

Phuket Gazette

April 29 - May 5, 2017

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44 Pages / 20 Baht

‘WE ARE WORKING TO ARRANGE 18 MILLION BAHT FOR TWO PROJECTS’

ONE YEAR ON

In the post-Surin demolition sphere, B800mn renovation plans still uncertain

By Kongleaphy Keam

A YEAR after the demolition of the last remaining buildings along Surin Beach, and nine months after plans to convert the beach into ‘Rajabhakti Park’ were announced, officials are still waiting for approval for the more than 800-million-baht project to be built in its place.

The plans, which have been revised several times, were submitted by Cherng Talay Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS) Phuket Office in April.

“At this stage, we have yet to receive a response from MoTS. I cannot say when the plans will be approved, but everything has been submitted from our end,” said Cherng Talay *OrBorTor* President Ma-ann Samran.

“However, while waiting for the ministry’s decision, we are working to arrange 18 million baht for two projects, which we expect will be completed before the next high season comes around.”

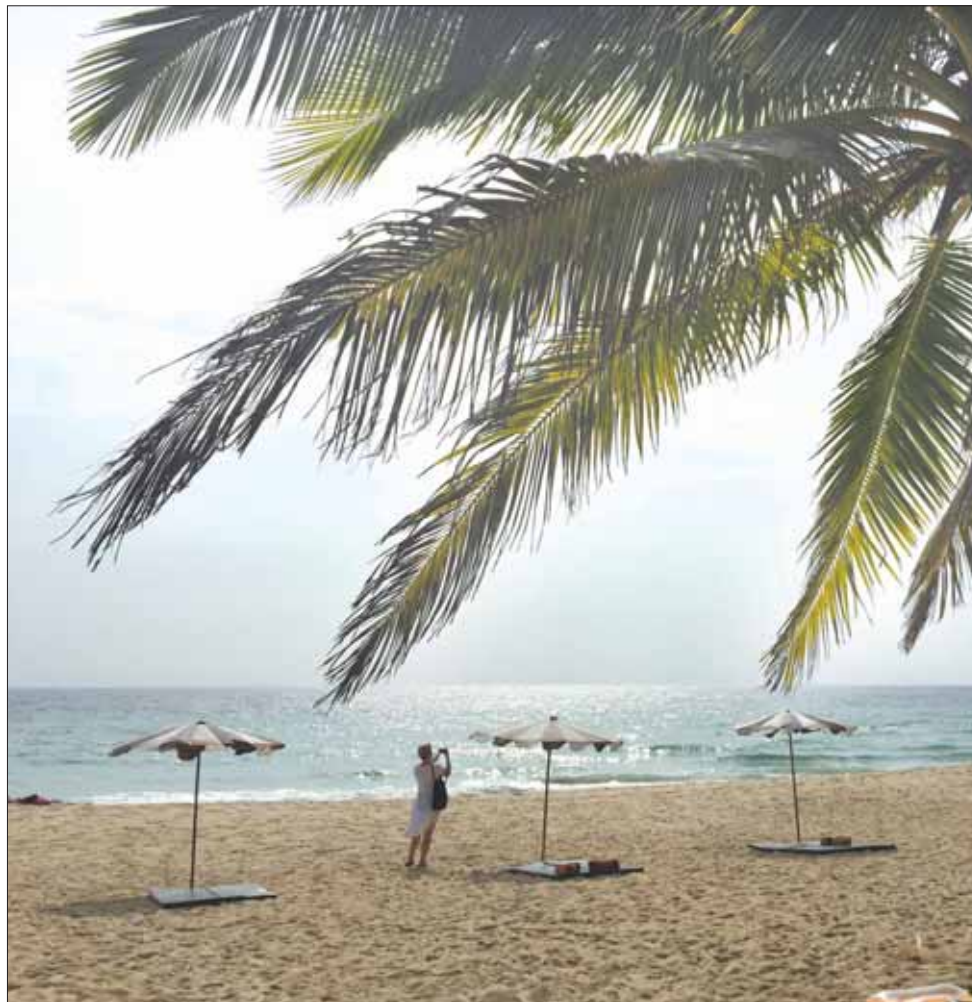
The projects include a gate surrounding the beach as well as improvements to the general landscape in the area.

“I can’t deny that there are still problems at Surin. For instance, vendors are still setting up umbrellas and chairs despite the fact that it is illegal. However, we are doing our best to gradually solve these issues,” said Ma-ann.

The budget for the slated gate is about 8mn baht.

“Building a gate is an effective way to make Surin well-organized and provide security for tourists and locals. With marked entrances, officers can control who enters the beach, and will be able to prevent vendors from illegally setting up umbrellas and beach chairs there,” said Mr Ma-ann.

“So far, vendors have been able to elude authorities and set up umbrellas and mattresses on the sand. We have never ig-



Despite Surin having been ruled a virgin beach last year, vendors are still touting umbrellas and beach mattresses to tourists and beachgoers. Photo: Kongleaphy Keam

nored this issue; the vendors have been arrested and punished accordingly. However, it is not something we want tourists to witness. I think the gate will provide a permanent solution to prevent vendors from conducting illegal businesses on the beach,” he added.

While waiting for budget finalization and approval, Cherng Talay *OrBorTor* has asked the military to step in and patrol the beach, starting May 1.

“At the moment, we still have no gate, so we have to rely on human resources. The *OrBorTor* does not have enough officers, so we had to bring in outside help. Let’s see who dares to bring umbrellas to the beach now,” said Mr Ma-ann.

The second project, which is beautifying and improving the landscape, is a

back-up plan, in case the Rajabhakti Park plan takes longer than anticipated to approve.

“We intend to use about 10mn baht of our own budget to clear and construct parkland and flower gardens on about 100 rai of land,” said Mr Ma-ann.

“The money will also be used to beautify the entire stretch of beach. We intend to turn it into a walking street and allow local vendors to sell their wares there from Thursday to Sunday night every week. This will not only help locals, but also provide a new attraction at Surin. However, the most important rule to remember is that the walkway has to be cleared every morning,” he added. Mr...

Continued on Page 3

Man murders daughter and live-streams the incident

A THAI man angry with his wife disappeared from the house with their eleven-month-old daughter and live-streamed himself murdering the child on Facebook Live. He then proceeded to hang himself.

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BUSINESS



How to get your email marketing to work for you so it doesn’t end up as spam.

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LIFE&STYLE



An in-depth look at the relative merits and attractions of Phuket’s East and West coasts.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Phang Nga to get underwater 'artsy' museum

MORE than 20 decommissioned army trucks were lowered into the water with the aim of enhancing marine life in Phang Nga on April 23.

The project was launched in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit.

"We have placed artificial coral, army vehicles (for coral to grow on) and a statue of a sea turtle in order to revive tourism and marine life in areas that were destroyed in the 2004 Tsunami," said Rak Khaolak Foundation Chief Sompong Daopiset.

"Our plan is to add more statues in the coming years. These will tell the story of the culture of Phang Nga," he added.

Fourth Army commander Lt Gen Piyawat Nakwanich presided over the official handover of the vehicles.

"The purpose of this project is to build habitats for local marine life and map the area out as a new snorkeling attraction. I would like to invite the public to visit and help maintain it," said Gen Piyawat.

Chief Sompong added that the ultimate goal was to make this "museum" one of the "best underwater tourist attractions on earth."

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Woman killed, 3-year-old survives hit-and-run



A three-year-old child survived while her aunt was killed in a hit-and-run accident in Thalang on April 21. Witnesses told police that the two victims were riding on a motorbike ahead of a bus, when they attempted to turn right and collided with it. The motorbike, along with its two riders, was dragged along the road under the bus for about 30 meters. Rescue workers attempted to revive the aunt, named by police as Suksai Phukeethip. However, she was pronounced dead by doctors at Thalang Hospital. The driver of the bus fled the scene to avoid a public confrontation, but contacted the police soon after to explain. Officers are now checking CCTV footage to check who was at fault. Photo: Winai Sarot

Parasailing young Russian tourist injured

A 10-YEAR-old Russian tourist was injured after he fell from a height of 2.5 meters while parasailing at Karon Beach on April 24.

The victim, Timur Gadyshin, received first aid on the spot and was then taken to Patong Hospital where he was treated for minor injuries.

"The parasail operator, Noppadon Nakeepet, explained that while the captain was driving the boat, the propeller got stuck in a plastic bag which caused the boat to stop moving," said Capt Weerayuth Thansirisukhaworakul of Karon Police.

The boy and the operator both sustained minor injuries from being thrown onto the sand.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Mai Khao man shoots half his head off

A MAI Khao resident believed to be suffering from a mental illness reportedly shot himself in his home on April 21 in what turned out to be one of the bloodiest scenes Phuket police say they have encountered recently.

Lt Col Watcharin Jirattikan-wiwat of Tah Chat Chai Police received reports of the incident at about 8:45am.

"Inside a private home, 53-year-old Chanit Pruksaprasert lay dead near the entrance, with the top half of his head splattered all over the floor. His face was unrecognizable," said the colonel.

Officers at the scene also found a shotgun and used shell nearby.

"Mr Chanit's mother and brother told us that he was an introvert and barely interacted with others. He was also known to be paranoid and a skeptic who remained alert at all times," said Col Watcharin.

"The family told us that he may have gotten the idea that someone or something was coming to hurt him, and that he may have taken out the shotgun in self defense, but shot himself instead," the colonel said.

— *Winai Sarot*

Chinese man drowns while snorkelling

A CHINESE tourist snorkelling for the first time in his life drowned at Koh Racha Yai on April 23.

The victim, Hangseng Chen, 62, was on a day trip with the

'Jaiyun Travel Group Co Ltd'.

"Suthee Maliwan, the tour guide, told us that they made a stop to let the tourists snorkel. He said that he gave instructions on how to use the equipment, and told them to wear life jackets," said Lt Sakarin Saengjaroen of Chalong Police.

"However, after about five minutes, he found Mr Chen floating face-down. He was wearing all the necessary equipment," confirmed the lieutenant.

Mr Suthee reportedly saw that Mr Chen wasn't moving, so he pulled him up onto the boat and administered CPR.

They arrived at the pier and transferred the victim to Vachira Phuket Hospital.

"Mr Chen was pronounced dead on arrival. His daughter, Xiao Mei Chen, told us that her father was diabetic, couldn't swim, and had never used snorkelling equipment before," added Lt Sakarin.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

Pattani rapist arrested in China Town

PATONG Police on April 20 arrested a Pattani man for rape, impersonating an officer of the law, robbery and house encroachment.

"Russanee Bahe confessed to seven counts of rape," said Lt Col Somsak Thongkliang of Patong Police.

Col Somsak led a team of officers to arrest him at the 'Best Store' hotel in the China Town area.

Two masseuses, both of whom requested that their name be withheld, filed complaints against Mr Russanee.

One said that he forced himself on her and robbed her of 2,000 baht, while the other said that he barged into her room and tried to have sex with her, but fled after he saw her daughter. She added that he stole 1,500 baht and ran off.

Police checked CCTV footage to learn the suspect's identity. His involvement in both cases was confirmed and he was found to have been previously convicted of rape and released from prison last year.

The suspect told police that he chose masseuses as targets as he believed they wouldn't dare to file official complaints. He also confessed to using the stolen money to buy drugs.

Police warned the public to be wary of impersonators and to call 191 in case of emergency.

— *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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Man kills self after hanging baby girl

By Winai Sarot

A YOUNG father and his 11-month-old baby were found hanging at an abandoned construction site for a hotel in an apparent murder-suicide in Nai Thon on April 24.

Thalang Police were contacted by 21-year-old Jiranuch Trirat earlier in the evening asking for help to find her husband and daughter, who had both disappeared from their house in Baan Mood Dok Khao.

Thalang Police then referred the case to Sakoo Police.

“We found Wuttisan Wongtalay, 21, and his daughter Natalee Wongtalay, hanging from a 10-meter-high wall at [the partially completed construction for a] Peninsula Hotel,” said Capt Jullaus Savannin of Sakoo Police.

Ms Jiranuch’s uncle, Suksan Buachanit, said that before Mr Wuttisan left, the couple quar-

reled, during which he tried to choke his wife and asked “How should I kill you?”.

At about 5:45pm, Mr Wuttisan, using his Facebook account under the name of ‘Tonkla Ja’, posted a four-minute live video of the horrific incident.

“The clip showed the screaming baby while her father attempted to kill her by hanging. The baby eventually went quiet, after which Mr Wuttisan hung himself. We urge netizens not to share the video, as it is very disturbing,” Capt Jullaus told *Gazette* reporters.

Both father and daughter were officially reported dead at about 8pm.

The captain also stated that police will investigate the cause of the murder and suicide separately.

Both bodies were transferred to Thalang Hospital.

The incident also caught



The pair were found hanging in Nai Thon. Photo: Winai Sarot

the attention of Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong, who expressed his condolences and said that the government would extend financial support to the family, if needed.

“This tragic incident reflects the weakness of the family institution. Citizens should consult and support each other to solve problems in order to prevent such incidents in future,” said Governor Norraphat.

Fate of Surin Beach hangs in the balance



A weekly walking street is planned at Surin. Photo: Kongleaphy Kearn

Continued from Page 1

...Ma-ann confirmed that due to improved water treatment systems, there is no longer any black wastewater at Surin Beach.

“We will use the treated water to grow grass and plants in the area,” Mr Ma-ann.

He also confirmed that since the demolition of restaurants and bars along the beach, not a single restaurant owner has returned to the area or disobeyed the law.

“No restaurants have been allowed to operate here, but we do allow small vendors to sell food and drinks in salengs (motorbike sidecar) near the beach. It does not look too bad and helps the locals make a living. However, once the walking street is finished, we will ask all these vendors to move there,” said Mr Ma-ann.

“Unless we take immediate action, Surin Beach will be seized back by the vendor mafia. We are fighting to reclaim it for the public instead,” he concluded.



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Media council to have limited term of 5 years

THE CONTROVERSIAL inclusion of two state representatives on the proposed media regulation council would be placed in a provisional clause stipulating limited terms of five years, chairman of the media reform committee ACM Kanit Suwannet said on April 25.

Meanwhile, major media organizations planned to move against the bill on Media Freedom Day on May 3, saying the bill was aimed at controlling the media rather than protecting journalists.

The committee, under the National Reform Steering Council, plans to deliberate the proposal in the month of May, Chairman Kanit said, adding that the latest proposal was to ease concerns of the press about state interference in the media.

Social security benefits to be improved

THE CABINET on April 25 approved a series of laws to boost benefits for voluntarily insured persons under the Social Security Act's Article 40.

Labor Minister General Sirichai Distakul said after the Cabinet meeting that a royal decree on the Social Security Office (SSO) insurance qualifications and a royal decree on the SSO contribution criteria and rates, and criteria and conditions for benefits, as well as a ministerial regulation on the rate of government contributions were approved.

The insured will enjoy 300 baht per day of hospitalization due to accident or sickness to compensate for a lack of income (up to 90 days per year). An additional 3,000 baht on top of the 40,000 baht death/funeral-assisting compensation if the voluntarily insured person has paid contributions to the SSO fund for more than six months. The amount is 200 baht per head per month in child support (for up to two children) and 10,000 baht one-time old-age pension if the voluntarily insured person has paid contributions to the SSO fund for more than 180 months.

Being a voluntarily insured person does not require a health check and can be used along with universal healthcare.



Chinese sub deal confirmed for 'cheapness'

THE government on April 25 confirmed its decision to buy a submarine from China because of its cheapness and the fact that many neighbors have the vessels – but observers said the warship was of little strategic value and questioned its price and quality.

The Cabinet quietly approved the Navy's proposal to spend 13.5 billion baht on one Yuan-class submarine and instructed the Navy's commander, Admiral Na Arreenich, to finalize the purchasing contract with the designated Chinese manufacturer soon.

"The reason we chose Chinese-built submarines is because they are the cheapest when compared to other countries," Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan told reporters. The submarines were needed to "protect our natural resources in the Andaman Sea", he added, while stressing that neighboring countries "all have submarines".

Indonesia gets closer to port hub dream

THE government, along with French container shipping firm CMA CGM Group, launched on April 23 the first Jakarta-Los Angeles direct route, which promises faster shipping and lower costs.

For state port operator PT



Pelabuhan Indonesia (Pelindo) II, which manages Tanjung Priok, the route is also a testament to infrastructure as the country's largest seaport has improved and is now suitable to accommodate large ships for transshipment purposes.

"The launch of the maiden Jakarta-Los Angeles direct route signals that [Tanjung Priok is] ready to be a transshipment port that is more cost friendly for clients," Pelindo II president director Elvyn G Masassya said during a ceremony to welcome CMA CGM Otello container ship at the port.

The Jakarta-Los Angeles weekly direct service boasts a maximum of 23 days of shipping, faster than the normal 30 days, with 20 to 30 per cent cost reduction as clients do not need to transfer in Singapore.

Integrity pact signed with cellular services

THE National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission on April 25 signed an integrity pact with the Anti-Corruption Organization of Thailand as part of its efforts to ensure the transparency of its project to install broadband and cellular services in remote areas of the country.

The pact also covers any

state or private entity which bids to implement the project.

Under the pact, the procurement process and the project's development will be observed by a third party in a bid to ensure transparency.

Pattaya street fight video goes viral

A VIDEO which appeared to show two groups of men fighting in Walking Street Pattaya went viral after being shared on Facebook.

The incident, believed to have taken place during the early hours of April 24, was shared by Facebook user Sutthinat Phermsuk.

The five-minute-clip didn't show clearly how many people were involved nor did it clarify the reason the fight broke out.

The chaotic scenes showed a group of men, who appear to be Middle Eastern, fighting among each other as staff from adjacent bars seemed to be trying to calm the situation down.

At least two men appeared to have been knocked on the floor, while a foreign tourist can be seen falling over a garbage bag.

The footage, which has been viewed more than 350,000 times, comes just weeks after the authorities in Pattaya launched the new 'Happy Zones' in a bid to crackdown on illegal and antisocial behavior in the Walking Street area.

The Happy Zones were introduced after the popular resort became the subject of negative news stories in the media.

Royal rites for cremation to be held in Oct

THE Royal cremation ceremonies for HM the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX) will be held between October 25 and 29.

October 26, the day of his cremation, will also be a national holiday to allow members of the public to take part in the important event.

Assistant Government Spokesman Colonel Atisit Chaiyanuwat announced on April 25 that HM King Maha Vajiralongkorn (King Rama X) had approved the schedule.

Atisit said Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam had proposed three options on how to facilitate people's desire to join the royal cremation ceremonies.

The first is to declare October 25 and October 27 as national holidays too, so that people from the provinces can travel to Bangkok for the ceremonies and then travel back in time to work again.

The second is for October 25 and October 27 to be holidays for people living outside Bangkok.

The third is to not declare any additional holiday and let people decide for themselves how they can attend.

King Rama X ordered that royal ceremonies be held in remembrance of his father on October 13 every year, the same way royal ceremonies are held in commemoration of his great grandfather, King Rama V.

Corruption investigation to be used as blueprint

THE National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) chairman Gen Watcharapol Prasarnrajkit has said the investigation into former Department of Special Investigation chief Tarit Pengdit will serve as an example for other cases against corrupt state officials.

Mr Tarit was found by the NACC to have obtained unusual wealth during his time as DSI chief.

Earlier in the month of April, he was dismissed from his post as an adviser at the Prime Minister's Office and has not been allowed to appeal against the decision.

Emails may be missing the mark



RECENTLY my business partner and I have been analyzing the whole email marketing stream and what came to light was quite a surprise.

He is a systems engineer so it is fair to say his level of knowledge when it comes to IT far surpasses my own. We were collaborating on our latest project and the issue of email marketing and whether it was effective came to light, especially after he really delved into the topic.

The concept is fairly simple. You collect potential customers' email addresses through some kind of capture technique, often through Facebook or a capture page on a website or blog. Maybe you collect them some other way and then enter them manually into your system (be cautious if this is you). Once the addresses are in the system, you fire away emails to your hearts content.

Sounds simple right? So



People send out emails in order to target potential customers, but they all mostly end up in spam folders. Photo: AndyPandy

what could possibly go wrong? Quite a lot it seems.

We are very big on analytics. On a recent mail-out we conducted, we reviewed the open rates, links in the email clicked on and interaction. The open rates were very low (we normally expect about 20 per cent minimum), so we started digging.

What we discovered was to

a level that was unexpected – most of the emails were never even reaching the recipients' inbox.

I have written before how Google thinks it knows what we want to read, and sorts our emails on autopilot. This is based on a number of factors which include the sender, the past history, the content of the emails and whether any

“spammy” words are used. This is now also the same for Live, Hotmail and most providers with a filter in place.

But they also analyze the server or platform that the emails are sent from. Now most small and medium businesses are going to use a third party service provider like Aweber, GoDaddy, Infusionsoft and so on. Given the fees paid to these guys, you would think they would be assured of getting into the inbox.

Well, guess again.

We found that when using these services, a very high percentage went straight to the Spam folder, where your clients will never even see it. And that was because the providers were actually on blacklists themselves.

So what should you be taking away from this?

Firstly, don't assume that your message is getting through – in fact it is more than likely not making it to the inbox. So don't plan all of your marketing and customer acquisition around successful email campaigns without finding out.

Secondly, make sure your

leads opt in to your system and “whitelist” your email address – this will make sure you get to the inbox.

Thirdly, run your email through a ‘spam test’ score to make sure that it is less likely to be blocked. The filters score emails and more of each factor results in instant spam, so if you can reduce other areas you might still have a chance. You can use a free service such as go.solidsystemsinc.com/Glock.

“Finally, conduct a review of your system. For this, too, we recommend Glock.

The bottom line is that if you are reliant on email marketing to reach your customers, it is worth conducting a review or getting someone to do it for you. You can email simon@swconsulting.asia to get a free review.

Simon Wetherell is a social media expert, trainer and lawyer. He now resides in Thailand where he trains businesses and individuals on how to profit from the social media industry. For more information, visit <http://PhuketOnlineMarketing.com> or call 095-085 3355.

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Phuket Gazette

Going 'clean'

CLEANLINESS is next to Godliness, as the old saying goes, so it is hard not to agree with new governor Norraphat Plodthong's stated goal of beautifying Phuket "by our hands".

Gov Norraphat, set for mandatory retirement from the civil service in just a few months' time, has understandably had to set his priorities in a practical way. When one really thinks about it, however, declaring war on dirtiness is about as ambitious a goal as any ever stated by a new governor.

It almost makes one wonder: why not just declare victory over entropy and just drop the mic before walking off the stage with those handsome C-12 retirement benefits to enjoy the golden years with?

But more seriously, and as stated in this space numerous times in the past, the trend here in Phuket is one of relentless urbanization, which has proven to be the most powerful driver of 'dirtiness' on the planet. Indeed, there are few places anywhere in the world that have been as dramatically transformed over the past few decades as Phuket.

Physical changes to the landscape are the most obvious. The current proliferation of new highway underpasses serves as testament to the fact that Phuket is following in the same developmental path as Bangkok.

This should come as little surprise given that all occupants of the Governor's mansion, not to mention legions of other Bangkok-based apparatchiks, are all career civil servants appointed in Bangkok.

Rather than taking any real steps to address the root causes of an ever-worsening traffic situation, such as the dire lack of public transport, we see the traffic nightmare gradually taking on the same three-dimensional aspect it now has in the capital.

Any successful 'war on dirtiness' will inevitably require a change in the common culture, but there are few indications that such a change is forthcoming in the Bangkok-led, top-down culture that is Thai society.

As can be seen in some Western countries, urbanization can be carried out in ways that minimize negative impacts – not on the natural environment itself, but on the city dwellers who inevitably displace it.

At the end of the day, and as recognized by our new governor, any real change has to come from the ground up – if we can find any ground left that has not been covered with concrete and bitumen.



The right way to preserve nature

Re: Phang Nga to create underwater tourist attraction, Apr 24

Are they serious? What on earth was going on in their minds when they decided to purposely dump trash in the beautiful Phang Nga Bay?

Has anyone discussed this with marine experts?

We should get artificial substances, especially toxic substances like paint and electric parts, out of the water.

Who came up with this idea? I am both shocked and concerned.

If this is how Thailand wants to preserve wildlife, I've lost hope.

Someone
Gazette forum

Need competent captains on boats

Re: 'Inexperienced' Chinese tourist drowns in Phuket, Apr 24

Competent certified captains are required to prevent this type of 'non accident'. The people involved in this are certainly accessories to manslaughter.

Michael Arvin
Facebook

Insurance may be a double edged sword

Re: Opinion: Phuket tourist influx and the rise in hospital bills, Apr 23

Easier said than done.

A significant percent of the Tourists to Phuket or Thailand

Letters to the Editor

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

in general are over 60 years old. Most have insurance, but it is valid only in the USA and Europe and their territories.

Most insurance companies will not insure people over 60, or if they do, the cost is very high.

If Thailand wanted to provide a basic insurance for tourists and expats then it might work; otherwise it would hurt tourism.

Capealava
Gazette forum

Hope gov can really make it happen

Re: First priority is to beautify Phuket, says Gov Norraphat, Apr 22

Well said, Sir – now make it happen – please!

Robert J Haydock
Gazette forum

Foreigners working without permits

Re: Former tour company staff member wanted for deceiving Malaysian travellers, Apr 20

A lot of foreigners holding a work permit are selling and guiding sightseeing tours, yachting, fishing, kayaking and diving tours – which is illegal

in Thailand.

Those jobs are only for Thai people with a TAT Guide Licence.

Many foreigners set up Facebook pages and overseas websites to promote those tours to foreigners wishing to come to Thailand, with payment by PayPal to overseas bank accounts.

Asterix
Phuket forum

Need solutions, not more excuses

Re: 10-year-old Russian tourist injured in Phuket parasailing accident, Apr 24

As a passionate aviator and private pilot, I have watched these operations on the beach with interest. Unfortunately, this incident does not really surprise me.

A plastic bag... interesting. A 'sudden downdraft' would be an even better excuse. Or don't we hear brake failure as an accident excuse quite often?

Reinhard Luksch
Facebook

Take responsibility for your actions

Re: Mother and son injured in bike crash, Apr 20

I hope they have to pay for repairs to the truck.

It is time people in Thailand took responsibility for their actions.

Phil Phelan
Facebook

The Phuket Gazette is Published
in association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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The views expressed in the Phuket Gazette are often those of the writers and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher, the Editor, the shareholders or the directors of The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd.

Volume 24 Issue 17

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Property market at a crossroads



THAILAND is and will remain an attractive property market to invest in. The geography of the place lends itself well to a good quality of life, especially if income to support that lifestyle isn't an issue.

However, it does have neighboring competition and is in the process of assessing its options to revise laws to continue developing its economy. The way in which Thailand chooses to proceed at this current crossroads will have an impact for the next 5-10 years and will shape the volume and quality of foreign investment in property.

Amid a backdrop of protests about 'long leases' for foreigners in special economic zones – a place where investment is clearly very important and presumably deliberately encouraged – I find myself writing about the age-old issue of whether Thailand should liberalize its property ownership laws to stimulate investment.

If you are dreaming about



Current law allows foreigners to 'renew' 30-year leases . Photo: andibreit

land being owned directly by foreigners, you are better off if you forget about it. The idea of that is mostly offensive to many Thais; in fact, in many countries, ownership is restricted to the entire population to leasehold only. Take Hong Kong SAR for example, where only St John's Cathedral is freehold.

However, I know many

agents and developers are tired of discussing the meaning of 'renewals' in 30-year lease agreements, and many lawyers are tired of explaining that 30 years means 30 years.

I visited a friend in Kuala Lumpur recently, at his trendy new house about 15 minutes from the CBD. It was inside a huge development with club

houses, hospitals, schools and so on, all built to service the accommodation. I realized that while Thailand thinks about what it should or should not do, other countries are just doing it. Vietnam has recently stimulated its property market with ownership by foreigners now being permitted. However, it is subject to a 'maximum number' restriction – which seems fine to avoid foreign enclave issues.

Owning a condo isn't enough for many foreigners in Thailand.

When I attended a Thailand Elite event in Singapore some time back, a 30-something-year-old asked "If I live in Thailand and I want to own a property other than a condo, what are my options?". The answer is a 30-year lease and please 'check with your lawyer' about the renewal.

So, apparently there is a crossroads ahead. What will all those lawyers do if property ownership is simplified and many foreigners start taking a 50, 60 or dare I say it – 70 or 99 year lease on property? They won't run out of work anytime soon as they will have to con-

vert leases, restructure sales agreements, and create better arrangements with lessors.

Thailand will have more opportunities to look at its foreign investment laws. However, now is a good time for a change to be pushed through without too much difficulty.

The country can cope with more foreigners residing for longer. Foreigners don't generally use up national resources; contribute to the local and national economic cycles; provide employment opportunities; and may present a good opportunity to transfer knowledge and slow down the 'brain drain' phenomenon which affects many countries as young generations look outside their home countries for experience.

So, fingers crossed that the good path will be chosen and that the magic number will be a good one. In my opinion, 99 is a very lucky number, although I also like 88.

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

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Relative merits of East vs West coast



PHUKET'S tourism is very much West coast focused. The beaches are whiter and sandier, resorts and hotels aplenty. The Northeast monsoon brings generally dry and hot weather, and the sea is calm, while during the Southwest monsoon, the beaches are red-flagged and swimming is best avoided.

The East coast, however, is more of a year-round destination. What it may lack in beaches, it makes up for in islands, most of which are easily accessible by boat.

Phuket's East coast is undergoing a revival of sorts and this renewed interest is being driven by the marine industry.

First and foremost, Phuket's four marinas are all on the East coast. The two largest – Phuket Yacht Haven and Ao Po Grand Marina – can accommodate 620 boats between them, each more than 100 meters in length.

A little further south are the centrally located Phuket Boat Lagoon and Royal Phuket Marina. These neighbors are reshaping the surrounding area of Koh Kaew and are development clusters and market generators in their own right. The Villa Market at Phuket Boat Lagoon draws people to



Phuket's marinas are now drawing crowds with a flurry of monthly events. Photo: Supplied

the area, and the space for offices and businesses in the Boat Arcade has been a welcomed addition to the area.

The high season 'Boat Lagoon Weekend' event has become a huge success and a monthly magnet of activity on the East coast.

Next door at Royal Phuket Marina, a surge in events activity in recent times, the addition of the 'Regus Royal Phuket Marina Business Center', and the opening of 'Kids Mania' and the 'Dry Stack' facilities are attracting a new demographic to the area.

While the West coast accommodates the majority of the island's tourists, many

head to the East coast, which is the embarkation point for the best islands, more than 30 of which are just an hour's boat ride away. Add to that the stunning Phang Nga Bay and the appeal of East coast living is obvious.

Here are my top five reasons to check out the East coast.

MARINAS

The East coast is home to Phuket's four marinas: Phuket Yacht Haven, Ao Po Grand Marina, Phuket Boat Lagoon and Royal Phuket Marina.

All provide easy access to an archipelago of islands off the East coast. More than 30 is-

lands are a short boat trip from any marina and Phang Nga Bay is right on the East coast's doorstep, with its waters being accessible all year round.

The marinas, with their impressive boats and array of dining and drinking outlets, are destinations in their own right and can make for a great day out.

GASTRONOMY GALORE

The East coast offers diversity of cuisines and ambiance with something for all budgets. Fine and casual dining, patisseries, coffee shops, street vendors (yes, they still exist in Phuket), lounge bars and more – the East coast has it all.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

All spa'd out? Want to work up a sweat? Phuket's East coast is home to the island's leading sports facilities. RPM Health Club is the island's top health and wellness center, while a little further north is the multi-million dollar Thanyapura Health & Sports Resort.

PHUKET CITY

Phuket City has undergone a resurgence in recent years and now offers an eclectic mix of dining and drinking experiences, mixed with traditional Thai and Hokkien cuisine not found anywhere else on the island.

Temples, culture, historic buildings and so much more await those who make it to Phuket's administrative center.

The bird's-eye view of the city from Khao Rang, famous Thai food restaurants, the Trick Eye museum and the Sunday night market on Thalang Road are just a few of the reasons why this is a top spot to visit.

COMMUNITY

The residential options are now better than ever. In comparison to the West coast, the East Coast has been slow to develop, but there are now many affordable housing and condominium developments located just inland from the coast, as well as the marina offerings which provide private gated communities with facilities on your doorstep unrivaled by traditional standalone developments.

Next time you're thinking of somewhere new to go or a new place to eat, head to the East coast and explore. You'll be sure to find something to your liking.

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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White flowering shrubs



WHITE has many associations, including innocence and purity. On the down side, it represents coldness and sterility.

In Thailand, judging by the dominance of white in floral garlands, it brings good fortune. Most lucky leis contain two or three white flowers – buds of jasmine and milkweed (*calatropis*) plus a pair of creamy magnolias for good measure.

The white spectrum is equally well represented in the average Phuket garden – from the pure white of the day and night flowering *jessamines*, boxwoods and *bauhinias*, to the creamy tinted flowers of *brunfelsia* or *buddleia paniculata*. Most of these flowers are fragrant, as though Mother Nature decided that their pallor needed something extra to attract the attention of pollinating insects or perfume-loving humans.

To illustrate my point: the two most perfumed plants in my garden are the racemes of *buddleia* and the fiddlewood (*citharexylum spinosum*). Both are relatively insignificant visually, but the scent of the tiny flowers is rich and intense, especially in the morning. A word of warning: the fiddlewood is sometimes sold as a *buddleia*, but a *buddleia* it ain't. It has distinctive, bright green leaves (the *buddleia*'s are grey-green and rough), and it grows rapidly. Unless you want a specimen tree or some rapidly acquired shade, it is not for the cottage garden.

Other white bloomers are more tractable and more available. Take the gardenia (cape jasmine). A member of the madder family (*rubiaceae*), florists love it on account of its large, scented blooms and glossy, evergreen leaves.

Its flowers are usually creamy white and exist in any number of cultivars which range from semi-double varieties such as 'Magnifica' to the double 'Mystery'. Preferring acidic soil, the gardenia is a good choice for a container. But it needs plenty of fertilizer.

The dwarf *tabernaemontana* has smaller flowers that remind me of propellers and look as though they should be revolving in the breeze. An evergreen shrub with a compact habit, it



The *buddleia paniculata* is one of the specimens of white flowering shrubs found in many Phuket gardens. Photo: peganum

will, given plenty of water, flower regularly. Fragrant, especially at night, it is easy to propagate from seeds or cuttings.

Jasminum sambac (Arabian jessamine), another sweetie, is well known in Thailand as mali son. Its white flowers are star-shaped and appear in clusters all year round. And unlike most varieties, it is tolerant of dry soil. Both *jasminum multiflorum* (star jasmine or *mali phueng*) and *rex* (royal jasmine or *pan yii*) have evergreen foliage. Both are climbers, both need moisture at their roots and some support for their branches.

Given these favorable conditions, they will bloom for most of the year. The royal jasmine produces two or three white flowers at the end of each vine; multiflorum has eight petalled blooms which are covered with fine yellow hairs.

A favorite of mine is the orange jasmine (*murraya paniculata*). It is self-supporting, and in three years, will grow into a neat bush some four meters tall. The spicy fragrance attracts many butterflies. Easy going, it will tolerate being clipped and pruned.

So too *wrightia religiosa* (*mok baan*), a white flowering shrub from the *apocynaceae* family. A favorite with Thais, it is usually grown as a hedge, or arranged as a front line of earthenware pots. Its flowers are pendulous and bell-shaped, but insignificant. However, it is evergreen, tolerates shade and blooms persistently. Yet another of those white shrubs that smells divine.

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 wordpress website: [GreenGaloshes](http://GreenGaloshes.com).

Phuket durian to be promoted as 'GI'

A CAMPAIGN to promote durian has been launched in Kamala, roughly nine months after pineapples with a price tag of 1,500 baht hit the markets in Phuket last year.

"Following an announcement by the Ministry of Commerce, committee members came to Phuket to 'inspect' local durians in Kamala," said Kamala subdistrict chief Kamnan Yuttasak Yayee.

"Each tree produces fruits with their own unique taste, which are delicious and fragrant," he observed.

Officials now plan to enhance the quality benchmark of durian to the same standard as Phuket pineapples and pearls.

They also intend to classify Phuket durian as a Geographical Indication (GI) product – items that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are



A GI label will enhance the fruit's value. Photo: Hafiz Issadeen

due to that origin.

The annual yield of the fruit is about 4-5 tonnes, mostly between May and June.

"The upgrade will enhance the value of the fruit and help locals generate more income" said Mr Yuttasak.

He added that officers from the Department of Intellectual Property would help accelerate the process of registering durian as a GI product.

– Sukawin Tanthavanich

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