technology of the world will make little difference if we cannot change a 'culture of carelessness' that renders so many among us incapable of taking steps to prevent immediate 'in-your-face' threats to our health and well-being.



Worldwide shame over temple scandal

Re: UN issues statement after more horrors discovered at Tiger Temple, June 3

This has brought worldwide shame on Thai authorities for allowing a once precious and famous temple to sink to such depravity. Someone somewhere was pocketing money to turn a blind eye.

James H Miller
Facebook

Sadly, even monks cannot be trusted to protect endangered species.

Glad that someone stepped in and shut down this barbaric practice.

And I hope those responsible will be quickly imprisoned or banished from the country.

Tim
Gazette forum

Punishment is not nearly enough

Re: Airport axe-man charged, gets licence suspended [video], June 6

He 'forgot' to take it out? Apparently he didn't forget it at the airport.

Then he put it away and forgot it again, since it was still there when the police checked for it.

His punishment is not nearly enough. Everyone knows suspending his license isn't going to stop him from driving. And a 1000 baht fine? He'll make that back in a couple of hours.

Look at the video. Look at how he parked.

Letters to the Editor

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

Welcome to me-first-land.

CaptainJack
Gazette forum

Pat on the back for Thai authorities

Re: Four jailed, heavily fined for land theft, June 4

If this news doesn't send a message to those who are contemplating stealing land, I don't know what else would.

Well done to the authorities. Justice served.

seht1912
Gazette forum

Speedboats kept 500 meters off shore

Re: Second turtle killed by propellers in Krabi this week, June 6

Divers get run down and the speed boats are left alone to do as they please and the divers are moved.

Now turtles are killed and at last they ask the speed boats to be careful.

Far better just to order the speed boats to slow down and give set channels in and out of the Phi Phi area as the turtles and divers are only in [the water] close to the island. If the speed boats are kept 500 meters off shore then no one will be

hurt and that includes the speed boats.

Simon Lomas
Facebook

Learn to adapt to the conditions

Re: Two dead, two seriously injured in rain-drenched Krabi crash, June 2

"Witnesses claimed that heavy rain and slippery road conditions were the cause of the crash." No, not adapting to the conditions is to blame. If people used common sense and slowed down, these events would not occur as often as they tragically do.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Thoughtless and unfeeling behavior

Re: Two dead, 20 injured in speedboat collision, June 8

This is tragic beyond belief. How can tour boat operators be allowed to carry on in this fashion, without fear of any consequences on human lives?

Phuket works 'hard' to maintain its image as a tourist destination, yet tourists can't even take a boat ride without wondering whether they'll make it back safely, or even alive for that matter?

No leniency for those responsible. The driver and owner should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Jane McCullen
Facebook

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Taking responsibility for pets

FIRST PERSON

PHUKET, as we all know, is a major tourist destination, and Phuket Town is an important historical area. The government is constantly working to promote and maintain the image of Phuket by hosting interesting events and activities in the area, in order to boost the economy and reputation of Old Town.

However one persistent issue that we see all around, and that I really want to get rid of, is the problem of stray animals, especially dogs, in the Phuket City Municipality area.

The root of the problem is that most owners are not aware that contraception is necessary for their animals. These animals keep breeding and creating problems for everyone else, as the owners do not take responsibility for them.

I would like to encourage Phuket City Municipality residents to take responsibility of their pets. If you decide to adopt them, you must be good at taking care of them as well. You must make sure you take the time to ensure their cleanliness, which is very crucial for their good health.

People must take the responsibility of vaccinating their animals at stipulated intervals. Vaccines are necessary to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and skin problems. If people do not take good care of their animals, they will frequently get sick, which will cost them even more in medical expenses. It is also necessary to vaccinate your animals for your own health, as some of these diseases can be passed on to humans. So, not only is it necessary for your animals, it is important to pro-



Boonsom Roongudom, 59, is a Phuket native. He received a veterinary degree from the Department of Livestock Development (DLD), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. Mr Boonsom has been working as a veterinarian for the Phuket Municipality since 1980.

Here, he talks about the on-going issue of abandoned cats and dogs in Phuket City and outlines his suggestions for a long term solution.

tect yourself as well.

Some owners, who no longer want to assume responsibility for their animals, just abandon them at temples or by the roadside. This also adds to the waste in the area, as animals defecate unchecked on public and private properties.

So, we must attack the problem at the roots. The issue is clear: pet owners need to take responsibility for their animals and to this end, I suggest that owners of all cats, dogs and other pets in the municipality must register their animals with us.

We are doing our best to issue municipal laws about this matter, in order to control the unbridled spread of stray animals in Phuket City. These laws will work for the benefit of everyone in the community. The fine and punishment for breaching these laws is currently under review.

One of the laws that urgently needs to be implemented is that whenever anyone takes their dogs out in public, such as to a market, public park, school or any other public place, they must be kept on a leash and under control. The owners must also make sure that the

leash does not harm the animals.

Our clinic was only recently launched, but residents in the area are slowly becoming aware of our presence and the services we provide. We are working on improving public relations via local radio channels, leaflets, and also by word of mouth to create awareness among people in the Phuket City Community.

We constantly strive to educate people about vaccines, neutering, birth control, and other issues that they may not have known about before. At the moment our center can only provide a free rabies vaccine, which is provided by the Department of Local Administration.

I hope to see the stray animal situation in Phuket improve soon. I hope that in about three years' time, the number of stray dogs will have significantly decreased through our push to educate and connect with the owners. I am aware that we cannot change peoples' perspectives immediately, but we hope to see a gradual change. That is why it is necessary to start from the root of the problem and come up with a long term solution.



Car parks can bring in millions for private companies. Photo: Rachmaninoff

The perks of parking ready to be reaped

FRIENDS have often whined to me about the traffic issues in Phuket Town, usually about how difficult it can be to get in and out of town during morning and evening rush hours. But I had no idea just how implausibly gridlocked the center of town can become, until I scheduled a lunch meet there.

We were booked to meet at one of those fun little eateries in the town's 'banking zone'. Arriving in the area, I discovered that parking was so limited that people were leaving their cars in the middle of road, and relying upon their hazard warning lights to inform traffic that they had no intention of moving for a while – result: instant car park.

Why people now seem to think that hazard warning lights give them permission to park in the middle of the road is a column for another day, but I believe it comes from following the bad example set by minivan drivers, who are well-known for using their hazards just to nip into 7-Eleven for a Red Bull.

In the end I had to give up trying to park in the 'banking zone', or I would have starved to death, instead nipping around to Montri Road – just a few minutes from the eatery – and parking in a back-street car park where there was space to spare.

Island View

By Alexander Maycock

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

This got me wondering, why on earth hasn't someone jumped on the big business of multi-story car parks for the old town? Oh, I know: they're ugly, often smell of urine and can become dens of iniquity if not properly patrolled – but they are ever-so effective at taking parked cars off the streets.

Parking in the old town is never going to improve. The authorities are already mulling plans to change some of the roads into permanent walking streets and, although a good few years off, the light rail system will see a significant reduction in available parking spaces.

The usual answer is to moan about the problem and wait for the authorities to do something about it. But why wait? Privately run car parks make huge profits around the world. In the UK, one company runs over 500 multi-story car parks, with a turnover of more than 10 billion baht a year and very healthy profit margins.

It may not be very sexy business-wise, but there's a bundle of baht to be made with a multi-story parking service in Phuket Town.

Words from the Wise

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

– Muhammad Ali

“Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present.”

– Jim Rohn

Issues & Answers

Why is the road near Tha Rua being repaired?

I FREQUENTLY used to pass along a small road beside Tah Rua Temple in Thalang. From what I remember, the road was in very good condition.

I recently passed by the area again and was surprised to see that it was muddy and undergoing repairs. I was wondering why a perfectly good road needs to be dug up again?

Jennifer Morris
Thalang

Teeraporn Jirarattana-

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

korn, Director of the Department of Rural Roads Phuket office replies:

Thank you for your query.

This road has been in use for about 10 years now. It is still in normal condition, but the cement underneath is fragile. So, we need to strengthen the road by mixing cement with the concrete in order to better handle heavy vehicles.

The work should have been completed already, but has been delayed because of the rains. It should be completed by next week. Once the repair work is completed, the road should last another seven years.

Brexit and your pension

Finance

By David Mayes

THE possibility of the UK leaving the European Union is a subject of hot debate among the British. Most of the debate revolves around the implications for the future within the UK itself but not much is said of what kind of implications this could have on expats. For the most part, things will change very little either way for expats but in the areas of pensions and taxation, it may lead to drastic changes that could be implemented almost overnight.

One great benefit of the UK being in the EU has been the need to follow certain regulations. These have generally been favorable to expats, as one of the main objectives of the union was to make it easier for people, goods, and services to move about freely between the different member states.

The general trend worldwide since the financial crisis has been towards protectionist policies, which are almost always harmful to expats. While certain EU countries such as France and Holland have extremely high personal taxation rates for residents, once their citizens move abroad, their tax affairs become irrelevant to



The UK will no longer need to follow any of the rules sanctioned by the EU. Photo: Boonyawat Saelim

their home country. This avoids double taxation and makes it easier for workers to move around within the union, and it provides great legal tax planning opportunities for expats.

If the UK were to leave the EU, it would no longer need to follow any of the rules it has been bound to for so long. Many see this as a good thing since it increases flexibility to introduce legislation that may benefit the local economy, but they also may take away liber-

ties currently given to expats. The financial affairs of the UK are not in a great state and there is no light at the end of the tunnel in sight, so a worst case scenario would be that the UK could copy the US and try to introduce taxation based on citizenship.

Another very clear example of a right that could disappear is the right to transfer a pension offshore. For retirees with large pots, this can lead to very large, totally legal, tax savings.

However, this legislation was only ever put into effect because the UK lost a lawsuit in the EU courts.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) could very easily close down the right to transfer pensions the very next day after the UK leaves the union. If someone has a pension pot of say GBP500,000, they are likely going to be in a 40 per cent tax bracket when drawing it down or passing it on to their loved ones. That is GBP200,000

that HMRC loses out on when a retiree moves somewhere like Phuket and transfers their accounting home to Gibraltar to legally take advantage of their 2.5 per cent flat tax rate and zero inheritance tax.

Think of the larger pensions, which often go into seven figures, and you get an idea of how much potential revenue HMRC is missing out on due to their inclusion in the EU. They are very much aware of the sums of lost revenue the QROPS (Qualifying Recognized Overseas Pension Scheme) market costs them, and I can't imagine they would allow this in a post-Brexit UK.

It may be a stretch to think the UK will begin treating expats the same way as the US does, but I can't imagine the right to transfer your pension out of the UK tax net would remain.

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

E-commerce brings in billions, creates jobs

VISA International says collaboration between public and private sectors is needed to drive growth of electronic payment in the Kingdom, while the past 5 years saw migration to e-payments adding about 113 billion baht to the Thai economy, the largest increase in Asia.

Pauline Sahetapy, vice president of the Visa School of Public Policy, said on June 2 that driven by new technology, forms of payment were evolving from traditional to new ways such as paying by credit or debit cards, mobile phones, wearable devices and the Internet of Things.

"The process of educating consumers, merchants and their clients on e-payment appears to be insufficient," said Ms Pauline. "In order to speed up this development, government agencies and private companies should engage in the process of moving it forward. The government can help through the use of policy, regulations and finan-



E-payments are an evolution from the traditional. Image: Dometorres

cial incentives."

She suggested that a regulatory framework encouraging open access and competition would achieve desired regulatory outcomes, while partnering with the industry could improve regulatory execution and reduce the risk of unintended consequences.

This advice, if followed, would seem to be beneficial for Thailand. Moody's Analytics found that the increased use of electronic payments, including credit, debit and prepaid cards, added about 0.19 per cent to

Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP) from 2011 to 2015, the largest weighted average increase in Asia.

That growth was three times that of the regional average increase of 0.06 per cent of GDP, with Vietnam following Thailand at 0.14 per cent and Singapore at 0.1 per cent. Increased e-payment usage also created the equivalent of 75,730 jobs in Thailand per year in the same period.

Suripong Tantiyanon, country manager of Visa International Thailand, said these findings reinforced the many positive benefits that electronic payments bring to economies, not just in Thailand, but all over the world.

This data suggests that the right public policies could create an open, competitive payment environment, and contribute to economic growth and job creation.

- The Nation



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BIS Phuket eyed for takeover

THE British International School Phuket (BISP) is in talks with global education provider Nord Anglia, which is making a bid to take over the school's operations.

In a letter addressed to parents last week, BISP CEO Apiwat Ourairat stated that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the school and Nord Anglia over the potential lease of the operating entity of the school.

The letter explained that due diligence was underway and that the outcome was currently being negotiated. It was clarified that ownership of the school would remain with the existing company and that a portion of funds from any potential lease would be reinvested in significant upgrades to the facility.

Nord Anglia was founded in the UK and has headquarters in Hong Kong. The conglomerate has 42 international institutions



British International School Phuket. Photo: Gazette file

under its umbrella in Asia, Europe, the US and the Middle East. The company is also listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

International schools in Thailand that are in the Nord Anglia network include St Andrews International School Bangkok and Regents International School Pattaya.

Two weeks ago, Thanyapura announced that Phuket International Academy is joining the United World College group of international schools in a bid to attract more students and raise the bar on education generally in Phuket.

The continued growth of the international school market in Phuket was reflected in a recent

C9 Hotelworks report, indicating positive investment sentiment in the sector among large international groups.

Bill Barnett is the founder and managing director of C9 Hotelworks (C9Hotelworks.com), a leading hospitality and real estate consulting firm based in Phuket and operating throughout Southeast Asia.

Bankruptcy legislation introduced for SMEs

NEW legislation to help floundering small businesses get back on their feet has gone into effect.

Director General of the Office of SMEs Promotion (OSMEP), Salinee Wangtal, revealed this week that the new SME rehabilitation legislation has been made part of the Bankruptcy Act of 2016.

Under the new laws, individuals and entities with funds of less than 10 million baht will be able to access state protection against civil action from multiple lenders, allowing them a greater chance of recovery.

Such businesses will also be able to access more loans from the OSMEP.

- NNT

KBank builds a better e-payment bandwagon



Kasikorn Bank is a big player in mobile banking. Photo: GuillaumeG

THAILAND'S online trade this year is expected to grow about 20 per cent to 240 billion baht this year, from B200bn baht in 2015, because of the substantial movement from the fourth-generation wireless network, large retailers venturing into online business, and the government's National E-Payment Program, according to Kasikorn Bank representatives, a big player in mobile banking.

Noppawan Jermhansa, executive vice president of KBank, said that the trend will lead to a 'mobile commerce' society, due to which the bank has developed strategies for online marketing and sales promotions via four products as payment channels. These are the K-Credit Card, K-Debit Card, digital banking (K-Mobile Banking), and K-Payment

Gateway.

KBank's digital banking at present has nine million customers, whose transactions totaled 3.9 trillion baht last year. The key strategy is to roll out new application features that allow users to personalize the app to their liking, making their smartphone the only device they need for all kinds of financial transactions.

The bank expects to add 3.4 million more customers to its digital-banking base this year.

To support e-commerce entrepreneurs, representatives say that KBank focuses on developing tools to improve the efficiency of digital payment platforms, ensuring customers that the various payment channels are both convenient and high-powered.

- The Nation

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Miss Grand Phang Nga crowned in Khao Lak

The Miss Grand Phang Nga 2016 beauty pageant was held at Khaolak Laguna Resort on May 25 to decide which of 17 budding beauty queens would go on to compete in the Miss Grand Thailand 2016 finals.



Chatnarinrat Woraklearkeaw, event organizer (right) hands a prize to Miss Popular Vote Raksina Sanongyat.



Jureeporn Thongsalub, the winner of Miss Grand Phang Nga 2016 (center), 1st runner up Supathra Kriengprom (right) and 2nd runner up Sirin Srisawas .

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A taste of the Argentinians

Patong Beach Club staged an Argentine wine tasting on May 30, introducing bon viveurs to a new range of wines from Argentinian wine producer Luigi Bosca.



Gabriela Millan (center) from Luigi Bosca with Phuket Food and Beverage Co Ltd's MD Pheera lamrahong (left) and Sales & Marketing Director Kajnarong Pitrachat.

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Events in Paradise

Phuket FC get tested at Bangkok Hospital

Bangkok Hospital Phuket recently held fitness tests for the players from Phuket FC at the hospital's Sports Medicine and Arthroscopy Center. Phuket FC will use the test results to develop physical fitness for their players.



Dr Nathawoot Sawasdee, General Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine specialist (center) and Bangkok Hospital Phuket staff with Phuket FC's players.

Blue Canyon Open 2016

Blue Canyon Country Club hosted a press conference on May 20 to introduce the Blue Canyon Open 2016. The tournament will be held on Jun 11-12, and will challenge amateur golfers from the age of 12 years old, and 55 years old and up for the senior division. Blue Canyon expects 150 Thai and foreign golfers from Phuket and surrounding provinces to join the tournament.



Sarawuthi Bhumithaworn, GM of Blue Canyon Country Club (center), Busaya Jaipiam, head of the Phuket Public Relations Dept (3rd from right) and Thikhamporn Suksawat, Deputy Managing Director of Blue Canyon Country Club (3rd from left) with Blue Canyon staff.



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First floating market opens in Phuket



The Kathu Floating Market is the first of its kind to be launched in Phuket. Photo: Chantra Flynn

THE latest in Phuket's ever-increasing list of attractions is the Kathu Floating Market, located opposite the Loch Palm Golf Course.

The first market of its kind to be launched in Phuket, it was officially opened late last month, with Phuket Vice Governor Kajornkiet Rakpanitmanee among the guests in attendance.

The market is based on a floating structure, and visitors can take a boat to move between zones.

The attractions include restaurants, coffee shops, spas and shops selling jewelry, clothing, handbags, soaps, shoes, souvenirs, and various other items.

There are also plenty of options for entertainment, including cabaret performances, Thai dancers and sword fighting dances.

The market is open daily from 10am-10pm. Entry is free for Thais (ID card required for entry). Foreigners have to pay a fee of 300 baht per person.

— Sahar Aftab Paliwala

Drive easy with new mobile app



Claim Di facilitates communication and claims between drivers and their insurance companies, so they can complete their own transactions without waiting for a surveyor. Photo: Claim Di

CLAIM DI is a new mobile application for facilitating communication and claims between drivers and their insurance companies, so they can complete their own transactions without waiting for a surveyor.

The insurance facilitator application was launched in Phuket on June 7.

It is a fully functional outsourced application for insurance services, including immediate claims at the scene without waiting, emergency calls using GPS on your phone, non-accidental claims,

car inspections, and other kinds of full service roadside assistance.

“Why Claim Di? The short answer is that it is fast, easy, free and reduces the chances of fraud. It also helps to reduce waiting time and traffic jams if there is a road accident,” said Kittinan Anuphan, the CEO and founder of Anywhere 2 Go Co, Ltd, at the grand opening of the company's new office in Phuket.

The highlight feature of this application is K4K. For those who have already downloaded the app and filled in their de-

tails, all that needs to be done in case of an accident is to shake the phone near the phone of another party who also uses Claim Di.

The application will check the validity of each side's insurance. You can also submit the photos of the damaged vehicle into the application as evidence.

After that, the insurance companies of both sides will issue claim reports via the Claim Di application. Drivers can then go their separate ways without the need to wait for surveyors.

“There are many other features of the Claim Di application. In case the other party does not use Claim Di, and you need a surveyor to come to the scene of the accident, you can use the application to notify your insurance company and a surveyor will come to the site immediately by using the GPS location from your phone,” said Mr Kittinan.

Claim Di also has a call center for those who do not use the application and would rather contact the company via phone.

“We are in partnership with almost every insurance company in Thailand,” said Mr Kittinan.

“It can be used for non-accident claims as well. For example, in case you hit the wall of your house, you just need to take photos of the damages, send them through the app, and make an appointment with the garage. It saves a lot of time,” he added.

Claim Di also has a car inspection service. If you wish to change your insurance company, you can conduct a self-inspection to facilitate the switch.

“The application also provides 24-hour roadside assistance, such as towing services, fuel provision, assistance for flat tyres, mobile mechanic and jump starting your vehicle. We are just one click away,” Mr Kittinan said.

Registration is free and comes with 500 baht worth of free roadside assistance for the first claim filed within a year.

— Chutharat Plerin



Artist inspires young minds at the British International School Phuket



Year 8 students at British International School, Phuket (BISP) were given expert advice from local artist Khun Yai (back left), who has a studio in Phuket Town and is famous for his watercolor paintings of Phuket and Southern Thailand.

Smart living starts now

Smart Life By Danny Bishop

THIS is the first in a series of articles designed to engage the ultimate architects of smart cities: the mums and dads, the social workers, the councillors, small business owners really the people that make up the city.

The next technology revolution has the potential to manage, and maybe even unwind the damage caused by the last one. Many technological and social developments are coming together to form the foundation of the next technological age. This new age will take the concept of information to a whole new level.

We are about to learn so much about everything that is happening, and has happened. If we can make sense of this information, our decision-making ability will be raised to telepathic-like abilities. What sort of decisions? Well, the best way to describe this is to go through some real world examples.

RETAIL

At the commercial level, the new age will transform the way we shop and get advertised to – in some ways similar to how Google invented data driven targeted advertising.

It's pretty common knowledge now how they seem to know what to advertise to you by collating inordinate amounts



Automated car parking in Germany stores up to 400 vehicles at a time. Photo: DooMMeer

of information about you. Google's ability to deliver you such amazing free tools (gmail, drive, maps, earth) for the sole purpose of delivering advertising to you, speaks to the incredible value of this information as it stands today.

Shops in the near future will be essentially showrooms that will resemble in many ways browsing the Amazon website. However, rather than browsing a website, you will be browsing the physical web. This will be location-based browsing, where consumers are engaged via bluetooth beacons.

A bluetooth beacon is similar in some ways to a QR code, but the beacon will actively engage the user, rather than passively wait to be scanned. So, as you approach a beacon (for example at the entrance to a store), a notification will come

up on your smartphone in response to repeated bluetooth transmissions, and convince you very politely to install an app.

Once the app is installed (and if permissions are set by the consumer appropriately, as they will in many cases), as you walk around the store and approach other beacons, you will be fed location-specific information about promotions, product information, and advertising in a way that has not really been done before, at least not without a very attentive salesperson.

It will be able to lead you to where you want to go, connect you with other similar shoppers, schedule appointments for you, and actually provide you a lot of value, similar to the way Google Maps provides a lot of value. And for what purpose? Well, in this case, it is to sell you

stuff of course, but we are all used to that. It will just do it in a far more sophisticated, efficient, and probably pleasant way.

All this, with just the installation of an app that gets pinged by bluetooth beacons, and of course a lot of cloud software. This will provide the consumer with great value, and in return the vendor just wants to learn an awful lot about you, including your precise location at all times within the store.

To be continued...

Danny Bishop is an entrepreneur and engineer enthusiastically working on 'data drive solutions'. He is the co-founder of www.organicresponse.com and is focused on energy efficiency, and efficient occupancy utilization of commercial offices, universities, hospitals, schools and data centers.

Blind Thai ensemble plays for the Rotary Club



The orchestra performs at a charity dinner in Bangkok. Photo: The Nation

THE Thai Blind Orchestra performed at a charity dinner in Bangkok last week to entertain the audience with their music.

The kids, aged between nine and 18, are members of the country's first music ensemble of its kind, which brings together young musicians either blind, visually impaired and/or suffering multiple disabilities.

The brainchild of Alongkot Chukaew, director of the Thai Elephants Research and Conservation Fund near Khao Yai National Park, the orchestra has been delighting fans of classical music since its inception in 2014.

The young musicians are taught by 23-year-old Kritsanapan Punsuk, who also conducts the band, as well as other music graduate volunteers. It is funded by several charitable organizations and all the musical instruments are donated. Every year, they perform at several fundraisers to benefit the blind and visually impaired.

– The Nation

Blood donation drive announced

RED Cross Society Phuket Chapter has announced a donation schedule for this month.

The Phuket Regional Blood Center (PRBC) often asks for donations to save the lives of Thais and foreigners.

They now need blood types O, A, and AB. The mobile blood donation clinics will be at the following locations this month:

June 14: Phuket Regional Blood Center, Phuket Town (World Blood Donor Day 2016), 8:30am-8pm

June 15: Outrigger Beach Resort Laguna Phuket, 10am-3pm

June 17: Tesco Lotus Phuket (in front of Uniqlo), 12am-6pm

June 18: Duangjitt Resort &

Spa, 10am-3pm

June 21: Deevana Plaza Phuket (Meeting Room), Patong, 1-4pm

June 21: Phuket International Hospital, 1-4pm

June 23: Kalima Resort and Spa (Kalimmax room), Patong, 1-4pm

June 23: Amari Phuket, Patong 1-4pm

June 27: Movenpick Resort and Spa, Karon Beach, 1-4pm

June 27: The Westin Siray Bay Resort and Spa Phuket, Koh Sirey, 1-4pm

June 29: JW Marriott Resort and Spa, Mai Khao, 1-4pm

For more information, call PRBC on 076-251 178 or email them at phuketrbcc@yahoo.com

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

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Optimize the boat, not the rating



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

WISE words from James Dadd, director of the RORC Rating Office, who recently took a detour from his Australia/ New Zealand tour to stop over in Samui during the Samui Regatta and talk with sailors and event organizers about the IRC rating system prevalent in this area of the world.

“We are cautious in our approach, introducing new ideas over time,” noted Dadd. “Our aim is to encourage sailing, to ensure it is fun.”

IRC is an international rating rule to handicap all types and sizes of keelboats, allowing them to race together on the same race course and at the same time. Managed and jointly operated by the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) in the UK and *Union Nationale pour la Course au Large* (UNCL) in France, a series of measurements of a boat – its sails and sail area, boat type, model, age, weight and much more – are collated and submitted to RORC who, using advanced technical formulae will issue the boat with a Time Corrector (TCC) number based on all the data received. This is the boat’s ‘handicap’.

In a race scenario, a boat’s elapsed time (the time it has taken the boat to complete the race) is multiplied by the TCC



Left: All boats are treated the same and subject to the same method of calculation and formulae. Right: James Dadd, director of the RORC Rating Office. Photos: Gazette file

number to give the boat’s corrected time for that race. The boat with the shortest corrected time is the winner.

The IRC rule is unpublished, meaning the method and formulae used to calculate the TCC are secret to the RORC. All boats are treated the same and subject to the same method of calculation and formulae – no matter what the size, model or age of the boat – but the rule details remain secret to prevent designers from taking advantage and designing IRC-targeted boats.

The objective is to try to remove the perceived barriers to going out on the water and racing, by making it easy for a boat to receive a rating based on eas-

ily obtainable information and IRC’s experience with similar boats around the world. Once a boat has a rating they can continue on that rating or start to optimize their boat to improve performance or as Dadd says, “Optimize your boat, not the rating.”

According to Dadd, there are 6,500 boats around the world using the IRC system and the aim is always to provide fair and fun racing.

Stressing the importance of listening to sailors and hearing their feedback on the rating system and how it works in practice around the world, ensures RORC continues to develop it in the best way pos-



sible for the entire fleet. The rule is progressive and ultimately represented by the IRC Owners’ Associations.

“We have lost the America’s Cup [to a multihull format] and Volvo Ocean Race to one-design. We don’t have these top events to innovate, the innovation of which then normally trickles down to all the fleet.”

The IRC rating system is inclusive, it’s for keelboats of all types. “The majority of the IRC fleet around the world are cruiser/ racers or racer/cruisers. The Maxi’s, for example, only account for perhaps 100 boats out of the 6,500 IRC rated boats in the world right now.”

“Our aim is to protect the

fleet to provide a fun racing environment for boats that like to race against each other.”

The premier fleet of racing boats in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand were at the recent Samui Regatta and more than 30 sailors enjoyed Dadd’s casual and frank discussion of the rule, its recent changes and areas that are currently being reviewed.

Hosted in Samui by the organizers of the Samui Regatta, Simon James, IRC Rule Authority for South East Asia, said, “It’s a rare opportunity for the sailors to meet the director of the ratings office. It’s actually a chance for both sailors and RORC themselves to discuss and listen to each other. This interaction is essential to ensure the IRC rule represents the majority of keelboat sailors around the world and delivers a fair, unbiased handicap system for racing in all locations and all conditions.”

For more information on IRC in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, contact Simon James at info@irc-sea.com or visit www.irc-sea.com.

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

Toyota ‘Fast Fun Fest’ returns

SAPAN Hin is revving up to host the first round of the sixth annual Toyota Motorsport ‘Fast Fun Fest’ in July.

Phuket Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul joined Toyota executives at the event press conference in Phuket Town last Friday as the motoring brand entered its 30th year in motorsports.

Toyota will also hold the first ever ‘Hilux Revo One Make Race’ for vehicles with 2,400cc engines; a real test of durability and performance, said executives.

The other categories of the competition include the ‘Corolla Altis One Make Race’; ‘Vios One Make Race’; and ‘Vios One Make Race Lady Cup’.

“Phuket is the host city for the first round of this year’s series, to be held July 2-3,” said



Phuket is the only province to host the event six years in a row. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

Toyota Pearl Managing Director Chaipat Na-Ranong.

“The next four rounds are scheduled to be held August 13-14 in Nakhon Ratchasima; September 17-18 in Chiang Mai; October 8-9 in Buriram; and then November 25-27 in

Chonburi.”

A variety of special performances and other motor-sport related activities for all the family are planned for the Phuket race day.

Four local schools are competing in a cheerleading

contest: Phuket Technology College; Phuket Wittayalai School; Satee Phuket School; and Srinagarindra the Princess Mother School, Phayao.

“Motorsport fans, students, car lovers and anyone else interested in participating in an exhilarating range of activities is welcome to join the event,” said Mr Chaipat.

“We are also keen to raise public awareness on road safety while give people a chance to learn more about motorsports.”

Phuket is the only province to have hosted the event six years in a row.

“We are thankful for all the support we receive in Phuket. Even though it rains most of the time that we are here, people still come out to support us,” said Mr Chaipat.

– Chutharat Plerin

Slow ride in the South



Cyclists at the slow ride event. Photo: The Nation

‘SLOW Life Ride in Hidden Cities’, part of the Nation Broadcasting Corp and the Tourism Authority of Thailand’s bid to get more cyclists touring the upcountry provinces, began last Sunday with 300 people riding around Phatthalung.

The event is designed to boost visitor numbers, promote sustainable tourism and raise environmental awareness.

The remaining rides are set for Rayong, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Pathom and Lamphun.

– The Nation

A dead ocean means a dead planet



WHETHER it's mantas or methane, protection or disposal, the world needs to get its act together.

First some facts. Half of the world's carbon dioxide is absorbed by the oceans. That the seas are a sink for CO2 is wonderful; it's just that they are being damaged in the process. Hence, the dramatically increased levels of carbonic acid. One result of this acidification is that shellfish have trouble growing shells; another is a decline in key oxygenators: zoo-plankton levels have dropped three per cent in just 15 years. Remember, it was the oceans that gave us life as we know it today. Remember, too, that land animals only began to rule the earth after sufficient oxygen had become available. A dead ocean means a dead planet.

Far too many of these creatures have already perished. About 250,000 thousand sharks are butchered every day for shark fin soup. While the trade in manta rays is less in the spotlight, one island in Indonesia has, for years, been entirely dependent on the trade. Why? Because Chinese profiteers have stimulated the grisly business by claiming that manta gills can cure conditions such as cancer. As the flesh is too pungent to eat, it is mostly left to rot.

Talking of rotting, consider methane. Produced worldwide in much smaller quantities, it is nonetheless 25 times more ef-



1.5 billion cows and other domestic livestock emit more methane than the world's entire transport system.

fective at absorbing heat than carbon dioxide. This is bad news for global warming. A primary component of natural gas, it is released into our atmosphere by oil refineries, mining activities and increasingly from decomposing landfills. Every rubbish dump on Phuket – and there are thousands of them – is exhaling methane, but agriculture is the heaviest producer of CH4. Consider this: 1.5 billion cows and domestic livestock emit more methane than the world's entire transport system. Imagine the positive impact if we all gave up meat one day a week.

The whole shebang has been exacerbated by the vicious circle that is climate change. For the first time in 11,000 years, vast expanses of Siberia, Canada and Alaska – maybe a fifth of the globe's land mass – have started to thaw. The rise in temperature has unlocked

frozen methane trapped for aeons in the Arctic permafrost. For when these upper layers of frozen soil begin to thaw, deposited organic material, mostly peat, begins to decompose, releasing both CO2 and CH4. The projected figures are staggering: 205 gigatons of carbon dioxide on course to be released into the atmosphere. Even the northern landscape is changing. Rock-hard ground has already been transformed into a patchwork of muddy lakes.

Is there any hope on any front? Well, some help is at hand for beleaguered sharks and rays. Many developing countries are slowly realizing that marine tourism is infinitely more profitable than lifeless fish on a marble slab. A dead manta ray or whale shark is worth a few hundred dollars at source; sight-seeing marine tourism can generate millions of dollars. For this reason, In-

donesia is slowly becoming a potential haven for these magnificent creatures.

The Philippine government reintroduced a fishing ban on mantas in 2002.

As for carbon dioxide and methane, the solution, as we all know, is to develop natural energy sources and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Acid rain and global warming are the direct result of green house gases pouring into our skies. Capture biogas from landfills and use it as an energy source.

Additionally, educate the old as well as the young. Maybe our children will then inherit a natural world worth inheriting.

If you have gardening or environmental concerns, contact Patrick at drpaccampbell@gmail.com. Many of his creative and academic publications can be found at his website: Green galoshes Wordpress.

Farmers urged to diversify



PM pushes farmers to grow alternatives to rice. Photo: fir0002

PRIME Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha has advised farmers to grow crops that are suitable to current weather conditions.

Gen Prayut made the comments at an award ceremony held on National Rice and Farmer's Day on June 5. The event recognized 23 outstanding farmers and gave representatives of a farmer's association the chance to meet the Prime Minister.

Gen Prayut said farmers need to adapt to climate change and advances in technology. He affirmed that the government will provide them with the means to successfully grow their crops.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Gen Chatchai Sarikulya clarified that he did not forbid farmers from growing rice in April but encouraged them to postpone crop cultivation to July, when the rainy season starts.

The minister will also encourage farmers to grow other types of crops while water resources were too scarce for full-scale rice farming.

- NNT

Tip of the week Power up your plants

SOME of us use hormone rooting powder when planting cuttings or even seeds. More easily obtained is a cheap and non-toxic alternative: a mixture of cinnamon and aspirin. Take a teaspoon of cinnamon powder from your herb rack, add it to a glass of luke-warm water and drop in a tablet of soluble aspirin. Mix thoroughly and allow to cool.

An unlikely aid to germination and growth? Here's a simple explanation. Cuttings and seeds dipped in the solution for an hour or two will have absorbed a potential growth stimulant [the salicylic acid in aspirin], which also



Cinamon is a natural growth stimulant. Photo: pixabay

confers the benefit of what is called "systemic acquired resistance" which improves resistance to cold, drought or disease. And the cinnamon (a tropical tree bark) will offer a natural barrier to infection, as it contains anti-fungal properties, which help prevent attacks on seedlings and cuttings such as damping off.

Aerial photography is the future



By The Book
Kevin Hodges

PROFESSIONAL real estate photography is more essential than ever before when marketing any type of property for sale. Between 2008 and 2012 real estate searches on Google grew over 253 per cent, with 90 per cent of buyers beginning their searches online (nearly 30 per cent of those using mobile devices). Listings with professional photos generated an average of 139 per cent more clicks than those without.

These figures explain why it is so important to have great quality photos when selling a property. Most people today have less spare time and greater access to the internet, therefore prospective buyers will spend hours poring over real estate listings online (rather than physical visits), and they are always going to be most attracted to the properties with the best photos. As the saying goes: 'a picture speaks a thousand words'.

Professional Real Estate photography now covers virtual 360-degree property tours, aerial photography, aerial video productions as well as interior/exterior photography. These are ideal for



This is a new advanced drone with high definition 4k stabilized video and still camera, GPS stabilization, automatic obstacle avoidance, one of the many used by companies on the island. Photo: Doody Butch

villas and condos for sale; holiday rental properties; new property developments; real estate agents; land owners; businesses; architects; hotels; schools; marine industry and many more.

Most people are now familiar with the 360-degree virtual tours, but this is still greatly under-utilized by sellers. A 360-degree tour will boost

Listings with professional photos generated an average of 139 per cent more clicks than those without

your online marketing to a higher level. Potential buyers can view a 360-degree virtual walk-through anytime and anywhere in the world from their computer or mobile device.

Virtual Tours help your property achieve more exposure, with listings receiving substantially more views than listings without a tour. They also allow you to have a 24/7 permanently Open House,

without the presence of a real estate agent or home seller to show the property. This is even more useful in a market such as Phuket where the majority of buyers are not here all year round.

360-degree virtual tours are attracting buyers unable to view and set property apart from others, especially for holiday rental and long-term bookings, giving the tenant confidence in villa quality, facilities and location.

Aerial photography – sell without viewing, see topography, access, neighbors, local

utilities, land construction exact heights. It also allows owners and buyers to view from any height and can show distances to beaches.

For hotels/resorts – a combination of 360 virtual tour and photography can turn website visitors into real bookings and is also perfect for your sales team showing aerial overview, facilities, and walk-through. A motion video that includes aerial/interiors/lifestyle and sound track makes a powerful sales tool.

With access to drones, high quality cameras and editing software now widely available, the cost of having high quality professional photos or video is no longer prohibitive and is an essential tool in generating maximum interest in the property you are trying to sell.

We always strongly recommend to all owners that they should get high quality photos that often can be arranged through their real estate broker.

For more information about this article, contact Kevin Hodges, Siam Air Cam (SAC) quoting Professional Property Photos. Call him on 076-324 042 Email: info@siamaircam.com; www.new.siamrealestate.com/services/siam-air-cam/

Pruksa innovates bright future



Pruksa Avenue right here in Kathu, Phuket. Photo: Zohaib Sikander

THE company is looking into innovation to sustain its growth well into the future. "We have set three goals – to be one of the top 10 real estate companies in Asia, to be one of the top brands and to grow in a sustainable manner," Lersuk Chuladesa, Pruksa's co-chief executive officer, said on May 26.

Management consulting company McKinsey was retained to draft a new corporate strategy, which involves establishing a holding company that

will focus on recurring income.

However, target segments will remain unchanged – housing for the low-end and premium markets that ask for over 10 million baht for a home, 7mn baht for a townhouse and 5mn baht for a condominium.

Another highlight to achieve sustainability is innovation. Since 2004, 7 precast plants have been set up with a total annual capacity of 6.5 million square meters.

They can produce finished

walls, floors, rest rooms and other sections for over 1,000 housing units each month.

Using precast components shortens the construction of a high-rise building by a year. Steel waste from housing construction is down to 0.5 per cent from 30-35 per cent in the past.

Constructed models showcase four housing megatrends that Pruksa wants to introduce to Thailand – energy-efficiency, smart building, multi-generational housing and security. To be completed by the end of June with consultation with German architect Martin Schoch, future models will focus on two megatrends – multi-generational housing and energy efficiency.

"I have to admit that homes for the elderly will be a bit tough in Thailand. However, we are ready to explore possibilities," Mr Lersuk said.

– The Nation

Governor wants the island to go green

GOVERNOR Chamroen Tipayapongtada praised Siam Cement Group's (SCG) newest building in greater Bangkok, which incorporates the latest design concepts.

The governor urged Phuket's developers to follow suit, during the Phuket & Southern Thailand FM & Green Building Seminar on May 27.

SCG, the largest cement supplier in Southeast Asia, moved into its new headquarters on its 100th anniversary, said SCG portfolio management executive Panupan Papan.

Mr Panupan said that building sustainably means balancing between the delicate needs of the environment, the economy and society. "The true definition of a green building lies in its sustainability."

He said that the SCG head-

quarters was specifically designed to limit the energy needed to regulate the building's temperature, lighting and water consumption requirements.

"Phuket's builders should not disturb their surrounding natural environment by clearing forests or building on a gradient, which may cause erosion. As a tropical island, it's important for developers to adopt green building designs to preserve the natural environment. It's crucial for builders to incorporate their developments into the environment, rather than the other way around," said Mr Panupan.

To that effect, Mr Panupan recommended the use of renewable building materials, including bamboo and recycled metal and stone.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

DSI to launch anti-fraud land app

Potential buyers can instantly check land borders on mobile devices

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE Department of Special Investigations (DSI) announced it will launch a mobile application, allowing users to evaluate properties remotely before buying or selling land.

The 'DSI Map on Mobile' application is expected to debut within the next couple of months.

This announcement comes after a string of land raids, prosecutions of incorrect or falsified land documents and the revocation of titles in Phuket.

"We've designed an application that will reflect the database of land-related information. People will now be able to immediately check from their mobiles whether the land they are planning to buy overlaps with public land, protected forests or national parks," said DSI Deputy Director Pong-In Intarakhao.

"It's important for potential buyers to check property lines and legalities prior to purchase of land. We know that recently many investors have purchased land that was unlawfully issued," he added.

Many of the buyers were unaware of the illicit nature of their purchases, and have lost



The mobile app will be backed by a DSI database, which will help potential buyers check land boundaries prior to purchases, thus saving them legal issues with the government in the future. Photo: Gazette File

large sums of money. This has damaged both Thailand's reputation and its investment climate.

DSI officials said Maps on Mobile is about 90 per cent complete, and is currently being

tested.

"We have data on almost every plot of land in the country. When we are ready, we will make it available to download for free. At the moment, it is available only in

Thai, but we are planning to develop an English language version after the Thai language version is released."

"Hopefully, it will reduce the number of land fraud cases in Thailand," he said.

Thai hotelier invests in the Highlands



The Columba Hotel Inverness. Photo: Columba Hotel

THAILAND-BASED Compass Hospitality Group is involved in the business for over 30 years, and on May 26, announced its entrance into the Scottish market with Columba Hotel Inverness, located on the banks of the River Ness and southern Scottish Highlands.

This hotel is the latest addition to the company's portfolio, which comprises of properties in Phuket, Chonburi, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin and Bangkok hotels. Its location provides convenient access to shops, restaurants, churches, museums and attractions that cater to different lifestyle preferences, while its own restaurant offers dining options by the riverside.

The hotel consists of 82 guestrooms and suites, each with classic designs albeit equipped with modern-day lifestyle conveniences.

- *Phuket Gazette*

InterContinental inks deal for new Phuket property

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) signed a management agreement with Proud Resort Phuket Co Ltd to develop InterContinental Phuket Resort as part of the luxury project MontAzure on the island's west coast.

Scheduled to open in 2019, the resort will be located on Kamala Beach, within a well-enclosed bay.

The resort is just a short drive away from Patong Beach, and provides easy access to Phuket International Airport as well.

"Phuket has always been an important destination in Southeast Asia for IHG, with the island's tourist arrivals recording double digit year-on-year growth since 2011," said Alan Watts, chief operating



The new resort will be located at Kamala Beach as part of a luxury project. Photo: InterContinental Hotels Group

officer at IHG.

"We're glad to be able to work with our long-term partner Proud Phuket Resorts Co on what will be a key resort property for us in a prime des-

tinuation in Thailand."

The resort will be the sixth IHG property in the Greater Phuket area, and the 19th IHG property in Thailand.

- *Phuket Gazette*

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KATA BEACH BARGAIN



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- Fluent in English, has full experiences of telesales skills
- Able to work under pressure and reach target set each month
- Be on time and responsible on your job assignment

Benefit:

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

Tourism always the top priority

By Chutharat Plerin

SANTI Pawai has been working in Phuket since 2012 as the director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Phuket Office (MOTS). He was promoted last year to oversee Phuket tourism.

Mr Santi, who is originally from Lopburi, is the head of Phuket's Tourist Assistance Center at the airport, as well as the Tourism Business and Guide Registration Office. He took over the position of director at the Institute of Personnel Development for Physical Education and Sports, at the Department of Physical Education in Bangkok on June 8.

Mr Santi said it will be necessary for the incoming director of the MOTS to build up the island's standards, in order to ensure tourist safety and have them return in the future.

"Our main purpose is to develop and support tourism, especially in terms of safety, in order to boost tourists' confidence when travelling on the island. We've put together a plan for this coming year, and I think it will be a very smooth transition, as whomever re-

places me will be qualified," he said.

He believes that getting tour operators under control and on the same page as government officials will be of the utmost importance.

"If tourists are impressed by tour guides, it's likely they'll be impressed by Phuket as well," he said.

Mr Santi was a champion for the cause of Thais retaining the exclusive right to sell tour packages.

"Identification cards have been issued to nearly 1,000 people who have been trained and approved to sell tour packages throughout the island. Card holders are Thai nationals only, and must carry their IDs at all times," he said.

He also enforced stricter rules for tourism business registration. Under the new policy,

all shareholders are required to appear for question- ing during the registration process, in order to prevent nominee issues.

Mr Santi also made it mandatory for all tour companies to have insurance in place to take care of any medical expenses needed for injured or deceased tourists.

"Should a complaint about a tour company or operator be filed by a tourist, company representatives will be called on to come in and explain the incident. I wanted these tour companies to be competing in quality of services, not in pricing," he said.

He aimed to crack down on substandard services and said that officials were on the lookout for tour companies who offer lower-than-average prices.

"It's damaging to the industry when two companies are hagglng with tourists and one

offers a much cheaper price. Tourists will then begin to doubt people quoting them honest prices," Mr Santi said.

Mr Santi said it was important to deal strictly with the influx of illegal tour guides, and said that those caught working illegally will now be deported and blacklisted.

"Compa-

nies who continue to hire illegal guides will have their business licenses revoked and face the highest penalty under the law.

I hope that by strictly enforcing these measures, we can make Phuket a better tourist destination," Mr Santi said.



Our main purpose is to develop and support tourism, especially in terms of safety, in order to boost tourists' confidence when travelling on the island

- Santi Pawai, ex-director of Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Phuket Office



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