

Phuket Gazette

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'DUE TO MEDICAL ETHICS, WE DO NOT PICK AND CHOOSE PATIENTS' BEARING BURDENS

Phuket hospitals face exponential costs of treating uninsured emergency patients

By Dr Tanwa Apornthip

THERE is no lack of evidence about the alarming number of tourist deaths in the Land of Smiles. According to the 'Bureau of Prevention and Assistance in Tourist Fraud', there was a 54 per cent increase in tourists' deaths in 2015 as compared to 2014. This figure only counts tourists. The actual number including expats is likely higher, as can be seen in the statistics provided by the Farang Deaths project. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade estimated that there were 109 deaths of Australians alone in Thailand between July 2014 and June 2015. Given the likelihood that a foreigner might be injured in Phuket, clear protocols on uninsured foreign patients are surprisingly missing.

According to Methavee Maneesri of Vachira Phuket Hospital, when foreign patients are unable to pay their bills, the hospital has to absorb the expenses. Last year alone, the hospital wrote off 4.3 million baht of unpaid bills incurred by foreign patients as a loss. Over the last nine years, Vachira Phuket Hospital has written off more than 24 million baht as losses.

"Due to medical ethics, we do not pick and choose patients before we initiate life-saving treatment. The questions of payment and insurance coverage are always secondary to saving patients' lives," said Ms Methavee. However, patients with non-life-threatening conditions will be asked to show proper insurance coverage or adequate deposit before the treatment is administered.

"Given the large amount of annual write-off for saving critical foreign patients, it simply doesn't make sense for us to shoulder the cost of treatments that patients should be able to pay with proper insurance coverage. After all, these are conditions that are not dangerous to life in the near future. Even Thais have to show proper insurance coverage before the treat-



Last year, Vachira Phuket Hospital wrote off 4.3 million baht of unpaid bills incurred by uninsured foreign patients, with the amount being 24 million baht over nine years. Photo: Gazette file

ment can be initiated," said Ms Methavee. Feeling the financial effects that uninsured foreign patients cause on the hospital's bottom line, the international department, currently led by her, was established to handle the issue.

According to National News Bureau of Thailand (NNT), medical treatments for emergency patients at hospitals within 72 hours no longer incur any payments from patients as a basic benefit of Thai citizens.

Government Spokesman Lt Gen Sansern Kaewkamnerd said the Universal Coverage for Emergency Patients (UCEP) was put in effect starting from April 1, allowing patients undergoing emergency treatments at any nearby hospital without payment for the treatment costs during the first 72 hours.

The practice will adhere to the Ministry of Public Health's regulations and protocol for emergency treatment costs. All hospitals in Thailand are obliged to follow

the protocol.

Upon being asked how the financial loss is being mitigated, Ms Methavee said that Vachira tries its best to contact the family and relatives of each patient. If the family members refuse to care for the patients or support them financially, the hospital usually covers the expenses for life-threatening illnesses until the patient either expires or can be released. Most patients are released by either voluntary self-deportation or signing a debt agreement with the hospital.

A plea for help to embassies usually results in letters of appreciation with no monetary or personnel support, Ms Methavee explains.

"Sometimes, a patient in our care is unable to go back to his home country or in a serious enough condition to require a nurse aide. A lot of money is needed to...

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New Phuket gov arrives shortly after NCPO order

Norraphat Plodthong arrived in Phuket on April 10 after ex-Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan's transfer was announced by the National Council for Peace and Order. Gov Norraphat says his first priority is Songkran safety.

Story on Page 2

BUSINESS



Further market consolidation and pullback expected in coming months.

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PROPERTY



An assessment of the property market's performance at the end of Q1 2017.

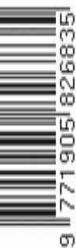
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LIFE&STYLE



A reader's inquiry about plant identification leads to interesting questions about plant species.

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LOCAL NEWS
Briefly

Phuket gold shop thief nabbed by cops

A CHIANG Mai woman who stole items from two gold shops last month in Phuket was arrested on April 8 in Songkhla.

The woman had reportedly entered gold shops in Wichit and Talad Nue and was seen stealing items on CCTV footage before escaping.

Region 8 Police led by Lt Col Prawit Engchuan of Ao Nang Police were responsible for the arrest.

“The 28-year-old woman, Thivaporn Saksri, had escaped by car to a friend’s house in Songkhla Province,” said the colonel. “She confessed to both crimes, stating that she needed money urgently.”

She was charged with committing theft using a motor vehicle, and said she had already sold the stolen items.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Nok Air plane grounded due to bad weather

NUMEROUS complaints by passengers of a grounded Nok Airplane last weekend resulted in an official public apology by the airline via so-

Families participate in merit-making ceremonies



Phuket locals offer fruit, juices, milk, and other items to young monks at a park in Koh Kaew on April 9. A number of families, such as this one, perform merit-making ceremonies before, during, as well as after the official Songkran holidays. Sprinkling scented water from a silver bowl in order to cleanse images of Buddha is done on the third day of Songkran. Young Thais during the New Year celebrations sprinkle water on their elders to show respect and receive their blessings. Photo: Trin Kulprasit

cial media on April 9.

At least 150 passengers were affected by the cancellation of flight DD7525, which was slated to leave Phuket International Airport at 10:50pm on April 8 and land at Don Muang in Bangkok at 12:12am the next day.

“The Bangkok-bound flight had to be cancelled due to turbulent weather,” Nok Air officials posted on their official Facebook page.

Similar reasoning was also given for the delay of flight DD7524, due to arrive in Phuket from Bangkok at 10pm, which was rerouted to Hat Yai.

Of the original 150 passengers, 131 boarded another flight (DD7521) to Bangkok at 6:25am.

The Facebook post ended with the ‘explanation’ that the immediate decision to ground the plane was made due to the

fact that Nok Air gives priority to passenger safety above anything else.

For the remaining passengers, Nok Air has agreed to change the tickets without any additional fee.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

New Governor welcomed

NEWLY-appointed Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong arrived in Phuket on April 10 after ex-Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan’s transfer was announced by the National

Council for Peace and Order.

Governor Norraphat visited Wat Phra Thong, or the ‘Temple of the Golden Buddha’, and paid his respects at the Heroines’ Monument before arriving at Provincial Hall.

“My first priority is to implement strict safety measures during Songkran,” said Governor Norraphat.

“I will also continue to focus on the tourism sector, waste management and overall security in Phuket,” he added.

Gov Norraphat said he will help Phuket maintain its identity, while following the government’s policy of ‘Strong together – No one left behind’.

“Several factors have to be well-coordinated in order to position Phuket as a sustainable tourism destination,” he noted, adding that he would continue to work toward them.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

British expat electrocuted

OFFICIALS have been instructed to examine a power pole that may have electrocuted and caused the death of a British expat at his house on April 6.

“We received reports of the incident in Rawai. At the scene, we found Paul Wilkinson, 55, unconscious,” said Lt Col Kanan Somrak of Chalong Police.

Rawai rescue workers administered CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] before rushing him to Chalong Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

“Mr Wilkinson was working in the garden while she was inside the house,” said Col Kanan.

“He was using garden tools, including scissors, in close proximity to an electric pole and transformer located right next to the wall of his house. This leads us to believe he may have been electrocuted,” he added.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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Woman escapes burning vehicle



Ms Weeraya was able to escape the burning vehicle. Photo: Winai Sarot

A PHANG Nga woman escaped injury after her car caught fire in Phuket on the afternoon of April 6.

Thalang Police officers received a report of a burning vehicle at the Mud Dok Khao-Nai Yang junction.

“Weeraya Thitiwana, 34, had just driven from Phang Nga to Phuket when her car started smoking and caught fire,” said Capt Chatree

Chuwichian of Thalang Police.

“She parked on the roadside and luckily managed to escape before the flames engulfed the entire car,” Capt Chatree added.

Firefighters spent 15 minutes battling the flames.

“Ms Weeraya has contacted her insurance company, which is now looking into the cause of the fire,” added Capt Chatree.

– Winai Sarot

Hospitals suffer losses from uninsured cases

Continued from Page 1

...arrange for such transportation. We are trying our best to budget for it,” said Ms Methavee.

“Even without the ability to pay, no patient is ever held against their will,” said Ms Methavee.

She guaranteed that the hospital has no policy to hold patients against their will or confiscate passports as payment guarantees.

While the protocols at Vachira are beneficial to foreign patients, those of other hospitals could be less so, she explained.

“Different hospitals have different procedures when a foreign patient with no health insurance is unable to pay the bill,” said Dr Weerasak Lawtongkum, vice director of Vachira Phuket Hospital.

Some cases could be construed as a total disregard of medical ethics when a hospital finds out that a foreign patient

might not be able to pay the bill.

Dr Weerasak gave an example of a case in which an illegal immigrant walked into another hospital’s emergency room with a knife wound in the abdomen.

However, since the patient was not likely to be able to pay for the bill, the other hospital refused to provide the patient with care. Instead, the patient was put in an ambulance, driven to Vachira’s emergency room, and left there.

“They were fully capable of treating the serious injury. However, they did not want to shoulder the irrecoverable expense from doing so,” said Dr Weerasak.

In less extreme cases, many foreign patients are transferred from private hospitals to Vachira when their financial situations have become less than ideal.

“We use the rates announced by Thailand Ministry of Public Health. The same

government-subsidized rates apply to both Thais and foreigners. [The cheaper rate is] why private hospitals sometimes refer patients to us,” said Dr Weerasak.

Uninsured patients with serious illnesses who are transferred to Vachira eventually become a financial burden for the hospital.

Many countries around the world require that tourists entering their countries have health insurance. Members of the European Union or UAE are notable examples.

Given the recent push for Phuket to become a global premier travel destination, the government has to resolve the financial burden on the hospitals and set a clear protocol regarding uninsured foreigners.

Concrete steps need to be implemented in order to further the growth of Phuket into the acclaimed tourist destination the government wants it to become.

CLOUDY BAY
WINE DINNER

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Cloudy Bay 2013, Chardonnay

Foie gras
Chocolate, brioche, peach chutney
Cloudy Bay 2015, Sauvignon Blanc

Boneless lamb shank
Dauphine potato, eggplant caviar, mushroom
Cloudy Bay 2014, Pinot Noir

Tarte des Demoiselles Tatin
Vanilla ice cream
Cloudy Bay 2011, The Koko,

Mignardises
Arabica Coffee & Fine Tea

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Samui Hospital overcrowded, patients in halls

LOCALS in Samui have lodged complaints about overcrowding at Samui Hospital leading to makeshift arrangements to accommodate patients in the hospital's hallways.

Patients and their families say that the hallway is hot and mosquito ridden.

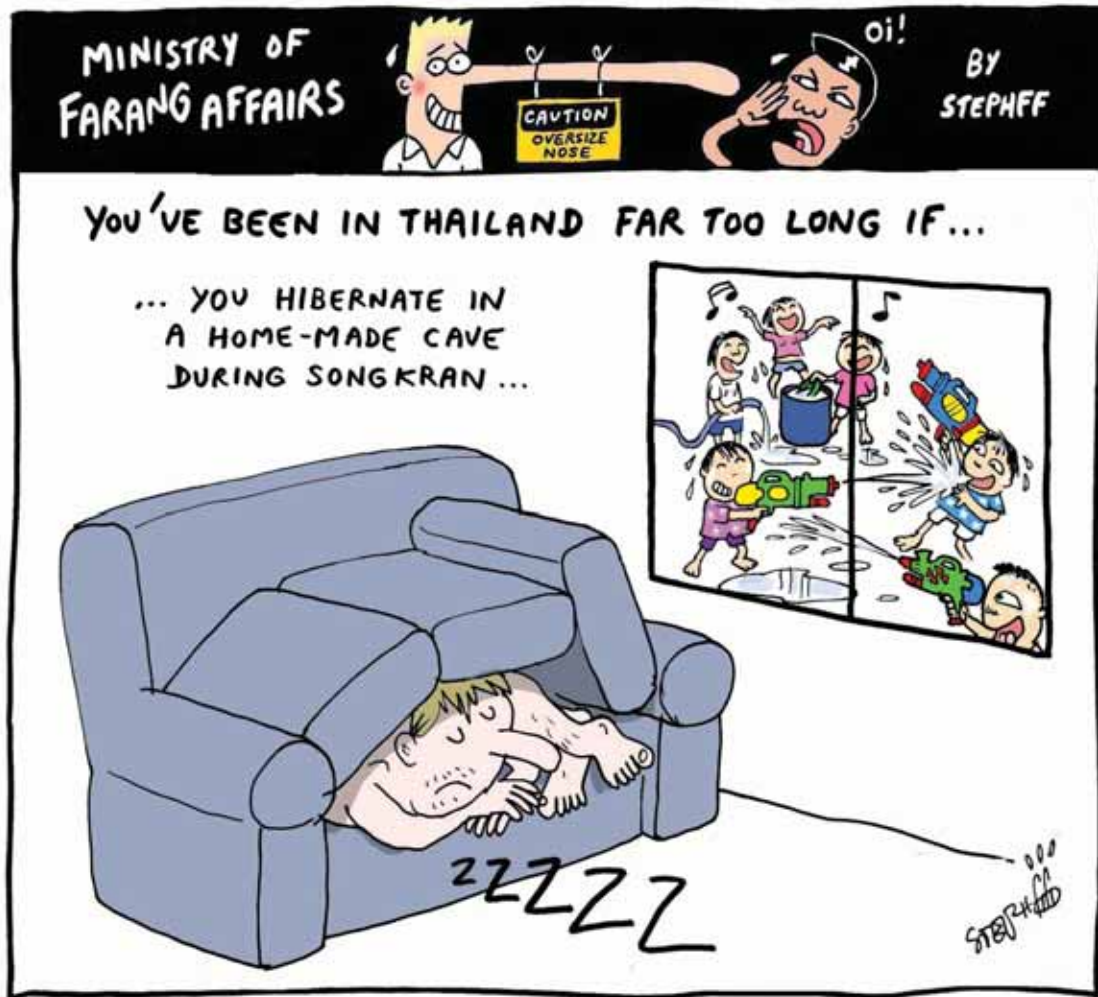
"Currently, we only have 133 beds, but about 160 patients to cater to," said Samui Hospital Director Dr Theerasak Virtanon.

"Additionally, we have locals and foreigners from Koh Phangan coming to Samui for treatment."

Dr Theerasak added that she has been raising funds to build another emergency ward.

"We are finalizing some details before the building becomes functional. After that, we are sure the situation will improve," said Dr Theerasak.

- Suchat Hankij



His Majesty signs new constitution

HIS Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn on April 6 signed the country's new constitution – the 20th – giving it royal endorsement and setting in motion a process for the next general election, which is expected late next year.

Through a court secretary, HM proclaimed the new charter's promulgation in a televised Royal ceremony that included local and foreign dignitaries and Prime Minister Gen Prayuth Chan-o-cha.

The new constitution was published in the *Royal Gazette* about an hour after the ceremony was completed.

The solemn and ritual-laden ceremony, held at the historically significant Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, was broadcast nationwide. The ornate building served as the venue for the country's parliament until the early 1970s. His Majesty arrived at the throne hall at about 3pm, and the ceremony lasted a little more than 30 minutes.

His Majesty signed three copies of the new constitution, which were then stamped by officials and placed on gilded pillars before the King. After signing the three copies with gilded covers, he ceremoniously handed them to the PM.

The King declared that the 2017 constitution would replace the post-coup interim charter of 2014.

The preamble mentioned constitutional crises in the past that had led to political impasses, and said that despite many constitutions, the country still experienced a lack of political stability, occasional disruptions and different conflicts. It partly blamed "dishonest and corrupt people who abused their power and failed to be aware of their responsibility towards the country and the people", it said.

The new constitution reflects two changes advised by the Royal Household Bureau in January. One change involves Article 5, which allows the King to use his royal prerogative in line with the traditional rule in cases where no existing laws are applicable. This is the same as Article 7 in the 2007 constitution. In the constitutional draft approved in the referendum last August, Article 5 authorized the Constitutional Court to hold a special meeting with political leaders to deal with any severe crisis or impasse.

NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

B40mn granted to flood victims in south

HIS MAJESTY the King granted to the government 40 million baht from the proceeds of the sale of greeting cards drawn by him and a diary designed by him to help flood victims in southern provinces.

He granted an audience to Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha at Dusit Palace.

The money was raised from the selling four greeting cards drawn by the King and sold in 90 baht sets. The diary was sold for 199 baht.

The cards and diaries were sold at the Grand Palace, the Golden Place, 904 welfare shops, the Suksamran bicycle shop and Nai In bookstores.

His Majesty earlier expressed concern for the people affected by severe flooding in southern provinces in December and January and granted his own money for buying necessities to help flood victims.

The prime minister will use the money to rehabilitate villages damaged by floods. His Majesty also granted money to help 267 schools.

Market pullback nothing to worry about



AS of late March, US stocks appear to be cooling after strong gains since the US elections. Over the next 1-3 months, I expect further market consolidation with a pullback by major market indices to the 50-day moving averages level being a real possibility.

The Dow Jones could fall below 20,000, while for the S&P 500 index, a 3-5 per cent pullback to a support level at the 2,300 mark would still indicate a healthy market. What I don't want to see is the S&P falling further than that, as then we may start to see other (more bearish) technical formations start to form on the technical charts. Over on the NASDAQ, tech stocks have been strong performers lately; but I would still not be surprised to see a pullback to the 5,500 level.



NASDAQ tech stocks have been strong performers. Photo: bfishadow

The iShares MSCI Thailand Capped ETF has an increasingly healthy chart with multiple bottoming or bullish formations being layered on top of each other. Thailand and its tourism industry has struggled for the last few years with the military takeover and now the passing of the King; but the THD chart shows signs that the country may have

finally turned a corner with the ETF ready to break out.

In fact, if we project upwards the difference between the market bottom (around US\$55) and recent levels (US\$77), the THD could break out to the US\$90 level. Keep in mind that such a breakout would only take us back up to 2013 highs before much of the

country's troubles began.

Some US market indices are performing worse than the key market ones. The SPDR KBW Regional Banking ETF had a big run up after the elections and profit takers are now pulling their profits. However, that not all regional banks are performing poorly – some individual names are holding on to their gains.

The iShares US Broker-Dealers ETF, SPDR S&P Metals and Mining ETF and the SPDR S&P Biotech ETF have also seen some additional pullback or profit taking.

It's no fun to go through a pullback; but as long as we don't see key indices cratering back down to pre-US election levels, there is no need to be overly worried. Investors also need to remember that while a sector index may see pullback or profit taking, not every stock in the index experiences a decline.

Pullbacks or corrections

should always be looked as opportunities to see which stocks in a portfolio are holding up as weak stocks that do not hold up should be sold while any winning stocks should remain in a portfolio or be reviewed for profit-taking opportunities.

Finally, investors need to keep in mind that correction will create headlines (especially if the Dow falls below 20,000), but investors need to ignore sensational headlines and focus on price action and long-term trends.

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

Students for hire



At least 243 businesses have offered jobs to kids. Photo: JinKai97

MORE than 1,700 students can spend their school break earning a wage and gaining experience in a program arranged by the government's Employment Department.

Waranon Pitiwan, the department's director-general, said 243 businesses have offered to temporarily take on 1,760 students aged 15 and up, in jobs such as customer service, cashiers and sales assistants.

They include Ek-Chai Distribution Systems (which runs the Lotus shopping centers), Yum Restaurants International Thailand (KFC restaurants), Nopparod (Santa Fe restaurants), MT Thongpunchang Group (Swensen cafes), Hot Pot Restaurant, MK Restaurant, CP All (7-Eleven stores) and Central Food Retail.

Several state agencies are also hiring young people for the school break.

Mr Waranon said the public-

sector employers would pay 300 baht a day for at least seven hours of work per day, excluding breaks, and 150 baht for half-days. The private sector pays 40 baht per hour up to four hours a day during the school term and up to seven hours during the break.

"Working during the school break or in their free time during school gives students valuable training, instills a sense of self-pride, teaches responsibility and patience and makes constructive use of their free time," Mr Waranon said.

"It helps ease their parents' financial burden, while the actual experience the young people gain helps them assess their aptitudes and prepare to enter the labor market after graduation."

Students interested in joining the program can contact the Phuket Employment Office or call 1694.

– The Nation



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Phuket Gazette

Easy come, easy go

THE unexpected transfer to Bangkok of former Phuket Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan [see page 2] certainly comes as a surprise to many of us in the local media – and once again begs the question of whether a directly-elected governor might be a better option for the province at some point in the future.

It goes without saying that any discussion of such a refinement to our democracy might come across as a bit premature at this time, especially given that the exact date of the next national election has yet to be announced.

From a bureaucratic perspective, the ‘lightning transfer’ of the outgoing and affable Mr Chokchai in many ways comes across as ‘business as usual’ at the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), which has continued to operate very much as usual through a long succession of governments, both elected and self-appointed.

In the past, moving a civil servant from a high-profile gubernatorial posting to a desk job in Bangkok was fairly common, but such a move would likely have been reported as “moved to an inactive post”. At this stage, however, it seems that few outsiders really know what is going on in the halls of the MoI.

The MoI has offered no explanation as to why Gen Prayuth felt it necessary to invoke Article 44, which gives him sweeping powers in order to prevent any act that undermines public peace, to justify the transfer.

If, as some have speculated, Phuket’s 47th governor is under some kind of investigation for wrongdoing, it would seem a prudent public relations move to at least make some information to that effect available – yet none has been forthcoming.

Also a bit of a mystery is the choice of Norrapat Plodthong as his replacement, especially since our new governor is only a few months from mandatory retirement at age 60 and has little direct experience with Phuket, at least that we are aware of.

Given these facts, we wish the new governor a warm welcome to Phuket and the best of luck in governing such a unique and challenging jurisdiction.

We can only hope that when democracy is eventually ‘restarted’ our new rulers will seriously consider allowing Phuket to directly elect its own governor and enjoy other aspects of being a special administrative jurisdiction like Bangkok and Pattaya.



Stay safe during the Songkran holidays

Re: *Gearing up for the Songkran holidays in Phuket*, Apr 9

Get a dash-cam.

Make sure it’s working and never hand the footage over to anyone before you’ve at least backed it up, preferably uploaded to the internet.

CaptainJack
Gazette forum

Need to grow at a sustainable pace

Re: *Keep It Green: Now is the time to act*, Apr 7

Yes, I’m sure the eyes of the developers roll over because, like Trump and all the other short term thinkers in this world, profit and greed are their only motives.

According to a team of top climate scientists, we need one and a half planets to support the current rate of global consumption.

Further economic growth will eventually render the human species extinct. We need to live with nature, not exploit it.

Newseeker
Gazette forum

Invest passively if you lack experience

Re: *Finance: Don’t buy into the 13 trillion dollar lie*, Apr 7

My advice is that if you’re not sure how you want to invest, passively investing in a low cost index funds is the way to go.

Letters to the Editor

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

It’s the least expensive way to go with the same chances of success as any other method.

This is good advice and I’m not trying to make any money off of anyone.

Pinot
Gazette forum

One step ahead, but two backwards

Re: *Phuket Governor transferred out just six months into the job*, Apr 5

No wonder Phuket won’t get anywhere with all this rapid changing of personnel at the top of the local government.

It is one step ahead and two steps backwards. Probably the mess on the island is too big to be solved.

Ernst Ruetimann, Trang
Gazette forum

Shortest tenure of any governor

Re: *New Phuket governor arrives on the island*, Apr 10

It is always the same, with every new governor. The only thing that might – might – differ is the level of morality prevailing behind closed doors.

It’s what we don’t see or hear

that really matters.

Without corruption being severely crippled, there is genuinely no hope for trust, respectability or meaningful economic development of this country.

Rod Daniels
Gazette forum

Is six months the shortest tenure ever of a Phuket governor?

I wonder what Governor Chokchai did to get moved on so quickly?

Rhetorical question.

Chas
Gazette forum

Hope Songkran is less bloody this year

Re: *Officials say Phuket ready to deal with Songkran influx*, Apr 11

That remains to be seen. Let’s see what the final injury and/or death toll is this year.

Tim
Facebook

Very little regard for their own safety

Re: *Chinese tourist dies after photo attempt*, Apr 6

Why do Chinese tourists have such little regard for their own safety?

Both authorities – here in Phuket and back in China – are to blame for their lack of action in this matter.

Sarah Lee
Facebook

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Q1 property update

TCC sets B120bn to global landmarks



Demand for freehold condos in the Thai domestic market is picking up. Photo: Phuket@photographer.net



AS WE enter the second quarter of 2017, the real estate market in Phuket remains slow.

There are 'pockets' of demand: there is demand for freehold condos and discounted resale properties. Inquiries from the Thai domestic market are picking up and the condo market in Bangkok is doing well, with many developers there reporting strong sales so far this year.

During the past high season, rental occupancy on pool villas was very good, with many villas experiencing high occupancy rates albeit at rental rates which were lower than in peak years. It is true to say that the current market remains challenging, but there are reasons to be positive for the not too distant future.

Like markets the world over, Phuket's real estate market will experience ups and downs.

In 2014, Phuket Real Estate prices were at a peak – the subsequent crash in oil prices and Russia's economic downturn brought an end to this peak and since, real estate prices have come down.

This is not necessarily a bad thing as markets get overheated and need a correction. They cannot go up in a straight line forever.

A correction will eventually bring in new buyers and can lead to a new sustained boom. Look at the US stock market which is now at record highs after being written off by so many.

It is always difficult to time markets. However, prices have come down to a level where we are seeing increasing buyer interest in terms of the number of inquiries.

This should signal that the bottom of the market is being reached as more people look to buy in and the argument for a bright future for Phuket is much stronger than the alternative.

Elections due next year, new 50 year leases for foreigners being mooted, infrastructure improvements, a new constitution in place and continued stability with ever-growing tourist numbers, coupled with current lower real estate prices could lead to the next real estate boom here. For those with cash sitting idle in the bank at record low interest rates, it is a good time to be a buyer in Phuket and put that money to work.

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

TCC ASSETS (Thailand) Co, the property arm of beverage tycoon Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi's empire, has set aside an investment budget of more than 120 billion baht from this year to 2021 in an effort to achieve double-digit annual growth.

One Bangkok, a mixed-used project on Rama IV Road, is one of the projects TCC will kick off this year.

The group also has land available for the development of commercial buildings and residential projects over the next five years. They are in the study process, TCC chief executive officer Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi told a news conference on April 3 after introducing One Bangkok to the property market.

Mr Panote said this project was the first to be launched this year by One Bangkok Holding Co, a joint venture between TCC Assets, which holds an 80.1 per cent stake, and Frasers Property Holdings (Thailand), which holds 19.9 per cent.

The joint-venture firm will have registered capital of 38.5bn baht. Frasers Property Holdings (Thailand) is a subsidiary of Frasers (Thailand) Pte Ltd.

One Bangkok is located on a 104-rai plot with a 30-year leasehold from the Crown Property Bureau. The project will have office space, a luxury hotel, and residential and retail facilities. It is undergoing environmental impact assessment, and construction is due to begin at the end of this year for completion by 2025.

A TCC Assets subsidiary won the bid to develop the plot from

the Crown Property Bureau in 2014. The contract includes a grace period of nine years for development of the project and has a 30-year leasehold renewable for another 30 years.

"We plan to open retail outlets, the hotel and office space in 2021 that we will manage ourselves; then open the residential project," Mr Panote said.

Group chairman Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi said TCC has confidence in Thailand's economic growth as the Kingdom has been a gateway for investment in other countries in the region since the Asean Economic Community came into effect in 2015.

"Our vision is to create a place that people can love and want to spend time in, which everyone in the city will feel is an integral part of our city. Once completed, it will be a global landmark that will enhance Bangkok's and Thailand's stature on the world stage," Mr Charoen said.

The next project planned by the group is the development of the land opposite One Bangkok, now known as the Thepprathan community. The project is under study, said Mr Panote.

The source of funds for the group's investment will be partly from its own cash flow. It may also raise funds from the capital market by issuing debentures, establishing a real estate investment trust or borrowing from commercial banks.

This will depend on the company's analysis of the cost of funds, Mr Panote said.

– The Nation

On a mission to achieve holistic sustainability

BANGKOK-based developer 'Magnolia Quality Development Corporation (MQDC), is concentrating its research on people's well-being with the hope of developing a model for a truly sustainable home.

MQDC, a subsidiary of the DTGO Corporation Limited, last year appointed Singh Intrachotoo, a well-known green designer and architect, to head its research center.

Mr Singh, who is an expert on transforming garbage into construction materials, is now associate professor at Kasetsart University. The company hopes he will be a good link between

academic expertise and the firm's 'sustainnovation', a concept aimed at balancing practical, emotional and social needs with each new architectural idea.

According to Mr Singh, 'sustainnovation' comprises three areas: clean environment, economic growth and understanding human needs.

His team is developing a system under the sustainnovation concept in parallel with the project construction team.

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– The Nation

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Bumper announcements before Songkran



On Deck

By Duncan Worthington

THE Thai New Year is upon us already. According to many a tourism brochure, Songkran is a water splashing festival, but in reality it is much more than that.

It's the start of a new year, a time to reflect on the past and look to the future. It's a time for family, to respect your elders and spend quality time together. It's a time to clean out the old and prepare to usher in the new.

Looking to the region, as I write this article the Singapore Yacht Show is upon us. Held just before Songkran this show has become the leader in the region – the place to do business, where global brands present and also where many from Thailand's marine industry attend. With two-and-a-half days of conferences, it's very much a business event, distinct from Thailand's boat shows which focus more on the experience of owning a boat, showcasing the marine lifestyle and the country's cruising grounds.

Recent weeks have been busy for Thailand's marine industry with announcements coming thick and fast. As we head into a new year, here's a quick look at some of the most recent highlights.



Pattaya's Top of the Gulf Regatta is expecting to welcome its 3,000th entry this year. Photo: Guy Nowell

The 14-year-old Phuket International Boat Show (PIMEX) is evolving into the Phuket RendezVous, under new ownership. The same team behind the Singapore Rendezvous and YachtStyle magazine will be adding more 'lifestyle' to the event, keeping the same dates (January 4-7, 2018) and venue (Royal Phuket Marina). Co-founder Andy Dowden remains part of the team.

The Optimist World Championship, which will be held July 11-21 in Pattaya at Royal Varuna Yacht Club, was officially launched at a media event in Bangkok recently. This is the

second time the event has been held in Thailand, and the organizers noted that more than 60 countries have already registered and more are expected to.

The organizers of the Top of the Gulf Regatta, also held in Pattaya, which will take place May 4-8 at Ocean Marina Yacht Club, announced that they will be welcoming their 3,000th entry this year. This is the 13th year of the event which has, from day one, been a big supporter of grassroots sailing in the country, providing a platform for Optimists and dinghy classes to compete, as well as larger keelboats and multihulls,

and the one-design Platu.

Back to boat shows and the dates of the 2017 Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show (also in Pattaya and held by the same organizers as the Top of the Gulf Regatta, Ocean Marina Yacht Club), have been announced. To be held from November 23-26, this will be the sixth year of the show which has shown growth year-on-year and proven to be an excellent showcase for the Gulf of Thailand, its facilities and untapped cruising potential.

On the back of the Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show and Top of the Gulf Regatta, and

the awareness both events have created for the Gulf of Thailand, the Customs Department made recent changes to their interpretation of regulations regarding visiting yachts, which now means yachts coming from overseas can stay for up to 12 months. This is a positive step for Thailand's marine industry and is something I reported on in an earlier column.

Back to Phuket; the Thailand Yacht Show recently made some big announcements about their plans for the 2017 show, held December 14-17 at Ao Po Grand Marina. With the aim of making the show a festival of all things marine, organizers will expand the components and plans to have four spectacular world championship competition events – P1 powerboat racing, foiling catamaran yacht racing, stand-up paddle boarding and kite-surfing – and create a unique viewing platform on the breakwater that surrounds the marina.

As we head into the new year, exciting times lie ahead for Thailand's marine industry.

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



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Pet monkeys caught up in drug arrest

TWO little monkeys clung tightly to their owners, Kanchana An-ampol, 38, and Sakuna Suthipibul, 24, as the two women were arrested in possession of 470 *ya bah* (methamphetamine) pills and 6.8 grams of *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) at their rented room in Chon Buri's Sattahip district on April 10.

The arrest followed an investigation that found that the women had allegedly sold drugs to local youngsters. The two women reportedly confessed to having been convicted for drug crimes before, adding that after they were released they resumed their criminal activities.

They reportedly said they had been supplied by a Chon Buri-based dealer identified only as a woman named "Nok"



One of the suspects hugs the monkeys after her arrest. Photo: The Nation

whom they knew from prison. Officials planned to send the pet monkeys to an animal rehabilitation center before returning them to the wild, while the same-sex couple were accused of possessing narcotics with the intent to sell.

– *The Nation*

Plant identification is not always easy



ONE of the more fascinating aspects of writing this column is that it brings you into contact with members of the local gardening fraternity. Some of the questions they pose are quite teasing. Take Chris, who sent me a photograph of a pot plant which has suddenly and inexplicably decided to bloom. He says, "I never really cared about it, but now it is flowering so I would like to know what it is".

First, a general point about plants that decide to burst into flower after a fallow period. The likely explanation is that conditions have changed. If the soil, location or provision of water and food are not right, many plants will refuse to expend extra energy on blooming. Of course, many plants are remarkably unfussy and will tolerate poor conditions, which are more likely to occur in the confines of a container than in open ground.

I digress. Chris's plant had a solitary, five-petalled, white



The *Jasminium multiflorum* possesses conventionally pointed leaves. Photo: Forest & Kim Starr

star-shaped bloom. My initial reaction was to say jasmine, but the leaves were not right for *Jasminium multiflorum* or *rex*, both of which possess conventionally pointed leaves. These looked glossy and rounded, a characteristic which suggested *Stephanotis floribunda*, sometimes known as the creeping tuberose or Madagascar jasmine. In favorable conditions,

it will twine and climb and will produce clusters of starry flowers. But *Stephanotis* is quite a difficult subject and will only flower profusely with plenty of tender, loving care.

There is another plant which also appears to fit the bill. The single bloom in the photograph more closely resembles that of another evergreen shrub known as *Carissa grandiflora*. Not a

climber, what it has in common with *Stephanotis*, apart from a white five-petalled flower, is dense, evergreen foliage which has similar leathery and rounded leaves, it is also known as Boxwood Beauty.

There are important distinctions between *Stephanotis* and *Carissa* which will help Chris to make a definitive identification. Unlike the twining tube

rose, *Carissa* is low growing, often forms a clump, and the leaves are paler underneath. It can be used as a low hedge or barrier. It likes full sun and its somewhat tubular blooms rarely appear in shady conditions. Indeed it is drought tolerant. Perhaps, Chris has moved the container; maybe the sun's change of direction has increased the amount of light the plant is now getting.

There are other differences. *Carissa*, in common with all other members of the *apocynaceae* genus, exudes a milky latex when the stems are broken and it produces red or magenta berry once flowering is over. Hence it's other name of natal plum.

So there you have my opinion – for what it is worth. Chris's plant may of course be neither of these fellows, but at least we have uncovered a few clues.

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

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Life of an old fashioned photographer

By Kongleaphy Keam

Achirawit Churmung is currently working as a professional photographer as well as a university lecturer teaching photography courses both at Prince of Songkla University and Rajabhat University. He is also one of the organizers of 'The Quiet Beauty', a photography exhibition being held in Phuket till the end of this month. The exhibition features more than 70 black and white photographs developed using a technique known as 'sliver gelatin printing' in a dark room.

We rarely see this technique employed in the age of digital photography, but Mr Achirawit has been doing it nearly his entire life, saying that it is a passion of his.

Mr Achirawit, originally from Kanchanaburi, graduated from Rangsit University in Bangkok with a Bachelor's Degree of Art, with a specialization in photography, in 1997. Since then, he has been involved in photography in every role he has held, giving him more than 20 years of experience in the field.

"In the past, photography

used to be a special career. If you hadn't learnt it professionally, you couldn't do it. Every shot using film requires skill, technique, and a lot of practice. Everything had to be well-prepared and carefully thought out because you could not see the end result right there on the spot," says Mr Achirawit.

"But now, everyone can be a photographer without having to study at school – all you need to have is a smart phone. I consider this era as the biggest turning-point as well as the most challenging period in photography. So, people attach less value to well-trained photographers," he added.

However, real professionals always find a way to survive, he says.

"Those who have been studying and training in the field understand more about the usage of photographs in different situations," says Mr Achirawit.

"For example, let's take a photo shoot for an advertisement. I agree that an amateur can take beautiful pictures, but the feeling and meaning behind these photos goes beyond that.

A professional knows how to

make the end result more interesting, rather than just beautiful," he explained.

"Let's say the advertisement was for coffee – the picture shouldn't just be 'beautiful'. Instead, the photographer's job is to make it look delicious, smooth and drinkable. There is a difference between the two ideas. Another example is steak. A real professional will know how to use the light when taking the picture. If you use too much light, it might look nice, but not realistic, since people normally eat steak for dinner, not breakfast. So in this situation you have to use warm evening light to make it look more realistic and luxurious. Different kinds of projects require different location, lighting and context," he added.

Mr Achirawit says that one of the problems that professionals face is that the market has been 'spoiled' by those who don't understand the difference in quality and only go for lower prices.

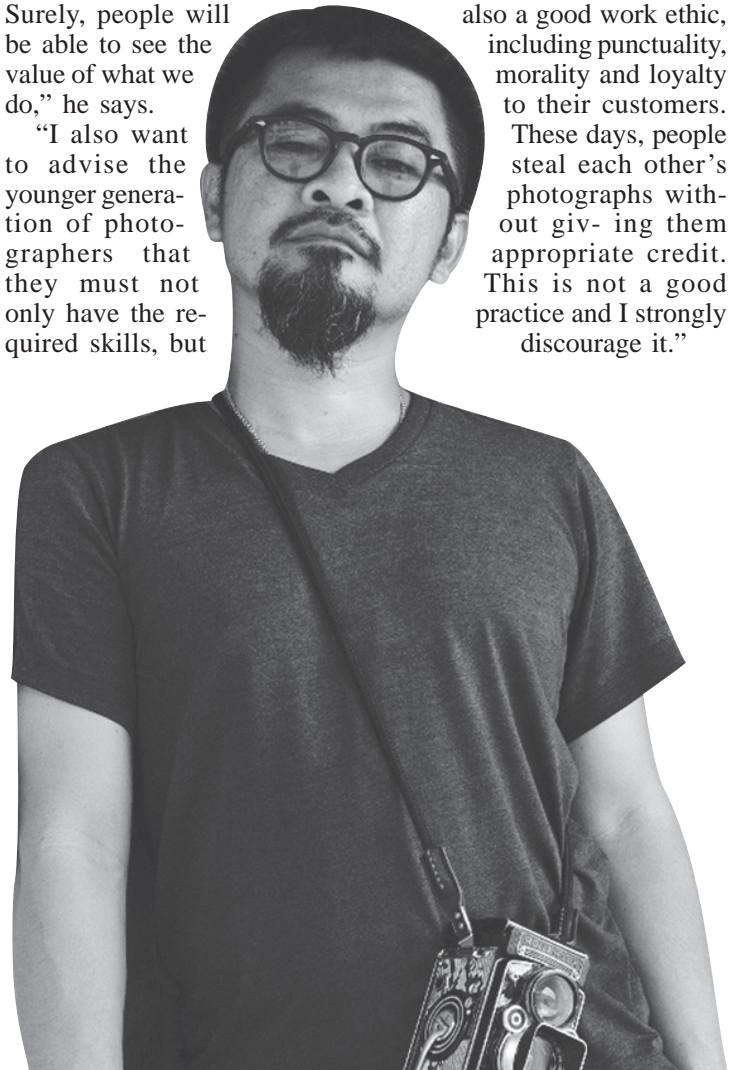
"My solution is to relax, take a deep breath and accept the situation. There's no point being stuck in the past – all we can do is deliver our best work.

Surely, people will be able to see the value of what we do," he says.

"I also want to advise the younger generation of photographers that they must not only have the required skills, but

also a good work ethic, including punctuality, morality and loyalty to their customers.

These days, people steal each other's photographs without giving them appropriate credit. This is not a good practice and I strongly discourage it."



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