

# Phuket Gazette

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'MAYBE HE THOUGHT I WAS JUST A BAR GIRL WITH A TOURIST'

## CASE CLOSED

■ Thai driver, who ran over German until he was dead, fined 7,500 baht

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE driver of a car that killed a German man and severely injured his Thai partner in Kata last year will walk away without serving any jail time.

The dramatic court case over the death of Andreas Walter and the severe injury of his Thai partner Patcharin Lammai ended on October 6 at Phuket Provincial Court.

Jakarin Rodpradit, the driver of the vehicle that ran over Mr Walter after colliding with the couple while they were riding a motorcycle on the way to Kata from Chalong, was ordered by the court to pay a 7,500 baht fine and pay 1.8 million baht compensation. He also received a two-year suspended jail sentence.

Mr Walter was 47 years old at the time of his death on December 3, 2015.

"I was conscious, but unable to move immediately after the accident. The driver didn't stop; he kept trying to drive forward over the top of my boyfriend. I couldn't do anything," Ms Patcharin told the *Gazette* from her hospital bed several days after the incident.

Police seized Mr Jakarin's driving licence at the scene on December 3 and then allowed him to return to his vehicle and go on his way. They reportedly did not conduct a blood alcohol test on Mr Jakarin.

However, Ms Patcharin alleged that Mr Jakarin told witnesses that he had in fact been drinking before the incident but that he was not drunk.

In a subsequent interview with police on December 8, Mr Jakarin reportedly denied responsibility for the crash, telling police



Patcharin Lammai was severely injured in the crash. A court ruled on October 6 that the driver who repeatedly ran over her partner will not face jail time. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

that Mr Walter was in fact the one driving recklessly and had cut him off.

However, about a week later, Ms Patcharin went to police with CCTV footage and eye witness statements in an effort to prove that Mr Jakarin was at fault. When faced with the new evidence, Mr Jakarin confessed and was charged with reckless driving causing death, injury and property damage, without stopping and assisting the victims.

He was subsequently released on bail.

"I want this case to serve as an example to everyone that people cannot be killed on the roads by reckless driving without the perpetrator facing serious consequences," Ms Patcharin said.

"If it was a normal crash, and the man

had stopped, Andreas might still be alive," Ms Patcharin said. "Maybe he just thought that I was some bar girl with a tourist, so he didn't care."

Relatives of Mr Walter in Germany hired a lawyer to fight the case for them, demanding 1.3 million baht in compensation for Mr Walter's death. Ms Patcharin also demanded 800,000 baht compensation for her injuries.

Mr Jakarin requested a period of one month to consider the demands. A final settlement was then reached to compensate Mr Walter's relatives in Germany with a 1.3 million payout and 500,000 baht for Ms Patcharin.

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### Passengers still arriving to wait in long lines

ONE month after the official opening of the new international terminal at Phuket International Airport, frustrated travellers are still faced with long lines at immigration counters.

*Story on Page 3*

### BUSINESS



Locally made wicker and bamboo OTOP products are a hit with tourists. *Page 11*

### PROPERTY



Low budget hotel Red Planet slated for a US\$70 million expansion. *Page 19*

### LIFE&STYLE



Queen Noor of Jordan officially opens United World College. *Page 15*



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## LOCAL NEWS

# Briefly

### Frenchman's body found in Patong hotel

THE naked body of a Frenchman was found in a hotel room in Patong on October 8.

The body of Sylvain Bernard Renia, 27, was discovered by housekeeping staff at The Nest Resort on Nanai Road.

"His body was found on the toilet. He was naked and his face and body were resting against the wall," said Capt Sininat Cherdchutrakulthong of Patong Police.

Police found scattered belongings in the room, but no sign of violence on the body.

"We believe he had been dead for six hours before we discovered him," said Capt Sininat.

Hotel staff told police that Mr Renia had sought medical treatment for a food allergy.

The body was transferred to Patong Hospital for an autopsy.

"We suspect his death was caused by a pre-existing medical condition, but we are still waiting for the official autopsy report," added Capt Sininat.

– Winai Sarot

### Police arrest gamblers during raid on den

POLICE apprehended 16 suspected gamblers and confiscated more than 130,000 baht in cash and gambling paraphernalia during a raid of an illegal gambling ring in Wichit on October 9.

City Defence Deputy Jiradet Burarak and other officials led the raid on a house in Soi Thepanusorn at about 6pm, after locals complained about the level of noise emanating from the residence.

"The suspects included both men and women. We confiscated a mobile phone, two 'money buckets' and 142 gambling chips," said Deputy Jiradet.

The suspects were taken to Wichit Police Station and charged with gambling. Police said the investigation is ongoing.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Another Chinese tour bus crashes on Patong's slopes



The bus driver lost control and ploughed into three other vehicles on October 5, resulting in a Thai man being seriously injured and 11 others sustaining minor injuries. Witnesses told Patong Police that the bus crossed over into oncoming traffic while in a downhill turn. The bus, with MKR Transport and Jinchi Travel Group logos on it, had 22 Chinese tourists on board at the time. Photo: Winai Sarot

### Gun-toting cell phone robber eludes capture

POLICE are looking for a man who allegedly snatched a mobile phone from a student at gun point in Phuket Town on the morning of October 9.

"The victim, Kritsana Harinsalai, 24, came to the Phuket City center for an exam. He had just finished and was walking to the parking lot with three of his friends when the suspect rode up on a motorbike and asked to borrow Mr Kritsana's cell phone to make a call," said Maj Rachan Panwai of Phuket City Police.

Mr Kritsana said he told the man that he had no credit on his phone, but the man insisted that he try and see if the call would go through anyway.

"As soon as I handed him my phone, he started to ride away. I tried to get it back from him, but he pulled out a handgun and pointed it at my head. I was in complete shock – the next thing I knew, he was riding away with it," Mr Kritsana told Phuket City Police officers, adding that his phone was worth about 10,000 baht.

CCTV footage showed the suspect heading in the direction

of Phuket Prison. Police said they expect to apprehend the robber soon.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

### Diving trainer arrested in road-rage fight

POLICE filed charges against a diving instructor after his reckless driving was caught on camera on October 7.

A viral video on Facebook titled 'Please help. Am I in the wrong?' shows the driver of a Honda Accord attempting to turn right from the left-hand turning lane at the intersection of Chao Fa West and Thep Anusorn Road in Wichit, near the Shell gas station.

The dash-camera video appears to show the instructor, named by police as Tor Por, cutting off the driver, pulling over and threatening him.

Mr Tor appeared to be turning right from the left-turning lane, despite the fact that there were two right turning lanes. The dash-cam driver, named on Facebook as Jeerapong, initially did not allow Mr Tor to cut him off.

In the video, Mr Tor honks at Mr Jeerapong and rolls down

his window, shouting at Mr Jeerapong to stop the car. After both vehicles stop, Mr Tor exits his vehicle and yells at Mr Jeerapong, "Do you know who I am?"

Mr Jeerapong politely explains that the diving instructor was in the wrong lane. Mr Tor then replied, "Don't teach me the law," and returned to his car.

Mr Tor, who works as a diving instructor on Koh Naka, surrendered to Wichit police station the following day.

He was charged with reckless driving, improper overtaking, dangerous driving and threatening others.

– Winai Sarot

### Investigators: boat blaze due to lack of care

INVESTIGATORS confirmed on October 7 that an electrical short circuit was the cause of a speedboat blaze off Yamu Pier in Pa Khlok on September 24.

Three crew members were injured in the fire, with one of them sustaining serious injuries including a broken leg and burns on 40-50 per cent of his body.

The man was released from hospital on October 9. The three-engine speedboat is registered to CC Blue Marine.

"The boat was acquired in an auction, but had remained unused for a long time," said Pa Khlok Municipality Mayor Panya Sampaorat.

There were no tourists on board when the fire broke out, as crew members were preparing the boat for boarding at the time of the incident.

"The estimated value of damages to the boat is about 3 million baht," Mr Panya confirmed.

Medical expenses of all three men were reportedly covered under the company's insurance.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

### Police hunt for Kathu murder suspect

POLICE are hunting for a Thai man suspected of shooting dead a van driver in Kathu on October 8.

Chamngong Kaewprot, 41, was admitted to Phuket International Hospital by his wife, with shotgun wounds to his back. He was later transferred to Mission Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

"Witnesses said that Mr Chamngong had parked his van outside his house in Phuket Golden Ville 5 at about 11pm and was walking toward his house when a heavy-set man, whose face was covered, shot him in the back and drove away," said Capt Sawanya Eiatrong of Kathu Police.

Witnesses added that they believe the suspect may have been waiting for Mr Chamngong to return home.

"Mr Chamngong's friends said that he had several girlfriends, one of whom may have been involved with the unknown suspect," added Capt Sawanya.

Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Sermphan Sirikong, who is in charge of the investigation, said that he had ordered provincial and Kathu Police to work together and check CCTV footage of the area.

"At this stage, we can only speculate that a conflict regarding sexual relationships had arisen between the two men," said Deputy Sermphan.

"We will continue to investigate and hope to apprehend the suspect soon."

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Road raging biker arrested

SAKOO Police arrested a Thai man on October 10 who critically injured another man in a road rage-fueled drive-by shooting.

The 23-year-old suspect, Pawarut Thepabutra, told police that he left his house about 5am on the morning of October 6 with his girlfriend to join a Vegetarian Festival parade at Bang Neow Shrine in Phuket Town, but turned around when it started to rain.

On the way home, riding against the flow of traffic, Mr Pawarut nearly collided with another motorbike.

Mr Pawarut admitted to Sakoo Police that he became enraged after the other driver shouted at him, so he turned his motorcycle around, chased down the victim and shot him.

The victim is under close observation after several surgeries for his gunshot wound. The bullet passed diagonally through his rib cage and was lodged above his groin.

"We found the suspect hiding at a house in Sakoo," said Sakoo Police Superintendent Jirasak Siemsak.

Col Jirasak said police have not pressed charges against Mr Pawarut's girlfriend, who was his passenger at the time of the incident.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

# Airport delays continue

By Kongleaphy Keam

ONE month after the official opening of the new international terminal at Phuket International Airport, frustrated travellers are still putting up with long lines at immigration counters.

Officials told the *Gazette* that the delays are due to a lack of essential equipment; Only 13 of the 34 immigration counters at the international departure terminal had computers on the September 16 opening day of the new terminal, causing long delays for passengers.

All 34 counters were, as of press time, equipped with computers, however the processing of passengers is still slow while immigration officers wait for more passport scanners and cameras for the counters.

Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan said there was a delay in acquiring the passport scanners and cameras because they are 'regulated equipment'.

Furthermore, both departing and arriving travellers reported that the immigration counters are under-staffed.

Australian tourist James Denton, who arrived at Phuket International Airport at



Test flights back before the terminal's opening were meant to iron out any kinks. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

12:30am on October 2, said it was mayhem at the immigration counter in arrivals.

"There were well over a thousand people waiting to be checked in and only five immigration officers on duty."

Mr Denton said at least five other flights arrived at the same time as his and there seemed to be little coordination between flight arrivals and immigration staffing.

"At one point a new group of immigration officers came in and I thought they were there to help, but it was just a shift change and there were still only five counters open," Mr Denton said.

Mr Denton said he eventually managed to get out of the airport at 4am that morning.

Thirty additional immigration officers have since been added to the Phuket Airport

pool. However, travellers in and out of Phuket will still see long wait times.

"The lines are shorter since the extra officers were drafted in late September and they are processing passengers more quickly now but things will be better once the rest of the equipment is installed," said Ms Monrudee.

Additional reporting by Simon J Hand

# Vegetarian Festival draws meth dealers

PROVINCIAL police announced on October 7 that they have seized nearly 72,000 methamphetamine pills (*ya bah*), estimated to have a street value of 4 million baht, over the course of the first week of the month.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teeraphol Thipjaroen told the *Gazette* that the annual Vegetarian Festival brought with it a chance for dealers and suppliers to transfer drugs and cash in a more anonymous environment.

Gen Teeraphol said police interrogations of suspects arrested during the festival allowed law enforcement to move against suspect after suspect in repeated raids.

"Our first suspect, Tanu Maidee, said he bought drugs from Mooktad Boonprasop at the Nice Place apartment complex on Thepkrasattri Road," Gen Teeraphol said.

Mr Tanu reportedly told po-



Meth and ammunition seized by police. Photo: Sukawin Tanthavanich

lice about yet another drug dealer named Sommard Poomi during his interrogation.

On October 5, Mr Tanu's tip-off allowed police to capture Mr Sommard, along with 820 *ya bah* pills and a little more than three grams of crystal meth (*ya ice*). The same day, police raided Mr Mooktad's apartment.

"Police founding an estimated 7,000 *ya bah* pills, 345 grams of *ya ice*, and a handgun with 87 rounds of ammunition," Gen Teeraphol said.

Police then interrogated Mr Mooktad, who reportedly con-

fessed that he ordered drugs from a 'Mr Shane' via a middle-aged female courier named Chollada Musur.

The following day police set up a sting, telling Mr Mooktad to order 2,000 pills from Mr Shane. Police then arrested Ms Chollada when she arrived with Mr Mooktad's order, and confiscated some 64,000 pills and about 276g of *ya ice*.

Mr Sommard, Mr Mooktad and Ms Chollada were charged with illegal possession of category 1 drugs with intention to sell. Mr Mooktad was also charged with possession of an

illegal firearm and ammunition. Mr Tanu was charged with possession of a category 1 drug.

All together, police seized 71,810 pills and 625g of *ya ice*.

- Sukawin Tanthavanich



# Drunk driving law could punish family members

PROVINCIAL officials told the *Gazette* on October 7 that they are prepared to support and enforce a new law that would punish the families of drunk drivers, should the legislation be approved by Thailand's Cabinet.

Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith is behind the proposed new legislation aimed at cracking down on the number of drunk driving accidents, deaths and injuries across the Kingdom. In addition to stricter laws around what constitutes the act of drunk or impaired driving, the legislation seeks to extend punitive fines to the immediate family members of drunk driving offenders.

The legislation comes after a report by the World Health Organization found Thailand to



An alleged drunk driver takes a breathalyzer. Photo: Gazette file

have the second highest road accident fatality rate in the world, with more than a quarter of the Kingdom's deaths attributed to drunk driving.

"There are several authorities working on this law at the moment, including the Thai Health Promotion Foundation

in Bangkok, which is studying what should be done with laws related to drunk driving," said Phuket Land Transport Office chief Sommai Sudkhao.

"To my knowledge, the legal alcohol limit will be lowered from the current .05 per cent blood alcohol content," stated Mr Sommai. "The idea behind this legislation is to punish the parents of teens who drink and drive. That will incentivize parents and other family members to stop drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel.

"This is to make the family take more responsibility over their family members instead of letting them drive off and put other peoples' lives at risk. However, it's just an idea at the moment – nothing is official yet," he added.

– Chutharat Plerin

# Forgiveness and regret

From Page 1...



The marriage of German national Andreas Walter and his Thai partner Patcharin Lammai was brought to an abrupt end when they were hit by a car while riding a motorcycle in Kata.

"Mr Walter's relatives received the full amount that they had demanded but I reduced my demands because I just wanted things to end peacefully," Ms Patcharin told the *Gazette* in the court room the day the trial concluded.

However, Ms Patcharin's relatives said they were astounded at the final verdict, having expected a jail sentence of several years to be handed down to Mr Jakarin.

"Really, no jail time at all? He killed someone, albeit unintentionally, and seriously injured another. I can't believe he only had to pay 7,500 baht and wasn't locked up. A two-year suspended sentence is nothing. I don't understand why," Ms Patcharin exclaimed after the court's verdict was read out.

"At least some prison time might have been appropriate. However, I respect the court's judgment," she said.

The lawyer representing Mr Walter's German family said they would not appeal.

"The family has been awarded the compensation that they demanded. His mother is old, and travelling to Thailand just to pursue the case is not an option," said the lawyer, who requested anonymity.

Ms Patcharin added that she also would not appeal and instead would try to exercise forgiveness.

"The money cannot bring my boyfriend back. Even so, I do not get any of this. It is all for his relatives in Germany. However, I am Buddhist so forgiveness is important," she said.

"But I hope this is at least an example that people can not just get away with something that was their fault," she added.

Ms Patcharin recounted that as well as initially denying being at fault, Mr Jakarin and his family claimed that she was just a bar girl. "They looked down on me and said I was just trying to get money out of a foreigner's death," she said. "I don't understand why Thai people look down on other Thais like this. That is why I used my own money to hire a lawyer and fight the case."

"At least it has ended peacefully. Even if Mr Jakarin doesn't serve any jail time, it will be a life lesson for him. He had to spend his time and money for his defence. I only hope he will be more responsible in future," she said.

Upon conclusion of the court proceedings, Mr Jakarin expressed regret, as well as gratitude, that the case had concluded peacefully.

"I apologize for the loss. Although I don't have to serve jail time, it has cost me a lot. I won't easily forget," he said.

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# Drunk American attacks vehicles, is fined 200 baht

By Winai Sarot

AN INTOXICATED American man was arrested for throwing bottles at vehicles and running in and out of traffic on Northbound Thepkraassatri Road in the early hours of October 12.

Thirty-eight-year-old Stephen Leonard was charged with drunk and disorderly conduct and damaging property by Tah Chat Chai Police.

Mr Leonard allegedly smashed a passing pick-up truck's window and caused a six-wheeled truck to lose control and crash into the curb, blocking north-bound traffic along the major thoroughfare.

"At about 5:30am, we received a report of a drunk foreigner running around, smashing vehicle windows in Mai Khao on Thepkraassatri Road, northbound," Capt Thanom Thongpan of Tah Chat Chai Police said.

"He was also cutting in front of vehicles, causing trouble to north-bound drivers who were trying not to hit him," he said.

When police arrived at the scene, Mr Leonard was reportedly restrained by locals in



The six-wheeled container truck swerved to avoid Mr Leonard, crashing into the median. Photo: Winai Sarot

order to prevent him from causing further damage.

Police found a container truck at the scene, unable to move after crashing into the roadside. Standing by the truck was the driver, Wallop Thongket, who had been on his way back to Surat Thani after delivering 7-Eleven products to Phuket Town.

"I had just completed my delivery in Phuket Town and was heading back when a foreigner came out of nowhere and

jumped in front of my truck," Mr Wallop said. "I braked hard and hit the median."

A pick-up truck with a smashed left window was pulled over near Mr Wallop's six-wheel truck. That driver, Sakkarin Sa-ad, told police he was on his way to Chonburi from Phuket Town, a 13-hour drive, when he came across Mr Leonard.

"He just jumped up and smashed my window," Mr Sakkarin said. "I saw him

smash another van's window with a bottle too. But, I guess the guy was in a hurry because he didn't pull over or anything."

Mr Leonard was later taken to Tah Chat Chai Police where he was charged and paid his fine of 200 baht. Capt Thanom told the *Gazette* that Mr Leonard has signed a compensation agreement which obligates him to cover the cost the damage to the vehicles he attacked.

## Police seize 100kg of marijuana at checkpoint

TAH Chat Chai police officers seized nearly 100 kilograms of marijuana at a northern checkpoint in Phuket on October 11.

Tah Chat Chai Superintendent Prawit Suttiruengarn told the *Gazette* that police arrested a Trang man, after ordering a vehicle to stop for a routine search.

The man, whom police identified as 37-year-old Annop Dueramare, reportedly attempted to drive away after officers searched his vehicle and discovered his illegal cargo, but police were able to regain control of the vehicle.

Mr Annop was charged with possession of a category 5 drug.

He reportedly told police he was acting as a courier between a supplier in Surat Thani Province and a buyer in Phuket.

"Mr Annop confessed that he got the marijuana from a 'Ms Koong' at a train station in Surat Thani," Col Prawit said. "He was then to transfer it to someone who was supposed to call him once he arrived in Phuket."

Police declined to comment if they received the call, as their investigation is ongoing.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong



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# Taxi drivers gone wild

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

AIRPORT 'Limousine' drivers and metered taxi drivers came to blows when a heated argument about passengers escalated at Krabi International Airport on October 4.

A video clip shot by a bystander was shared and widely criticized on social media. The caption of the video is "Krabi International Airport fight between green plate taxi and taxi meter [sic]. I don't want to see this happen again".

The clip shows a man being pushed to the ground by another as well as shouting and confusion in the background.

Several security guards jumped in to stop the fight, while astounded tourists and locals watched the embarrassing spectacle.

"Even though no one was seriously injured, such incidents impact the reputation of the airport and Krabi in general," said Krabi Airport Director Attapon Nuengudom. "We've called for a meeting between the parties to the fight, along with police officials and members of the Krabi Land Transport Office, in order to



A representative from the service insisted that they are a legitimate service, not a mafia. Photo: Gazette file

find a solution."

"The cause of the issue is that both sides did not obey the regulations set out for them. After security officers calmed them down, both sides agreed to stop," he added.

Surprisingly, the two drivers involved in the fight were let

off with nothing more than a 'warning'.

"We're happy to cooperate with the airport and officials," said Nakin Petsoot of the Airport Limousine Service in Krabi. "From now on, if any of our employees disobey regulations or indulge in arguments or fights,

we will suspend them from work for three to seven days," he said in an apparent confirmation of the relaxed local view of taxi driver behavior at airports.

"We just want justice and for everyone to know that we are legal service providers, not a mafia," he insisted.

## Team setup to tackle south unrest

A SPECIAL 'forward minister' team divided tasks among themselves to help tackle unrest in the deep South in their first meeting in Bangkok on October 6, Deputy Defence Minister General Udomdej Sitabutr said.

The 13-member team will facilitate coordination of agencies to address problems in the deep South and ensure a smooth flow of work, Udomdej said.

With direct connection to Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha and Deputy PM and Defence Minister Gen Prawit Wongsuwan, the team will receive a budget from the PM's Office.

Members present at the team's first meeting at the Defence Ministry in Bangkok were: Deputy Education Minister (team vice chairman) General Surachet Chaiwong; General Aksara Kerdphol, former army chief of staff and the peace dialogue's Thai negotiating team leader; and former SBPAC secretary-general Panu Uthairat (team secretary).

- The Nation

## Samui residents ask for help from up above



Samui resident Sawat Limsuwan turns to the spirits to beg for rain on the drought-hit island. Photo: Suchat Hankij

DESPERATE drought-hit residents on Koh Samui are turning to spirits as of October 7 for help after receiving little assistance from local authorities.

"There has been no help from the local government," said Samui villager Sawat Limsuwan, 61, after having prayed for the heavens to open

at a makeshift shrine on his parched land early last month.

Mr Sawat told the *Gazette* that with no access to fresh water - he has been bathing in mud mixed with alum.

Aside from praying to the rain gods, Mr Sawat begged for local officials to provide irrigation and water storage facilities.

- Suchat Hankij

## Cars damaged as crane crashes onto parking lot

TWO vehicles were damaged when a crane crashed into a covered garage in front of a residential building at Krabi Hospital on the morning of October 7.

The crane driver, Sompong Chinnawong, 60, claimed that he could not stop the crane, despite repeated attempts to brake.

"I was trying to start the engine, but it would not start. Then, for some reason, it started going backward. I think it may have been parked there for too long and the brakes were out of order," said Mr Sompong.

The crane slammed into the garage awning, which then fell onto two cars parked underneath.

Dentist Sawarot Damdee, who owns one of the damaged vehicles and is a resident at the building, said she heard a loud noise and then the sound of people shouting. Fortunately



The crane driver claimed that he could not stop the crane, despite repeated attempts to brake. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

she was still inside her room at the time.

"I was getting ready to take my child to school. I am thankful that nobody was injured in the incident," she said.

The crane insurance com-

pany has been contacted to cover all the damages. Krabi Hospital Deputy Director Anan Pinthongpan inspected the damage and has informed the police for further investigation.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Zero-dollar tours suspects apprehended

THREE executives of tour operators surrendered to police on October 7 in response to arrest warrants for their alleged role in a 'zero-dollar tour' network, which is deemed illegal and damaging to the Thai tourism industry.

OA Transport executive Thongchai Rungrojrangsi, Royal Gems executive Saithip Rungrojrangsi and Fu-an executive Winij Chanmanee showed up at Bangkok's Phya Thai Police Station, along with their lawyers, to acknowledge charges of conspiring in secret activities with unlawful intention; to cause damage to the local tourism industry; to operate illegal and unfair tour businesses; and violating the Anti-Money Laundering law.

The suspects maintained their innocence throughout the two-hour interrogation.

Mr Thongchai, Ms Saithip and Mr Winij were refused bail by the criminal court and face a 12-day detention period pending police investigation.

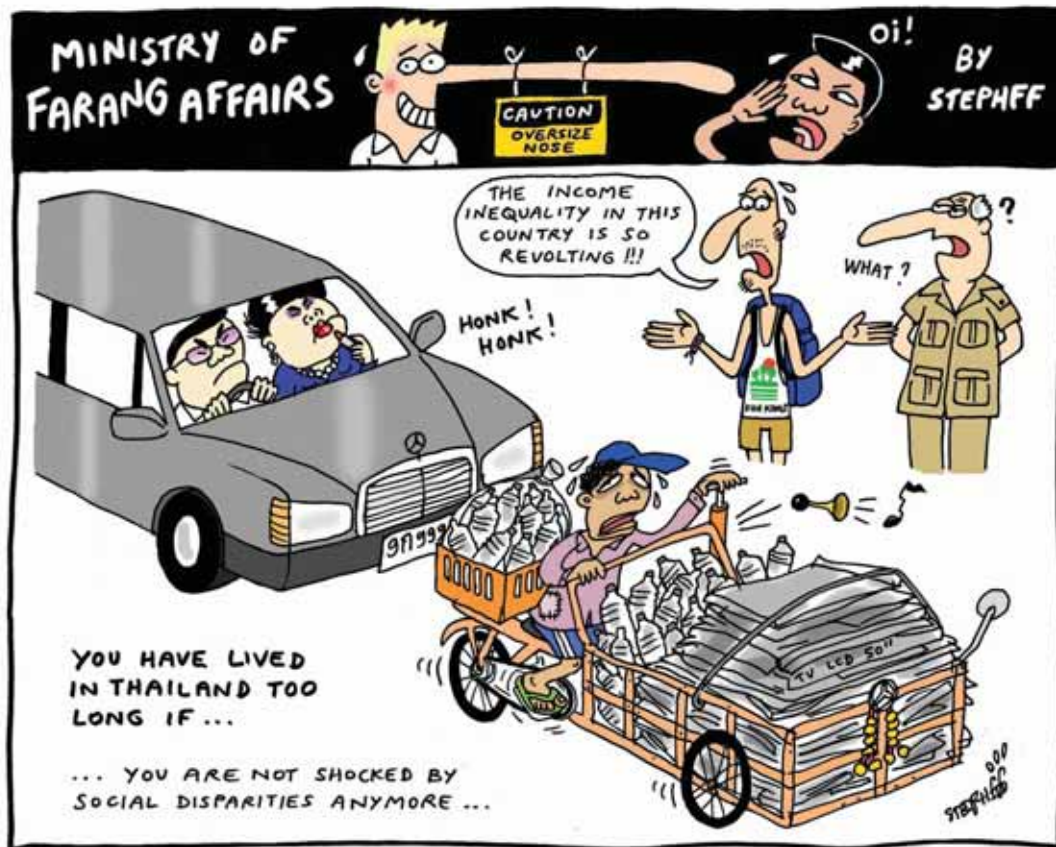
'Zero-dollar tours' offer cheap packages to tourists, mostly from mainland China, and allegedly pressure them into buying overpriced goods and services.

## US-Thailand prostitution ring busted

THAI Police are cooperating with their US counterparts in the hunt for a group involved in a "large-scale highly sophisticated sex-trafficking scheme" in which hundreds of Thai women were forced to work as prostitutes in the US.

About a dozen people were recently apprehended in cities across the US for running the operation. A Thai woman, Sumalee Intarathong, suspected of being the organization's boss, was arrested in Belgium in August.

"US police have contacted the Anti-Trafficking in Person Division about the case," Deputy Police Commissioner Gen Srivara Ransibrahmanakulhas said, adding that a team has been set up to check the backgrounds of Thais indicted in the US over the case. He said police were trying to determine whether Ms Sumalee had been involved in other illegal issues in Thailand.



Meanwhile, US authorities said on October 5 that they had shut down a sex trafficking ring and charged 17 people in a case stretching from Thailand to various major US cities.

Twelve Thai nationals and five Americans were charged with illegally transporting hundreds of women from Thailand and forcing them into prostitution in Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington DC and other cities.

According to the indictment, the organization targeted poor women who spoke little English, and promised them a better life in the US at a debt of US\$40,000 to \$60,000 (1.4 million baht to 2.09 million baht).

It said the women were required to repay the debt through forced prostitution.

## Thai man kills two, then takes his own life

A KNIFE-WIELDING Thai man is believed to have killed his wife and her mother before taking his own life by drinking pesticides at their home in Lop Buri's Phattana Nikhom district on October 9.

The man's 13-year-old daughter said she survived the attack by locking herself in a room. She told police that the father had suffered from mental illness for years, but had lately stopped seeing a doctor and taking his medicine.

Following reports of the incident, police found the body of Poonsab Peecharoen with

## NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

multiple knife wounds.

The two other bodies – identified as the alleged killer Somchai Sithai and his wife, Jamreung, who sustained multiple knife wounds – were found in the kitchen.

The couple's daughter told police that her mother was cooking when her father killed her.

She said her grandmother was attacked when she went to see what had happened.

She said she emerged from the room to find her father drinking the pesticide from a bottle and he yelled at her to stay upstairs, which she did.

## Suspect in triple murders apprehended

POLICE arrested a possibly mentally-unstable Myanmar national on October 7 for allegedly murdering three homeless people in Pathum Thani's Thanyaburi District two weeks ago, city police chief Lt Gen Sanit Mahathaworn confirmed on October 8.

Mr Bung admitted to being the person filmed on a surveillance video taken close to the scene of one murder, but denied killing anyone.

A six-year-old child also

claimed to have seen Mr Bung tying up one victim, the police chief added.

Gen Sanit said police had found a bloodstain on the man's T-shirt, which they suspected came from another person.

He said the man's clothes were submitted for DNA testing and if there is a match with any of the victims, police would link him to all three murders. He said the DNA test results should be available in one to two weeks.

A source in the case investigation team said Mr Bung was also accused of a fourth murder for allegedly killing newspaper vendor Wanchai Noimontree, 56, who was found dead with 10 stab wounds to his neck and torso

on September 5 at a park under the Rama 6 tollway in the Phayathai area of Bangkok.

At the time, homeless people in the area including Mr Bung were rounded up for questioning but there was no evidence to prosecute him for the murder. The Myanmar man was charged with illegal entry, then deported via Tak Province on September 12, but he returned and allegedly committed more killings.

## BKK ban on footpath stalls remains firm

"THE ban on stalls on footpaths at Pratunam and Ratchaprasong roads and in Siam Square remains in effect," Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) deputy governor Gen Assawin Kwanmuang said.

Stall vendors in Siam Square and the surrounding area affected by the ban have mobbed the BMA to request for the ban to be rescinded. Vendors also objected to the regulation by hanging banners in front of Siam Square, displaying messages asking for sympathy. However, the BMA deputy governor said vendors should move to designated areas.

"They cannot claim that they have been selling there for a long time. I heard that some sellers had three stalls and they hired migrants to take care of their stalls. "Bangkok residents should not buy things from stalls that are set up illegally on footpaths. The BMA is trying to find the most gentle way to regulate all footpaths in the inner Bangkok area to ease traffic problems," he said.

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**Phuket Gazette**

# Better police training

THE light court sentencing against a Thai driver who ran over and killed German national Andreas Walter last year [see cover story] serves as yet another example of why the police need better training in how to respond and collect evidence at road accident scenes.

The late Mr Walter, who was a long-term expat in Phuket, was run over and fatally injured by the driver in the December 2015 accident that was clearly witnessed by the man's girlfriend, who was also seriously injured, as well as several other eyewitnesses.

However, allegations that the young driver of the vehicle was under the influence of alcohol at the time were never put before the court, because police who responded to the case never questioned him at this point, let alone ask him to take a breathalyzer test or call him in for a more accurate blood alcohol level test.

Strangest of all is the fact that officers confiscated the suspect's driver's licence before allowing him to drive away from the crime scene. Driving while not in possession of a valid licence is already one of the most common crimes in Thailand. For officers to allow or actually encourage someone to do so is highly questionable in itself. If the individual has just run over two people in plain sight of witnesses, as alleged, it is completely unfathomable.

Thai traffic law carries stiff penalties for drunk driving, which is defined as having a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 per cent. A typical night out in Patong would put the vast majority of drinkers over this limit very quickly, putting them at risk of fines of up to 60,000 baht and jail sentences of up to three months, even if no accident has occurred.

The long-standing failure of Thai traffic police to make arrest for moving violations, instead of relying on the use of traffic checkpoints to generate income through fines, has been criticized in this space many times over the years.

You are legal if there is no more than 50 mg/dl of blood. In normal circumstances, 50 mg/dl means about two glasses of beer, so in general, if you are driving, you should try not to go above this.



## No room for more trash in Phuket

*Re: Opinion: A warm welcome for Governor Chokchai, Oct 9*

Please Governor – do something about the environmental disaster that is Phuket. Raw sewage is commonly released into the dying oceans.

There is no room for any more trash, yet the incinerators have been broken for years.

The island runs out of water every May. There is no water management.

Developers are killing Phuket. Why is there more 'development' every day? Housing is in an enormous bubble. Stop the development.

*Pinot  
Gazette forum*

### Thank goodness for social media

*Re: Diving instructor charged with reckless driving, Oct 8*

Great story. Got to love social media – and dash cams – for things like this. Good luck Mr Jeerapong, maybe time to leave your temper at home?

*Dan Snyder (Koh Kaew)  
Gazette forum*

### Swamped by cheap mass tourism

*Re: The billion dollar behemoth stirs, Oct 12*

Find this strange when the island is being swamped with mass cheap Chinese tourism with an infrastructure that cannot cope and is way behind where it needs to be.

Even last month a friend

### Letters to the Editor

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

who works selling high-end units, stated that she had not one person enter the office in over a month.

All around the island there is incessant building. Hopeful optimism or wishful hope?

*Johnny Murray  
Facebook*

### At least a four year term per governor

*Re: Opinion: Gov Chokchai outlines his plans for Phuket, Oct 12*

Blah, blah, blah. In 18 months he'll be transferred away again and any good he manages to do will swiftly be undone by his successor.

A governor should be in power for at least 4 years in order to achieve any real progress.

*CaptainJack  
Gazette forum*

### Station police officers outside bars

*Re: New drunk-driving law would punish families, Oct 11*

Why can't the police stand outside the bars and check when people come out and take their motorbike or car?

I bet they can take a lot of

people every evening.

*karl.hakan  
Gazette forum*

### Airport steering committee needed

*Re: Fliers still facing long queues at Phuket Airport, Oct 7*

An effective airport steering would help. All the knowledge is available, they should only act.

If they continue the same way we will loose more and more tourists every day.

*Jurg Brand  
Facebook*

### Wet conditions do not cause accidents

*Re: Tourist bus crash causes pile-up on Patong Hill, Oct 7*

Wet conditions do not cause accidents.

The failure to drive according to the conditions is the cause. That's like blaming the tree for being in the way.

*DC Chris  
Facebook*

### Mandatory CPR skills for tour guides

*Re: Longtail passengers rescue fellow tourist, Oct 6*

Great news that she survived. CPR skills should be mandatory for all tourist guides.

*Sarah Whitcher  
Facebook*

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# Ideal investment hub

## FIRST PERSON

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha officially visited Phuket last month in order to chair the grand opening ceremony of the new airport terminal, as well as Startup Thailand and Digital Thailand 2016. His visit was interesting to both Thais and foreigners, as many wondered why he was paying this much attention to Phuket, and especially why he flew over here himself.

The answer is simple. Startup Thailand is one of the country's most important strategic ventures. It is a mega trend that people worldwide are interested in. The Thai government has shown great vision by investing in this field. Gen Prayuth even flew to China to meet and discuss the future prospects of Startup Thailand with Jack Ma, the Chairman of Alibaba Group.

Most people I interact with say they want a house in a tourist province such as Phuket, whether they are investors, businessmen or otherwise. While others ask me what is so special about living in Phuket or owning property for investment purposes. Here is what I have to say to them.

What makes Phuket outstanding as compared to other cities, both in Thailand and abroad, are the beautiful beaches. This is why Hollywood celebrities regularly fly to Phuket for their holidays.

In addition, local people are very kind and people in Phuket speak in English, more than most people in the rest of Thailand. Besides the beautiful beaches, Phuket has also been named as a City of Gastronomy



**Panupong Kritchanarat**, originally from Bangkok, is currently the CEO of Boat Pattana, Phuket and has been working with its management for eight years. He also has several years of experience in real estate management. He holds a Masters of Business Administration from Sasin Graduate Institute of Business

Administration at Chulalongkorn University. Here, he talks about finance options in Phuket and why it is a good place to start investing in.

by UNESCO. Additionally, the cost of living is not high as compared to other tourist destinations in the world. Moreover, there are two other neighboring provinces that are also beautiful, which makes it an ideal location to travel to.

Phuket is located in the hottest region at the moment. While other countries are trying to keep their economies from falling apart, Asian countries are prospering, particularly those in the Asean Economic Community. There are many foreigners living in Phuket for that very reason. Many families have settled here, or their kids study here while one or both parents work in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam or Indonesia.

Phuket has an international airport that is able to support thousands of passengers. Because of the close proximity to Phang Nga, it is easy to deliver supplies to the island, either by land or boat.

Phuket is one of the marina hubs in Asia and has caught the attention of millionaires around the world. This is our strongest selling point. We also have ex-

perts in yacht maintenance as well as luxury hotels, spas and good food.

Phuket is also on its way to becoming a medical and healthcare hub. We have affordable aesthetic and beauty treatments, and excellent service during and after treatment.

Phuket has several Thai and international schools providing a high standard of education. The culture of these schools is becoming increasingly global, which helps students think outside of the box. So it is an ideal place to start a family.

Phuket is expanding, but one of the problems we face is limited land supply. The only way to expand further is into the sea. Therefore land prices in Phuket are going up rapidly.

Phuket people are capable of moving the island forward. They don't sit around waiting for the government or anybody else to step in. There are many young and enterprising investors in Phuket, who have a great vision for improving the island and helping it keep up with the rest of the country and the world.



Carelessness goes unchecked year after year. Photo: Peter Griffin

## Safety first, please

### Island View

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

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

THE end of the vegetarian festival means different things to different people. While some miss the sights and sounds, others breathe a sigh of relief about the end of the crowds and noise. I have no complaints on either of those counts. I don't like crowds or noise, so I chose to spend my time safe in the comfort of my own home. It's a part of Thai culture and I have no right to complain. However, I am concerned about the uncontrolled, unchecked and prevalent use of fireworks during the festival.

A few days into the festival, I woke up to a deafeningly loud noise outside my window at about 5am. I woke up with a start, and couldn't get back to sleep until it was time to get to work. All the while, I was prepared for the news that something tragic, along the lines of the Mother's Day bombings, had happened again.

I later found out that it was a 'synchronized' blast from dozens of fireworks in an open field right next to my building. It may sound like a minor inconvenience to some, but consider how the same noise would impact a sleeping

toddler, a pregnant woman or a sick person.

Another concern I have is that the sale of fireworks and their use by children goes completely unchecked. Children throwing lit fireworks at passing motorbikes and getting a kick out of the riders' startled reactions wasn't an uncommon sight during the festival. What those children didn't realize, or rather what their parents didn't bother to teach them, is that their fun and games could cause some serious damage. A stray firecracker could hit an innocent passerby in the eye or cause a motorcyclist to lose their balance and topple over.

Thankfully, this year's festival went by without the tragic and unnecessary loss of life witnessed last year, but damage was done nonetheless. A fire destroyed an undisclosed amount of merchandise at the Bang Tao Supercheap mini-mart on day five of the festival. It was reportedly set off by children throwing firecrackers. This needless damage could have been easily prevented if these children hadn't been handed the fireworks (or the money to buy them) to begin with, by what I can only describe as irresponsible parents.

This culture of carelessness goes unchecked year after year. All we can do is hope for the best and implore the authorities to make firecracker safety a bigger priority during such festivities.

## Words from the Wise

**"Don't gain the world and lose your soul; wisdom is better than silver or gold."**

– Bob Marley

**"Don't find fault, find a remedy."**

– Henry Ford

**"It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light."**

– Aristotle Onassis

## Issues & Answers

### Can we still park at the front car park?

ONCE you arrived at the old terminal of Phuket International airport to pick up passengers, drivers used to be able to park my car at the front car park area. Can you still park at the area as before?

There is a fence around the car park, so I wasn't sure about whether the old rule is still applicable or not.

**Officer Pirat Sawangsub** replies:

Thank you for your query. If you wish to wait for passen-

gers or park, you have to go inside the five-storey car park building.

The area is big enough to hold 1,500 vehicles at a time.

The old car park is currently being used for buses and taxis. We are not allowing private cars to park there anymore.

This has been done in order to avoid congestion.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions.

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

Submit your issue at:

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

Kiratti  
Kathu

Phuket Airport Security

# Advent of panoramic photos



WHILE there has been a lot of news in the press recently about Twitter and what is going to happen with the new relaxed 140 character rules, or the Samsung Note 7 exploding with regularity and being banned from all commercial airlines, the interesting news for me is what we can all use to promote our businesses and get the best returns.

Followers of my column will know by now that I am result-orientated and I like simple and effective methods of marketing. Facebook is about to launch a new panoramic function that will allow you to add your panoramic pictures and will then display them like a video on your post.

So why am I excited about that? Think of the industries in Phuket that will directly benefit from this. From the obvious real estate, hotels, tourist operators and restaurants, it will have a broad scope.

So why will this be any different from video? If I understand correctly, it will be easy to use the rapid picture function on most smart phones, and with a bit of simple creativ-



Facebook is about to launch a new panoramic function. Photo: Tumisu

ity you will be able to add promotional content.

Combined with Facebook ads, this will make it very easy to get in front of your target market.

It is interesting to note though, that Facebook has just apologized for misrepresenting the time that viewers allegedly spent watching videos on their application and website. This has led to a large group of very disgruntled and perplexed

marketers who created entire campaigns based around video to take advantage of what Facebook had labeled a new trend.

The good news is that video will continue to trend, and will no doubt be the way of the future, as people are becoming more and more selective and attention spans are decreasing.

So keep an eye out for this new opportunity and see how your business can take advantage of it. No doubt, early users

to embrace it will be rewarded by Facebook, so start planning and see what creative ideas you can come up with.

*Simon Wetherell is a Social Media Expert, Trainer and Lawyer. He now resides in Phuket where he trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the Social Media industry. For more information go to <http://PhuketOnlineMarketing.com> or call him on 095-085 3355.*

## Boost in ad spending expected

ADVERTISING in the rest of this year is expected to pick up after hitting rock bottom with a drop of almost 8 per cent in the first half, reports media research agency Nielsen Thailand.

Nielsen says that ad spending dropped only 0.4 per cent to 9.63 billion baht last month from the same month last year, compared to a plunge of 2.5 per cent in August.

Ad spending last month confirmed a positive sign after declining 5.4 per cent to 86.52bn in the first three quarters from 91.44bn in the same period last year.

Advertising via digital TV, radio, cinema, outdoor, transit, in-store and online media channels moved upwards as well.

Digital TV ads picked up by 5.6 per cent to 16.67bn baht, outdoor ads by 34.2 per cent to 4.19bn baht and online or internet ads by 73.6 per cent to 1.33bn baht.

It was a different story for newspapers, magazines, cable and satellite TV and the legacy players in terrestrial TV broadcasting. Cable/sat TV ads seems to suffer the most, followed by magazines by almost 30 per cent and newspapers by 17.4 per cent.

– The Nation

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## Samsung pulls the plug on Note 7 production

ON OCTOBER 11, consumer electronics giant Samsung pulled the plug on its troubled Galaxy Note 7 smartphone, permanently discontinuing production of the flagship device that has been mired in a disastrous recall over exploding batteries.

Earlier the same day, the South Korean conglomerate had halted sales and exchanges of the Note 7 and urged customers to stop using them, following reports that replacements for combustible models were also catching fire.

The move sent Samsung's share price into a steep dive and, once the markets had closed, the company announced it was scrapping the model entirely.

"Putting consumer safety as the top priority, we have reached a final decision to halt production of Galaxy Note 7s,"

it said in a statement.

A company spokesperson confirmed that the suspension was 'permanent'.

While numerous analysts had predicted just such an outcome, it was still a stunning move for a company that prides itself on the quality production of cutting-edge technology.

It is especially damaging because the large-sized Note series, along with the Galaxy S smartphones, are Samsung's flagship bearers in the fierce battle with arch-rival Apple's iPhones for supremacy in the high-end handset market.

The final decision came a little over a month after Samsung ordered the recall of 2.5 million Note 7s in 10 markets following complaints that its lithium-ion battery exploded while charging.

– The Nation

## Microsoft backs Thai digital transformation



The company says it is setting up Microsoft Experience Zones as well as an Internet of Things Center of Excellence. Photo: The Nation

MICROSOFT is heading for a digital transformation in Thailand.

The company says it has joined its business partners to set up Microsoft Experience Zones for customers and will also set up an Internet of Things (IoT) Center of Excellence by the end of this year.

Orapong Thien-Ngern, general manager of Microsoft (Thailand), said the firm would drive business towards digital transformation to improve productivity, identify customers, improve operation process management and improve services.

The digital transformation will focus on four areas: engaging customers, empowering employees, optimizing business, and transforming products and business.

At all organizational levels, the company will support the IoT platform, Microsoft cognitive services, its intelligent cloud platform and cyber security. It will provide technologies, solutions and platforms to help businesses improve efficiency

and productivity.

Mr Orapong said the company, along with its business partners, would set up an IoT Center of Excellence in the next couple of months to provide a platform for proof of concept and prototypes for businesses that want to develop projects.

"I think that our new vision will drive Thailand onwards to success in the digital-transformation journey across all dimensions of development. It will boost Thailand's capability for innovation, reinforce competitiveness across the business sector, develop next-generation talent and open opportunities for all to harness the true potential of digital technologies in creative, constructive and secure ways," he said.

The Board of Investment has reported that SMEs last year comprised 99.7 per cent of the companies in the Thai economy, 80.3 per cent of total employment and more than 42 per cent of Thailand's GDP.

- *The Nation*

# Wicker products a hit with tourists



The team exhibits their products at many events and is now also starting classes for those interested in learning the craft of manufacturing wicker and bamboo products. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

HANDMADE bamboo and wicker products manufactured by senior citizens have generated much interest from tourists and foreigners in Krabi. The group is now represented under the Krabi One Tambon One Product (OTOP) banner.

The project started in 2014 when a team of 14 senior citizens in Wang Nam Kiew Moo 1, Khao Kram sub-district decided to learn the craft and manufacture wicker items in order to generate additional income.

"The products are made of bamboo, rattan and banana bark. These materials can be used to manufacture a number

of useful items such as fishing equipment, boats and many others. Prices range from 250-650 baht," said Salimor Thongkam, president of the bamboo wicker project in Wang Kam Kiew.

"We have exhibited our products at many events, and continuously strive to make them better," Ms Salimor added.

Team members earn a combined income of 40,000 baht per month, which amounts to about 3000 baht per person.

"We are starting to get more and more customers, such as hotel and gift shop operators, who order baskets and other items from us. Recently, a group of foreigners ordered a

Vietnamese boat for one of their events," said Ms Salimor.

"They liked our products and ordered 10 more at a price of 5,000 baht each."

The unique thing about the products, Ms Salimor says, is that they are handmade from start to finish.

"These products represent local culture and wisdom. What we are doing is considered culture conservation," she added.

The team has also started teaching classes to those interested in learning how to make these products.

For further details about classes or product information, contact 089-471 2058 and 082-273 2560.

## Krabi hosts global rubber conference

EXPERTS and industry players from 25 countries met at the Global Rubber Conference 2016 in Krabi on October 11, to discuss the future prospects of the rubber industry in Krabi and all over the world.

The two-day conference was held at Deevana Plaza, Krabi Ao Nang, jointly organized by the Rubber Authority of Thailand (RAOT) and Confexhub.

"More than 500 people took part in the event, with the sole purpose of giving Thai rubber



Participants at the event. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

business operators a chance to discuss and exchange ideas regarding the rubber-producing business and its future in the in-

ternational community," said Dr Suthee Intharasakul, governing adviser of the RAOT.

"Experts in the field were also invited to share their knowledge of the future pricing of the product, its research and development, environmental sustainability, tyre production and other related topics," he added.

About 400 tonnes of rubber are traded in Krabi each month, generating an estimated financial flow of more than 20 million baht.

- *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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# Jungceylon hosts Thailand fruit fest

Jungceylon Phuket hosted the 1st Thailand Fruit Festival 2016, from September 25 through 27. The festival brought together a cornucopia of fresh and processed fruits and innovative fruit products sourced directly from local farmers.



(From left to right) Director of Agricultural Trade Promotion Division 1 Worapun Prasertying, Jungceylon General Manager Paul Rochel, Vice Governor Prajiad Aksornthamakul, Agricultural Trade Promotion Division 2 Director Suthatsanee Rajruangrabin and guest.

# Officials welcome tourists on China's 'National Day'

Phuket officials with the Airports of Thailand welcomed Chinese visitors arriving on October 5, as the Phuket International Airport launched the island's 'Golden Week' campaign to celebrate the People's Republic of China's national holiday.



Phuket Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan (center) and AOT Phuket staff dress up in traditional Chinese garb to welcome tourists from China at Phuket International Airport.

# Subaru stunt show cranks up the heat

Guinness World Record stunt driver Paul Russell Swift wowed crowds, courtesy of TC Subaru Thailand, the official Subaru dealer of Thailand, on October 7 through 9. Stunt drivers demonstrated their abilities in two-wheeling (skiing) their vehicles, doing burn-outs and tricks at Saphan Hin in Phuket Town.



(From left to right) Tawan Kamrit, Sales & Marketing Manager (TC Subaru Thailand), Guinness World Record stunt driver Paul Russell Swift and Piriya Tantipiriyakij, Managing Director (Lifestyle Auto) of Subaru Phuket.



A stunt driver gets their vehicle up on two wheels during the skiing event.



Stunt drivers perform burnouts during the Saphan Hin stunt show.

## Events in Paradise

### Former Phuket governor visits Nook-Dee resort

Former Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada visited Nook-Dee Boutique Resort by Andacura in Kata. Mr Chamroen said he misses Phuket.



(From left to right) Wanchai Sae-Tan, former Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada and Klaus R Rauter, Managing Director of Andacura Hotels & Resorts.

### Bangkok Hospital Phuket visits the Phuket Gazette

Bangkok Hospital Phuket representatives visited the *Gazette's* office on October 7 to support the Phuket Vegetarian Festival and present gifts to Editors.



(From left to right) Event Marketing Executive Pannathat Kesro, Gazette Editors Wes Martin and Sahar Aftab Paliwala, Head of Corporate Communication BDMS Southern Group, Niyompong Torwong and Public Relations Executive Piyarat Techamanosikul.

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# Queen of Jordan opens UWC

By Desmond Farang

OVER 400 guests attended the official opening of The United World College – Thailand on October 1, including Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan.

The school's inauguration makes it the first UWC in Thailand and the 16th such campus worldwide. UWC Thailand (UWCT), formerly Phuket International Academy, currently has 375 students from 59 countries, aged 18 months to 18-years-old. The school welcomed its first cohort of UWC scholars in August.

UWCT Communications Manager Natalie Weekes told the *Gazette* on October 10 that UWC has 154 National Committees worldwide in charge of selecting students for entry into one of the 16 UWC schools or colleges.

"UWCT's selection is based on demonstrated promise and potential only, and places are offered independent of financial means," the statement reads. "A vast majority of students selected through UWC National Committees therefore receive full or partial scholarships in order to allow as many students as possible to receive a UWC education, independent of their socio-economic background."

"UWCT's class of 2018 is primarily made up of National Committee scholars, who represent 30 of the 43 students in Grade 11."

The opening ceremony included speeches from Sir John Daniel, Chair of the UWC In-



HM Queen Noor was gifted a potted plant by a student dressed as the warrior-god Hanuman. Photo: Wes Martin

ternational Board, an address by Dr Teerakiat Jareonsettasin, Vice Minister of Education in Thailand, and HM Queen Noor of Jordan, current President of UWC.

"Standing up to intolerance and injustice are not the only pressing issues our young people must face," HM Queen Noor said during her speech. "They will be the generation that must address environmental issues such as access to food, water and other vital resources and managing a rapidly growing world population. Faced with these and other global concerns, we can see even more clearly that the world needs future leaders

who know and understand one another and who are inspired to make a positive difference."

"UWC Thailand has a unique role to play in addressing these challenges and demonstrating the power of education to bring people together."

HM Queen Noor was then gifted a potted plant by a student dressed as the mythical Thai warrior-god Hanuman.

Julian Whiteley, UWCT's Head of School, focused his address on the need for custodianship of the island's environment, highlighting student engagement in green-oriented projects.

"Phuket's economic health is dependent upon the health of the marine environment," Mr Whiteley said. "And yet we have all witnessed the degradation that has taken place over the years, as it does in places the world over that become popular destinations. With the assistance of the Nai Yang Sea Bees Dive School, run by UWC graduate Michael Bannick, our students will be working on a reef conservation project."

Mr Whiteley said UWCT students were also involved in a mangrove reforestation project.

"The students have already planted over 3,000 trees this

year and our aspiration is to establish our own nursery. It was wonderful this year at our Wai Kru ceremony, not to be presented with an arrangement of cut flowers, but a mangrove sapling. But education is the key and we want to work with the local community on this too."

During the ceremony students performed several dance and musical pieces including a New Zealand Haka, an African dance piece, a traditional ceremonial Thai dance, a traditional Russian dance and a lively Bollywood performance. The majority of performances were developed by UWCT students. The school's Poetry Slam group also performed a self-composed piece on the struggles faced by refugees.

The closing remarks were made by grade 12 student Bushra, one of the school's 'Kurt Hahn' scholars from Kashmir and the current Chair of the Student Council.

"Now that we are a part of the UWC family, we will continue to do our very best to encourage students to be mindful about themselves and towards their society so that they can become change-makers," Bushra said.

"We see it as our responsibility towards the community that we call our home. There is so much for us to accomplish in terms of becoming a UWC but that is also the beauty of it – there is always something we can improve on, and we have only just begun."



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## Illuminated boats light up the sky



An illuminated boat procession or 'Lai Ruea Fai' is being held in Muang District, Nakhon Phanom Province throughout this month. The festival is celebrated at the end of Buddhist Lent, when Lord Buddha is believed to have returned to Earth from heaven. Fire boats decorated with flowers, incense, candles, and lanterns are launched on the Mekong River every evening.

## PKRU to represent Thailand at WRO 2016

A GENERAL science team from Rajabhat Phuket University was named Thailand's champion to compete in the World Robot Olympiad 2016 (WRO 2016) in the advanced robotic challenge in New Delhi, India.

The champions were named as Pipat Charoensuk, Apiwat Jinta and Tamolwan Boonchuay, and were led by two teachers named Tanawit Tongmai and Parawee Yutgaskasemsan.

The WRO 2016 is scheduled to take place from November 25-27.

Another team from PKRU placed fifth in the national round.

Mr Tanawit, who devoted his time to the success of his students, revealed the behind-the-scenes workings of the team to the *Gazette*.

"The students worked very hard and practiced daily after class from 5-10pm," said Mr Tanawit.

"In order to compete with other nationalities, the students pulled out all the components to understand their mechanics better as well as to improve the overall functionality."

Mr Tanawit added that the entire team at PKRU, including the teachers, is looking forward to representing Thailand at the competition.

- *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

# Gourmet with a twist

LOCATED 10 minutes from Chalong Circle along the road to Kata-Karon, Mom Tri's Wok Pagoda fuses gourmet Western and traditional Thai dishes together over an open-air pavilion.

Nestled in the steep slopes of Phuket's mountainous East-West divide, Wok Pagoda's vantage captures a nearly 180-degree view of Chalong Bay, Phi Phi island and the carpet of lush terrain rising into Phuket Hill.

In short, the view alone is worth the visit.

Wok Pagoda's fusion-focused fare is the new-born sister to the established and widely-praised Mom Tri's Kitchen, just a jaunt away in Kata.

Its opening in December, just in time for high season, and will allow patrons to sample the wok-served gourmet fusion of Thai, Asian and Western recipes that are uniquely crafted by head chef Tummanoon Punchun, and creatively presented by his prompt and courteous staff.

Mr Tummanoon's reputation as a premier chef in Thailand brings with it a focus on the charcoal grill at the heart of Wok Pagoda's state-of-the-art kitchen. Fresh, locally-sourced ingredients fill a menu designed to give the classics a twist.

From stir-fried beef tenderloin in a red reduction sauce with crackles of black pepper and a Thai heat, to a basted and braised sweet-yet-savory pork-



House favorites include baked sea-scallops and a tiered eggplant salad with shrimp and curdled chicken. Photos: Wok Pagoda/ Mom Tri's Kitchen

chop, Western clientele will feel right at home while easing into their Southeast Asian tastebuds.

House favorites include baked sea-scallops served in the shell and topped with garlic and Parmesan; a wafer tower layered with rich and

locally-sourced crab meat and garnished with basil and pesto dashes; and a similarly tiered eggplant salad with shrimp and curdled chicken. Every dish is served in an elegantly styled wok.

The Japanese-inspired bar is perfect for those who want

to enjoy yakitori tapas, or just cocktails and conversation while enjoying the scenic view.

In Wok Pagoda, Mom Tri has delivered a classic gourmet restaurant with a twist and flare fitting for Phuket.

- *Phuket Gazette*

## Thai Samsung offers discounts on pre-bookings

THAI Samsung on October 12 offered a 10,000 baht discount plus 2,990 baht headphones to fans who had pre-booked Galaxy Note 7, if they opt for other top models of its smartphones.

Thai Samsung Electronics officially announced the cancellation of the pre-booking of its new flagship Note 7, a day after Samsung announced the halt of sale and production of the Note 7 following continued reports of battery explosions.

Thai Samsung said the customers who have pre-ordered Note 7 will get a 10,000 baht discount for buying Galaxy S7, Galaxy S7 edge or Galaxy Note 5 instead. The customers will

be given Samsung Level Active headphones worth 2,990 baht as a gift.

But the customers who simply cancel the pre-booking without opting to buy one of the three models, will receive a 2,000 baht cash voucher as a gift.

The company explained that in Thailand, Galaxy Note 7 has never been up for sale and Thai Samsung Electronics took only pre-booking orders.

"We would like to inform pre-booking customers that they can have their deposit fully refunded," adding that they can also opt for a 2,000 baht cash voucher or the discount.

- *The Nation*

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# Shooting for the stars

**On Deck**  
By Duncan Worthington

BANGKOK was host to Asia's Sports Industry Awards & Conference (SPIA Asia) at the beginning of this month. A two-day conference with presentations from leaders in the regional sports industry – IMG, Lagardere, GroupM, Media Pro, Total Sports Asia, TATA Consulting, and many more – discussing the best practices and latest developments within the sports industry, was followed by the Asian Sports Industry Awards.

It was a veritable sports buffet of information and opinion and a celebration of the sports industry. Sailing, sadly, didn't get much of a look in.

Thailand has some of the best amateur sailing events in the region, evidenced by the large number of sailors from around Asia and beyond that come to Thailand each year to compete in these events. Phuket King's Cup Regatta, Top of the Gulf Regatta, Phuket Raceweek, Samui Regatta and the Bay Regatta – they're household names to many near and far, yet there was only one Thailand regatta that made the shortlist at SPIA Asia, Top of the Gulf Regatta, and they walked away with Silver in the



Extreme Sailing Series in Qingdao, China. Photo: Aitor Alcalde Colomer/ Extreme Sailing Series

'Best Amateur Event of the year in Thailand' category.

What was more of a concern, however, was how little airtime sailing got in the conference. Everything from buffalo racing to marathons, table tennis, badminton, football and more were covered. Brands such as Liverpool and Chelsea were present. Sailing, however, got only a mention in passing. Blink and you missed it.

For a country that is blessed with world-class cruising grounds, has an established amateur regatta

scene with strong international draw, and has produced a youth world champion in the sport, why is so little attention outside the 'those-in-the-know' given to the sport?

While our neighbors are attracting world-class sailing events to their shores, Thailand seems content to watch the sport sail on by.

Singapore has hosted an event in Extreme Sailing Series on a number of occasions as well as having been a stopover for the Volvo Ocean Race in the past. China has done the

same, as well as entering a team in the Louis Vuitton Cup previously, and of course, hosting the Olympics.

Hong Kong meanwhile, has been named a stopover in the 2017/18 Volvo Ocean Race for the first time.

Thailand is not without excellent facilities. The skill set is here in-country, and Thailand does indeed host international events. The Kingdom has hosted a number of dinghy world championships over the years and Royal Varuna Yacht Club in Pattaya is to host the

Optimist World Championships in July 2017.

However, at the professional level of the sport, Thailand is nowhere to be seen.

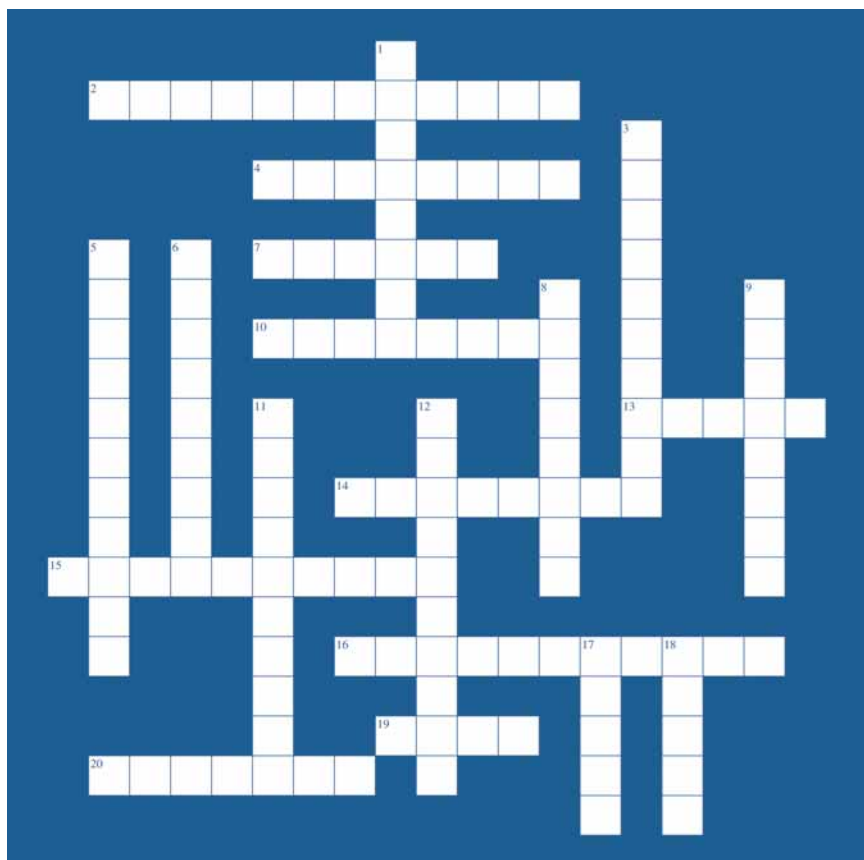
Sure, hosting such events are not cheap and require significant financial backing. In most cases in Asia these events have government backing and financial support, yet Thailand has not yet reached this level.

Hosting such international events is not simply a way to promote the country. Such sporting events often get put into the tourism bag and are seen as a way to draw visitors – think F1 and FIFA World Cup. However, they are so much more.

The intangible benefits are priceless. Such events inspire, give hope and provide opportunities. Hosting international sailing events can be a catalyst for industry growth, growth in sporting excellence and a springboard for a career path for young sailors – something that is sadly lacking in Thailand (and Asia), for the sport of sailing.

It's time to think big Thailand.

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



## Gazette Crossword

Test your word power and local knowledge.

### Across

- 02. Not candid or sincere
- 04. Able to perceive or feel things
- 07. Pyramid-like temple
- 10. District or municipality offices in Thailand
- 13. Lowest or deepest point
- 14. Long narrow boat used to transport tourists
- 15. Sincere regret
- 16. Attracting notice or attention
- 19. Pier located in Pa Khlok
- 20. Legendary bird that rises from the ashes

### Down

- 01. Defunct Thai airlines that crashed in 2007
- 03. Not logical or reasonable
- 05. Coffee pot with plunger
- 06. Take the place of
- 08. Shorten by cutting off the top
- 09. Details of lineage, especially of animals
- 11. Conditions relating to public health
- 12. Hundredth anniversary
- 17. Beans used to produce chocolate
- 18. Last letter of Greek alphabet

Solution on opposite page.



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# A flowery conundrum



A GOOD friend of mine once had a roof garden in Phuket, with trellises completely covered in a vigorous climber replete with lush green foliage and masses of golden trumpet-shaped flowers.

The growth was so dense that it was home to at least thirty pairs of nesting sun-birds. Its name? That's easy. Knowledgeable gardeners among you will be saying: *allamanda* – either the large and spectacular *cathartica* or the smaller, more common and hardier *schotti* – the one often used as a border plant to decorate roadsides.

Actually it is neither, though it does belong to the same genus of *apocynaceae*; all plants which contain a milky and poisonous latex in their stems.

This particular plant hails from Mexico and Central America and, to the best of my knowledge, is rarely grown in Southeast Asia.

Certainly, this is the only example I have encountered either in Thailand or the Philippines. A pity, since it is not only a vigorous climber, but possesses clinging tendrils, which mean that unlike the heavyweight *allamanda cathartica*, it needs no support and will be happy in a large container.

Your correspondent would



The portulaca is perfect for coloring gardens in Phuket. They burst into bloom whenever the sun caresses and they have an immunity to drought. Photo: Andrew Butko

love to hear from anyone who is cultivating this vine. Its name? Probably *odontadenia*.

There is another aspect to this floral puzzle. According to the 'bible' of the country's flora, 'Plant Materials in Thailand' – an illustrated catalogue which comes close to listing all species grown in the kingdom, there is another related climber called

*pentalinon luteum*.

Like the *odontadenia*, it comes from central America and has similar, five-petaled, trumpet-shaped blooms in an even brighter neon-yellow.

Both have a pronounced pinwheel shape, with slightly overlapping petals that in form, if not in hue, resemble the flowers of the periwinkle.

And since this vine is such a

vivid yellow (luteum means 'yellow' in Latin), I am inclined to think this may be the variety in question.

There are lots of related and more accessible species. For example, a deep rose-pink variety of the allamanda is the *mandevilla blanchetii*, named after a British botanist.

Like *cathartica*, the *mandevilla blanchetii* is not

self-supporting. It will need stakes to help it maintain its shape, but it can be trained against a wall or trellis. The leaves, which are grey-green, are relatively sparse and prone to attacks from mealy bugs.

But there are many more hybrids, mostly developed from three species: *amabilis*, *splendens* and *sanderi*. The colors now range from pale pink and purple to white and even red. *Sanderi*, a Brazilian native, is much more vigorous than the violet form *blanchetii*: a vine planted in my garden quickly grew eight feet tall and covered the sala. With deep green foliage and a yellow center to each bloom, it is a dramatic addition to any garden.

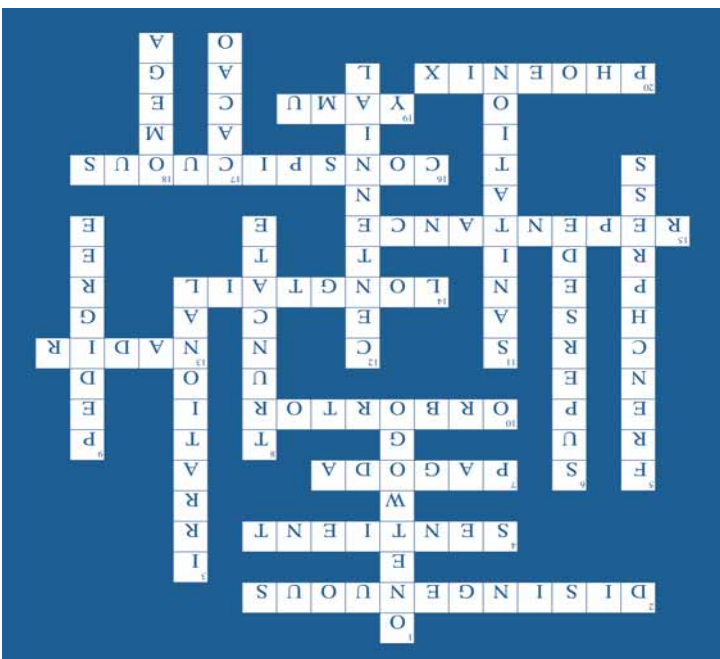
All these climbers enjoy a measure of sun. Most will grow happily on a patio or terrace, provided the conditions are right. If you plan to use a container, then use a large one. The roots will need a mix of sand (to help drainage) and plenty of organic material. Since they are heavy feeders, apply some slow-release fertilizer to the soil three or four times a year.

Oh, and don't worry too much about the names.

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

## Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



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# The reality of Phuket weather



A LOT is said about the negatives and positives of the business and economics of the Phuket property market, but it seems that less is said about the realities of the weather here on our green and often wet island, and how that impacts on property.

What is said is often encapsulated in a sugar-coated cloud of positivity – I recall the time there was a campaign within the property market among agents and the like to rename ‘Monsoon Season/Wet Season’ as the ‘Green Season’. This, like the drooping electric cables scattered between various concrete pillars, didn’t really hold up to the test of time.

Before I launch into a property weather analysis, I would like to say that one of the reasons I moved to Thailand was for the tropical climate. I can further confirm that I didn’t really know what tropical meant until I experienced its fluctuations year in and year out.

One of the main aspects of the weather system here means that new property looks great in high season, but if it isn’t maintained it can quickly look like old property. This effectively means that asset management of an estate and maintenance of a property is very important and therefore buying a property can and



Weather is often ignored as a relevant factor when judging the property market. Photo: Gazette file

should involve looking closely at the management plan.

There is a premium for property which faces the sea or is anywhere near a piece of sand and a glimpse of the sea is involved. The premium doesn’t just involve the premium for the view, it involves having to re-sand, re-paint and recalibrate sun-warped sliding doors, replacing balcony wood and constantly redesigning overhead shade that perhaps the architect didn’t think looked cool in the promotional 3D renderings but your family might appreciate as a respite when they visit.

Aside from the effect of salt and sun, there are quite

wide ranging effects from water. It never ceases to amaze me, or the web forum trolls, that there appears to be great surprise expressed each year about the sheer volume of rainfall and that the rainfall is at its most intense for an average of 8 months out of the year.

The fact of the rainfall means that many houses without guttering will need it to prevent damage to their walls and structure. Further, the rain causes that freshly poured and oh-so-popular sandwash to become slimy and brown, unless you treat said sandwash with many chemicals and also employ your own jetwash or outsourced

jetwashers to intervene.

The rain also causes legal disputes, fortunately or unfortunately depending on what business you are in. Seemingly unknown to many property developers and land owners, there is a provision in the civil and commercial code of Thailand which addresses this. The second part of section 1340 reads “...if any damage is suffered by reason of such artificial drainage [being from higher land] the owners of the land may, without prejudice to any claim for compensation, require the owner of the higher land, at the owner’s expense, make drainage through lower land to a public waterway or drain.”

There are, conveniently, some Supreme Court cases that support this principle, I am reliably informed.

So, as you watch the raindrops fall on the uneven road surfaces of our developing highways, consider for a moment the impact this water has on the property market here in Phuket and how it could affect your investment and expenses here. If you are busy drafting up a brochure describing the seasons, or reading such a brochure thinking about your ‘usage rights’, consider for a moment, how many times during the ‘green season’ the swimming pool will be used by you and how many times it will need to be cleaned. Consider how many times you might not be able to go to the beach in an eight-month rainy period, and how many times the roads and underpasses will flood, albeit temporarily.

If you are a contractor about to tell your employer that you will ‘finish in 3 months, no problem’, don’t forget – it will rain, your workers will get wet, your materials will get wet and so on. And if you are planning on laying any electric cables – they may get wet too.

Be under no doubt – Phuket is a green island, and still beautiful in my opinion, but it is also undoubtedly very wet.

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

## World-class resort mall opens in Hua Hin

THE GRAND opening of the Bluport Hua Hin Resort Mall earlier this month attracted so much interest that traffic jams formed along parts of the route from Bangkok to Hua Hin resort town in Prachuab Kirikhan province.

The Mall Group and Proud Real Estate spent more than 4 billion baht on the destination, which spans more than 200,000 square meters, and is the first ‘resort mall’ in Thailand.

About 50,000 square meters have been allocated for a department store, 25,000 square meters for a shopping plaza and 10,000 square meters for a supermarket, as well as exclusive stores, restaurants, cinema complex and theme park.



The Mall Group and Proud Real Estate spent more than 4 billion baht on the new mall. Photo: The Nation

Supaluck Umpujh, vice chairwoman of Hua Hin Asset and chairwoman of The Mall

Group said the group has continuously advanced Thailand’s retail legacy by fashioning

world-class department stores, such as Siam Paragon, the Emporium and the Emquartier.

“The Mall Group, as Thailand’s leading retail developer, has once again outdone itself as it is ready to reveal its latest pride and joy, made possible by joining forces with Proud Real Estate,” Ms Supaluck said. “The resort mall is right across from the Intercontinental Hotel, with the architectural marvel that combines inspirations from famous seaside resorts, such as Saint Tropez, Riviera, the Caribbean islands, the Mediterranean Sea and Cape Town,” she said.

“The interior and exterior designs come together harmoniously to become the gorgeous

resort mall offering a delightful shopping experience and premium services.

“Hua Hin has a charm that enchants people from all walks of life, from around the world with its tourism spots, natural paradises, and historical heritage. It is without doubt that Bluport Hua Hin Resort Mall will become a world class resort mall destination in Asia.”

Bluport has selected leading fashion merchandise, beauty, lifestyle, sports, and digital technology products.

It also includes famous restaurants and well-known cafes, a premium gourmet market, Bluport cineplex, and a ‘Whale Port’ interactive theme park.

– *The Nation*

# Red Planet slated for US\$70mn expansion

THE low-cost, 144-room Red Planet Patong may acquire new siblings in the region, after an October 5 announcement from parent company Red Planet Hotels that it had secured US\$70 million from investment bank Goldman Sachs to support expansion in Asia.

Founded in 2010, the pan-Asian budget hotel chain owns and operates a portfolio of 4,118 rooms at 26 hotels in Asia: seven in Indonesia; four in Japan, 10 in the Philippines and five in Thailand – in Bangkok, Pattaya, Hat Yai and Patong in Phuket.

The funds from Goldman Sachs will facilitate the activation of a confirmed pipeline for the company to open 10 new hotels, slated to open over the next two years.

Red Planet Hotels Chief Executive Officer Tim Hansing said the investment would solidify the company's current expansion roadmap, and help to establish a basis to close a final round of private investor equity support to further expand their brand.

"We have a well-diversified portfolio over four countries,



Founded in 2010, the pan-Asian budget hotel chain owns and operates 26 hotels in Asia. Photo: Red Planet

and have developed a highly systematized brand," Mr Hansing said. "We have also created a unique customer-facing IT platform that is without

parallel in our market. We now have substantial growth opportunities, not only in our existing markets, but also in additional countries, where we

are confident our brand and product will excel."

"To have our company, our people, our product and our brand be funded by Goldman

Sachs gives us the confidence that we are on the right track to our stated goal of a 2018 Initial Public Offering (IPO)."

"The growth of travel, coupled with the evolving demands for more diverse and cost-efficient hospitality platforms, is leading to new opportunities for entrepreneurial companies in Asia," said a Goldman Sachs managing director Jonathan Vanica. "We anticipate our capital will help Red Planet Hotels accelerate its expansion throughout the region."

Simon Gerovich, Chairman of Red Planet Hotels, added: "The investment we have received from Goldman Sachs will augment our expansion capabilities in the short-term and allow us to focus on our longer-term goals of scaling up our hotel footprint across the Asia-Pacific region."

Since 2011, Red Planet Hotels has raised US\$240 million, and the funds from Goldman Sachs position the company to complete its next and final pre-IPO round of capital raising amounting to USD250 million.

- *Phuket Gazette*

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Boat Lagoon Phuket. 2 bedrooms, fully furnished. Email: fon-daki@hotmail.com

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## GENERAL CLASSIFIEDS

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**Daily Meetings**

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084-307 7408  
Email: phuketaa@yahoo.com

Google AA Phuket

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**Position: Sales Representative** **THE VIEW**

- Listening to customer requirements and presenting appropriately to make a sale
- Cold calling to arrange meetings with potential customers
- Responding to incoming email and phone inquiries
- Negotiating the terms of an agreement and closing sales
- Gathering market and customer information
- Negotiating on price, costs, delivery and specifications with buyers and managers
- Creating detailed proposal documents, often as part of a formal bidding process which is largely dictated by the prospective customer
- 1+ years experience will be considered
- Knowing projects in Phuket
- High commission

Contact Monthipa. Tel: +66 (0)836 914 028.  
Email: info@theviewphuket.com  
Website: http://theviewphuket.com

**HANDYMAN NEEDED**  
Thai national. Full-time job. 6 days/week. Driving licence & spoken English skills required. 5-villa resort, small team. Cherng Talay, Thalung, Phuket. Please call 076-602 280, 089-594 5312. Email: lea@siamaya.com

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- Dive Instructor
- Asst. Chief Engineer
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- E-Commerce Reservation Supervisor
- Spa Supervisor
- Bar Supervisor
- Excursion Guide

**Profile:**

- ▶ At least a vocational certificate or Bachelor's degree
- ▶ At least 3-5 years experience in the field
- ▶ Strong result oriented, people management and leadership skills
- ▶ Strong English communication skills and computer skills
- ▶ Strong analytical and problem solving skills and execution of work

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- ▶ Duty meals in the staff canteen / Officer check at hotel restaurant as per position category
- ▶ Private dress / uniform laundry
- ▶ Transportation from/to Phuket / Krabi - Resort for round trip by ferry
- ▶ Accommodation as per your position at resort

Thai national and foreigner applicants will be considered. Please send your CV to [hr@zeavola.com](mailto:hr@zeavola.com) [preecha@zeavola.com](mailto:preecha@zeavola.com) or call Preecha Onkong at 075-627000 for an appointment.

**Human Resources Department**  
Resort: 11 Moo 8 Laem Tong, Koh Phi Phi, Ao Nang, Muang, Krabi 81000 Thailand  
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# Leaving a better world behind

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

RICH Cramp is the Phuket organizer of Trash Hero, an organization dedicated to solving the global garbage problem. He has a degree in English Literature, and currently teaches at HeadStart International School in Phuket. He spent part of his childhood in Thailand, before moving to Hong Kong, then Taiwan and finally settling in England.

"I moved back to Thailand to travel and teach after 22 years away, and this is part of the reason why I decided to start Trash Hero in Phuket – I saw the effect of 20 years of unregulated plastic pollution," he says.

Rich laments the fact that only hotels and businesses near the beach focus their efforts on garbage collection and disposal, with little or no input from the government, despite the fact that one of Thailand's main attractions are the beaches.

"One image I'll never forget is seeing some Thai children taking selfies on a beach that was covered in rubbish. What got me was that they didn't seem to be aware of the rubbish they were

standing in. Or if they were, they thought it was normal and still worth a photo. At once I knew there were two problems: the beaches aren't looked after and the need for education in Thailand regarding plastic pollution is huge," says Rich.

Rich believes the most important step toward solving the garbage crisis is educating the youth about pollution and its effects on the planet.

"If any of our Trash Heroes grow up to be in a position of influence, just imagine the difference they can make. The whole concept of sustainability is that we are borrowing the world from future generations and whatever we put in it, they will have to deal with. It shows kids that you need to get off the couch, stop signing petitions on Facebook and get your hands dirty to fix the world's problems," he says.

Rich is more than happy with the response to Trash Hero's cleanup campaigns and says that all kinds of people, ranging from local street sweepers to tourists and expats, show up at the clean-ups. However, he believes there

is still much more to be done, particularly with regards to changing people's mindsets.

"Someone once wrote online that initiatives like ours don't make a difference – don't believe the naysayers. On average we pick up 200kg of trash every week, which means that by August next year, we will have stopped about ten tonnes of rubbish floating back into the ocean," he says.

Rich says that laying the blame on tourists may be easy, but that's not the solution.

"A lot of the stuff we pick up isn't just litter from tourists, although the current narrative is that tourists are the main problem. They certainly are part of the problem, but if we are to fix this, there needs to be a culture of openness and dialogue," says Rich.

Rich's message is simple – prevention is key.

"In future Trash Hero Phuket campaigns, we want to take action on plastic bags before they leave the shops. I'd also like to work with the local fishing industry to see if we can reduce the amount of trash being dumped into the seas by some

of the boats," he says.

Being a full-time teacher and a family man, finding the time to commit to the initiative is one of the biggest challenges for him.

"At the moment I join cleans every two weeks. Sounds simple, but not when you have to arrange print-

ing of t-shirts, post boxes of bottles, find sponsors and attend the cleans themselves. It all adds up.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand is the official sponsor and has been of great help to us. At the end of the day, once you've cleaned a beach and the sun is setting, it's a great feeling," he says.



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