

# Phuket Gazette

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'WITHIN ONE YEAR WE'LL GET THE FORESTS BACK UNDER CONTROL'

## TAKING IT BACK



Following a court ruling that the plantation was in fact encroaching on public forest land, Thalang District Municipality issued a letter informing residents of the ruling and ordering them to demolish the construction immediately. Photo: Phuket PR

### Task force makes final cut to reclaim Forestry Dept land

By Winai Sarot

THALANG locals are furious after a joint task force of government officers demolished a man-made plantation in Suan Pa Bang Kanun on December 19 as it was reportedly encroaching on 120 rai of public forest land in Phuket.

The first round of demolitions in the area took place on July 14 this year, during which five houses, a palm-tree plantation and a rubber plantation on about 48 rai of land overlapping forest reserves were torn down.

A 1998 census of registered community members and property claims showed that the area, spread out over some 2,000 rai, is partially covered by forest.

Government officials said that they had allowed community members to settle on land where the forest had died off naturally, but villagers not counted in the census were accused of encroaching onto government-controlled land, which is the origin of the long-standing issue.

At the time of the first demolition, former Phuket Vice Governor Chokdee Amornwat said that the court was also considering whether another 100 rai or so had been encroached upon.

Following a court ruling that the plantation was, in fact, encroaching on public forest land, Thalang District Municipality issued a letter on September 12 informing residents of the ruling and ordering them to demolish the construction immediately. However, no action was taken by the locals.

Another letter, issued a month later on October 11, gave locals 45 days to demolish any construction on public land, but it also went unheeded. More than two months after the second warning was issued, offi-

cial stepped in to clear the land themselves.

Officials cited the Forest Act, B.E. 1941 section 54 and National Reserved Forests Act, B.E. 1964 section 25(3) as the legal basis for the action.

The raid was led by Capt Boworn Promkeawngam of the Royal Thai Navy's Phuket-based Third Area Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), and Kasem Sukwaree, chief of the Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Phuket Office.

More than a hundred officials from several departments were also present, including Thalang District Office, Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command, Army 41st Military Circle, Thalang Police, *OrBorJor*, Thepkrasattri and Sakoo *OrBorTor*, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) and Phu Yai Baan.

A local named Ampa Thongthep tried...

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### Fatal visa run claims 3 lives in horrifying road crash

KBV Phuket Visa Run Company van crashes into Phang Nga house, resulting in the deaths of three and six seriously injured foreigners during a visa run from Phuket to Satun.

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### BUSINESS



Krabi locals find a way to make edible jellyfish a means to an end during tough times.

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### PROPERTY



Investors offered special seasonal financing deal for Laguna Park homes and luxury villas.

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### LIFE&STYLE



Superyacht rendezvous holds 16th annual event and first Winner's Cup race at SALA Phuket Resort & Spa.

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## LOCAL NEWS

# Briefly

### Pranksters warned of dire consequences

THE EXPLOSIVE Ordnance Unit (EoD) responded to a bomb scare at Phuket's old bus terminal in Talad Yai District on the evening of December 15.

Phuket City Police officers received reports of the incident at about 6pm, regarding a blue suitcase that had been left next to a power pole opposite CN Restaurant.

Lt Apichart Musi-kasang arrived at the scene with other officers and rescue workers, who then notified the EoD following an initial probe.

"We told people to stay away and move their vehicles and then cordoned off the area," said Lt Pratchpong Keawkamchan of the EoD. "We roped up the suitcase and dragged it into the middle of the street. It was heavy but turned out to be empty when my team opened it up."

"The restaurant staff told us they had spotted the suitcase at 8am. At first they ignored it, but by 5:30pm they began to panic. If a tourist forgot the bag, that is okay. However, if someone left it behind to create panic, we will go after them with full force," warned Lt Pratchpong.

The bag was submitted as evidence. Police are looking through CCTV footage to find the suspect.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

### Man arrested for robbing French tourists

A MAN was arrested for robbing a French couple in Cherng Talay on December 15.

The tourists flew back to France the next morning after being reunited with their bag shortly after the incident.

"According to the couple's statement and witnesses' accounts, they were walking near Zscape Condo when the man approached them, snatched their bag and took off," said Lt Col Sakon Krainara of Cherng Talay Police.

"The couple shouted for help and passersby at the scene helped track down and catch the robber. Their bag – contain-

# Samkong Underpass closed for grand opening



Officials, monks, clerics and guests gathered at the Samkong Underpass for the official grand opening ceremony on the morning of December 20. Phuket Vice Governor Teera Anantaseriwidhya and Highways Department Chief Construction Engineer Parinya Sangsuwan were present at the event, for which the underpass was closed off 10pm of December 19 until noon the next day. Photo: Highways Office

ing a camera, cell phone, hotel key card and some cash – was returned to them," he added.

Police arrived at the scene and apprehended the suspect, named Isara Kajaroen, 28. He was charged with robbery and taken to Cherng Talay Police Station for legal processing.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

### Man in ICU after high speed collision

A MAN ended up in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and a woman was severely injured in a gruesome high-speed motorbike collision in Thalang on December 15.

Captain Suporn Muangkhai of Thalang Police received reports of the incident about 6:30am and arrived at the scene on Khaow Laan intersection, Srisoonthorn Road to find Kittu Chareonrat lying underneath a motorbike with a piece of metal embedded in one of his legs.

Capt Suporn confirmed that the other victim, named as Chutima Marsingthong, 21, was lying 5 meters away on the asphalt with a twisted left arm.

"Broken helmet visors and pieces of metal were strewn about onsite," said Capt Suporn.

"It took rescue workers

about 15 minutes to remove the metal shard from Mr Kittu's leg, which was still attached to the bike. Both Mr Kittu and Ms Chutima fractured their legs in the collision," confirmed Capt Suporn. "They were first taken to Thalang Hospital and later transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital."

Mr Kittu was in and out of consciousness with labored breathing and in critical condition at the ICU as at press time.

"We are still investigating the crash but are having a hard time figuring out exactly what happened as there were no witnesses. For now we believe it was a head-on collision."

– *Winai Sarot*

### Female cobra captured in Chalong house

SNAKE catchers were called out to a house in Chalong on December 16 to capture a large adult cobra that had hidden itself among antique jars in a store room.

"We had to be really careful capturing this one, a female cobra, to make sure we didn't damage the fragile jars, which were Chinese antiques," said volunteer snake catcher Sayan Thummapan.

Mr Sayan said the snake was

about 3-4 meters long and it was later released in the wild, adding that his team of volunteers from the Ruamjai Foundation have been bagging an average of 2-3 snakes a day over the past two months.

The foundation can be contacted at 076-283346/7 for any such issues.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

### American found with slashed throat

AN AMERICAN man was found dead, with deep slashes to his neck, at a rental room in Rawai on December 20. Police suspect he may have taken his own life but have not ruled out other possibilities.

"Inside the bathroom, we found the body of the 62-year-old victim (whose name is being withheld) lying face up, with a 15cm long wound on his neck, likely caused by a sharp object. We also found a box cutter covered in blood and a pair of scissors covered in blood in the sink," said Maj Thada Sodarak of Chalong Police.

The victim is believed to have been dead for at least an hour before his body was discovered by his girlfriend, who reportedly fainted when she first saw him.

"She returned from work to

find the room locked from inside. She tried to call, but no one answered, so she asked her neighbors to help break down the door," said Maj Thada.

Police also questioned a friend of the deceased.

"The friend said the deceased's visa had expired a year ago and he had been overstaying ever since. He also told us that his friend had asked his embassy for help and was given advice on the documents he needed to provide, but he did not have enough money to get his paperwork processed and pay for the visa," said Maj Thada.

Police found no signs of struggle or ransacking onsite.

"At this stage, we can't say what exactly happened. It looks like he may have cut his own neck, but we are still collecting more evidence, and questioning relevant people," he added.

The body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for further examination and the American Embassy was informed of his death.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

### Pick-up burnt to a crisp on Thepkrasattri

TWO MINOR explosions rocked Thalang on December 19 when a pick-up truck caught fire in the southbound lane of Thepkrasattri Road.

The vehicle was burnt to a crisp with an estimated 600,000 baht in losses incurred. The driver of the vehicle escaped unharmed mere moments before the flames erupted.

"The blue Toyota Vigo belonged to 34-year-old Wichai Buasri, who was on his way to Phuket Town from Pa Khlok," said Sen Sgt Maj Suthee Maneesing of Thalang Police. "After passing by Heroines' Monument he saw smoke coming from under the hood. He parked it on the roadside and exited the vehicle. Two explosions were followed by fire."

"Luckily, Mr Wichai managed to stop in time and right in front of the Tha Rue police box. Officers at the box called in Thalang Police and Srisoonthorn firefighters, who closed off the side lanes to prevent damage to others nearby and extinguished the fire within 30 minutes.

Police have yet to figure out the cause of the fire, but believe it was either a short circuit or a leak in the engine. The pick-up is being investigated.

– *Winai Sarot*

# KBV Phuket Visa Run company van fatalities: Three foreigners killed



The foreigners were on their way to a visa run from Phuket to Satun. Photo: Phang Nga Rescue Team

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

THREE foreigners died and six others were seriously injured when the van they were travelling in crashed into a house in Phang Nga on the morning of December 21.

The foreigners were on their way from Phuket to Satun for a visa run with KBV Phuket Visa Run company, when the van crashed in Bang Tuey sub-

district.

Police and emergency responders rushed to the scene of the accident.

“We found a severely damaged white van with a KBV Visa Run logo, which had crashed into a nearby house. The survivors and bodies of the deceased were immediately transferred to Phang Nga Hospital,” said Capt Chatree Piankayai of Phang Nga City Police.

“The van driver, named Prawit Raweerat, told us that he lost control of the van at a bend in the road due to rain and slippery conditions, hitting an electric pole and then crashing into the house,” Capt Chatree added.

Mr Prawit and his wife sustained minor injuries while the condition of the hospitalized foreigners was reported to be precarious at press time.

# Two injured as truck crashes into electric pole



Officials rushed to the crash scene after initial reports. The driver said he lost control as his vehicle was too heavy. Photo: Winai Sarot

TWO PEOPLE were injured when a trailer truck carrying a backhoe crashed into an electric pole in Phuket’s Thalang District on December 14.

Thalang Police received news of the crash on Thepkrasattri Road northbound at about 3:45pm. Officials and rescue workers rushed to the scene where they found the truck trapped in a jumble of wires.

“The front side of the vehicle was heavily damaged. We found the driver, Somporn Thioput in a confused state. He was still inside and had injured his back,” said Police Lt Sunan Petnhu.

“There was also a child with him, who had sustained minor injuries in the crash,” he added.

The driver told police that he was heading back from Phuket Town when a pick-up truck driving in front of him braked “without warning”. He added that he hit the brakes, but as his vehicle was “too heavy”, he lost control, hitting the pole at the side of the road.

The incident caused a traffic jam for several hours on Thepkrasattri Road.

Mr Somporn was charged with reckless driving and causing damage to public property.

– Winai Sarot

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## Russian dies in grisly collision



One victim died within the hour after the crash. Photo: Winai Sarot

By Winai Sarot

ONE RUSSIAN tourist died and another was severely injured in a horrifying collision with a taxi, while riding their motorbike southbound on Thepkrasattri Road, in front of Baan Jee Teng on the evening of December 20.

The 25-year-old deceased man was named as Roman Melehin. Part of his foot was sliced off and was still attached to the bike, while he also suffered serious injuries to his neck and head.

The other tourist accompanying him was conscious throughout the ordeal, and suf-

fered a broken leg among other injuries. He is currently recovering in hospital. The taxi driver sustained minor injuries.

The 38-year-old taxi driver, named as Nattawat Thongthaphe, told Lt Sunan Petnhu of the Thalang Police that he was heading down southbound Thepkrasattri in the middle lane when the tourists swerved their bike from the left lane over to his lane. "He told us that it was too late to brake".

Mr Nattawat was charged with reckless driving causing death and injury. Officials confirmed that further investigation into the case will be necessary.

## Dozen arrested for illegal gambling in Wichit town house

A DOZEN people were arrested in a raid on a gambling den located at a townhouse in Wichit on the afternoon of December 19.

Most of the gamblers were tour guides, it was reported.

The raid by a joint task force comprising 41st Military Circle and Wichit Police officers was carried out after a month of surveillance following complaints by neighbors of illegal activities at the three-storey house in Chao Fah sub district.

Police identified the house owner and alleged operator of the gambling den as 45-year-old Sompot Chiwinsirithada.

"The door needed a key card to open it. We didn't want to alert anyone of our presence so we waited patiently until we could follow one of the players as he entered the house. Officers immediately moved up to the second and third floors where the gambling was taking



Investigators staked out the house for a month before carrying out the raid. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

place," said Wichit Police chief Thanasak Sawangsri.

Police arrested Mr Sompot and 11 gamblers in the raid.

Mr Sompot was charged with illegally providing gambling services and the others

were charged with gambling offenses.

Maj Thanasak revealed that gamblers at the den were each required to place a minimum bet of 5,000 baht.

– Kritsada Mueanhawong

## Already expired



The encroached area consists of rubber plantations. Photo: Phuket PR

From Page 1

...to get officers to halt the demolitions by presenting a document from the Ministry of Interior dated October 2010, saying locals were authorized to use the land temporarily. However, officers at the scene informed her that the document had expired.

Most of the encroached area consists of rubber plantations along with some sato and betel palm trees, which were chopped down in the raid. The

raid and subsequent demolitions are part of a directive by PM Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha.

"This demolition is part of government policy. There are four steps in the forest reclamation plan," Mr Kasem said. "Within one year, we'll stop deforestation and begin to get the forests back under government control. In a span of two years, we'll be focusing on improving our forest management, and over the next decade we'll be restoring national forests."

## Kathu man drowns while fishing for clams in swamp



The drowned victim was allegedly drunk before diving into the swamp to fish out clams. Photo: Winai Sarot

A PHUKET man drowned while diving for clams in a swamp in Kathu on the morning of December 18.

The incident occurred near

a cement factory on Wichit-songkram Road. Police arrived at the scene to find the body of the victim, named only as Wirot, lying on the ground. His

friend, Narong, was waiting for the authorities at the scene.

"Mr Narong told us that he and Mr Wirot had come to the swamp to find clams and that they had been drinking together before jumping in," said Capt Wichote Meephob of Kathu Police.

Mr Wirot said his friend disappeared and so he searched in the water for him and found his body at the bottom of the swamp.

"He said that he pulled his friend out of the water and then alerted us. We found no signs of struggle or bruising on the body," said Capt Wichote.

Police believe the dead man may have suffered from a cramp, causing him to drown, but they are investigating the matter further before concluding the case.

– Winai Sarot

# Brawling Bangla tourist at risk of brain damage

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

A GERMAN tourist was knocked unconscious from a severe head injury early morning December 18, following a brawl with bouncers at a Bangla Road bar.

Thomas Rapp, 31, reportedly racked up a 2,000 baht bill following a night of heavy drinking at Dragon Night Bar on Soi Freedom.

“Staff and other witnesses told us that Mr Rapp and a friend were celebrating his birthday. When the bar was about to close, staff handed him his bill, but instead of paying it, he started creating a scene,” said Maj Phatthapee Srichai of Patong Police.

“They added that Mr Rapp punched one of the doormen who tried talking to him. Two others then stepped in and a fight ensued, during which Mr Rapp was knocked unconscious.”

He was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital, while the



Three bouncers involved in the altercation say Mr Rapp attempted to throw the first punch. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

bouncers, named as Surachart Chuchuaiy, 26, Pison Inthasara, 22 and Suthat Deeprai, 20, were taken to Patong Police Station for questioning.

Doctors told the *Gazette* the same morning that Mr Rapp

suffered a brain hemorrhage, but could not yet confirm whether he would need surgery.

The bar staff have not been charged so far as police are collecting CCTV evidence and investigating the matter further.

# 20,000 baht bounty for ‘prison breaking’ teen



He stopped at his mother’s home for his things. Photo: Phuket City Police

POLICE ON December 16 announced a 20,000 baht reward to help track down a 19-year-old who escaped police custody after he was apprehended in Phuket Town for a failed robbery attempt on December 14.

The teen, named Chaiwalan Pennuanong, was arrested after he and an accomplice snatched a bag from a female student. She had chased them down while his accomplice fled the scene.

Col Kamon Osiri of Phuket City Police told the *Gazette* that

they were tracking his movements using live CCTV footage until officers reached his house at Tri Trang Beach in Patong.

“He hailed a motorbike taxi and met with his mother – he wasn’t there when we arrived. His mother told us that he packed up some things and left without telling her where he was headed,” said Col Kamon.

“We will capture him soon, and award 20,000 baht to whoever alerts us of his location.”

– Kritsada Mueanhawong



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# Protesters crash deep-sea port hearing

ABOUT 300 protesters broke into a public hearing on December 15 on the ‘destructive’ Songkhla II deep-sea port, claiming the forum was false as only supporters of the project were invited.

Demonstrators gathered in front of the BP Samila Beach Hotel in Songkhla from early morning in a bid to stop the hearing being held by the Marine Department. At 9.30am, they successfully breached the venue and continued to protest inside the meeting room.

Deputy Songkhla Governor Anuchit Trakulmututa said that although many protesters tried to shut down the session, it continued without incident.

“The [security] officers are the ones to be applauded. The situation was under control and there was no violent clash,” he said.

The event was reportedly heavily guarded with hundreds of police and military personnel.

The Songkhla II deep-sea

port is part of the bigger Satun-Songkhla Landbridge project. The proposed site for the seaport is at Ban Suankong in Tambon Nathap of Chana District, although three other sites were proposed at Ban Khoksak, Ban Thayang, and Ban Pakbang.

Mr Anuchit stressed that the new seaport was essential for the province as it could save a lot of expense transporting goods from the region to elsewhere. He said that the first Songkhla deep-sea port was getting close to its maximum capacity and the goods from Southern provinces had to transport to Penang Seaport in Malaysia instead.

Somboon Khamhang, secretary-general of the NGO Committee on Rural Development in the South, said that despite authorities proclaiming that the forum was a success, the meeting result should be considered void.



About 300 protesters laid siege to the stage at the Marine Department’s first public hearing on the Songkhla II deep-sea port. Photo: The Nation

“The Environmental Impact Assessment study and public hearing for only Songkhla II deep-sea port is unjust. This project links to the other projects such as Pak Bara deep-sea port

and a railroad connection between two seaports to form the big Satun-Songkhla Landbridge project.

“They have to be studied as a whole in order to understand

the impact from this mega-project,” he said.

“We will still carry on our campaign against these destructive projects because they will significantly transform the Southern region into an industrial zone and devastate the pristine natural resources which foster the agricultural, fisheries and tourism economy of the region.”

He said the first public hearing on the Pak Bara deep-sea port in Satun will be held in February 2017.

Renu Vejaratpimol, an expert on EIA and former lecturer at Silpakorn University, warned that the separate EIA study and public participation will lessen the overall impact of the project.

“I still cannot see any economic worthiness from this landbridge project and I do not think it is worth trading rich natural resources for the wealth of some top elite,” he said.

– *The Nation*

## Dep Mayor vows cleanup of littered Samui beach



A Facebook post displaying the rubbish at Chaweng Beach went viral. Photo: Suchat Hankij

SAMUI officials vowed to clean up Chaweng Beach in Koh Samui after photos of the trash there went viral on social media on December 19.

As per the pictures being circulated via the Facebook post, about 500 meters of the beach is littered with garbage comprising bottles, old shoes, spray cans, Styrofoam and plastic buckets. The area has begun to smell and the water has become dark, locals reported.

Koh Samui Deputy Mayor Muensil Poonsawat told the *Gazette* that floods after heavy rains caused the trash to eventually end up at the beach.

“There was a lot of trash that washed up into the Chaweng canal after the city was flooded. The trash went into the canal and ended up in the sea. When the floods came, so did the trash onto the beach,” said Dep Mayor Muensil Poonsawat. “The trash subsequently littered all of the beach. Our staff is working on cleaning the area as fast as possible.”

– *Suchat Hankij*

## Stolen bag returned to American tourist



Mr Rusciano was reunited with his belongings. Photo: Suchat Hankij

By Suchat Hankij

A THAI couple was arrested on December 18 for the theft of an American tourist’s bag from a hotel room in Koh Samui on December 17.

Christopher Rusciano, a pilot for *Spirit Airlines*, was staying at Ark Bar Beach Resort, where the incident occurred.

“Mr Rusciano left his room to meet his friend, who was also staying at the resort in a nearby room. He had left the door to his room unlocked,” said Bo Phut Police Captain Sirichat Kamunee.

“When he returned, he noticed that his bag – containing

gadgets and equipment worth 150,000 baht – had disappeared, so he raised the alarm.”

Police tracked down and arrested two suspects: Uthen Kaseam 25, and Saifon Suudther, 20. They were still in possession of the bag containing Mr Rusciano’s belongings – including a camera, lens and iPad – except his passport, which they had discarded.

Mr Rusciano collected his belongings at Bo Phut Police Station on December 19 and thanked officials for their swift resolution of the matter.

It was confirmed that he will be issued an emergency passport from the American Embassy in Bangkok.

## Demolition execs charged over 4 deaths

POLICE have charged the managing director and engineer of a demolition firm over the collapse of an eight-storey building in Bangkok that killed four workers on December 16.

Boy Ocean Star Company insisted that it had subcontracted the job to another firm, Mega Tools.

However, police have charged the company's managing director, Mana Kaewmanee, and the firm's engineer Kittipong Yootairomboon with recklessness causing deaths and injury – mental and emotional – to others.

Both denied any wrongdoing and were released on bail of 120,000 baht each.

According to Boy Ocean Star manager Nattapong Rattanatrakoolsuk, Mega Tools, via its representative Kritachaya Sriwana, took over the work from his firm on October 11, and started demolishing the former car showroom at Sukhumvit Soi 87 on November 7.

He added that although his firm was not directly involved in the incident, it was ready to help families of the victims.

On December 20, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) continued its efforts to retrieve the bodies of workers Prai Khanoomram, 38, and Boonjaeng Leslaong, 46, who had been buried under the rubble.

Asked whether the BMA would take over demolition of the building in the wake of the tragedy, Mr Banchong said the administration would look into which party should be in charge.

Yuttapan Meechai, secretary to Bangkok Governor Gen Aswin Kwanmuang, said the BMA had already consulted experts from organizations such as the Engineering Institute of Thailand over the situation.

Deputy Bangkok Governor Amnuay Nimmano said people could report irresponsible building demolitions to the BMA.

Meanwhile, Admiral Banawit Kengrian, a former chief adviser to the Defense Ministry who lives in the area, said the demolition of the building had adversely affected local people since the project began.

"Aside from dust and debris, sometimes vehicles of the firm involved have blocked our soi," Adm Banawit said.



## Digital TV operators ask for govt's help

PRIME MINISTER General Prayuth Chan-o-cha on December 21 invoked special powers under Article 44 of the Interim Charter to issue relief measures for digital TV operators, that have faced business difficulties for problems which many say were caused by the state regulator, as well as the global economic slowdown.

The moves, which include extending the deadline under which state agencies have to return their radio spectra – or bandwidth – for reallocation, were welcomed by broadcasters, who said they would help ease financial strain.

The PM's order extends the deadline for all 21 state agencies to return their spectra to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission by another five years from the original deadline of April next year.

The PM's order also allows the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Research and Development Fund Commission to subsidise the monthly cost faced by digital TV broadcasters for transmitting their programmes to satellite and cable platforms for three years, at a total subsidy of 2.5 billion baht.

The fund commission will pass the subsidy to Channel TV 5, which will seek transmission services for broadcasters. Currently, broadcasters seek transmission services on their own.



## Trucker on ice wrecks havoc

A six-wheel truck driver, allegedly under the influence of crys-

tal methamphetamine, was nabbed near Sukhumvit Soi 63 in Bangkok's Wattana district on the afternoon of December 21 for causing a 38-vehicle collision.

The suspect, who was fleeing after crashing into a policeman's motorcycle, went on to hit 10 other vehicles and then caused a pile-up of 28 vehicles in a 5-kilometer stretch of Sukhumvit Soi 63. The incident also caused severe traffic jams.

Upon hearing of the accidents at 1pm, police rushed to scene to find 26 cars and two motorcycles hit by the truck from the middle to the mouth of the soi, where the truck was parked after having run out of petrol.

The truck driver, identified as Ekkaphot Yossiri, 27, reportedly fled towards Ekamai Skytrain Station on foot, where he was surrounded by some 20 people who had given chase.

City police chief Lt-Gen Sanit Mahathaworn said that Ekkaphot confessed to being high on drugs, a claim that was backed by a positive urine test and 1.93 grams of "ice" in his possession.

31 DECEMBER

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## Phuket Gazette

# As good as it gets

AS the year draws to a close, social media has been flooded with an increasingly common sentiment: Good Riddance 2016.

Fair enough. The past year has been so full of unprecedented – many would say negative – developments that it would be futile to try and list them all here.

A few do stand out and seem to point to some global trends, however. In terms of democracy, at least where it still functions to a reasonable degree, 2016 left many people reeling.

First was the United Kingdom opting out of the EU with the surprising result of the “Brexit” referendum. This was followed by an equally jolting development in the US, where the Electoral College chose reality TV star Donald Trump as its new Commander-in-Chief.

In the Middle East, the world’s undisputed leader when it comes to sectarian violence, ISIS continues its land war to claim responsibility for horrific acts of terror abroad. The list goes on and on.

With global overpopulation, technological change and environmental degradation proceeding at paces never before imaginable, it should not be surprising that so many take the bait when promised of a return to ‘simpler times’, whether they comes in the form of a fabled Islamic caliphate, colonial-era Great Britain or a *Leave it to Beaver* version of the US, circa 1950.

In reality, of course, we have never had it so good. If we could somehow be transported back in time to one of these bygone eras, we would no doubt soon be clutching our smartphones and furiously tapping our heels together begging to be sent back home.

Nevertheless, change fosters feelings of nostalgia that are perfectly wrapped up in tradition. And here in Phuket we are particularly enthusiastic about celebrating them all. Where else are no fewer than four New Years holidays celebrated?

The latest stop on calendar of observances is Christmas, the pagan holiday successfully rebranded as the birthday of Jesus Christ, whose real birth date is, of course, unknown.

But as arbitrarily as they may come to us, holiday traditions provide us with the perfect vehicle to spend time with friends and loved ones, to reflect on the past – and plan for the future.

With all that in mind, the *Gazette* wishes all our readers safe and happy holidays and extends our best wishes for 2017.



## Allow gov to complete his term

*Re: Phuket Gov slashes accidental death target by more than half, Dec 17*

It’s like Ground Hog day. Every so often we get a new Governor who makes grandiose promises to fix this, fix that, improve traffic, reduce crime, but the numbers keep going up and problems keep getting worse.

One wonders if it will ever get better. Why not leave the governor in place for at least 4 years to allow time to accomplish something start to finish?

*Scudman  
Gazette forum*

### Letters to the Editor

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

no brake lights? If so, does he think that would release him from the universal and overriding rule that the driver of a vehicle ramming into the one in front of him is always guilty?

Good luck, Mr Somporn.

*Bob Morgan  
Gazette forum*

feared Benz drivers seem to be the worst of the lot – famous for tailgating, weaving through traffic, illegal overtaking and not using their indicators when changing lanes in their rush to kill or injure tourists.

*Peter Rawai  
Gazette forum*

### No rentals without valid licence

*Re: One dead, another injured in gruesome Phuket collision, Dec 19*

Unless they have a motor-bike licence, these tourists should not be allowed to hire bikes. They watch the locals drive like idiots and think they can go one step further, but forget the locals have been riding bikes since they were 12.

*Stephen Morris  
Facebook*

### Perfect way to get rid of jellyfish

*Re: Edible jellyfish help Krabi fishermen earn extra cash, Dec 17*

This is the perfect way to get rid of this ‘medusa’ and generate some extra income.

I wonder how this jellyfish tastes?

*Ernst Ruetimann, Trang  
Gazette forum*

### Well done to Phuket snake catchers

*Re: Cobra captured in Chalong home, Dec 17*

These guys are awesome, they catch these things without wearing protective gloves or boots. They just use a bit of blue plastic pipe with a loop of rope threaded through it and a whole lot of bravery. Kudos, fellas, well done.

*CaptainJack  
Gazette forum*

### Did the pick-up have brake lights

*Re: Two injured as truck crashes into utility pole in Phuket, Dec 15*

I love the bit about how the pick-up in front of him “braked without warning”.

Is he saying the pick-up had

### Dire need to train Phuket taxi drivers

*Re: Two more Chinese tourists badly injured in Phuket taxi crash, Dec 14*

Unfortunately, people are not taught how to drive safely here, and do not need to be properly trained drivers to pass their driving tests for public service. The taxi, mini-bus, Airport ‘Limousine’ and chauff-

### Keep paying your bar tab as you go

*Re: German tourist suffers brain hemorrhage after fight over bar tab, Dec 19*

I have been travelling to Thailand for 32 years and never had a problem with security or bar staff over a bill. If you get drunk and start mouthing off, trouble will be right at your feet. Pay your bill as you drink, so nothing escalates and you don’t wake up in hospital.

*Stephen Battaglione  
Facebook*

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# Regularly risking life and limb just to remain legal

By Nick Davies

IF YOU are a foreigner living in Thailand you need a visa. That's fair enough. It's like that all over the world. But no matter what kind of visa the foreigner has – tourist, non-immigrant, retirement, education and so on – he or she often has to spend time, money and frequently risk life and limb just to stay legal.

This week we have heard about the deaths of at least three foreigners related to visa issues.

On the morning of December 21, news came in of three foreigners killed in a horrific minivan crash in Phang Nga while doing a border visa run from Phuket [See Page 3].

The driver, who survived, lost control of the van as he took a bend at high speed on the wet, slippery road and then slammed into a power pole and a house front.

What a senseless waste of life, all because these foreigners had to cross a border to stamp their passport, only to turn around and come back again instead of being allowed to make a trip to the local Immigration Office.

Most foreigners, I'm sure, don't mind abiding by the law and just want to make an honest living, maybe supporting a family as well. However, no one really benefits from the foreigner having to do these regular three-month visa runs to another country.

And now, because of completely unnecessary idiocy on the road, at least three families will be in mourning this Christmas because the foreigners



**Unnecessary carnage before Christmas: Three foreigners died horrifically and other passengers were seriously injured when a visa-run minivan crashed in Phang Nga.** Photo: Phang Nga Rescue Team

were forced to put their lives in the hands of a reckless driver, who likely received no real safety training.

On top of that, it's so difficult to really be sure what kind of visa to apply for and what is needed to apply for it. There is little official information online. A simple search reveals mostly stories by other foreigners plagued with the same problems of trial and error.

Even law firms shy away from offering visa advice services as it's a quagmire they'd rather not get into.

Apart from foreign deaths, hundreds of Thais will no doubt die on the roads again over the new year holiday.

There will be police checkpoints, which will perhaps save a few lives by preventing drunkards from driving or the overloading of old vehicles, but the police simply can not be held responsible for people's own stupidity.

Raising penalties for dangerous or drunk driving is all good, but what is really needed is widespread public relations campaigns so that more people grow up under-

standing the risks and speaking up when other drivers put their lives at risk.

Here we drive on the left because Thailand copied much from the United Kingdom's roads when building highways. Britain though, is boasting a dramatic reduction in road deaths over the past 10 years, from 3,201 in 2005 to an average of 1,700 for the past three years.

The government puts the reduction down to a range of factors, including: safer infrastructure; new vehicle technologies; hazard perception testing; tougher law enforcement; shifting social attitudes and better trauma care.

Please do something to educate the public and make it trendy to think of safety.

Come up with some snappy public service announcements for radio and TV that strike a chord in the minds of road users and motorists so that it becomes cool to be a safe driver.

Fobbing off unnecessary road deaths as the victim's karma is not acceptable – not when many of those accidents can be prevented with a more safety-aware public.



**Road Rage: No one wins.** Image: PublicDomainPictures.net

## Countering roadrage

Island View

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

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

AS FAR as road safety in Phuket goes, authorities always highlight 'speeding' and 'helmetless riding' as the major causes of accidents and deaths on the road. However, a relatively overlooked area – in my opinion – is road rage.

One recent incident involves a 21-year-old Thai man, who threw a large rock at a passing car, causing the driver to crash into a nearby pole, injuring him, as well as his wife and child. Police later tracked the man down and called him in for questioning, who explained that the driver had cut him off first and that he wasn't aware that the man's wife and child were in the car with him. After apologizing and paying a nominal fine, he was sent on his way.

Another incident involving a Thai TV celebrity who publicly beat up and humiliated a motorcycle rider for scratching his brand new car, generated plenty of debate last month. Videos captured by bystanders showed the celebrity dragging the man off his motorbike, repeatedly striking and inti-

midating him, and finally forcing him to apologize to his mini-cooper, before letting him go.

The video was shared on several social media websites, particularly Facebook and YouTube. The victim's family reported the incident to police, but said they didn't want to make a big issue because they were worried it might affect his future. The boy suffered a broken nose, damage to both eyes and extensive bruising from the beating he took.

The resultant public outcry cost the celebrity his job in a public announcement and apology by his employers, who were quick to cut him loose when he fell out of public favor. Weeks later, it was revealed that the actor had taken the oath of monkhood and all was forgiven.

One point that stands out in this whole debacle, other than the obvious and disgusting display by the offenders, is the lack (or in some cases total absence) of negative reinforcement.

Merely levying a fine conveys the message that if you pay up, you are free to abuse. In order to discourage such behavior, especially if the injured parties suffer from serious physical or mental harm, the appropriate course of action needs to be much harsher and include at least some jail time, in order to make any real difference to our roads.

## Words from the Wise

**“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”**

– Leo Buscaglia

**“There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.”**

– Nelson Mandela

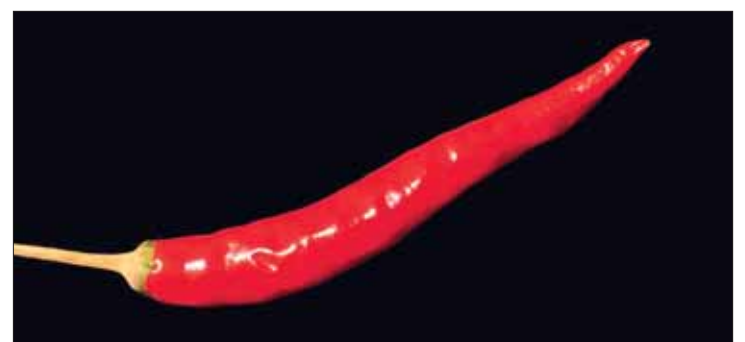
## Thai idioms and their meanings

Thai idioms often take their cues from nature.

If one wants to point out a stark contrast in a situation, it is seen as being like 'a crow holding a chili pepper in its mouth' (*ka khap prik*).

The striking black feathers of the crow clashing with the bright red of a ripe chili pepper are what make for the contrast.

For amorous couples wishing to tie the knot, it is of course tradition for the man to ask the bride-to-be's family for their daughter's hand in marriage in an



**The red of a chili against the black of a crow is a stark contrast.**

appropriate way. This is expressed with the phrase '*khao tam trok, ork tam pratu*', which translates as

entering by the street and exiting by the door.

It's basically expressing the proper way to do it.

## TAT rethinks plan as China arrivals drop

THE TOURISM Authority of Thailand (TAT) is reassessing the Chinese market after arrivals from the Kingdom's No 1 source destination dropped for three consecutive months due to the Thai government's crackdown on zero-dollar tours and illegal tourism businesses.

TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn said the number of tourists from mainland China fell 16 per cent in October and 30 per cent in November compared to the same months last year.

The number is expected to drop by 10 per cent in the current peak season compared to December last year.

The government has cracked down on zero-dollar tours and illegal tourism businesses since September, including the seizing of OA Transport, which controlled more than 2,150 tourist buses that mainly served the China market.

"The government will continue the crackdown on zero-dollar tours and illegal business in a bid to shift to more quality [tourism]," he said.

Mr Yuthasak added that the arrivals target from China this year has been revised down from 10 million to 8.9 million. However, the China market will remain the largest source of international arrivals to the country – about three times higher than the No 2 market, Malaysia.

As of December 14, mainland China had contributed 8.4 million visitors to the Kingdom, up from 7.5 million in same period of 2015, or a 11.2-per-cent increase. The China market alone is expected to generate income of 400 billion

baht this year.

In a bid to stem the drop in Chinese tourists since the crackdown, the governor said TAT and high-ranking officials had talked with the Chinese government and the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and held a familiarization trip to Guang-zhou in China last week in an effort to encourage tourists to return to Thailand. The TAT will also provide a list of guaranteed Thai travel operators to the Chinese government after presenting the CNTA with a long list of approved Thai companies previously.

Following the crackdown, tour operators in China have adjusted the average package price to Thailand from 2,000 yuan (10,000 baht) to between 6,000-10,000 yuan per trip. It has been reported that some companies sold packages for as low as 600 yuan before the crackdown.

The Thai tourism agency is also seeking to join marketing campaigns with airlines to promote Thailand, particularly in Shanghai and Beijing, along with encouraging more charter flights from China to the country between December and February.

"We should pass through this difficult period with regard to the China market and hope to receive more quality tourists in the coming year," Mr Yuthasak said.

"TAT expects to welcome 9.8 million Chinese travellers next year," he added.

TAT said the Chinese market might no longer be an emerging market after the crackdown.

– *The Nation*

## SEPO draws up five-year strategic plan to improve land, sea and air transport



Water transport of goods is required to increase to at least 15 per cent from 11.44 per cent by 2021 as part of the State Enterprise Policy Office's five-year plan. Photo: Olga Maersk

THE STATE Enterprise Policy Office (SEPO) will propose to Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak its five-year strategic plan for 11 transport-related state enterprises, aiming to increase annual transport investment by 10 per cent and reduce goods-transport costs to 6.9 per cent of gross domestic product.

Krichthep Simlee, acting deputy permanent secretary of the Transport Ministry, said SEPO had proposed to the ministry a strategic plan running from 2017 to 2021.

It involves 11 state enterprises under the ministry and complies with the national five-year state-enterprise strategic plan.

Under the SEPO plan, the first strategy calls for raising the capability of Thailand's transportation services to international levels as well as more efficient supervision and oversight to reduce accidents.

Initially, the Transport Ministry has a policy to reduce the

number of fatal road accidents to 4.07 per million kilometers of travel by 2021 and the number of air-freight accidents from six in 2015 to none.

The second strategy involves investment in transport infrastructure to enhance the country's competitiveness and economic stability with sustainability, and develop technology and information technology for more efficiency.

SEPO has set a target for state enterprises' investment in the transportation system to expand by at least 10 per cent per year.

Goods-transport costs are targeted to drop from 7.4 per cent of GDP in 2015 to 6.9 per cent.

The transport of goods by rail is targeted to rise to at least 4 per cent of the total from last year's 1.4 per cent, while water transport of goods is required to increase to at least 15 per cent from 11.44 per cent.

The third strategy involves

state enterprises' capability to generate income from their core and non-core businesses, while reducing the losses that some have suffered due to too-high expenses for staff and inefficient operations.

The fourth strategy is to increase governance and good management, and the fifth aims at innovation and technological improvement for the transportation system.

The Transport Ministry planned to send SEPO its comments and additional information on the strategic plan by December 21 and propose it to the Deputy Prime Minister on December 23, before forwarding it to the State Enterprise Policy Committee chaired by Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha next month.

The strategic plans of each state enterprise in the transportation field will be drawn up this month and in January. The committee will then review the plans in March.

– *The Nation*



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## Phang Nga airport plans take shape

BANGKOK Airways is moving ahead with plans to build an international airport in Phang Nga, tentatively named as Phang Nga-Andaman International Airport.

In what could be either a public-private-sector partnership or a solely private investment, sources have confirmed that Bangkok Airways is in talks with Phang Nga province for a large-scale land lease for the facility, with the environmental impact assessment already in the works.

The proposal has already been submitted to the Forest Department.

The location of the proposed airport is Moo 4, Baan Tha Dindaeng, Lam Kaeng sub-district in Phang Nga's Thai Muang district. It sits on a site of about 2,000 rai (320 hectares).

Tentative plans for the runway are for 3,000 meters, which would be longer than that of Samui's airport. Details on the cost and facilities of the airport have not been unveiled.

Last year, passenger arrivals at Phuket International Airport exceeded 6.4 million, while nearby Krabi Airport passed the 1.8-million level.

Bill Barnett, Phuket-based managing director of C9

Hotelworks Co, said the resort market of Phang Nga is expected to achieve 1 million hotel guests in 2016.

This is expected to become even more pronounced in the years to come as the rising Chinese, Australian and regional Asian source markets add to the traditional legacy winter snowbird arrivals and grow the destination.

Mr Barnett said hotels in the pipeline were increasing.

Overseas investors and international brands are fueling the momentum of a defined move north of Khao Lak into Bangsak and beyond, seeing a series of large upscale properties coming online.

It is expected that the new airport will relieve pressure on Phuket's aviation gateway and serve as a tourism hub for Phang Nga, and as a long-term catalyst for sustainable growth.

Nearby Khao Lak counts 104 registered tourism establishments with 7,822 rooms and is seeing a considerable influx of international hotels in the pipeline.

Bangkok Airways boasts a strong track record successfully managing and marketing a similar facility on the resort island of Samui.

- *Phuket Gazette*

## Edible jellyfish on menu for export opportunities

By Kritsada Mueanhawong

FISHERMEN in Krabi are taking advantage of export opportunities afforded by an earlier-than-usual seasonal influx of edible jellyfish.

About 100 fishermen in Krabi's Nhongtalay sub-district are cashing in on the unusual marine menu item.

The locals are catching the 'Lodchong' jellyfish and selling them for up to seven baht a piece to buyers who are exporting the gelatinous zooplankton as an additional delicacy on menus in restaurants around the region.

Local council member Udon Bootlhee said the Lodchong jellyfish appear in the waters surrounding six Andaman provinces for about three months each year, usually between March and May, but this year the jellyfish have arrived earlier than usual.

"The fishermen have been collecting the jellyfish for the past 10 days, giving them an extra income of about 2,000-3,000 baht a day," said Mr Udon.

"So far this year, the jellyfish have generated about a million baht in total for locals," he said.



A fisherman shows off a Lodchong jellyfish caught off the Krabi coast. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

The Lodchong jellyfish are sold on at Mahachai market in Samut Sakhon Province and

prepared for export to be put on menus in countries such as China, Japan and South Korea.

## Luxury stores could do more to impress

A SURVEY by International Service Check has found that the Internet is playing a crucial role for Thai consumers of luxury products.

Over 68 per cent of customers are doing research online before deciding to buy luxury items, but 72 per cent of luxury purchases are made offline.

Among those who do research online, 67 per cent use non-brand-related channels, such as social media and online reviews. Meanwhile, 53 per cent of consumers decide what to purchase through official brand communication online, 37 per cent make a decision in-store, while 35 per cent are likely to be influenced by recommendations from friends and family.

After doing their research, consumers decide whether to purchase online or in-store.

Consumers who purchase online cite such reasons as better prices (85 per cent), convenience

(62 per cent) and the ability to compare products and prices before buying (54 per cent).

It was found that the higher the price of a luxury product, the less likely it would be purchased online. The average maximum spend online for a luxury product is 25,500 baht. The top reasons for not buying online are the inability to touch and feel a product (50 per cent), being afraid of counterfeit products (48 per cent) and mistrust of websites (24 per cent).

Therefore, the importance of good service offline is still just as crucial as before, if not more important, in pushing consumers to make a decision to purchase.

International Service Check conducted mystery shopping visits to the most popular local and international luxury brands in Thailand from September 19 to October 24. Evaluators assessed 57 major luxury brands for overall service quality and

impressions and found an "unimpressive" average score of 72.2 per cent, which is quite low compared to expectations in luxury stores, where customers expect to be pampered.

"While almost all of our evaluators felt impressed by the stores' atmosphere [97.9 per cent], their impression went downhill from the moment of interaction with the sales assistants," International Service Check said.

Across all five categories, the results obtained an average score of 67.2 per cent. The top sections were closing and farewell (78.3 per cent), delivering of solutions (70.2 per cent) and engaging with the customer (69.5 per cent). The bottom sections were fitting experience (69 per cent) and emotional connection (49.2 per cent).

"Our evaluators found that while most sales assistants actively tried to show products

(83.8 per cent), the product characteristics and/or benefits were not as readily discussed," the firm said in its report.

"Material and quality were discussed only in one out of two visits, followed by style and design (one in three visits), functionality and use of item (one in four visits) and details of manufacture (one in 25 visits).

"Based on these results, the information provided in store is not enough for a customer to make an immediate decision. Only 13 per cent of customers felt confident to buy based solely on the visit to the store.

"After buying, consumers typically return to the Internet and social media to evaluate their purchase. If they were happy with their experience and the product, 55 per cent share their feedback with friends and family."

- *The Nation*



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# Ministers open 16th Thailand Yacht Show

Thundery skies thursday afternoon did nothing to subdue the festivities at the Opening Ceremony of the Thailand Yacht Show 2016. After being greeted by the Show's managing director Andy Treadwell, accompanied by Minister of Tourism & Sport Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul and Deputy Minister of Transport Omsin Chivapruk, the Guest of Honour, Deputy Prime Minister General Thanasak Patimaprakorn and a whole host of senior government representatives and officials were escorted through the Show's Exhibition Pavilion and then on down to D' Deck overlooking Ao Po Grand Marina Dec 15.



The official VIP party at the TYS Opening Ceremony. While the cameras flashed, the drones buzzed overhead, and the horns blared in the marina, the Official Guests joined together for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a great many photographs, and then went down to the docks for a tour of the Show before boarding the crown jewel of the TYS, the 90m Lauren L, for a celebratory dinner.



Deputy Prime Minister General Thanasak Patimaprakorn.



Edward Tan Executive Director with his crew from Hong Seh Marine, Singapore joined the Thailand Yacht Show 2016 at Ao Po Marina.

**Events in Paradise**

# Le Meridien hosts first Relax Bay, Karon Classic contest

Congratulations to the winners and participants of the first 'Relax Bay, Karon Classic 2016'. After a 2km Ocean Swim followed by a 1km Beach Run, Wong Kin Long (Hong Kong) won the race. Scott Bartlett (New Zealand) came in second, followed by Mek Austin Ren Fong (Singapore). Australian Consul-General for Phuket, Craig Ferguson presented trophies to the winners. The event was jointly organized by Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort and Relax Bay Water Safety Academy sponsored the event with the support of the Australian Consulate-General in Phuket and Phuket International Hospital.



From left: Scott Bartlett from New Zealand (2nd Place), Australian Consul-General for Phuket Craig Ferguson, Wong Kin Long from Hong Kong (1st Place), and Mek Austin Ren Fong from Singapore (3rd Place).

# Hyatt holds glittery night

The Hyatt Regency Phuket Resort held a silver and gold-themed 'Glittery Sunset Night' of culinary creations and entertainment with a lucky prize draw on December 2.



From left: Hyatt Regency Phuket Resort executives Vasikan Karnchananan, Director of Sales; Stephen Radcliffe, General Manager; and Sirithorn Viravat, Marketing Communications Manager.

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# Second TYS delights one and all



With dozens of superyachts and exhibitors, as well as the ever-popular demonstration board, the second TYS had something for everyone to enjoy. Photos: Richard Dobson

THE second edition of the Thailand Yacht Show (TYS) was held from December 15-18, 2016 at Ao Po Grand Marina, Phuket. Created by the organizers of the Singapore Yacht Show, the TYS, in partnership with the Thai government, combined the best aspects of yacht charter, boating industry and luxury lifestyle events and was destined to attract industry players and consumers alike to become the focal point of the luxury charter yacht business in the Asia Pacific region.

With the launch of the first edition in February, the Thailand Yacht Show was created to drive the Prime Minister's project to make Thailand the principal region for yachting in Asia, and the winter destination of choice for superyacht owners and charterers from around the world.

Following the success of the inaugural show in February 2016, many of the industry's leading names returned to show their support for Thailand's new national boat show.

The show welcomed visitors from all over the region to view and try out a line-up of premier yachting, boating and luxury brands, including Lee Marine, Boat Lagoon Yachting, Simpson Marine, Asia Marine, Multihull Solutions, Hong Seh, Leopard Catamarans and BURGESS Yachts, among many others.

Highlights included the return of the Norman Foster designed *Ocean Emerald*, a contemporary masterpiece that offers Michelin star on-board dining and a wealth of luxurious on-board facilities;

the Sanlorenzo 46Steel superyacht *Forwin* with its stunning new refit, and the brand new *Galeon 460 Flybridge*, which made her Asian debut.

With a wide variety of boats and yachts to choose from at Ao Po Grand Marina – which has direct access into Phang Nga Bay – potential buyers were given the opportunity to step on board and head out for a sea trial. The popular catamaran HYPE hosted a series of morning cruises around the Bay's beautiful islands for those look-

ing to venture out to enjoy some swimming and snorkelling before the opening of the show. The Second TYS also saw the return of the popular Demonstration Platform, with guests trying out many on-water activities such as Flyboards, Seadoos, sailing boats and paddle-boards – courtesy of Show partner, Java Yachting.

The *Phuket Gazette*, *Gazette Radio* and *The Nation* are proud national media partners of the Thailand Yacht Show.

– *Phuket Gazette*

## Thailand ranked 36th in tech device prices

According to research undertaken by Latin America's leading e-commerce platform Linio.com, Thailand ranks 36th in average price of smartphones in a study of electronic devices and brands across 72 countries.

Linio has released the 2016-17 Technology Price Index comparing the cost of 14 popular devices and brands and has undertaken the research to better understand the global economic trends in the price of electronics.

The Technology Price Index takes into account the cost of smartphones, laptops, games consoles, tablets, smart devices, and other gadgets, ranking the countries on the average cost of all products researched.

To conduct the research, Linio looked at the costs of all products in the study from sev-



The survey included 72 countries and 14 brands, in which Thailand ranked 36th. Photo: pexels

eral brick and mortar chain stores and smaller retailers in all major cities in each country. The study also took into account the average costs from at least three reputable online

outlets in each country. Taxes and other associated purchasing costs, minus delivery, were also accounted for.

The results, which were ranked in order of the average

cost of all products researched, also reveal that Thailand is in the top 15 most affordable countries for iPhones.

Andreas Mjelde, Linio's chief executive officer, said that

it is hoped the index helps people more confidently interpret variations in tech price around the world. Increasingly, the average citizen is a global one, and with a better understanding of global markets comes increased empowerment to travel, shop, and live smarter.

The results were calculated by researching the average retail cost, including taxes, of 14 popular devices, including Apple and Windows-powered products, in 72 countries.

Linio also polled 5,000 participants on owning and buying new technology. The results reveal 78.20 per cent of respondents consider their smartphone to be their most important gadget. Laptops came in second at 10.7 per cent, followed by the TV at 3.9 per cent, and gaming consoles at 2.7 per cent.

– *The Nation*

# Aphrodite claims Superyacht Rendezvous Winner's Cup



Superyacht *Aphrodite* was the first champion of the ASR Winner's Cup at the 16th annual Asia Superyacht Rendezvous. Photo: Asia Superyacht Rendezvous



Three of the superyachts crossed the finish line within a minute of each other. Photo: ASR

THE crew of Superyacht *Aphrodite* was the first champions of the 16th annual Asia Superyacht Rendezvous (ASR) Winner's Cup last weekend.

Owners, guests, captains and crew came together for the high-class three-day event organized and co-sponsored by Asia Pacific Superyachts, Mai Khao at SALA Phuket Resort & Spa.

As well two days of races, events on the social calendar during the rendezvous included a cocktail party on board *S/Y Dunia Baru* and the Benetti Challenge – a model yacht competition hosted by

Co-Sponsor Benetti Yachts – plus a gala Dinner at the host resort's Sala Restaurant.

Competing in the races were: *S/Y Bliss*; *S/Y Dallinghoo*; *S/Y Aphrodite*; and *S/Y Tiara*.

"This year's Rendezvous was certainly one for the books with outstanding participation from all crew members, owners and captains to create a light-hearted, yet competitive atmosphere for both the Benetti Challenge and Winner's Cup," said Race Director Andy Dowden.

Day 1 of racing was anything but dull with clear skies, calm seas, light wind and an unusual occurrence of two

races.

According to the committee boat *M/Y Azul A*, the first race resulted in one yacht recording damage and another retiring, leaving a series final of 2 points for *S/Y Aphrodite*; 5 points for *S/Y Tiara*; 6 points for *S/Y Bliss*; and 7 points for *S/Y Dallinghoo* with the lowest score being in the lead.

However, what made this race day so unique was that three yachts crossed the finish line within a minute of each other.

As the sun set after the first day of racing, the music was turned up for the Benetti Challenge at SALA Phuket, where crew members mingled before hunkering down in an epic battle to create miniature model yachts out of various materials and then raced them down two troughs with nothing but lung power.

Cheers and jeers from the crowd made for a lively evening with the overall winner announced as the *S/Y Tiara* crew and the best design prize going to the crew *S/Y Dunia Baru*.

Race day 2 proved to be an even better day to be out on the water with stiff winds, lovely weather and the added bonus of double points.

*S/Y Aphrodite*, *S/Y Tiara*, *S/Y*

*Bliss* and *S/Y Dallinghoo* battled it out in an impressive display of workmanship to create an exciting race for spectators.

After the final yacht crossed the finish line, scores totaled 4 points for *S/Y Aphrodite*; 9 points for *S/Y Tiara*; 12 points for *S/Y Bliss*; and 15 points for *S/Y Dallinghoo*, making *S/Y Aphrodite* the first champion of the ASR Winner's

Cup.

Captain Simon Blundell accepted the trophy on behalf of his crew and after a little friendly jabbing at his competitors, stated that he looked forward to coming back again next year.

Race Director Andy Dowden noted that this was one of the best fleet of yachts he has seen in years.

– *Phuket Gazette*

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# Reefers, rogues and regulations



ACCORDING to recent statistics, Thailand has the fourth largest seafood export industry in the world, valued at a massive annual 6.5 billion dollars.

With its fleet of Phuket-based fishing vessels and substantial shrimp-farming industry, the island is a significant contributor to this figure. However, adverse international publicity in the last few years has caused some decline, following allegations not only of human rights abuses but also of IUU (Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated) fishing abuses.

Greenpeace recently claimed that an international crackdown on human rights crimes, plus depleted fish stocks in the Gulf of Thailand and now the Andaman Sea, has prompted some Thai vessels to explore waters off the coast of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, others to travel 7000km to the rich and bio-diverse Saya de Malha bank off East Africa, a shallow marine system that is not properly policed. These excursions into remote and lawless waters only exacerbate the problem, whereby trafficked men – slaves in effect – are sold and mistreated at sea. Moreover, seafood caught by these ‘pirates’ – not only un-



Thailand’s seafood exports are worth US\$6.5mn, but what is the real cost of the world’s fourth-largest industry of its kind? Photo: Ghost Presenter

regulated, but also illegal – is entering the supply chains of multinational companies that process food. They then sell it globally, in clear violation of international labor, fishing and marketing codes.

One of the problems in Thailand is that the industry relies so heavily on migrant labor. Though precise figures are elusive, more than 90 per cent of crews come from outside Thailand.

These fishermen effectively possess no rights; prisoners on board, as catches are transferred at sea, to refrigerated ‘reefer’ vessels, which then re-

turn to port.

The news is not all bad. In 2015, the government embarked on a comprehensive reform program. Aimed at curbing these malpractices, the regulations have frozen the registration of new boats, and surveyed the existing fleet of 42,000 vessels.

Licences have been restricted in some cases – from open to limited-access fisheries – and a quota imposed on the number of days a vessel can fish. Boats must be marked with details of their size, fishing gear, and designated area of

operation.

Most relevant to this debate, new directives aim to regularize the laws concerning the protection of migrant workers, and to eliminate criminal labor brokers. Inspections of seafood factories – where migrants are also heavily employed – has led to the closure of 17 such establishments.

If human rights abuses are one issue, over-fishing is another. According to official statistics, from a peak catch of 300kg per hour in the 1960s, Thai fishing boats are now catching just 18kg. And tech-

nological advances, by virtue of their very efficiency, have accelerated the decline, as sonar has developed. Tharamat, a local fisherman, explains: “Now it is a race to get to the fish, so the boat with the biggest sonar usually wins.”

Speaking at the port of Nivat, a Phuket merchant adds: “Most of the big fish are gone. We used to have over 30 trucks a day just for tuna from the seas around Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. Now we have maybe five to 10 trucks...all that comes from Indonesia.”

## Gazette Crossword

Test your local knowledge and word power.

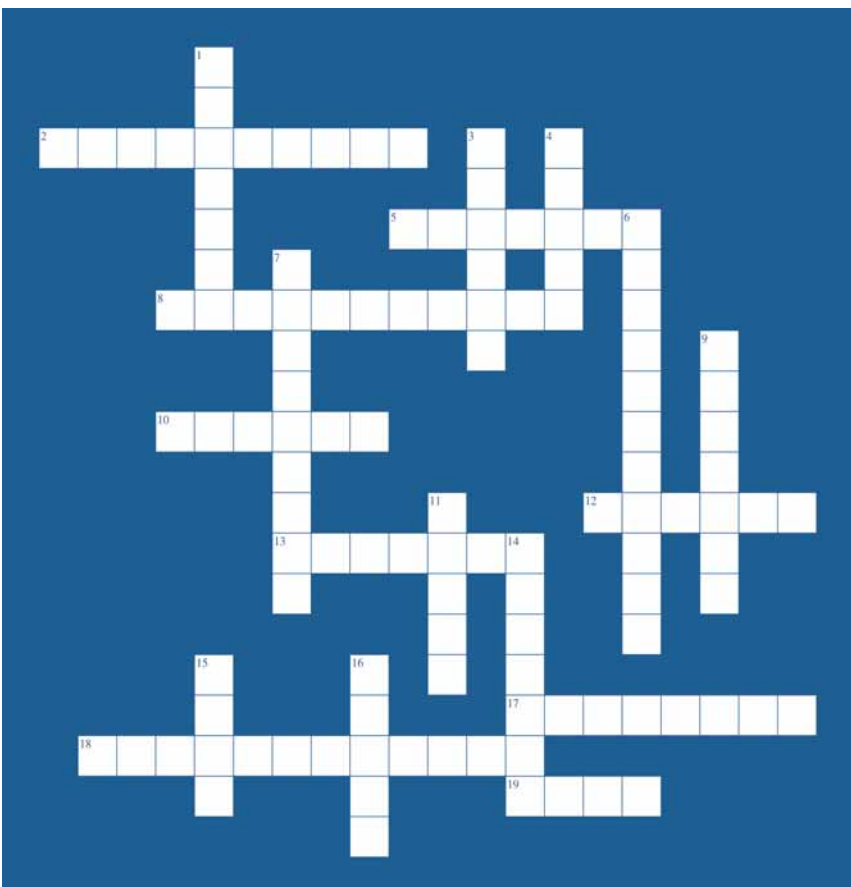
### Across

- 02. Put out
- 05. Charitable donation
- 08. Pleasant surprise
- 10. Jack Sparrow
- 12. Old fashioned
- 13. Elephant in the room
- 17. Provincial authority
- 18. A whipping
- 19. Mentor

### Down

- 01. Humdrum
- 03. ‘Happy Days’ character
- 04. British policeman
- 06. Of the earth
- 07. Phuket Police Commander
- 09. Ramayana character
- 11. Fake
- 14. Location of newly opened underpass
- 15. Supermarket chain
- 16. White (French)

Solution on opposite page.





**Family Law/Custody /Divorce/Will**

**Child Adoption**

**Notary Public**

**Litigation (Civil & Criminal Cases)**

**Company Setup**

**Business Contracts Property Law/Due Diligence**

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# Something for everyone at Moon Bistro

By Zohaib Sikander

WITH the Cherng Talay area filled with flashy eateries, it is often difficult to decide where to grab a bite to eat. Driving down Lagoon Road, a small joint named *Moon Bistro and Restaurant* catches the eye at first glance.

This elegantly-designed restaurant appeals to tourists, as well as long-term expats and locals, with both indoor and outdoor seating separated by large glass doors.

The owner, Mazar Jobi, is an interior designer by profession, and has done a commendable job creating an atmosphere that is both functional and inviting, by painstakingly crafting each aspect from the walls to the furniture. The high canopy-style ceiling fits well with the wooden interior, while the walls are adorned with large paintings that complement the funky, yet laid-back atmosphere Ms Jobi has strived to create.

The restaurant has recently expanded their menu to include a larger variety of both Thai and 'farang' food, with regular favorites such as burgers, sandwiches, soups and steaks, as well as offerings for those with a more adventurous palate.

After a refreshing lemon and ginger welcome drink, I started off with some 'nibbles', including spring rolls wrapped in shrimp, and chicken satay. Ms Jobi, who is a gracious host and interacts frequently with all her customers, explained that the idea behind her restaurant is an upscale joint with a relaxed



The cozy and tastefully-decorated interior was carefully designed by the owner, with both indoor and outdoor seating. Photos: Moon Bistro



Pan grilled salmon and pineapple fried rice are only some of the delicacies on offer at prices that won't pinch your pocket. Photos: Moon Bistro

vibe, offering reasonable prices and quality food.

The main course consisted of pasta served with a chicken creme sauce and mushrooms, calamari stuffed with minced chicken, Tom Yum seafood soup, garlic fried rice and chicken with coconut curry, as well as a sau-

sage chicken baguette which I packed away for some delicious midnight snacking.

Although I was quite full before dessert (the portions are quite generous, unlike many other restaurants in the area), I couldn't help but reach for a few mouthfulls of mango with

sticky rice, which was a great end to a satisfying meal.

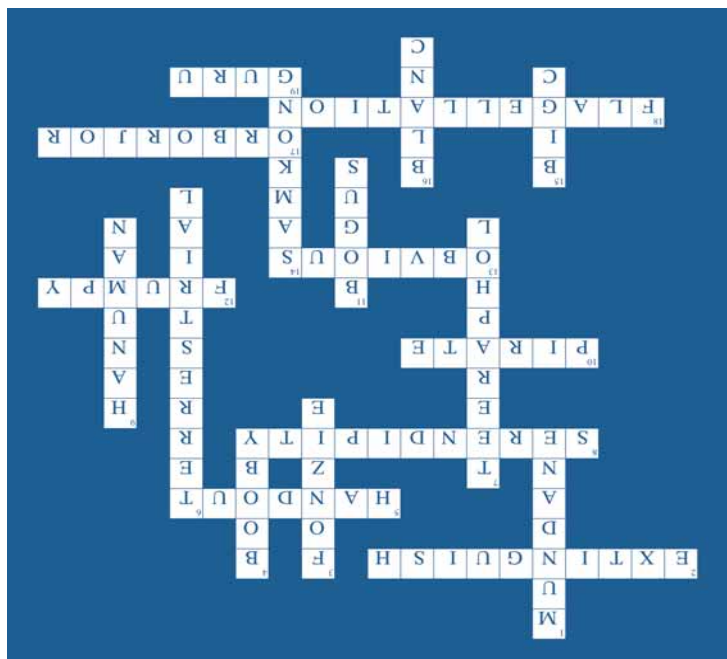
In an area brimming with over-priced cafes and bars, the Moon Bistro is refreshingly affordable. Average prices for entrees are 200-250 baht, unless you're ordering steak, which will set you back about

550 baht tops. A number of meal-in-a-box options are also available, with prices starting at 120 baht (not including delivery charges).

For more information, contact Moon Bistro and Restaurant at 092-414 2914. Delivery is free within a 5km radius.

## Crossword Solution

Turn the page upside down to read the answers.



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# Festive five per cent financing offered for Laguna Park's townhomes, villas



The Laguna Park two-bedroom townhomes priced from 9.3 million baht in a tranquil and secure low-density gated neighborhood are on the fringes of 1,000 acres of lush tropical parkland adjacent to the Laguna Phuket Golf Course. Photo: Banyan Tree Group Property

## Advertorial

INVESTORS in Laguna Park's two-bedroom townhouses and five-bedroom villas located next to the Laguna Phuket Golf Course are being offered a special five per cent financing option for the festive period.

Aimed at couples and growing families, the homes by the Banyan Tree Group are priced from 9.3 million baht and come ready to move in with several options available for buyers to further develop the properties, such as adding a third bedroom or even a rooftop Jacuzzi.

The three-story stand-alone villas encompassing 340 square meters of light filled space are designed for families.

The spacious modern-tropical homes priced from 14.9 million baht feature four bedrooms and five bathrooms.

The spacious semi-customizable modern tropical homes priced from 14.9 million baht feature four bedrooms and five bathrooms.

As well as the five per cent financing option, buyers who purchase a home at Laguna Park during the limited seasonal dis-



A free furniture package is included in the festive season discount for the Laguna Park town homes so residents can start enjoying the Laguna Lifestyle immediately. Photo: Banyan Tree Group Property

count period are also entitled to a five-year golf membership to the adjacent Laguna Phuket Golf Course, along with Angsana Vacation Club membership, which includes up to five-years of free stays in their portfolio of resorts, said Head of Banyan Tree Group Property Stuart Reading.

"To celebrate the festive season and to make purchasing

even easier, we are offering, for a limited period, five years financing at only 5 per cent interest. Plus we have a bonus gift of a free furniture package so new homeowners can start enjoying their residence immediately," said Mr Reading.

The villas and townhomes are located in a tranquil and secure low-density gated

neighborhood on the fringes of 1,000 acres of lush tropical parkland adjacent to the Laguna Phuket Golf Course.

Residents can also benefit from the 'Laguna Lifestyle', being situated in one of Asia's finest integrated resort destinations among five-star resorts, residences, a shopping village, spas, restaurants and bars,

"The gated development provides a family-friendly community, embodying the project's concept of 'Growing Together'," said Mr Reading.

Contact the Laguna Park sales office for more information.  
Tel: 076-362 333.  
Email :info@lagunaproperty.com  
Website: lagunaproperty.com

# Prepare your property properly

**By The Book**  
**Kevin Hodges**

THE onset of high season is here again. The monsoon rains have passed, the sun is out and businesses are preparing for the influx of tourists to Phuket.

The next six months are when most buyers will visit Phuket and when most property sales occur. Phuket real estate brokers will have already been short-listing those properties they will concentrate their efforts on most.

Market conditions remain slow but there is an increase in transactions in the resale market, which is offering great value for buyers right now. Real Estate brokers will always concentrate their efforts most on those properties they feel show best, offer excellent value and are the most attractive to their potential buyers.

If you are preparing your property for sale this high season, here are some pointers.

### ESTABLISH A PRICE

The current market is very



Brokers will always concentrate their efforts on properties they feel show best, offer excellent value and are the most attractive to their potential buyers. Photo: Donald Tong

competitive so price your property correctly to attract potential buyers. Consider the price you paid for the property, how long you have owned it, comparable property prices, what similar properties have sold for, any improvements added, present condition of the property, current property climate and exchange rates movements since buying.

Arm yourself with all the facts and remember: a property's value is only what someone is willing to pay.

### GETTING YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER

Before a buyer is found for your property, it is advisable to check through a certified lawyer in Thailand that you have all necessary ownership documents to sell your property, an estimate of the transfer taxes payable upon sale and an explanation of the selling options available to you. You need to know whether you can sell the property leasehold or freehold, or with a land-owning company. Also check whether

you need to be physically present to complete a sale, or if you can give power of attorney to your lawyer beforehand.

### SIGNAGE

Allowing the agent to erect a sign is very important as brand name and reputation may draw in passersby.

### NEGOTIATING

Be prepared to negotiate on your asking price. Phuket is cur-

rently a buyers' market and in the end it is what the buyer will pay, regardless of your price.

### SHARING COSTS

In Thailand it is customary for the seller and buyer to share the transfer costs 50/50 but this is up to you to negotiate. Sellers must understand associated costs and incorporate them into the selling price. Trying to renegotiate fees after a selling price has been agreed will almost certainly lose the sale.

Having found a buyer and negotiated the sale price and terms, it is not uncommon for the seller to run into issues that can potentially ruin the sale, such as missing documents or higher than anticipated tax. All of these are likely to result in a lost sale, or at the very least, returning to the negotiating table, delaying the sale and creating higher closing costs.

For more information about this article, contact Kevin Hodges, Siam Real Estate (SRE) at 076-383646, or email [kevin@siamrealestate.com](mailto:kevin@siamrealestate.com); [www.siamrealestate.com](http://www.siamrealestate.com).







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Email: [ebay@rock-star.asia](mailto:ebay@rock-star.asia), please see details in weblink: <https://magazine.diviac.com/job-vacancy-online-travel-agent/>

**LAWYER WANTED URGENTLY!**

Prefer Thai female, 22-35 years old. Bachelor's degree in law or equivalent, new graduate is welcome. Fair English skills. Located in Patong. Tel: 076-344 180, 093-686 8525. Email: [admin1patong@ilo-phuket.com](mailto:admin1patong@ilo-phuket.com)

**OPERATIONS ASSISTANT**  
Required at weddings & events company in Cherng Talay. Must have experience in events and work under pressure. Good organizational skills, hard working, good administration skills. Tel: 089-973 2159. Email: [meesak@phuketweddingevents.com](mailto:meesak@phuketweddingevents.com)

**FEMALE GALLERY MANAGER**

Art gallery in Phuket Town needs Thai female with previous sales experience. Good English and Chinese essential. Great salary offered. Located in Phuket Town. Tel: 087-884 8271, 086-509 7510. Email: [simon@colonial-connection.com](mailto:simon@colonial-connection.com)



**The Phuket Gazette seeks to fill the following position:**

### ACCOUNTANT

- ▶ Thai nationals, aged 22 years up
- ▶ Bachelor's degree in Accounting
- ▶ Some fluency in spoken and written English

Good salary for the right candidate.  
Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV by email to [Anna@phuketgazette.net](mailto:Anna@phuketgazette.net)

**The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd**  
79/94 Moo 4, Thepkrasattri Rd, Koh Kaew, A. Muang, Phuket 83000  
Tel: 076-615244 Ext. 102 Fax: 076-615240



### Position: Chief Engineer

- Follows company preventative maintenance procedures and guidelines for guestrooms, equipment, public space, and building envelop, etc.
- Maintains engineering related check book accounting procedures to ensure department operates within budgeted guidelines while maintaining required stock of supplies and materials
- Assures that basic mechanical and/or electrical equipment, machinery and/or circuitry of the property are kept in good working order
- A complete understanding of all building related systems -- Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, Life Safety, IT, etc
- Any other duties assigned by Management

### Position: Sales Representative

- 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
- Coordinate and follow up sales with agents
- Prepare artwork for advertising in social network marketing and media

### Position: Executive Assistant General Manager

The Executive Assistant Manager assists the General Manager and the Hotel Manager. He/she provides both Managers with information of all the departments. An Executive Assistant Manager is responsible for keeping a perfect coordination between all departments and controlling their operation with regards to the company's standards, revenues and controlling costs and the highest comfort and satisfaction for guests.

**Responsibilities include the following:**

- Manage schedules, answer and respond to phones, set up meetings and general office support for the General Manager and other team members as identified
- Coordinate travel arrangements, expense reports and department invoice processing
- Coordinate department-wide events, meetings, off-site venues, and training programs
- File, track and organize department documents and contracts
- Handle privileged and confidential information appropriately
- Ad the view projects will be assigned as necessary
- Maintain and order office supplies
- Monitoring and supervisor of all operations in all department

**Qualifications:**

- 2-5 years administrative experience required preferably in a hotel environment.
- Must be fully versed in Microsoft Office applications including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Ability to work in a complex, fast paced environment with changing priorities
- Prioritization and multi-tasking against time lines
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills are required
- Team player and highly collaborative
- Demonstrate high levels of trust and confidentiality
- Sales and PR experience is required.

**Contact Person: Tukta**  
Email: [info@theviewphuket.com](mailto:info@theviewphuket.com) | Mobile: 083-691 4028

## GENERAL CLASSIFIEDS

**BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**

**SAILING COMPANY**  
Established in 1999 - Sailing School, Charter service, Yacht Chandlery and Management for sale complete - yachts, dinghies, vehicles, and advance sales, with all staff and infrastructure in place. Many opportunities for growth and expansion. Capital for four work permits. Sale due to the principal's health. Contact by email or call. Tel: 076-397942, 081-370 1995 (English). Fax: 076-397942. Email: [inq@sea-yss.com](mailto:inq@sea-yss.com) [www.sailing-thailand.com](http://www.sailing-thailand.com)

**LAUNDRY FOR SALE 2 MILLION BAHT**  
Laundry shop in Phuket Town with semi industrial equipment with existing customers for sale. Eligible for work visa. Tel: 084-662 9961. Email: [pinyo@zolutionsthailand.com](mailto:pinyo@zolutionsthailand.com)

**CLUB MEMBERSHIP AVAILABLE**

**PHUKET COUNTRY CLUB**  
Lifetime family membership 440,000 baht includes transfer fee. Tel: 091-034 0495 (English), 082-805 3403 (English & Thai). Email: [mikecahill1806@gmail.com](mailto:mikecahill1806@gmail.com)

**BLUE CANYON MEMBERSHIP**  
Lifetime membership for sale 690,000 baht plus transfer fee. Tel: 087-887 9506. Email: [ono bu.yukio@gmail.com](mailto:ono bu.yukio@gmail.com)

**BLUE CANYON**  
Blue Canyon corporate membership (2 players). Special offer: 700,000 baht including transfer fee. Tel: 081-737 5085 (English).

**BLUE CANYON MEMBERSHIP**  
Lifetime membership for sale: 700,000 baht, transfer fee paid by buyer. Tel: 081-970 9055.

**BULLETINS**



**Alcoholics Anonymous**

If you want to drink that is your business

If you want to stop that is ours

Daily Meetings

Patong, Phuket Town, Chalong, Surin, Karon

081-895 4763  
084-307 7408  
Email: [phuketaa@yahoo.com](mailto:phuketaa@yahoo.com)  
AA Phuket



### Marketing Coordinator Wanted

Real estate company is looking for marketing coordinator.

- Excellent English
- Male/female, Thai national
- Driving licence

Please call 089-594 6888. Email: [info@arthouse.asia](mailto:info@arthouse.asia)

## GENERAL AVIATION

**Let us....**

**Fly your brand**

**or promote your event!**

**Thailand Yacht Show**  
11-14 Feb 2016

**We add **buzzzzz**, and do it  
where the message cannot be missed!**

Tel: 076-615244  
Ask for John or Oranee

**Phuket Gazette**

### Classified Advertisements

Please use this form to write your classified advertisement.  
Then hand it to any of our agents.

\_\_\_\_\_ (heading)

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Classified ads are charged per line. Each line is 140 baht,  
with a minimum of 4 lines (heading included) per ad.

All advertising must be paid for in advance.

**Deadline for Property Gazette page: Friday 3 pm.**

**Deadline for all other ads: Saturday 12 noon.**

### BOATS & MARINE

### WHEELS & MOTORS

#### SESSA 20 MOTORBOAT FOR SALE

20 foot walk-around motorboat, 2007, includes trailer, 140hp 2-stroke Mercury engine, 9.8hp Tohatsu spare engine, toilet, cushions, fenders, ropes, etc. 740,000 baht. Thalang. For more information, please call 090-153 1833 (English). Email: jhorr2000@yahoo.de

#### MAZDA 3 FOR SALE

Perfect condition. Please call 092-261 4287.

#### MINI COOPER FOR SALE

Mini Sport Diesel, 4WD, automatic, top model, October 2014, 64,000km, 1 owner, no accidents, 7 seats, navigation system, etc. 890,000 baht. Located in Thalang. Tel: 090-153 1833 (English). Email: jhorr2000@yahoo.de

#### 20M BERTH RENTAL AT R.P.M

Private owner offers 20m E dock berth for long term rental at the Royal Phuket Marina. Berth will accommodate yachts of up to 20m and significant discounts are available for a long term agreement. Contact for further information. Tel: +44-786-6588395 (English). Email: james@shayler.co

#### NISSAN JUKE - 16,000KM

2015, white, top model. No accidents. Original paint. New condition. 595,000 baht. Tel: 081-891 6174 (English & Thai). Email: jjckhan@hotmail.com

#### TRUCK FOR SALE

Price: 250,000 baht. Contact: Julie. Tel: 082-421 6414.

# Reaching for the finish line

## Long-time Phuket vacationers now have a new reason to visit

By Zohaib Sikander

THOMAS and Sonja Baumgartner may be two among thousands of athletes who competed in this year's Laguna Phuket Triathlon, but their story is an inspiring one nevertheless.

Hailing from snowy Switzerland, the couple are regular vacationers to Phuket. Although of an active and sporty disposition, they had never thought about taking part in a triathlon event until their daughter brought it to their attention more than 15 years ago. Since then, they have participated in several competitions.

Sonja's first triathlon in Thailand was the 2009 Laguna Phuket Triathlon. She came back the next year and took part in Ironman 70.3.

"Due to our busy schedules, we train extra hard to make these events worth our while," says Sonja, who works as a specialized physical therapist.

"We try to take our vacations

in hotter countries when it's snowing and raining back home," adds Thomas. "This year, we landed into Chiang Mai to take part in a biking tour to conquer Doi Inthanon, the highest mountain in Thailand. While we were there, we heard about the triathlon and came here."

Thomas and Sonja feel there are no limitations as to who can participate in these events – anyone who's serious enough about it can do so.

"First, you need to set yourself some goals. Start with shorter distances that you can easily achieve.

"For example, it's foolish to think that you can build endurance in just a couple of weeks. Along with realistic goals, you also need to maintain a healthy

diet," says Thomas.

"If you're a complete novice, start running and swimming once a week, and riding a bicycle (even a basic mountain bike will do) twice a week. Do this on a weekly basis and over the next few months you will begin to develop stamina and strength to go longer and faster," says Sonja. "About two years is a good time to be ready for a triathlon."

They also suggest that the first time anyone takes part in something like the LPT, the goal should not be to win.

"It's important to simply have fun and go at your own pace. Take in the experience and enjoy it. The goal should be to finish it and not succumb to any pressures of winning the race. Your second attempt will defi-

nately be easier," says Thomas.

Although the pair may not be able to participate next year, they are excited for the 25th anniversary race in two years time.

"This is more than an event; it's a lifestyle. We

know many people here. If you are part of this community, you meet like-minded people along the way," says Sonja.

**It's foolish to think that you can build endurance in a couple of weeks. To start training, set realistic goals and maintain a healthy diet**

– Thomas & Sonja Baumgartner, 2016 Laguna Phuket Triathletes



**XANA BEACH CLUB**

**COUNTDOWN PARTY**

**SATURDAY**

**31 DECEMBER**

**21:30 UNTIL LATE**

**1,000 THB**  
INCLUDING A COMPLIMENTARY DRINK

WITH INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED DJ  
**DJ VIKI LOVE • DJ EDDY FRAMPTON**

**076 358 500**

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