

# Phuket Gazette

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‘I HAVE TO HAVE THE FIRST REFUSAL ON THE TOP BID. IF I MATCH IT, I GET IT’

## Inside the deal

**Royal Phuket Marina's founder opens up about his agreement with a mystery investor**

By Simon J Hand

ROYAL Phuket Marina (RPM) is on the market.

The announcement of the 'luxury lifestyle development's' impending sale comes as a surprise to many industry analysts, particularly as RPM Chairman Gulu Lalvani has often referred to the development as his legacy. Just last year, Mr Lalvani announced a 5 billion baht investment plan for the marina.

In an exclusive interview with the *Gazette* earlier this week, Mr Lalvani explained he was approached by a private equity investor at the beginning of January.

Taking a break from his high finance life in New York to enjoy a yachting vacation around the Andaman, the holiday-maker reportedly contacted Mr Lalvani to make him an offer.

"I said, 'it's not for sale'. I told him this is my personal hobby and so on," Mr Lalvani said.

While Mr Lalvani refused to reveal the identity of the potential buyer, he said that his own research into the man and his company found considerable investments in the hospitality industry worldwide.

Mr Lalvani's anonymous investor reportedly holds significant assets in mixed-use developments in the US, including in Florida's entertainment capital Orlando, and similar developments in California.

"He kept following up and I kept telling him no," Mr Lalvani said. "Then he sent two people from the US and appointed



A mock-up of RPM's post-sale master plan, which shows a water park surrounded by hotels, condominiums and villas. Photo: Royal Phuket Marina

an architect, saying he would pay for the architect to put together a master-plan of what he wanted to do here."

Beyond the opportunity to get a free master-plan from a major property investor, Mr Lalvani said he was impressed by the investor's willingness to do whatever it took to convince him to take the deal.

"He said he would pay for the master-plan, 'You have nothing to lose and if we can't do a deal you can have it with pleasure,'" Mr Lalvani said. "Well, that sounded very good to me. By the middle of March, he had convinced me that he was very serious and the master-plan went ahead."

RPM, located on the island's east coast, has appointed JLL Hotels & Hospitality

Group to handle the sale through an 'expression of interest' campaign.

That master-plan includes 2,700 hotel rooms, divided among several brand-name hotels, in low-rise structures arranged around a large water park, as well as an artificial beach and beach club. The plan also features time-share villas, tourist facilities and a conference center, spread across RPM's almost 200 rai of land.

The plan is reminiscent of Mr Lalvani's original vision for the marina complex, but with a significant difference in the market focus.

In 2002, Mr Lalvani was among...

*Continued on Page 4*

### 20 foreigners arrested in Patong raids

COMPLAINTS from local vendors about illegal foreign workers led to 20 arrests in Patong last week. Some were in violation of their work permits, while others had no work permit at all.

*Full Story Page 5*

### BUSINESS



Exploring the day-to-day workings of the luxury car industry in Phuket.

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## LOCAL NEWS

## Briefly

## Boat propeller kills teen tourist

A SPEEDBOAT crew member was charged for reckless driving causing death, after a Chinese tourist was severely injured when he was caught in the boat's propeller on July 6.

Li Yuheng, 18, was aboard the *Poseidon 959* along with 33 other tourists. The boat was headed from Phuket to Phi Phi and had moored at Pileh Bay for tourists to swim.

A crewman, who was not the driver, failed to check the aft of the boat before repositioning the vessel due to rough waves.

Mr Li sustained severe injuries on his right arm and both legs. He underwent emergency surgery (ICU), but succumbed to his injuries at Krabi Hospital on the same day.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Mobile phone thief, alleged rapist arrested

A SUSPECTED mobile phone thief was arrested on the night of July 6, after police tracked him down when he used the stolen phone.

Wiwat Wiroondok, 20, had a Samsung phone, a watch and several other stolen items in his

## Krabi rains cause flooding, damages



Heavy rains have deteriorated roads, farms and homes in Krabi. Overnight storms on July 6 caused flooding in the areas downhill from Phanom Bencha mountain, just north of Krabi Town. Officials from the Krabi office of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said a major road, 30 rai of palm-nut farms and 10 houses were damaged in the flooding. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

possession at the time of the arrest.

“A woman named ‘Kan’ reported to police that about 5am on July 2, a man broke into her room while she was sleeping,” said Kamala Police Deputy Superintendent Sophon Borirak. “She said he attempted to rape her, but she woke up and fought him off, so he ran away. She later realized that her phone and some other items were missing.”

Police tracked the activity on

Ms Kan’s phone, which led them to Mr Wiwat. He confessed to stealing the items from Ms Kan’s house.

Mr Wiwat added that he took her keys to open the front door, stole her mobile phone and whatever else he could get his hands on. He then returned to the house later to molest her.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Phuket to get 1k free Internet spots by 2017

ONE thousand free wireless internet hotspots are to be made available in Phuket in time for the tourist high season at the end of this year.

The hotspots will be made available in Phuket Town and Patong, as part of Phuket’s development as a ‘smart city.’ Thailand’s Software Industry Promotion Agency, announced.

A provincial official said that the hotspots will also be used to record the numbers of tourists and learn their internet habits.

Officials did not confirm whether users of the free WiFi would have to register before accessing the hotspots.

– Kongleaphy Keam

## Krabi officials thank tourists for Ao Nang beach cleanup

PUBLIC officials in Krabi began picking up trash that had washed ashore along a two kilometer stretch of Ao Nang beach on July 13.

The officers were joined by private companies, as well as tourists, who pitched in to clear the beach after the heavy rains and strong surf washed trash up along the Ao Nang shoreline.

Krabi officials said they were concerned about the effects of the trash on Krabi’s main tourist attraction, as Ao Nang’s white beaches have turned brown and black by the plastics and unnatural trash strewn about its shores.

“We really appreciate the tourists who came out today to help us pick up the beach,” Muang Krabi District Chief Suriyun Damrongkul told the *Gazette*. “The plastics and trash littering the shoreline pose a big problem for Krabi tourism.”

The beach cleanup is expected to last for several days.

– Kongleaphy Keam

## One dead, one injured after motorbike crash

A THAI woman is dead and a man was injured after their motorbike flipped over when it hit a pothole on July 12.

Locals told Thalang Police that the accident occurred behind Thai Watsadu on Srisoonthorn Road at around 11pm. They complained that the same pothole has been responsible for a series of accidents along the roadway.

Ms Anongwadee Boonsop, 24, succumbed to her injuries while being transferred to Thalang Hospital. Mr Pisit Tongkam, 21, was also transferred to Thalang Hospital, but recovered from his injuries and was later released.

– Winai Sarot

## Emergency personnel train in CMEX 16

ROYAL Thai Navy specialists boarded and detained ‘terrorists’ during the nationwide Crisis Management Exercise 2016 (CMEX 16).

Between June 30 and July 5, emergency personnel simulated crises and carried out response plans on Cape Panwa and near Phuket International Airport.

Responders in Phuket drilled for emergency situations, including the hijacking of a yacht off Panwa and a plane at Phuket airport. Crisis response personnel also trained to board and search illegal fishing boats, suppress the smuggling of illegal workers into the country and in deep sea rescue tactics.

– Chutharat Plerin

## Wall collapses after downpour

HEAVY rain caused a concrete containment wall in Rassada to collapse on July 11.

The Disaster Prevention and Mitigation’s Phuket Office said 100 meters of wall behind the electricity plant, gave out during flooding, blocking one lane of the road nearby.

No one was injured in the incident. On July 12, two backhoes were sent to demolish the wall.

– Chutharat Plerin



# Boost for grassroots agro-business

PHUKET pineapples, batik, goat's milk and lobster are four locally-produced agricultural products to be branded and promoted by Pracha Rath Rak Samakkee to help boost the province's grassroots economy.

Pracha Rath Rak Samakkee Phuket was first launched on March 31, as a government-backed corporation with the aim of developing and promoting the province's strengths, such as tourism, agriculture and locally-produced goods under the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) banner.

"There is much local wisdom surrounding these agricultural products, which are high-quality products worthy of a place on the international market, but have never been effectively marketed due to a lack of local marketing skills," said Pracha Rath's Orasa Tosawang on July 8.

"Now it's time to bring about change by helping promote these grassroots enterprises and improve their standard of living," said Ms Orasa.

Initiated by Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda, the Pracha Rath project's ultimate goal is to boost local economies through collaboration between the government, the private sector and local communities.

Phuket was selected as a pi-



Phuket-made batik journals and notebooks on display as part of Pracha Rath's promotional campaign. Photos: Gazette file

lot province, with the aim of strengthening the overall grassroots economy, which in turn is expected to strengthen the nation's economy.

If successful, similar initiatives are planned for Petchaburi, Udon Thani, Chiang Mai and Buriram provinces.

"The aim of the initiative was to increase income for the rural population and to improve the standard of living in southern provinces through three strategic areas: agriculture, product processing and community tourism," Mr Anupong said in May.

"Pracha Rath operates as the middleman between local producers of agricultural products and big businesses owners.

Simply put, locals have quality products that big businesses need. It's a win-win solution," said Mr Anupong.

Topping the list of Phuket's home-grown products is the Phuket Pineapple, which has a Pracha Rath price tag of 1,500 baht.

Currently, only 50 locally-grown pineapples meet the criteria to merit the 1,500-baht price tag. Another 50 are expected to be ripe and ready to eat by October.

Asked how Pracha Rath could justify the high price for pineapples, Ms Orasa said it was part of the marketing strategy to boost Phuket's identity as a source of quality agricultural products.

"Nonthaburi Province, for

example, has durian which sells for 210,000 baht, after the Nonthaburi governor launched a durian promotion campaign. The campaign put the province in the spotlight and it became well-known nationwide, so why shouldn't Phuket have a 1,500 baht pineapple?" Ms Orasa asked.

"The pricey Phuket pineapples are really a gimmick to help promote Phuket as a producer of quality pineapples," she said.

Ms Orasa said the ultimate aim was to raise the price of the average Phuket pineapple from 30 baht to at least 70 baht each.

"We have already talked with the Phuket Hotel Association, and more than 50 hotels are ready to help out by buying pineapples from locals at 70 baht a piece. The rest is up to local producers to grow quality pineapples with guidance from our experts," said Ms Orasa.

Batik is another unique Phuket product that has lacked promotion, according to Pracha Rath representatives.

"We are going to help those batik makers raise the quality of their product with modern designs," Ms Orasa said. "Umbrellas, bags and notebooks, are among the specific products we are promoting, as well as new packaging and custom designs with the help of Miss Grand

Phuket as the Phuket Batik Ambassador."

Ms Orasa said Pracha Rath is targeting hotels and souvenir shops to sell the batik products.

"The outlay for the batik bag producers is about 200 to 400 baht but they will sell in the shops for about 1,200 baht, while the umbrellas will fetch around 450 baht each," she said.

Pracha Rath has also launched campaigns to promote Phuket goat's milk and lobster, representatives confirmed.

Ms Orasa said Phuket goat's milk has won several national awards and will be promoted through a new marketing campaign.

"There are several beauty products derived from goat's milk, such as body lotions, soaps and shower cream," she said.

The annual Phuket Lobster Festival, August 1-31 now falls under the Pracha Rath banner, with the group aiming to promote the crustacean as a signature menu item in Phuket restaurants.

"More than 30 restaurants in Phuket are joining the lobster festival with their own Phuket lobster signature dishes. A number of restaurants will be featuring lobsters, Phuket pineapples and goat's milk," said Ms Orasa.

— *Kongleaphy Keam*

## Hilltribe woman killed in Phuket Town shooting

POLICE are still searching for two suspects who allegedly shot a woman in the head, killing her in the early hours of July 8 in Phuket Town.

Phuket City Police responded to a reported attack on a souvenir shop on Phang Nga Road shortly after 4am.

The *Gazette* has confirmed that the woman was a hilltribe, non-Thai citizen from Chiang Mai, named Wenlang Sae-Lee.

The 22 year old was found lying in a pool of blood, after being hit by a 9mm bullet above her left eyebrow.

Ms Wenlang's bereaved husband, Tajer Sae-Kwang, 31, told police that the couple was having drinks in the closed shop with two friends when the shooting began.

Police reported that a blue



The shop where the shooting occurred. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

awning was covering the shop entrance at the time of the incident.

"The bullets came from out of nowhere," Mr Tajer said. "We had no idea who was shooting at us."

Police said CCTV footage showed two men walk up to the front of the shop and fire

seemingly randomly into it before running away. Four bullet cases were recovered from the scene.

"We are keen to arrest the suspects as soon as possible," said Lt Col Taksin Pinyothepprathan of Phuket City Police.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*



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## 573 drivers arrested in 3 days

FIVE hundred seventy-three drivers were arrested during a three-day crackdown in Phuket from July 3-5.

Royal Thai Army personnel and Phuket law enforcement officers set up checkpoints throughout the island, in what officials from the Department of Land Transport (DLT) called an attempt to boost Thailand's image.

DLT director-general Sanit Promwong, said the crackdown was aimed at taxi drivers and public transport drivers.

Mr Sanit said the crackdown ticketed and fined 344 unregistered or unlicensed taxis.

"Another common violation was driving customers off of designated routes, for which the maximum fine was 10,000 baht," Mr Sanit said. "And modifying the taxi, by installing things like spot lights, which is quite common and carries a 5,000 baht fine."

On July 7, the chief policy adviser at the Phuket Land



Officers inspect a taxi bus during the crackdown. Photo: Winai Sarot

Transport Office (PLTO), Jaturong Kaewkasi, said the provincial government will continue the crackdown.

"As the officers from Bangkok have left, it falls on us to continue to carry forward the same standard," Mr Jaturong said. "This is a very good start, and we needed our superiors to begin the crackdown. Now we'll be the ones carrying it out."

Mr Jaturong said the crackdown targeted not just taxi drivers, but the drivers of all kinds of public vehicles across the island.

"Those who are repeatedly found in violation of transportation laws, will have their public commercial licenses permanently revoked," Mr Jaturong said.

The nation-wide crackdown is an attempt by the DLT to improve Thailand's image. Mr Sanit said similar crackdowns will take place in Bangkok, Pattaya, Krabi, Chiang Mai and Samui.

Anyone who wishes to file complaints against bad drivers should contact the DLT hotline by dialing 1584.

— Chutharat Plerin

## RPM for sale

From page 1

... a number of interested parties encouraging the Thai government to adjust its restrictive taxing structure that bulked foreign yachts with foreign carpets and levied a punitive 200 per cent plus tax on their import. With the changes in the excise and tax laws, the flow of new yachts arriving in Phuket's waters jumped considerably and Mr Lalvani began building RPM.

The development was to take place over multiple phases, including a second marina basin, high-end condos and luxury villas. What exists as RPM today is just the first phase of that original plan.

The collapse in tourist arrivals following the 2004 tsunami and a series of international economic crises stalled development of further phases. It was not until just over a year ago, Mr Lalvani said, that he felt confident enough to announce his intention to bring in new investment to kick start further phase development.

However, in the years since the completion of the first phase of the marina, the demographic of visitors to the island has changed dramatically.

"I didn't expect this demographic," Mr Lalvani said. "I thought there would be more and more Europeans." Mr Lalvani said his original vision for RPM was that it would be the cornerstone of a re-imagined Phuket that would become the 'Monte Carlo of Asia.'

"I did genuinely think like that," he said. "I discounted the Chinese economy progressing so fast. So there I was wrong. What is happening now is Europeans are still coming, but Asians are coming in greater numbers."

Mr Lalvani experienced first hand the shift in tourism demographics, as an estimated 30,000 Asian tourists now use the marina each month as a jump off point for speedboat tours to Phang Nga Bay and Phi Phi. Good business, but definitely not the business he was expecting.

According to JLL's "Information Memorandum" on the RPM offering, which the company distributed to about 100 of its top property clients around the globe, 63 cities in 20 countries now have direct flights to Phuket. Nearly half of those flights originate from China.

"40 per cent of the world's population lives within five hours of Phuket," Mr Lalvani says. "It was direct flights that

made the Chinese market. India will be next, if they get direct flights. Once they get going... This place hasn't seen anything yet. The future of Phuket for tourism is incredible."

The new investor's master-plan focuses on the mid-range family market. The change in demographic emphasis will also bring the development in line with the Tourism Authority of Thailand's latest shift in marketing position, from a value-for-money destination to a value-for-experience destination, purportedly driving tourist spend through longer stays and higher quality experiences.

JLL has set a ten-week window on the expression of interest, with an expectation of serious offers to be on the table before the end of September. But with an eager investor already on the hook, why did Mr Lalvani appoint JLL in the first place?

"We couldn't agree a price. Obviously someone coming in wants to have the lowest [price], but the seller wants the highest – and I wasn't wanting to sell it anyway," Mr Lalvani said. "So, he came up with this idea: 'Why don't you put it on the market? I have to have the first refusal on the top bid. If I match it, I get it. If I don't match it, go ahead.' So, that's the legal agreement that we signed."

At this stage, however, Mr Lalvani has not yet made any commitment to sell RPM and says he would still be happy to continue to build his legacy in the years ahead. But the crux of the issue is, who will carry that legacy into the future?

"To be frank with you, my children, unfortunately, are not turned on by living in Phuket," he said. "My son has a very successful business and is jet-setting around the world, my daughter is married in England and doesn't want to move from there and Zoran [his youngest], I was hoping, would take over here, but he's told me: 'Don't count on me, I want to live in Europe.' That's a bit of a disappointment."

"For me [the offer] is timely. I'm 77. I don't feel it but I see the potential. There are more boats here than ever before. And if there's the best water park here, surrounded by all categories of hotel for whatever your budget, and the best marina and the best beach club, where else can you go?" Mr Lalvani asked.

"People go where their kids can be happy."

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# Police arrest more migrants

COMPLAINTS from local vendors about illegal foreign workers led to the arrest of 20 foreigners working in Patong last week.

Phuket Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul spoke about the arrests at a press conference on July 12.

"We found the illegal foreign laborers at 15 shophouses along Taweewong road. Some sold food and drink, which is a category reserved exclusively for Thais," said V/Gov Prajiad.

"The laborers were from Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma and Vietnam. Some did not have work permits, while others were in violation of their work permits."

Police seized two motorbikes, along with some of the merchandise being sold at the shops, for legal processing.

"These workers also annoy tourists by constantly attempting to lure them into their shops," said Phuket Provincial Labor Office Chief Suttipong Saisakares.

The suspects were charged under the Working of Alien Act 2551. Police are now investigating their employers.



The suspects, from Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma and Vietnam, were charged under the Working of Alien Act 2551, for allegedly working without, or in violation of, their work permits. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

The arrests come in the wake of a national push to resolve the 'problem' of illegal workers.

Last month, the Committee on Foreign Workers and Human Trafficking Resolution Policies, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, resolved to counter the issue.

Foreign workers without

permits face the prospect of mass arrests and large fines, said Arak Prom-manee, head of the Labour Ministry's Employment Department.

The committee resolved to push for facilitation centres and guidelines for 'alien' workers to cut the number of illegal workers without proper

papers.

Deputy PM Prawit also encouraged officials to dissolve ineffective registration processes and verify the legal status of smuggled workers. He added that the issue of illegal foreign workers affected national security.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

# Samkong completion delayed again

THE expected completion date of the Samkong Underpass has been postponed yet again, from July 31 to mid August, the Highways Department confirmed July 7.

"At this stage, the project is about 83 percent complete," said Patiwetwottisak Sookhii, the new director of the Phuket Highways Office. "However, due to the rainy weather, we have asked for more time to finish construction."

Starting from January 22 this year, the construction company Wiwat Construction Co Ltd has been fined 2 million baht per day until the project is complete.

The company continued construction despite the hefty fines. In February, the Transport Minister gave the company until April 10 to complete the project and the company promised to abide by the deadline.

The deadline was further delayed to the end of June, which was then again pushed to July 31. Construction of the underpass began in mid-November of 2013.

- Kongleaphy Keam





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# Krabi marina raided

THE developers of Port Takola Yacht Marina in Krabi Town have been charged with land encroachment, after Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) officers raided the site on June 29.

DMCR officials said that during the raid, over 100 officers inspected the marina property for encroaching onto government land.

After finding that the marina encroaches onto 12 rai of preserved forest area, the owners of Port Takola have been charged under the National Reserved Forest Act and the Forestry Act of 1941, for procession and clearance of land without approval.

On July 11, Port Takola Marketing Manager Mathew Na Nakhon and Deputy Director-General Sakda Wichiansin held a press conference at the Golden Hill Hotel in Krabi Town, during which they gave statements that they would fight the charges.

"The Nob canal was once connected to the Ji Lard canal and exited out into Phang Nga



Mr Mathew points to a birds-eye view of the Port Takola property. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Bay, Mr Mathew said. "The company is simply preparing to dredge the canal in order to accommodate yachts into the 300 rai of marina land.

During the press conference, Mr Mathews stated that the company has been forthright in every respect thus far in its dealings with the government, but it is still being charged. He also said that the land is administered by the Marine Department, not the Depart-

ment of Marine and Coastal Resources.

Mr Mathews sought to reassure the marina's investors that the case against Port Takola would be dropped.

"We have filed a complaint with the Krabi ombudsman's office, that states we've been unfairly charged. Furthermore we have a *Trachong* title deed to the land in question, which allows us to put the land to use.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

# Photos spark outrage over Samui facilities

PHOTOS circulating on line of dirty and unsafe toilets at Pru Chaweng Park in Koh Samui have sparked enough public outrage that officials are considering moving the facilities.

Images of used needles, condoms and faeces went viral on July 5, after a user posted them on Facebook. The ten-toilet public restroom is located in a public park and falls under the purview of the Koh Samui Municipality.

The park is a popular destination for families and has a large field used for festivals and ceremonies.

Koh Samui Deputy Mayor Muensil Poonsawat said the municipality was aware of the situation, but that the blame rests with 'teenagers' for vandalizing the facility at night.

"We are aware of the situation and thank members of the public for voicing their concerns, particularly for women and tourists," said Mr Muensil.

"We currently do have staff whose responsibility it is to



Turned out sinks sit in front of the park's bathroom. Photo: Suchat Hankij

take care of the restroom, but they have to cover a large area throughout the park and may not be able to maintain it properly. We were aware of some teenagers hanging around the toilets at night and doing drugs. We locked up the restroom [instead of the teenagers], and the teenagers broke in and damaged the property, even tearing out some washbasins," he explained.

Mr Muensil said the municipality is looking into building a new facility as a result of the

issues with the current restroom.

"We're looking into relocating the toilets to a new area where it would be easier for our staff to take care of them properly, to make sure its cleanliness is maintained and to enforce its hours of operation," he said.

"Above all, the public's safety will come first. We will not let the public park be used as a drug party hangout for teenagers."

– Suchat Hankij

# Samui thieves target renters



Rental owners petition Bo Phut police. Photo: Suchat Hankij

A THAI man who allegedly rented out cars and motorbikes to tourists on Samui has disappeared, in what authorities believe to have been an elaborately-orchestrated scam.

Some 16 renters petitioned Bo Phut police on July 7 to investigate a Songkla man they believe to have cheated them and fled Samui.

The suspect was identified as 40 year-old Channapat Banjonturakarn, but it is still unclear whether that is the suspects real identity or a fake one used to scam vehicle renters.

Bo Phut police allege Mr Channapat rented vehicles from other renters on Samui, before leasing the cars and motorbikes out to tourists. Mr Channapat and his suspected accomplices allegedly leased 30 motorbikes and 30 cars from renters across the island, claiming that he would rent the vehicles out to tourists at a

mark-up.

General Taywes Pliumsui of the Bo Phut Police said that Mr Channapat's car rental garage is now closed. Renters said his telephone number has also been discontinued, bemoaning the fact that they still have to pay off the loans for cars that they may never see again.

"This is a huge issue, Gen Taywes said. "We've contacted the Samui Ombudsman's office and have Bo Phut Police now out there hunting for Mr Channapat.

Police are currently investigating the ending dates of Mr Channapat's contracts with renters. Gen Taywes said they cannot press charges against active or on-hold contracts, but they will charge Mr Channapat for embezzlement for those contracts that have ended and the vehicles that have not been returned.

– Suchat Hankij

# Injured dolphin rescued

THE Royal Thai Navy was working to save the life of an injured dolphin found stranded on a beach on Lanta Noi Island in Krabi on July 10.

Locals found the fatigued cetacean with a damaged left fin on Lang Sod Beach and called the Navy for help.

Lieutenant commander Peerapat Pattanasopon said the dolphin appeared to be a female, aged 10-15 years.

Rescuers presume the dolphin was unable to keep up with her pod because of her injured fin and was subsequently washed ashore.

Lanta local Sakda Tawee-



Navy rescuers aid the dolphin. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

muang said the animal is a rare striped dolphin.

Lcdr Peerapat said the dolphin is being cared for at the Navy's Lanta facility with the aim of returning the animal to the open sea once it has been nursed back to health.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## 7 bread-man killers charged with murder

PUBLIC prosecutors indicted six young men and a young female on July 11 on three charges relating to the death of disabled bread-delivery man Somkiat Srijan in Bangkok in May.

The suspects were charged with murder and carrying weapons in public without a sound reason.

Four of them were also charged with intruding on another person's residence to commit assault with a weapon.

Prosecutors believe there is not enough evidence to support a premeditated murder charge against the suspects, which carries a penalty of 15-20 years in jail or the death sentence.

## Spaniard pleads not guilty to countryman's murder

SPANIARD Artur Segarra Princep, 37, pleaded not guilty to the murder of compatriot David Bernat, 40, at a hearing at Ratchadapisek Criminal Court in Bangkok on July 11.

Mr Princep faces charges of premeditated murder, destroying a corpse to conceal a death, illegal detention and theft.

The court said the defence would have a chance to review the evidence and scheduled a session for examination of evidence on July 25.

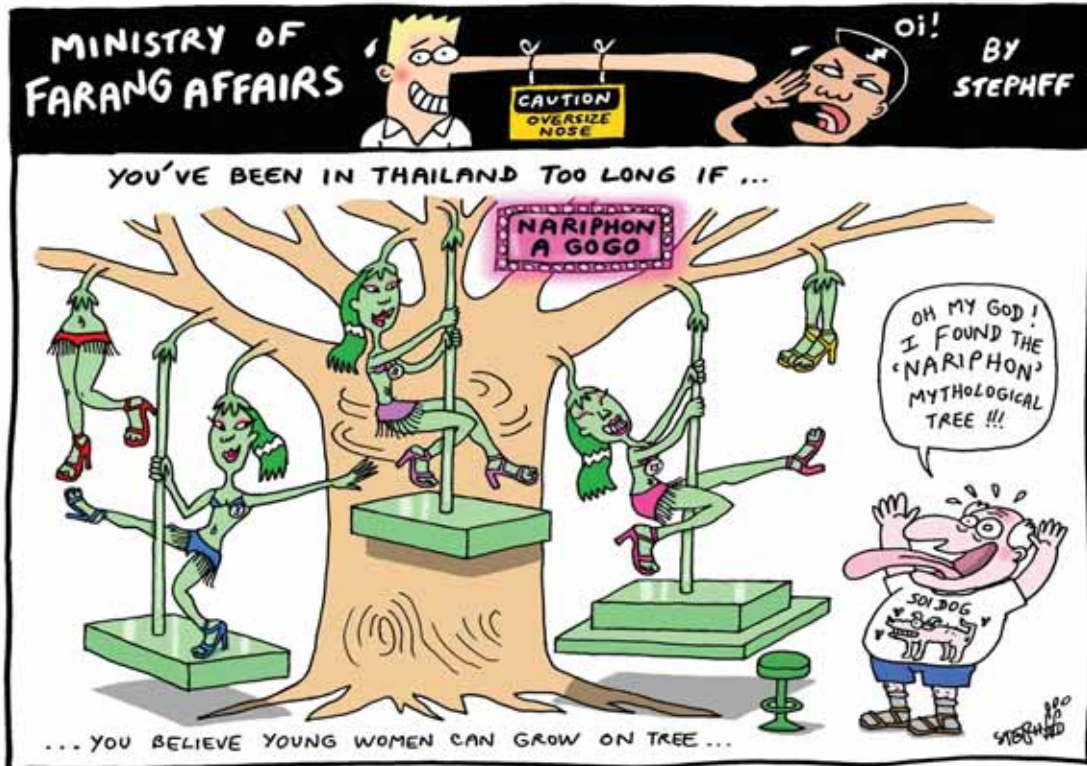
Mr Princep denied all charges and said he did not know Mr Bernat, but admitted to staying in the condominium where the murder allegedly took place.

The case, filed on May 3, said the discovery of body parts in a river in Bangkok and nearby areas in January led to the victim being identified as Mr Bernat.

## Extravagant light show may cost governor his job

BANGKOK Governor Sukhumbhand Paribatra threatened to sue the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) on July 12 for damaging his reputation.

Investigation conducted by the office has exposed alleged irregularities in the 39.5 million



baht festive lighting project, which was implemented during his term.

Governor Sukhumbhand declared that he was not worried about any probes into the project and said his city administration had proceeded based on his election policies.

Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha said he would not intervene over alleged abuse of power by the governor concerning procurement for the New Year light show.

Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda said his ministry was acting on the OAG's findings, but had no direct authority to remove the governor from office, which can only happen with a two-thirds majority vote from Bangkok's councillors.

## Investigations into deaths of three teens after police chase

METROPOLITAN Police Bureau Division 9 commander Maj-General Jirapat Phoomvijit on July 11 expressed his condolence to the families of three youngsters who died when their motorbike crashed as they tried to escape police the day before.

Eyewitnesses told police that the youths were racing on Sukhapibal Road. Their friends, however, claimed they ran into two patrol officers, who demanded they stop but their motorbike suffered a brake malfunction and they crashed.

Gen Jirapat said he told police to gather evidence carefully

to ensure justice was served.

Police have provided the families with money to assist with the staging of the funerals. They are also looking at CCTV camera footage as part of the investigation.

## Two Bangkok police officers investigated in bribery scandal

TWO Bangkok police captains are facing investigations over allegations of 'purchasing' a police inspector's position.

Nimit Mai traffic police deputy inspector Captain Chanchai Yensuk filed a complaint on July 5 against Bang Rak police deputy inspector Chaninthat Ratchinotrai.

Capt Chanchai claimed that Capt Chaninthat told him to pay 700,000 baht to purchase gifts for senior police officers.

However, he claims that despite giving the cash, he did not get the position as promised. Both officers' supervisors will deal with the disciplinary punishment process.

Capt Chanchai will initially be considered the damaged party, and police will further investigate to determine if senior officers are involved.



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## Phuket Gazette

### Pilot province... again

While the media narrative abroad regarding our Land of Smiles has focused on such lofty issues as democratic development, freedom of expression, human rights and so forth, it is somehow reassuring to know that here on the ground the saying *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* still seems to apply as far as daily life is concerned.

The phrase means 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. That certainly seems to be the case in Thailand.

A recent example comes to us straight from that bureaucracy of all bureaucracies, the Ministry of Interior. Phuket has once again been chosen as a 'pilot province', this time for the ministry's Pracharath Rak Samakkee project (see page 3).

This 'Civil State Loves Unity' (our translation) project is highly reminiscent of many other lavish central government projects aimed at the 'grassroots' of Thai society by previous administrations. The stated aim is to help small and medium-sized enterprises in three areas designated as strategic: agriculture, 'product processing' and community tourism.

Phuket might well be the most unlikely of candidates among Thailand's 77 provinces to serve as the 'model' province for such a populist project.

For a start, few provinces apart from Bangkok have a smaller percentage of land under agricultural use. 'Product processing' is also rather hard to find here, unless one includes the crafting of everyday household objects into recreational drug-taking paraphernalia. And 'community tourism' is curious indeed, given the sheer number of package tours we suffer on a daily basis. The homebred population of Phuket is probably outnumbered by outsiders by a factor of at least 2:1.

Three months after its launch, the project is literally just starting to bear fruit. This comes in the form of 50 'homegrown' Phuket pineapples, now on advance-purchase offer at just 1,500 baht each – somewhat over the going local market rate.

The price has been defended by the project team on the basis that a durian from Nonthaburi once fetched 210,000 baht. While it is undeniably challenging to argue with anyone who might deploy this type of logic, such reasoning does seem to be in the news quite often here in paradise.

But of course the real reason that Phuket is always and inevitably the first choice for pilot projects has little to do with grassroots development. No, it's rather more tied in with the fact that our emerging Pineapple Hub is, at least in the eyes of the desk-bound bureaucrats of Bangkok, still the perfect island getaway from life in the big mango.



### Don't bite the hand that feeds you

*Re: Scarce hauls concern local fishermen, conservation officials, July 11*

Much of the trash I've seen in the waters around Phuket for over 25 years comes from the fishing boats – plastic, used neon light bulbs, oil, old line, fishing nets, etc.

The local bottom trawlers have decimated the fish stocks and other aquatic life. No-fishing zones are ignored.

Same with the locals who fish from shore; they use the beach sea as their garbage can and leave their litter behind. I have no sympathy for these people.

*Rooster  
Gazette forum*

### Phuket nightmare seems never ending

*Re: Teenaged tourist critically injured by speedboat propeller, July 9*

Again and again, more and more people in Phuket killed and maimed by reckless speedboat, tuk-tuk, taxi, tour bus and minibus drivers. This Phuket nightmare looks like it's never going to end.

*Boris  
Gazette forum*

### Still awaiting the new incinerator

*Re: Keep It Green: Care for the natural environment, July 10*

Still awaiting a new incinerator; what has been the delay? Most streets are now piled with rubbish, with no facilities provided to take even such basic

### Letters to the Editor

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

stuff as building rubble or old household furniture.

*Harry  
Gazette forum*

### Roads will be safer with fewer buses

*Re: Tranlee Travel assets seized in Phuket, Phang Nga raids, July 7*

It would be a good idea to check the serviceability of the buses while they are off the road. We wouldn't want any future brake failures, would we?

Probably a bit too progressive an idea though. At least the roads will be safer with 50 'China buses' now temporarily in retirement.

*Mister Ree  
Gazette forum*

### Underpass is a serious inconvenience

*Re: Delayed again: Samkong Underpass completion pushed to August, July 7*

This is a serious inconvenience to motorists.

I would like to propose that the fines levied, about 400 million baht thus far, be given back to the abused motorists, in a reverse toll system.

Each and every time a vehicle passes through the mess, 60 baht is handed to the driver at the reverse-tollbooths. Ten

baht for motorbikes. Is that not fair enough?

*Geoff  
Gazette forum*

### Even lower returns for condo owners

*Re: By the book: The market is ripe for the picking, July 9*

And now with the hefty fines for rental landlords renting out condos for less than 31 days, meaning even lower returns for their owners, it's going to get even worse.

The rule bows to pressure from the hotels but ruins the market value of the condos. And then the government wonders why sales are down with sinking values in Thai properties at all levels?

*Seeall  
Gazette forum*

### No lights and dangerous U-turns

*Re: Motorcycle rider killed in collision with U-turning pickup, July 8*

Indeed possible that the bike did not have its front lights on. Many bikes have at least one of the lights broken, or block the front light by having a bag in the basket. However, driving this stretch daily, many vehicles do make very dangerous U-turns here, even though there is a solid double line separating the traffic, which, as far as I understand, means passing or crossing is prohibited, so there-for no U-turns either.

*SH  
Gazette forum*

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# Improving road conditions

## FIRST PERSON

MY MAIN target as the new director of the Phuket Highways Office is to finish all the ongoing construction as soon as possible, ease the traffic flow at construction sites as much as we can, push several new projects and, most importantly, boost road safety.

The job of the highways department is not only to build roads, but more importantly, provide services after the roads are built. Traffic convenience and road safety are thus crucial aspects of our job. That is the real purpose of building roads.

Phuket is a fast developing province, which makes our job a lot more challenging. The busier it gets, the more work is needed to ensure everything runs smoothly.

We have to keep multiple, complicated factors in mind, including land price, effect on local citizens and ensuring that daily life is impacted as little as possible.

We are not only dealing with the roads, but with people too. Caring about how construction work affects locals is our main task. Another important aim of ours is to start fixing unsafe roads to help reduce traffic accidents.

However, in order to improve road safety, the highways department cannot work alone. We need the help and cooperation of the local authorities. What we can do is fix and maintain unsafe roads, unclear or damaged traffic signs and lights, and bring everything up to date in order to avoid accidents.

The traffic police and municipality have to help us achieve that goal. At the moment, we are cooperating with



**Patiwetwottisak Sookhii**, originally from Nonthaburi, is currently the new director of the Phuket Highways Office. He assumed his position last month and was working as the director of Prachuap Khiri Khan Highway Office before that. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Prince of Songkla University and a Master's degree in transport from Kasetsart University.

Here, he talks about the plans for improving Phuket transport during his term in office.

local authorities to fix several spots that were damaged by heavy rain. We will continue to gradually fix all these problems.

I request anyone who finds any roads to be unsafe or any traffic signs to be unclear or damaged, please take a picture and file a complaint with the Phuket Highways Office and we will do our best to fix it as soon as possible. We respect and appreciate all complaints and tips.

As far as the Samkong Underpass is concerned, we will consider it as a learning experience and be more careful from now on. We are working very hard and it is more than 80 percent complete. We are focusing on the road condition, signs, traffic lights and so on, and expect to be done soon, despite the recent heavy rains, which act as an obstacle.

At this stage, all we can do is finish ongoing projects and plan more carefully before starting any new ones, several of which are in the pipeline at present.

We plan to build a new road

from Baan Sakoo (Phuket International Airport) to Outlet Mall (Bypass Road in Koh Kaew). Currently, we are in the observation and studying stage. The expected budget is about 12 billion baht, but it will take some time to kick off.

There are also two flyovers in the pipeline, both of which have already passed through the public hearing phase. They are expected to start in the next several months, and are currently under review by the ministry.

Another upcoming project is an airport underpass at the T-junction on Thepkrasattri Road. We will construct the underpass on the main road, so those heading northbound to Phang Nga just have to go straight underground. The project is currently under review by the the cabinet and awaiting their decision.

We expect that when all these projects are finished, Phuket traffic will get better in the near future, about five years. However, we will never stop improving as Phuket never stops developing.



THY ego shall not suffer to mount a scooty. Photo: ponraj22

# Commandments of Phuket Farang life

## Island View

By Archbishop Desmond Farang

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

REMEMBER, I am the whiteness of thy skin. Despite how burned thou may become, I have led thee out of the land of the West, out of the bondage of actual behavioral standards. These are my commandments to you, Chosen People!

THOU shalt not pay less than 200 baht for a taxi fare, regardless of the distance or length of time it takes to arrive. Refrain thou from taking public transportation, for it is not for thee and it displeaseth the Taxi mafia. Praiseth thou when thou hearest my cry, 'TAXI?!' for you shall know that my whiteness is set upon thee.

THOU shalt not heed the red flag zones on beaches, nor the lifeguards, those harbingers of doom. They knowest not how well thy strong farang arms pullest thee through the water. They wish to bind thee back up in chains. Cast them aside and fling thyself into the arms of the lord, thy whiteness and the sea.

THOU shalt buy a Big Bike, for thy ego shall not suffer to mount a Honda Wave, nor any of its 50cc counterparts. Thou shalt wear no helmet, for thy giant head canst not be constrained by reason, let alone a basic grasp of self-preservation.

THOU shalt not take a Thai wife until thy gut alone be of twice her weight.

THOU shalt not visit Bangla Road during weeknights, lest thee be led unto that Sodom and sufferest to teach English the next day with a pounding hangover (again). Nor shalt thou covet that Sodom's bar girls, lest thy wallet be visited by Satan, who guises himself in the countenance of the family's sick buffalo.

WEAREST thou not a shirt wherever thou shalt go. The lord has bestowed on thee his whiteness, which canst not be made to suffer the modesty of a shirt. If thou must deign to wear a shirt, suffer not one with sleeves, bro. As the lord hath spoken unto us, 'Suns out, thy guns be out, dude.' Amen.

THOU shalt not speak ill of thy benefactor, the Government. For as the Government giveth, so too shall it taketh away. It allows thou to drinketh up thy spirits, it frees thee to lie down with the denizens of that west coast Sodom. As long as thou praiseth the Government, thou shalt fear no repercussions.

## Words from the Wise

**"I always prefer to believe the best of everybody, it saves so much trouble."**  
– Rudyard Kipling

**"'I am' is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that 'I do' is the longest sentence?"**  
– George Carlin

## Issues & Answers

### Where can I renew motorcycle insurance?

I NEED to renew the insurance for my motorcycle but don't have time to go to the Land Transport Office in Phuket Town. Is there somewhere else I can do it, such as at my local 7-Eleven with counter service?

If so, what do I need to take with me and is it possible to let someone else do it for me?

Germ  
Thalang

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

have to take your motorcycle registration booklet. If you are paying for the motorcycle in installments and you do not yet have the original registration booklet, then a photocopy of the book and all the relevant pages is sufficient.

The whole process should only take a couple of minutes. You do not necessarily have to do it in person.

For more information call 076-211 019.

The Phuket Land Trans-

# Investment potential of the Philippines



Finance

By Don Freeman

I RECENTLY spent a week in the Philippines – a country long labeled with the dubious distinction as ‘the sick man of Asia’ and a country investors might want to take a closer look at.

The Philippines’ presidential and vice presidential election on May 9 saw the rise of Rodrigo Duterte, after incumbent President Benigno Aquino III (who took office in 2010) was barred from seeking re-election.

From 2002 to 2009, their GDP growth averaged about 5 per cent, but this average rose to 6 per cent from 2010 to 2015 (during Aquino’s term), with the government targeting even higher GDP growth of 6.8 to 7.8 per cent for this year.

Even after Duterte’s win (he has been called the Donald Trump of the Philippines) most experts believe the economy should continue to perform well.

After all, the Philippines has weathered worse uncertainty and political and economic storms before, from Ferdinand Marcos and martial law to a messy transition to democracy, and from the Asian and then global financial crisis to the more recent economic downturn of many of its trading partners.

In recent years, the business process outsourcing industry has been one of the most impor-



The business process outsourcing industry is one of the most important contributors to the Philippines’ growth, expanding twice as fast as the entire economy in recent years. Photo: Alfredo Molina

tant contributors to the Philippines’ growth story, with the sector expanding twice as fast as the entire economy. This is largely due to companies in high cost markets taking advantage of lower costs in the Philippines for back office and customer care activities. In addition, overseas Filipino worker remittances have remained strong and are another important driver of the local consumer economy.

On the other hand, much of the recent strong economic growth has still not trickled down to the majority of the population – a problem you will quickly notice as a visitor to the country.

For investors, there would be a number of Philippines’ stocks

that have lightly traded over-the-counter (OTC) market listings along with exchange traded funds (ETFs)/funds with exposure to the country, but the following ETF and NYSE listed American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) are the most liquid options to choose from:

The iShares MSCI Philippines Investable (NYSEARCA: EPHE) has tracked the MSCI Philippines Investable Market Index since its September 2010 inception date and offers the broadest exposure to the Philippine stock market. The ETF also comes with a 0.64 per cent expense ratio, has over US\$300 million in net assets (as of late April) and an average trading

volume of close to 300,000 shares per day for the last three months. As of late April, EPHE was up 5 per cent since the start of the year, down 15.25 per cent over the past year and up 41.5 per cent since October 2010, while a potential performance benchmark, the iShares MSCI Emerging Markets Index ETF (NYSEARCA:EEM), is up 7 per cent since the start of the year, down 21.2 per cent over the past year and down 24 per cent since October 2010.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone (NYSE: PHI) or simply PLDT was founded in 1928 and is now the largest telecommunications and digital services company in the coun-

try. PLDT would also have investments in other sectors of the economy (for instance, a stake in Meralco, the country’s largest electric distributor) while through wholly owned ePLDT, Inc, the group offers a suite of managed digital solutions ranging from big data analytics and contact center solutions to disaster recovery and managed security.

PLDT has a market cap of around US\$8.5 billion and an average trading volume of around 100,000 shares per day for the last three months. As of late April, PLDT shares are down 7.4 per cent since the start of the year, down 40.7 per cent over the past year and down 28.8 per cent over the past five years (mainly due to shares falling off sharply with last summer’s overall market swoon). There’s also a biannual dividend (with a rate paid at management’s discretion) yielding more than 6 per cent.

Does the Philippines fit into your investment portfolio?

*Don Freeman, BSME, is president of Freeman Capital Management, a Registered Investment Adviser with the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), based in Phuket. He has over 15 years experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. He can be reached at 089-970 5795 or freeman capital@gmail.com.*

## Half-year ad spend down

ADVERTISING expenditure in Thailand in the first half of the year fell by 7.86 per cent from 60.74 billion a year earlier, but showed a slight improvement on the 8.5 per cent decline in the first five months, according to the latest survey by Nielsen Thailand.

Nielsen reported on July 12 that big companies like Unilever (Thai) Holdings had decided to cut their advertising budgets.

Expenditure via satellite TV dropped by 17.4 per cent and digital TV ad spending decreased by 9.03 per cent. Newspaper advertising saw a drop of 17.43 per cent and magazine ads were reduced by 28.15 per cent.

Out-of-home media (cinema, outdoor and transit ads) saw substantial growth, while internet ads surged by 77.56 per cent to about 850mn baht.

– *The Nation*

## Marketing small businesses

Biz Chat

by Zohaib Sikander

THE dictionary definition of marketing is ‘the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising’.

Through the next series of articles, we will discuss the concept of ‘marketing mix’ and the ‘4 Ps’, particularly as it applies to small businesses. These are product, price, place and promotion.

Any freshman marketing student will have studied the ‘4 Ps’, first coined by the American academic Neil H Borden, and then refined by Edmund Jerome McCarthy in 1960.

Let’s take a look at the first one: product.

The product (or service) is

what you’re selling to your customers. Let’s discuss this with the example of a small bakery.

The product is the fresh bread, pastries, jam, scones, tarts... basically everything on the menu. But the concept of product doesn’t end there. It includes the packaging, ambience of the store, politeness of the store manager or clerk and the overall experience of shopping.

To market a product, business owners have to understand the need that the product satisfies. A product is essentially a ‘solution’ made up of dozens of complex factors, even something as seemingly simple as a loaf of bread.

It should taste great, smell appetizing, be available in different sizes, have a desirable texture, be produced with eco-friendly, locally sourced ingredients... the list goes on.

This is where small businesses can create a niche for themselves. The personalized service, attention and care that customers receive at a small business is something they value and come back for.

A corner shop bakery owner can, for instance, capitalize on the fact that he or she uses a treasured family recipe, because that is the experience customers come to expect at such an establishment.

Small businesses should play to their strengths, which is the element of differentiation, rather than standardization.

*Zohaib Sikander is the Business Editor at the Phuket Gazette. He has a degree in entrepreneurship and operations management. Send questions or suggestions at zo@phuketgazette.net.*

# Driving the luxury car industry

By Zohaib Sikander

BEHIND the closed doors of the glitz and glamor of the luxury car industry in Phuket are a host of complicated market forces at play. Let's take a closer look at the factors that come together in the day-to-day running of this business.

Millennium Auto, located on the Bypass Road in Phuket, sells some of the most renowned luxury cars in the world, including BMW, Mini Cooper, Aston Martin and Rolls Royce – names that would make any car lover's eyes (including mine) sparkle.

The company has seen a healthy increase in sales since relocating its outlet last year and also dabbles in the used super cars market, says Millennium Auto General Manager Viraj Thanissranont.

Personally, if I were to buy a super car, I would prefer to be its first owner, but practically speaking, there is a huge, untapped super car market in Phuket for people who would perhaps like an upgrade from a Honda or a Nissan, but just can't afford the pinch on their pockets at present.

One of the additional services that they provide is a repair business, as well as a body and paint business.

"The trend for luxury cars is increasing, not only in Phuket, but all over the country," Mr



Some of the world renowned brand names that the outlet sells, including BMW, Mini Cooper, Aston Martin and Rolls Royce, would make any car lover's eyes sparkle. Photo: Zohaib Sikander

Viraj told the *Gazette*. "People in Bangkok prefer sedans, but Phuket has a higher percentage of SUVs."

Car rentals is another business that Master Group Corporation Asia (MGC-Asia), the holding company of Millennium Auto, has tapped into.

Operating under the brand name of Sixt, the group has an outlet at every airport in the country, with a total of 28 car rental stations throughout Thailand, including one in Patong and one at Phuket International Airport. This is one market that

is very new to us, but we are expanding along with the needs of the community.

Despite its growing sales, the company admitted to facing its fair share of hurdles as well. The primary concern Mr Viraj highlighted was electricity. The five-rai showroom located on the Bypass Road consumes an inordinate amount of power, he said.

"We try to reduce power usage by delaying air-conditioning by 30 minutes after the showroom opens up. However, power limitations are a hurdle to future growth and also costs

us more at the end of the month," said Mr Viraj.

"We are exploring the possibility of generating solar electricity to meet our needs in the future."

The company believes that Asean will provide several opportunities for them in the future.

"Asean will benefit Phuket directly as more people will invest, leading to more business opportunities for everybody," said Mr Viraj. "Moto racing is also another potential market segment that can prove beneficial for us in the long run."

# TOT, CAT to merge within the year

THE State Enterprise Policy Commission has instructed TOT and CAT Telecom to complete the merger of their three core operations within one year.

They will merge their transmission and fibre-optics networks to become the National Broadband Network Co, their Internet gateway and submarine cable networks will become the Neutral Gateway Network Co, and their Internet data centres will become IDC Co.

The other flagship services of TOT and CAT, including fixed broadband, mobile phone service, telecom towers and other assets, will remain with the two agencies, which will act as holding companies.

Their employees will be asked to move to the merged companies on a volunteer basis. The labor unions of TOT and CAT have so far opposed the plan.

CAT's acting president Surapant Meknavin said that each of the three new entities will work out plans to list on the Stock Exchange of Thailand. He also said that management would meet with employees to explain the move to them. He expects that CAT's and TOT's fixed-broadband businesses will also soon seek private partnerships.

- *The Nation*

# Lobster Festival aims to promote local eateries



More than 30 restaurants in Phuket will join the festival with their own Phuket Lobster Signature Menu. Image: Pracharat Rak Samakee

THE Phuket Lobster Festival 2016 is set to be held from August 1-31 to promote the sale and consumption of Phuket lobsters.

The festival is part of the Interior Ministry's venture to promote Phuket as a launch pad for a new government-backed social enterprise initiatives to help grass-roots businesses flourish and contribute to bol-

stering the local economy.

More than 30 restaurants in Phuket will join the festival with their own Phuket Lobster Signature Menu.

Social media competitions will also be part of the festivities, with four return tickets to Bangkok and 50 other prizes to be won.

- *Kongleaphy Keam*



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# DJ Jeff Retro powers up Illuzion



DJ Jeff Retro delivers high-energy electro live on stage at Illuzion Phuket.

Las Vegas DJ Jeff Retro packed out the house at Illuzion Phuket on July 9 and had revellers pounding the dance floor with his live performance of high-energy electro and progressive house music accompanied by exotic dancers and spectacular light show.



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**ents in Paradise**

**Royal Gems, Rayaburi take over Phuket FC**

Royal Gems Pavillion and Rayaburi Group announced on July 8 their joint take over of the floundering Phuket Football Club. The joint buyers have moved the goalposts and are aiming to take the local team to the top of Thailand's first division.



Rayaburi Group Chairman Pitipon Nukulpanitwipat (left) and Royal Gems Pavillion Vice Chairman Chatchai Rojrongsri.

**Miss Thailand thanks Angsana for support**

The three runners up of Miss Thailand World 2016 paid a visit to Angsana Laguna Phuket on July 7 to show their appreciation for the local resort's support during the Miss Thailand World Campaign.



(from L-R) Angsana Laguna Phuket Director of Marketing Communications Nampetch Tipaxsorn; Area Director of Revenue Management Sombat Rattananai; Miss Thailand World 2016 runners-up Natkamol Suwannasilp and Jinnita Buddi; Angsana Hotel Manager Figen Bulut; Miss Thailand World 2016 1st runner-up Phatlada Kullaphakthanapat and Angsana Director of Sales Paritchawan Kraiponrak.

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# Seclusion lures at Big Fish

By Wes Martin

YOU won't know about Big Fish unless you've stayed at the Marriott Resort & Spa in Nai Yang.

The upscale restaurant is tucked against the sea-side base of the modern hotel, and is nearly surrounded by Sirinath National Park.

Even after arriving, would-be diners must speak with a bellhop to be driven down by golf cart to the restaurant. This has its own charm, if you're in the right mood – like visiting a speakeasy, you're in on some secret. The restaurant is fortified, in a way, against the traffic and chaos of Phuket's day-to-day throngs.

The venue's formal dining is relaxed by its quite literal pool-side ambiance, and its view of the Andaman is absolutely distracting. That is, until you open a menu.

Along with haute couture favorites, like rack of lamb and red snapper, Big Fish offers gourmet twists on traditional Phuketian dishes.

It trawls the flavors of Phuket Town's street-side vendors and My-Fair-Lady's theme. Hokkien noodles and Tom Yum are presented as upright and chic, but still have enough fiery undercurrent to make you blush. Like many of Phuket's ritzy eateries, Big Fish



Big Fish is aptly named; the restaurant's fish and wine selection are big draws for diners. Photo: Wes Martin

straddles the avant-garde and the traditional. Unlike many of them, it seems comfortable doing so.

Along with its full-range bar, no doubt popular with Marriott residents wishing to partake in sundowners and the restaurant's front-row seat to the Andaman's sherbet sunsets, Big Fish boasts one of the more refined wine cellars in Phuket.

Connoisseurs would be satisfied with a house red here, although there are more sophisticated bottles to choose from.

However, the sommelier's curation shines in the white wine selection. Sauvignon blancs have a refreshment appeal at this latitude, and Big Fish's seafood offerings are a natural fit.

The brand new restaurant only opened its doors on June 1, and already gathering a reputation for producing quality seafood entrees.

"We purchase the majority of our seafood locally, and every day, Chef Sahapat visits local markets and fishermen on

Nai Yang Beach to select fresh fish, crabs, prawns and shellfish," said Marriott spokesperson Panchan Noimee-charoen.

While Big Fish's luster shines brightest on their seafood offerings, red-blooded diners will take comfort in their selection of steaks and lamb, paired with an excellent range of Cabernet Sauvignons, Shiraz or Malbec.

Book a room uphill and hire a babysitter. This is one restaurant we're hooked on.

# Obesity on the rise in Thailand



Prevalence of obesity in Asian countries. Source: WHO Non-Communicable Diseases Country Profiles, 2011

OBESITY has reached alarming levels in the Asean Economic Community and especially in Thailand, where 32 per cent of the population are overweight, reports Dr Gerard Lalande, managing director of CEO-Health. This pushes the country into second place in terms of prevalence of obesity after Malaysia at 44 per cent and ahead of Singapore at 30 per cent.

To assess obesity, health professionals use the Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is the weight in kilograms divided by the square of your height.

In the western world, a BMI above 30kg/m<sup>2</sup> is considered obese, whereas in Asia, the threshold is 25kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

– *The Nation*



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# The siege of Chantaburi

## Looking Back

By Anand Singh

IN THE year 1786, the Burmese had laid siege to the ancient capital of Siam for many months. Eventually they were able to breach the city's walls. What followed was an orgy of violence and destruction as the invaders laid waste to the once magnificent city. Ayutthaya was torched, its treasures plundered and hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants either fled or were taken captive by the Burmese.

During one of the darkest times in Siamese history, General Taksin, former governor of Tak Province, knew that facing the bulk of the Burmese army on his own would have been fatal. His men numbered only a few hundred, while the Burmese had over 50,000 men at Ayutthaya. Shortly after the fall of Ayutthaya in the year 1767, General Taksin marched east instead. His plan was to secure the coastal towns to the east and establish a stronghold. After a few skirmishes with the Burmese, he finally reached Rayong. A few days later, the governor of Rayong sided with General Taksin and allowed him command of the city.

General Taksin stayed at Rayong for a while. All this time, news had spread of a young and brilliant general who had defied the Burmese invaders. Many Siamese men who could fight, flocked to Rayong to join Taksin's army.

It became apparent to Taksin



A statue of General Taksin in Chantaburi, where the historic siege took place. Photo: Alchetron

that the town of Rayong was too small to serve as his stronghold. As his army grew, he set his sights further east, to the city of Chantaburi. General Taksin felt he needed the city's support in men and arms. Taksin sent his emissaries to Chantaburi to try and convince the governor to side with him.

Taksin and the governor of Chantaburi were childhood friends who had served together as royal pages when they were younger. Upon receiving the emissary, the governor agreed to Taksin's request. In his reply, he welcomed the general to his city. Not long after, Taksin's army marched towards Chantaburi.

General Taksin was still on his way to Chantaburi when the advisers of the governor began to convince him that welcoming Taksin into the city would be a grave mistake. Up until that

point, the eastern towns of Siam had been spared the carnage brought on by the Burmese. The Burmese would soon send the bulk of their army to get rid of Taksin. When that happened, the advisers warned, any town or city that harbored him would be sacked and torched like so many other cities that resisted them prior to the fall of Ayutthaya.

The governor was terrified and opted to change his mind. He sent a message to General Taksin saying that he was no longer welcome at Chantaburi and that he should go back the way he came. General Taksin was furious. His resolve was to win Chantaburi by diplomacy, but if that was not an option anymore, he was willing to go to war.

That night, Taksin called a meeting with his top commanders. He laid out his plans for attacking Chantaburi. When he

finished, he ordered his men to break every pot, pan and cooking utensil that they had brought with them for preparing food. He then proclaimed in front of his men, "Our next meal will be in the city of Chantaburi. The alternative is to starve to death here in the wilderness".

At three o'clock in the morning, the attack was launched. Taksin rode atop his war elephant ahead of his army. The elephants battered the city's gates. Cannons fired at the walls. Phraya Pichai, one of Taksin's most trusted captains, led the frontal attack.

Once the city gates were broken, Phraya Pichai led his men into the city. The rest of Taksin's army followed suit and entered the city.

Chantaburi's army was completely overwhelmed. Many of the men quickly surrendered. The governor of Chantaburi, re-

alizing that he had lost, quickly fled with his family in a small boat down the river. By the time the sun rose, Chantaburi was finally subjugated.

Taksin stayed at Chantaburi for three months while his troops recovered from battle. It was during this time that Taksin received reports of the destruction and carnage that the Burmese had inflicted on Siam. He learned that Ayutthaya had been completely destroyed. The Siamese king was found dead. His brother, Prince Uthumphon and other surviving members of the royal family were taken back to Burma and resettled there, so that in their lifetime, they would never become a rallying point for Siamese loyalists to stage a rebellion.

Ayutthaya was an ancient city and capital of a large empire that endured for centuries. It was home to 33 kings. The city was a glittering metropolis with a population of nearly a million people at the peak of its glory. When it suddenly fell, it created a power vacuum and political chaos that broke Siam like a shattered mirror. Many cities that were part of Siam under Ayutthaya, such as Sawankhalok, Phimai, Nakhon si Thammarat and Pattani, took this opportunity to declare their independence. The governors answered to no one.

In the face of political turmoil, Taksin vowed to drive the Burmese out of Siam and restore the kingdom to its former glory. Now that he had secured the eastern towns, it was time to march west again.

## Business community gets their hands dirty



The Rawai Nai Harn Business Community is organizing a beach clean-up at Nai Harn Beach on 24 July from 4-7pm. The event will be moderated in English and in Thai by a local radio DJ. There will also be a mass aerobic session on the beach. Trash bags, gloves and drinking water will be provided at the venue. Photo: Gazette file

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# Cycle to pump up your sex life

**Blazing Saddles**  
By Baz Daniel

THERE is no doubt that cycling is tremendously beneficial for your body and you only have to look at the fine physiques of such super-cyclists with strong Phuket associations as Chris McCormack, Clint Kimmins, Belinda Granger and Anan Duangsopa in order to see how true this is.

But how good is cycling for your sex life and does it have any positive benefits for your performance in the romantic realms of life, away from the grease, gears and grunts of pumping those hot Phuket hills?

Bicycling in the past has actually got a bad media rap for cramping sex lives by, shall we say, 'numbing the equipment'. While education and gel saddles have quieted those concerns, new research shows that cycling on a regular basis can actually make your sex life better.

Here are a few benefits to keep in mind the next time you feel inclined to mount your two-wheeled silver stallion and take off for a ride.

## YOU'RE SEXY AND YOU KNOW IT

Riding a bike makes you fit, and being fit makes you feel more confident. In a study of



Cycling is easy to enjoy, well into old age. Photo: pixabay

more than 400 men and women, researchers at the University of Arkansas found that those who were physically fit rated their own sexual desirability much higher than did their unfit peers.

Even just a couple bike rides a week were found to boost body image. Among those who exercised two to three days per week – over 80 per cent of males and nearly 60 per cent of females – rated themselves as above, or much above average in sexual desirability.

In terms of actual performance, among those who exercised four to five days per week, 88 per cent of females and 69 per cent of males reported themselves as being above average.

## YOU'RE SEXY AND THEY KNOW IT, TOO

Cycling can make you way more attractive to the opposite sex. A survey of 600 men and women commissioned by the British Heart Foundation found that respondents believed cyclists to be 13 per cent more intelligent and cool, and 10 per cent more charitable, than other people. Twenty-three per cent said they'd rather date a cyclist than other types of athletes. And about two thirds of the respondents owned up to loving the look of our Lycra outfits.

## GETTING A LITTLE BIT HIGH

There's a reason why many people turn to mind-altering

chemicals to 'get in the mood for love' – it relaxes them and lowers stress levels and inhibitions. Well, cycling is an easy way to catch that same chill vibe.

You can thank endocannabinoids (which, as the name suggests, are in the same family of chemicals that give pot smokers their high) for that blissed-out feeling you get on your bike, as exercise triggers the release of these stress-busting, feel-good chemicals.

Regular riding also helps keep stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol in check, which means you'll feel less stressed overall.

Research finds that less stress leads to easier sexual arousal. That means you'll be more likely to get in the mood, and enjoy a naughty romp more often. Sure, you can get those endocannabinoids through other form of exercise like running – but not everyone can run long enough to get a fix.

Because cycling gets your legs moving and heart pumping without jangling your joints, you can produce a biking buzz no matter your size, or current fitness level.

## THE PUMP IS PRIMED

Exercise is energizing, so you're less likely to be too tired to tango. It also promotes cardiovascular health and increases blood flow,

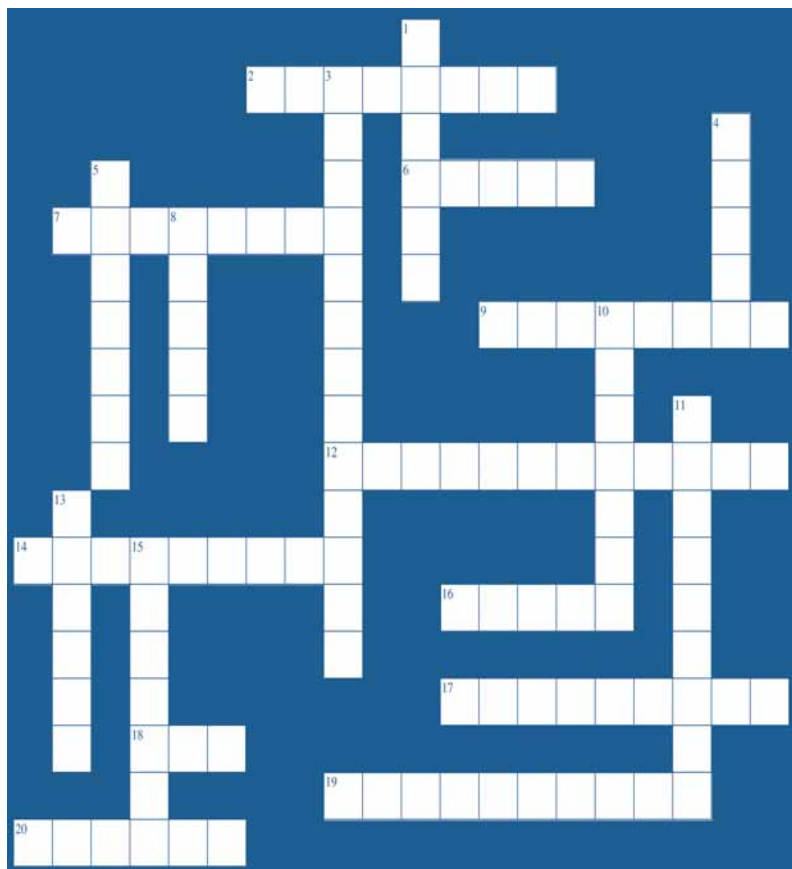
both of which have been scientifically shown to be good for your sex life. Duke University researchers found that men who exercised just 30 minutes a day, for four days a week, were two-thirds less likely to suffer sexual dysfunction than their sedentary peers. Research shows women who are physically active enjoy similar benefits and are more easily aroused, especially soon after exercising. That may be why surveys show that people who exercise more also have more sex.

## AGE IS NO BARRIER

A Harvard study of 160 male and female swimmers found that swimmers in their 60s had sex as frequently and were as sexually satisfied as those 20 years younger. It's a sure bet that cycling works just as well if you want to stay sexy longer. And like swimming, cycling is gentle on your joints, so it's easy to enjoy well into old age. In fact, 22 per cent of the net growth in cycling worldwide is among people over the age of 60.

## CAN YOU SAY STAMINA?

Cycling increases your strength and endurance... need I say more? Just remember to stay safe when out cycling on Phuket's maniacal roads, as 'rumpy-pumpy' is so much more difficult when you're in traction.



## Gazette Crossword

### Across

2. To envy or resent others' good fortune
6. Inventor of 3-D 'magic' cube
7. Distilled
9. Tom Hanks plays a modern day Robinson Crusoe in this 2000 film
12. Tennis grand slam named after French aviator
14. Block access to an area
16. Shrewd and knowledgeable
17. Heavenly
18. Twitch or spasm
19. Decisive and with authority
20. Start again (a machine, computer etc)

### Down

1. Giving off a rotting smell
3. Of the usual or common type (2 words)
4. Stringed instrument
5. Extremely plain and simple
8. Bury
10. Cruel and oppressive rule
11. Predatory reptile
13. Bright and showy
15. Italian rice dish

Solution on opposite page.



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# Customized smoothies can jump start your day

**Excuse Buster**  
By Craig Burton

A LOT of people ask me about how to make the perfect smoothie. Here are my steps on how to build a great green smoothie that is a meal containing fibrous carbs (veggies), protein and good fats, and is packed full of nutrition.

A lot of my clients start the day with this formula and tweak it to suit their likes.

Step 1: Start with the base. Choose any or all of these vegetables, as they are the easiest to digest and tolerate: celery, fennel (anise) and/or cucumber.

Step 2: Add a small amount of any of these: kale, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, endive, escarole, spinach, cabbage.

Step 3: Add a fat. As I say to my clients, a meal without a good fat is not a complete meal. Look after those hormones and stop the sugar cravings with good fats. You can choose from avocado (quarter to half), coconut oil (1-2 tbsp) or nut butter (1 tbsp).

Step 4: Add a protein. You may choose a high quality protein powder like hemp/ brown rice (sun warrior/sprouted brown rice protein), pea or grass fed whey. You may also choose freshly ground chia or flax seeds (1-2 tbsp) which has



A green smoothie is packed full of nutrition to give you energy throughout the day. Photo: Pixabay

protein, good fats (omega 3) and fiber.

Step 5: Add herbs or spices. If possible, add herbs to your juicing. Herbs also make wonderful combinations, and here are some that work exceptionally well:

Peppermint – great for digestion

Cilantro – natural chelator of heavy metals and toxins

Tumeric – powerful anti-inflammatory

Ginger – dramatic effects on cardiovascular health

Step 6: Improve the taste: You can also add one-half to a whole lime or lemon for every quart of juice. You can actually

juice the skin if you want, in order to avoid the hassle of peeling them. Far better to use lemon or limes than carrots, beets or apples, which have far more fructose.

You may also add some low fructose fruit like kiwi fruit or berries like cranberries, goji, strawberries or blueberries.

Researchers have discovered that cranberries have five times the antioxidant content of broccoli, which means they may protect against cancer, stroke and heart disease.

In addition, they are chock-full of phytonutrients, and can help women avoid urinary tract infections. Limit berries to

about a quarter of a cup. Here's a possible example:

- A handful of baby spinach
- 1 cucumber
- ½ avocado
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 sprig of peppermint
- 1 tablespoon of freshly ground chia seeds
- 1 kiwi fruit

Add as much water as needed and ice to make it cooler.

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

## Banyan Tree shows off new summer collection



Green tea has anti-oxidant and anti-ageing properties. Photo: Mandeep Singh

BANYAN Tree Gallery is welcoming the summer season with its newly-launched website and a new apple green tea collection.

The tea offers the promise of moisturizing, anti-ageing, purifying and the aroma-therapy benefits of apple cider vinegar and organic green tea extract.

Signing up for the website brings 20 per cent savings on the first purchase, as well as loyalty points and rewards.

The new website comprises a range of personal care products, aromatic essential and massage oils, and ceramic oil burners.

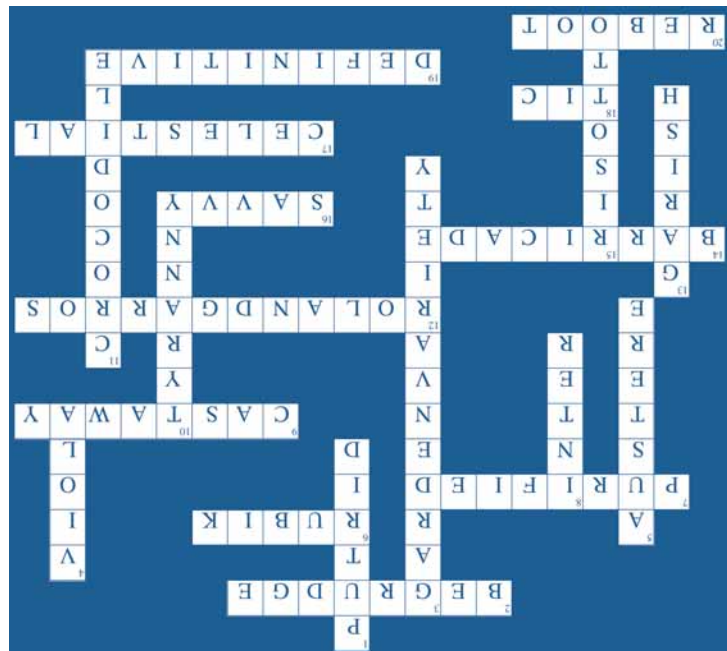
The company says that the collection is free of parabens, sodium laureth sulfates (SLES), sodium lauryl sulfates (SLS) and is not tested on animals.

For more information, visit [banyantreegallery.com](http://banyantreegallery.com).

– Phuket Gazette

## Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



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<http://dolphinsbay-phuket.com>

# The condo-hotel conundrum



Property Watch  
Desmond Hughes

It can be completely legal to operate a hotel in a condominium, but there are lots of laws; regulations and requirements to comply with and meet.

Recently, there has been controversy stirred up by announcements of enforcement of existing laws where unlicensed and non-compliant hotel operations are being run out of condominiums. I note it is often those that complain about the lack of enforcement of certain laws who then contrarily criticize the authorities for choosing to crackdown on what are often flagrant violations. You can't have your cake and eat it, every time.

There is a lot of confusion in the discussions about hotels and condominiums. This is partly due to the advent of social media and 'super quick' unresearched opinions, speculation and rumor trumping common sense, fact and law. The information on how to conduct hotel operations legally in any suitable environment is available from the authorities, but the issue is that many simply didn't ask, deliberately took a risk and didn't seek to comply with quite basic regulations.

Like many aspects of law, there are different opinions on what can and can't be done in a



dCondo Creek condominium by Sansiri. Photo:Manuschai Padung

condominium environment. Condominiums were initially designed to be residential-only environments. The Condominium Act has gone through several revisions with the latest 2008 version attempting to bolster consumer protections and even providing a mandatory form of sale and purchase agreement to be used during the sale. Given the complexity of real estate, in particular the popularity of 'mixed use' environments, developers are left with little choice but to supplement such standard agreements with addendums and clarifications, beyond that which the legislator thought of. Provided such addendums don't dilute consumer rights protected in the

legislation, this is acceptable. However, many cross the line and then find out in court cases where the lines are drawn.

The Condominium Act doesn't contemplate hotel use at all. The Hotel Act doesn't contemplate hotels being operated in condominiums at all. That said, there is no prohibition on the concept of business being conducted in a condominium. However, there is a logical process relating to condominiums that must be followed to even build a condominium, and if you do not plan for the condominium to contain hotel operations in the future, then it can become very difficult to ever 'convert' retrospectively.

A condominium must have

an environmental consent, normally in the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) survey. The regulations and rules for buildings and design relate to condominiums, not hotels. Therefore, if there is a plan to operate a hotel, the architect, environmental consultant and developer must all work together to ensure the design of the condominium would also be appropriate for hotel use. Car parking, lift design, sewage, and health and safety features, to name a few, must all be planned carefully.

At the point a condominium is built, a developer will apply for registration of the condominium building and issuance of individual condominium unit titles. At that stage, a hotel cannot be operated in the property. The EIA is still for condominium use. Subsequent to issuance of the condominium unit title deeds, there must be a new EIA application for hotel use. This process can take around a year or more, depending on how organized and competent the developer and consultants are.

After an EIA is obtained, then the developer must submit to the authorities, not only the EIA, but also a consent to operate hotel and change use of building documents to the District Office, among other items. If the co-owners didn't pre-agree to sign these documents, then this means

the application cannot be filed and the condominium cannot be operated as a hotel. Management between the 'Condominium Juristic Person'; 'Condominium Juristic Person Manager'; the Condominium Committee and the co-owners also requires careful attention to ensure rules and regulations are not violated.

It is not necessary to 'dissolve' a condominium in order to obtain a hotel license. The titles can still remain issued and valid.

The issue that exists now is that many developers and owners didn't foresee the hotel style of use in their projects. Instead of thinking about compliance, many jumped in and advertised their properties on hotel style websites – Airbnb, Agoda and the like. The authorities have seen this, and it gives rise to multiple issues. Many are not paying proper taxes – business taxes or personal income taxes. If there is no licence, then the facilities that must be provided to guests cannot be inspected or supervised.

Thailand has a very strong hotel and tourism market. It has every right to protect that market and those who make money from a segment of tourists, be it visitors or real estate buyers. And naturally, they must abide by the laws and regulations.

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

## New brand of tropical town homes launched

PHUKET-BASED developer Living Vis unveiled East Bangtaoville, a suburban neighborhood of modern tropical town homes in Thalang, on June 6.

The residential community of 59 two- and three-bedroom houses on five rai in Ban Don, off Thepkrasatree Road, is about 80 per cent complete with 20 of the pre-built homes already sold.

"We plan to add a clubhouse and swimming pool exclusively for residents to complete the project in the coming months," said the development's general manager Chairat Pokapol.

Located just over 4km from Layan Beach, the pre-built homes feature Kholer bathrooms and glazing by Fletcher



East Bangtaoville tropical town homes in Thalang are ready to move in. Photo: Living Vis

Aluminium with front and rear east-west-facing balconies that can be opened up to allow the house to be naturally ventilated.

"Some of the residents at East Bangtaoville work at the airport and there is a mix of Thai and foreign couples.

Starting from 3.6 million baht, the two-story houses come in two designs. Covering a total area of 126 square meters, including a garden and carport, the two-bedroom houses are five metres wide. Each of the bedrooms has an en-suite bathroom,

and there is a downstairs rest room. The indoor living area covers a total of 108sqm, the car port 18.4sqm and the garden 12sqm.

The larger three-bedroom houses, also with three bathrooms, have indoor living

space covering 125sqm. The slightly larger outdoor area has a 23.6sqm car port and a garden area of 14sqm.

"The houses have been positioned for maximum privacy for residents in this quiet and secure gated community with security guards 24 hours," said Mr Chairat.

Residents benefit from being close to Phuket International Airport and only a ten-minute drive from Bangtao and Layan beaches.

Buyers can be confident that they are investing in a pre-built property," said Mr Chairat.

The developer is offering to throw in starter kit built-in kitchen, air conditioning and other items for early bird buyers.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

# PREA sees glut turn to growth with developers investing B5bn

PHUKET: After a long lull in the province's real estate market, experts believe at least 5 billion baht will be invested in the housing market between the last fiscal quarter of this year and the first quarter of next year.

Phuket Real Estate Association (PREA) president, Thanusak Pungdet, made the announcement on July 9, after reportedly meeting with developers and reviewing market forecasts for Phuket's real estate demand.

"2016 real estate investment was quite slow, both in the demand for housing and for condominiums," said Mr Thanusak.

"There were not many new projects being built over the last months of the year."

Mr Thanusak said the PREA believes the absence of new building projects in Phuket is due to a glut in chronically unsold units leftover from previous years.

More than 2,000 condo units were left unsold last year along with an estimated 300 houses, according to the PREA.

Mr Thanusak said optimistic forecasts were partly due to government intervention. "The first quarter of this year, the government began a campaign



Phuket Real Estate Association (PREA) president Thanusak Pungdet is confident Phuket's housing market will grow, despite a glut of 2,000 condos left unsold last year. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

to boost investment by decreasing the ownership transfer tax," he said. Mr Thanusak also chairs the Provincial Real Estate Standing Committee, along with Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada.

"We're seeing a better situ-

ation in the Phuket real estate market right now, and I believe the last quarter of the year will be even better, as more projects come onto the market."

The PREA estimates that best-selling properties will be 2 to 3 million baht houses.

Higher-end market sales may also see gains. "I have confidence in Phuket's tourism growth, which will bring investors to Phuket, as people come and choose to stay and settle down," said Mr Thanusak.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Designers in demand

International design institute Cidi Chanapatana aims to turn Bangkok into an Asean design education hub.

President Sakorn Suksriwong said the CLMV market – Cambodia, Laos, Malaysian and Vietnam – was expanding dramatically, as was demand for designers, especially in the hospitality industry, he said.

"However, Thailand's capacity to develop new professional designers is still inadequate for market demand.

"Therefore, the institute is committed to providing world-class design courses with reasonable fees for young designers as well as career switchers," said Mr Sakorn.

"We aim to be the leading design-education provider in Asean. We are collaborating with the Istituto Europeo di Design in Milan, one of the world's top-10 design institutes; NABA [Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti], the owner of the Domus Academy in Milan; and the Royal College of Art in London, for its interior design program.

"These collaborations will be a bridge to share our vision, knowledge and resources with world-leading design countries, and will be another step in making Bangkok a design education hub of Asean."

- The Nation

## Urban housing taking off

LISTED PROPERTY firms have aggressive plans to launch a number of residential projects worth over 170 billion baht in the second half of this year to boost presales this year, while the market showed slight growth in the second quarter, after the tax incentive for the property sector expired at the end of April.

Sansiri Plc plans to launch 13 new residential projects in the second half of the year; both ready-to-stay residences and projects under construction worth 37.45 billion baht combined.

The company reported presales worth 13 billion baht in the first half, or about 30 per cent of its presale target of B42 billion for the year.

Pruksa Real Estate Plc plans to launch 38 new residential projects worth B30 billion in the second half, after the com-

pany reported total presales worth B21.63 billion or 42 per cent of its presale target of B51 billion this year.

"We have to launch more new residential projects in the second half of this year to boost our presales as we delayed launching new projects in the first half of this year," Pruksa Real Estate's co-chief executive officer Lersak Chuladesa said recently.

He said the company sped up its sale inventories in the first half after the government's measure. So, it had to launch more new projects in the second half to boost presales to reach its sales target for the year.

To boost sales, the company has maintained the free transfer and mortgage fee similar to the government's measure. But the campaign would end at the end of September, he said.

Meanwhile, LPN Development Plc plans to launch six new condominium projects worth B7 billion in the second half of the year.

LPN Development managing director Opas Sripayak said the property market in the second quarter showed slight growth after the government's measure expired. So, it had to speed up to the launch of new condominium projects in the second half to boost presales to achieve its target for the full year.

According to a survey by the Government Housing Bank's Real Estate Information Centre (REIC) a total of 123 new residential projects were launched in Bangkok and suburban areas in the first five months of this year – a total of 29,380 units – which was a drop of 22 per cent from the same period last year.

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**Phuket Gazette**

# Real estate broker goes retro

By Chutharat Plerin

JEFF Retro, a DJ from a top night club in Las Vegas, performed for thousands of guests at Illuzion night club in Patong on July 9.

Jeff has been a DJ for about 15 years now. He was born in Ohio and comes from a musical background. He was raised by a single mother who majored in music in college and worked as a music and choir director. His father was a music major as well and still plays with a small band in Ohio.

Jeff did not want to have anything to do with music when he was younger, but was rather more interested in sports. He played football, basketball and baseball. Music was still a part of his life, but he was undecided about what he wanted to do professionally.

After changing his major four times in college, his mother insisted that he choose a field and stick to it, so he settled on and graduated with a degree in communication.

After graduating from col-

lege, Jeff started working in real estate and was self-employed for several years. He also worked part time at a radio station, but not with the intention of pursuing music as a career.

When he started out, he made about six dollars an hour as a part time DJ. He says it was a laughable amount and he certainly didn't do it for the money. At one point, he was even working as a full time DJ, but then he would always go back to working in real estate, he said.

However, his life took a major turn in 2008, when the financial crisis was in full swing.

Jeff says he lost a lot of money and property in the economic crash, at which point he decided to re-evaluate his life and his priorities.

Following his heart and his true calling, Jeff decided to become a full-time DJ. He packed up all his belongings and moved from Florida to Nevada.

Without any real idea of what he was doing, he fol-

lowed his instincts, which told him that he was on to something great. He confesses that he didn't know a single person when he left home and wasn't sure how it would all work out, but he kept going just the same.

Jeff began playing gigs at restaurants, which was a far cry from the posh nightclubs he now plays at. However, he paid his dues, he says, and took on any jobs he could get his hands on.

Going on in a similar fashion for almost six years in Vegas, Jeff had actually decided to call it quits and move back home at one point. He even called and told his mother that he had failed and would be returning home.

However, an unexpected gig came up about that time, which turned his life around. The Hakkasan Group invited him to open for their new night club. It wasn't even a paid gig, but he took it anyway.

However, this opportu-

nity soon led to others, and things started going uphill from there, Jeff says.

Jeff attributes his success to his humility, and says he still doesn't consider himself as a rockstar.



He is a true music lover and hordes of Phuket residents and tourists were well entertained by his sophisticated beats.

Photo: Chutharat Plerin



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