

# Phuket Gazette

April 22 - 28, 2017

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‘CHANGE CANNOT OCCUR WITHOUT INVOLVEMENT OF ALL PARTIES’

## NEW BEGINNING

**■** New Phuket gov outlines plans for improving the island, enhancing tourism

By Kongleaphy Keam

NEWLY-elected Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong says his first priority is to beautify Phuket.

The governor on April 19 held his first ‘media meet’ at the Provincial Hall since his arrival on the island on April 10, to lay out his plans for Phuket.

On April 4, ex-Phuket Governor Chokchai Dejamornthan was transferred out after six months on the job, with Gov Norraphat – previously Provincial Management Adviser at the Office of the Permanent Secretary of Interior – being named as his successor.

This project was named by the Governor as ‘Beautiful Phuket by our hands’ or ‘Phuket Suay Duay Mue Rao’.

“Cleanliness is the very first impression we present to anyone – we must ensure that Phuket is always clean – so we remain in line with our image as a world class tourist destination,” said Gov Norraphat.

“Cleanliness doesn’t just mean trash collection, but also improving the general image of Phuket as one the cleanest tourist destinations in the world. We will renovate all dirty things that affect our image, such as waterways, fresh markets, public parks, restaurants, stray dogs, and so on.”

The governor added that he wanted cleanliness efforts to be sustainable, rather than a one-off event.

“This is not a one-day project that we pick up trash, pose for the press, and call it a day. The change should be real and lasting.

“It has to start with you. This cannot work without the involvement of all parties. Everyone has to understand that cleanliness is their responsibility too, rather than just the government’s,” he added.

The governor acknowledged that Phuket has many other problems waiting to be solved, but that cleanliness was the easiest one to start with. The project is ex-



New Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong told the press that wants cleanliness to be a continuous battle and not just a one-day event. Photo: PR Dept

pected to begin in May, with a three-month evaluation also scheduled.

The governor said his second priority is to make Phuket safer, but details about how he plans to put that in motion have not yet been revealed.

The third project is using sports to fight the prevalent drug culture among youngsters on the island.

“Local authorities and educational institutions must arrange sports competitions for youth to participate in every month. In 3-6 months, we will arrange a prize-giving ceremony for those with the most participation certificates,” said Gov Norraphat.

The last agenda of the meeting was creating religious harmony.

“Religion is a sensitive subject, so I will try to learn as much as possible about other religions by visiting mosques, churches and so on. I want people to talk openly about their problems, so we can work together and find ways to solve them,” said Gov Norraphat.

“My management style is using the

problems as the subject matter or proposition. Then we analyze the root cause of the issue from different angles. Then, we prepare, plan and solve the problem.

“My motto and management style is to make things as simple and straightforward as possible and to analyze the causes of the island’s problems in order to solve them. All these projects are possible if we do things the right way,” said the governor.

Other issues under discussion were infrastructure, traffic, water management, tourism, safety, fraud, natural resources, national parks, and law and order. The governor said details of new projects would be released in subsequent meetings.

“Anyone with any problems or suggestions can let me know directly. I will try to read every case file at Damrongdharma Center to keep up to date with the public’s issues,” said Gov Norraphat.

“Lastly, if you see anyone using my name to do something illegal, please try to record evidence in any form and let me know. My only purpose in being here is to improve Phuket,” he added.

### Songkran ends with four deaths, 70 injuries

THE annual Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign during Songkran ended on April 17 with a total of 67 accidents injuring 70 and killing four, an increase in both number of deaths and injuries as compared to last year.

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LOCAL NEWS  
Briefly

Park chief blows whistle

AO NANG Police officers revealed on April 17 that the Koh Phi Phi chief of park protection had asked them to arrest his own staff the previous day for selling used island tour tickets to unsuspecting tourists.

Ao Nang Police Lt Songphon Boonchai informed *Gazette* reporters of the development at 11am.

“The Chief of the Hat Noppharat Thara – Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park Protection Unit, Teerayuth Boonlert, instructed us to prosecute Chainarong Patan on charges of defrauding tourists,” said the lieutenant.

Lt Songphon added that he received reports from a tourist boat captain that Mr Chainarong sold four tickets valued at 1,600 baht each for a four-island tour.

“The tickets (to Koh Kai, Koh Poda, Koh Tab and Talawaek) that were sold had already been utilized by others before the sale. Mr Chainarong has confessed to the crime, but we have yet to charge him until we investigate further,” said Lt Songphon.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Traditional Songkran hosted by Siriroj Hospital



Phuket International Hospital hosted Thai traditional Songkran festivities – the management team paid respect to the elders. Vice Governor Sanit Sriwihok, V/Gov Theera Anantasereewittaya and other high ranking officers attended the event. This tradition is called ‘Rod Nam Dam Hua’. Photo: Supplied

Girl rewarded for bag return

A NINE-year-old girl received a reward for returning a bag containing 130,000 baht in cash and

90 grams of gold on April 17.

Piyarat Boonkek and her parents met with 55-year-old Nukhlia Sangkaew, the owner of the bag, at Kamala Police Station to return it.

Ms Nukhlia told Police of-

icers that at about 2:30pm she withdrew the cash from the bank to pay a hospital bill. On her way back home, she got caught in heavy rain, during which the bag may have fallen on the road.

She backtracked her route twice, but to no avail. That’s when she received a phone call from Ms Piyarat’s parents regarding her missing bag.

“When the rain stopped, I found the bag on the Kamala Beach road and took it to my parents so they could return it. They walked around the beach looking for the owner, and found a beach vendor who was her relative – she contacted Ms Nukhlia,” Ms Piyarat told *Gazette* reporters.

“When I received the phone call, I was so happy that I cried. I gave her 2,000 baht for her act of kindness,” said Ms Nukhlia.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Taxi driver wins B30mn in Thai lottery

A TAXI driver on April 16 won 30 million baht in lottery winnings in Koh Samui.

Sittichai Samthong, 40, was surrounded by friends and family to celebrate his good fortune.

“I was confused at first because I did not expect to win. I have now notified Samui Police,” Mr Sittichai told the *Gazette*. “I will continue to drive my taxi – I just want to buy a new house for my mother.”

He chose the lottery ticket from his Surat Thani taxi licence plate number – Tor Kor 729. The winning number was 816729 consisting of ten lotteries valued at 3mn baht each.

– *Suchat Hankij*

Tour bus crash causes massive Songkran jam

A TOUR bus full of Chinese nationals crashed into several cars on Patong Hill road on April 13, creating a massive traffic jam due to additional Songkran visitors.

Lt Col Pattapee Srichai of the Patong Police received reports of the incident at about 7pm.

“We arrived to see a ‘Somsak Transport Company’ bus with a broken front windscreen and several other cars that were damaged on the road. The bus had first smashed into a Toyota SUV, which in turn crashed into at least five other vehicles,” said the colonel.

More and more people piled up and got caught in the traffic jam that ensued.

Bus driver Charun Sillapakarn told police that he picked up 30 Chinese tourists from the Bauman Residence Hotel when, while navigating down the hill, he ‘lost control of the brakes’ and crashed.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*



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# B116mn expansion planned for sea port

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

THE transport and marine departments last week announced plans for a 116-million-baht expansion at Phuket deep sea port in Vichit.

Deputy Minister of Transport Pichit Akrathit and Marine Department Director-General Sorasak Sansombat held a conference to reveal details of the planned project.

“The current port is about 360 meters wide and unable to handle big cargo ships and passenger ships at the same time. We plan to expand it to 420 meters in order to provide convenience to both groups. The project will take about 13 months to complete,” said Mr Sorasak.

He also added that the Treasury Department has chosen Phuket Deep Sea Port Co Ltd to build the expansion zone, including a new one-story building reflecting the culture



The expansion is expected to take 13 months to complete, but no starting date has been announced yet. Photo: Phuket PR

of Phuket, as well as a passenger zone, Customs Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facility, food outlets, toilets, Duty Free Shop and car park.

Deputy Minister Pichit noted

that the purpose of the project was to boost the marine tourism industry and the local economy.

However, the starting date of the slated expansion is yet to be revealed.

# This year’s Songkran ends with four deaths

THE annual Seven Days of Danger road-safety campaign during Songkran ended on April 17 with a total of 67 accidents injuring 70 and killing four.

The first death was on April 15, when 37-year-old Bussaba Banviset fell from a tri-motorbike in Cherng Talay. She was riding without a helmet and pronounced dead at Thalang Hospital.

The same day three were killed in motorbike related incidents.

Peerapon Namsupho, 21, was said to be speeding early morning on April 17 when he lost control and hit a metal fence in Kathu, on Wichitsongkram road. He was pronounced dead at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

Panudek Wongsiwong, 22, was killed when his big bike ran into a road median in Saphan Hin. He was speeding, according to police, and was pronounced dead at the same hospital.

Adirek Suetrong, 39, was riding pillion on a motorbike taxi when the driver reportedly cut in front of a garbage truck in Rassada. Mr Adirek was killed, while the driver, although injured, survived.

Last year, the campaign came to a close with three dead. The number of injuries was also 12.9 per cent less than this year.

According to Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) statistics, the main factors causing accidents this year were speeding, unclear vision, unsafe road conditions, drunk driving, illegal overtaking, riding without a helmet, and driving an unsafe vehicle.

“We checked 37,415 vehicles and caught 11,177 for traffic offences. This was a spike over last year by 2,806 cases,” said Mr Chaitawat Sivabavorn, chief of the DDPM Phuket office.

As part of the National Council for Peace and Order’s (NCPO’s) ‘No Drink Driving’ initiative during the Songkran holidays, Phuket officers also confiscated 269 vehicles, including 59 cars, 208 motorbikes, and two trucks in alcohol-related offences.

– **Kongleaphy Keam**

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## Cop shooter on the run in Koh Samui

POLICE in Koh Samui are hunting for a hit and run suspect who injured a motorcyclist and shot at police officers before escaping on April 16.

Lt Col Denduang Thongsrisook of Bor Put Police said traffic police officers were in the area and went to check.

"A brown pick-up truck crashed into a motorbike in Chaweng at about 11:50pm, landing the motorcyclist in the hospital. The driver drove away when he saw the police," the colonel told *Gazette* reporters.

"We followed the truck, which the driver parked in front of 'First Residence Hotel' and ran. As soon as we got close, he shot at us, missed, and ran into a nearby soi. The passenger in the truck, named only as 'Jiab', surrendered himself to us," said Col Denduang.

Mr Jiab told police that the driver, Kraiwuth Boonphutphong, was a speedboat captain and also his friend. Two knives and a BB gun were found inside the truck.

"We geared ourselves up with bulletproof shields and cordoned off the soi. We couldn't find Mr Kraiwuth, so Mr Jiab took us to his girlfriend's room, where we found *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine) paraphernalia and a gun," said the colonel.

Police are still searching for Mr Kraiwuth, who was nowhere to be found. The motorcyclist was subsequently discharged from the hospital

- *Suchat Hankij*



## Krabi credit card scammers arrested

POLICE in Krabi arrested five suspects and are looking for two more involved in alleged credit card fraud to purchase a hotel this weekend.

"On April 12, staff of a Bangkok Bank branch in Ao Nang notified us that three men and two women were attempting to purchase the 700 million baht Krabi Heritage Hotel on a 300mn baht contract using credit cards," said Col Cherdpong Chewpreecha of Krabi Provincial Police on April 14.

The alleged fraudsters were named by police as Thanakorn Chivitrungruang, 44, from

## NATIONAL NEWS Briefly

Chiang Mai, John In Lee, 46, and Kio Sak So, 49, both from South Korea and Hangsakan Amamtai, 36, and Jagal Numich, 35, both from Mongolia. The two on the run are also Mongolians.

The staff also said that on April 11, 10pm to 1am, the suspects attempted to withdraw the deposit of 60mn baht by making 65 transactions at an ATM.

"The suspects presented the bank staff ATM slips, but since the code on all slips was unusually identical and there was not enough money in the account, they were refused service," said the colonel.

Police also informed the *Gazette* that the same group was planning to purchase a 550mn baht Pavilion Queens Bay Hotel by making a deposit of 118mn baht.

"As per our investigation, the suspects had drawn up a contract to use during the Songkran holidays, since there were fewer staff members present at that time," said Col Cherdpong.

"They also used their credit cards at 10pm to avoid a bank system check."

Ms Thanakorn and Ms Numich both denied the allegations, while the three men accepted. Police confirmed that they will be charged after further investigations and interrogations are complete.

"Ms Thanakorn was charged for nine fraud cases in the past and had used similar contracts

to buy hotels in Krabi and other provinces valued amounting to 5,000mn baht," stated Col Cherdpong.

- *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

## Alleged dealer denies charges

ALLEGED Laos drug lord Xaysana Keopimpha on April 18 denied in a Bangkok court that he was a major player in a regional drug network.

Mr Xaysana was arrested at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport in January. He is believed to be the mastermind behind a network that smuggled drugs from Laos to Thailand for sale in the southern provinces of Thailand and other Asean countries, including Malaysia and Singapore.

He was charged with smuggling *ya bah* (methamphetamine) and possession of narcotics. His lawyer Vorakon Phong-tanakul said in Criminal Court, adding his client had also backtracked on a confession he allegedly signed while in police custody. Mr Vorakon said Mr Xaysana did not understand Thai laws and said officials told him he could change his plea when he appeared in court.

## BMA to ban BKK street food

STREET FOOD vendors will disappear from Bangkok by the end of the year in the interests of cleanliness, safety and order, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) says.

A month after the city was

named the finest street food destination in the world by CNN for the second year, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) continued its operation to reclaim the pavements for pedestrians and announced that vendors would be banned entirely from the capital's streets.

## More than 700 attempt to get medical help

MORE than 700 people tried to exercise their right to free emergency medicine during the seven dangerous days associated with the 2017 Songkran Festival, according to the National Institute for Emergency Medicine (NIEM).

Of them, about 38 per cent were judged as eligible for the services.

NIEM secretary general Atchariya Pangma said on April 18 that 1,773 patients have requested care under the new policy that was launched at the beginning of this month.

Under the scheme, serious emergency patients can receive free treatment at public and private hospitals for the first 72 hours of care.

"But overall, just 40.33 per cent were qualified," he said.

Mr Atchariya explained that only patients in serious emergencies could take advantage of the free treatment, such as difficulty breathing or incessant seizures.

## Gang arrested for stealing phones

A FRENCH tourist whose smartphone was stolen by a gang while he was celebrating Songkran in Bangkok was overjoyed to get it back on April 18.

Jeremy Gatine was given his phone back at a press conference held at the Metropolitan Police Bureau.

Three Cambodians and a Thai were arrested for allegedly cutting off waterproof sleeve bags from their victims at major Songkran celebration sites.

Mr Gatine said he would like to thank the Thai police for their speedy apprehension of the suspects and added that he was delighted to get his phone back because it contained key contact information.

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# Tips for analyzing a stock's value



WHEN I decide that a stock could either be worth buying or worth placing on a watchlist, the first thing I do is look at the stock's fundamentals using a stock research and marketing tool called 'MarketSmith'.

Using small cap LGI Homes (NASDAQ: LGIH) as a sample stock, let's look at some fundamental data that will help decide whether its worth owning or watching.

Return on Equity (ROE) is a key measure of profitability that calculates how many dollars of profit a company generates with each dollar of shareholders' equity. An ROE of more than 10-15 per cent is good while LGIH's ROE of 25 per cent is very healthy.

Quarterly revenue or sales along with earnings per share (EPS) should both be going up year-on-year and that's the case with LGIH. Quarterly or sequential increases may also be a consideration, but keep in mind that some sectors like housing and retail are very cyclical during the year (homebuilding and buying tends to occur in the warmer months while retailers are heavily dependent on end of the year holiday sales).

Market capitalization, float



Detailed charts have day to day noise, but they can be useful for spotting resistance levels. Photo: Allan Ajifo

and shares outstanding will tell you how big and well traded a stock is. LGIH has a market capitalization of about US\$672 million making it a small cap. A few hundred thousand shares are traded per day, meaning that its reasonably well traded for a company of its size. A more lightly traded stock (under 50,000 shares a day, for instance) will be much more volatile.

What the underlying company does is also important. LGIH is focused on the design, construction and sale of single family homes in strong growth

markets like Texas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, Colorado, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington and Tennessee.

And while the above fundamentals are important, its technical chart will be the most important consideration for when to buy and when to sell. For technical analysis, I use a program called 'TeleChart 2000', which allows me to look at the main timeframes for a stock.

I will start my technical analysis with a monthly chart where I want to visually see a

long term uptrend. Looking at LGIH's chart shows that it's not an old stock as it only went public in 2013, then moved sideways until 2015, when it quickly lurched significantly higher before coming back down again.

Overall, LGIH's technical chart is showing an uptrend. I also prefer to buy stocks after pullbacks and LGIH's chart is clearly showing a pullback for roughly the last four months of 2016.

After looking at the monthly chart, I will then take a closer

look at the weekly chart. Usually stocks in bull markets will make strong moves upward and this will be picked up by a weekly chart. A strong upward move will also build up selling pressure as some investors or traders decide they want to take profits off the table. This causes shares to eventually peak and fall off until the 'smart money' comes back in for more shares on the dip and causes the uptrend to continue past the old previous high.

A daily chart and a 30-minute trend should also be reviewed. Keep in mind that detailed charts have more day to day noise, but, they can be useful for spotting resistance levels.

Remember: winning stocks will go through corrections and this is perfectly normal. LGIH has all the hallmarks of potentially being a winner moving forward. That's why I am keeping a close eye on it.

*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 of experience working with expatriates, specializing in portfolio management, US tax preparation, financial planning and UK pension transfers. For more information, contact 089-970 5795 or email freemancapital@gmail.com.*

## THAI employees appeal to Finance Ministry

The Thai Airways International labor union has appealed to the Finance Ministry to inspect the airline's operations.

In a letter submitted by union president Damrong Waiyakane, inspection was requested for executives and some members of the THAI board of directors.

The union alleged that a lack of transparency in the airline's operations had resulted in financial losses and damages to its corporate image.

In one case, it said, the THAI board resolved to approve the sales of 17 idle aircraft that still had about six to eight years remaining in their service lives. As a result, the company suffered losses of about 30 billion baht from 2008-2016, and about 26bn baht occurred between 2013 and 2016, the labor union claimed.

Noting that THAI had attributed its successful reforms for the company's profit of about 47 million baht last year, the letter indicated that there were discrepancies between the board's claimed successes and the reality.

Another decision criticized by the union was the establishment of THAI Group comprising Thai Airways International, Thai Smile Airways and Nok Air for collaborative management. It suggested that Thai Smile be fully absorbed into THAI.

The union also claimed a lack of transparency in the nomination process for the THAI president, believing that abuse of power and conflicts of interests could arise, or the procedure could be cancelled and the position of caretaker president extended.

- The Nation



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## Phuket Gazette

# Insurance troubles

DURING the current 'restart' period, the government should consider establishing a system of mandatory, basic healthcare insurance for visiting foreign tourists who lack it while travelling in the Kingdom.

As outlined in a recent *Phuket Gazette* article by Dr Tanwa Apornthip, measures need to be established in order to grow Thailand into a truly world-class tourist destination.

Tourist arrival numbers continue to increase despite considerable setbacks. Let us not forget that more than a decade has passed since one of the best-selling T-shirts at roadside souvenir stalls on the island read: "Patong Beach, Phuket, Thailand: 2001 Bomb Alert; 2002 SARS; 2003 Bird Flu; 2004 Tsunami; 2005 Earthquake; 2006 Bangkok Bomb; What's Next?"

But even after actual terrorist bombings on the island last year, the tourism juggernaut continues its relentless expansion cruise into unchartered waters, buoyed in large part by the vast, final frontier that is the mainland Chinese market.

But the ever-growing number of tourist arrivals has resulted in an inevitable increase in the number of accidental injuries and deaths.

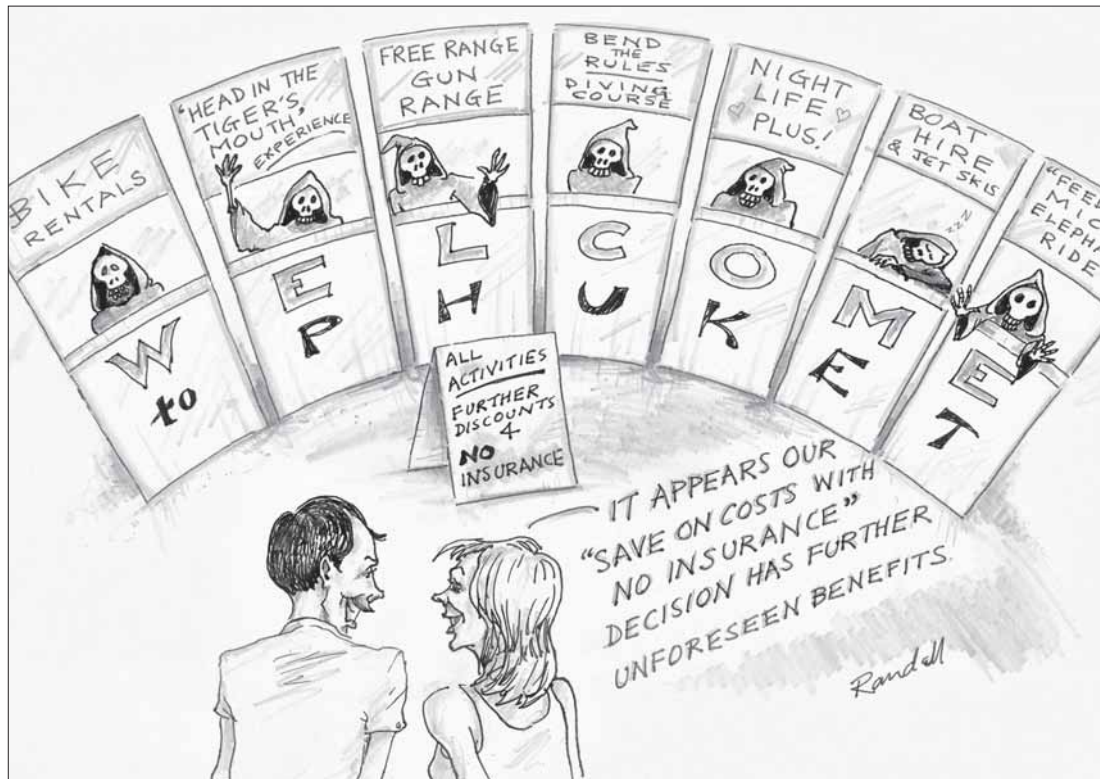
That a certain percentage of visitors lack medical coverage, and thus place a burden on the state when they are injured, is equally inevitable. Thailand's state healthcare system is far from perfect, yet as many readers will be aware, it usually comes through when it is needed most: in times of crisis.

Basic coverage through the Social Security Office is already afforded to foreigners who have worked legally in the Kingdom, at less than 450 baht per month. Some EU states require tourists to show proof of adequate medical insurance prior to entry. There is no reason for Thailand not to do the same.

Those that fail to provide such proof could be issued prorated, temporary coverage under the state system based on the length of stay specified by their visa, which should come in at around 450 baht for a one-month stay.

Needless to say, implementing such a system would create an added layer of bureaucracy at Custom and Immigration checkpoints, but since such measures have already been successfully implemented by other countries, Thailand has multiple case studies to review in order to set up such a system as efficiently as possible.

The current regime has already expressed an interest in implementing such a system. The sooner it does so, the better it will be for all concerned.



## Hope new gov can improve traffic

*Re: New Phuket Governor meets with officials, orders 'organized' disbursements, Apr 12*

Dear Governor Norraphat. One thing I hope you will sort out straight away is the 'Ruination of Rawai', which is probably tucked away at the back of the filing cabinet under 'Vised Road Improvements'.

Putting U-turns where it is impossible to turn in a pickup because of the vehicles parked in the bike lane has turned Vised Road into a much more dangerous place. I predict many more accidents, not fewer.

Chas  
Gazette forum

### Letters to the Editor

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

then they can do this all year round and save so many more lives. If they really have saved lives then they have proved it can be done so why stop after a week?

Surely, saving lives on the roads is more important than hanging round street corners taking 300 baht from tourists or collecting money from bars, restaurants, massage shops.

Or is collecting money more important than saving lives? Just a question.

Simon Lomas  
Facebook

### He will be missed

*Re: Long term Phuket expat David Ratcliffe passes away at 75, Apr 12*

We shared some fun Sunday games at the yacht club with friends and family – rest in peace David. My thoughts are with the family.

Alice Ankerstjerne  
Facebook

### Same policy should apply all year

*Re: 14 fewer road accident deaths in first three days of Songkran holiday, Apr 15*

If its really a success and lives are saved then why not do it all year. Why only for Songkran and New year.

If saving lives really matters

### Brake failure to the 'rescue' as usual

*Re: Phuket tour bus crashes in Patong, Apr 14*

Good old 'brake failure'. At least the road wasn't wet from the rain – Article 44 the weather.

Mister Ree  
Gazette forum

### Krathom is just a mild stimulant

*Re: Two arrested with more than 250,000 baht worth of krathom, Apr 17*

This is so stupid, busting people for krathom. It is a mild stimulant, somewhat is the cat-

egory of Betal nut. It is not addictive, although some teenagers mix it with alcohol laced with cough syrup, but even that is still is less dangerous than a few cocktails.

Why is Alcohol legal? It kills more people than all drugs combined...such hypocrisy. My rant is over.

Ozette  
Gazette forum

### Hibernate to protect yourself

*Re: Ministry of Farang Affairs: Hibernate during Songkran, Apr 16*

Exactly what I've been doing for the last 10 years since pump-guns and ice cubes were introduced. Loved the "old" Thai Songkran, though.

Chaing\_noi  
Gazette forum

### Healthcare solution straightforward

*Re: Special Report: Phuket hospitals facing huge losses from uninsured patients, Apr 18*

Why do people make such a big deal? The solution is simple. 1) All people coming to holiday here MUST have insurance, which includes that they can ride motorbikes, and this advice must be given to all countries. 2) The law for the wearing of helmets be enforced 100%. 3) If none of these are followed, please don't complain.

Bazza  
Gazette forum

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# Russians revive market for villas

**Across the Land**  
By Amy Koh

THIS year, the luxury villa rental inquiries are coming in early. By March, agents had already started calling around asking for rental rates over the holiday season of December 2017 to April 2018.

The luxury villa rentals over the last two holiday seasons have been somewhat disappointing, with villa owners either not achieving any rentals for their properties or conceding a lower rental rate to accommodate the budget of the booking. It was also noted that the length of bookings over the last two holiday seasons, if any, were shorter than previous years.

The holiday season also looked quite positive, with inquiries for rentals coming in strong.

Nearly all of the early inquiries are from the Russian market and with the strengthening of the Russian ruble and US dollar, it looks like the more popular villas could be snapped



Luxury villa rentals are picking up in Phuket after two sluggish holiday seasons. Photo: Miskawaan

up faster than expected. Villa rentals, as compared to hotels, are popular among Russian clients as most of them travel with family (and even extended family) during the holiday season. Thus the requirement of a villa with a minimum of 3-5 bedrooms or more. Most Russian

families also tend to cook – especially if they are staying for 1-3 months – so the fact that nearly all villas come with fully equipped kitchens is another added plus.

With holiday villas not renting out well the last two seasons, we expect rental

price wars and steep discounts to begin soon, as most villa owners will attempt to secure an early booking for the coming season. For those villa owners who try and hold out for a higher rate or a longer stay, it will probably be a chicken and egg situation

about whether to secure an early booking with a lower rate/shorter period or not get a booking during the holiday season if demand dwindles closer to the holidays.

However, if demand continues to increase and most of the holiday villas are booked, then those owners who have held out will get the most favorable rates.

Russian tourists have always been big spenders, with average spend per person being 5,520 baht per day (Source: Russian Tourism Market Report – C9 Hotelworks, March 2017).

Average spend takes into account accommodation, food and beverage, retail, and spa and excursion. Last year saw an increase in non-scheduled flights from Russia and this year is looking positive as the Russians are finally starting to flock back to the white sandy beaches of the Andaman.

*Amy Koh is the sales manager of Engel & Voelkers Phuket. To contact Amy or for more information, visit [www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket](http://www.engelvoelkers.com/en/phuket)*



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# Role of Garuda in Thai history

## Looking Back

By Anand Singh

THE Garuda is a common symbol in Thailand. It can be found on bank notes, government documents and official flags. Both government and private offices often hang an image of the Garuda from the top of buildings. Sometimes it even appears on consumer products.

The official emblem of the Thai government is a frontal image of the Garuda in red. This mythical creature was adopted as the symbol of the government in 1910, during the reign of King Rama VI.

The legend of Garuda dates back thousands of years, originating in ancient India. The beast is mentioned several times in various Indian epics, such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. According to folklore, the Garuda is half beast, half god. He appears to have eagle-like characteristics, with large wings, sharp talons and a sharp beak affixed to a human face. He possesses human arms and a human body, whereas his lower body resembles that of a large bird with a feathery tail.

The Garuda has unfathomable power. It is said that his wings are capable of creating gusts of storm when flapped. He is able to fly high above the clouds and soar swiftly. Despite his unmatched strength, he is said to be wise, gentle and respectful.

The Garuda is often depicted



The Garuda is the Royal standard of the Thai government as well as the symbol of the King. Photo: Sodacan

with Narayana, who, in Hindu scriptures, is one of the most important of all the Brahman gods. According to legend, Narayana made a bargain with the Garuda. In return for the gift of immortality, the Garuda promised to become Narayana's mode of transport. Narayana would ride on the Garuda's back as he flew across the heavens. In Hindu folklore, Narayana is often depicted riding on the Garuda's back.

It is this story that connects the Garuda to Thai tradition. Since the old days of Ayutthaya, Thais have always believed in

the divinity of their kings. During the Ayutthaya period, it was believed that the king was in fact a god incarnate, who had descended down from the heavens to serve mankind.

The idea of divinity of kings could be traced back to India. According to ancient Indian scriptures, Narayana had reincarnated on earth as many as nine times, each time taking a different 'Avatar', in order to banish evil and fight tyranny.

In the epic Ramayana, King Rama is mentioned as being the avatar of the god Narayana. He incarnated on earth in order to

defeat and kill Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. In the Mahabharata, Krishna was believed to be an avatar of Narayana. Even Buddha is believed by Hindus to be the ninth reincarnation of Narayana.

Since the Ayutthaya period, Thais also believed that their kings were the incarnation of the god Narayana. Although it was a symbolic interpretation, it was a powerful one. The king was divine, sent to rule his subjects on earth and alleviate their suffering. His authority was heaven's mandate.

During the Rattanakosin era,

Thai kings of the Chakri dynasty continued this interpretation, perhaps taking it further. Chakri kings assumed the title 'Rama', after Narayana's avatar in Ramayana.

Rama V ordered the design of a new emblem of government that would reflect the traditions of Siam. Since Thai kings were believed to be the personification of the god Narayana, it was appropriate to use the Garuda as the symbol of the government.

The initial design of the national emblem, drawn by Prince Naris in 1893, showed Narayana riding on the Garuda. The final version featured only the Garuda.

Today the Garuda flag is flown above Royal residences to signify the King's presence, as well as in front of Royal vehicles. It is also mounted under every portrait of the King and Queen.

In the year 1996, a royal barge was launched to become the seating barge for King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The barge was named 'Narai Song Suban'. The bow depicts Narayana mounted on the Garuda.

Private businesses may be granted the use of the symbol if they are deserving and of good standing. If permission is given, the firm may hang a sculpture of the Garuda on all their business premises, or print the Garuda symbol on their merchandise.

Receiving a Royal Warrant is considered a great honor and a mark of distinction for any Thai company.

## Islanders celebrate traditional Songkran

CHALONG and Phuket Town underwent an alcohol cleanse during Songkran to host a more traditional commemoration of the holiday.

Chalong Mayor Samran Jindapon, along with the general public, made offerings of food to monks.

The program also included a segment to help foreigners understand the rites and importance of celebrating Songkran, followed by traditional dances and pouring of water on the hands of the elderly.

Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong presided over Songkran festivities at Lime-light Avenue.

"Following strict instructions of the government to control drugs and alcohol during the festival, it will be good to have



Traditional Songkran festivities were held in Chalong and Phuket Old Town. Photo: Chalong Municipality PR

fun without any legal concerns and road accidents," said the governor. Powder, foam and high pressure water guns were also prohibited at the event.

Similar festivities were also held at Phuket Old Town, including a Baba dress-wearing ceremony.

— Sukawin Tanthavanich

## Funeral service held for expat David Ratcliffe



Cindy Ratcliffe with her three daughters – From left: Sarah, Claire and Sian with their families at the funeral service for David Ratcliffe. David lived in Phuket for 25 years and served as Commodore for the Phuket Yacht Club at Ao Yon and managing director of Thaisarco.



# Helping nourish fussy eaters

**Excuse Buster**  
By Craig Burton

I AM SOON to give a talk on nutrition at one of Phuket's international schools. One question I always get asked when speaking to parents is: "How do I get my child to eat vegetables?"

Having two children myself, I know the struggles of encouraging children to eat more from this critical food group packed full of nutrients. However, as most parents know, raising children is a labor of love that has patience and persistence as the cornerstones.

Here are some tips to help encourage your child to eat more vegetables.

1. Most important strategy to kids eating vegetables is seeing parents eat lots of them in order to set a good example. Show them how much you eat and enjoy vegetables.

2. Don't give up on certain vegetables. Taste buds change over time, so keep putting vegetables in front of your kids in different ways.



Having children grow vegetables is a good way to engage their interest in eating them. Photo: skitterphoto

3. Use praise when your child tries vegetables, especially new ones.

4. 'No dessert till you eat your vegetables' is a great rule. Worked when I was growing up and I still use it too.

5. Get your child involved in

preparing vegetables.

6. Offer vegetables as snacks. We often give some raw vegetables for the kids to munch on before dinner, including carrots, cucumbers and bell peppers.

7. Go for variety, taste and

fun. If you have young ones, make little men with carrot legs, celery arms, tomato heads and cucumber bodies.

8. Get them involved in growing 'easy' vegetables such as tomatoes. If they grow them, they are more likely to try them.

9. Get vegetables into meals in as many ways as possible (such as steamed, roasted, raw, cooked or boiled).

10. Make your own tomato ketchup with real tomatoes, herbs, spices and better sweeteners such as erythritol/xylitol (coconut nectar/stevia – most commercial brands use high fructose corn syrup).

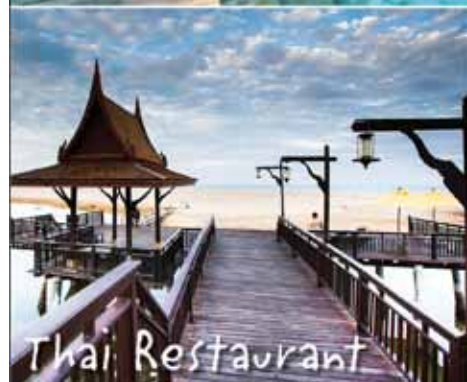
11. When shopping, try to ask them which vegetables they know about and want to try next.

12. Add 100 per cent real butter and olive oil to vegetables, along with a pinch of herbs and spices, including unrefined sea salt.

13. Try adding some seaweed to meals, as they are full of minerals.

14. Make wraps from lettuce leaves and add grated vegetables, chicken or eggs. Serve with a tasty dressing made of raw honey and fruit.

*Craig Burton is a Certified Sports Nutritionist (CISSN) with a Bachelor of Science degree (Sports Science) and a National Academy of Sports Medicine (PES) certification.*



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Our Jungle House, the most popular and sustainable resort at Khao Sok, is building a new resort called Our Jungle Camp. The resort itself will be built out of sustainable materials, especially bamboo. It will target university and school groups and nature study groups but also rent to ordinary tourists.

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# East meets West in bold new collection

By Kongleaphy Keam

QUATTRO Design, one of Thailand's top importers and designers of exclusive furniture, recently launched a limited edition collection named 'East Meets West' and the philosophy behind it is to represent the relaxed, tropical lifestyle of Phuket.

East Meets West is a collaborative effort between Eichholtz (a home furnishing brand from the Netherlands that Quattro distributes), and Jim Thompson, which is a world renowned textile house from Thailand.

"This is a perfect combination of top western and eastern brands, which users perceive as both modern as well as representative of the tradition and culture of the east," says Vichada Sitakalin, design director and co-founder of Quattro Design Co Ltd.

Beside the cooperation between these two renowned brands, the unique thing about this collection is that it goes beyond the concept of an 'ordinary' beach house.

"We played around with different materials and designs



The color scheme for this collection is predominantly blue. Photos: Supplied

from Jim Thompson. The collection is aimed at promoting a stylish and eclectic beach lifestyle as well as luxury countryside living," says Ms Vichada.

"That is why we chose blue

for the theme color of this set as it represents the sea, sky and the beauty of Phuket beaches. It is a soothing color for the eyes."

She added that the target customers for this collection are

primarily those who are passionate about home decoration, appreciate the beauty of Thai fabric and design, and always seek 'differentiation'.

"Phuket, therefore, is the perfect place to launch this

collection. We designed this keeping both Thai and foreign tastes in mind, and we expect it will appeal to both. Basically, it's for anyone who wants to make their home joyful and add a touch of the beach life in it," says Ms Vichada.

"Ultimately, we would like to retain our image, not only as a luxury furniture company, but also as design consultants able to provide guidance about home decor," she added.

The company's major expectation from the 'East meets West' collection is to raise brand awareness among both Thais and foreigners.

"We aim to be a top-notch luxury furniture brand and we want our customers to see us as a trusted provider of furniture and accessories needed to make their homes remarkably beautiful," says Ms Vichada.

The collection was launched at the Quattro Design showroom in Phuket last month. Anyone interested in viewing it can visit the showroom at Boat Avenue, contact 076-325141 (ext #2) or check out [www.facebook.com/quattrodesign](http://www.facebook.com/quattrodesign).

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