

Phuket Gazette

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‘THEY WILL DARE TO DO ANYTHING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT’

Lawless teens

■ Officials, social workers struggle for answers to escalation of youth violence

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE director of the Phuket Juvenile Observation and Protection Center (JOPC) said she believes teenagers across Phuket are becoming more aggressive.

Rawee Kuhamooka told the *Gazette* that every year JOPC staff have to work harder to control their detainees. Ms Rawee's comments come after a riot at the center earlier this month left the building's grounds, cafeteria, therapy and treatment rooms in disarray.

Thirty-five juvenile delinquents tore apart furniture and discharged fire extinguishers in a riot that was only quelled after provincial police were called in.

“We can prove that [detainees] are more aggressive from how hard we have to work to control them,” Ms Rawee said. “Over the past several years we’ve worked harder than ever, even though the number of juveniles coming in the center is the same. Teenagers’ behavior today is characteristic of older criminals. Yet we still use the same soft laws and the same out-of-date methods to deal with them. This is why they’re never afraid of detention and are more likely to commit crimes over and over again.”

Every year, the Phuket juvenile center processes between 400 and 500 cases involving 15-17 year-olds who were convicted of committing a crime. Ms Rawee said the majority of the cases that are referred to the center involve possession of the category 5 narcotic *kratom*, followed by cases involving violent assaults and the illegal possession of a gun.



A detainee looks through the bars of the JOPC. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

“Every day, we have around 30 to 40 teens in the center, who are overseen by about 10 officers,” she said. “The teens are divided into different correctional education classes based on the crimes they’ve committed.”

Ms Rawee said the detainees meet with a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, doctors, social workers and specialists within the first week of their arrival. Afterward, each detainee is categorized into low, medium and high risk groups, following a mandatory drug test and physical examination. Each detainee may spend no longer than 90 days at the facility.

“For teenagers, courts almost always give them the chance to come here first and almost never send them directly to prison,” Ms Rawee said. “More than 80 percent of our detainees are judged to be able to return to society,”

Ms Rawee said she believes the emphasis on treatment is not enough to deter those detainees deemed a ‘higher-risk,’ from recidivism.

“From my experience, I believe that family, society and our weak laws are the three main reasons our detainees are becoming more and more troublesome,” Ms Rawee said.

FAMILY

JOPC staff psychologist Phetcharat Phromphet told the *Gazette* that teenagers from divorced parents or troubled households are more likely to become aggressive, both at the center and out in society.

“It’s called imitation theory,” Ms Phetcharat explained. “If the kid is...

Continued on Page 5

Island tourist security call center promised

IN THE wake of the August 12 Mother’s Day attacks, provincial officials have promised to establish an emergency call center for the island’s tourists.

Full story Page 3

BUSINESS



Business owners appeal to retain the current Phuket governor.

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PROPERTY



Supicha targets locals with sino-style architecture in Koh Kaew.

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LIFE&STYLE



The real cost of incarceration outweighs the benefits.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Child finds hanged father

A FOUR-year-old girl found her dead father hanging by his neck from a tree in Koh Kaew on the morning of August 19.

The 43-year-old man, named Wirot Jadsang, used to work as a hotel cook. He reportedly died about two hours before his daughter found his body on her way to school.

Lt Col Sanich Nookon of Thalang Police arrived at the scene to find that Mr Wirot's body had been cut down and moved to his house by his family.

"After discovering her father's body, the girl called out to her mother, Rassamee Jadsang, who called others for help to cut the rope to remove the body," said Col Sanich.

"Ms Rassamee said that her husband had been depressed and didn't share any of his problems with her."

— Winai Sarot

Python slithers into Krabi shop

A THREE and a half meter long python slithered into a coffee shop in Krabi in search of sustenance on the morning of August 18.

Panrin Kongprom, a staff member at the eatery, said that the 20-kilogram python had

Tractor topple kills Krabi school worker



A man working to level a field behind a school in Krabi was crushed to death after his tractor toppled over on August 23. Police identified the 29-year-old's body as that of Weerayut Raksakij. Mr Weerayut was found pinned underneath the upside down tractor, which had to be righted with an excavator in order to retrieve the body. Mr Weerayut's body was examined at Krabi Hospital, where it was discovered that he had broken his neck, skull, facial bones and several ribs. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

stopped traffic near the Tesco Lotus Express to make its way across Maharat Road in Krabi Town and into Kunya Coffee Shop.

Krabi Pitak Pracha Foundation received reports from locals at about 10am and arrived at the scene to rope up the reptile.

"The python wrapped itself around a rescuer's arm and refused to let go," said Manit Salee, one of the rescuers from

the foundation. "Other rescuers helped free him from the python and controlled the situation in 10 minutes."

Mr Manit also explained that the surrounding area used to be a jungle before it was turned into a building area, which is why snakes have no small animals to hunt. "A few days ago, three snakes were captured and released into nature."

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

French tourist drowns after swimming in red flag zone

A FRENCH woman drowned after swimming in a red-flag zone at Nai Thon Beach on the afternoon of August 20.

Anne Sophie Marie Torrijos-Faisant, 23, reportedly drowned as her friends looked on helplessly. They were unable to help as she was dragged out to sea by a rip current.

"We were told that Ms Torrijos-Faisant was swimming with her friends when she was dragged 30 meters offshore," said Sakoo Police Lt Thanakan Utchanarassamee.

"It took about 20 minutes for the lifeguards to find her, and

it was too late to save her. She was pronounced dead-on-arrival at Thalang Hospital.

"It's monsoon season and we want to warn all tourists and residents not to swim in the red-flag zones.

"If you want to swim, please make sure you do so in the designated safe zones where the lifeguards are on patrol," he added.

— Winai Sarot

'Random' fires gut third car this month

THE driver of a Honda Accord had to make an emergency stop when his car burst into flames on the night of August 18.

The car's owner, Nantapol Saelim, 34, said he was driving from his house in Koh Kaew and heading into town about 10pm, when he smelled burning and promptly pulled in to the Merlin Hotel car park on Yaowarat Road, police told the *Gazette* on the morning of August 19.

Mr Nantapol parked his car and leaped out to call for help.

A hotel security guard rushed to put out the blaze with a fire extinguisher.

Mr Nantapol was not injured, but the car suffered damage to the engine, battery and the front-left wing, which was melted by the heat of the flames.

Earlier the same week, a dentist in Krabi escaped serious injury when her car mysteriously burst into flames while she was driving home from town.

— Kritsada Mueanhawong

Driver flees bus crash after tourists injured

MORE than 30 Chinese tourists were injured when their tour bus crashed into the temple wall at the bottom of Patong Hill on the night of August 22.

The driver fled after ploughing into the wall of Wat Suwan Kiriwong around 8:30pm.

Police later confirmed that the driver surrendered to police later that night.

A total of 31 people suffered minor injuries. They were in a state of shock and taken to Patong Hospital, said Pattapee Srichai of the Patong Police.

"The bus was making its way downhill into Patong and was at the last bend in front of the temple when the driver lost control, hitting a car and a van before crashing into the wall," said Maj Pattapee.

The driver has been charged with reckless driving causing injury and damage property.

— Winai Sarot

4 bodies wash ashore in Krabi

POLICE suspect that four bodies that washed ashore in Krabi last weekend could be those of crew members who went missing when their fishing boat sank on August 15.

"All of the bodies have been transferred to Krabi Hospital for DNA testing," said Krabi Marine Police chief Anurak Parinyasathiragul. "The missing crewmen's relatives and employer arrived in Krabi, but were unable to identify the bodies, which were badly disfigured after a long period of time in the water."

Two bodies washed ashore at Jum and Phi Phi islands on August 21. Two more bodies were found on Koh Lanta and Phi Phi the following day.

Police would not estimate how long it would take to identify the bodies.

— Chutharat Plerin

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Police, officials seek to reassure tourism sector after bombings

THE Royal Thai Police announced on the morning of August 19 that new safety measures will be taken by Provincial Police to 'boost tourist confidence' in light of the August 12 Mother's Day bombings.

At a meeting between local officials and consular representatives, the police responded positively to requests by 15 consuls to assign officers to a contact and information center in case of emergency situations on the island.

"We would like to announce four safety measures," said Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen. "Firstly, we plan to get updated news and information on crime related to tourists for analysis, so we can be on top of things at all times. Secondly, we have come up with a prevention plan under which we will have more officers patrolling tourist areas in cars, motorbikes, bicycles, ATVs and also on foot."

"Next, we will ask for local businesses, such as hotel operators, to cooperate with us by 'keeping an eye' on their areas. Lastly, we will use Information Technology (IT) to boost security. We will be importing security systems, such as



Officials across the province said that security would be stepped up in response to the Mother's Day bombings that hit downtown Patong, as well as provinces across the south. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

POLIS, CRIMES, PDC, I-POLICE, CCOC and Home-Guard as soon as possible.

"We really need information to report to our embassy, but have no one to ask," said Pornphan Sittichaiwijit, the Royal Norwegian honorary consul to Phuket. "We need facts and not rumors, and it would be great to have a contact center that we can call and ask. The other option is to have officers call and inform us during emergency situations."

In response, Gen Teerapol agreed with the suggestion and said that he will work with relevant officers to get the center set up as soon as possible, and that the consuls could "call in directly in case no one else gets in contact."

As of press time, officials in Phuket had not begun setting up the emergency call center, nor could they say when it would be operational.

Royal Thai Police Deputy Commissioner General Wuthi Liptapallop, along with Vice Governor Chokdee Amorn-

wat, as well as officers from the Region 8 Police, Provincial Police, and members of the Phuket Tourist Association and Phuket Hotel Association attended the meeting.

Also present at the meeting were consular representatives from Australia, China, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Germany, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, France, the UK and the US.

- Kongleaphy Keam

Cost of visa on arrival to double

THE fee for visa on arrival in Thailand, enjoyed by citizens of 18 countries around the world, is to double from 1,000 to 2,000 baht, with effect from September 27.

Visa on arrival is available at many points of entry throughout Thailand and is valid for a single use.

The 18 countries on the list are Bulgaria, Bhutan, China, Cyprus, Ethiopia, India, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Taiwan.

The Foreign Ministry said in its announcement that the decision to hike the charge for this class of visa was based on the amount Thai embassies and consulates collect, to make the fee more comparable to what Thais pay when they travel to other countries.

Tourists from the aforementioned countries applying for the visa on arrival must be entering Thailand for tourism and must possess a return ticket within 15 days of arrival. They must also arrive in the country with a standalone passport photo and notify immigration of where they are staying in Thailand.

- The Nation

After-hours bars fined in Phuket Town police raids

PROPRIETORS of two bars in Phuket Town were charged on the morning of August 18 for selling alcohol after-hours in raids conducted by police and public health officials.

At 12:30am, the officers paid a visit to the venue 'Harem,' located on Phang Nga Road in Talad Yai, where they found alcohol still being served to customers.

Regulations allow entertainment venues to open until 1am but forbid them from selling alcohol after midnight.

"Sayampoo Seeयोtha claimed to be the venue's manager, but when we asked to see the business licence, he could not produce it. He was charged for operating a bar without a licence and selling alcohol after-hours," a spokesperson for



Officers raided Harem in Phuket Town. Photo: Phuket City Police

the police told the *Gazette*.

Later, at 1:15am, the officers raided a bar called Duzz, located on Mae Luan Road, at the foot of Rang Hill.

"The Duzz bar had a proper licence, which was registered by 76-year-old Suchart Limpanon, allowing it to open from 6pm to 1am," the spokes-

person said.

However, inspectors discovered a receipt for alcohol sales with a 0:41 time stamp.

The manager, Chanu Jitman, could not contact Mr Suchart so the licence holder was charged in his absence for trading after-hours, witnessed by Mr Chanu.

Dr Prapa Nakara, director of the Phuket Provincial Health Office's Non-communicable Diseases Division, who took part in the raids, said she was concerned about after-hours trading and illegally promoting smoking at nightlife venues.

"As well as clamping down on after-hours alcohol trading, we want to ensure entertainment venues are not allowing smoking," said Dr Prapa.

- Chutharat Plerin



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Krabi village threatened by sinkhole

A SINKHOLE that appeared on the night of August 17 in a village in Krabi is threatening to swallow up a road and nearby houses if it gets any larger.

District officials went to inspect the 3.5-meter deep hole that opened up on a roadside in Lam Tab district after heavy rainfall. Inspectors climbed into the 1.5-meter-wide hole, and found that it extends at least four meters under the road.

"Villagers have been warned against going near the hole and a portion of the road has been closed off," said Krabi administrative president, Wuttichai Pedthong, who accompanied officials to inspect the sinkhole on August 17.

Mr Wuttichai said the Department of Mineral Resources Surat Thani would assess the risks to the village "soon."

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Task force busts drug gang

AUTHORITIES arrested six members of an alleged *krathom* drug distribution network on August 16. The gang is charged with possession of 326 kilograms of the category 5 narcotic. Police estimate the contraband has a street value of 300,000 baht.

A joint task force comprised of Thalang administrative officers, Khok Kloi police and civil defense volunteers reportedly detained two suspects after stopping a suspicious car entering the Phuket Tah Chat Chai check point on August 21.

"We found a suspicious car with two suspects inside attempting to transit through the check point entering Phuket," said Thalang Chief Administrative Officer Siripong Leeprasit. "However, our inspection turned up nothing, so we asked them to come down to the Thalang District office, where they were questioned for



The suspects are made to pose with their alleged haul of *krathom* leaves. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

six hours until they confessed."

"The driver, named Bookaree Maanraden, 19, confessed that he was supposed to check if the route was clear for another vehicle, that would transport the drugs to Phuket."

This led to the arrests of the other four suspects, who were

waiting in Phang Nga.

"We seized 326kg of *krathom* and eight mobile phones, near Baiyang Resort in Khok Kloi," Mr Siripong said.

"Mr Bookaree confessed that he had bought *krathom* from Malaysia in Hat Yai, and intended to sell it in Phuket for 1,000 baht per kilogramme," he

said. "This is the third time he's done this."

Officers refused to name the other suspects besides Mr Bookaree, as he was the only one to confess to the crime. However, all six were charged with illegal possession of a category 5 drug.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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Power out for 11 days in Krabi



Mr Ekwit shows off his generator. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

HOTEL business operators in Krabi are relying on generators for sporadic blackouts scheduled from August 20-31, due to a halt in the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority's gas supply. That gas is used by power plants to generate electricity for the region.

The interruption in supply is reportedly due to annual maintenance.

Business operators are relying on their own generators in order to maintain services during the blackouts.

"Even though the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) has announced that they have reserved power for that period, we still have to be prepared," said Ekwit Pinyotham, owner

of the Peace Laguna Resort and Spa in Ao Nang, who has kept his 250-kilowatt spare generator handy for the blackouts.

"We face them quite often, even on normal days," he added.

Hotel operators are also arranging more outdoor activities to encourage guests to stay out of their rooms in case of power cuts.

"Even though we have our own generator, it may not be enough to provide power to all the rooms," said Mr Ekwit. "We also have to raise the temperature in the lobby by adjusting the air conditioning to 25 degrees."

"We want this 12-day maintenance period to have minimal impact on tourism," he added.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Teenage rage on the rise

From Page 1

...living with a violent or volatile family, they'll internalize and imitate that behavior."

"Teenage years are a time of change, and during that period they need a rational voice giving them advice, otherwise they will turn into their surroundings. If their family has problems, they'll turn to their friends," Ms Phetcharat said.

"On the other hand, if the family spoils their children, if the kids always get what they want, they'll expect that in real society. They will dare to do anything to get what they want."

A 17-year-old at the detention center, arrested for possession of marijuana and a gun, echoed Ms Phetcharat's statements. The *Gazette* is withholding his name, as he is a minor.

"Actually, my mom knew that I was playing around with marijuana," he said. "She tried to stop me, but I didn't listen to her, I think because I've always been a little spoiled by my mom. I'm not afraid of her. And since she's not always around, I still get to smoke."

"My mom was very disappointed at me after my arrest," he said. "I think, after I leave here, I will never do it again. If I do it again, next time I might not be

taken here, but might go to jail. They gave me one chance already, so I have to be better."

Ms Phetcharat said it doesn't always take a volatile household or a pushover parent for teenagers to end up at the JOPC. Sometimes parents have no time to take care of their children, or they live far away from their kids.

"Teenagers are at that age where they're still learning new things," Ms Phetcharat said. "It's the age of trying something new, the age of wanting to win or to be the best at something. Kids want to be recognized and appreciated by others, particularly by their peers."

"Therefore, if they don't live with their family, or if their family isn't around to redirect them right away, the chances are greater that they'll end up off-course," she added.

SOCIETY

After the family, society as a whole has large role in affecting teenagers' behavior, Ms Phetcharat said.

"Phuket is a very diverse place, and there are a lot of foreigners and Thais moving here from other provinces to work and live. While that's good for the economy, growing villages into cities means there's more likely to be crime,"

she said. "We can see that teenagers are moving here by themselves from other provinces to study, and that group is hugely vulnerable."

"A high fluency in technologies like social media, also means that teenagers can access nearly anything at any time, which is another big issue," Ms Phetcharat said. "This is part of the reason that they're acting older than their age and more unexpectedly."

Ms Phetcharat said that social media gives teenagers access to new friend groups, allowing them to try new things and access illegal substances or weapons.

Another 17-year-old who agreed to speak with the *Gazette*, said that he met his friends online and that they introduced him to drugs for the first time.

"I was arrested for *krathom*," he said. "My parents work a lot, so I spend most of my time with friends. At first, I didn't drink *krathom*, but when I started hanging out with them more often, I just wanted to try it."

"The first time I was arrested and taken to the JOPC, I was very worried," he said. "I heard from people outside that there's a lot of hazing and pressure from the older generation inside and that the punishments were really harsh, but the JOPC is not like that. They teach us and change our minds a lot. I will never

commit a crime again after I leave here. I think I've learned a lot here."

LAW

Ms Rawee said she believes the teenagers under her charge are becoming bolder with each passing year. For her, changes need to be made in order to ensure that the JOPC can adequately focus on treatment and reducing recidivism.

"The most important part of this problem is that our laws are weak," Ms Rawee said. "If the law is strict, people are deterred from crime, particularly teenagers. If we punish them harshly when they do wrong, they'll be afraid of the consequences of doing it again."

"Thailand's laws give teenagers several chances," she said. "The punishments are mostly just going to the JOPC, which isn't much of a deterrent."

But Phuket's Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen disagrees.

"Laws and how we enforce them are at the end of the equation," General Teerapol said. "The law gives teenagers multiple chances, as they are not old enough to think like an adult. This is an international standard and we cannot punish teenagers harshly."

"Arresting teens isn't our goal," he said. "The real goal is to help them."

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Boss on the run after employee slaying

POLICE are hunting for the owner of a car detailing shop in Krabi, on the run after shooting dead an employee found drinking kratom juice at work on the afternoon of August 20.

Krabi City Police Major Supat Hemjinda said the shooting occurred just 100 meters from a police box, on Phet Kasem Road in Krabi Town.

“The shop owner, Thawat-chai Suannuch, reportedly shot Wichan Sangwan, 20, several times with a 9mm pistol after the employee pulled a knife on the owners,” said Maj Supat.

Police said they believe the shop owner caught his employee drinking an illegal stimulant known as ‘4x100’ and an argument ensued.

The 4x100 stimulant is a concoction of kratom leaf juice and cough syrup, and is classified as a category 5 substance.

Mr Wichan was shot three times: in the head, neck and shoulder. Mr Thawat-chai remains at large.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Workers electrocuted

ONE man was killed and three others hospitalized on the night of August 20, after they were electrocuted while working in a wastewater retention pond at a hotel on Koh Samui.

The men were using a pump to drain water from the pond at a hotel in Bo Phut, when the pump became submerged in the water, electrocuting them.

Police reported that a hotel staff member spotted the unconscious men in the pond and pulled the plug on the pump.

“Anucha Pompetch, 37, was taken to Bangkok Hospital Samui, but later died from his injuries,” said Captain Kantapol Srisuksai of the Bo Phut Police.

As of press time, two of the men had been discharged, but another remains in hospital.

Police declined to reveal the name of the hotel while investigations are underway.

– *Suchat Hankij*

Mother still fights for justice in neglected Samui cold case

THE mother of a German man who was killed two years ago in a bloody altercation in Koh Samui has written a letter pleading with Thai authorities to try those responsible for her son’s death, while bemoaning a lack of progress made in the case.

Volker Schwartges was 46 years old when he was brutally stabbed, allegedly by a group of teenage Thai nationals armed with broken beer bottles and a knife, during a dispute on Soi Green Mango in Chaweng on August 20, 2014.

The letter by Gisela Schwartges, dated August 1, states that back in 2014 she was informed of her son’s death in Thailand by two police officers from the Dusseldorf Criminal Investigation Department.

Mrs Schwartges added in her letter that she has spent the past two years collecting media clippings and investigative reports regarding her son’s murder.

“Police have deliberately failed to submit the case to the



Mr Schwartges funeral procession in 2014, attended by his wife. Photo: Gazette file

public prosecutor’s office in time, and for the first 84 days after the incident, the official investigation report read ‘dead’ instead of ‘murdered,’” she wrote.

The letter continues: “My son will never come back, but I hope that his killers will be brought to justice. How do we know that an incident such as this one will not happen again,

if the murderers are freely roaming the streets?”

Lt Col Jaru Phetpan, Inspection Department chief of Bo Phut Police, confirmed that police had already handed the case files to the public prosecutor’s office a long time ago. However, he could not recall exactly when that was.

“The case has been pro-

cessed at our end,” he said.

A clerk at the prosecutor’s office confirmed with the *Gazette* on August 24 that the case had already been through the court and that judgement had been passed. The clerk was not able to confirm the outcome of the case nor give any further details as this edition of the *Gazette* went to press.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

5-hour police stand off ends with Samui murder-suicide in bar

THE manager of a popular bar near Chaweng Beach on Koh Samui reportedly shot dead his friend on the night of August 17 before turning the gun on himself after a shootout with police and a five-hour standoff.

Bo Phut Police officers arrived at Bar Solo around 1:30am to find the body of Chulit Somakert lying on the floor. His alleged killer, Samroeng Thongpan, reportedly shot at the officers before fleeing to the 2nd floor, where he barricaded himself in.

Police cordoned off the area and attempted to persuade Mr Samroeng to surrender.

“We tried to contact Mr Samroeng on his phone and we used a megaphone, but he did not respond,” Bo Phut Police superintendent Thewet Pluemsut told the *Gazette* on August 18.

At about 6am, two teams of armed police with bullet-proof shields broke down the barri-



Police stormed the building after a five-hour stand off with the gunman. Photo: Suchat Hankij

cade, to find Mr Samroeng dead from a gun shot to the head.

A witness said the men were friends but they had fallen out over a million-baht money

sharing scheme and that Mr Samroeng owed Mr Chulit money.

“There were customers in the bar when Mr Samroeng

opened fire on his friend, letting off several rounds, and they had to take cover,” said Col Thewet.

– *Suchat Hankij*

Beaten brits paid for their troubles

THAI bouncers caught on video in Khao San Road beating up British tourists on August 15 have lost their jobs and received suspended jail sentences.

The four British tourists have since received 10,000 baht compensation each from their hotel, it was reported.

Tourist Police officer Nithithorn Jintakanon said the tourists had beer in hand and tried to get into the hotel bar. When denied entry because of a no-drinks policy, they gained access to the toilets and threw beer around, annoying other tourists present. An argument led to the attack in the street.

One of the bouncers in the video is heard saying "He started the fight. He picked on me first". The tourists reported the incident and the two bouncers involved were rounded up. Both appeared in court and were fined 2,000 baht each and sentenced to two months in prison. Both of the bouncers were sacked by the hotel.

True Corp under fire for aid in fraud

CHANGES have come thick and fast in the wake of the case of a Bangkok man who suffered a 900,000 baht loss from his bank account after a thief managed to get a replacement sim card from True Corporation.

The sim – fraudulently obtained after the thief pretended he had lost it – was used to get a one-time password and empty the account of Phansuthee Meeleukit, a car detailer who thought he was selling merchandise to the thief, it was reported.

Kasikorn Bank already announced that they would reimburse Phansuthee, but True refused to do so.

Now True is under investigation by communications authorities for their role in the matter and have already admitted that their procedures were not properly followed by a staff member. They have offered the victim of the crime a phone and free calls for a year.

A new sim was issued to the thief despite neither a Thai ID card nor a proxy authority being presented according to their own regulations. The government wants to know what True will do to ensure future incidents.



Gov't doles out millions in victim pay outs

VICTIMS of the bomb and arson attacks that rocked the southern region from August 10 to 12 are to get compensation from the government.

The violence claimed four lives and wounded 37, including 11 foreigners. One of the foreigners was still in hospital on August 22.

Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam said that the compensation payouts were on top of what the victims would get from insurance. "For injured victims, the compensation amount will vary depending on the severity of their injuries," he explained.

Mr Wissanu was speaking after he chaired a meeting on remedial actions for the victims.

He said relevant authorities such as the Social Development and Human Security Ministry as well as the Justice Ministry would also provide other forms of assistance to victims of the attacks.

Temple money launderers charged

DHAMMAKAYA Temple lawyer Samphan Sermcheep and two board members of M-Home Co met police on August 22, to hear charges of money-laundering and conspiracy to launder money in relation to the



Klongchan Credit Union Cooperative (KCUC) embezzlement scandal.

Mr Samphan and three others were accused of acting as a proxy for KCUC chairman Supachai Srisupa-aksorn in holding shares of M-Home Co, which Supachai allegedly bought with money siphoned from the cooperative's accounts, before later transferring the shares back to Supachai.

Department of Special Investigation (DSI) Bureau of Special Crime 3 director, Pol Lt Colonel Bantoon Chimgra, notified the accused of the charges and carried out an initial interrogation. He said the suspects acknowledged the charges, but Samphan denied the allegations and said he would only testify in court.

B12.29mn stolen at ATMs nationwide

THE thefts have forced the Government Savings Bank (GSB) to suspend indefinitely the services of about 4,000 NCR-branded ATMs.

GSB director Mr Chartchai Payuhanaveechai said on August 23 that the bank had suspended the services of the Scottish-made ATMs on August 8 after officials

found out that 21 of the ATMs had been hacked with the use of malware.

The hackers withdrew 40,000 baht each time from six NCR ATMs in Phuket, twice in Surat Thani, Chumpon, Prachuab Khiri Khan and Petchaburi and five in Bangkok.

Mr Chartchai said the bank had notified the Bank of Thailand about the electronic thefts so that commercial banks which have similar brands of ATMs can be warned and take appropriate preventive measures.

He said that the stolen money belonged to the bank, not the customers, so GSB would demand compensation from the manufacturer of the machines.

Pokemon Go 'busters' team stationed in BKK arrest 12

TRAFFIC POLICE arrested 12 motorists on Bangkok's roads on August 22 as part of their "Pokemon Traffic No Go" campaign.

Launched on August 6 across Thailand, Pokemon Go has quickly attracted a huge number of fans.

Metropolitan Police commissioner Lt-General Sanit Mahathavorn said two drivers were nabbed on Rama IV, eight on Sukhumvit Road, and two on Ramkhamhaeng Road for using their cell phone while driving – a violation of Article 43(9) of the Land Traffic Act.

Pol Lt-Col Bowornphob Soonthornraekha, deputy superintendent at the Phayathai Police Station, said the campaign was being implemented on 10 major roads in Bangkok.

"It not only [targets] anybody using phones while driving, but also the pedestrians who are chasing Pokemon carelessly that can cause traffic accidents," he said.

"If officers spot anyone using phones while driving, they will take photos as evidence to impose a 400 to 1000 baht fine, while pedestrians not walking on footpaths will be warned according to the Traffic Act."

Between August 10 and 20, 243 motorists were caught using their cellphone in the capital, with many of them apparently playing Pokemon.



Phuket Gazette

A second chance

THE rioting by inmates at the Phuket Juvenile Observation and Protection Center (JOPC) earlier this month [see page one] is a reminder of the need to try and steer troubled youth back onto the right track before they reach adulthood.

The body of scientific research on what leads youths astray is enormous. But, like most social science research, there always remains that confounding unresolved issue of 'nature versus nurture' when it comes understanding human behavior.

It is well established, however, that there are strong correlations between delinquency and certain, easily-measurable factors – most notably, whether or not youths were raised in a stable family with two parents.

In most cases, youths that end up in these facilities come from broken or dysfunctional homes. As a result, they all too often fail to develop a true sense of social responsibility.

Increasingly shunned by civil society, they react by joining peer groups of like-minded individuals with similar anti-social behavior, such as the youth gangs that are now prevalent in most parts of this island.

Social workers at facilities like the JOPC often serve as society's last line of defense to save troubled youths from lives of crime, often with drug-addiction and other forms of anti-social behavior thrown into the misery mixture.

Just as importantly, successful intervention at this crucial developmental stage also protects society from all of the negative impacts of these behaviors, which now include millennial threats such as terrorism and mass shootings. Unfortunately, in the vast majority of cases, rehabilitation is no easy task.

By their very nature, these euphemistically-named centers tend to do just the opposite. It is therefore of utmost importance that their workers identify and weed out the worst instigators before events like the recent riot occur.

Thailand has long maintained separate legal and penal systems for youth offenders. Drawing a dividing line between minors and adults at the age of 18 years is obviously arbitrary. Although scientific evidence claims that the human brain doesn't fully mature until one hits the mid-twenties, the line needs to be drawn somewhere.

All of us who survived our teenage years can no doubt cringe at some of the indiscretions of our own youth – so we should all be willing to give young people a second chance.



Tour companies need to step up

Re: Bus driver flees after Chinese tourists injured in crash, Aug 23

Is it not about time that the owners of the company are also fined or prosecuted for not ensuring that the buses are in good working order and that the person driving is competent and is forced to follow driving laws?

How many buses have crashed on Patong Hill because of bad brakes? The owner of the company has a responsibility to ensure his equipment and staff are fit for the purpose.

MGB
Gazette forum

Show some integrity and compassion

Re: Mother of man killed in Samui cries for justice two years on, Aug 19

An absolute disgrace. Words fail me; the officer cannot remember when he sent off the paperwork. Look at your records and show some integrity and compassion.

Harry
Gazette forum

Need better safety standards

Re: Four electrocuted in hotel water treatment pond, Aug 22

Sadly, another case of 'never-colonized' Thailand adopting Western ideas and technology, and then only half doing the job.

To point out the obvious, most, if not all, Western countries

Letters to the Editor

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

have 3-core cable, one strand of which is the earth ground. Not required on many electronic items, but sure is needed on pumps, washing machines, fridges, and so on. Standardization of plugs and outlets also needs urgent attention.

Masuk
Gazette forum

Need signs in all major languages

Re: French tourist drowns at Nai Thon, Aug 22

Well, if the lifeguards are like the two lifeguards at Kamala, one sleeping behind the tent, the other on the phone, who worries about another life lost?

Maybe the signs should be 6x6 feet and written in four major languages, so all can see.

Bazza
Gazette forum

Phuket xenophobia has to stop

Re: Opinion: Reassessing priorities to maximize national security, Aug 21

There was indeed much speculation at the time as to who was responsible for the bombings, but mostly it was assumed that it was the work of southern Thai separatists.

This assumption has since been validated by DNA evidence from the unexploded devices. This was done by Thais. Increasingly xenophobic measures by immigration will only further deter foreign tourists from coming here.

CaptainJack
Gazette forum

USDA guidelines keep changing

Re: Excuse Buster: The flaws of nutritional science, Aug 19

Your article is spot on. As someone who worked at USDA in America, I know full well the influence the commercial food industry had on USDA nutritional guidance.

It was and still is heavily influenced by the dairy and grain industries. Greatest myth is their belief that fats make you fat. They do not, carbohydrates do.

GMOs are inherent in the grain industry, which is why even 'whole wheat foods' are 'processed'.

Sinjin MacLeod
Gazette forum

No foresight behind visa fee increase

Re: Visa-on-arrival fee to double from Sept 27, Aug 19

I agree entirely, it's a ridiculous decision with no foresight.

Central will become slightly more bearable with fewer Chinese tourists shouting at each other.

Matt
Gazette forum

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Promoting local sports

FIRST PERSON

FIRST of all, I would like to congratulate all the participants and medal winners of the 2016 Rio Olympics. I would particularly like to commend the weightlifting medal winners, as this sport is not very popular with Phuketians currently and we don't have many national weightlifting champions.

However, I hope that these wins and other victories in important regional matches can help develop weightlifting into an outstanding sport in Phuket and Thailand in the near future. This will motivate the younger generation to pay more attention to weightlifting.

The trend of sports in Phuket is extraordinary. Sports are an important factor in attracting tourists to the island. For example, world class internationally renowned golf tournaments are one of the biggest sports tourism attractions. Golf players, along with their staff and families, come to the island for golf tournaments, which is a huge income boost for locals.

Another upcoming trend is Muay Thai training. This is a blend of sports tourism and beach holiday, for those who want to develop their boxing technique and take their training to a new level, and also want to enjoy the island life.

Modern, high standard boxing camps are rapidly opening up and gaining popularity on the island. People from all over the world come to train in Phuket at camps such as Tiger Muay Thai and MMA Training Camp, Dragon Muay Thai Camp, Siam Muay Thai Academy and Phuket Muay Thai Training Camp.

Additionally, we have world-



Sirawee Waloh, originally a native of Pattani, was appointed as the new director of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Phuket Office (MOTS) on July 25, 2016. She had previously been working as a human resource developer and nurse at Pattani Provincial Public Health Office for 18 years. She is a graduate of the College of Nursing, Songkhla.

Here, she talks about sporting trends in Phuket and areas that need improvement.

class sailing races, such as Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek and the King's Cup Regatta, that are immensely popular every year. The King's Cup is Asia's biggest and most popular regatta, a one-week event held annually in Phuket. It was inaugurated in 1987 to celebrate the 60th birthday of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej. It was also awarded the 'Best Asian Regatta' at the 12th Asia Boating Awards held in May, organized by Asia-Pacific Boating and China Boating magazines.

For locals, football is still the most popular sport, both in Phuket and other provinces. We have centralized different kinds of sport in the Saphan Hin area, which is an ideal location, surrounded by the relaxing sea atmosphere. Additionally, strong cooperation between provincial authorities – both private and public – helps boost the sports industry in Thailand.

We also have several training institutes for athletes, such as Thanyapura Sports & Leisure Club, one of the finest Asian sport, fitness and health havens, that features the best sports facilities and coaching expertise.

We are also lucky that there are private sector organizations ready to support and sponsor our teams all the time.

However, there are some areas we need to improve and focus on to further develop Phuket as a world-class sports tourism destination.

First of all, we need bigger and better venues, such as stadiums, to host both domestic and international matches. We also need to improve facilities, such as toilets and old equipment, at existing venues. Another area of focus is improving the quality of our athletes through more rigorous professional training. We aim to train our athletes in sports tactics, such as how to play with the least amount of exertion and injury, how to deal with injuries and how to enhance strength and stamina.

Our aim is to host major international sporting events, such as the 2014 Asean Beach Games. If Phuket has a chance to host big sporting events like this, it would provide a much-needed boost to our sports facilities and venues, and will surely benefit locals as well.



The big bike bug hit me after about a year. Photo: Dennis Bratland

Over to the dark side

AFTER about a year and a half of living in Phuket, I have finally taken the leap and upgraded from a scooter to the loud, notorious 'big bike'.

Cruising on my new ride, with an ear to ear grin plastered on my face, I felt an overwhelming sense of good fortune. The loud hum of the Yokishima exhaust did muffle my train of thought, but didn't stop me from thinking how mammoth a task it was to shift to something with a bigger engine.

It all started on the Bypass Road when my scooter hit a series of consistent, consecutive bumps that hurt my backside and left me wishing that the tyres were just a little bigger and wider.

"I almost died," I told my boss when I reached work. He suggested I get a car and I sniggered, recalling my grim financial situation. So, I started saving up and researching.

I researched for months before taking the leap. I joined dozens of groups and forums on Facebook, related to buying and selling anything on wheels in Phuket. I clicked through hundreds of bikes, that were either way too expensive or too big for me to ride (did I mention that I've never driven a manual bike before?).

I initially decided on a Phantom, then a Keeway, then a homemade Harley Davidson and finally settled on a Honda CBR. This brought me to my next problem – how do I test

Island View

By Zohaib Sikander

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

drive the bike without crashing in front of the owner.

I swallowed my pride and called up my 'taxi-guy', who hooked me up with his 'mechanic-guy' to check out the bike and test drive it. Since my self-esteem had already hit rock-bottom, I called up the owner and told him that I wanted his bike, but didn't know how to ride one. He was obviously taken aback, but politely told me in his thick, Russian accent to come over the next morning.

Next morning, my new 'mechanic-guy' picked me up and we drove to Rawai silently, the language barrier hanging thick between us. When we got there, I chatted with the owner while the mechanic assessed the bike. While waiting for his approval, I had a nice long chat with the seller, who was surprised when I told him that he didn't hear me incorrectly over the phone and that I actually didn't even know how to ride it out of his street.

Regardless, the bike was approved, money, telephone numbers and papers were exchanged and I wobbled out on the street, with a supportive, happy-with-the-quick-transaction Russian shouting "You can do it" behind me.

Words from the Wise

"For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?"

– Steve Jobs

"'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

When will Kathu construction end?

I WAS recently driving from Loch Palm Golf Course toward Kathu when I saw some ongoing construction work on the road, making it much narrower and difficult to pass through. There are many big trucks and buses crossing that way, which results in long tailbacks on that road. Can you please update when the work is expected to be completed?

Suriya Nuanjan of the Kathu Municipality Office replies:

Thank you for your query.

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Sahar Kathu

The construction is being done to build a wall to prevent landslides. It has already been ongoing for a while, and we expect to be finished in about five months.

For safety purposes, we have already installed a sign and light there. Officers will also be there to redirect cars. Please drive with caution and slow down when you arrive at the site. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Alibaba proves naysayers wrong



Finance

By Don Freeman

IT'S not been an easy market for many individual stocks over the last few years. Take the case of Chinese internet and e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (NYSE: BABA) – a stock I have been watching closely since its debut, when a client wanted to buy some shares.

Many western investors do not appreciate just how big of a global internet and e-commerce bellwether Alibaba truly is. For starters, Alibaba.com is the world's largest online business-to-business (B2B) trading platform for small businesses. There's also consumer-to-consumer (C2C) portal Taobao, which is similar to ebay.com, while Alipay is China's version of Paypal. Other business interests range from numerous e-commerce related websites, cloud computing, instant messaging and online music services to the newspaper South China Morning Post.

In September 2014, Alibaba had the biggest IPO in history (US\$25 billion) as shares were priced at US\$68, but opened at US\$92.70. Shares then surged to an all-time high of US\$115 in subsequent months, only to be crushed by the market to as low as US\$59. Right now,



In 2014, Alibaba had the biggest IPO in history with shares opening at US\$92.70. Photo: Kevin Hutchinson

Alibaba's technical chart shows a solid bottoming formation in the form of a triple bottom, roughly from last summer until this spring, followed by a consolidation, until more recently when shares broke out about 19 per cent to the US\$97 level.

On August 11, Alibaba easily beat earnings and revenue expectations for its fiscal first quarter, which bodes well for the rest of the year's performance. Some key financial or business metrics from the quarter include:

Sales grew 59 per cent to US\$4.84 billion, the fastest growth since the 2014 IPO, thanks to revenue from acquisitions earlier this year; while the core China e-commerce business grew 47 per cent, also

a post-IPO high.

Mobile monthly active users surged 39 per cent to 427 million and mobile revenue increased 119 per cent year-on-year – accounting for 75 per cent of Alibaba's total China retail revenue compared to 51 per cent in the same quarter a year earlier.

Annual active buyers on Alibaba websites rose 18 per cent to US\$434 million for a net addition of US\$11mn from the prior quarter. Alibaba bought back US\$2bn worth of shares.

On the other hand, Alibaba continues to face its share of unique challenges, that include currency headwinds hitting the top-and bottom-lines as China depreciates the Yuan and the US dollar remains strong.

Counterfeit goods appearing on Alibaba sites also remains a serious problem, while how the company calculates some key business metrics along with some murkiness in its financials remain concerns for US regulators and investors alike (BABA is, after all, a Chinese company).

Like Google, Alibaba's core business has allowed the company to splurge on more wildcard investments – many of which continue to lose money and may or may not ever bear fruit. The promising cloud computing business did grow 156 per cent last quarter, but it's still relatively small (US\$187 million in revenues) compared to Amazon Web Services and is still losing money (albeit, the business is

closer than ever to break-even).

Moving forward, Alibaba's technical chart could see further consolidation at present levels, while a pullback would be perfectly normal. Shares could still end up retesting the previous resistance level, which will then become a new support level. However, we will only know for sure by watching the share price action over the coming weeks.

And even if you don't want to invest in individual stocks like Alibaba, watching the performance of growth stocks like BABA (that are also bellwethers) is important at this stage of the market, because its growth stocks that always provide the main source of fuel for bull markets. Likewise, many skeptics continue to believe this market cannot move higher – leaving it up to growth stocks like Alibaba to prove them either right or wrong.

Does a growth stock like Alibaba fit into your 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 expat-riates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. He can be reached at 089-970 5795 or email: freeman capital@gmail.com

Petrol prices hiked nationwide

	OLD	NEW	INCREASE
Benzine 95	31.36	31.76	+0.40
Gasohol 95	24.25	24.65	+0.40
Gasohol 91	23.98	24.38	+0.40
Gasohol E20	21.74	22.14	+0.40
Gasohol E85	17.59	17.99	+0.40
Diesel	23.79	24.19	+0.40

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Pricing your products right

Biz Chat
by Zohaib Sikander

THE second element of the '4 Ps' of marketing is price. Price is what your customer pays you in exchange for goods and services received by them.

There are many aspects to this deceptively simple element. In setting your price, you must first decide what is the value of the product or service to the buyer. If you set your price higher than what your target market is willing to pay, you're likely going to lose out on business. On the other hand, if you set your price too low, you are not maximizing returns to your business, and your product may even be valued as 'inferior'.

Another important point to consider is your customers'



Price should reflect the value of the product to customers. Photo: pixabay

price sensitivity. This means considering whether a small change in price will affect your market share and profits. If the benefits of a price increase outweigh the loss in customers, it makes sense to do it. If not, you will lose out on market share and profits.

Another interesting elements of pricing is offering loyalty points for a certain num-

ber of purchases made. Many successful companies offer loyalty points – Makro, The 1-Card and Starbucks are just a few examples in Phuket.

Finally, carefully consider how your pricing compares with your competitors. There are several pricing strategies you can employ, which is a subject I will explore in more detail in my next column.

Biz: Save our Gov

By Chutharat Plerin

EIGHT of the island's major private business organizations have appealed to the central government to reconsider moving the Phuket governor a month from now.

The statement, issued in Thai, was released on August 22, after the announcement to transfer Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada to Nakhon Sri Thammarat effective October 1 was officially announced on August 17 by the Prime Minister's Office spokesman Maj Gen Sansern Kaewkamnerd.

Governor Chamroen is being transferred as part of the cabinet's decision to transfer 19 officers of the Ministry of Interior in an annual reshuffle.

The organizations that issued the plea to keep the governor include the Phuket Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Phuket Industries, the Tourism Council of Phuket, the Phuket Real Estate Association, Phuket Tourist Association, Thai Hotels Association Southern Chapter, Patong Hotel Association and Kata Karon Hotel Business Association.

The statement referred to the growth and tourism figures of Phuket, saying that tourism in-



The statement referred to the growth and tourism figures of Phuket in that tourism income for the country was continually growing and amounted to billions of baht a year. Photo: Jeremie Schatz

come for the country was continually growing and amounted to billions of baht a year. The number of tourists has also been increasing constantly, from 6 million in 2007 to 12.5 million in 2015.

Additionally, Phuket has been chosen by the central government to be a model province for several projects, such as MICE city, marina hub, medical hub, maritime and yacht hub, and as a smart city. Phuket was also named as a city of gastronomy by UNESCO.

"Three Phuket governors have been reshuffled in the past

four years. This affects the development of Phuket as management cannot continue properly when a new governor is selected. It takes time to understand Phuket and get to know all the officials who work for the island. If Phuket governors are changed in a short period of time, Phuket will likely lose its chance for continuous development, which will also affect investor confidence," the statement read.

The organizations called on the central government to realize that the period of time to reshuffle the governor is very

important.

"Phuket is unique and requires someone who suits the island well. It is a dynamic place and whoever is chosen as the governor must understand the needs of locals, investors and foreigners, and have a great vision to drive Phuket forward properly. The Phuket governor must be one who really loves Phuket and will work to continually expand growth in every area, so that islanders can have a sustainable means of living. Only then can Phuket aim to be an Asian and regional economic hub," the statement read.

Chevron committed to Thailand

CHEVRON is committed to its Thailand investments, despite job cuts that have spurred rumors of the US oil major's exit, and may keep a Myanmar gas field stake if no attractive offer is made for the asset, a Chevron executive said this week.

As one of America's largest oil and gas producers – supplying more than one-third of the country's natural gas demand – the oil giant operates several exploration and production blocks in the Gulf of Thailand.

"The assets we operate in the Gulf of Thailand are a core part of Chevron's portfolio. We are intent on them remaining so. We are not leaving Thailand," said Chevron Asia Pacific Exploration and Production President Stephen Green.

The Thai government earlier this year put up for auction oil and gas contracts expiring in 2022/2023, after activists had protested a proposal to extend the concessions with existing operators. Chevron and other licence holders will be able to participate in the sales, and if no other bidders surface, then Bangkok will negotiate extensions of the concessions with them. Chevron aim to invest more than 100 billion baht (US\$2.9bn) in Thailand in 2016.

– *The Nation*

Thailand ranked 20th in fixed broadband use

THAILAND is ranked 20th in fixed-broadband adoption with 9.2 per cent subscribing to the service in 2015, according to a new study by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

Among countries in Southeast Asia, Singapore ranks seventh with 26.5 per cent subscribing to the service; Malaysia is 21st with 9 per cent; Vietnam is 22nd with 8.1; Brunei is 23rd with 8; the Philippines is 30th with 3.4; Indonesia is 41st with 1.1; Cambodia is 44th with 0.5; Laos is 45th, also with 0.5; and Myanmar is 46th with 0.3 per cent.

The world's average was 11.2 subscriptions per cent in 2015. Leading in Asia and Pacific is South Korea, at 40.2. Japan's subscription rate is 30.5, against

China's 18.6 (excluding Hong Kong and Macau).

The report titled 'State of ICT in Asia and the Pacific 2016: Uncovering the Widening Broadband Divide' covers 53 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The report showed that Thailand's fixed-broadband subscriptions remained low despite a sharp increase in the past 15 years. Thailand had an average annual growth rate of 159 per cent during the period.

The study found a varied level of costs for internet transit connectivity, which is correlated with the cost of fixed-broadband subscriptions. Subscribers in Thailand and the Philippines pay more than 2,700 baht per month for the service, against less than 350 baht in Singapore and about 1050 baht in Malaysia.

– *The Nation*



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Local chefs to shine at Phuket Tasty Fest

Local officials gathered at Limelight Avenue to announce that the Phuket Tasty Fest 2016 and Andaman Hotelier and Tourism Fair 2016' will take place from September 9-11 at the venue (see page 14).



Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana (2nd left) talks about the importance of promoting local food and traditions, while TAT Phuket Director Anoma Wongyai (left), Vice-Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul (3rd left) and show organisers look on during the announcement of the festival.

Laguna Phuket golf challenge gives back to the community

Laguna Golf Phuket recently hosted its inaugural charity golf tournament, the Laguna Phuket Hospitality Challenge, which gathered professionals from the hospitality industry around the island for a fun-filled Friday, replete with a round of golf, various on-course challenges and refreshment/massage stops. The networking event also raised 138,000 baht for Laguna Phuket Foundation's Community Learning Centre program.



(From L-R) Kannika Janjampa, Assistant Club Manager, Laguna Golf Phuket; Saowanee Akkasintawangkul, Assistant Sales & Events Manager of Laguna Golf Phuket; Prae Sunantaraks, Director of CSR & Community Relations of Laguna Phuket; and Peera Poomsok, CSR Manager of Laguna Phuket, with some of the kids.



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ents in Paradise

Ikea Phuket drops in for a visit with the Gazette

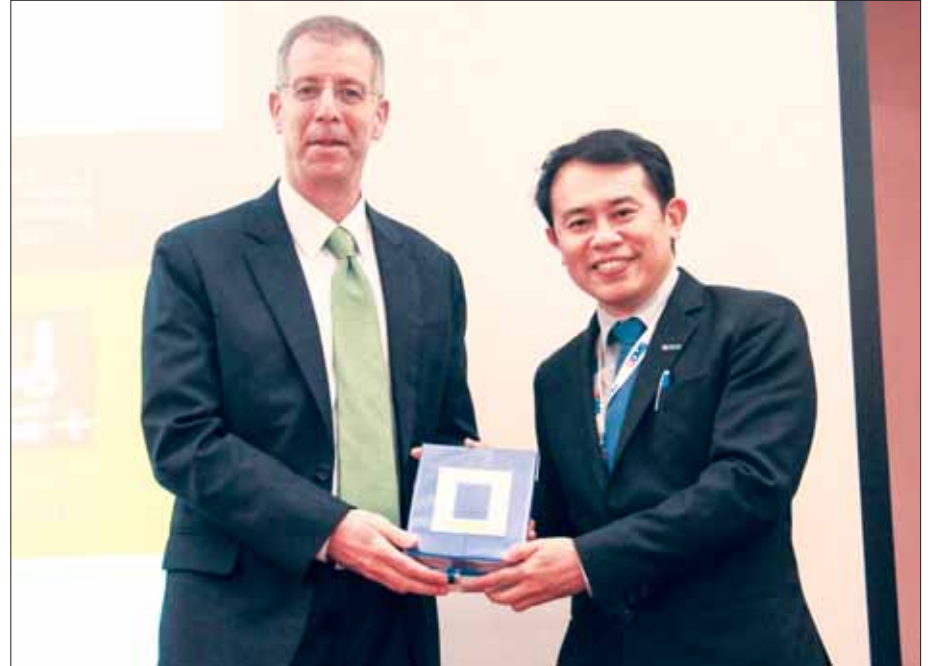
Representatives of Ikea Pick-up and Order Point visited Phuket recently to promote new home furniture and decor products in their September 2016 catalog.



Natthira Susangrat, Phuket Gazette's GM (2nd left) greets Ikea Phuket representatives (from L-R) Kamonporn Srisoontorn, Marketing Assistant of Ikano (Thailand) Limited; Jittranuch Lertchaiworakul, Assistant Marketing Manager of IKEA Thailand; and Rungrat Chodchoy, Media Relations Specialist of Aziam Burson-Marstellers.

Israeli Ambassador visits Bangkok Hospital Phuket

Bangkok Hospital Phuket gave a warm welcome to a delegation led by HE Simon Roded, Israel's Ambassador to Thailand, on August 17. The visit included a special screening of 'Brave Miss World', an award-winning movie that shines a light on violence against women and children. The movie was screened to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's 84th Birthday.



Dr Somrit Jantarapratin (right), Hospital Director of Bangkok Hospital Phuket presents a gift to Israel's ambassador, HE Simon Roded, to thank him for visiting the hospital.



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Indonesian yacht to kick off Asia Superyacht Rendezvous

INDONESIAN charter yacht S/Y Dunia Baru will help kick off the 16th annual Asia Superyacht Rendezvous for the first time this year. The 51m phinisi-style sailing yacht will be hosting the opening cocktail reception. Running from 16-18 December in Phuket, the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous is one of the largest gatherings of extra-large sailing and motor-yachts in the region, bringing together Asia's yachting community for three days of friendly competition.

"We are thrilled to be taking part in the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous for the first time this year and to be hosting the opening cocktail party on board Dunia Baru," says the yacht's owner, Mark Robba. "For me as a superyacht owner, there are few cruising grounds in the world as beautiful as those in Southeast Asia. Every day is an adventure and an opportunity to escape and experience something new. I'm glad we can join the other yachts, owners, VIP guests and crew at the Rendezvous in its celebration of yachting in this region before we make our way to Myanmar for some new adventures and charter."

This year's Rendezvous will be hosted at the award-winning



The 51m phinisi-style sailing yacht Dunia Baru will host the opening cocktail reception at the 16th annual Asia Superyacht Rendezvous. Photo: AlbatrossPR

SALA Phuket Resort & Spa, a five-star resort situated on Mai Khao Beach. Highlights over the three days will include the opening cocktail party on board Dunia Baru – a chance for guests to participate in the 'Rendezvous Challenge' of model boat building and races, the 'Pirate's Booty' treasure hunt and a VIP Gala Dinner on the final evening.

"As the organizers of the Asia Superyacht Rendezvous, we are very excited that Dunia

Baru has agreed to be the host yacht for this year's opening cocktail party," says Gordon Fernandes, one of the event's longtime organizers, alongside Captain Charlie Dwyer.

"All phinisi yachts offer guests an unrivalled experience due to the charm of their traditional build, but Dunia Baru takes this to the next level. We're very happy the invited guests will have the chance to view Dunia Baru in all of her glory while at anchor outside

Rendezvous host hotel, SALA Phuket Resort & Spa."

The opening party will be a precursor to the start of the following morning's superyacht sailing races, which will be on a course marked by participating motoryachts.

Following the Rendezvous, Dunia Baru will make her way to the cruising grounds of Myanmar, where she will be available for charter through 37 South.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Phuket to host culinary fest, tourism fair



V/Gov Prajiad at the event launch. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

MARK your calendars for two fun festivals coming to Phuket next month. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office is hosting the 'Phuket Tasty Fest 2016' and 'Andaman Hotelier and Tourism Fair 2016' from September 9-11 at Limelight Avenue.

The tasty fest will include live cooking demonstrations, as well as celebrity chefs creating their own menus with local Phuket ingredients.

The tourism fair will feature flower, wood and ice carving competitions, as well as seminars on marketing, branding and service design from industry experts. A bus service will be available at Limelight Avenue, the dragon statue in Queen Sirikit Park, Phuket Municipality, Wat Klang and opposite Vanich Plaza building.

For more information, visit www.andamanhotelier.com.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

Young chefs shine at Junior Master Chef

YOUNG chefs donned their toques for the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization's Phuket Junior Master Chef 2016 event held on August 20-21 at Phuket Vocational College.

The event was chaired by Theera Jiasakul, chief of the PPAO council, and included both training and competitions.

"We wanted to provide an opportunity for students aged 12-15 years, who love cooking, to be trained by experienced chefs from the Phuket Thai Chef's Association," said Charin Rattanachawee, deputy director of Phuket Vocational College.

"The aim of this project is to encourage students to explore food techniques and decoration. Age does not matter if you have an interest in something and are willing to



Young chefs along with officials at the event. Photo: PPAO

work toward it."

Students who pass the course will be given the opportunity to learn more about food techniques if they wish to pursue it as a career.

Mr Theera said he hoped to see the students further develop their knowledge and skills. He added that it was a valuable skill to help people make a living and support their families as well.

– *Chutharat Plerin*

New services, expat card launched

PHUKET International Hospital announced the launch of three new departments, as well as its 'Expat Privilege Card', on August 20.

Wassana Tipayaongtada, chairwoman of the Provincial Red Cross Phuket Chapter, presided over the grand opening event, that was held under the theme 'We're Family'. BDMS Southern Group management and staff, Thai and foreign dignitaries, local authorities and local business representatives were also in attendance.

The three new departments include the Children's Clinic, Phuket International Dermatology Institute (PDI), and Ayuravadhana Geriatric Clinic.

The newly revamped children's clinic is inspired by Lego Thailand, with the aim of promoting children's learning, imagination and creativity. The dermatology institute caters to both cosmetic skin care and skin



The Expat Privilege Card is intended to provide healthcare and medical privileges for expatriates. Photo: Phuket International Hospital

diseases, boasting internationally qualified dermatologists on its panel. The Ayuravadhana Geriatric Clinic aims to deliver comprehensive elderly care, with the Phuket Vaccine Clinic in tandem offering protection against diseases at all ages.

The Expat Privilege Card

was launched to provide healthcare and medical privileges for expatriates in Phuket and nearby provinces. It can be used at all BDMS Southern Group hospitals – Bangkok Hospital, Phuket International Hospital and Dibuk Hospital.

– *Sahar Aftab Paliwala*

Olympians welcomed by fans, families



Athletes arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Photo: The Nation

THAILAND'S Olympic medalists returned home on August 17 to a hero's welcome, with over 1,000 people, including family members, fans and the media, mobbing them at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport.

Gold medalists Sopita Tanasan and Sukanya Srisurat, silver medalist Pimsiri Sirikaew and bronze medalist Sinphet Kruaithong, arrived at the airport, which echoed to the cheers and music of thousands who were waiting to welcome their heroes.

Representatives of the Metropolitan Electricity Authority, the main sponsor of the weightlifting team, and family members carried banners and placards with welcome messages. Bouquets of flowers and garlands were handed over to all the Olympians, while some family members brought along their favorite foods.

Taekwondo athletes – silver medalist Tawin Hanprab and bronze medalist Panipak Wongpattanakit – received a similarly welcome from families, media and fans upon their arrival on August 23.

– *The Nation*

Phuket Vegetarian Festival announced, security beefed up

By Chutharat Plerin

PHUKET Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthammakul announced the dates of this year's Vegetarian Festival, as well as a special prayer ceremony to honor HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, last week.

The nine-day festival is slated to take place from October 1-9. The event attracts thousands of visitors to Phuket to witness the festivities, which include fire-walking, bladed-ladder climbing, hundreds of stalls fully stocked with vegan foods and processions at locations throughout the island.

"I have urged all relevant officials to make sure public safety comes first, and especially to keep an eye on dangerous firecrackers and illegal activities during the festival," said Vice Governor Prajiad.

"We will be especially vigilant on October 2, when a special prayer ceremony will be held at Saphan Hin for the good fortune of His Majesty."

The Vegetarian Festival, or jia chai as it is known in local Hokkien Chinese, began in 1825, when the governor of Thalang, Praya Jerm, moved the island's principal town from Tah Rua in Thalang district to Get-Hoe in Kathu district, where there were many tin mines and Chinese miners.

Kathu at that time was still covered in jungle and fever was rife. It happened that a travelling



The nine-day festival, scheduled to take place from October 1-9, attracts thousands of visitors, who come to Phuket to witness the festivities. Photo: Gazette file

opera company (called ngiu in Thai or pua-hee in the Hokkien dialect) came from China to perform for the miners.

When the whole company fell sick from an unnamed malady, they kept a vegetarian fast to honor two of the emperor gods, Kiew Ong Tai Teh and Yok Ong Sone Teh. The sickness afflicting the opera troupe then disappeared.

This greatly interested the people of Kathu, who asked how it was done. The answer

was that ritual vegetarianism, with its attendant ceremonies, had been the remedy, and as a result, people embraced the faith enthusiastically.

As the sun sets on the first night, all Chinese shrines taking part in the annual Vegetarian Festival will raise their go-teng poles so that the jade emperor, among the nine emperor gods, can descend from the heavens, heralding the beginning of this year's event.

Meanwhile, cooks at food

stalls around all participating shrines will begin preparing vegetarian fare, which will be provided throughout the festival.

Festival goers must adhere to certain rules, including maintaining polite behavior, wearing white, abstaining from alcohol consumption and refraining from sexual activities. Additionally, pregnant and menstruating women, as well as people in mourning, must refrain from watching the festivities.

New roundabout helps lower road accidents

THE construction of a roundabout at Phuket Provincial Hall has reduced traffic accidents in the area, Phuket City Traffic Police reported last week.

"The Narisorn-Surin intersection roundabout funded by the Safer Road Foundation has significantly reduced the number of accidents in the area," said Lt Col Padungpong Duksukaew of Phuket City Traffic Police.

Col Padungpong stated that in 2015, there were 36 accidents at this intersection, or an average of three accidents per month. Since the new roundabout was finished in May, there has only been one re-



The new roundabout at Phuket Provincial Hall. Photo: Gazette file

ported accident at the site.

"Most accidents occurs because commuters ignore the traffic light. Now they see the roundabout and slow down, which has led to fewer accidents," Col Padungpong added.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

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Giving back on Mother's Day

Diving
By Isaac Stone Simonelli

THOUGH irreparable damage has been done to many of the reef systems along the Andaman, especially those near major tourist destinations such as Phuket, dive sites in the region continue to offer extraordinary experiences to rookie and veteran divers.

Within the Phi Phi archipelago, a popular day-trip destination for dive companies out of Phuket, as well as those based on Phi Phi Don, the local community is coming together to protect and rebuild marine systems.

In honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's 84th birthday on August 12, hundreds of volunteers came together to clean Phi Phi's beaches and reefs while promoting environmentally sustainable practices and awareness.

"As part of the Phi Phi marine team's tasks, we invited divers from all of the dive centers on Phi Phi Island to participate in fish and turtle releases," explained Andrew Hewett from the Phi Phi Island Conservation and Preservation Group.

A total of 40 volunteer divers managed the release of five hawksbill turtles, 10 bamboo sharks, 50 anemonefish (clownfish) and 200 mullet.

"To release the anemonefish



In honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's 84th birthday on August 12, hundreds of volunteers came together to clean Phi Phi's beaches and reefs. Photo: Gazette file

safely we used wire cages, which were placed over the anemones as a temporary measure to prevent larger fish from feeding on the young clownfish," said Mr Hewett.

"The turtles were released from the beach at Viking Cave and the bamboo sharks were released in 1-2 meters of water, where they could immediately find refuge in coral reef. Two days later, one of our staff found one of the bamboo sharks 16 meters further down the reef on Pileh Wall."

Mr Hewett admitted that animal releases, which are common during Buddhist holidays and as public relations stunts by large companies in

Phuket, are less likely to have an immediate impact on the ecology of the reefs.

"However, it is my belief that the more frequently local communities participate in projects such as this, the more aware they become of the fragility of coral reefs," Mr Hewett said.

"By reducing the destruction of coastal resources we may give the coral reefs and marine diversity an opportunity to recover to a point of self sustainability."

In addition to the animal release, a team of divers moved a three tonne mooring that had been installed too close to an artificial reef, threatening to

damage what it was placed there to protect.

Once the fish were out of the bags – so to speak – the mooring moved and the underwater cleanup at Saam Hart complete, the dive teams returned to Tonsai Bay to clean up under the pier.

"We removed a tonne of rubbish in less than two hours," said Mr Hewett.

But there is always more trash in the sea.

The diving communities along the Andaman coast must continue to bolster their efforts to self-educate, as well as educate the local communities on how to protect the wonders just below the surface.

Small boats in second TYS line up



The demo platform was popular at the first TYS. Photo: Zohaib Sikander

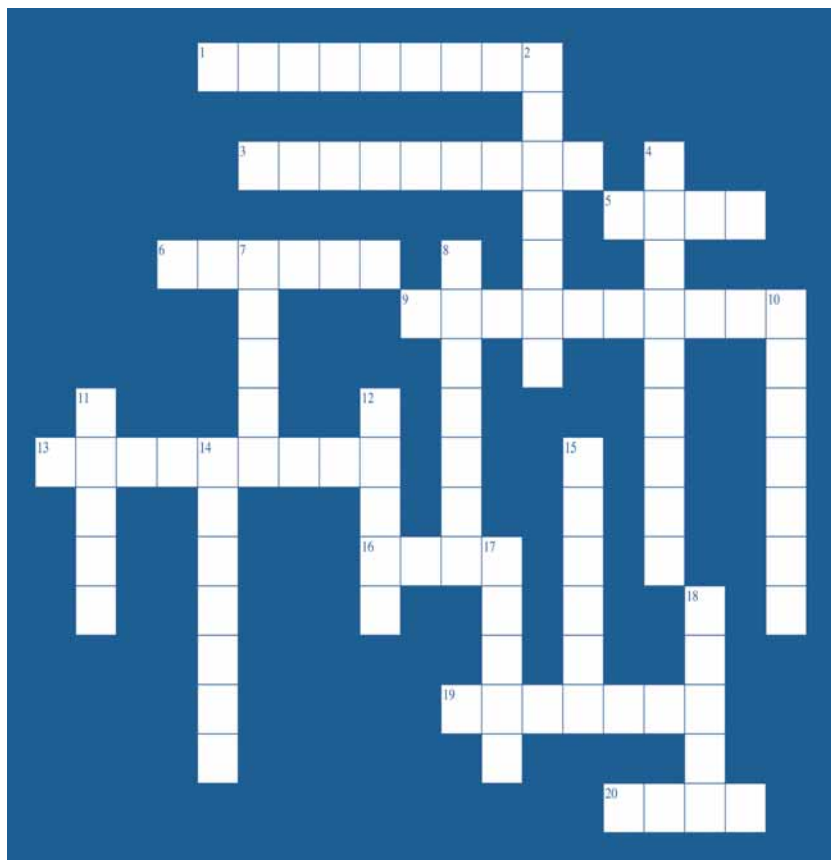
ORGANIZERS of the second edition of the Thailand Yacht Show (TYS) at Ao Po Grand Marina from December 15-18 are looking to add new features to attract different visitors.

One of these, the 'Premier Display' is intended to give visitors the opportunity to view the latest small boats and watercrafts on offer in Southeast Asia.

"At the first edition of the show we didn't anticipate such a high level of interest in the latest runarounds and tenders, especially boats in the 10-40ft range. This show will see a great line-up of smaller boats, enabling newcomers to step into the yachting lifestyle," says event director Wade Pearce.

Mr Pearce believes that this new element will perfectly complement the highly popular 'Demo Platform' which was popular at the first TYS, as crowds gathered to watch and test the latest jet ski, FlyBoard and Lampuga exhibits.

- Phuket Gazette



Gazette Crossword

Across

- 01. Used to store items
- 03. Provide fresh air
- 05. Chef's second in command
- 06. Small restaurant
- 09. Festival held annually in Phuket, includes fire walking
- 13. Take turns
- 16. Old name of Thailand
- 19. Motorcycle adjunct
- 20. Horseback sport

Down

- 02. Person on a pension
- 04. Person showing tourists around
- 07. Lustrous fabric
- 08. King's Cup, for instance
- 10. Relating to or measured in numbers
- 11. False or assumed identity
- 12. Armed hold-up
- 14. Do not ignore these beach warning signs
- 15. A severe flood
- 17. 'The Godfather' organization
- 18. Marine formation at the bottom of the sea

Solution on opposite page.



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The cost of incarceration

Law, Life, and Society
By Robert Virasin

LAST month, Justice Minister Paiboon Koomchaya's announced that methamphetamine will be removed from the list of Category 1 hard narcotics. It was met with controversy but it is a welcome change to a policy that has devastated Thai society.

According to the Corrections Department, Thailand has a prison population of 371,347 which is the 8th largest prison population in the world and accounts for about 40 per cent of the those incarcerated in Southeast Asia. About 70 per cent of the Thai prison population is in for drug related crimes.

The most commonly used illegal methamphetamine is *ya bah*. It is generally taken orally, but can also be inhaled or injected. The drug is addictive and habit forming. It is a stimulant that can keep users awake for days and generate hallucinations. The drug is harmful, but being found guilty of possession of *ya bah* can be more destructive. When *ya bah* was categorized as a hard narcotic, a finding of guilt could result in up to 10 years in prison.

It is generally accepted that incarceration is required by a civil society to maintain order and protection from individuals whose release could be dangerous to the general public. But there is a cost to



According to the Corrections Department, Thailand has the 8th largest prison population in the world and accounts for about 40 per cent of those incarcerated in Southeast Asia. Photo: Gazette file

incarceration. With hundreds of thousands of individuals locked up, the public is required to expend large amounts of financial resources to house, feed and supervise them, as well as provide health services. These financial resources should be redirected to preventing serious crimes like violence, theft, embezzlement, and other crimes with victims.

There is also a social cost to incarceration. Men and women are taken away from their community, friends and family, that

results in a social void. Families are disrupted. Children are without their parents. Men and women are without their spouses or loved ones. Parents are left without their children. Without the family unit, there is a reduction in household income, as well as an increase in poverty, parentless children and unsupported elderly. In addition, the fear of incarceration prevents some drug abusers from seeking assistance for their addiction.

We are not saying that

Thailand should get rid of jails or prisons. However, the law should take into account the social and economic costs of incarcerating non-violent drug offenders. Community service and treatment is a better alternative for those convicted of the use of narcotics. Justice Minister Paiboon Koomchaya has moved in the right direction.

There should be examination of other prohibited drugs to see if alternative penalties would be a better option in light

of the social and financial costs of incarceration.

Until the law changes, foreigners visiting or living in Thailand should not consume illegal narcotics or be in situations where they can be a victim of a drug scam. There are multiple cases of foreigners claiming that they have had drugs planted on them for extortion purposes. We personally know of an Australian man who was in a hotel room with a girl at a red light area when the police entered the room. The police claimed that he was in possession of illegal drugs, which they found hidden in the room.

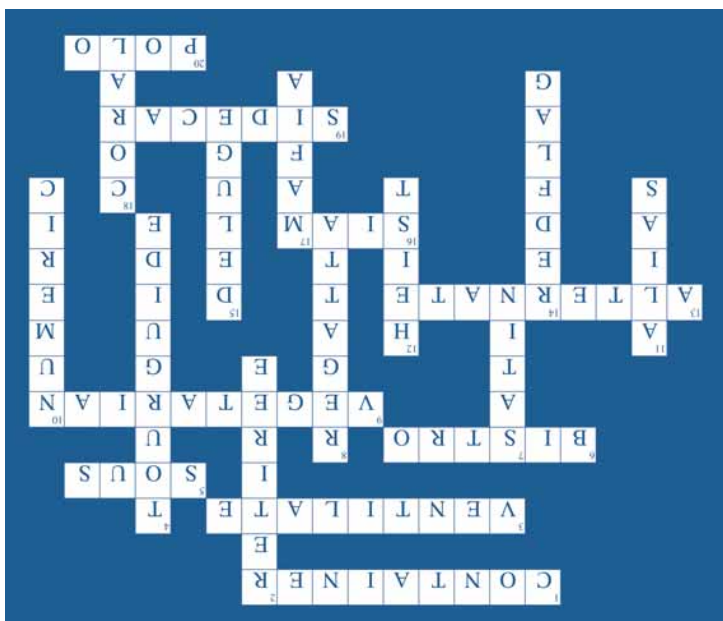
The threat of incarceration in Thailand's overcrowded jails is an easy tool for extortion. My advice for foreigners is to stay away from using illegal drugs, excessive drinking and red light areas.

For foreigners who ignore this advice, they should keep the phone number of a trusted local English-speaking criminal attorney and the number of their local embassy with them. Following an arrest, signing documents or making pleas without understanding the language or consequences can result in long-term imprisonment.

Robert R Virasin is a licenced US attorney and managing director of Virasin & Partners. Yutthachai Sangsirisap is a licenced Thai Attorney at Virasin & Partners. They can be reached at info@virasin.com or at www.virasin.com.

Crossword Solution

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Americans ain't misbehavin'

HOTEL guests in the US can't agree on whether to tip or not but they all agree that free Wi-Fi is a must, according to the latest Expedia Hotel Etiquette Study.

The study asked 1,018 Americans to identify features and amenities they prioritized when booking a hotel, as well as guest behavior they found most aggravating.

It concluded that Americans, who have stayed in a hotel at least once in the past two years, disagree about the protocol of tipping hotel employees, but agree on the importance of complimentary Wi-Fi.

Price was the top consideration chosen by 73 per cent of respondents.

Complimentary Wi-Fi ranked second (63%) followed by 'location' (61%), 'reviews' (43%) and 'parking options' (38%).

Wi-Fi was also selected as an essential amenity, deemed 'very important' by 88 per cent of respondents, and 97 per cent of respondents said Wi-Fi should be free of charge.

An in-room fridge (81%), complimentary toiletries (80%) and a pool (59%) were among the top four amenities desired.

Earning hotel rewards points and the hotel brand itself were considered 'very important' by only 20 and 18 per cent of ho-



Americans are divided on whether to tip housekeeping – or whether to tip at all. 30 per cent claimed not to tip any of the staff during a hotel stay. Photo: Ed Gregory

tel visitors, respectively.

Top of the list of bad behavior by other guests were 'inattentive parents' and 'hallway hell-raisers'. The others were:

- In-Room Revellers 59%
- Complainers 53%
- Bickerers 35%
- The Loudly Amorous 29%
- Poolside Partiers 28%
- Hot Tub Canoodlers 22%
- Business Bar Boozers 17%
- Elevator Chatterbox 9%

The study revealed that 18 per cent of study respondents have asked to switch hotel rooms because of noisy neigh-

bors.

Expedia.com vice president and general manager John Morrey noted that thoughtful behavior is paramount in an environment like a hotel.

"The hotel experience is one that many people love. Fresh towels, a comfortable made bed, room service at the ready. It can be a deeply enjoyable experience but it's vital to remember that you're not staying there by yourself. You are surrounded by hundreds of people who have paid to share that space. Conscientiousness makes all the difference," he said.

Americans are divided on whether to tip housekeeping – or whether to tip at all.

Thirty per cent claimed not to tip any of the staff during a hotel stay.

Among those who do tip, the most-tipped hotel employees are housekeepers (46%), followed by room service (40%) and the valet (30%).

Only 20 per cent said they tip the porter and just 10 per cent tip the concierge.

Americans were also asked about temptations to misbehave during a hotel stay.

In response, 24 per cent of them admitted to 'hoarding' toi-

leties to take home; 11 per cent have let multiple people sleep in their room without notifying the hotel; and 10 per cent have taken items from their hotel room without permission.

When it comes to slightly more illicit activities, Americans appear to be largely well-behaved. Only four per cent have smoked in a non-smoking room.

Three per cent have 'deliberately eavesdropped on a neighboring room.'

Two per cent have attended a hotel party that left the room in disarray, and the same percentage of Americans admit to having been locked out of their hotel room wearing just a bathrobe.

The study was commissioned by Expedia and executed by GfK, an independent global market research company.

The study was conducted online using the GfK KnowledgePanel – an online probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US general population, not just the online population.

The study consisted of 1,018 interviews of randomly selected US adult residents, conducted in July among adults aged 18 and over.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Brexit fallout: More Thais investing in London luxury

CENTRE POINT, an exclusive residential and retail development in the heart of London, has grown in popularity with buyers from Thailand.

The number of apartments sold to Thai nationals has doubled since the June 'Brexit' vote to leave the European Union.

Originally built in 1966, the 34-storey landmark building is protected by the government service Historic England because of the exceptional and pioneering design of the building.

Centre Point is one of London's most famous skyscrapers and is being extensively refurbished by the owners and developers of the building, Almacantar.

Tracy Hughes, residential sales director, said the lifestyle, language, healthcare services



Thais feel at home at the luxurious Centre Point in the heart of London. Photo: Mike Peel

and educational opportunities in London continued to make

it a world-class city. Since the appointment of a new prime minister, London has stabilized politically and financially, she claimed.

In the past two months, the Centre Point apartments have become even more popular with Thai citizens because of their design, the unique features of the building, its prime location and the favorable exchange rate, she said.

Centre Point's renovation is due for completion next year, in time for the arrival of Crossrail, a new high-speed railway that will start running in London in 2018.

Centre Point's appeal to Thai nationals has been the service that will be available to residents, its desirable location and the spectacular views across London.

– *The Nation*

Recharge devices with a power plant



The Bioo Lite Plant Pot provides up to three charges a day using the power of photosynthesis.

NOW you can really go green in your home by installing an actual power plant in your living room.

The Bioo Lite Plant Pot Charger is a plant pot with a USB charger for smartphones, tablets and other devices powered only by photosynthesis.

The plant pots are available in a variety of colors and can be used with any plant and will

provide you with two to three full smartphone charges per day, the makers claim.

Bioo Lite can be used with any plant, soil, or irrigation as it only requires photosynthesis. Use the USB charger included with your tablet, smartphone, or any other device to conveniently plug into the concealed port at the top of the planter.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Supicha targets locals with sino style

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

LOCAL developer Supicha Property is set to begin construction of a mixed-use commercial and residential development near the British International School (BIS) in Koh Kaew in December.

The construction company has sunk 300 million baht into the Supicha Sino Khokaew project, situated on eight rai opposite the international school in Koh Kaew and backing on to a lake.

The project comprises a total of 65 units in three different categories: 32 'Home Office' units; 11 'Single Family House' units; and 22 'Twin House' units.

Fronting the development along the roadside are the 22 Twin House units, each with a total floor area of 160 square meters – the smallest units in the development – priced at just under 4 million baht.

Clustered in the center of the



Supicha Sino Khokaew is a mixed commercial-residential development aimed at Thai buyers. Units include shop houses and family homes Photo: Supicha Property

project are the 32 Home Office units, each covering an area of 165sqm, divided into rows similar to backstreets in a town

center and priced at just under 4.5 million baht.

The more exclusive two-storey single family houses

each has a total area of 175sqm and backs on to the lake. These have a price tag closer to the 5 million baht mark.

“We are confident the Phuket Town style concept will be a hit with local buyers, especially given the location near the international school but at reasonable prices,” said the project’s sales manager Hathaitip Koysonwong.

Construction is set to begin in December and expected to be completed around the first quarter of 2018,” said Ms Hathitip.

The properties are aimed at mainly Thai buyers, said Supicha Property Managing Director Supicha Yorsaengrat – also the managing director of Isayaporn Co Ltd., which was established in 2010 and owns the land on which the project is to be built.

“Demand is high for these kinds of units. The price and mixed commercial-residential concept are suitable for local investors. We have already sold 13 units,” she said.

Iconic Indigo Pearl renamed



The Slate Resort is one of 50 boutique properties world wide operated under the Design Hotels group. Photo: The Slate Resort

PHUKET’s iconic Indigo Pearl Resort at Nai Yang Beach has been rebranded as ‘The Slate’ in a tribute to the area’s tin mining heritage.


The resort, designed by award-winning architect Bill Bensley, is one of 280 boutique and luxury independently owned hotels in over 50 countries operated under the Design Hotels Group.

Relaunched earlier this month, The Slate Resort is to

remain under the operation of its original owners, the ‘Na-Ranong’ Family, as ‘one of the finest hotels in Phuket’.

The resort features 177 decadent accommodation suites, eight restaurants and bars, three outdoor swimming pools, tennis courts, a kids club, a private beach club and the Coqoon Spa with a tree-house style treatment enclave.

– Phuket Gazette




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Phuket Gazette

Around the world and back

By Zohaib Sikander

MITR Kokapan, or 'Koko', as he is better known to his friends and family, may look like your run-of-the-mill Phuket restaurant owner, but his life has been far from ordinary. Born in Isarn, he is the second of eight siblings. After moving to Bangkok at an early age, Koko started working at hotels to support himself and further his education.

"I studied political science at Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok and worked in hospitality for 15 years. I've worked at Hilton, Sheraton, Shangrila, Grand Hyatt – you name it. I started as a bus boy in the fine dining room, then moved up to be a waiter, captain, supervisor and so on," he says.

In 1992, he met a guest staying at the Grand Hyatt who told him that American Cruise ship company Carnival Cruise Lines was looking to recruit crew members. He sat for a TOEFL exam, which he passed, and later met with the company representatives when they came to interview new recruits. He was

chosen as a server – and thus began his life of adventure and travel.

"I was very excited when they first recruited me. My whole family came to see me off at the airport as I was the first one in my family to move abroad. When I reached there, I had to undergo rigorous training to learn about different types of food at culinary school and wine training at Nappa Valley, California," says Koko.

He settled into his role on board the cruise ship, going all over Europe, the Mediterranean, the United States and the Caribbean.

"We changed ships every six to eight months. The ships we worked on were massive – the largest was a 4,500 passenger ship with about 2,000 crew members. There were at least 40 nationalities of guests and crew members on board.

I met and worked with Australians, Europeans from many countries, Americans, Filipinos, Jamaicans, Japanese, Mauritians, Indians... The list is endless. I even met many VIPs and celebrities such as the

Backstreet Boys, George Foreman, Jeb Bush and the Miami Heat basketball team," he recalls.

Despite the glamour of traveling the world and the fact that he was making much more money than he could have imagined back home, Koko says it hasn't been an easy journey for him.

"I worked up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week. The work itself was very demanding. We had to walk back and forth from the kitchen – which was no mean distance – with two dozen loaded dinner plates, wearing back supports to carry the weight around. The money was great, I made many extra tips as well and could afford anything I wanted. I was able to buy my own house, a car and everything my family and I needed. But I only got to see them once a year for about six to eight weeks," says Koko.

Koko worked on cruise ships for almost 20 years. It was there that he met his wife Kassama, who was also working for the same company at the time. The couple also helped rehabilitate victims of Hurricane Katrina when it struck the US coast in 2005.

Since retiring from a life at sea,

Koko moved to Isarn, where he and his wife owned and operated three motels.

After that the couple moved to Phuket and worked in hospitality. Now he is running his third restaurant, which is in Kathu.

"It has been an interesting journey, but after all these years, I have decided I don't want to work for anyone anymore," Koko smiles.

Photo: Zo Sikander





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