

Phuket Gazette

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'OUR ANCESTORS SPARED THEM SOME LAND, NOW THEY USE MOB RULE AGAINST US'

DEAL DOOMED

Rawai's sea gypsies march on university during PM's visit

By Chutharat Plerin

HUNDREDS of Rawai sea gypsies and community activists marched to Phuket's Rajabhat University on September 16 to petition the prime minister during his visit to the campus.

Security personnel allowed only five representatives from the sea gypsy delegation into a university conference room to submit a letter addressed to Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha.

The gypsies had gathered at Rassada Municipality Office earlier that morning before marching toward the university, where PM Prayuth was meeting with Phuket's industry leaders, but were intercepted by authorities at midday.

The letter's submission came amidst PM Prayuth's one-day visit to the island, as he headlined the opening ceremonies of Phuket airport's international terminal, inaugurated 'Startup Thailand' and met with trade representatives at Rajabhat University.

Secretary-General Wilas Aroonsri accepted the letter on his behalf.

"We will collect background information on the sea gypsies and send it to the Prime Minister from the provincial offices before responding to the letter," Gen Wilas told the delegation.

The letter implored the Prime Minister to help resolve an ongoing land dispute between sea gypsies and Rawai developers, including Baron World Trade Co Ltd.

In their letter, the delegation asks PM Prayuth to check Baron's land documents, ratify a community *chanote* and set up a special committee to resolve disputes regarding Phuket's sea gypsy communities.

The decades-long disputes between the Rawai sea gypsies and developers in the island's southernmost municipality had



PM Prayuth Chan-o-cha (right) with Gov Chamroen Tipayapongtada. Photo:Chutharat Plerin

entered a new round of government-mediated negotiations in February, when Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada backed a developer-drafted plan to buy the land the gypsies currently reside on from the developers who allegedly own it.

However, Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda told the *Gazette* after PM Prayuth's speech at Rajabhat University that Gov Chamroen's plan would not move forward.

"The government cannot buy a piece of land for private purposes just because the Phuket Provincial Governor asks us to do it," General Anupong said. "It is against the law."

Gen Anupong's comments are important as Gov Chamroen reports to his superior, the Minister of Interior [sic].

The PM himself told members of the press during a question and answer session at the end of his visit that he was aware of the land dispute, but that his hands are tied according to the law.

"I accepted the letter and will see what we can do," PM Prayuth said. "At this stage, I cannot promise anything beyond what the justice system decides. What we can do is to prove who lawfully owns the land and how they obtained the title. We can only do what the law allows."

"The government tried to find them another piece of land, but they insisted on staying where they are, where their ancestors lived and where their traditional ceremonial sites are located," PM Prayuth said.

For their part, the developers in Rawai said they will wait until the provincial court comes to a decision.

"The sea gypsies know they are living on other people's property, but don't care because they have the support of a third party," Weerachai Tantiwattanawalop, who claims to own five rai of land currently occupied by sea gypsies, told the *Gazette* on September 20. "It is up to the..."

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Authorities crack down on 'zero-baht' tourism

SPORTS and Tourism ministries team up with Chinese tourism associations in order to bring deceptive practices by tourism companies to a halt.

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BUSINESS



Successful Bangkok-based startups urge Phuket to join the digital age.

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PROPERTY



Authorities raid villas on Coconut Island in land encroachment case.

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LIFE&STYLE



Free-divers making a splash as professional mermaids.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Australian man crashes near Muslim graves

AN AUSTRALIAN man died from severe head injuries on September 17, about two hours after he crashed his motorcycle into a roadside barrier in Kamala.

The victim, who was initially unidentified, was later named as Roger Frederick Younger, 37.

“Mr Younger was critically injured when he crashed his bike near the Muslim graveyard in Kamala,” said Capt Prasert Thongprom of Kamala Police.

“He was rushed to Patong Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.”

The Australian Embassy has been informed of the incident.

Witnesses reported that Mr Younger was speeding before the accident.

– Winai Sarot

Double motorcycle accidents mar weekend

TWO motorcyclists died in two separate mysterious accidents on Thepkrasattri Road in the early hours of September 18 – one a woman in her mid twenties, the other a man, also in his mid twenties.

Police responded to the first accident in Koh Kaew on the northbound lanes of the road at about 2:30am.

“We received a report that there had been a collision between a pick-up truck and a motorcycle, but there were no eyewitnesses and it was not clear how the accident had occurred,” Phuket City police chief Nucharee Longkaew told the *Gazette*.

Police found the bloody body of an unidentified woman at roadside.

“The victim was a female, about 25-30 years old. She was wearing a black top and blue jeans and was covered in blood. We found no identification on the body and there was a heavily damaged Honda Wave motorcycle at the scene. A pick-up truck with a damaged back

Vendors protest ahead of rumored Supercheap



Local vendors took to the streets of Rassada on September 13, following rumors that Supercheap plans to open a store in the area. About 40 vendors gathered in Soi King Kaew Utit at about 5:30pm. Village head Prasert Ruangdam told the *Gazette* that he had filed a complaint with the local ombudsman's office. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

window was parked there. The truck's owner was absent,” said Maj Nucharee.

Two hours later, Phuket City Police responded to a second collision on Thepkrasattri Road, this one in the southbound lanes in Bangku, near the underpass construction site.

Phuket City Police Captain Suchat Meelumpong said police responded to the Bangku accident at 4:30am to find the body of a man aged 25-30 years old in a pool of blood in the middle of the road. He was wearing brown shorts and a black T-shirt.

“No identification was found on the body, only some money and a phone,” said Capt Suchat.

Again, there were no eyewitnesses to give police an account of the incident. However, a damaged Suzuki motorcycle lay nearby – a length of metal construction wire tangled in the bike's undercarriage.

Rescue workers also spotted a chipped curbstone lying in the left hand lane, a few meters from where the bike and the body lay.

A Vachira Phuket Hospital spokesperson said that relatives of both victims had now come forward to identify the bodies.

– Winai Sarot

Abandoned baby found in Patong trash

KUSOLDHARM Foundation rescue workers removed a baby from a trash can in Patong in the early hours of the morning on September 17.

Power to the city was reportedly off, and the person who found the newborn told the rescue personnel that he didn't see the child at first.

“We were alerted to the presence of the baby by a person who was scrounging through the trash at about 1am,” said emergency medical responder Yotwaris Rittisirikul.

“She is very cute,” Mr Yotwaris said. “She was not even crying, just smiling at me. She was wrapped in a white blanket and looks like a healthy baby.”

Mr Yotwaris said the baby looked to be about about one or two weeks old.

“Her umbilical cord had already been removed. After we found her, we took her to Patong Hospital for a checkup. We hope police find the mother soon,” he said.

– Winai Sarot

Another worker falls to death from worksite

A BURMESE man reportedly fell to his death on the morning of September 15, while working on the 4th floor level of a building under construction in Patong.

The man was found dead by co-workers at about 10:30am.

“Mr Tee, 56, was found lying face down in a pool of blood below the spot where he had been working at the construction site on Soi Pisitkoranee 15,” said Patong police chief Teerasak Boonsang.

“He was working on a wooden scaffold platform, plastering a wall on the 4th floor of the building. He appears to have lost his balance and sustained fatal injuries to his head when he hit the ground. However, police are continuing investigations to confirm the circumstances surrounding the incident,” said Maj Teerasak.

Mr Tee's body was taken to Patong Hospital. He is at least the second worker to have died on the job this month.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Serial bike thieves nabbed after crash

TWO teenagers suspected of stealing a total of nine motorbikes in the past few months were arrested on September 18.

The young men – one a 14 year old, the other a 17 year old – were apprehended when Phuket City Police responded to a 3am report of an accident on Surin Road in Phuket Town and found that the 14 year old had been involved in the collision and the 17 year old had gone to help him. Both were questioned further at Phuket City Police Station.

“We had received a number of complaints concerning stolen motorbikes recently and had been on the lookout for the culprits,” said Phuket City Police Lt Naruebadin Pangleesen.

Police said the pair confessed to stealing nine motorbikes, six of which were in their possession at the time of arrest.

“They had already sold three of the stolen bikes,” said Col Naruebadin.

The six bikes in the teens' possession had been stolen from various locations including Patong, Wichit, Thepkrasattri Road, Samkong and Koh Kaew.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Vendors irate as floating market starts sinking

DOZENS of vendors from the Kathu Floating Market filed a complaint with the Kathu District Office on September 20 about a lack of customers and much lower income than they had been promised by the owners.

“Vendors said that they had been led to believe that the floating market would receive about 2,000-3,000 tourists a day, but the actual number is close to a hundred visitors,” said Kathu District Chief Sayan Chanachaiwong.

Vendors at the market are fined 3,000 baht a day if they don't open their stalls, and said they had previously filed a complaint with the project owner, PRA Phuket Solution Col Ltd, but nothing had been done so far.

“We will call the owner and investigate further in order to find the best solution for all concerned,” said Mr Sayan.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

Foreigner-targeting bus gang members caught

POLICE detained three men on September 14 whom they accused of robbing a Belgian tourist aboard a Phuket-bound bus.

Peter De Balabander boarded the bus in Surat Thani and said he had asked bus staff to load his bags, but after arriving at Khao Sok National Park in Surat Thani and hailing a taxi to his rented bungalow, he realized that he couldn't find his wallet.

Mr Balabander told Banroong Chanbamrong, his taxi driver, about his predicament. Together, they followed the bus until it reached Baan Hin Dan checkpoint in Takuapa District, Phang Nga.

"We stopped the bus at the police control checkpoint in Phang Nga," said Lt Col Chotipong Ketsarin of Taladyai Police. "Mr Balabander had



An officer searches the bus. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

asked us for help to locate his wallet."

Col Chotipong told the *Gazette* that police officers asked the bus staff if they had found a wallet, but were told they had not found anything. Police then proceeded to search the bus.

"We found *krathom* leaves hidden on a shelf above the bus

driver," Col Chotipong said. "Also, another man sitting close to the driver looked suspicious."

Police told the two men to exit the bus and frisked them. The driver had 2,000 baht in his pockets and police found about 80 Euros stuffed into his seat.

"Our investigation discovered 72 *krathom* leaves, 4,000 baht and Euros valued at about 3,040 baht," he added. "Mr Balabander's wallet was also recovered."

Three men, including the driver, were arrested. Police reported that the men confessed to targeting foreign tourists along the Phuket-Surat Thani route.

Police charged Sucha Koa-saard, Samat Chimplee and Somchai Tohmad with possession of a category 5 drug and theft.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Sea gypsies submit letter



Sea gypsies intercepted by authorities. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

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...government to take care of the sea gypsies."

Mr Weerachai, who was among the land owners who drafted the proposal Gov Chamroen submitted to the Ministry of Interior, said developers wanted to clean up the area and turn it into a tourist attraction.

"For example, tourists visiting Promthep Cape could stop there if the government decided to develop it," Mr Weerachai said. "We get that government cannot just buy private land for individuals, but developing the area is a great idea because, if you take a look at it now, the whole place is filthy."

Mr Weerachai said that on September 23, authorities were expected to demolish one of the sea gypsies houses, as it was found by a municipal court to be built on private land.

"The court ordered some of them to move out, but they just ignored the order. They know they live on our land. Our ancestors spared them some land but now they use mob rule against us," stated Mr Weerachai.

"It would not have gone this far if the sea gypsies were not supported by third parties, NGO and human right representatives," Mr Weerachai said.

"They know they live on other people's private property."

"We are willing to help solve the problem, but the sea gypsies must cooperate with us as well," PM Prayuth said.

"If the government decided to buy the land, we'd pack up and leave," Baron World Trade representative Chatree Madsatun said. "But it's okay that that's apparently not going to happen, because we have the correct documentation showing that we've purchased the land fairly and transparently. We know that the court will side with us."

Nirund Yangpan, who was one of the five Rawai sea gypsy representatives allowed to submit the letter to PM Prayuth, said that he and his villagers will stay right where they are.

"It doesn't matter whether the government buys the land or not," Mr Nirund said. "We have been living there for generations. We will not go anywhere. It is our home. We have nowhere else to go."

"We had the chance to submit our request to PM Prayuth and to ask the government to revoke the titles over our land and to pay for the land," said Mr Nirund.

"We know the titles were unlawfully issued and we can wait forever to see this be proven."

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Families to cash in on anti-noise spending

REPRESENTATIVES of more than 400 families in Baan Mak Prok gathered at Nurool Ebadayah Mosque to meet with airport officials on September 20, to discuss how the budget for noise reduction will be used.

Last week, Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith announced that Thailand's Cabinet had approved a 3 billion baht budget to spend on anti-noise pollution measures for the new international terminal at Phuket Airport, and to compensate nearby residents.

The budget will be utilized to reduce noise pollution in four Moo Baan near Phuket International Airport, namely Baan Mak Prok, Baan Mai Khao, Baan Laem Sai and Baan Bor Sai.

"The noise from the airport has been affecting our health, particularly our hearing, for several years, and we have lodged several complaints already," said village headman (Phu Yai Baan) Boonpaisarn Boonsob.

Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan and her team were also present at the meeting.

"First of all, please understand that the budget only covers those who have already constructed their houses in the area, and that construction has to have been finished before 2010," said Ms Monrudee.

"There are different types of compensation. Those who live in 'high risk areas, that is, areas where the noise levels which is above 40 decibels, can choose between selling the land or getting the money to improve their house," she said.

"Those who live in 30-40db areas will only receive money to improve their houses," she added.

"If you have a *chanote* for the land, you can submit your request for funds immediately. Our teams will come to observe and will try to have everything processed by October," said Ms Monrudee.

"Those who have land ownership documents other than *chanotes* have to wait for another meeting to be held on October 3."

After listening to the suggestions, about half of the 100 families from the high risk area Baan Mak Prok decided to sell their houses and land.

While there was general agreement on the suggestions, some families complained that the process was very slow, while others said that it was unfair to prioritize *chanotes*. Yet others suggested that officials should also offer to buy land without any construction on it.

- Chutharat Plerin

Brand new terminal, same old problems

LONG lines, delays, non-existent essential equipment, a lack of personnel and confused travellers have all marred the opening days of the Phuket International Airport's new terminal.

Phuket airport officials admitted the new terminal's immigration systems are not working, even after test flights from China and the terminal's official September 16 opening by Thailand's Prime Minister.

Somsak Pakdeerak, deputy director of the Phuket International Airport Administration Department, confirmed the delays with the *Gazette* on September 21.

Out of the 34 counters at the immigration departure area, only 13 had computers, the Phuket Airports of Thailand reported.

An airport Immigration officer, who spoke to the *Gazette* on the condition of anonymity, said that three of those computers are reserved for use by VIPs; crew members, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation personnel and the disabled.

"The computer and Internet system aren't stable either," the official said "That's caused huge delays in our traveller processing times."

The official said it would take up to three months until new computers arrived.



Passengers wait for immigration in the dimly lit terminal. Photo: Gazette file

"Hopefully, we should be getting about 20 more officers next week," he said.

Screens detailing departure and arrival information were offline as of press time. Many passengers in the international terminal's departure section, delayed by long immigration lines, are confused and often have no warning when their flight's gate changes.

The official told the *Gazette* that immigration at the new terminal is short-staffed.

"We would like to apologize for any inconvenience. We are not ignoring the problems," he said.

Mr Somsak declined to comment further. Airport director Monrudee Gettuphan could not be reached for comment.

- Chutharat Plerin

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Ultimatum, outrage over dolphin death



Fishing mazes off the Krabi coast. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

KRABI locals were outraged after a social media post showing a dolphin calf dying in an illegal coastal-fishing net system went viral on September 18.

A user on the social networking application 'Line' shared the photographs, taken in the Khao Khram sub-district's Tah Paree Bay the same day.

A Marine official confirmed that the baby dolphin, weighing about four kilograms, had been stuck in the trap for several days with its intestines ripped out.

Public outcry prompted Krabi Marine Chief Saen Srangam to issue a three-month ultimatum to the owners of the dozens of illegal maze-like nets throughout the bay, otherwise they would face harsh penalties.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Food vendor burdened by debt, found dead in home

A LOCAL Krabi resident walked into a blood bath on the morning of September 17 when he entered his room to find the body of his wife, who had asked to be left alone the night before.

Sudrak Khumsuk, 33, found 28-year-old Supranee Wangthanom with a gunshot wound to the head and a four-page note on the bed next to her. The note read that she had "made many mistakes and had disappointed her parents and loved ones". Police also found a handmade gun near her body.

"She spent the night of September 16 alone in the room, while I slept downstairs with our relatives," Mr Sudrak told Krabi Police officers. "At about 4am, we heard what sounded like firecrackers going off, but ignored it as our neighbors often set them off."

Mr Sudrak said his wife, who was a fruit and dessert seller at a Krabi Town fresh market, did not follow her daily morning routine of preparing items for sale, so he went up



Rescue workers wait outside the family's two-storey house. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

stairs to check on her.

"I pushed the door in and was shocked to see her covered in blood," Mr Sudrak told the *Gazette*. "I called the police as soon as I managed to pull myself together."

Mr Sudrak said he and Ms Supranee shared their two-storey townhouse with two of

their relatives. The relatives told police that she was depressed because she couldn't repay her debts.

"The family members told us that Ms Supranee was indebted to a loan shark," said Krabi City Police Captain Wipach Wongdet. "They also said that she was upset that the

rent money family members had given her had already been spent, most likely on gambling."

The *Gazette* was unable to confirm how much money Ms Supranee owed, while police said they would continue to investigate her death.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Monks, locals undertake road repairs with personal funds

MONKS and locals in Krabi took it upon themselves to finally fix a road that had remained damaged for over a decade.

The Abbot of Suwan Thararam Temple, Luang Phor Prathuan Jitseelo, led a team of nine monks and several locals in repairing the pot-holed road on September 14.

The monks financed the operation by diving into their own pockets as well using money from the temple's donation box, that amounted to a total of 30,000 baht.

It took them one day to fix an 800-meter stretch of Baan Khao Tang Road in the Krabi Noi sub-district.

"The road was riddled with potholes and a number of motorbike accidents have occurred on it – we couldn't stand its condition anymore," said Abbot Prathuan.

"We had been asking local officials to fix the road for



The Abbot of Suwan Thararam Temple led a team of nine monks and locals in repairing the pot-holed road. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

about 10 years but to no avail."

"Now that we have repaired it, it's much safer for students, farmers and locals," he said.

The director of the engineering division of the Krabi Noi Municipality, Suthep Buakaew, said his team had been planning to fix the road for quite a long time, but had been waiting for

the rain to stop.

"We had already purchased the asphalt for the repairs but the rain just wouldn't stop," said Mr Suthep.

"We are, however, truly appreciative of the monks' initiative and will take care of the rest of the road as soon as possible."

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

Self-taught snake catcher nabs 35-kilogram cobra

A FIVE meter long king cobra discovered by an 11-year-old girl was caught by a Koh Lanta man on September 16.

Worawut Longasun says he trained himself to capture snakes by watching videos on television and YouTube.

The snake was found in the storage area of Aree Wansuk's house by her daughter, who spotted the reptile's tail while playing with her friends nearby.

"My daughter ran up to me and insisted that she saw a black snake in the storage area," said Ms Aree.

"I didn't know what kind of snake it was, so I called on the village headman for help. He then notified Mr Worawut, our village's snake catcher."

Mr Worawut, cheered on by a crowd of villagers, captured the snake within ten minutes and released it in a forest about a kilometer away.

"I think it lives about 50 meters from Ms Aree's house in the Thung Ngiw Hills and may have slithered out in



Mr Worawut says he has caught more than 20 snakes this year. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

search of food. We took measurements – it was about five meters long and weighed 35 kilograms," said Mr Worawut.

Mr Worawut also caught a 30-kg king cobra in March.

"We have found a lot of snakes during the monsoon season. I have caught more than 20 snakes this year alone. Even though it's dangerous, I'm glad to be of service to help my fellow villagers," he added.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

27 killed in Ayutthaya boat collision

AT LEAST 27 people died in a boat accident in Ayutthaya, while 19 were injured and dozens are missing, as an overloaded boat rammed into pole on September 18.

The boat, that was carrying Muslims back from a local mosque, capsized in the Chao Phraya River.

The accident took place at about 4pm in Ayutthaya province, when the overcrowded boat smashed into a pole in front of the Sanam Chai Temple after avoiding a collision with a large cargo boat.

The vessel, designed to carry 50 passengers, reportedly had more than 150 passengers on board at the time of the accident, according to some estimates.

“Many passengers tried to jump out of the boat and scramble towards the shore, which was about three to five meters away,” Annop Kudephan, a 50-year-old survivor, recounted.

All the passengers had attended an annual Muslim ritual at the Takia Yokin Mosque in Ayutthaya earlier in the day and were reportedly on their way back to Kwan Market in Nonthaburi province when their boat capsized.

Rescue workers rushed to help passengers. Among the deceased was a three-year-old boy.

Experts raise water scarcity concerns

WHILE there is enough water available, resources have to be managed very carefully, as water experts warned last week that mismanagement could result in serious problems.

Sucharit Koontanakulvong, head of water resources engineering at Chulalongkorn University, pointed out that even though the water level in reservoirs looks positive, the authorities should be careful as the current level of water in dams was still quite low.

The Bhumibol Dam, one of the country's major reservoirs, is just about 38 per cent full. Other key dams namely Sirikit, Pasak Jolasid and Kwai Noi, are also less than half full.

“As predicted there will be



more rain throughout September and some places can be hit by flash floods. However, from October onwards, the precipitation will fall and we will enter the dry season,” Mr Sucharit said.

B500mn lost as fire consumes two factories

A MAJOR blaze destroyed two paint-making factories in Samut Prakan province on the morning of September 17, resulting in four injuries and an estimated damage bill of more than 500 million baht.

The fire at UR Chemical Ltd in Bang Phli district was reported to authorities early in the morning, said Captain Phongnarin Nontanok, deputy inspector of Bang Phli Police Station, with 20 fire trucks sent to the scene.

Phongnarin said when firefighters arrived at the scene the blaze had already engulfed a three-storey factory and a nearby warehouse and there were several explosions inside the facility.

The factory stored many flammable materials including fuel oil, turpentine, resin oil, and methanol, which were stored in more than 300 200-liter barrels and 30 300,000-liter tanks.

The materials exploded, causing a large part of the factory to collapse.

Four people were injured



due to falling debris and they were treated at Bang Phli Hospital.

The fire also spread to another paint factory, which also sustained major damage.

Firefighters took more than five hours to bring the fire under control.

All the machines in both factories were destroyed. Security personnel at the facility said the fire was started by faulty machine during a break, so there were no workers inside the factories at the time.

They said the fire spread very quickly due to the flammable materials.

Police inquire DSI's failure to mention photos

POLICE have questioned the intention of two Department of Special Investigation (DSI) officials in not telling them from the outset about photos they took of a detainee who died in suspicious circumstances on August 30.

Tawatchai Anukul, 66, a suspect in an illegal land-deeds case, died while in the custody of the DSI.

DSI officials have said

Tawatchai hanged himself and they called for medical assistance from a nearby hospital.

“We wonder why they didn't tell us during the first interrogation that they took photos of the medical help [being administered],” Thung Song Hong Police Station's superintendent Pol Colonel Mana Pohchuay said on September 16.

The DSI officials in question are security guard Chayapol Wancha-aim and Pol Lt Colonel Pairoj Laorattananurak, deputy head of the DSI detainee-control division.

The photos were later submitted to police by the DSI. Chayapol and Pairoj were interrogated separately.

Army chopper crashes in Narathiwat, injures four

AN ENGINE malfunction is believed to have caused an

Army helicopter to crash in Narathiwat's Muang District on September 16, with the four people on board escaping before the machine exploded.

The two pilots and two mechanics on board were injured.

Colonel Yutthanam Petchmuang, deputy spokesman for the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4's Front Command, said the crash was still being investigated.

The accident happened at about 8:30am at the helicopter landing pad at the Narathiwat Taskforce in Tambon Khok Khian, with the helicopter spinning out of control when it was approaching to land to pick up passengers, Yutthanam said.

On board were Major Wirat Susamran, Lieutenant Sathaporn Chaiket, Master Sergeant 1st Class Thanin Mahamane and Master Sergeant 1st Class Uthai Tampeek.

It took firefighters with three fire engines about an hour to extinguish the fire.

The helicopter departed Thaksin Ratchaniwet Palace to the Narathiwat Taskforce and had been scheduled to take 46th Ranger Regiment Commander Colonel Pisit Charnlekha and his team on an inspection trip to Narathiwat's Chanee district.

Young woman arrested for trafficking

AUTHORITIES nabbed a 20-year-old woman on September 18 for allegedly procuring minors for the sex trade.

The suspect, identified only as Aphinya, was arrested at a motel in Nakhon Pathom as part of an undercover operation.

Police contacted Aphinya on Facebook, after receiving reports that she had been pimping via social media.

The suspect had brought two girls, aged 17 and 14, to the motel.

Ms Aphinya confessed to the crime and was charged with human trafficking.



Phuket Gazette

Boosting startups

THE new Ministry of Digital Economy and Society shows the correct spirit in supporting and promoting startup businesses through its recent Startup Thailand 2016 activities here in Phuket. Our island has enormous potential as a hub for digital technology outfits, but fostering success for local startups in competitive international markets will require a much more 'international outlook' than many of the supporting agencies involved have at present.

With its large population of expatriates, a new generation of local youths with strong English-language, computer and science skills are now entering the workforce. Many of these are graduates of Phuket's international schools, as well as schools with strong English language programs.

However, growing up on the island and being educated through high school here, many of these kids head off to study at universities abroad, never to return – although many would love to come back and work here.

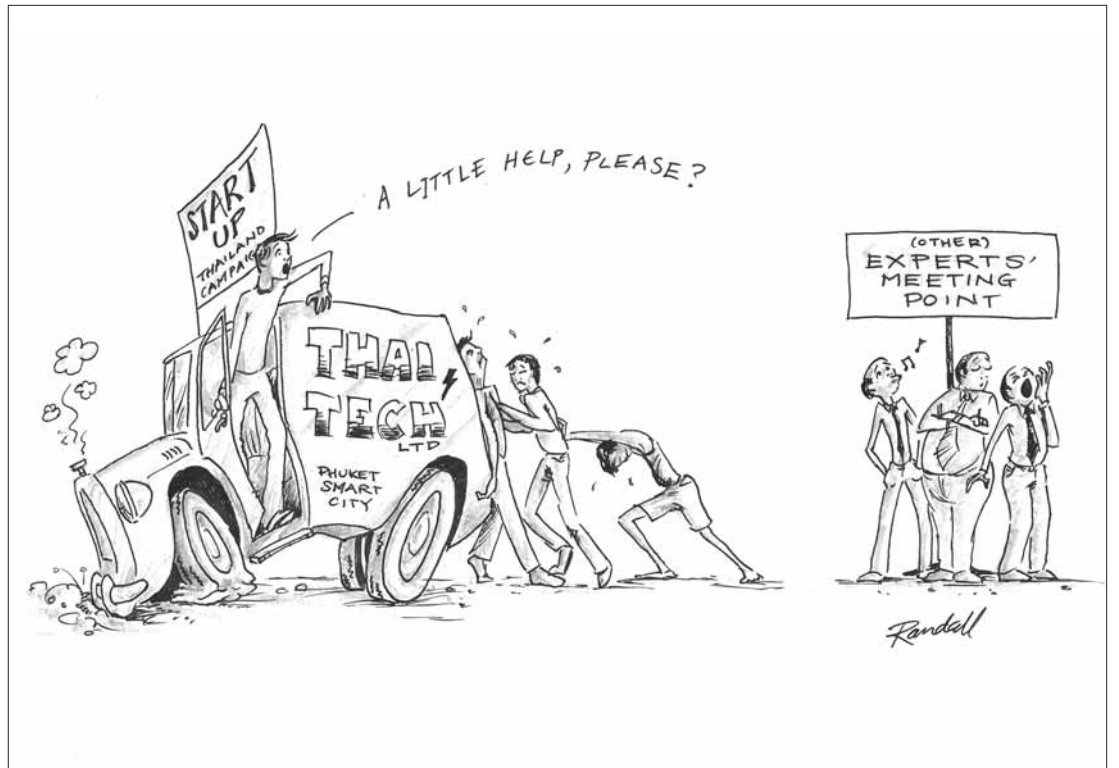
The problem for many young people who fall into this category is that their parents want better academic opportunities than are made available to them through the national disgrace that is the Thai public education system.

Only a very small percentage of local youths who graduate from the two universities on the island – Rajabhat Phuket and the Prince of Songkla University Phuket Campus – emerge with the language and computer skills required for success in international commerce. Those that do possess them are often self-taught, tutored in the private sector or have some other kind of outside support. Expat parents, who have spent a fortune educating their kids at private schools here and universities abroad, find that the only jobs available to their children locally are low-paying affairs in the tourism sector.

It currently costs over 2 million baht a year for parents to send a child to study at a top-notch university, such as the so-called Ivy League schools in the United States. This is far too expensive for all but the richest of the island families.

Coverage and promotion of recent events in Phuket reveal that organizers still have a long way to go. Almost all coverage of these events is in Thai.

To tap into Phuket's potential, the government need not focus on promotional campaigns, but rather on providing necessary infrastructure and reducing all of the regulatory and bureaucratic impediments that have kept so many promising young entrepreneurs from setting up business here.



Patrol cars and fines much needed

Re: Island View: Don't need a 12-lane highway, Sep 20

You hit the nail on the head. Excellent article. They need to put at least 50 highway patrol cars on the roads here and introduce a points system with hefty fines and jack up insurance rates of offenders.

You literally have to kill someone on the roads here to get a careless driving ticket. A 12 lane highway will only increase the body count, they will only go faster on a straight road.

*Paddy
Gazette forum*

Delay has been going on for some time

Re: PM's visit dashes sea gypsies' hopes for land dispute resolution, Sep 19

PM Prayuth said, "At this stage, I cannot promise anything beyond what the justice system decides. What we can do is to prove who lawfully owns the land and how they obtained the title."

True, but this delay has been going on for some time now and surely it is not that hard to do... unless other 'things' are at play.

*Hugh Jampton
Gazette forum*

Homestay promises to be interesting

Re: Community homestay fair to be held in Phuket Town, Sep 17

A few homestay experiences might be interesting and maybe

Letters to the Editor

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

some hands-on job experience.

A stay with a tuk-tuk driver would be interesting or a Taxi Mafia guy. It would be an experience of a lifetime doing either of those two.

Seriously, maybe a stay in a rubber plantation actually would be interesting. To stay on a Thai fishing boat would scare the life out of some.

*Lizardofoz
Gazette forum*

Need better health and safety care

Re: Burmese laborer in fatal fall at Patong building site, Sep 15

Was he wearing a climbing harness attached to a firm anchor point? I doubt it; there is no health and safety enforcement in Thailand.

*Shwe
Gazette forum*

Ten years is too long a waiting period

Re: Krabi monks cough up cash to repair road, Sep 15

Good try, Khun Suthep, must be very wet waiting 10 years for the rain to stop. Could have built an ark whilst waiting.

Sounds as though Khun Suthep has taken excuse lessons from an English builder.

*Tony Robinson
Gazette forum*

The mother knows her baby is missing

Re: Another baby trashed, this time in a Patong trash can, Sep 19

Hope they find the mother? No, I'm pretty sure the mother knew her child was in a trash can. Ridiculous.

*Sam Da Costa
Facebook*

Need annual budget for cleanliness

Re: Rendered images of Rajabhakti Park released, Sep 20

I hope they will set up a yearly budget to keep in order with cleanliness, painting, safety guards and so on... without forgetting restrooms and food courts for demanding tourists, Thais and foreigners alike.

*Seafarer Divers Charlie Phuket
Facebook*

Terrifying death toll in Phuket

Re: Australian crash victim succumbs to head injuries, Sep 19

The death toll this week has been horrifying. May he rest in peace.

*Cindy Auburn
Facebook*

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Farewell, Governor Chamroen

FIRST PERSON

IT HAS been a year since I took up the position of governor in my hometown. It has been a great year for me, and I have received immense support from both government and private sectors. I am thankful to everyone, as I could not have done it by myself.

If I have upset anyone during my tenure, whether intentionally or unintentionally, I apologize for that. However, please understand that everything I did was for the benefit of the people.

I have been back and forth to and from Phuket for several years. I started my career as a government officer here and also served as the vice governor from 2012-2014, before coming back to assume the position of governor in 2015.

One of my proudest achievements has been to return the beaches of Phuket back to the people. This was also one of the toughest tasks I have had to deal with. Some of the beaches were returned completely to their natural state, whereas at others we allowed some local vendors to earn a living. The prime objective here was to ensure that Phuketians got the maximum benefit out of it.

I trust the people of Phuket to continue following the 10 per cent beach rule. There are some pending beach matters that I cannot tend to in the few days I have left, so I will leave those for the new governor's attention.

The beach clearance was a huge accomplishment. I was working against many people, especially those whose revenues were affected by it. Some people are not satisfied with



Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada has been the Phuket governor for a year. He is now being transferred to take up his new position as the governor of Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

Here is his last letter to the island.

what we have accomplished, while others don't think it's that big a deal. Please be proud of the beautiful beaches you have – go out to see the beauty of Phuket and be proud, like I am.

SMART CITY

Another important project we initiated is the Phuket Smart City project. This will help make the economy stronger and ensure a bright future for the island. The innovation park at Saphan Hin is already operational. This is a platform for the new generation to learn about technology and utilize it for their benefit.

We connected with many other cities to gain knowledge about smart cities and pushed very hard to make this project a reality. We have just started, whereas other cities are far ahead of us. However, it's never too late to start, and in another year or two, we'll be able to see worldwide real-time footage of Patong Beach via CCTV. It's a great concept to merge smart cities and tourism.

CCTV CAMERAS

We plan to install CCTV cameras at the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint, so that we can scan every single car passing

through there. The next step will be to scan people's faces and install more CCTVs throughout the island, especially at the piers.

STARTUP THAILAND

The plans for Startup Thailand have been finalized and presented to the central government. The project will cost about 4.2 million baht, and I believe in the PM for getting it approved.

LIGHT RAIL

Conceptually, the project is ready. I strongly believe that it will become a reality with the support of the central government. Safety has always been our first priority, so we have revised the plan to ensure that it is so. Even though it costs billions of baht to add more safety features, we cannot afford to be cheap. If we can't get the best outcome, it's better not to do it at all.

NEW HIGHWAY

This will be Phuket's premium thoroughfare, and I am happy to have got the ball rolling on it. I wanted the designers to come up with a safe and dignified road. This will be a signa-

ture Phuket road, so if you come to Phuket, you will necessarily travel along this 22km road, with all the wires buried underground. It will cost up to 20 billion baht, including expropriation.

ILLEGAL TAXIS

Four years ago, this was a huge issue on the island and nobody would even talk about it. I pushed very hard to get rid of them and took the initiative to solve the issue. We managed to get more than 5,000 drivers legally registered in the system.

PROVINCIAL HALL

The Phuket Provincial Hall building was constructed in 1913. We built a new reinforced concrete structure and I was fortunate enough to have a chance to work there as the 46th governor of Phuket. This is the first reinforced concrete structure in Thailand. Some people protested against the construction of a new Provincial Hall, as the building is more than 100 years old. However, we needed a new and more suitable building and the new hall serves that purpose.

SEA GYPSIES

We have been trying our best to resolve the land dispute between sea gypsies and land developers, and have escalated the issue to the relevant departments to take care of the locals and see what is best for them. It is also important to provide them with a means of earning a living by means other than fishing, so they can lead a good, healthy life. I have done my job, and now the rest depends on the

central government and courts.

In conclusion, I can say that I have done everything in my power to push projects, expand sister cities, and anything else I could do for the benefit of Phuket. Sometimes, things were out of my power, so I asked the central government to take charge.

The truth is, all these mega projects costing hundreds of millions, are out of my control. Everything gets decided in Bangkok, but as the governor, I had to take the blame. I am thankful to everyone who registered their concerns on delayed projects, as it is their voices that helped speed things up.

I reported the progress of all our projects, as well as plans for future projects, to the Prime Minister when he visited the island on September 16. I had nothing to lose, so I took the one shot I had. I wanted to make my voice heard in front of the PM and all the ministers.

All the provincial plans are in place and I believe the new governor will carry on the work very well. He is an honest and capable man. I speak from my heart when I say that I am worried about the facilities here in Phuket.

I would like to see Phuketians, whether they were born here or have moved here for work, to love Phuket and take good care of the island. I also hope to see good cooperation between government and private sectors, to help the new governor move Phuket forward.

I cannot be here forever. It is the government's decision to move officers where they see fit. I do not mind working anywhere, as everything I do is intended for the benefit of my country. If anyone visits Nakhon Sri Thammarat, you are welcome to come see me in my office.

Words from the Wise

“Don't be dismayed by good byes. A farewell is necessary before you can meet again. And meeting again, after moments or lifetimes, is certain for those who are friends.”

– Richard Bach

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”

– Steve Jobs

Issues & Answers

Are there any changes in beach rules?

THE high season is starting soon in Phuket, so I was wondering if the 10 per cent beach rules are still applicable on Phuket beaches.

Are beach chairs allowed for the coming high season? Or are there going to be any new rules announced after the beach clearance campaigns?

Thank you in advance for a response ahead of time. I love beach chairs but I want to ensure that I'm following

the rules as well.

*Concerned Citizen
Phuket*

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

Submit your issue at:

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat replies:

Phuket's beach management system is still the same.

The 10 per cent beach zone is in use and is taken care of by the local authorities in each area. Please also note that we are not considering any changes to the rules in the near future.

There are no chairs allowed on the beach, but you can bring your own blanket and enjoy the beauty of Phuket's beaches.

Playing the watching and waiting game



Finance

By Don Freeman

WITH the Brexit fallout largely out of the way now, many stock market sector charts or indices are setting up nicely to move off their bases and move higher.

The S&P 500 index recently hit an all-time high but it has also largely moved sideways within a tight range since October 2014. In fact, this has been the longest historic period where the market has not exactly been in a clear bull market nor a clear bear market – more than a 20 per cent decline – but in a tight consolidation pattern, which reflects a period of indecision by investors.

The Dow Jones also currently sits at an all-time high. For the short term, I am watching for a consolidation and then for more buyers to step in. For the long term, the Dow Jones chart is showing a double bottom, which means there is plenty of room for more upside all the way to the 20,000 level.

The iShares MSCI Emerging Markets Index ETF (NYSEARCA: EEM) appears to be breaking out while the iShares MSCI ACWI ex-US Index Fund (NASDAQ: ACWX) has yet to do so. The SPDR STOXX Europe 50 ETF (NYSEARCA: FEU) has



Worldwide news continues to be negative, but markets seem to ignore much of it. Photo: Perpetual Tourist

been holding up – or at least not dropping below January/February lows – in spite of Brexit fears and continuous terrorist attacks. Even if you are not invested in global indices, it will still be important for your portfolio to have the rest of the world's markets eventually follow the US markets to higher levels.

The SPDR S&P Biotech ETF (NYSEARCA: XBI) is not going anywhere just yet. I'd like to see it blast past the 60 level before getting excited about a sector that tends to con-

tain the market's riskier stocks.

The SPDR S&P Biotech ETF (NYSEARCA: XBI) has become overbought on the latest US rally and investors will need to see whether any pullback turns into a sell off. Nevertheless, industrials doing better is a good sign that a bull market is still alive and that the global economy is not about to fall off a cliff.

Brexit may have triggered a final washout for the Financial Select Sector SPDR Fund (NYSEARCA: XLF), which is at a critical point on the techni-

cal charts. However, we still need to see buyers step in before declaring that financials have bounced back.

Just over a month ago, the iShares Dow Jones Transportation Average ETF (NYSEARCA: IYT) chart looked horrible, but then began showing signs of improvement. If the Dow and S&P 500 are going to rally, we need to see the transportation index break higher.

There are many stocks on my buy list that are acting well now, but many of these stocks

also have been overbought as Brexit fears faded. So I am waiting one or two weeks to see if we can get a consolidation or a pullback on their charts, because stocks will often experience pullbacks to their breakout levels, but then we want to see them push higher to confirm a change in trend.

Although news from around the world continues to be horrible, global markets continue to ignore much of this news. If global markets are going to begin trending up into a new bull market after a very volatile and choppy two years hiatus, then we will see confirmation in positive price action for key indices with leading stocks on my buy list moving higher. For those reasons, I will be watching China, emerging markets, US financials and the technology sectors for any signs of strength.

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

Thai garment exports tipped to drop further

THAI garment exports are expected to continue to decline with more Thai manufacturers expanding to neighboring countries to tap cheaper costs and better tariff benefits.

Vallop Vitanakorn, an adviser to the Thai Garment Manufacturers Association, said after expanding investments to Cambodia and Vietnam over the past four years, manufacturers were expected to generate US\$600 million in overseas sales this year.

Mr Vallop said that garment exports from Thailand were forecast to decline about 7 per cent to US\$2.55 billion but that was not an alarming development.

The estimated \$600 million in sales from overseas this year will be contributed from 33 apparel manufacturers operat-

ing in Cambodia and Vietnam. They had a combined initial investment capital of about 4 billion baht.

Mr Vallop said more garment enterprises would expand businesses to neighboring countries, with Myanmar a potential option if it had stable infrastructure development.

He said in the future export income from Thailand would not increase, but exports from Thai manufacturers operating overseas would.

Mr Vallop also said that garment manufacturers would still keep investments in Thailand, in part because the country had skilled labor.

Income from investments in neighboring countries is expected to be 40 per cent of the total garment exports next year.

– *The Nation*

The right place at the right time

Biz Chat

by Zohaib Sikander

THE third 'P' of the marketing mix is place. This is typically the process of moving the product from the seller to the buyer, or how and where consumers can buy a company's product or avail their services. This includes making the product available through multiple channels, such as brick and mortar stores, websites and home delivery.

In the past, retail products typically followed the indirect channel of distribution, that is, from manufacturers to distributors to retailers to consumers. The advent of social media and e-commerce has made this process easier and more convenient. While brick and mortar stores are still widely used, a wide variety of products and services are now also sold through websites or



Many businesses, such as Swedish clothing company H&M, choose to have a physical as well as an online presence. Photo: Nissy-KITAG

Facebook groups.

Some companies use e-channels to augment sales at physical outlets. For instance, Swedish multinational clothing store H&M has large, well-lit stores as well as a website where shoppers can order items. Some retailers, however, entirely operate as online businesses. A prime example of this would be amazon.com.

The type or types of 'place'

also depends on a business's brand image and overall strategy. High-end car manufacturers like BMW or Benz, for instance, would have luxurious, spacious displays, whereas a small neighborhood grocery store would be space efficient and stacked with shelves.

The most important aspect of placing a product or service is making it available at the right place and the right time.

Digi-biz pioneers in smart city push

By Chutharat Plerin

SEVERAL successful businesses that have leveraged digital services provided by nationwide mobile network service provider Dtac's 'Startup Accelerate' program threw their support behind the local launch of 'Startup Thailand' and 'Digital Thailand 2016', held to coincide with the Prime Minister's visit to Phuket on September 16.

Joining the event organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Information and Communication Technology were new successful startups such as Skootar – a professional messenger and courier service which can be booked through a mobile application; Claim Di – an insurance claim app for motorists; Take Me Tour – a company offering personal one-day tours with local experts with a focus on social media applications; and Freshket – a Bangkok-based online fresh food ordering and delivery service.

Representatives from Dtac and the start ups were on hand at the event to offer advice and inspire small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) by sharing know how and experience using digital technology and communication services to reach out to cus-



Representatives from Dtac Accelerate and successful start ups Skootar, Claim Di, Take Me Tour and Freshket joined the Startup Thailand event in Phuket on September 16. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

tomers through mobile applications.

Dtac Accelerate's Director of Business Innovation, Sompoat Chansomboon, said Phuket's smart city status and prominence as a tourism hub were a gold mine for startups focusing on customer services using digital technology.

"Phuket has a population of 378,364 registered residents, but in 2014 the number of tourists was 11.85 million.

About 70 per cent of those were international travellers, making Phuket a suitable location to attract foreigners with digital technology expertise to invest in or establish a parent company," he said.

"As well as being a tourism hub, Phuket is one of the nine 'super clusters' of future industries using advanced technologies to strengthen business environments in core industry sectors," Mr

Sompoat added.

According to statistics provided by the National Legislative Assembly, there are at least 500 startups in Thailand, of which 80 per cent are in Bangkok, 10 per cent are in Chiang Mai and 5 per cent are located in Phuket. The most attractive business sectors are tourism, hospitality, beauty and healthcare, agriculture, IT and digital content.

TAT bridges gap between tourists, locals

A THREE-DAY campaign was launched by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket on September 18 to promote local tourism on the island.

The campaign, named 'Phuket Baan Baan', was chaired by TAT Phuket director Anoma Wongyai.

"Our ultimate goal is to bring together tour agencies and hotels and educate them about tourist areas on the island," said Ms Anoma.

"We are targeting the culture and urban tourism of Old Phuket Town, Rawai, Bangrong, Pa Khlok, Thalang, Kamala, Bang Tao, Mai Khao and Tah Chat Chai."

The schedule comprised a meeting to showcase the uniqueness of each community on September 18. The second day saw a local trade seminar in Phuket Town. Tourism agencies from the private sector visited local areas on the last day.

The director said that this could help channel finances into the local community, and not just larger entrepreneurs. "Tourism agencies will be able to promote the local way of life," she added. "I do believe this will revive and encourage local tourism in the eye of tourists and they will surely love it."

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

TOT, CAT told to reform

DEPUTY Prime Minister Prajin Juntong, who is temporarily in charge of the new Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDE), said on September 20 that TOT and CAT Telecom should speed up their consolidation by merging three units and competing with each other in some areas.

The ministry will call in Thaicom to discuss reforming the satellite-service industry.

The MDE has to follow the Cabinet's resolution by bringing the Thaicom 7 and 8 satellites under the ministry's concession regime.

The ministry's plan to roll out free broadband internet access to 30,000 villages nationwide is expected to be delayed by three to four months, but the installation of the network should be completed by the end of next year, the deputy PM said.

On July 11, the State Enterprise Policy Commission instructed TOT and CAT to

complete the merger of their three core operations by hiring consultants separately for the merger plan within three months, setting up the consolidated companies within six months and transferring all assets to them within a year.

The commission, also known as the 'superboard', ordered them to merge their transmission and fibre-optics networks into the National Broadband Network Co with 15 billion baht of asset valuation.

Their internet gateway and submarine-cable networks will become the Neutral Gateway Network Co with 5 billion baht of asset valuation. Their internet data centers will become IDC Co. The MDE has a 7.76 billion baht budget for the next fiscal year – 50 per cent more than the ICT Ministry was allocated last year.

– The Nation



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Gecko Nursery School kids fill tummies instead of trash bags

Children from the Gecko Nursery School Phuket visited the new Phuket Marriott Resort & Spa in Nai Yang Beach on September 16, as part of an environmental awareness project jointly organized by the school and the resort in north Phuket. Rain dashed the organizers plans to get the kids and their parents cleaning the beach so they were instead treated to breakfast at the resort's lobby lounge.



RAINED OFF: Gecko Nursery School kids enjoy breakfast at the Marriott.

Floral farewell for Governor

Prominent Phuketians and the press threw a 'country dress' themed farewell party for Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada at the Phuket Merlin Hotel on September 19, ahead of his transfer to Nakornsrihammat on October 1.



Phuket Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan and Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada.



Sunday

TAPAS

This is what Sunday lunches are meant to be - fabulous, fresh unlimited Western and Asian tapas with friends and family crafted by the talented team of chefs at Banyan Tree Phuket.

Activities:
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Please call 076 372 400 to make your enquiries and bookings. | Email: fb-phuket@banyantree.com | banyantree.com



A party guest hands the governor a red rose as he croons on stage.



Phuket Provincial Public Relations Chief Busaya Jaipiam (left) and Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat (right) pose with a life-size cutout of the governor.

Events in Paradise

Confucius Institute puts on cultural performances

The Faculty of International Studies at Prince of Songkla University and the Confucius Institute of Phuket put on an afternoon of cultural performances for the ASEAN Extravaganza on September 7, at the university's Phuket Campus. The line up of performances representing ASEAN nations included a traditional costume fashion show and classical music from Thai, Chinese and Indonesian bands.



Students show off traditional Chinese fashions on the catwalk.

Soft drink giant funds million baht law faculty scholarship

Executives of Thailand's distributor for Coca-Cola recently joined Prince of Songkla University alumni to launch a million-baht scholarship. The program aims to help fund underprivileged students in getting a head start at learning law at the university.



(From L-R) Prince of Songkla University Hat Yai Campus Vice President Asst Prof Wasin Suwannarat; Faculty Of Law Dean Suphawatchara Malanond; Haad Thip PCL's CEO Phairoch Rattakul; COO Major General Patchara Rattakul, and Senior Vice President Pariya Chirabanhu.

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Patient record systems revamped

By Kongleaphy Keam

WITH the aim of utilizing IT and innovation to improve the healthcare sector and public healthcare services in particular, the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) linked hands with the National Electronic and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) to develop the Personal Health Record (PHR) system.

The system had initially been launched in government hospitals in five provinces including Phuket, Nakhon Nayok, Kanchanaburi, Phetchabun and Roi Et. Under the new system, doctors are able to access patient information from a data center, which will lead to better on-time treatment.

The Phuket Provincial Public Health Office (PPHO) has been using the system for a month already.

"We have received good feedback from both health officers and citizens so far. The system gives users a chance to check their health records online by themselves. At this stage, there are about 300 registered users," says PPHO IT officer Kittisak Chosiwongpipat.

"There are a total of 29 state health centers in Phuket that this system was introduced to. The users, including doctors, officers and patients, can use this system to access their



About 300 users have so far registered to use the system to check their records online. Photo: Pixabay

healthcare and treatment records at any state hospital for up to five years," he added.

Chularat Tanprasert, director of the Information, Communication and Computing Research Unit at NECTEC and leader of the PHR project, said that work had begun in 2013 in collaboration with SIPA to provide a service platform in the area of public health and medical personnel records for Thai citizens via an Android-based PHR mobile application.

Users can access the centrally stored data via computers, tablets and other

smart devices, she said, adding that the PHR system gave everyone the opportunity to securely access medical and personal health data.

The PHR system comprises four categories: health history, treatment, health check-up and behavior adjustment, and health analysis.

"The health history element provides personal health data, data from district health authorities, health security data, list of nearby healthcare providers, and information on health education and guidelines," says Ms Chularat.

The treatment element provides medical history, immunization history and appointment data. The health check-up and behavior-adjustment element will facilitate annual health checks and self-health assessment, and also provide data on the evolution of health conditions, exercise and dietary information.

Lastly, the health-analysis element provides total healthcare information for individuals, from the treatment of existing conditions to pro-active or preventative treatment.

Jirawan Boonperm, chair of

the executive board at SIPA, says the collaboration would enhance public healthcare service and improve the quality of public hospitals for all Thais.

"The software agency is negotiating with the Public Health Ministry to utilize the PHR system and provide it to public hospitals nationwide as the next step in the project," she says.

As a result, all state-hospital patients will be able to access their healthcare records and benefit from doctors being able to instantly access the latest information on them from the PHR system nationwide, adds Ms Jirawan.

Sarun Sumriddetchkajorn, executive director of NECTEC, says the PHR system would allow all Thais to access their healthcare information via a smart device, utilize it to become more pro-active about their health and protect themselves as much as possible from disease.

"Moreover, they will be able to get treatment from their doctor and hospital on time, as medical professionals will be able to access the pooled patient database built up from data supplied by hospitals that participate in the project," he says.

Any citizens interested in utilizing the facility are invited to get their username and password from PPHO or other health centers nearby.

Additional reporting by The Nation.

Homestay fair celebrates local culture, community

THE 'IMT-GT (Indonesia Malaysia Thailand - Growth Triangle) Homestay Fair 2016' was held from September 20-22 at Limelight Avenue in Phuket Town.

A community homestay is a means for travellers to visit countries, live within a community and participate in the local lifestyle.

The aim of the event was to develop local community and culture.

"The event included local tourism entrepreneurs from 14 southern provinces," said Tourism and Sports permanent secretary Pongpanu Svetarundra.

"Representatives from each community exchanged ideas in terms of their own homestay tourism activities."

Phuket vice governor



V/Gov Prajiad with event officials. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

Prajiad Aksornthammakul commented on the diverse tourism cultures of the southern provinces.

"The popular homestay communities in Koh Yao in Phang Nga, Baan Pitak in Chumphon, Boh Ked Look in Satun and Laemsak in Krabi are good examples of local cultures surviving and thriving in modern times," he told the *Gazette*.

- Sukawin Tanthavanich

Never too late to be healthy

WHILE the trend in sports and fitness is on the rise in Phuket, many people are still struggling to be fit. The *Gazette* caught up with Pruth Kulprasit, a first time triathlete in Phuket, to get some fitness tips for beginners.

"I first started cycling in order to lose weight. About a year and a half ago, I weighed 81kg and even felt uncomfortable bending down to tie my shoelaces," says Mr Pruth. "The first time I attempted to run, I couldn't make it further than 500 meters. But the key is to respect yourself and keep going."

Mr Pruth worked his way up, from cycling and running for weight loss, to running his first ever triathlon. He says that you don't need professional training to attempt it.

"I find that self-training works just as well if you set yourself achievable goals," he says.



Mr Pruth confesses that the first time he attempted to run, he couldn't make it past 500 meters. Photo: Pruth Kulprasit

He also says it's very important to set your own goals at your own pace.

"Don't compare yourself with other athletes. Most people push themselves very hard while training, but fall short when it's time to finish the race. Just do what you were doing during

practice, and if you finish the race, that's a victory in itself," he says.

"There is no such thing as perfect timing. The perfect time is when you get up, put on your shoes, and head out the door to begin working out."

- Sahar Aftab Paliwala

SE Asia's climbing capital

By Desmond Farang

CONTRARY to popular belief, Phuket is not the place to be for rock climbing.

The island's jungled interior peaks rise in an almost Appalachian profile, with relatively tame gradients to their summits. For all the international hula-balloo it receives, Phuket is almost a complete contrast to neighboring Krabi Province, whose limestone columns rise vertically out of impenetrable jungle and Phang Nga Bay to speckle the horizon.

Krabi's reputation as a world-class sport climbing and deep-water free soloing area – where climbers clamber up the cliff-face un-aided and fall back into the ocean's depths – has enjoyed proliferation through social media sites, climbing forums, magazines and by word-of-mouth, as belayers trade stories of southern Thailand's climbing heartland from Yosemite's granite valley to Tasmania's basalt columns.

Phuket's proximity to Krabi allows young – primarily western – climbing enthusiasts to work and live here, while escaping across Phang Nga Bay every weekend. But the pipe dream for Thailand's expat climbing community is to escape Phuket's real-world gravity altogether and become a full-time dirtbag at the base of one of Krabi's silvery peaks.

For them, Railay Bay and Tonsai wall are the Rome of Southeast Asia's climbing world, with every dirtbag ad-



Mr Lakos goes above and beyond the call of duty, posing with tourists for a selfie. Photo: Desmond Farang

venturer and teacher-turned-climber sweating their sins across the limestone walls and proselytizing the nirvanas to be achieved at their summits to friends back home.

In short, every climber dreams of the life Michael Lakos has made for himself.

The dirtbag-turned-entrepreneur helps run his brother-in-law's tour boat, which has afforded him the opportunity to memorize several of Railay Bay's crags over the past six years.

Before the most recent ban on deep-water free soloing in Krabi, the Kiwi's flat-roofed junk was perfect for bringing climbers near Phang Nga Bay's hot spots and giving them Icarus' wings. Now, the *Pla Luang* is primarily chartered

for swimming and sunset cruises, which it does exceptionally well, as evidenced by Krabi Sunset Cruises' five-star TripAdvisor rating.

In his spare time, Mr Lakos lives the life that few of us can only dream of. Ever a health-conscious man, Mr Lakos spends his time climbing the most beautiful routes in Thailand and cooking for himself in his rented bungalow just off of Railay's east bay.

Mr Lakos' sunset tours ply the waters of Phang Nga Bay nearly every afternoon, affording him the opportunity to lead-climb and set up routes for less capable climbers nearly every morning, including yours truly.

Mr Lakos and the *Pla Luang* are staples of Railay and Ao

Nang. As conspicuous as a farang is in Thailand, Mr Lakos is the closest thing I've seen to someone revelling in the dirtbag lifestyle and being loved by locals for it. Walking along the waterfront is a time-consuming activity for the thirty-something year-old, as he's caught up in conversations with everyone who would otherwise recognize the color of his skin and entreat him to lunch.

Mr Lakos and his ilk represent the best of the Krabi climbing community; from backflips off of his well-captained ship to leading sport climbing routes and lending out gear for fellow dirtbags, Michael and his crew are as much a part of the reputation of Railay Bay as it's sheer and well-bolted cliffs.

Phuket to participate in international cycling event

APEX850 charity ride between Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand will be held in Phuket on November 3. The 1500 kilometer race is an annual charity fund-raising bike ride organized by volunteer members of the Apex Clubs of Singapore and Penang.

Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada joined Paradej Pruksajirasakul, the event organizer of APEX 2016, to promote the event and recruit sponsors and riders. The money raised from sponsors will be donated toward educational causes in Thailand.

"This is the first year that Phuket has officially joined the ride," said Mr Paradej. "The race will start on October 30 and continue over seven days. The income will be donated to Yaowawit School & Lodge in Phang Nga, and nursing school scholarships at Vachira Phuket Hospital."

Governor Chamroen expressed his support for the event.

"Phuket has always welcomed these kinds of healthy activities, particularly charity events. We are ready to provide our support, especially in terms of ensuring safety and traffic assistance," he said.

For more information, visit the official Apex Facebook page at [facebook.com/OfficialApex850](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialApex850).

- Kongleaphy Keam

Thailand wins gold at Rio Paralympics 2016

VETERAN wheelchair racer Prawat Wahoram landed Thailand's first gold in Rio Paralympic Games on September 11, with a time of 11 minutes, 1.71 seconds in the men's 5,000 meter race.

The 35-year-old from Sa Kaew first burst into prominence after winning the men's wheelchair racing 5,000m gold at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, China. He has become one of the most accomplished Thai athletes with disabilities.

Mr Prawat has captured six gold medals at the paralympic games so far, comprising the men's wheelchair racing



Mr Prawat celebrates his victory. Photo: The Nation

10,000m and 5,000m at the 2000 Sydney Games, 4x100m and 4x400m relay events in Athens in 2004, 5,000m in Beijing and a sixth gold at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro games.

- The Nation

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Mermaids spotted off Phuket

Diving

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

THERE are real mermaids out there. It's a profession that some freedivers have found themselves slipping into.

Phuket-based PADI scuba diving instructor Kate Gray, who was crowned Miss Germany 2010, made a big splash here a couple of years ago as 'Mermaid Kat' and opened Phuket's Mermaid Kat Academy in 2012.

"I first started mermaiding as a hobby but it quickly became a job. Since opening the mermaid school I have been teaching mermaid courses in many different countries."

Mermaid Kat is now working in Australia and Germany as an underwater stunt model and entertainer, as well as running her mermaid school, which she touts as the first in the world, as well as a mermaid shop.

"In the past few years, the number of mermaids and mermen around the world has increased drastically. There are different kinds of merpeople out there, such as hobby mers, entertainers, kid's entertainers, mermaid trainers, underwater models, tail makers, environmentalists and many more," Mermaid Kat says. "For me, the freediving aspect is important. I'm a certified PADI freediving instructor, which helps me hold my breath



Mermaid Nora launched her career as a mermaid in Phuket. Photo: Richard Wonka (We Freedive)

for a long time while performing at underwater shows or during underwater shoots."

Though Mermaid Kat has gone international, Phuket waters are where she got her 'fluke' (mermaid's tail).

"Phuket has wonderful beaches and clear water. It was a great place to start my life as a real life mermaid," said Mermaid Kat.

Melanie Long, or Mermaid Melanie, is a Scottish freediver who has also made a splash as a mermaid in Phuket, but her love of the water has inspired her to pursue a degree in Marine Biology.

"Initially, I developed my freediving skills to enhance the

realistic image of a mermaid. From there it developed into a passion for the sport and became a challenge to constantly push my limits to see what my body is capable of," she says. She didn't win, but gave an outstanding performance as a freediver at the Phuket We Freedive Suunto series in 2014.

"Freediving skills help when mermaids are creating underwater images and videos. I have been hired as an underwater stunt double for TV commercials because of my skills. It really depends on which way you want to focus your mermaid career," she says.

Nora Galgoczy, or Mermaid Nora, launched her career as a

mermaid in Phuket and is now based in the Caribbean.

"I feel like I belong in the water. I honestly feel like I'm half fish, half human in a sense. People think of mermaids as something impossible, but I want to show others that there is no such thing as 'impossible' and you can really be what you want to be," says Nora.

Freediving has shown me that people are often unaware of their full potential and that it is really important to stop limiting ourselves, just because we don't always have the imagination.

"You have to be comfortable without breathing for a few minutes underwater. Otherwise, you don't look like you belong there.

I often dive down to a scuba diver, and at first, they are surprised that I'm there without a tank. They wave, interact and are ready to say 'bye' after a few seconds, thinking I have to go up for air. Then, I don't. You can see on their face that they are really confused when I stick around a little longer. The longer I stay and the more comfortable I look underwater, the closer they get to believing, just for a second, that I am a real mermaid."

Mermaid Nora has spent a couple years training and working with local freediving company *We Freedive*. Last month she completed both her Association Internationale pour le Développement de l'Apnée (AIDA) and PADI freediving instructor certifications.

"People freedive for different reasons: to self explore, to push limits, to express themselves, to compete, to look cool and so on. I'd call being a merperson an artsy division of recreational freediving in a monofin, with a strong focus on fun and self expression," she says.

"If we talk about freediving, people tend to pay attention to breath hold time or depth and distance covered. As a rule these numbers would be the result of relaxation, streamlining, proper techniques and so on. In mermaiding, the focus shifts away from such rules to appearance. It is a performance for an audience."

Gazette Crossword

Across

02. Local Phuket group fighting for land
05. Wind instrument
06. Sporting event to be held in Phuket in November
07. Potato (informal)
09. To bring about or initiate
11. Bond movie villain
16. Abrasive substance used to polish woodwork
18. Guard or lookout
19. Ballroom dance
20. Music played to please a lover

Down

01. A distinguished musician
03. To renounce, particularly a throne
04. A group of four people playing music together
08. Phuket tourist attraction in Chalong
10. Small ape, recently rediscovered in the Phuket wild
12. Not literal, metaphorical
13. Phuket nightclub entertainment
14. One of the official languages spoken in Kenya
15. Outgoing Phuket governor
17. Unhealthy or pale appearance

Solution on opposite page.



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Understanding the dowry dilemma

Law, Life, and Society
By Robert Virasin

A MISUNDERSTANDING of a Thai marriage custom nearly broke up the relationship between two of my clients.

I represented an American in his application for a fiancé visa for his Thai fiancé. After successfully obtaining the visa, the Thai fiancé requested 200,000 baht for her family before going to the United States to get married. The American became outraged and contacted me to cancel the visa for her.

My client did not understand the Thai concept of *sin sod* (dowry). *Sin sod* is a Thai tradition that means different things to different families. Traditionally, a *sin sod* represents the value that the future husband places on the daughter of a family. It is negotiated between the future husband and the future wife's parents. The amount provided by the future husband is a representation that he has the ability to financially support the daughter.

For poor families, the loss of a daughter is also the loss of someone who helps financially support the family. For women from wealthy and educated families, the *sin sod* represents the ability of the future husband to maintain the social status of their daughter.

Depending on the family's financial situation, the family may choose to return the *sin*



It is important for foreigners to understand the Thai concept of dowry before saying 'I do'. Photo: Gazette file

sod to the couple to start their new life together. For women with families in the rural parts of Thailand, there is generally no expectation that the *sin sod* will be returned after the marriage.

The tradition of *sin sod* is covered in Thai law. Section 1437 to 1447 of the Thai Civil and Commercial Code outlines the legal aspects of *sin sod* and *Khongman* (a gift from the man to his future wife to show that a marriage will take place). Under Thai law, an engagement is not

valid until the man gives or transfers property to the woman in anticipation of the marriage.

Under section 1438, an accepted engagement does not force the woman or the man to marry each other. There cannot be an agreement for one party to pay a penalty if the marriage does not occur. Once the engagement has taken place, there must be a reasonable explanation for why the marriage should not occur.

If the woman causes the marriage to not take place, the

man can legally request the return of the *Khongman* from the woman and *sin sod* from her family. If the man causes the marriage to not occur, then the woman can keep the *Khongman* and the family can keep the *sin sod*.

An engagement is not legally required for marriage. However, a broken engagement can lead to the filing of a lawsuit against the breaching party. The breaching party is liable to compensate the non-breaching party for compensation resulting from the bro-

ken engagement. The compensation can include injury to the non-breaching party's reputation, expenses incurred in anticipation of the marriage, and damages suffered to their earning expectation in anticipation of the marriage. There is no breach if one party has passed away.

Love is blind. When two people decide that they want to be together in marriage, the cultural and family differences are revealed. The relationship no longer concerns just two people, but makes family and society additional parties. It is important to avoid the misconception and emotional outbursts when presented with a cultural conflict during the meeting with a Thai fiancé's family.

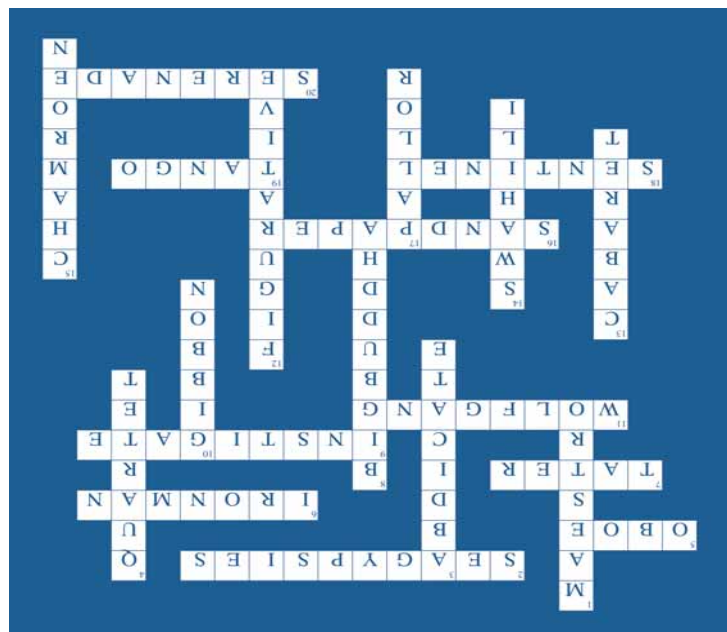
Misunderstanding Thai culture and customs can lead to the breakup of a relationship. My client's anger subsided when I informed him about the tradition of *sin sod*. He felt very sorry for his words and actions toward his fiancé and her family. He apologized, and the couple is currently in the United States about to get married.

This could have been avoided if he had learned about Thai traditions before deciding to get married.

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

Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



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Make outdoor furniture last longer

Property Inspector

By Mark K. Dietrich

OUTDOOR furniture can be a sizable investment even here in Thailand. In Phuket it's either the hot sun or rain adding to deterioration. With proper care and cleaning, you can enjoy your outdoor furniture for years.

New furniture comes with care instructions; however this is not always the case in Thailand. So here's a quick reference to help you maintain your outdoor furniture.

Outdoor furniture is available in many materials: wicker, wood or teak wood, fabric, aluminum, iron, steel and resin. Each material requires different maintenance methods.

Monthly cleaning and maintenance can keep the furniture looking good for longer and make your investment last longer too.

You can clean most furniture with soap and water. A pressure washer is useful for cleaning many types of outdoor furniture, but you must remember to use a low setting. A pressure washer is not recommended for most wood furniture.

Teak is the first choice for long lasting furniture and its durability makes it a favorite for patio and deck furniture.



If left alone, teak's golden brown color will change to a lustrous silver-grey within a year. Photo: Line Omev

Like many tropical hardwoods, teak is saturated with a hard waxy oil substance that protects the wood from bugs, disease, mold and the effects of weather and the sun. This protective oil greatly reduces the damaging effects of weather over the years but does not completely eliminate aging. If left alone, teak's golden brown color will change to a lustrous silver-grey within a year.

Many products are available that will preserve the beauty of your teak patio furniture but it's very important to pick the right one. Some products called 'teak oil' are suitable for indoor

teak furniture but may actually promote growth of mold. If you choose to treat your teak furniture, choose high-quality teak oil and make sure the product is intended for use on outdoor teak furniture.

In Thailand we have found it is best to apply the teak oil every three to six months depending how much sun your furniture receives. Follow these steps for oiling to get the best results:

Clean the furniture with soapy water, rinsing with a garden hose or a teak cleaner.

Ensure your teak furniture is completely dry before ap-

plying the oil, as moisture trapped within the wood may cause black mildew spots to appear after oiling. Your furniture may take up to a couple of days to dry out fully after cleaning or rain. For a smoother finish sand lightly with fine sand paper.

Ensure the teak is clean and free of dust. For outdoor furniture use high quality teak oil.

For a super smooth finish, apply two or three times and sand between layers with fine sandpaper. Teak oil will trap dirt and darken with age. Should this occur, scrub and preferably sand to remove old

oil and then re-coat.

Wicker furniture can be cleaned using a hose or pressure washer. Simply remove the cushions and spray off dirt and spills. If it's really dirty, use a sponge and mild soap along with cold water to wash. Allow the furniture to dry completely then apply a paste wax to the frame to keep it shiny and weather resistant. Apply every three to six months.

Aluminum, wrought iron and steel frames can be cleaned with water and mild soap. Many modern frames are rust-resistant or rust free but if your metal furniture is not rust resistant then paste wax can be used to protect it from corroding or rusting. Apply every three to six months.

As there are so many second homes in Phuket, this is another item your Property Management Company should have on their list to maintain.

Mark Dietrich is a professional inspector and property builder with a Master's degree in building engineering. He came to Phuket after working for 25 years in the custom home and inspecting industry in the USA, and has been working in Thailand for more than 11 years. Visit certifiedphuketrealestate.com email: propertyinspectorthailand@gmail.com. Tel: 085-809 8755.

Krabi tourism gets airlift from Asian flight influx

KRABI used to flip-flop between having a regimented high-season – catering to winter snowbird visitors from Scandinavia and Europe – and a low-season during which many hotels even scrapped breakfast buffets.

However, the latest research by C9 Hotelworks reveals skyrocketing airlift is edging the market towards being a year-round destination.

The C9 Hotelworks 'Krabi Hotel Market Update 2016' report reveals that between 2014 and 2015, passenger arrivals grew by a whopping 45 per cent.

At the mid-year point in 2016, year-on-year arrivals were 13 per cent, but are expected to grow with the upcoming high season.

Fresh data from global hos-

pitality giant STR shows a jump in occupancy of international-standard properties to at least 70 per cent.

"The recent upgrade of Krabi International Airport means it now services regular charter flights from mainland China and South-east Asia," said C9 Hotelworks Managing Director Bill Barnett.

"Krabi has also taken advantage of the expansion of Phuket International Airport by offering attractive landing options and a strong resort infrastructure," said Mr Barnett.

Two remarkable trends are apparent from the C9 Hotelworks report, said Mr Barnett.

"First is the impact of growing airlift from Greater China with Krabi Interna-

tional Airport receiving 3,015 flights from the Mainland in 2015. Secondly, international passenger arrivals from China in terms of market share rose from 38 per cent in 2014 to 61 per cent last year," he said.

"While Krabi is in the process of driving upward in its tourism cycle, growing pains are expected when you understand that registered hotel rooms in the market are close to hitting 20,000, but when you take a look at the incoming supply line, 70 per cent of these new hotels are mid-scale properties that are betting on the future of mass tourism.

As nearby Phuket is learning, bigger is not necessarily better in the long run," he concluded.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Amatara, Bangkok Hospital ink deal to cash in on aged

THE Amatara Resort & Wellness in Phuket and Bangkok Hospital Group aim to cash in on ageing Asians and Europeans with integrated tourism and wellness services.

The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding in Phuket on Monday. Prattana Punnakitikashem, managing director of Amatara A Destination Spa Ltd, operator of the Phuket resort, said it had rebranded and repositioned the resort last year to cash in on the growing wellness market and ageing society.

"The resort aims to become one of the top five wellness destinations in Asia and that 90 per cent of customers would come from outside Thailand; half from Asia and half from countries such as the UK, Germany, the US and Australia.

The hotel has added to its property a health-conscious restaurant, 17 pool villas and

the 'world's first Thai hammam' – a traditional Turkish and Moroccan bath with Thai spa therapies.

"We expect our overall business to grow by 10 per cent, Ms Prattana said.

Kongkiat Kespechara, chief executive officer of Bangkok Hospital Southern Group, said the main target market was people aged 45 up, but young people who are concerned about their health were also welcome.

"Thailand is entering an ageing-society phase, and many [incurable] diseases and disorders including Alzheimer's have been found. This is a new opportunity for the group," he said.

The Thai Hotels Association Southern Chapter says more than 30 new hotels and resorts with more than 5,500 rooms are scheduled to open in Phuket over the next few years.

– *Phuket Gazette*

Joint task force raids suspect property on Coconut Island

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

OFFICERS from a joint task force raided a Coconut Island (Koh Maprao) development on September 14, after locals warned authorities that the developer had already begun construction without proper land ownership documents.

Police refused to name the property development company or the female suspect listed on the development's tax documents, stating that they were in the preliminary stages of investigations.

"After we received a complaint that a private company was buying land from locals without documenting their purchases, we first had our team survey the area via helicopter," said the deputy commander of the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division, Col Bancha Panpradap.

"We found several construction sites on a hill and in nearby forest," said Col Bancha.

"We learned that the buildings were intended for tourism and hospitality."

A Swiss man, who police identified only as 'Mr Adam', claimed to be the development's caretaker and construction manager.

"He failed to present us with any land ownership documents for the estimated 20 rai of land that the development sits on,"



Acting on a complaint, land inspectors carried out a raid and demanded to see the land documents. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

Col Bancha said.

"There are already 14 houses built on that land but he only presented us a tax payment document."

Col Bancha said the land in

question was estimated to be worth at least 5 million baht per rai.

"At this stage we have not charged Mr Adam with anything as he is just the caretaker.

"However, we will charge the person whose name appears on the tax document with encroaching on public land as well as for building without planning permission."

B800mn for Surin Beach revamp

PLANS for Surin Beach, which was officially reopened as 'Rajabhakti Park' in June, were released to the public this week.

Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat said that officials are looking to make it the "most beautiful beach in the world". The estimated budget for the project is more than 800 million baht.

"Surin Beach is already 'listed' in the 'top ten most beautiful beaches of the world', so it will not be difficult for us to achieve our goal," the vice governor told the *Phuket Gazette*.

The park's reopening back in June followed the demolition of buildings encroaching on public land in Surin in April.

The demolition efforts were led by V/Gov Chokdee and the former Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) President Ma-ann Samran, and overseen by military personnel.

"We submitted our proposal to Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha on Friday during his visit to the island. It comprises plans drawn up by the Phuket government and private sectors."

"We cannot make it happen all at once – the work will progress in several stages. As it is a big project, we are looking to complete the park in three years, so it should be done by the end of 2019," V/Gov Chokdee said.

— Chutharat Plerin

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Phuket Gazette

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- ▶ Freehand drawing and web-design skills a plus
- ▶ Responsible, hard-working, attention to detail
- ▶ Able to work in a fast-paced environment and meet deadlines
- ▶ Good communication skills, team player
- ▶ Thai-English speaker

Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV to Khun Anna (General Manager), by email, fax or post to:

The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd
79/94 Moo 4, Thepkrasattri Rd, T. Koh Keaw, A. Muang Phuket 83000
Tel: 076-273555, ext 102 | Fax: 076-615240
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Phuket Gazette

All is revealed in the tarot



FORTUNE teller Sirirat Rattanasuanjig, or 'Adina' as she is better known, had a near-death experience when she was a child. She was a bystander as a couple were quarreling. One of them had a knife which ended up embedded in her chest.

She was rushed to the hospital and nearly died from her injury, but eventually pulled through. The near-death experience, she says, turned out to be a gift that has given her psychic abilities, which she uses to consult people on life matters and tell fortunes with tarot cards.

Over the past ten years Adina's unique ability to see inside people's

hearts and minds to give advice on their life's path has earned her a reputation as a respected fortune teller and many of her clients are A-list celebrities, politicians and wealthy business people.

Adina travels between Phuket and Bangkok to meet with her clients, for which she earns about 20,000 baht a week.

For her, fortune telling was a vocation that developed naturally over time, but as a business it is one that requires little financial investment. Of course it's not something just anyone can do.

While some may consider fortune telling and psychic abilities pseudo science, Adina insists that if she wasn't telling the truth to her clients, she wouldn't have kept them for so long. "The

people I work with see that I know their past and can predict their future, or at least give them advice on the decisions they can make."

"Fortune telling is a multi-disciplinary practice that brings together the supernatural, psychology and probability. Fortune tellers have to be well versed in all these areas to do their job properly."

Adina says her job is to 'heal minds', which is not something

people with a troubled mind can always do on their own. Calling in a fortune teller is often the last resort.

"People call on me when they cannot solve their problems by themselves. They want to know what will happen in their future. It's human nature, really. Some come to me in tears. Maybe their busi-

ness has gone down the tubes or they are troubled about love issues, so we become a personal consultant.

"We can't always know everything about their past, but we can see the effects past events have had on their current situation. This is where knowledge of psychology comes in... sometimes it's necessary to tell a white lie."

But "the cards don't lie" says Adina. Each card has a meaning.

"The cards you pick are for your own story. I ask people to shuffle the cards to begin a reading. Some will shuffle the cards seven times and others only three times. These actions are all part of the client telling his or her story," she says.

In tarot, nine is the magic number. In a reading, Adina tells her clients to pick only nine cards from the entire set spread face down in front of them.

"These nine cards tell an entire life story - the past, the present and the future," she says.

- Kongleaphy Keam

Fortune telling is a multi-disciplinary practice that brings together the supernatural, psychology and probability. Fortune tellers have to be well versed in all these areas to do the job properly

- Sirirat Rattanasuanjig

Bodega

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We never say goodbye and we simply say see you again. Join us to farewell our last brunch of 2016 in style on Sunday 25th September 2016 at Bodega & Grill. A lavish Sunday Brunch features a delectable international seafood buffet, complimented by a 12 course degustation menu featuring finest selection of gourmet plates.

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