

Phuket Gazette

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‘THEY CHECKED OUT THE SYSTEMS BEFORE THE ATTACK’

ATMS HACKED

■ Eastern European suspects scam 16.5 million baht from ATMs nationwide

By Chutharat Plerin

A PROVINCIAL court issued an arrest warrant for a Russian man on August 30, whom Phuket police believe to be involved in a series of ATM scams that robbed an estimated 12 million baht from Government Savings Banks (GSB) in Phuket and nationwide last month.

Although police estimate up to four other Eastern European suspects to be involved in the month-long spree based out of Phuket, Royal Thai Police adviser Panya Maman said authorities are refusing to divulge the names of the other suspects at this time.

“We prefer not to reveal many details about the suspects because it may affect the outcome of the investigation,” General Panya said in a press conference at the Phuket Provincial Police Headquarters in Phuket Town on August 30.

“We prefer to reveal only that we’ve asked for a warrant to be issued for Rustam Shambasov, 29, a Russian national.”

“We now have all the details and names of the suspects,” Gen Panya said. “The next steps are to ask for their arrest warrants, to arrest the suspects and to return the money to the bank, both the 12 million nationally and the 4.5 million taken from Phang Nga.”

Police believe that an ATM located in Wichit was used to perpetrate the national fraud.

“Our initial findings point to this ATM being used as a master controller,” Gen Panya told the *Gazette* on August 28. “We found that this machine linked to and controlled two other ATMs in Surat



General Panya (center) is briefed by Phuket police officers after the Government Savings Bank reported an estimated 12 million baht loss due to ATM hacks. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Thani Province.”

“The group apparently used an electronic card from England to withdraw money from the ATMs,” he said. “They appear to have inserted the card and used a loophole in the network to trick the machines into giving out cash.”

Police also examined two Government Savings Bank ATMs on Sunday, August 28; one located in front of J&P Supermart in Mai Khao, the other at the CP Fresh Mart on Sakdidet Road on the way to Cape Panwa.

Police suspect at least 21 ATMs were hacked across the country, resulting in more than 12 million baht in cash being withdrawn. Another 200 ATMs are suspected of being infected during the exploits.

“As soon as we took the case, we

worked relentlessly to identify every suspect,” Gen Panya said. “Many police departments worked together until we identified the suspects and know how they carried out the crime. Please know that although they have left the country, we are making progress on arresting them.”

Gen Panya told reporters that there is no evidence at this time for police to believe that a Thai national helped to carry out the scheme.

“It took some time before the bank was capable of informing the authorities,” he said when asked by reporters why the bank waited so long before reporting the theft. “The system that the suspects used reset the ATM security features back to normal after they took the money. That was unfortunate...”

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Land official dies while awaiting trial in cell

A FORMER Land Department official was reportedly found ‘hanged’ in his detention cell, one day before he was due to appear in court.

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BUSINESS



PM Prayuth to visit Phuket for the launch of Startup Thailand this month.

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PROPERTY



CPN announces 20bn baht expansion of Central Festival Phuket.

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Useful tips for Australian visa application procedure for Thai nationals.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Wichit man arrested after drug raids

PROVINCIAL police arrested a 28-year-old man on August 24, after a raid of his home turned up 1.3 kilograms of marijuana.

Police received a tip from an informant that Nopparut Tongserikun was selling marijuana out of his Wichit house.

Provincial police reportedly sent in undercover officers to wait for Mr Nopparut outside the house, who then frisked him and found him carrying drugs, before raiding the house.

Mr Nopparut reportedly confessed to police that the marijuana belonged to him and that he bought it from a dealer in Bangkok through Facebook. After paying the dealer, known by the alias 'Mr Ann', he received the marijuana via post.

Police reported that Mr Nopparut confessed to smoking marijuana, as well as selling it to customers in the area.

Police told the *Gazette* they are following up leads in order to arrest Mr Ann.

– Winai Sarot

Emergency crews battle airport fires



Firefighters and rescue workers were deployed on the tarmac as part of regular drills aimed at improving response times and emergency response efficiency on August 25. This is the fourth such drill at the airport this year. No flights were reportedly affected by the drill. Photo: Phuket International Airport

Phone thief caught selling stolen wares

POLICE arrested a Burmese national at Central Festival shopping mall on the afternoon of August 26, after he attempted to sell phones he had

stolen from a shop in Karon to undercover police officers.

Police cornered Moe Win Ko, 21, at the mall after tracking him down using CCTV footage that had captured him stealing 13 mobile devices from the Olay Phone store on Patak Road.

Mr Moe reportedly visited the Olay Phone store, taking with him a broken phone to be fixed, but returned to the shop and broke in, stealing 13 mobile phones with a total value of 200,000 baht.

He also stole about 50,000 baht in cash from the store, police reported.

Phuket provincial police said Mr Moe had confessed to stealing the phones and cash.

Mr Moe has been charged with breaking and entering and theft at night, which carries a maximum prison sentence of three years and a fine of up to 6,000 baht, or both.

– Winai Sarot

Bird hunting man shot dead

POLICE are looking for an unknown assailant who shot dead a man in a Krabi palm plantation on August 24.

"At the scene, we found the body of 39-year-old Jaran Petchseewong lying face up in a pool of blood, with a bullet

wound to the chest and a bird cage in his hand," said Capt Papat Wongdet of Krabi City Police. A bullet casing lay near Mr Jaran's body, which the police kept as evidence.

Locals told Capt Papat that Mr Jaran had gone into the forest to catch birds, and had parked his motorbike inside the palm plantation.

Police said the shooter may have been waiting for him inside the plantation and shot him when he arrived.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Phuket hosts annual anti-terrorism drills

NAVIES from the United States, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Malaysia concluded their annual counter-terrorism conference and exercises on August 27, after spending two weeks at the Royal Thai Navy's base in Cape Panwa.

The drills are part of the annual Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism 2016 (SEACAT16), which aims to boost participating countries' efficiency at combating terrorism.

– Kongleaphy Keam

Flash floods cause delays after official reassurances

FLASH flooding brought traffic to a standstill across the island on the morning of August 25, after hours of heavy rains continued to pour down across the island as the morning rush hour began.

Traffic ground to a halt along several stretches of Chao Fah West Road, the Bypass Road and several spots along Thepkrasattri Road, causing major tailbacks. A few stretches of the roads near British International School were also affected, with several cars reportedly broken down along the way.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Phuket office issued a weather warning to residents about flash floods and possible landslides.

Earlier this month, Chalong Mayor Samran Jindaphol told the *Gazette* that they were '100 per cent' prepared for this year's floods.

– Chutharat Plerin

Truck splits in half on impact with pole

POLICE charged a woman with reckless driving and damage to public property after she lost control of the truck she was trying to drive and slammed into a power pole on August 28.

The driver, Pavalee Khamleang, 27, and her Indonesian passenger were injured in the accident. Ms Pavalee sustained injuries to her neck and back. The passenger, Tranggielia Parengkuan, 44, injured his arm.

The crash occurred in the southbound lanes of Thepkrasattri Road in Mai Khao. The truck, a bronze Mazda, was almost completely severed in half by the collision.

Police reported Ms Pavalee told them she was heading to Phuket from Krabi when she lost control on a bend in the road due to slick road conditions following rain.

Shortly before Ms Pavalee's accident, local villagers reported that an 18-wheel truck had lost control at nearby Baan Suan Mapraew, causing a traffic jam.

– Winai Sarot

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False headline causes panic, headaches for Phuket police

PROVINCIAL police sought to reassure residents of their safety after a popular Thai-language newspaper claimed that there were more than 30 bombs placed across the province on August 23.

The front-page claim caused public panic as police scrambled to check possible bomb drops in hot spots around Phuket.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen confirmed with the *Gazette* on the morning of August 25 that there were no additional reports of bombs being found anywhere on the island.

Maj Gen Teerapol also encouraged the island's residents to report any suspicious activity.

"After the news was published, we thoroughly inspected and x-rayed potential target areas, but found no additional devices or explosives," said Gen Teerapol.

"However, we do not ignore the potential for this kind of situation to get out of hand and we will continue to closely monitor public areas. We will do our best to keep Phuket secured, and we urge the public not to panic."



Police patrol Phuket airport as part of the heightened security after the bombings. Photo: AoT

The misleading headline came just days after police and public security officials attempted to reassure tourists and tourism businesses that Thailand's south is safe, after more than a dozen bombs rattled the region over the August 12 Mother's Day weekend.

On August 19, Royal Thai Police announced increased security measures for Phuket, including increased police and military presence in popular public areas and tourism hotspots.

Gen Teerapol said Phuket's provincial police will continue to follow up on reported suspi-

cious activity and tips from citizens.

"We have been working with citizens so far, and we hope we can keep working together in order to continue to keep Phuket safe."

There has been no action taken against the newspaper.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Man found hanging at Kosit Temple

A 53-YEAR-old Thai man was found hanged by his neck from a concrete pillar in a Phuket Town temple on August 28.

Lt Surachart Tongyai of Phuket City Police received word that a body, later identified as Charan Nakhanat, was found at about 4:30pm and accompanied Kusoldharm Rescue workers to the scene.

"We found the body of Mr Charan at Kosit Temple, sitting with his back against a pillar, to which he was hanging from a length of cloth wrapped around his neck," said Lt Surachart. "There was also a bottle of alcohol lying nearby."

Police estimated Mr Charan had been dead an hour before they arrived. His belongings were reportedly untouched.

"According to his friends and relatives, Mr Charan was having financial trouble and was under a large amount of stress," Lt Surachart said. "He had temporarily pawned off his pick-up truck to a friend, but wasn't able to retrieve it due to a lack of money."

Mr Charan's body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital.

"He was known to drink alcohol and was said to be under a lot more stress than usual in the past few days."

- Winai Sarot

Fires linked to bombings

POLICE in Ao Nang recovered two devices on August 24 that they suspect were part of the incendiary bombs used to set fire to a souvenir shop in the tourist destination on August 12.

Forensic Police Region 8 Colonel Surapol Jaisan said Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) personnel assisted in examining the wreckage of the Ao Nang shop for evidence linking the August 12 fire to a series of bombings across southern Thailand on Mother's Day.

Col Surapol said the EOD team investigated the scene for about five hours before discovering the two badly-burned suspicious objects in the shop's pant and shirt section. The devices include the circuit board of a mobile phone, a battery, wires and metal fragments. Devices used in the attacks that left four dead and injured over 30 across Thailand's south ear-



Devices similar in construction to the Mother's Day bombs were found in the wreckage of the Ao Nang store. Photo: Gazette file

lier this month reportedly utilized mobile phones as explosive controllers.

"The stall owner, whose name is being withheld, said that on August 10, a pair of men wearing jackets, sunglasses and surgical masks entered the shop," Col Surapol said. "They pretended to be shopping for clothes for an hour before leaving the shop."

Police reported that evi-

dence suggests that the first incendiary device set fire to the pants section. However, a second device in a shirts section of the store did not appear to have detonated, but was damaged in the resulting fire.

Col Surapol said police are continuing to investigate the crime scene and are examining local CCTV footage for the two suspects.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong



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Fruit vendors fed up with thieving teens

FRUIT vendors in Phuket Town are fed up with fruit from their stalls being stolen overnight and the lack of progress in apprehending the culprits.

Phuket City Police Lt Col Naruebadin Pangleesen said officers were working on the case and that the suspects were known to police.

Prapawarin Khamdam, a stall holder in downtown, said thieves had stolen nearly 100 kilograms of durian from her stall.

"It's happened many times," Ms Prapawarin said. "We've filed a complaint, but police cannot catch the suspects, even though we've shown them CCTV footage that clearly shows their faces and their bikes."

Ms Prapawarin said she's lost thousands of baht as a result of the thievery.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Dealer pulls grenade on police

AN ALLEGED Krabi drug dealer was shot dead on the night of August 26, after a police task force cornered him and he attempted to throw a grenade at the officers, police said.

The suspect, who was the target of a joint task force raid in Krabi Town, is named as Chanchaiyuth Krainara, 29. Police are reporting that Mr Chanchaiyuth was a "big-time drug dealer" in Krabi and Surat Thani provinces.

"Task force personnel assembled in front of the Panumas Apartments on Ruamjaichon Road in Krabi municipality around 9:30pm," said Krabi Provincial Police Deputy Commander Boontawee Toraksa.

"However, before officers engaged the suspect, we received a tip that he had a hand grenade or an explosive of some kind, so we closed the road to avoid endangering anyone else."



Police shot dead Mr Chanchaiyuth when he allegedly motioned to throw the grenade at their blockade. Photo: Winai Sarot

Undercover officers posing as potential buyers attempted to surround and capture Mr Chanchaiyuth, who managed to escape and tried to break through the police blockade in a pick-up truck.

"In order to stop him, we shot his tyres multiple times," Colonel Boontawee said. "But, he didn't stop, and drove backward and then forward again before crashing into the barri-

cade of police trucks."

Mr Chanchaiyuth rolled down his window and threatened officers with an M67 fragmentation grenade, the police claim.

"He then got out of the truck and pulled the pin on the grenade and attempted to throw it at our officers," Col Boontawee said. "But our officers shot him before he could throw it. Luckily the device appears to have

been a dud."

Explosive Ordinance Disposal personnel reportedly spent an hour defusing the device.

Forensic officials and doctors at Krabi Hospital collected evidence from the scene and reported that Mr Chanchaiyuth sustained three bullet wounds to the head.

"On his person, we found 3,000 baht, Ya Ice (crystal meth) and Ya Bah (amphetamines), as well as a 9mm pistol," Col Boontawee said. "Inside his truck, investigators found 11 bags of Ya Bah, containing approximately 200 pills each, as well as a bag of Ya Ice."

Investigators reportedly recovered at least 30 bullet casings from the scene.

Two women who were in the truck with the suspect were taken to the Border Patrol Police office for further questioning.

— *Winai Sarot*

Foreign suspects paraded for media

SEVEN foreign suspects were rounded up on charges of rape, tax fraud, smuggling and defaulting on debts in Phuket, Pattaya, Songkhla and Bangkok, before being paraded for the media at the Immigration Bureau in Bangkok on August 28.

Three of the suspects were Chinese nationals. They were accused by the Chinese government of committing tax fraud worth about 1 billion baht and smuggling of illicit substances. They had escaped prosecution by entering Thailand on tourist visas and were arrested at Phuket International Airport.

Smolnikov Vasilii, 42, the Russian owner of a construction company, was nabbed the same day in Songkhla province's Sadao District after arriving in Thailand on January 3, 2013.

He was wanted by Interpol for allegedly faking documents concerning a construction project for the Russian government and bribing officials there.

German national Markus Andre, 56, was captured in Pattaya after allegedly fleeing his country and entering Thailand on December 29, 2014. There was an arrest warrant out for him for allegedly defaulting



The alleged criminals were presented to Bangkok media. Photo: The Nation

on debts.

Frenchman Patrice Giuliani, 58, was sentenced by a French court to 15 years in jail for raping his daughter, born to his ex-wife, in 2012. He allegedly fled prosecution to Thailand on September 7, 2012 and was detained in the Chana Songkram subdistrict of Bangkok.

Paul Strubin, 67, a Swiss man wanted for fraud and embezzlement, entered Thailand on October 3, 2013. He was arrested in Pattaya after overstaying his visa by 960 days.

— *The Nation*

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ATM scammers fly away with millions

From Page 1

...for the GSB, but tells police officers that the suspects are experts in this kind of cyber-security scam.”

Gen Panya revealed their primary suspect as Mr Shambasov on August 29. According to police, Mr Shambasov was spotted repeatedly wearing a “Detroit City” t-shirt that caught police attention after reviewing ATM and CCTV footage. Mr Shambasov reportedly flew to Thailand on July 14 from China, and departed on August 1, bound for Moscow. Police believe that he alone made 13 withdrawals, totaling more than 3 million baht in Phuket, Bangkok and Phetchaburi province. At press time it was unclear if Mr Shambasov had perpetrated similar crimes in China.

“The suspects used three vehicles to perpetrate their scams: a white Toyota Fortuner, a white Toyota Vios and a white Honda Civic,” Gen Panya said.

“They must have thoroughly checked the GSB system before carrying out the exploits,” Gen Panya said. “We believe the group in Phang Nga comprised the leadership of this gang, as they were the first ones carrying out these attacks.”

In response to the massive breach in ATM security, the GSB has reported that its ATM vendor, NCR Ltd, has developed a program that may protect ATMs from the kind of malware that affected the GSB cash machines last month.

GSB CEO Chatchai Payuhanaveechai said that “NCR was ready to deliver the software.”

Mr Chatchai added that NCR Ltd had 60 teams ready to install the software at GSB ATMs nationwide, at a supposed rate of 200 ATMs per day. He said that the GSB planned for all ATMs infected with malware, would be able to resume operations by October.

The GSB recently shut down more than 3,000 ATMs in six provinces, after many were found to have been infected with malware, while the bank sought technical help from NCR.

Police believe Mr Shambasov and his colleagues’ scam began in Phang Nga province in March, where the group allegedly ripped off an estimated 4.5 million baht from ATMs, before making their way to Phuket in July. Police are also investigating by what means Mr Shambasov managed to take the scammed cash out of Thailand.

Gen Panya said the Central Investigation Bureau – which includes the Technology Crime Suppression Division, Immigration Police and Phuket Tourist Police– as well as Region 8 Police and Phuket Provincial Police, are working together and making progress on bringing in the suspects.

Immigration police are reportedly checking the movements of Eastern European men entering and exiting Thailand during June and July, as part of nationwide hunt for the criminal suspects.

“This crime took place because of foreigners and, as far as we can tell, the perpetrators are Russian,” Gen Panya said. “So, if anyone sees anyone who looks Russian or Eastern European doing anything suspicious at ATMs, please let police know as soon as possible. Such as using ATM late at night, when there’s no one else around, if they insert their card without pressing in a PIN code, or if they take a long time and withdraw a lot of cash.”

A police-sourced timeline of the gang’s ATM exploits

July 14: Arrives at Phuket International Airport at 00:40.

July 15: First ATM exploited via malware card in front of the Phuket Land Transportation Office (PLTO) in Phuket Town.

Within one minute Mr Shambasov makes off with 280,000 baht in cash.

July 16: Between 20:44-20:46, Mr Shambasov makes off with 80,000 baht from an ATM outside the Saiyuan Clinic.

July 17- July 18: Departs Phuket International at 22:55. Arrives at Don Muang airport at 00:15.

July 21: Withdraws 1.16 million baht from 05:50 to 05:57 from ATMs in Baan Kanonthawan, Phetchaburi province.

July 25: Mr Shambasov rents a white Toyota Fortuner at 13:30 from P&D Tour in Saiyuan, Phuket.

Police later pick up the renter’s copy of his passport.

July 26: Withdraws 80,000 baht from GSB ATM outside Saiyuan Clinic, at 23:27.

July 27: Withdraws 120,000 baht from Ruanporn Pharmacy from 14:53- 14:54pm.

Withdraws 280,000 baht from ATM outside PLTO again, from 16:03 to 16:04.

Withdraws 240,000 baht from J&P Supermarket from 23:16 to 23:20.

Withdraws 120,000 baht from Ruanporn Pharmacy from 23:29 to 23:36.

July 28: Hits ATM outside of PLTO again, from 00:18-00:20, making off with

280,000 baht.

Withdraws 80,000 baht from Saiyuan Clinic at 01:04.

Returns Toyota Fortuner at 18:30 at P&D Tour.

Departs Phuket airport at 21:35 to Don Muang via Thai Smile Airlines.

July 29: Reported ATM scam in Bangkok at the Family Mart in Sukhumvit, makes off with made off 240,000 baht between 03:41 and 03:43.

Withdraws 120,000 baht from nearby 7-Eleven between 03:56 and 03:59.

July 31: Withdraws 240,000 baht from the Family Mart ATM, again in Sukhumvit, Bangkok between 02:16 and 02:18.

August 1: Departs Suvarnabhumi Airport at 10 for Moscow via Aeroflot.



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Thailand on Zika ‘Red Alert’

THE number of detected Zika infections in Thailand has jumped significantly this year.

Between 2012 and 2015, an average of just five people were recorded as infected with the Zika virus each year. In the first six months of this year, at least 97 people in Thailand have been diagnosed with the disease.

New infections were reported in Chiang Mai, Chanthaburi, Phetchabun and Bung Kan provinces.

Disease Control Department chief Dr Amnuay Gajeena, in a statement on August 29, sought to allay concerns about the Zika threat in the country.

“We have implemented the strictest measures in controlling the spread of the Zika virus,” he said.

Dr Amnuay added that Thailand had not seen the prolonged spread of the disease in any affected area and the number of patients was not overwhelming.

Dr Amnuay’s comments come after a report from the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control

(ECDC) described Thailand as a “red alert” country with increasing and widespread Zika virus transmissions.

Dr Amnuay during the meeting said more Zika cases might have been detected because a better monitoring and diagnostic system had been established.

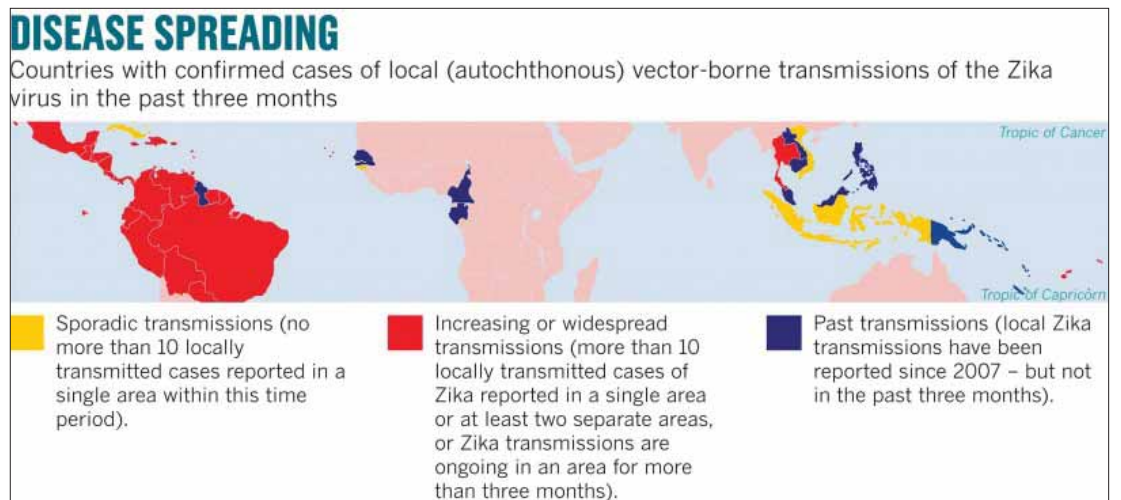
“Today, we can identify the Zika virus in local labs. We don’t have to submit samples to foreign labs for test results anymore,” he said.

He urged agencies from all sectors to support the Public Health Ministry’s efforts to combat the virus.

“As soon as a Zika case is detected, we have to set up an emergency operations center to control the spread at both the provincial and district levels,” he said.

While the Zika virus usually causes a mild fever, skin rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, or a headache, it can be fatal in rarer and more severe cases.

Experts have also linked the virus to birth defects in new-



The increase in Thailand’s Zika cases has warranted an upgraded status from the ECDC. Image: The Nation.

borns and fetuses.

“Pregnant women must seek prenatal care,” Dr Amnuay said. “If they develop any suspicious symptoms, they must immediately tell doctors.”

He said authorities had been monitoring 20 pregnant women in areas where Zika virus cases had been reported. Six have reportedly already given birth to healthy babies.

Dr Amnuay added that au-

thorities were also looking into microcephaly cases in Thailand to determine if there were links to Zika infections.

Government efforts are pushing for the eradication of the breeding grounds of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is the vector of the virus.

“Because of mosquitoes, it’s quite hard to eradicate Zika virus once and for all,” Chiang Mai’s public health chief Dr

Paisal Thanyawinichkul said.

He said Chiang Mai province had detected its seventh patient in San Kamphaeng district – the same area where two cases were identified in June.

Chanthaburi Governor Viturach Srinam said eight people came down with Zika infections in the province this year but they had fully recovered already.

– *The Nation*

Land official found hanged in DSI cell

A FORMER land department official under investigation in Phuket land-title cases allegedly committed suicide while in official custody on August 30.

Tawatchai Anukul, who was under investigation for illegal registration of land titles for about 1,000 plots in Phuket and Phang Nga, allegedly took his own life on August 30.

Custody officials said the suspect was found to have hanged himself just hours before he was due to appear in the Criminal Court.

Department of Special Investigation (DSI) officials said Mr Tawatchai, a former official of the Phang Nga Provincial Land Department, had hanged himself by attaching a sock to his detention room door early in the morning – a day after he was arrested for wrongfully exercising his duties as an official of the Provincial Land Department.

DSI director-general Col Paisit Wongmuang said Mr Tawatchai reportedly killed himself due to anxiety and stress after being arrested in Nonthaburi on August 29.

“I believe the suspect committed suicide because he faced a DSI arrest warrant and was

also being sued in many cases related to offences on illegal land-title registration,” Col Paisit said.

He added that apart from the DSI case, Mr Tawatchai was also being investigated by the Anti-Money Laundering Office over his property, as well as in a National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) probe over corruption.

The DSI chief said that Mr Tawatchai was allegedly involved in the illegal land-title registration of more than 1,000 plots of public land in Phuket and Phang Nga provinces and that his crime had cost the country more than 10.5 billion baht.

DSI deputy director-general Col Songsak Raksaksakul said Mr Tawatchai was arrested on August 29 in Nonthaburi after an arrest warrant was issued in June. He was detained at DSI’s headquarters for one night before being sent to Criminal Court for further sentencing on August 30.

However, Col Songsak said that after interrogation on the afternoon of the 29th, Mr Tawatchai showed signs of stress and ate very little, so officers let him rest in his

detention room.

“Then, when an officer went to Mr Tawatchai’s detention room around 2am, he saw that the suspect had hanged himself from the cell door using his sock,” Col Songsak said. The officer said he broke into the cell and had the suspect sent to Mongkut Wattana Hospital, but Mr Tawatchai died around 4:45am.

“I insist that the DSI has proper detention standards and we would like to express our deep condolences to the suspect’s family,” Col Songsak said.

“The DSI will set up a committee to investigate this tragic incident to see if it was because of negligence on the officers’ part,” he added.

Col Paisit said that a post-mortem would be conducted because Mr Tawatchai had died in custody. Then his body would be returned to his family for funeral rites.

“The criminal offences against him are now nullified because he is already dead, though investigation on money laundering related to his property will continue,” Col Paisit said.

Lt-Col Prawut Wongseenin,



A DSI official motions to the door from the hinge of which Mr Tawatchai allegedly hanged himself. Photo: The Nation

DSI Consumer Protection and Environment Crime Bureau director, stated that Mr Tawatchai’s death would not affect the illegal land-title registration case as the investigation was complete and the DSI had solid evidence against all the defendants.

“The DSI has two special cases involving this suspect, Col Prawut told the press.

“These two cases involve illegal land-title registration in

Phuket’s Thalang district and prosecution moves are being made on three companies and three officers, one of whom was Mr Tawatchai.”

According to the DSI, the suspect was being investigated on 12 cases by the NACC in relation to the illegal land-registration of 22 sites. He also faced a 12-year jail term issued by the Surat Thani provincial court.

– *The Nation*

Earthquake hits Myanmar, tremors felt in Thailand

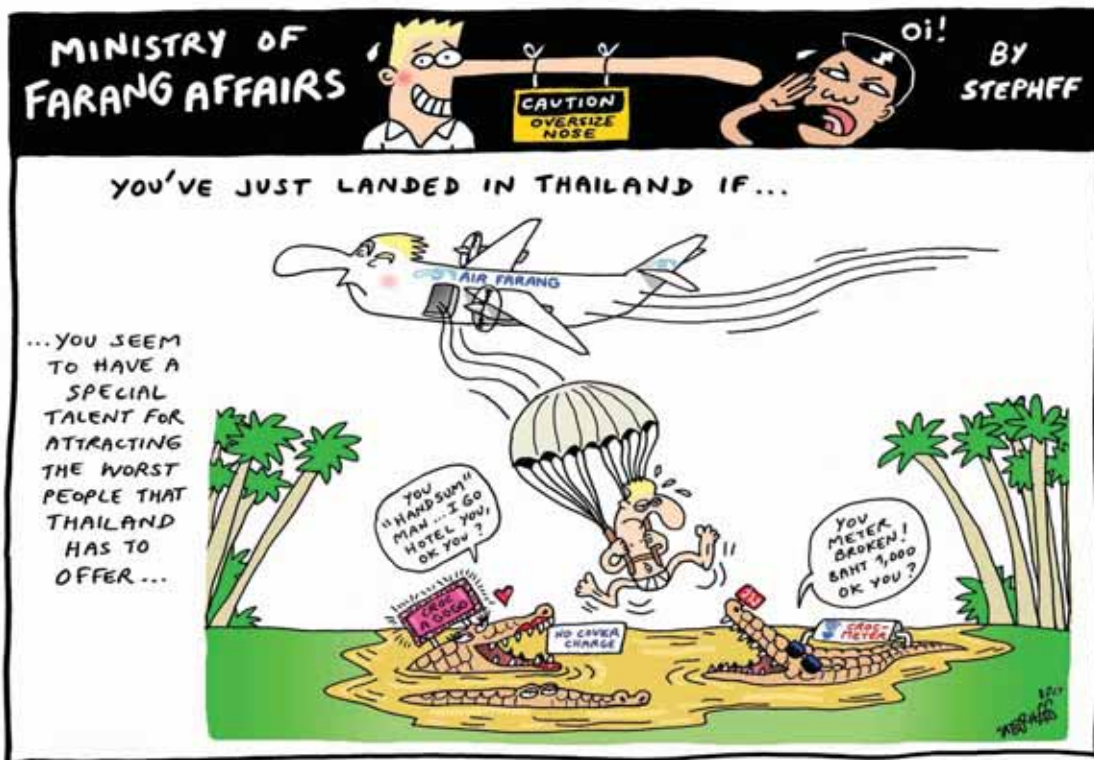
AN EARTHQUAKE hit Myanmar and nearby countries on August 24, causing panic in numerous areas.

The US Geological Survey said the quake struck just after 5:30pm and was 6.8 on the richter scale. The earthquake was felt widely across the region with people in Chiang Mai and as far as Bangkok feeling the tremor. Office buildings in Bangkok shook for a few seconds, residents said.

The earthquake was also felt in Bangladesh, India, Laos and China, residents said. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

Health checks after illegal dumps found

FOLLOWING a complaint by Chonburi residents that some 50 chemical drums labelled "Styrene Monomer" were dumped into a sand pit near a water source in Tambon Ban Pong in Bang Lamung District and a strong smelly substance leaked out, a doctor said on August 27 that the substance could be harmful to people's health.



The Disease Control Department (DCD)'s Bureau of Occupational and Environmental Diseases director Dr Preecha Premprea said officials were dispatched to check how much of the substance had leaked out.

Another team of officials was set to do a check on nearby residents for health impacts after a perimeter was set, he said.

Dr Preecha said styrene monomer was an organic compound used in industries to manufacture car parts, styrofoam and plastic.

If people inhaled a large amount, they could develop respiratory problems, have a seizure or even die.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Second Pattani bombing victim succumbs

A SECOND victim has died of injuries suffered in the August 23 car bombing in Pattani's Muang district, a spokesman for the Internal Security Operations Command said on August 26.

Minimart owner Khonsan Kudedakeng, 64, died on August 25 and his body was collected by relatives for an Islamic burial ceremony in Nong Chik district, the source said.

Previously, the center provided about 700,000 baht to aid the families of the dead and injured. He said 68 people were affected and damages were estimated at 30 million baht.

The car bomb attack at the Southern View Pattani Hotel took place only 10 days after a spate of bomb and arson attacks in Prachuap Khiri Khan and six upper southern provinces, which killed four and injured more than 30 others, including foreigners.

Floods in BKK lead to social media outcry

ON AUGUST 25, social media was inundated with disaster scenarios after torrential rains hit Bangkok overnight.

Among the most shared photos on social media were those that showed students rowing a boat to school, while others wearing swimming suits pretended to dive into floodwaters.

Those photos, taken at Rajvinit Bangkaew School, were among many depictions of flooding throughout Bangkok that featured prominently on social media, with the terrible traffic also a common theme.

Soon after the deluge, social media outlets were swamped by the news that Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha, as chief of the National Council for Peace and Order, had invoked his powers under the post-coup interim charter's Article 44 to suspend Bangkok Governor MR Sukhumbhand Paribatra from duty effective immediately.

The governor was at Hong Kong International Airport waiting for a flight to South Korea when news broke about Gen Prayuth's order, according to a BMA source.

Many media outlets outlined the 'failures' during Sukhumbhand's time as Bangkok's governor, drawing comments from across the spectrum of Thai social media.



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Phuket Gazette

Security boost

THE recent hacking of Government Savings Bank automatic teller machines (ATMs) nationwide raises a host of troubling questions. These relate not only to identities and whereabouts of the thieves, but also to the general state of security for ATM users in Thailand, the repeated failure of immigration police to keep known foreign criminals from our shores, as well as the clique's selection of Phuket as a base from which to operate.

Thai banking has certainly come a long way since ATM machines were first introduced here in the mid-80s. Older readers might remember just what a hassle banking was in the pre-ATM period. There were relatively few bank branches, and those that did exist were typically large and overrun with customers, all of whom had to place transaction slips into a large plastic box and wait for their name to be called.

Also sadly absent at most banks at the time was any queuing system, electronic or manual, with which to ensure that the 'first-come, first served' service policy, that is now in effect at every bank, could be carried out. It was a good time to know the teller at your local bank.

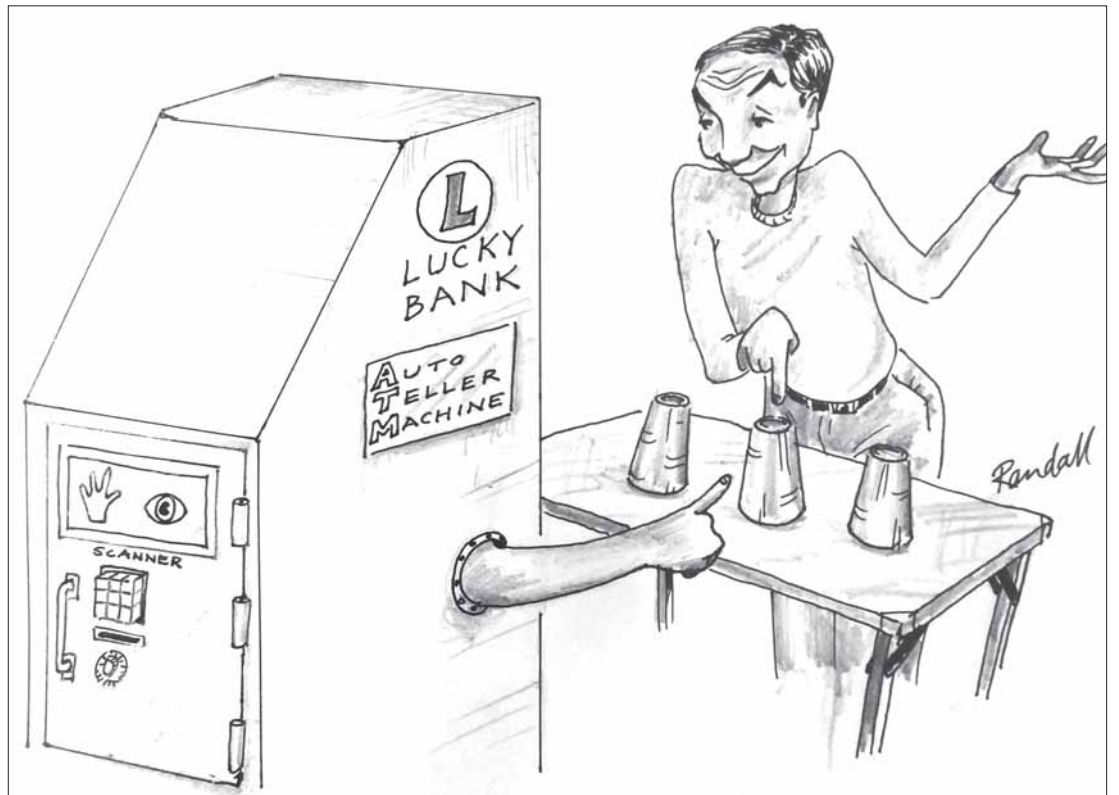
Despite advances in electronic banking technology, hackers have always lurked on the fringes, ready to take advantage of security breaches.

It is, of course, easy to fall into a false sense of security after making hundreds of painless ATM transactions, but the *Phuket Gazette* encourages readers to observe all basic security protocols, especially as Phuket has an established and growing reputation for ATM fraud, with foreign residents and tourists often falling victim.

As for the ongoing investigation into the culprits behind this latest ATM scam, the fact that they have successfully exited the country with so much cash does not bode well for the prospects of their arrest. They are probably now on some faraway beach sipping Mai Tais and chuckling under their breath as they read this.

The *Phuket Gazette* hopes the police can do a better job at liaising with international crime-fighting agencies to arrest and extradite such thieves so they can be brought to justice.

At a minimum we hope they will direct more resources to keeping known international criminals off Thai soil, and fewer resources to creating ever more paperwork for long-time, law-abiding foreign residents.



Time to get rid of the scum

Re: Foreign suspects celebrated for rape, theft, debt default and smuggling, Aug 29

Get rid of this scum! They bring us foreigners a bad name in Thailand. We foreigners who live here legally, respect the law and live decent lives get tainted by people like this.

Michael Crowhurst
Facebook

Investigation needs to go on regardless

Re: Man in debt found hanged at temple, Aug 29

Apart from determining if there has been foul play, and ending the case there and then in the event that there was not, how about the police investigating who he owed money to, and why he owed that money?

And what sort of pressure was he under? Pay or die pressure? Pay or your family gets hurt kind of pressure? No foul play should not mean an end of the investigation.

Geoff
Gazette forum

Better to relocate some departments

Re: Public outcry sends Vachira wing back to the drawing board, Aug 27

The current site of the hospital is not user-friendly and the lack of parking causes huge inconvenience for the patients, emergency vehicles and visitors. Why not split the hospital and

Letters to the Editor

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

construct certain departments on the huge tract of land next to Tesco Lotus on the bypass road? It would be a far more accessible location and take the strain off current resources.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

Courts too soft on juvenile delinquents

Re: Rise in Phuket's troubled teens, Aug 29

We have the same problem with youths in Australia. The courts are too soft on them and yes, a lot of them come from broken homes and mix with older boys so come under peer pressure. They try to be big men, so treat them likewise.

Bazza
Gazette forum

Phuket buses need exhaust brakes

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

I used to drive semi trailers, public carrying buses and other trucks in Australia professionally. There is one thing I noticed in Thailand and that is that it seems no trucks or buses here

have what I call exhaust brakes. This is a lever on the steering column where you engage the engine brake which uses the compression of the diesel engine to slow the vehicle down.

In Australia, there are zones where it cannot be used – which are residential. Here there seem to be absolutely no noise pollution laws and I find it strange they haven't got them. They save the need to over use the regular brakes. Excellent for downhill.

Lizardofoz
Gazette forum

Well done to Thai Olympians

Re: Thai Olympic medalists parade for the people, Aug 26

Congratulations to the athletes. The country must be so proud of you all.

Bill Proud
Facebook

Sino style buildings a breath of fresh air

Re: Supicha targets locals with Sino style, Aug 29

A great move forward for Phuket with an architect that thinks and embraces design in keeping with the traditional street scene. A breath of fresh air from the usual cheap trash designs you see. Phuket needs more architects like this and more developers that encourage and engage them.

Ian Rance
Facebook

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Easing migrant registration

FIRST PERSON

EARLIER in August, a crowd of more than a hundred local employers of migrant workers gathered at Phuket Provincial Hall to protest difficulties in registering workers under their employ. The employers demanded to skip official processes on location-based working restrictions.

Our office is following the policy of the Ministry of Labor and its laws. However, we still receive complaints sometimes. We cannot just close our eyes and follow the law without listening to the voice of the people about what troubles they are facing.

One example is that now the Employment Office is available seven days a week in order to make sure there will always be an official present in case employers need to work in a different place than they are registered. We normally work five days a week like other normal government offices, with some officials working in shifts. Now I make sure that the official present during off time is also authorized to sign off on emergency applications.

The ministry is trying to sort out problems as best they can. We are aware that most of the migrants workers first move here illegally. Some of them do not even have identification documents. In the meantime, employers are facing labor shortage problems because Thai people are not really willing to work as laborers anymore. However, if employers hire illegal workers, they risk facing charges for that. That is the main dilemma they



Pitool Dumsakorn, 54, is the current chief of the Phuket Employment Office. Originally from Phatthalung, he has a master's degree in Public Administration from the Prince of Songkla University in Hat Yai. He has taken up this position in order to manage unemployment on the island.

Here he talks about how employment laws must not only be strictly applied, but also be practical and applicable in real life.



Hundreds of migrant workers stand in line to register at Phuket Provincial Employment Office. Photo: Phuket PR

are facing.

Hiring illegal workers is a breach of both immigration and labor laws. The government has tried to resolve this by opening up a one-stop service for employers to legally hire labor and improve the quality of life for these people. We have a registration process so they can live and work legally for a period of one or two years (depending on the cabinet's resolution) before deportation.

I would like to say that we are really trying our best. We cannot just work to please some people. We aim to service everyone equally and have our rules to follow. If that is not enough, we look for al-

ternative solutions. We are doing our part and trying to fix problems, but employers should be equally strict in following the laws as well. We have started an extra queue for them, so they must be prepared to spare a little extra time for official processing as well.

If you want to make everything legal, you must register 100 per cent of your employees. Even if a single employee is found to be working illegally, authorities have every right to arrest the worker and press charges against employers.

I stand by my word that we can be flexible with the application of the law, but we cannot go so far as to break it.



Independent shops and vendors touting their services is a common sight in Phuket and all over Thailand. Photo: Takeaway

Killing the community

Island View

By Nick Davies

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

UNEMPLOYMENT in Thailand is practically zero. The official unemployment rate is around the one per cent mark. Compare that to somewhere like the UK, where unemployment figures over the past decade have fluctuated wildly between 12 and seven per cent, and one has to ask why a developed nation has an unemployment problem with millions dependent on government handouts.

One immediately striking difference compared to Phuket when walking down any British high street is the distinct lack of independent vendors touting their services and wares. It doesn't matter where that high street is in the British Isles, you are sure to find the same run-of-the-mill high street chain stores monopolizing the town with perhaps a local butcher or baker squeezed in between them.

In fact, on my last visit home to what was once a vibrant market town in the UK, I was shocked and saddened to see rows of boarded up shops in a deserted town center that used to be a hive of activity.

The health food shop, tailor, shoe shop, barber, grocer and other homegrown businesses all packed up long ago. They fell victim to the convenience offered by large out-of-town superstores. With loss-leader pricing of everyday produce, in-store bakeries, plenty of parking and cheap petrol at their pumps, the retail Goliaths essentially killed off the local community.

The only survivors in the old market town were pubs that had turned into classy restaurants, nail and hair care studios, a ridiculously high-priced sandwich shop and, of course, the banks.

One shop I was happy to see still going was a small family-run grocers that has shelves filled with tinned fruit and things just not found in superstores.

Mind you, the British public seem to be quite happy to be pre-occupied with which of the 16 supermarket giant offers the best deals. Many forget though, that less than a generation ago, there were 96 brands of British supermarket. Some just went out of business, but most were gobbled up by those 16 giant chains, so while shoppers believe they are being offered a wide variety of choice, they are all stocking their fridges with similar brands.

Sadly though, they are no longer supporting their own community and missing out on being part of the community as well.

Words from the Wise

“So my idea of neurotic is spending too much time trying to correct a wrong. When I feel that I'm doing that, then I snap out of it.”

– Gene Wilder

“In dwelling, live close to the ground. In thinking, keep to the simple. In conflict, be fair and generous. In governing, don't try to control. In work, do what you enjoy. In family life, be completely present.”

– Lao Tzu

Issues & Answers

When will Koh Kaew construction end?

I WANT to know what happened to the construction of the wall behind Isuzu in Koh Kaew. Last thing I saw was construction workers putting up a pillar. Now they have stopped working, while their backhoe is still parked there, making the road narrow and dangerous to pass through.

Could you please update us on the progress of the construction work there?

Susan Daley
Koh Kaew

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Muang District Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Choochip Bamroong replied:

The reason that the construction company has stopped working is that they made a mistake in putting up the pillars. At the moment, they are chalking up new plans.

I will push them to hurry up the work and clear out the road to make it safer.

The construction work was expected to be finished by next month, but I don't think the company can finish it on time, so they will have to face a fine.

Vendors cash in on gaming trend

By Kongleaphy Keam

LOCAL vendors at popular Pokemon catching spots in Phuket have experienced a boost in income since the launch of Pokemon GO in Thailand. However, some vendors expect this spike to be short lived.

For those who are wondering what Pokemon GO is, it is Nintendo Co Ltd's mobile phone game which marries a classic 20-year-old franchise with augmented reality, and has become an instant hit globally. Players walk around real-life places to search out and capture Pokemon cartoon characters on their smartphones.

There are two major spots where people gather to catch Pokemon in Phuket – Rang Hill and Saphan Hin.

The reason that these two spots are so popular is that there are many 'PokeStops' there with Lure Modules inserted. Lure Modules turn the PokeStops purple and attract more Pokemon to the PokeStop. People nearby will be able to catch more Pokemon.

The popularity of the game has so far been helpful for businesses in the area. A vendor at the bottom of Rang Hill, who wishes to be named only as Ms Pen, says that the area has become crowded ever since the game's launch in Thailand.

"I sell steamed buns (salabao), soy milk, and other



Crowds of local players flock to the Rang Hill viewpoint to catch the little monsters. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

drinks around the Rang Hill area. It is usually very quiet down here at the bottom of the hill. It used to be a shrine with hardly any visitors coming to the area. I used to come here to sell sometimes," she says.

"Ever since the game has been launched, many people gather here to play. The area becomes even more crowded in the evenings, from about 8pm until late at night. There are a lot of teenagers with bikes and cars, who stand there catching Pokemons."

Ms Pen says her sales have increased a little, but not considerably.

"I am able to sell more

snacks and drinks, but it is not a huge increase, as most people are there to play, not to eat. I still go out there to sell food every night, except on rainy days," she says.

"I need to cash in on this trend and earn quickly from this, because I believe people will soon get bored of it and not come here to catch Pokemon anymore. You know how Thai people are," she added.

A hawker at Saphan Hin, where many Pokemon GO players gather near the circle and the water, expressed similar views about the trend.

"A lot of people, especially teenagers, used to come to

Saphan Hin, even before the game was launched. Now we see even more teenagers, as well as a lot more middle aged people. It is very funny for me to see middle aged working people coming here to catch Pokemon," said Ms Kiew, a fruit seller in the area.

"I have made a little more income from this, but I am not really surprised or happy about it. I am certain it won't last long, but I am happy to see more people coming here making it more lively and crowded. I don't mind as long as it helps local vendors make more money, whether a little or a lot," she added.

Bhutan-Thai to partner up

THAILAND and Bhutan have agreed to forge closer ties in tourism and to formulate a package called 'Two Kingdoms One Destination' while exchanging business missions next year.

After a meeting of a Joint Trade Commission including Bhutanese Economic Affairs Minister Lyonpo Lekey Dorji two weeks ago, Thai Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn said on August 29 that the two countries foresee closer cooperation in many ways, particularly in tourism, as both are strong in that sector.

"Bhutan has encouraged Thai investors to do business there as well as help transfer know-how in tourism management and human-resource development," she said. Bhutan will set up a trade mission to Thailand early next year in order to showcase its strengths in trade, tourism and investment. Bhutan is Thailand's eighth-largest trading partner among South Asian countries. Trade between Thailand and Bhutan was quite small at 380 million baht last year.

The value of two-way trade during the past five years averaged US\$15.1 million, but has grown quite strongly at 38 per cent a year. Exports from Thailand averaged US\$14.98mn, growing by 39.12 per cent a year, while imports amounted to a very small US\$120,000 a year.

– *The Nation*

New payment method aims to ease online transactions

A NEW payment method designed to ease bank transfers, backed by the central bank of Thailand, was announced at a press conference held in Phuket on August 5.

Saowapa Limsila, chief of Phuket Provincial Office of comptroller general, and Jongrak Angtanya, vice president of Phuket Bank Club, jointly chaired the meeting held at Phuket Provincial Hall.

Prompt Pay is a new method of conducting transactions that allows users to transfer their money between accounts without having to input their bank account number. This reduces the hassle of carrying a bank book or having to remember your bank account numbers.

The service has been open for registration since July 15, but will be made effective on October 31.

"It is a new innovation in



Prompt Pay is intended to ease online transactions. Photo: Public Domain

money transfers," said Ms Saowapa at the launch.

"The user can send and receive money using only their

phone number or national ID card number."

This new service is part of the national e-payment policy

by the government to encourage the use of electronic transactions rather than carrying cash. It has been implemented through cooperation between the Bank of Thailand and all banks in the country.

Prompt Pay gives customers the opportunity to transfer amounts with lower-than-normal bank charges between two different branches of the same bank, and also between two different banks.

Transfers of less than 5,000 baht are completely free. Transfers of 5,000 to 30,000 baht will be charged a maximum of two baht per transaction.

Transfers of 30,000 to 100,000 baht will be charged a maximum of five baht per transaction. Transfers of more than 100,000 baht carry a maximum charge of 10 baht

per transaction.

Ms Saowapa said their extensive plans with Prompt Pay would change the future of banking in Thailand.

"In the future we will introduce many additional options to users of the service, such as tax returns, pensions and payment cheques," stated Ms Saowapa.

"We plan to offer these services to companies and juristic persons as well, instead of only providing them to the general public as we do now."

Those interested can register for Prompt Pay in 4 ways – ATMs, internet banking, mobile banking, and in person at the bank.

Users will be able to connect one bank account with one to three phone numbers, and can connect not more than four accounts per person.

– *Kongleaphy Keam*

Startup Thailand comes to town

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha is to visit Phuket on September 16 for the regional launch of a new nationwide initiative aimed at helping budding local businesses get off the ground and into the international arena of digital commerce.

The Startup Thailand 2016 campaign was launched by the prime minister in Bangkok in April as a joint government and private sector collaboration between 11 agencies to bring businesses up to date with contemporary international commercial practices and trends.

The Phuket seminar is scheduled to take place September 16-18 at Royal Phuket Marina with Gen Prayuth leading an entourage of about 200 experts, including Science and Technology minister Dr Pichet Durongkaveroj and Information and Communication Technology minister Dr Uttama Savanayana.

Phuket Vice Governor Kajornkiet Rakpanitmanee said on August 30 that keynote talks on the opening day of the September seminar would include 'Phuket as a Smart City and Startup Paradise'.

The opening day activities will also include a panel discussion titled 'Start-up and New Investment Opportunities in Thailand'.

Among the agencies participating in the drive are the ministries of Information and Communication Technology; Commerce; Finance; Industry, Foreign Affairs, Tourism and



Between 1,000 and 2,500 new businesses were launched in Thailand last year. Photo: Unsplash

Sports; Education; and Agriculture and Cooperatives. They are joined by the SMEs Service Center and community organization Pracha Rath.

Currently between 1,000 and 2,500 new businesses have been launched around the country in the past year and the organizers of Startup Thailand are hoping to help many more get access to information and technology so as to push Thailand as an ASEAN hub of digital innovation.

One of the goals of Startup Thailand is to bring together talented people from a variety

of different start-up companies from a broad spectrum of product and service sectors, said Science and Technology Minister Dr Pichet Durongkaveroj.

"Entrepreneurs can unleash their creativity by networking and exchanging ideas to formulate new business models for the future.

"New connections will be made and venture capital opportunities will arise to drive the country's economy forward in the digital age, said the minister.

Startup Thailand is heavily supported with strategic appli-

cation of technology public organizations such as the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA), the Electronic Transactions Development Agency, the Electronic Government Agency (EGA), Thailand Post, CAT Telecom and Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT).

"This multi-sector collaboration will create more jobs, more income and a higher standard of living for the country, resulting in more stability, prosperity and sustainability," he said.

For more information, visit thailandstartup.org.

Tour workers urged to be more vigilant

THE Department of Tourism has asked tourism workers to play a role in protecting tourists by remaining observant while working with the country's 64 associations to spur growth in the key sector.

"From now on, the department will increase its active role by organizing training to upgrade the skills for tourism personnel working in all areas of Thailand so they are more observant and always vigilant. If they happen to see irregularities, they will automatically inform law enforcement officials," said Wanasiri Morakul, director general of the Department of Tourism.

She said recent attacks in the southern provinces had encouraged people in the industry to work closer together and that the tourism industry looked more promising than ever.

"There has been greater synergy among tourism stakeholders, entrepreneurs, hotels, restaurants and service providers to upgrade security measures for all tourists," she said.

She said the department had begun strengthening its collaboration with 64 tourism associations to drive the development of high-quality community-based tourism so Thailand remains a dream destination for foreign tourists.

Thailand will host World Tourism Day in Khon Kaen next month and the WTTC Global Summit in Bangkok in April 2017.

- The Nation

Rising trend in digital ad spending

AD SPENDING on digital media will reach 10 billion baht next year, encroaching on territory held by mainstream media such as television and newspapers, the Digital Advertising Association Thailand (DAAT) reported.

"The biggest ad spenders, particularly skincare products, are spending more on digital media, reflecting that online media has become the mass media for consumer goods," DAAT president Supachai Parchariyanon said on August 29.

Based on research by the association and TNS Thailand (a global market insight and information group), skincare products are among the fastest-growing industries by sales



The DAAT believes that digital advertisement spending will exceed 10bn baht next year. Photo: pexels

volume, followed by non-alcoholic beverages, banks, alcoholic drinks, and vitamins and food supplements.

Mr Supachai believes that with rise in mobile internet users, advertising spending will exceed 10bn baht next year, out-

pacing newspapers.

Mr Supachai suggested that brands and marketers should gain deeper understanding about how to use digital media effectively, not only for brand building but also for boosting sales.

- The Nation

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Thai singer visits Dolphin Bay Nemo

Dolphin Bay Nemo Phuket welcomed Pat Suthasinee Buddhinan, the well-known Thai singer, along with her family on August 12. Ms Suthasinee and her family watched the dolphin show and happy kids petting the trained mammals.



Pat Suthasinee Buddhinan (left) and her family get up close with the dolphins at Dolphin Bay Nemo Phuket.

Bavarian beverages pour revelry into Phuket eatery

Anna's Bar and Restaurant in Phuket Town held a food and beverage pairing evening. The tastes on the plates were matched with beverages brought to Phuket by the Hacklberg Bavarian brewery.



(Back row from L-R) Traisit Glahan, General Manager, Pipatchara Wichinukulpradit, Project Manager, Nawaphut Chaowul, Marketing Consultant, Apiphu Buranapathma, Marketing Consultant, Chris Breitenfeller, Hacklberg Partner, Dudoo, Hacklberg Importer. (Front row from L-R) Atsushi Matsui, Owner of Anna Cafe, Thawika Combe, Area Sales Manager, Kankorn Wichayanurak, Area Sales Manager and Saksri Kerdphol, Hacklberg's Distributor in Southern Thailand.

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ents in Paradise

Pre-event gathering at Phuket Boat Lagoon

Organizers of the Riau Archipelago Marine Festival held a pre-event gathering for the sailing and marine community at the Boat Lagoon Resort on August 27. The theme of the festival, to be held from October 20-30 at the Riau Archipelago, Indonesia, is 'Sail Karimata 2016'. The festival will be hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia.



(L-R) Boon Yongsakul, Deputy Managing Director of Phuket Boat Lagoon and Kanit Yongsakul, Chairman of Phuket Boat Lagoon Group receiving a token of appreciation from Firnandi Gufron, Assistant Deputy Director of Indonesia Ministry of Tourism.

30th anniversary of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta celebration

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, Asia's largest yacht racing event, the organizing committee hosted a dinner at Bangkok's trendy Maduzi hotel last week for sponsors and friends.



(From L-R) Committee stalwart Santi Kanchanabandhu; committee president Kevin Whitcraft; Pana Janviroj, president of *The Nation* newspaper group; and John Magee of the *Gazette*. This year's King's Cup, which expects to see more than 100 yachts on the race courses, will take place at the Kata Beach Resort from December 3-10.

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• 88 Land and Houses Hillside Phuket, Construction Start: APR 2012 Expected Completion: JUN 2017. • 88 Land and Houses Koh kaew Phuket, Construction Start: MAR 2013 Expected Completion: DEC 2015. • inizio Koh kaew Phuket, Construction Start: AUG 2012 Expected Completion: MAR 2016.

Getting your visa application right

By Simon Wetherell

OFTEN you will hear people say getting a visa to Australia is very hard, but the reality is, as long as you meet the basic criteria, it could not be easier.

Many people make it much harder for themselves than is necessary, and hopefully this article will assist people to be successful the first time.

1. Make sure you choose the right visa, complete the appropriate application form and fill out all answers correctly and accurately.

2. It sounds obvious, but answer all questions fully and honestly. Mistakes, omissions or errors may not get picked up this time, but could come back to haunt you in future applications, and lead to cancellation of your existing visa or refusal of new applications in the future. If you realize you have made a mistake, update the embassy as soon as possible.

3. Don't be too proud or stubborn to get advice, but make sure the advice is from a trusted source and not 'bar rumors'. Often people rely on bad information or advice, with disastrous consequences. If you pay for assistance, use a registered migration agent or lawyer, beware of scammers and unqualified people who guarantee results or use questionable



Getting an Australian visa is not as complicated as most people seem to believe. Photo: Hai Linh Truong

practices. I have seen to many people pay too much money to get worthless advice or assistance.

For a list of agents go to www.mara.gov.au/search-the-register-of-migration-agents.

4. Plan ahead for what your future wishes are, as statements and facts you provide now can bind you for the future. Don't mischaracterize

relationships, it could come back to cost you in the future. Do be aware though of what impact this might have on your pension or other social security rules and payments.

5. Don't assume the embassy has the information about you or understands your situation. Every application is different, so make everything very clear and spell it out to assist the de-

cision maker to understand everything. Don't assume knowledge, understanding or that information provided in previous applications is known for the new application.

6. Allow plenty of time for your application to be reviewed and approved, in case further information is requested, or if your first application has been unsuccessful. From experience

most applications that are refused can be fixed and successfully re-submitted addressing the weakness from before. When you re-submit your application it is very important to remember point 5 above, don't just focus on the area of refusal.

7. Always submit a complete application, being lazy in providing supporting evidence and explanation is often the reason for delays at best, and in the worst case a refusal.

Make sure you tie all aspects of the application together, and that it is clear and makes sense to anyone looking at it without any prior knowledge or needing any new information.

The Visa Advice Center has a new office at Trendy Building, Sukhumvit Soi 13, Bangkok and offers a free consultation, either by phone or in person, with qualified and regulated staff.

If you are not sure about your application, visit the Visa Advice Center to get it right the first time, at VisaAdviceCentre.com

Simon Wetherell is a registered migration agent and lawyer. He resides in Thailand and has offices in Phuket and Bangkok. For more information, visit AustralianVisaPhuket.com, call 095-085 3355 or email swc.asia@gmail.com.

Award-winning robot to help autistic kids

THE creators of BotTherapist, a robot designed to help autistic children, won first prize in the Student Innovation Challenge World 2016, an annual event held to help people with disabilities in Asean through rehabilitation technologies.

The winning team came from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.

"We developed a robot that can be put to real use. It's also an innovation with commercial potential," said Wisanu Jutharee, a member of the winning team.

The robot was developed based on a model designed by the team's adviser, Assoc Prof Boonserm Kaewkamnerdpong, who came up with an initiative two years ago that addressed the alarming fact that while many children are diagnosed

with autism, the number of autism specialists is very limited.

Mr Boonserm believes the robot could help to alleviate the problem and teach children cognitive and social skills.

The robot flashes a light to attract attention and has wheels for moving around. It can make sounds and even 'facial' expressions.

Interaction between the robot and children involves a game of matching cards in which a child picks a card based on the same symbol displayed in the eyes of the robot.

If the right card is chosen, the robot displays a happy face and plays music, encouraging the child to change their choice. If its face turns sad, the child has picked the wrong card and the robot encourages them to try again. *- The Nation*

Australia makes changes to visa application procedures in Thailand

RECENTLY there has been a lot of confusion about what is happening with the new system for Australian visas. Below is are some guidelines for submitting Australian visa applications.

Anyone – other than Australian citizens – visiting Australia requires a visa. For some nationalities this can be very easy, such as the US, UK, Schengen countries and the like.

However, for Thais and other Asian nationals, this is a more complex and lengthy process.

Since the beginning of May, all Thai applicants for a tourist visa to Australia now need to attend VFS and submit biometrics, in the form of 10 fingerprints and a digital photo.

This can only be done at the



For some nationalities, getting an Australian visa can be very easy, but for Thais and other Asians, this is a more complex and lengthy process. Photo: Hoangkid

VFS offices in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, as the regional post office system that was previously in place was shut down in April.

This also includes online applications through an Immi

account. Applicants will be sent a letter notifying them to attend VFS for the biometric collection. They will also be required to pay the lodgement fee, which is the same for a complete application or just providing the biometrics. The only benefit to this is that the processing wouldn't take as long.

If you are unsure, you can contact VFS, the Australian Embassy or the Australian Visa Advice Center that offers a free consultation service and has offices in Phuket and Bangkok.

It is recommended that you make an appointment and plan ahead of time. This is to ensure that you bring all of the necessary documents and avoid having to make a repeat trip to Bangkok.

- Simon Wetherell

Locals unite to preserve heritage

Public takes to social media to stop demolition of century-old buildings

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

IN A refreshing display of solidarity, Phuket locals teamed up to help preserve century-old buildings at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

Vachira Hospital administrators, who had earlier announced plans to demolish the existing structures of two of their buildings, reached an agreement with concerned community members and employees over the proposed demolition of the historic 100-year-old buildings and surrounding mahogany trees.

The demolition of the existing structures was ordered to make way for a new hospital wing. The issue came to public attention when a Facebook user posted a statement in Thai.

“Vachira Hospital will demolish this 100-year-old building in order to expand its facilities,” the statement read.

“Locals are trying to help stop the project, but have too small a voice to convince management to alter their plans.

“I would like to ask for help from experts, teachers, members of the media, officials and officers, as well as from the public in general. Help us share this news and put pressure on Vachira to stop the project.

“The building is old, and this kind of architecture falls under the protection of the Fine Arts Department. Therefore, those who are responsible for the demolition of the building



Vachira Hospital officials announced that the old buildings would be transformed into a museum displaying historic medical devices such as Thailand's first X-ray machine. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

should face legal charges.”

The issue further heated up when a Vachira Hospital doctor submitted a complaint to the Damrongdharma center (ombudsman's office), after he received no satisfaction following a discussion of his concerns with Vachira management.

“The new building, which plans for 298 beds, received a 303 million baht budget from the Ministry of Public Health's 2017 yearly budget,” Dr Veerasak said.

“The management team

first informed us that the new building will be built at the current site of the canteen and laundry area, which had been approved by a team from the ministry.”

“However, in July, Vachira's director and deputy director stated that the building site would be changed to where the Ranong and Boontham buildings are located,” he said. “Both buildings date back to the period of King Rama VI and many old trees would also be destroyed for the new

facility's construction.”

Vachira Hospital's Chief Engineer Chaiyot Thonglim told the *Gazette* that the site of the development shifted due to logistical considerations.

“We've since surveyed both sites and the reason we changed our plans from the canteen and laundry area is due to the slope next to the parking area, which could affect traffic,” said Mr Chaiyot. “Another reason is that fire trucks would not be able to reach the area in the event of

an emergency.”

Vachira Hospital Deputy Director Somboon Wangtaetham announced that the buildings will not be demolished, following a meeting with members of the national Fine Arts Department on August 29.

“In the meeting we reached the conclusion not to demolish the buildings,” Dr Somboon said. “Moreover, we will have the site inspected by an engineer and an architect.”

Dr Somboon said the old buildings – named as the Ranong, Boontham and Sripatcharintransorn buildings – will be transformed into a museum, displaying historical medical devices, such as Thailand's first X-ray machine, and will include blood donation facilities.

He added the new wing would instead be placed elsewhere on Vachira's grounds.

Fine Arts Department Deputy Director-General Kajorn Mookmeeka, who joined officials during an inspection of the buildings on August 27, said that the Boonphat and Ranong buildings have endured heavy damage.

He added that the Fine Arts Department would compare the buildings' current state with an old photograph in order to estimate their renovation budget.

Additional reporting by Kritsada Mueanhawong.

Close encounters of the third kind

MEMBERS of the ‘third sex’ spending a penny at the Shell gas station on Chao Fa West Road now have toilet cubicles of their very own.

Both the male and female toilet stalls in the bathroom block of the gas station's forecourt each have one stall depicting an alien and a male-female symbol.

The symbol is meant to indicate that the stall is designated as a privy for transgender visitors.

– Nick Davies



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A look inside the Royal Pavilion

On Deck
By Duncan Worthington

I RECENTLY attended the National Science and Technology Fair in Bangkok at IMPACT Muang Thong Thani. The attraction for me was a Royal Pavilion that included boats made by His Majesty the King of Thailand.

Many will know that His Majesty has built a number of boats in his time. Twenty-five to be precise, all dinghies. His first was *Rajptain*, an Enterprise Class dinghy which he raced against Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh in 1965 from Pattaya to Koh Larn, and won. All 25 are still in working order and are kept with the full fleet (100 in total, many of them gifts) at Chitralada Palace and Tha Wasukri in Bangkok, and Klai Kangwon Palace in Hua Hin.

His Majesty created 'The Royal Mott Class' in 1966, which was designed within the parameters of the 'International Moth Class' and between 1966 and 1967 built a number of boats in the class using three of his own designs: Mod, Super Mod and Micro Mod. His Majesty registered the Mod design at the Patent Office in Great Britain and the Super Mod, a smaller and lighter version designed for easier sailing by Thai people, was on display at the fair. Despite being 49 years old



The Vega 2 on display at the National Science and Technology Fair in Bangkok. Photo: Duncan Worthington

and having won many races, the Super Mod was in exceptional condition. The sail, however, was not original but was new and made by Phuket sailmaker 'Local Sails by Ket'.

While the Super Mod was fascinating, it was another boat that was the star attraction and my main reason to attend.

Vega 2 is an OK Dinghy, one of four OKs built by His Majesty the King. The first, *Navaruek*, was built in 1965, and then there was *Vega*. After building *Vega 2* His Majesty renamed *Vega* to *Vega 1*. His Majesty sailed *Vega* from Hua

Hin to Sattahip in 1966 – a trip of approximately 60 nautical miles which took 14 hours. His Majesty presented the rudder of *Vega 1* as a trophy – the Vega Rudder Trophy – which is still competed for today, but this was not before HRH Princess Ubol Ratana raced *Vega 1* against His Majesty the King in the 4th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games (now the SEA Games) in 1967. Not only was it unusual for a father and daughter to compete in an international competition such as this, it was even more unusual that they tied on points, both winners, and

were both awarded gold medals. The medals were awarded by Her Majesty the Queen.

Plenty has been written about that historic achievement, but many forget that the two winning boats were built by His Majesty. *Vega 1* is today kept at Klai Kangwon Palace in Hua Hin while *Vega 2* is kept at Tha Wasukri in Bangkok.

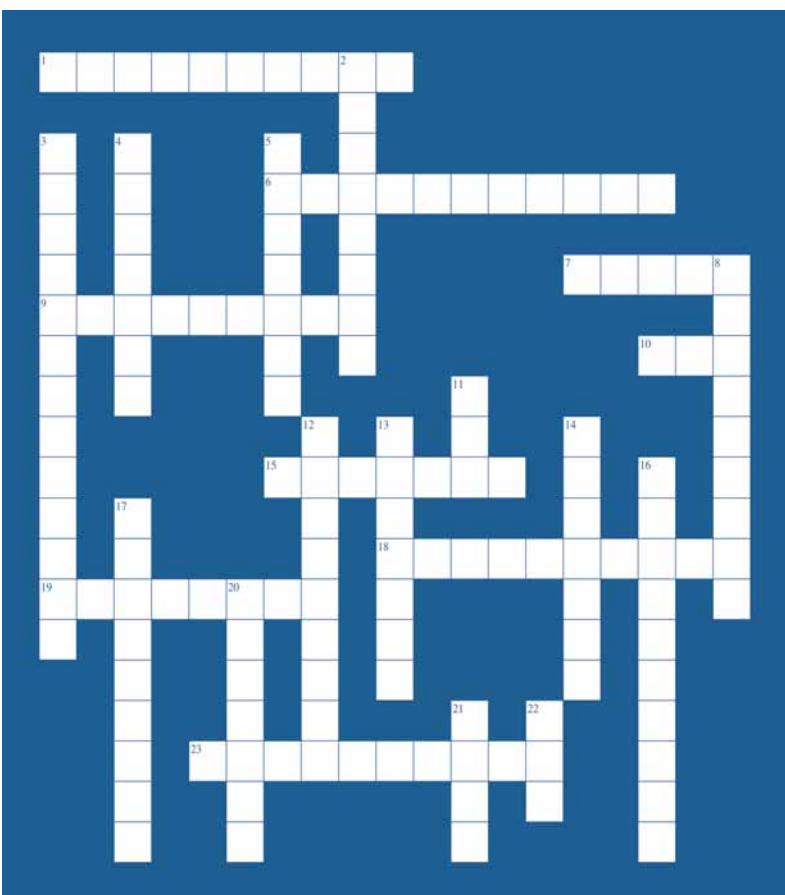
The boat on display at the fair was *Vega 2* and it is in immaculate condition – at 50 years old she is aging gracefully and still has the original sail. Talking with its Thai guardian, he explained the provenance in detail and what

was most surprising was that this was the first time in over 20 years *Vega 2* has been displayed to the public. *Vega 2* was never sailed after that gold-medal winning feat in 1967 and following a trip to Chiang Mai and subsequently Phuket more than 20 year ago, *Vega 2* has been kept behind closed doors ever since.

It was a true privilege to view this boat. The craftsmanship alone is impressive, but the pedigree and history is unmatched, I hazard a guess, anywhere in the world. Following *Vega 2*, His Majesty built his fourth and last OK dinghy and named her *Vega 3*, later changing the name to *Awake* because the King liked to work late, and more recently to *New*.

If you ever get the chance, take a look at the sail numbers on His Majesty's boats. Back when he built boats, all Thai sail numbers had TH as the prefix – two letters. Today it is THA. The numbers always add upto 9 – TH 18 (*Vega 1*), TH 27 (*Vega 2*). His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, also known as Rama IX, is the ninth monarch of the Chakri Dynasty.

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



Gazette Crossword

Across

- 01. Native scented flower
- 06. Clownfish
- 07. Jewel farmed from the Andaman sea
- 09. Phuket Town cabaret show venue
- 10. Phuket product of old
- 15. Bridge to mainland
- 18. Wet and dirty from the rain
- 19. Sanskrit epic (Thai)
- 23. American version of the Sony Walkman

Down

- 02. Loy Krathong month
- 03. Rama V
- 04. Native illegal plant stimulant
- 05. Phuket Town hospital
- 08. Decsive election result
- 11. Thai land measure
- 12. Ancient European civilization
- 13. The Scottish play
- 14. The Big Mango
- 16. Mountain dwellers up north
- 17. Stage name of actor James Eugene
- 20. Pricey shellfish dish
- 21. Thai scribe Sunthorn Phu
- 22. Cash machine

Solution on opposite page.



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The cost of cutting trees

Trees give life, yet we raze them without a second thought



I LIVE in Saiyuan in the south of Phuket. Every day for years and years, I have taken pleasure from the presence of a magnificent forest tree, probably a dipterocarp, high above the road and providing an arching green canopy to drive under on my way home. Inspiring... but in the blink of an eye, this tree, maybe 100 years old, has gone. All that remains is an ugly stump.

Why? I asked my Thai partner. "Oh! It was in the way. The man wanted to extend his house". For her, it represents progress. For me, mindless destruction.

Of course, we witness such acts everywhere in Phuket. The island has lost almost all of its original deciduous forest, much to encroachment. Most undeveloped land is now either scrubland, or rubber and palm oil plantations. Worse, every condominium, every shop house, every car park, obliterates a patch of greenery, along with its trees.

Almost nothing is ever done to replace this forfeiture.

Concrete jungles give nothing remotely beneficial to our environment. In fact quite the reverse: they spew out waste at an alarming rate. On the other hand, trees and the



Sun shines through a tree at Fort Canning Park in Singapore. An average sized tree produces enough oxygen to keep a family of four breathing for a year. Photo: Thomas Timlen

oceans are the lungs of the earth. An average sized tree produces enough oxygen to keep a family of four breathing for a year. By planting more trees worldwide, say 20 million, we would gain 260 more million tons of life-enhancing oxygen. At the same time, these trees would store (as carbon) 10 million tons of harmful CO₂ – the greenhouse gas primarily responsible for climate change.

Furthermore, trees reduce run-off by holding soil in place. Like a giant sponge, the root systems retain rain water and then slowly release it through

their leaves.

That the world is experiencing far more disasters due to landslides is in large measure due to de-forestation, to human destruction of forest and consequent loss of its capacity to bind the earth and soak up moisture. When properties are built on denuded hillsides the potential threat of mudslides is heightened.

Furthermore, some developers in Phuket would do well to realize that trees increase the value of property. Villas or apartments surrounded by trees sell for considerably more than properties with none. And

people are more willing to relax or shop where there are inviting areas of greenery. Singapore, much more developed than similarly sized Phuket, has impressive avenues of trees everywhere. Not only more appealing, but cooler than our own urban sprawl. Research shows that trees can cool a city by up to 10 ° F.

It is not just trees. We are all doing our bit when we plant gardens. Shrubs also provide shelter, food and nesting habitats for the considerable range of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects that still live in Phuket.

My own garden is home to squirrels, coucals (of the cuckoo family), sunbirds, bul-buls, and spider eaters, as well as skinks and agamid lizards. Butterflies abound too. Nothing unusual in that. If you provide the right natural conditions, Mother Nature will respond positively.

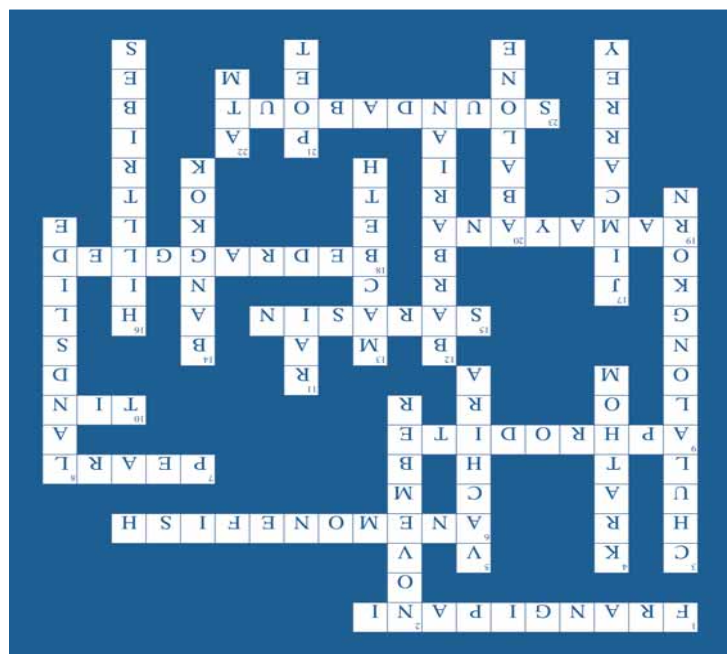
Happily, there are worthwhile global initiatives making a difference. Since 2010, 'The Canopy Project' has planted more than 1.5 million trees in 21 countries, focusing mostly on areas in need of re-forestation. The benefits are not just aesthetic. The UN estimates, that for every dollar spent on re-forestation, US\$2.50 is generated in local downstream income and benefits.

So far there is no Canopy Project in Thailand but at least Phuket is increasingly alert to the needs of a tropical island surrounded by eroding seas. The planting of mangroves is a welcome sign, along with a growing public concern for our beach-side casuarina trees, but much more needs to be done at a grass-roots level.

If you have gardening or environmental concerns, contact Patrick at drpaccampbell@gmail.com. Many of his creative and academic publications can be found at his website: [GreenGaloshes Wordpress](http://GreenGaloshes.wordpress.com).

Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



The British love affair with Phuket



By The Book

Kevin Hodges

FOR a long time, the British have been coming to Phuket on vacation, for their retirement, and to setup businesses here. For a lot of Brits coming aboard, Phuket is an attractive location for a holiday home or investment property, and UK buyers have established themselves as a permanent segment of the island's property market.

For the past 10 years, the baht has been strengthening against the British Pound. This, coupled with the increase in property values in Thailand, is making property purchases and living expenses more expensive for those tied to the pound sterling.

Following the June referendum in the UK, where the majority of voters voted to leave the EU – coined 'Brexit' by pundits – the British pound has weakened against the Thai baht to its lowest level in 10 years. This will of course mean fewer buyers from the UK for Thai properties and services, however, as the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining.

Here, that silver lining looks brightest for British sellers looking to repatriate



Even with under-performing property rentals, Thailand is still one of the top performing markets in Asia.

Photo: Globalpropertyguide.com

their proceeds back to the UK.

For a lot of British owners who bought their properties back in 2008 or earlier, they will have brought over sterling at an exchange rate around 60 baht to the pound. As of today, the exchange rate is closer to 45 baht per GBP, a difference of 25 per cent.

These owners are now able

to reduce their asking prices to stimulate a sale; They can sell their property for the same price they paid for it 10 years ago and they would make a 25 per cent gain on the exchange rate if they move their sales proceeds back into sterling.

For property investors and

The British pound has weakened against the Thai baht to its lowest level in 10 years

bargain hunters this has created an opportunity to purchase properties well under their current market value, just as we experienced with Russian home owners in Phuket about two years ago.

In the current global economic environment of low interest rates, there has been a clear flight of capital looking for higher yields. Thailand's property market, and particularly Phuket, provides attractive yields in the form of

rental incomes. With opportunities such as reduced selling prices from British owners, there is the potential to generate above-average returns when buying now.

The property market in Phuket remains soft, but there are reasons to be optimistic. We are seeing stronger demand and an increase in inquiries from buyers from the US, expats earning in US Dollars in the region, Hong Kong (whose currency is pegged to the USD), the Chinese mainland, the UAE and from Singapore.

The 'yes' vote in the Thai referendum will see the country return to a democracy, with elections due next year. This can only be positive for the property market, as more buyers will return once Thailand has an elected government.

We could well be seeing the bottom of the property market, and with tourist numbers to Thailand expected to hit 33 million this year, the country continues to attract new and returning potential investors.

For more information about this article contact Kevin Hodges, Siam Real Estate (SRE) Tel: 076-324042 Email: kevin@siamrealestate.com; www.siamrealestate.com

Bangkok's skies light up for nation's tallest building

BANGKOK'S skyline was brilliantly lit on August 25 at the grand opening of Thailand's tallest building 'MahaNakhon'.

The 'MahaNakhon Bangkok Rising the Night of Light' light show drew a large number of spectators from across the city. US pop star Pharrel Williams was also in Bangkok for the launch. His grocery store 'Williams Family Kitchen' is housed inside the building.

MahaNakhon is a luxury mixed-use 77-floor skyscraper on Sathorn Road. At 314.2 meters, it is now Thailand's tallest building.

The developer, Pace Development, aims to turn the building into a new Bangkok landmark with contemporary architecture and urban design. MahaNakhon houses mul-



MahaNakhon is a 77-floor skyscraper on Sathorn Road. At 314.2 meters, it is now Thailand's tallest building. Photo: The Nation

iple levels of restaurants, cafes and shops. It also boasts luxury residences by The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company in collaboration with Marriott International and

renowned hotelier Ian Schrager. The top floors also house a multi-level rooftop terrace bar and observation deck.

– The Nation

Koh Kaew construction comes to a grinding halt

CONSTRUCTION of a retaining wall on Soi Koh Kaew 33, behind the Isuzu showroom off Thepkrasattri Road, was delayed due to a mistake during the setting of a pillar.

Backhoes and other construction equipment has been left behind while the project has come to a temporary halt.

The project is jointly funded by the Muang District government, the Phuket Public Works and Town & Country Planning office and the local *OrBorTor*. Officials have said they will urge the construction company to quickly solve the problem, but expect the project to run behind schedule.

The 8.4-million-baht project covers an area of about 500 meters to build a three-meter-high retaining wall. The company originally said that construction would be completed by October.

"The reason construction is currently at a halt is that the engineer is in Bangkok to re-design the plans, as they made a mistake while working on setting the pillars," said Muang District chief Administrative Officer (Palad) Choochip Bamroong.

"We are working hard to finish as soon as possible, but cannot say exactly how long the delay will be. The construction company will be fined for the delay," he added.

Mr Choochip said he will call for a meeting to hasten the process.

"We are sorry for any inconvenience caused to commuters and advise everyone to drive with caution. I will urge the company to clear out the road and make it more manageable to drive on," said Mr Choochip.

– Kongleaphy Keam

CPN sinks B20bn into new Central Phuket

CENTRAL Pattana PCL (CPN) recently confirmed long-awaited expansion plans for Phuket, announcing a 20 billion baht investment to build a second mega complex opposite Central Festival Phuket shopping mall.

The new world class mega project in Phuket, to be named Central Phuket, is part of a 60 billion baht plan to develop and renovate 10 shopping centers nationwide between now and 2018, said CPN president and CEO Preecha Ekkunagul said at a Bangkok press conference on August 25.

“We aim to strengthen the country’s economy and develop innovative lifestyle and tourism hubs, renovating five existing locations and building five more from scratch over the next two years,” said Mr Preecha.

The new Central Phuket is a flagship CPN project in the heat of Phuket comprising two shopping centers catering to luxury and casual lifestyles, targeting Thais and tourists alike.

A premium hotel, world-class convention center are



CPN in funnelling B20bn into developing its shopping and lifestyle destination in Phuket. Plans for the new Central Phuket include a ‘Mystic Forest’ green zone, a walk-through aquarium and a modern floating market. Image: CPN

among the attractions delivering ‘special experiences beyond the imagination’ for Phuket shoppers.

The new additions to Phuket’s shopping and lifestyle scene include a Mystic Forest, a walk-through aquarium and a floating market.

The Mystic Forest is a

futuristic wonderland green zone combining advanced technology with Thai culture and a range of adventurous activities for visitors, said Mr Preecha.

Aquaria, a joint venture with Malaysia, is an underwater world and gardens that the developers say will be the

largest ‘aquascape’ in the world. The ‘world-class’ entertainment zone is to feature an exhibition of aquatic plants, it was revealed at the Bangkok press conference.

“The third section, ‘Tales of Thailand’, is to be a modern floating market selling products from the different

regions of Thailand, and is expected to be a draw card for tourists to experience the Thai way of life,” said the CEO.

Mr Preecha promised that Phuket’s new landmark shopping and lifestyle destination will be opened by the end of 2017.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*




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The company known as Canvas Creations Co Ltd, trading at Phuket Boat Lagoon, ID number 08355 43002257, will be transferred to new owners on 1st September 2016. All creditors of the company are hereby notified to render in their demands to the undersigned prior to the transfer date, and all persons indebted to the company are required to make immediate payment. Any claim submitted after the notice date will not be accepted by the new owners. Muzza Nordstrand, Managing Director. Tel: 081-370 1600. Email: canvasphuket@gmail.com

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Making big dreams come true

By Nick Davies

PHUKET native Montree Todtan is the CEO of the soon to open Phuket Elephant Sanctuary in Pa Khlok. The sanctuary is a dedicated last home for Asian elephants rescued and rehabilitated from life in the captive elephant tourism industry.

Now 46 years old, Mr Montree grew up in Phuket and after completing high school went to Ramkhamheang University for three years before becoming a salesman. His sales work took him around the country and the region to neighboring countries but when the economic crash came it was time to return home and do something different.

He opened the At Hill Elephant Camp on Nakkerd Hill (Big Buddha Hill), offering elephant trekking to tourists, but things took a new course when he wanted to retire one of the elephants named Tub Tim working at the camp in 2014. That's when he met Lek Chailert, who operates the Elephant Nature Park in Chiang

Mai under the Save Elephant Foundation.

Mr Montree spent time at the sanctuary in Chiang Mai, learning more about how to look after aging elephants, and the pair teamed up.

"Elephants are just like people. They sense who has good or bad intentions. Watching the elephants at the sanctuary has given me

much more insight into the real lives of elephants than when I was operating the trekking camp," says Mr Montree.

Although elephants don't work in the logging industry anymore, they still work very hard and can develop health problems over the years that turn into painful disabilities. I wanted to do give these hard-working elephants a retirement home where they could live out the rest of their lives in peace, just doing what elephants do,

says Mr Montree.

He says watching the sanctuary's first two elephants familiarize themselves with their new surroundings and with each other is a delight.

"I could see that they were not sure what to make of their new home. At first they were hesitant and seemed to be worried that at any moment they would be called back to work by their keepers, but after a few weeks, they seemed to

realize that they were now retired and were free to enjoy their new surroundings. It's wonderful to watch them enjoying each other's company and the natural surroundings of the sanctuary."

Elephants usually work until they are about 60 years old and can live as long as 100 years but taking an elephant to the sanctuary depends primarily on their health he said.

"We buy elephants that are ready for retirement from their

existing owner. Most of the funding to look after the elephants comes from donors and through the Save Elephant Foundation as well as the EARS Asia foundation.

Last weekend we were overjoyed to welcome our very first elephants Madee and Kannika to their new home with us here at the Phuket Elephant Sanctuary.

"I'm very proud to free them today.

This is my dream. My dream for a long time... We look forward to making many more dreams come true for the elephants and all of us here at Phuket Elephant Sanctuary."

It's wonderful to watch them [the elephants] enjoying each other's company and the natural surroundings of the sanctuary

- Montree Todtan
CEO of Phuket Elephant



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