

Phuket Gazette

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‘OUR AIM IS ALWAYS TO MEET THE ‘ZERO DEATHS’ TARGET’

WATER WARS

■ Officials prepare for influx of visitors to the island during Songkran festivities

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

THE island's officials are preparing to manage the influx of visitors, both local and foreign, who swarm into Phuket during Songkran, which is being celebrated nationwide this week.

Phuket International Airport Director Monrudee Gettuphan has confirmed that an in-line screening system was recently added to the airport, which will help ease passenger congestion, make processing times faster and outline and alleviate any ‘suspicious circumstances’ that might affect the island.

Phuket Vice Governor Sanit Sriwihok has similarly revealed the safety measures that will be implemented during Songkran.

“Every year, the (central) government provides us with additional support to prepare for Songkran. Safety measures include stricter police patrol at checkpoints to force people to drive safely as well as strict measures to prevent drunk driving. Most importantly, I ask people to be patient, have discipline and cooperate with officials,” Vice Gov Sanit told the *Gazette*.

He also spoke about the island's semi-annual ‘Seven Days of Danger’ campaign.

“Our aim is always to meet the ‘zero deaths’ target during Songkran, but sometimes, even despite our best efforts, we cannot change people's reckless behavior. If everyone follows the rules of the road, it will certainly help reduce the number of accidents and deaths on the road,” added V/Gov Sanit.

Tourism Authority of Thailand Phuket Director Anoma Wongyai said that at least 5 billion baht will be added to Phuket's economy during the Songkran festivities.

“About 76 per cent of the hotel bookings are from Chinese visitors, other Asians and European tourists, as Songkran also coincides with the Easter holidays,” said Ms Anoma.

She added that several cultural shows



Partygoers celebrate on Phuket's notorious Bangla Road. Photo: Gazette file

will also be held throughout Phuket for visitors to enjoy, including food and art festivals, games and parades.

“Visitor numbers are expected to be up this year, especially at the beach areas,” Wal Brown, founder and coordinator of the Region 8 Police Volunteers, told the *Gazette*.

“Subsequently, there will be more officers on duty than in previous years and they will be focused on the safety of everyone – both locals and foreigners. From prior experience, we know that there are far too many accidents, especially on the roads.”

Mr Brown also requested partygoers not to throw water at law enforcement officers and volunteers in uniform.

“From previous years, we know that it's really problematic to patrol when drenched,” he said.

Mr Brown also said that police would be focusing on dangerous actions with the use of water as well as unsafe driving and alcohol abuse.

“Everyone over the blood alcohol limit will be arrested, charged and put through the courts – no exceptions. This can lead

to deportation and a ban to re-enter Thailand,” Mr Brown told the *Gazette*.

When asked about a potential shortage of water during Songkran, Sayan Wareearoonroj, manager of Phuket Provincial Water Supply, said that he was not expecting water shortage to pose a serious problem in Phuket.

“The only problematic area is Patong, but there is sufficient water in the Bang Wad Dam and we are also receiving support from private entities such as the Loch Palm Golf Club and Manik Mining,” he said.

Despite precautions and reinforcements, officials and volunteers are urging people to celebrate responsibly.

“For anyone planning to enjoy the event, celebrate on your feet. Don't play on bikes, as it's very easy to get into serious problems and accidents,” said Vincent Modell, a volunteer rescue worker at the Kusoldharm Foundation.

“Don't drink and drive, be sensible about what you are doing and play safe. In case of accidents or emergencies, however, we are always there to help.”

Phuket Gov ‘transferred’ out within six months

PRIME Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha has ordered the ‘urgent transfer’ of now ex-Phuket Gov Chokchai Dejamornthan and other ranking officials from several provinces effective immediately.

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BUSINESS



A look at what rising interest rates mean for the US and global economy.

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LIFE & STYLE



Surviving the water ‘war-zone’ that is Phuket during the Songkran celebrations.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Birthday boy escapes deadly car crash

A LOCAL man celebrating his birthday was severely injured after his car collided with a construction barrier early morning on April 4.

Police received reports of the incident in front of the 'Great Glove' factory on Si Sunthon road in Thalang.

"We arrived at the scene to find a badly damaged pick-up truck. The 37-year-old driver, Maysa Tongjub, was still inside, with a bone sticking out from a wound on his right hand," confirmed Capt Kraisor Boonprasop of Thalang Police.

Mr Maysa had reportedly been celebrating his 37th birthday that night.

"We believe he was driving too fast and was unable to see the construction barriers. We have sent him to Vachira Phuket Hospital for treatment and will administer a drug and alcohol test," said the captain.

Mr Maysa was charged with reckless driving and causing property damage.

- Winai Sarot

Ao Nang cops inspect papers for disputed elephant

AO NANG Police on April 3 visited a shelter in Phuket to sequester a disputed elephant.

Last month, Krabi resident Somsak Riangnguen claimed that the elephant (named 'Yo') was stolen from him 14 years ago, whereas the shelter claims

Municipality office wins big at fishing festival



The Phuket Municipality Office hosted the 8th annual Fishing festival on April 2, raking in about 150,000 baht for shrine renovation and supporting education. Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwansupana chaired the event, which took place at the Prince Chumphon Khet Udomsak Shrine in Saphan Hin. She also helped cook food to be distributed at the festival. She added that an event such as this supports government policy to preserve local fishing for the long run. About 100,000 baht is to be used to restore the shrine, while the other 50,000 will go to support education in Cherng Talay. Photo: Kritsada Mueanhawong

they purchased the animal from Tak Province.

The shelter, named 'Amazing Bukit Safari', is located in Chalong.

"We came here with the intention of bringing the elephant back to Krabi, but we found that the shelter has their own documents with the official seal, stating that they purchased Yo. We are trying to ensure that their documents are legal and authentic," said Lt Col Winai Poonsawas of Ao Nang Police.

He added that authorities in both Surin - where Mr Somsak says the elephant is from - and Tak provinces will examine the documents before a final decision is made.

Until then, the disputed animal is to remain in Phuket.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Thai celeb dodges military draft call

A THAI celebrity on April 3 made an appeal to avoid being drafted in the military this year.

The appeal was made at a recruitment drive that is set to receive 3,000 young men for military service from the province. The two-day event started on April 3.

Tanon Chamroen, Phuket-born winner of popular TV show 'The Voice Thailand', sought his first deferment at the Piboon Sawasdee School in Phuket Town, citing the reason that he is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree at Bangkok University.

A total of 103,097 soldiers nationwide are to be selected for military service this year - Phuket's provincial allotment is 514. Thai men over 21 who mentally and physically meet the criteria must serve in the military for two years.

"My only concern is that I am studying at the moment. If I get a chance to join the force for my country in the future, I will happily do it," said Mr Tanon.

Mr Tanon then proceeded to

encourage young Thai men to do their duty for their country.

In another incident related to military drafts, a father hanged himself with a telephone wire after he found out over the phone that his son had been selected to serve in the military for two years.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Swede woman found dead in Patong hotel

A SWEDISH tourist succumbed to unidentified health issues in a Patong hotel room on April 2.

"We arrived at the 4th floor room at Patong Merlin hotel to find the body of 27-year-old Emma Katarina Grundstrom on the bed. There were vomit stains on the bed and blanket," said Lt Col Somsak Thongleang of Patong Police.

According to Ms Grundstrom's partner, named by police as Owe Christoffer Sjogren, 27, the two had checked in at the hotel on March 29, and were scheduled to check out on April 12.

"Mr Sjogren told us that she

had sustained an injury in her mouth on March 30, and went to a clinic the same day to buy medicine. On the next morning, however, he noticed that she had stopped breathing," said the colonel.

At about 10am, Mr Sjogren called hotel staff for help.

"Ms Grundstrom passed away before an ambulance from Patong Hospital arrived. Her body was taken to the hospital for further examination," Col Somsak added.

Police confirmed that there were no signs of a struggle or room ransacking.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

Man stabbed to death in bar fight by staffer

A MAN was stabbed to death by a fellow staff member at a Phuket Town bar on April 2.

"We found the body of Srichan Intaburi, 48 at a bar named 'Cowboy Pue Chiwit' on Surin Road, with knife wounds to his chest and stomach. He was lying face up on the kitchen floor in a pool of blood," Lt Col Thaksin Pinyo of the Phuket City Police told the Gazette.

Other employees at the bar named the suspect as Attapong Chanasuek, 21.

"Witnesses told us that Mr Srichan and Mr Attapong regularly argued at the work place. On this particular day, however, the two fought up until Mr Attapong stabbed the victim and fled on his motorbike," added the colonel.

The suspect was apprehended within two hours at a house in Wichit, with a 20-cm knife.

"Mr Attapong told us that he had felt a headache coming after having a drink offered by a customer. Soon after, he went to the counter to put his head down and fell asleep," he added. "He confessed to the eventual stabbing, but said that Mr Srichan first hit him over the head with an ice bucket, dragged him into the kitchen and punched and kicked him several times."

The suspect then reportedly ran to take the knife out of his locker to protect himself.

Mr Srichan's body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for further examination. Mr Attapong was charged with murder with intent, and carrying a weapon in public without permission.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong

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Governor among other high ranking officials transferred

PHUKET Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan has been transferred out after just six months on the job, with Norraphat Plodthong – previously the Provincial Management Adviser at the Office of the Permanent Secretary of Interior – being named as his successor.

The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) on April 4 issued a letter signed by the Prime Minister, invoking article 44 to ‘urgently’ transfer high ranking officials nationwide.

Governor Chokchai is one of those transferred and will be working in the PM’s office.

The letter does not mention the reason for the transfers, which are deemed effective immediately.

– *Phuket Gazette*



Norraphat Plodthong (above) has been named the new Governor.

British woman kills ghost rider



The accident occurred on Thepkrasattri road (southbound) near the Shell gas station in Thalang. Photo: Winai Sarot

A 62-YEAR-old motorcyclist was killed in a collision with a car driven by a 31-year-old British woman in Thalang on March 31.

“The accident occurred at about 9:05pm on Thepkrasattri Road (southbound) near the Shell gas station in Thalang. At the scene, we found the body of Pongsak Sripeuk lying face down on the ground. His arms and legs were broken and he was pronounced dead at the scene,” said Lt Sunan Petnhu of Thalang Police.

The driver, Jayne Pauline Watt, sustained minor injuries.

The deceased’s body was

taken to Thalang Hospital.

“According to witnesses, Ms Watt was heading back from the airport, driving south in the left lane, when Mr Pongsak, who was ‘ghost riding’ (heading north against traffic in that lane) suddenly appeared in front of her, having driven up from the opposite side of the road. It seems that Ms Watt did not have time to brake,” said Lt Sunan.

“At this stage, no charges have been made. We will question Ms Watt and the witnesses further before taking any further action,” he added.

– *Winai Sarot*

Two nabbed in B5mn drug bust

TWO suspects from a major drug network were arrested on March 31 with a kilo of *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) and nearly 8,000 pills of *ya bah* (methamphetamine) worth about 5 million baht.

The first suspect, Sompan Meemuangnork, was apprehended at Phuket Bus Terminal 2.

“We got a report from one of our sources about a big drug delivery from Bangkok to Phuket,” said Phuket Provincial Police Commander Teerapol Thipjaroen.

“Our source informed us that Mr Sompan would be the one making the delivery. We tracked his movements and learned that he would arrive in Phuket by bus, so our team waited for him at the terminal,” he added.

At about 9:30am, officers saw Mr Sompan getting off the bus with a box. They approached him, searched his belongings and found the stash.

He was charged with possession of a category 1 drug with intent to sell, then taken to Patong Police Station for further questioning.

“Mr Sompan admitted that the drugs belonged to him and that he intended to sell them to teenagers in Patong. He also provided information about another dealer from the network, which led to the arrest of Uraiporn Boonsawang,” said Maj Gen Teerapol.

Ms Uraiporn was found in possession of a .38 gun.

Mr Sompan did not provide the name of his contact in Bangkok, but Phuket police are coordinating with officials there to take further action.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Aussie tourist killed in cement truck collision

POLICE have yet to press any charges in the death of a 49-year-old Australian tourist who was killed after his bike crashed into a cement truck near Tri Trang Beach on March 30.

“We found Paul Anthony Bradbury’s body partially stuck under the wheel of the truck and covered in blood. A Honda Click motorbike, helmet and phone were lying nearby,” said Maj Teerasak Boonsang of the Patong Police.

The truck driver, Sakorn Sriprasit, 39, waited for police at the scene.

“According to Mr Sakorn’s statement, Mr Bradbury was

thrown off his bike after he lost control of it. His helmet also flew off his head when he fell,” said Maj Teerasak.

“We learned that he was staying alone at Baan Laimai Hotel – he had checked in on March 27 and was due to check out tomorrow. The motorbike was a rental,” he added.

The Australian Embassy has been apprised of the incident.

“At this stage, we have yet to press charges against the truck driver. We will question him more thoroughly and also talk to other witnesses before taking any further action,” said Maj Teerasak.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*



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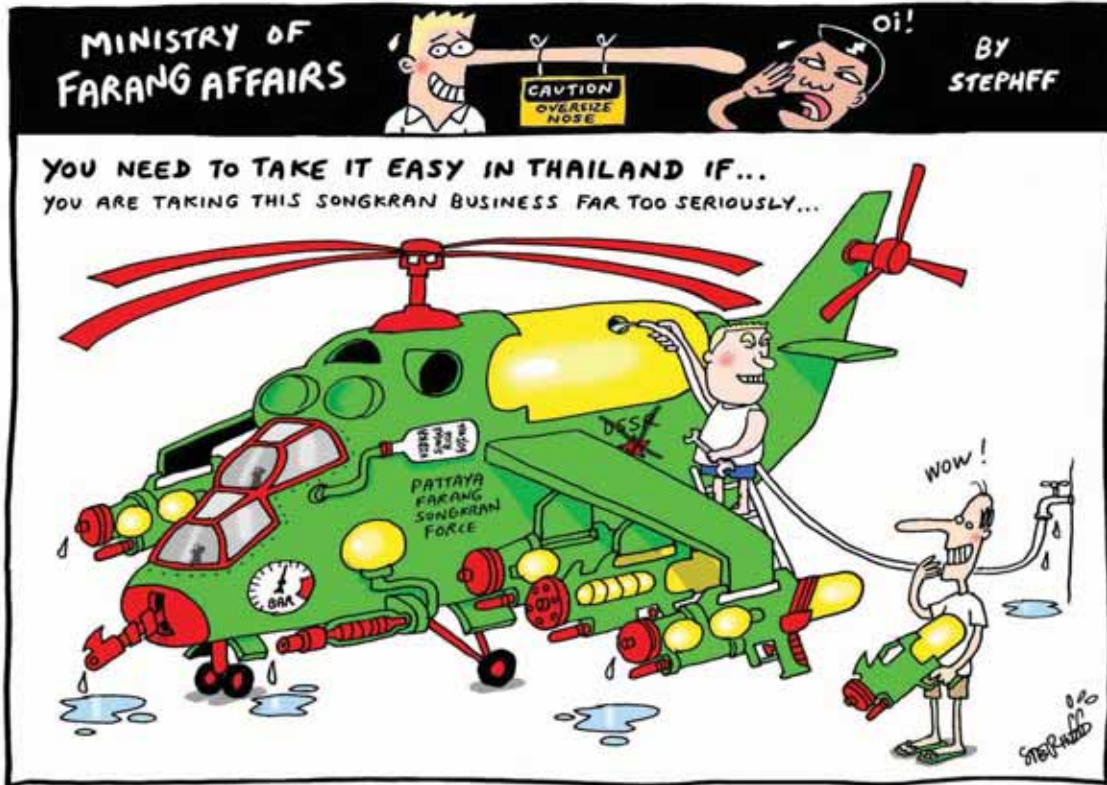
Website to verify fake news launched

DIGITAL agencies and private organizations on April 4 joined hands to launch a new website www.checkgornshare.com to act as a tool for the Thai online community to check and verify facts before sharing information on social media.

The "Check Gorn Share" (Check before share) campaign is aimed at promoting analytical and critical thinking in the online community, as well as raising awareness of the societal damage caused by rash, irresponsible sharing of 'fake news' stories.

The campaign is a collaboration between Rabbit's Tale, Moonshot Digital and Creative Juice Bangkok, with support from various private organizations including PTT, SCG, Siam Commercial Bank and the Thai Webmaster Association.

The move comes after the group realized that the spread of false or twisted information online could mislead the general public and cause them to incorrectly perceive a certain situation.



Five warrants issued for dead private case

POLICE have issued arrest warrants for five privates allegedly involved in the death of a conscript at Vibhavadi Rangsit Military Camp in Surat Thani Province, while the family of the dead private will receive 230,000 baht in compensation.

Maj Gen Apichart Bunsrirote, commander of Surat Thani Provincial Police, said the investigation into the death of Private Yuthkinan Boonniam, who was beaten to death inside the military camp compound, was progressing well and nearly completed.

"Five suspects are confirmed to be involved in the death of Private Yuthkinan according to the clear evidence from witnesses and surveillance camera records, thanks to the enthusiastic assistance from the 45th Military Circle," Apichart said. "We are sure that we can bring justice for Private Yuthkinan's family soon."

It was reported that the five privates on the arrest warrants will be taken to Surat Thani Police Station.

Police arrest Japanese felon for fraud

A 62-YEAR-old Japanese woman was arrested by Thai immigration police for allegedly cheating many Japanese people in a 700-million-yen (218 million baht) pyramid scheme.



Police said Setsuko Yamabe was arrested on the morning of April 4.

She entered Thailand on January 20 on a 60-day tourist

visa. She subsequently got another 30-day extension from the Immigration Police Division 1 until April 19.

Police later cross-checked her background and found she was wanted by the Japanese police.

Thai Immigration Bureau chief Lt Gen Natthathorn Praosunthorn was warned by the Japanese Embassy.



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What rate hikes mean for investors

Finance
By Don Freeman

IN EARLY March, the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates, with the market largely ignoring the long-expected move. With at least a couple of more rate increases expected in the near future, I would still not expect the market to suddenly turn bearish. After all, if the Fed thought the US economy was still too weak, they would not be raising interest rates.

When we had the 2008-09 financial crisis, the market was like a patient who just had a big accident and ended up on the operating table with the underlying economy being nearly dead. The market bottom was then followed by a small recovery rally, then some pullback and then a bigger rally followed by sideways action.

During this period of time, the Fed had to cut rates and do all kinds of creative 'quantitative easing' just to get the patient (that is, the market and underlying economy) off the operating table into the recovery room and back to a walking position with the patient now able to run again.

I would expect the Fed to slowly want to raise interest rates back up to the 3 per cent



The Federal Reserve has raised interest rates, but the market has largely ignored the move. Photo: pixabay

level, but this is going to take time and the underlying economy will need to be strong enough to absorb these rate hikes.

By mid-April, earnings reports will be back in the news. In the meantime, the market will be paying attention to any macro-economic data – especially any data coming out of the US. So far, US data is pointing to wages having risen over the past year and no serious signs of inflation. The Fed is also a bit behind when it comes to raising interest rates as the US still has very low interest rates – especially for longer term treasury bonds.

However, at some point

once again, the patient will stumble and fall (as in another recession and bear market). This is actually perfectly normal and something we should be prepared for at some point in the (hopefully distant) future.

Over the next several weeks into April and May, I would expect the market to take a rest by consolidating sideways. And while we have yet to see much of a pullback, I wouldn't rule one out.

A look at overall market performance for this year shows not much happening just yet with small caps while mid-caps have performed better and the bigger winners have been large cap stocks – especially those in

the health care and technology sectors. In fact, if you have not been overweight in those two sectors, there's a good chance that your portfolio's performance is lagging behind.

That's because these two sectors offer investors growth at a reasonable price, as their valuations are not much higher (if at all) when compared to the overall market. Keep in mind that while US health care reform (that is, repealing or fixing Obamacare) is still being debated, the market seems to be betting that not much will change – at least not much for health care stocks themselves.

One interesting area to watch is the strong US dollar

(which has strengthened even more over the past few years as the currency markets anticipate Fed interest rate hikes) and how that continues to impact international stocks which have largely underperformed over the past 8 or 9 years. Right now, the iShares MSCI Emerging Markets Index's (NYSE ARCA: EEM) chart is showing signs of life as it comes out of a two year bottoming formation while the SPDR STOXX Europe 50 ETF (NYSEARCA: FEU) is also showing signs of breaking out of its bottoming formation. Depending on what happens with the dollar, international stocks may soon become attractive again.

For now though, my clients and I will remain invested in strong stocks and ETFs as well as remain overweight in health care and technology related investments.

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

Millions of low-income people expected to be on welfare



Officials expect at least 10 million people to register. Photo: pixabay

A LARGE number of low-income people queued up to apply for state welfare as the second round of registrations opened nationwide on April 3.

Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong said at least 10 million people were expected to register in this round, which ends on May 15.

He added that after the registration, welfare cards would be given to those who met the criteria. The welfare cards will

be used to access privileges extending from free tap water, electricity and fares on public buses and trains. The types of welfare provided will be different for urban and rural people.

In Nakhon Ratchasima, several people waited for a long time in front of a number of bank branches, including Krungthai Bank's (KTB's) Hua Thale and Mittraphap branches, since early in the morning.

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Gearing up for the holidays

THE recent death of a 'ghost riding' Thai motorcyclist along Thepkrasattri Road in Thalang should serve as a sobering reminder to all motorists of the need to be on full alert during the upcoming Songkran holiday period.

As noted in this space numerous times in the past, Phuket seldom experiences the kind of spikes in road accidents, injuries and fatalities that some other provinces suffer over the Songkran period.

The reason for this is pretty obvious when one breaks down annual statistics, both for regular reporting of road accidents as well as during the two annual 'Seven Days of Danger' road safety campaigns that span the western New Year period as well as the Songkran period in mid-April.

Unlike other more rural provinces, which experience annual spikes during these periods, the numbers for Phuket differ little from the rest of the year. This is likely due in large part to the fact that much of Phuket's huge migrant workforce returns to home provinces to celebrate the holidays – with some inevitably contributing to the statistics in those locales. Of course, their absence is compensated for in part by an influx of tourists, both Thai and foreign, a percentage of whom are just as inevitably involved in accidents here.

The operation of these road safety campaigns, which rake in huge amounts in fines paid at road checkpoints, probably accounts for a much smaller reduction in accidents than the fact that there are just fewer 'local' people on the roads here during these periods; let's not forget that the vast majority of serious accidents involve young males on motorbikes, many of them drunk and without helmets.

Thai traffic laws are as well-thought-out and comprehensive as many western countries with far safer roads. The difference, as noted in this space *ad nauseam*, involves enforcement. The sad fact is that 'ghost riding' (riding on the wrong side of the road, for newcomers) is common here and often done in full view of law enforcement officers.

For these reasons, the *Phuket Gazette* advises all motorists to be on full alert, not just during the designated 'days of danger', but all-day, every day. Your life could quite literally depend on it.



Hope new Gov is good for Phuket

Re: Phuket Governor transferred out after just six months, Apr 4

Let's see what the new guy's instructions are but if he is to end corruption in Phuket and really make decisions and stick by them, rather than change every two minutes so no one knows what's going on, then it's a step in the right direction.

Simon Lomas
Facebook

Illegal activities within sight of police

Re: Chinese national and hilltribe man arrested for working illegally in Phuket, Mar 30

What hypocrisy. Beaches like Kamala and Bang Tao are populated with numerous wedding photo teams, obstructing entire stretches for themselves, shouting, screaming and just being a nuisance.

At Kamala Beach these (I suspect) illegal photographers operate within sight of the police station.

Michael Pohl
Facebook

The law is clear, but not always enforced

Re: Ghost riding Phuket motorcyclist killed in collision with British woman, Apr 1

So sad, the law is clear but never enforced. Both bikes and cars legally have to have fully functioning head lights, brake lights, rear lights and indicators, sadly many do not. Both cars and bikes are meant to drive on the correct side of the

Letters to the Editor

*Do you have an opinion to voice?
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road in the correct direction and flow of traffic.

In fact a huge proportion of bikes have no rear lights, never indicate and many I have personally seen at night driving have no main head lamp on or working.

Add to that the fact that many bikes drive on the wrong side of the road (driving on the right) driving directly towards you on your side of the road because of the u-turns and central road barriers they choose to ignore or drive across/around it is amazing to me that there are not more deaths.

The recent spate of newly installed central road reservation construction seen recently around Chalong and also Thalang, from monument towards Ao Po has seen a huge increase of this dangerous bike driving recently.

Brent Cowey
Facebook

A deterrent to all drivers in Phuket

Re: Angry German charged in Phuket for running red light, tossing car keys, Mar 28

Let it be a deterrent to all drivers. I saw a bus carrying tourists driving very fast through a main intersection on Viset road when the lights were red.

All the cars and bikes had stopped, but this bus driver bar-

reled straight on through, blasting his horn as if he owned the road.

Most appalling driving I have ever witnessed. Equal treatment to all for bad driving?

Harry
Gazette forum

Must have free access to the beach

Re: Opinion: What's next for Laem Singh Beach, Apr 2

I believe the precedent is that all land owners must give free access to public beaches, and that all beaches in Thailand are public.

I don't know why Channel 7 has been allowed to take in up to 50,000 baht a day from unsuspecting tourists.

I advocate boycotting the beach and not giving these people one more satang.

Pinot
Gazette forum

Celebrities should be treated the same

Re: Phuket celebrity temporarily avoids Military draft, encourages others instead, Apr 3

One sometimes wonders what qualifies one as a 'Thai celebrity'.

'I'm not going to join the Army but you can in my place' – very gracious.

I somehow get the feeling that 'serving his country' in the future might sort of fade away with time.

Mister Ree
Gazette forum

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Handy tips for online shopping

IN THIS modern day and age, online shopping is so easily accessible that even those residing on islands can benefit from its perks while enjoying the sun, sea and sand to the maximum. While websites like eBay and Amazon are dominating the West, e-commerce is only starting to grow here in Southeast Asia. According to *Statista*, the number of users in the Thailand e-commerce market is expected to increase from 12.1 million in 2017 to 13.9mn by 2021.

This means there's plenty of room for more e-commerce retail websites to grow and expand in Thailand. As online shopping develops into something bigger, this opens a gateway to other businesses as well. *Shopcoupons* is one which has seized this opportunity to leverage on the growth of online shopping.

One of the reasons why people lean toward online shopping as compared to traditional retail shopping in malls is because of the heavy traffic one has to brave just to get to the mall. Most would opt to place orders in the comfort of



Online shopping has become more convenient and easily accessible over the years. Photo: pixabay

their own home or office to save time and money. Additionally, shopping online costs lesser for the consumer as goods bought online are generally cheaper as compared to buying from brick-and-mortar outlets. To maximize the online shopping advantage, here are a few tips on how to save even more on your online purchases.

First, wait for big sale seasons. Just like a traditional

shopping routine, the best time to shop would be during big sale seasons like Thailand's 'Amazing Grand Sale' which occurs from mid-June till mid-August. During this period, retail as well as online stores have sales and is the best time to begin shopping, as consumers have more options to compare to and choose from. Well-known websites such as Lazada have massive sales with games, huge

never-before-seen discounts, and flash sales. This is when shoppers should fully take advantage of the season and shop.

Next, use credit cards which offer cash rebates on online transactions. There are a number of banks offering credit cards which give you cash-back when you spend online. Another alternative would be to get a credit card which gives you extra discounts with mul-

iple e-commerce stores. Some websites have special bank discounts on selected days of the week. If you're able to get a card which offers cash-back and extra discounts, you'll be able to reap more in return.

Finally, make full use of coupon codes. As online shopping is still fairly fresh in certain regions of Southeast Asia, many people are still new to the idea of using virtual voucher codes to gain additional savings. In the West, such websites providing numerous deals and discount codes are common. With hundreds of deals and codes for well-known e-commerce giants such as Zalora, Lazada, Konvy and more, *shopcoupons* is a trusted provider of promo codes and deals in Thailand.

Some coupon codes are only applicable for selected items whereas some are for store-wide use. Sign up as a member for free and save your favorite stores to be alerted immediately when the latest codes are updated.

There you have it – short but sweet tips for making the most out of your online shopping experience.

– *Phuket Gazette*



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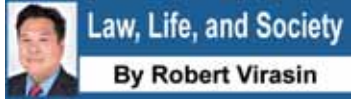


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Enjoy the holidays, but don't break the law



Law, Life, and Society

By Robert Virasin

SONGKRAN was originally a Thai religious festival marking the beginning of the Buddhist New Year. Now it has morphed into a week-long holiday, water fights and parties. Large numbers of tourists come to Thailand to join in the festivities. There are music festivals, hotel pool parties and walking street celebrations. It is a time where people let loose and civility is secondary. In response, Thai police are present in large numbers to ensure that there are no disturbances.

Excessive drinking contributes to the party atmosphere and the police will be looking for people who have lost control. Public intoxication is defined as anyone who puts themselves into a state of drunkenness by the consumption of alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating substances and exhibits themselves in a troublesome or senseless manner in a public space. Those found guilty can be arrested and fined.

Some examples of unacceptable behavior are defacing private and public property; urinating, defecating or vomiting on other people's property; fighting; or joining in a public brawl. These individuals can also face imprisonment and a fine.



Large numbers of tourists come to Thailand to join in the festivities. Photo: Gazette file

Do not consume illegal narcotics. The police are everywhere and looking for people under the influence of narcotics. The potential penalty for public intoxication or fighting does not compare to the seriousness of being arrested and charged with illegal narcotics. This opens people up for extortion and long sentences in Thailand's overcrowded prisons.

It is best to cooperate with the Thai police. Normally, they just want to ask questions or observe the behavior of an individual. Under section 367 of the Thai Criminal Code, people are required to provide their name and address to a public

officer if it is asked in the interest of legal enforcement. Failure to provide such information or to intentionally give false information makes the person liable for a fine. In addition, failure to cooperate might raise increased suspicions from the police and they may further interrogate you.

Any person who is given an order by a public officer and fails to abide by it without reasonable grounds, faces imprisonment and a fine. However, even if it is determined you have been given a reasonable request by a legitimate police officer, it is important to be wary.

If the police would like to

search your clothes or bags, ensure that it is done in public and in the presence of others. If they want to search your pockets, pull the items out by yourself to ensure that something is not unknowingly placed inside.

If the police determine that a law was broken and the individual needs to be taken into custody, they will arrest the suspect. They have a duty to immediately inform the suspect of the charge and take them directly to the closest police station to be processed. They are not allowed to take them into another room or to a private house, but directly to the police station.

After the arrest, the suspect

can contact a related person and an attorney. The police can only hold a person for 48 hours unless they bring the suspect in front of a judge to request for an extension of the hold. After the arrest, the suspect may be eligible for bail. For small cases like public intoxication, the bail can be paid immediately.

Another quirk in the law is that Thailand has a good Samaritan law. When someone sees any person in danger, they are required to render assistance if the assistance does not put the individual in danger. If the public officer requests assistance in the performance of a public duty, the person is required to assist the public officer. Failure to provide assistance in either of the above circumstances may lead to imprisonment and fine.

During this period of celebration, keep a copy of your ID, phone number of a local friend, contact for your local embassy, and the phone number of a local English speaking attorney. Have fun in groups and be vigilant. Stay away from narcotics and people who may attempt to take advantage of you.

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



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Vets find another turtle with coins in its stomach

NINE more sea turtles at the Sea Turtle Conservation Centre on Munnai Island in Rayong have been examined to determine whether they had coins in their digestive system, with one turtle confirmed to have four coins in its stomach.

Dr Nantarika Chansue from Chulalongkorn University's Veterinary Medical Aquatic animal Research Center (VMARC) led a team to perform health check-ups for the turtles, which came from the same pond as the green turtle 'Ormsin' (or 'piggy bank').

Ormsin became famous after surgery was performed on the animal to extract 915 coins from its stomach. The turtle had swallowed the coins thrown into her pond by people who believed it would bring longevity and good luck. The turtle died soon after the procedure.



VMARC vets performed health check-ups. Photo: The Nation

Dr Nantarika said the VMARC and the Marine and Coastal Resources Department veterinarian team had conducted X-rays and blood tests on the nine turtles.

"The DMCR team leader will carry on with the treatment we discussed and we will continue monitoring them," she said.

— *The Nation*

A different style of celebration in Phuket

By Patrick Campbell

PHUKET has its own riotous version of Songkran, Thailand's most important public holiday. Primarily a water festival, it celebrates the Thai lunar New Year and is held annually on April 13.

Mostly an occasion for youthful exuberance, the whole island is turned into a war zone, as young people spend the day getting into water fights with anything from pump action water pistols to garden hoses and buckets. The battle is waged both on foot at the roadside and from pickups loaded with tanks of H2O.

If you are foolhardy enough to join the celebrations, you may also be covered in a mix of water and white talc or chalk, a tradition begun by monks as a way of marking blessings. This use of powder seems to come from the Indian festival of *Holi*, which, like the Christian Easter, is celebrated at the



The young pour water over the palms of the elderly as a sign of reverence to ancestors . Photo: Gazette file

same time.

Mind you, Songkran does have a serious side, as Thai festivals usually do. It is an occasion – much like the local vegetarian festival or Loy Krathong – for merit-making and purification. For devotees, the morning will begin with a visit to their local temple, to wash images and stat-

ues of Buddha, or to clean and redecorate their house shrines. All these gestures are intended to initiate purification of the self and washing away of personal sins and bad luck in the past year.

The young may pour water over the palms of the elderly as a sign of reverence to one's ancestors. Other forms of merit-

making may include the usual offering of food to monks or, less commonly, the release of wild creatures such as birds or fish. In the south, people aim to observe three rules of conduct for the day: don't work, don't spend money and don't tell lies.

In Sanskrit, the word 'Son-

gkran' means 'the passage of the sun from one sign of the zodiac to another'.

There are 12 passages each year, but this one, celebrating both the Thai New Year and the 'Vernal Equinox' in western culture, is the most important. Originally determined by astrological computation, it is now observed on a fixed date. *Sankranti* is also the name of a Hindu harvest festival celebrated in India to mark the arrival of spring. In Thailand it marks the conclusion of the dry season.

A few words of advice for newcomers. If you do venture out, be prepared for anything from a snow-covered wind-screen to ice cold water down your back. Wear old clothes and if you are driving, be prepared for grid-lock, especially in parts of Phuket Town.

Also, look out for drunken revelers; they can be a danger both to themselves and others. Otherwise, embrace the occasion and enjoy being a kid again.

Break bread with friends and family at Angsana this Easter



Xana is offering complimentary dining for kids under 6. Photo: Supplied

XANA beach Club is hosting a Sunday Easter Brunch on April 16, with a 50 per cent discount for children aged 6-12, and complimentary dining for all kids under 6.

With the young ones free to enjoy the club's kids' corner, build sandcastles on the beach or take a swim in the pool, Xana is also offering free flow cocktails, wine, beer and live music for adults.

The brunch also includes an Easter-themed Kids Corner with activities such as egg painting and an egg hunt.

Prices start from 1,650++ baht (food only) and 2,450++ baht (free flow).

Bodega & Grill at Angsana Laguna Phuket will also host Easter celebrations with a four-course dinner paired with wine, from April 14-17.

Prices start at 2,080++ baht (food only) and 3,880++ baht (wine pairing or one glass of selected wine).

For inquiries or reservations, email fbreservation-laguna-phuket@angsana.com or call 076-358500.

– *Phuket Gazette*



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Dos and don'ts of celebrating Songkran

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

SONGKRAN marks the beginning of the Buddhist New Year in Thailand. It is also popular for being a water-splashing festival throughout Thailand.

Here is a look at some dos and don'ts to keep in mind.

DOs

1. Put your mobile phone and wallet in a zip-lock bag to prevent them from getting wet and avoid getting frustrated by having expensive electronics destroyed mid-water-war.

2. Wear a swimsuit underneath your clothing to prevent indecent transparency. Thai culture is conservative and see-through white shirts with provocative underwear underneath isn't acceptable.

3. Leave your valuables at home or in your hotel safe. You might need to have some extra cash and your phone to contact your friends, but only bring the essentials in a zip lock bag.

4. If you don't plan to join the water festival that day, it's probably best to avoid walking on roads as that's where the party will be.



It is important to celebrate responsibly during Songkran. Photos: Gazette file

5. Take care of yourself. Even though Songkran isn't the time to be dolled up, you should still apply sunscreen to avoid nasty burns and keep yourself hydrated as it is the hottest time of the year.

6. Wish the locals a happy new year in Thai, *Sawasdee Pee Mai*.

DON'Ts

1. Do not use banned equipment. Previously, there has

been rather hazardous equipment used to shoot water and aim from far distances that have caused accidents in the past.

Stick to the legal tools such as small water buckets and

light water guns.

2. Do not powder strangers. Unless it's a light tap on the cheek, we recommend that you avoid powdering a stranger's body as it is banned in order to avoid indecent touching.

3. Do not get too rowdy at the festival. While a drink or two might make the experience fun, it's best not to get too tipsy to prevent aggressive splashing that can be harmful.

4. Do not wear dressy shoes when walking down the street. As the floors are going to be wet, you should instead opt for sandals or flip-flops with a firm grip to the ground rather than dressy shoes that can make you slip and fall.

5. Do not wear too much makeup (this one's for the ladies). Keep things minimal and waterproof unless you want to parade the streets looking like a raccoon.

6. Never throw water at motorcyclists. It may unbalance them and cause serious accidents and/or injuries.

Stay safe, enjoy yourself and celebrate responsibly.

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