

Phuket Gazette

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‘OUR BIGGEST PRIORITY SHOULD BE TO STOP THE MAFIA’

ARMY AGENDA

■ Army commander says Phuket must get rid of ‘mafia’ and ‘powerful people’

By Kongleaphy Keam

THE new Army Region 4 commander has announced his agenda for Phuket, ticking off a list of at least a dozen problems he feels need urgent resolution.

During his visit last week, Lt Gen Piyawat Nakwanit said that he was “generally satisfied with the state of tourism in Phuket”, but that getting rid of ‘powerful people’ and officers who unlawfully practice their duties would set Phuket on the path to progress.

“Our biggest priority should be to stop ‘mafia’ and other so-called ‘powerful people’ from using their influence to benefit themselves illegally at the expense of others. It is imperative that we get rid of these people,” said the general.

Several government and private sector officers joined the meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall, where the issues under discussion ranged from beach management, public transport management and public land encroachment, to human trafficking, immigration, illegal tour guides and security.

One of the major issues Gen Piyawat focused on was public land encroachment.

“This has been a long-standing issue in Phuket and we need to resolve it urgently. For instance, Surin Beach was declared as a beach of honor, so we have to take measures to keep it in its ‘virgin’ state. Cherng Talay OrBorTor has to take steps to resolve this,” said Gen Piyawat.

Last month, Cherng Talay OrBorTor President Ma-ann Samran announced plans to build a gate surrounding the beach as well as a walking street to allow local vendors to sell their wares there.

“Encroachment is also prevalent at other Phuket beaches, including Laem Singh. There are about 33 more protected areas that officers must keep an eye on in order to prevent mismanagement and public land



Gen Piyawat discussed a range of issues such as beach and public transport management, public land encroachment, immigration, illegal tour guides and security. Photo: Phuket PR

abuse,” Gen Piyawat added.

Another issue on the agenda was public transportation management and airport management. Gen Piyawat discussed a number of problem areas, such as driving licences, drivers’ dressing, parking area management, checking the condition of vehicles and adjusting the price of public transport.

The general added that every vehicle and driver to enter and exit the airport should be screened for security.

“Every driver must have a card and their information should be available with police for their records. The immigration checkpoint service also needs improvement – service must be fast and convenient, both outside and inside the airport. Effective solution to these issues requires all officers to help each other,” he said.

Gen Piyawat also appreciated the efforts of all Phuket officers, adding that he wanted Phuket to be a ‘model tourism province’ and that unless concrete steps

were taken in the right direction, this would be difficult to achieve. Briefly, these included focusing on public benefit before anything else; coming together of all parties to solve problems; strictly checking and monitoring government officials for unlawful activities such as accepting tea money; and announcing promotional campaigns for public projects to inform locals and tourists of progress on the island.

Phuket Governor Norraphat Plodthong said he would do what’s in the island’s best interest.

“We have been working very hard to tackle all of these issues. I have just launched several projects to improve Phuket, including boosting cleanliness, sports activities for youth, waste management policies, and boosting security,” said Gov Norraphat.

“All of these will further the agenda of sustainable development of Phuket as an international city,” he added.

Phuket Gov participates in week-long clean-up

PHUKET governor and other officials participated in the week-long ‘Clean Phuket with our Hands and Hearts’ campaign. The event is slated to take place every month with evaluation held at regular intervals.

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BUSINESS



Phuket hosts the first Asian ‘Destination Wedding Planners’ conference.

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Phuket to Koh Lipe may be a long journey, but it’s one that’s worth the trouble.

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LIFE & STYLE



‘Jazz for King 2: Andaman Jazz by the Sea’ concert to be held in Phuket.

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LOCAL NEWS

Briefly

Man charged after fatal head-on collision

ONE man was killed while three others were severely injured after a speeding pick-up truck and a Toyota sedan collided, sending both vehicles into a roadside waterway in Krabi on May 1.

The car was carrying three people – driver Suphachai Limtrakil, 69, his wife Anchalee Sriwittayabancha, 42, and their 14-year-old daughter. Mr Suphachai was killed.

The truck was driven by Pornthanakrit Tunyasook.

“We found the totaled Toyota in the waterway along Petchkasem Road. Rescue workers had to use heavy machinery to cut open its roof and extract the body of Mr Suphachai,” said Lt Col Danaithorn Jaisabai of Klongthom Police.

All three survivors sustained serious injuries and were taken to Klongthom Hospital for treatment.

“Witnesses told us that they saw Mr Pornthanakrit drive his pick-up into Mr Suphachai’s car after crossing the road median from the opposite direction.

Mr Pornthanakrit was later charged with reckless driving causing death and injury.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

‘Dangerous’ plastic bottle overturns car at stoplight



In a crash that is being blamed on a plastic bottle, a car in Phuket Town flipped over onto its roof on May 1 after the driver lost control at a traffic stop. The front wind screen of the vehicle and a side mirror was broken. Lt Col Chana Suthimas of Phuket City Police told reporters that the 60-year-old driver claims the plastic bottle got stuck under the brake pedal causing him to crash. Photo: Traffic Line Group

Tour guide dies of possible heatstroke

A PATHUM Thani native was found dead in a rented room on Samui Island on April 30, from what police believe to have been heatstroke. The room is in a restaurant building on

Chaweng Beach.

Capt Boonnam Srinarat of Bo Phut Police confirmed the death of Thongchai Sudjaeng, a tour guide who catered to Chinese tourists, at about 5:40pm.

“Mr Thongchai was lying on the bed, shirtless and bleeding from the ears and nose. There were no marks of violence found on his body. Rescue

workers estimate that he had died about three hours prior to discovery of the body,” said the policeman.

Police also found anti-hypertensives in the room, which are normally used to treat high blood pressure and complications arising from it.

“A witness at the restaurant told us that Mr Thongchai had complained about the hot weather and had said that he wished he could ‘jump into water’ before going inside the room,” added Capt Boonnam.

The victim’s body was taken to Samui Hospital for further examination to confirm the cause of death.

– *Suchat Hankij*

Couple stuck with B6.7mn ‘horror’ house

DAMRONGDHAMA center staff and representatives of the Engineering Institute of Thailand on April 27 inspected a ‘questionable’ housing project in Koh Kaew.

The house, backed by a well-known developer, has reportedly been in shambles for about three years.

Sintichai Jitkam and Sunisa

Jitkham in November last year filed a complaint after purchasing the house in the development for 6.7 million baht. They additionally filed photos of water leaks from the ceiling and other structural problems that they said could be hazardous.

The developer responded to the original complaint by fixing some problems, but the couple explained that more issues had popped up and demanded a refund. However, they were offered temporary housing at another project instead.

“We noticed during inspection that some of the problems in the house had been fixed. Our specialist engineer and other officials will further inspect the house and offer a maintenance plan to the developer,” said Nanthasak Boonnak, director of the Damrongdhama Center.

Officials refused to disclose the name of the development, which is located nearby the British International School Phuket. No further updates were made available from the Damrongdhama center.

– *Sukawin Tanthavanich*

One killed in collision with Korean expat

A YOUNG Thai man was killed on April 27 after smashing into a Korean expat’s pick-up truck in Phuket Town.

Maj Nattaya Suwanpong of Phuket City Police received reports of the incident at about 11pm. It occurred at the Thepkrasattri-Nakhon road junction near Phuket Wittayalai School.

“The motorcyclist, Siraphan Sampaorat, 20, was lying in a pool of blood on the road when we arrived. He was rushed to Vachira Phuket Hospital and later pronounced dead. He was not wearing a helmet and sustained severe injuries to his head and legs,” said Maj Nattaya.

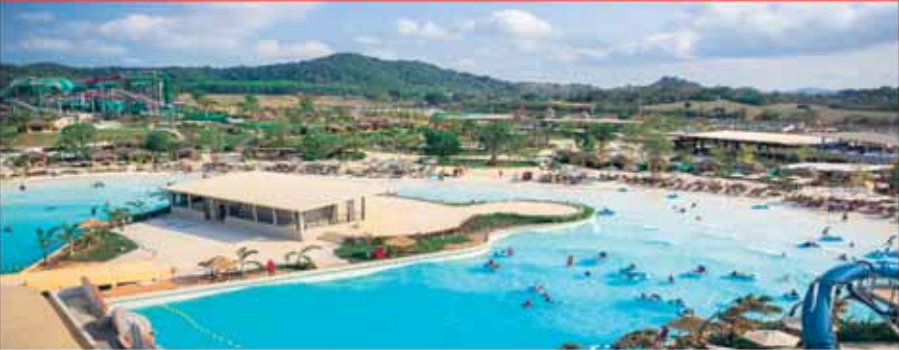
Both vehicles were damaged. However, expat Cheolhee Park remained uninjured.

“Witnesses told us that the motorcyclist was riding on Thepkrasattri Road while the Korean driver was coming from the opposite direction. They said that at the junction Mr Park attempted to make a sudden right turn, which caused Mr Siraphan to crash into the truck,” the policeman said.

“We will check CCTV footage and question Mr Park further before charging him,” he added.

– *Kritsada Mueanhawong*

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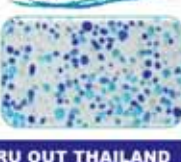



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Governor kicks off term by keeping 'clean-up' promise

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

PHUKET Governor Norraphat Plodthong on May 1 launched a campaign titled 'Clean Phuket with our Hands and Hearts', as promised during his first 'Governor meets Media' gathering at Phuket Provincial Hall last month.

The week-long campaign will be held each month, the governor stated.

"As Phuket is an international tourism destination, it is vital for us to be clean," Governor Norraphat stated during a visit to the Regional Center of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation last week.

He added that the goal of the campaign was to reduce garbage in public places such as fresh markets, canals, beaches, roads, public parks and public toilets. He also addressed other problem areas, including the island's messy, cartoon-like overhead cables, stray dogs and the drug culture among teenagers.

Representatives from a number of public offices joined the campaign, including the Phuket



The campaign will be held for a week each month. Photo: Phuket PR

Public Health Office; the Phuket office of the Natural Resources and Environment Department; the Phuket Provincial Administration Office; the Phuket Rural Roads Office; the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning; the Phuket Provincial Electricity Authority; the Phuket Livestock Office; the

Phuket Primary Education Service; and various schools and universities.

Throughout the week, participants gathered at Saphan Hin at 8am and then split up into groups to tackle each area.

"We will have regular evaluations to see how effective the campaign is," Gov Norraphat concluded.

School teacher injured in crash



Megan Mari was admitted to the hospital, where doctors confirmed that she is on her way to recovery. Photo: Kathu Police

A NEWLY-appointed American school teacher at Kajonkiet International School (KIS) Phuket was injured in a road crash in Kathu on May 2.

"The accident occurred at about 8:30am near the u-turn on Phra Phuket Kaew road. We found a damaged white Honda City and Yamaha Nuovo on the road," said Capt Watthathorn Bumrunghthin of Kathu Police.

"The bike driver, Megan Mari, 26, sustained injuries on her face and was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital for

treatment," he added.

Police questioned the car driver, Hasmeenee Leekha, 30.

"Ms Hasmeenee told us that the crash occurred because Ms Mari cut her off to make a U-turn," said Capt Watthathorn.

"Ms Mari has been teaching at KIS Phuket for just two days. We believe she's not familiar with the roads yet," he added.

At this stage, police have yet to press charges and are waiting to question Ms Mari when she recovers.

- Kritsada Mueanhawong



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BKK to have stricter street food controls

THE City Hall chief has stated that by May 31 street food vendors on Khao San and Yaowarat roads will be managed by stricter regulations to ensure clean and hygienic food preparation.

However, more roads could be allowed to serve street food like those two famous roads, Bangkok Governor Pol General Assawin Kwanmuang was quoted saying by the Thai National News Bureau.

Khao San Road and one traffic lane of Yaowarat Road will be closed from 6pm until midnight to allow the sale of street food, he said.

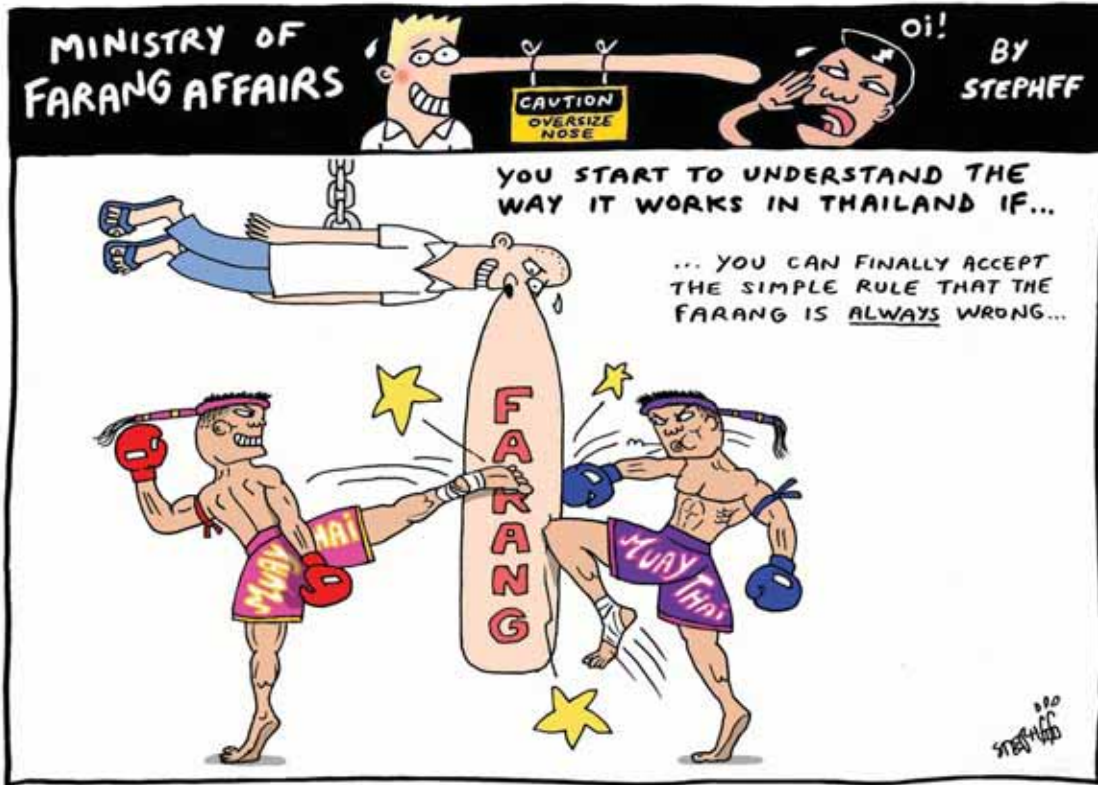
Street food vendors must wear aprons, hats and gloves every time they handle food.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) will designate areas for washing and disposal of waste.

The governor said the Ministry of Commerce would control prices and would require street food vendors to clearly display price tags in Thai, English and Chinese.

The Ministry of Labor will be responsible for street food vendors who hire migrant workers.

The governor added that the BMA was considering managing street food on other roads like Khao San and Yaowarat roads.



the media labelling the bill an infringement on press freedom, including via the proposed media professional council.

Red Bull heir skips town before warrant

VORAYUTH "Boss" Yoovidhya, the fugitive heir to the Red Bull fortune who is being sought to hear the prosecutors' indictment in relation to running over and killing a police officer in 2012, entered Thailand on April 23 and departed on April 25 for Singapore, Immigration Police revealed on May 2.

An arrest warrant was issued for Mr Vorayuth last week following his failure to meet prosecutors for a decision on his indictment a day earlier.

Immigration Bureau chief Lt Gen Natthorn Phrosunthorn said his office could check people travelling in and out of the country and if Mr Vorayuth re-entered Thailand the system would alert them.

He explained that Mr Vorayuth had left the country before the arrest warrant was issued.

He said Thong Lor Police investigators did not ban him from travelling abroad as the case stemmed from recklessness rather than a serious case with criminal intent. Therefore, he said, the Immigration Bureau was not authorized to stop him.

Three arrested for bank theft with fake bomb

POLICE have arrested two men and a teenager for allegedly robbing a Nonthaburi bank of 300,000 baht using a fake bomb in a crime one suspect said they had copied from a video clip that when viral on YouTube.

Provincial Police Bureau 1 Deputy Commissioner Maj Gen Thanayut Wutthitratthamrong and Nonthaburi Police Chief Maj Gen Susak



Prakkamakul announced the arrests on May 1.

The suspects were identified as Somkiart Udombitisakul, 37, his 17-year-old-son, and Wanchai Khunsri, 37.

They are accused of using a fake bomb to rob a branch of the Thanachart Bank at Center Point near the Central West Gate in Nonthaburi's Bang Yai district on April 20, making off

with 301,660 baht.

Police seized the fake bomb but retrieved only 2,880 baht from the suspects, who claimed they had spent the rest of the money.

Following the robbery, police checked CCTV footage and saw two robbers flee in a car. A licence-plate check confirmed that the car belonged to Mr Wanchai, who was arrested at his house in Pathum Thani.

Media reform bill changeable, says Dep PM

DEPUTY Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam said on May 2 that it was possible for the government to disagree with the media regulation draft bill proposed by the National Reform Steering Assembly (NRSA) before it forwarded the document to the Council of the State, its legal arm, to amend.

The media asked Wissanu about that possibility before attending the Cabinet meeting.

Dep PM Wissanu said every draft bill was subject for review to determine if they were in line with the constitution and those they were not would be scrapped.

He said he could not say if the media regulation draft bill violated the new charter's Article 35, which guaranteed press freedom, as he had not seen the bill.

He said he had no problem discussing the issue with media representatives. However, the government had not yet received the draft bill.

The NRSA voted in favor of the draft bill on May 2 despite

Police arrest transvestites for 'sex trade'

POLICE arrested six transvestites for allegedly propositioning tourists in Tha Phae Gate area in downtown Chiang Mai on the night of May 1.

Officers checked the area after receiving complaints that many transvestites in revealing dresses were working as prostitutes in the area.

Police located the transvestites just after midnight.

Police nabbed six of the alleged sex workers, said Lt Sathaporn Wathakorn, deputy crime suppression inspector at Muang Chiang Mai Police Station.

He said the arrested transvestites were aged over 20.

They were charged with trying to pressure people in a public place into buying a sex service, and thus had committed a shameful act in public.





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Global weddings come to town

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

PHUKET hosted the 4th Annual Destination Wedding Planners Congress 2017 (DWP Congress 2017), a conference of global wedding planners that brought luxury destination wedding planners, leading suppliers and creative partners under one roof.

More than 450 global wedding planners from 65 countries participated in the event, which was held from May 2-4 and was the first of its kind to be held in Asia. It was organized by Dubai-based QnA International and hosted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

The three previous editions were held in Greece, Mauritius and Italy.

“The Thai Government has always recognized the importance of the wedding and honeymoon segment as one of the top generators of tourism revenue,” said Minister of Tourism and Sports Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul.

“We aim to develop Thailand as the wedding hub of the ASEAN region.”

She added that the conference presented an opportunity to showcase what Thailand has to offer in terms of weddings and romance.

“Thai hospitality and ser-



The 4th Annual Destination Wedding Planners Congress 2017 was organized by Dubai-based QnA International and hosted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Photo: Tourism Authority of Thailand

vices can make any dream wedding even more memorable, while the amazing Thai food is one of our strengths for a wedding reception. We can offer various styles of food, from international cuisine to authentic Thai dishes and from tasty Thai local food to Michelin-star food prepared by internationally renowned chefs,” Ms Kobkarn said.

“Additionally, there are

many honeymoon packages designed to match the once-in-a-lifetime experience that Thailand provides,” she added.

Thailand has long been a hotspot for tourism, and has, in recent times, gained popularity as a venue for destination weddings and romance.

In a report generated by QnA International at the end of the 3rd DWP Congress in Florence

last year, Thailand was frequently cited as a preferred or emerging destination of choice for couples from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Australasia.

“We are delighted to welcome wedding planners and key influencers in the global wedding business to Phuket,” said TAT Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

“DWP Congress 2017 will

be an opportunity for us to showcase our readiness and potential in promoting Thailand as an international romance destination, through our professionalism, hospitality, creativity, and of course, our well-known Thai touch,” he added.

He added that other cities in Thailand would also make suitable wedding and honeymoon destinations, including Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Koh Samui and Krabi.

Akash Jain, Director of QnA International, said that there were many factors contributing to Thailand’s rise in popularity as a destination wedding venue.

“As we know, Thailand is well-known for its luxurious beach and spa resorts, breathtaking views, pristine beaches, lively entertainment, amazing hospitality and mouth-watering cuisine – it’s truly no surprise that it is one of the most popular locations picked for overseas weddings,” said Mr Jain.

“Thailand is the first country in Asia to be chosen for this initiative, and these factors played a big role in selecting the destination and the experience it will provide to these high-profile buyers,” he added.

Participation in the conference was by invitation only, making it highly-focused and exclusive to industry leaders.

‘Taste of Thailand’ takes Thai food to the United Kingdom

TESCO LOTUS, in collaboration with the Department of International Trade Promotion, has been hosting a “Taste of Thailand” festival in Tesco Kensington to promote a variety of quality Thai products bearing the Thailand Trust Mark.

The Thai products will be available at 250 Tesco stores in the UK, giving Thai farmers and businesses an opportunity to reach international markets.

“For 22 years, we have been committed to promoting sustainable growth of the Thai economy and society through income generation for farmers and business operators who supply their products through our network of 1,800 stores in Thailand,” said John Christie, chief executive officer of Tesco Lotus.

“We have supported exports of Thai products through the Tesco network, which spans 10 countries. For the past decade, we have exported a variety of Thai products including fruits, chicken, shrimp, groceries, pet food, stationery and toys to markets in Central Europe and Asia.

“In 2016, Thai products exported to Tesco stores in the UK exceeded 7.7 billion baht in value,” Mr Christie said.

To support the products’ launch, the festival will allow customers to experience a piece of Thailand through cooking demonstrations by Thai chefs and product sampling.

“We are creating additional programs to bring products of Thai farmers and SMEs to important overseas markets, while focusing on offering high quality products at affordable prices to Thai customers,” Mr Christie concluded.

– The Nation



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Phuket Gazette

Tragic end to a young life

PHUKET was in the international news spotlight again last week, this time for the heartbreaking murder of an 11-month-old baby girl, hanged by her own father in Nai Thon.

Most readers will already be familiar with the tragically short life of Natalee 'Biw' Wongtalay, whose execution went viral after her late father, 21, chose to post it on Facebook Live before taking his own life.

There are so many angles to pursue on such a story that it is difficult to know where to begin. Perhaps it is best to start by at least attempting to keep things in some kind of perspective, as difficult as that may seem.

As horrific as the murder was, the sad reality is that young men driven to insane jealousy have been perpetrating atrocities from time immemorial. Such jealousy is an incredibly powerful force that can flip an otherwise sane individual into the uncharted realms of unpredictable, violent behavior.

In this day and age, we tend to be bombarded with 'public awareness' slogans. Smokers now not only have to endure 'Smoking Kills' slogans on their cigarette packs, but also graphic representations of what some of the potential outcomes might be. We are also reminded daily of numerous other threats, both real and perceived.

Yet the single greatest immediate threat to young women around the globe comes not from 'second-hand smoke', or other perceived dangers, but a testosterone-driven male partner in fear of, or in the process of, being dumped.

Thai soap opera culture plays a particularly interesting role in all this. Female leads typically dish out the hurt by slapping one another in the face, or through similar such outbursts, while their male counterparts remain quiet, composed pillars of virtue.

In stark contrast, real Thai women of every age should be made better aware of the potential dangers posed by a jealousy fuelled young male. They need to be dealt with just as delicately as a time bomb in the process of being defused.

We do not know the exact course of events that led to this tragedy, or if the victim's now-widowed mom could have handled the situation better, but we nevertheless offer her and her family our condolences after such a horrible loss.

Rest in Peace, Nong Biw.



Not in the best interests of Phuket

Re: Phuket officials plan walking street, gated entrance at Surin, Apr 29

Walking street! As in the one that's in Pattaya?

Either leave it alone and make it into a beautiful park with no business or allow a street of well-designed restaurants.

The government seems to have zero interest in retaining the natural beauty. All they now think about is how they can cash in.

Thanks to the government meddling, Surin now stinks – literally. Eight million baht for a gate? And of course a fence and guards. So, basically a prison. Super. Lucky tourists.

Bob

Gazette forum

People should leave the lizard alone

Re: Meter-long lizard causes scare at Phuket beach, Apr 28

The lizard has as much right to be on the beach as the people. Leave it alone, it won't bother you.

Ricky Black

Facebook

Home owners' market gaining bad rep

Re: No refund for B6.7mn house in shambles, May 1

The photo looks very much like a home in the Burasiri development, directly across the street from the British International School – but I cannot be sure that it is, in fact, Burasiri.

Letters to the Editor

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

Hard to say whether the problems are coming from sub-standard materials or shoddy workmanship (or both).

But whatever the problem, it is very important to get this rectified honorably and quickly as Phuket is fast gaining a reputation as a place not to buy a home.

Len Callahan
Gazette forum

Need to respect others on the road

Re: Pick-up crash causes pile-up, Apr 28

Just drive carefully and respect all the others on the road.

A bit of patience would suit every driver, especially the Thais.

Simone Pfenninger
Facebook

Organic vegetables make a difference

Re: Excuse Buster: Getting your kids to eat more vegetables, Apr 27

Offer children organic veggies and fruit; they taste better and are more nutritious, which means the kids react positively to it.

Organic is less than 40 baht per day more expensive.

For a young child, probably less than 30 baht a day.

They will eat their organic veggies and fruit, more probably than they do the toxic versions.

Martin H J Smetsers
Gazette forum

Hope CCTV solves the mystery

Re: Young Thai killed in collision with Korean expat, Apr 28

I can't see heavy damage to the truck.

And I assume the motorbike the policeman is looking at is that of the victim.

So it looks more like he hit the pole where the motorbike is lying.

I hope CCTV footage will provide the answer as to what really happened.

Jelle
Gazette forum

Found a new excuse for road accidents

Re: Plastic bottle blamed for Phuket Town car flip, May 2

Once again, not addressing the real reason. The driver caused the accident by carelessly leaving the plastic bottle where it could cause danger. It wasn't the fault of the bottle.

Classic Ray
Gazette forum

No rain, no hills, can't blame slippery roads, can't blame brakes, so now its plastic bottles to blame.

Phil Phelan
Facebook

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Presenting....



Jazz for King2

Andaman Jazz by the Sea

20 May 2017

Loma Park, Patong, Phuket

เวลา 19.00-22.00 น.

“มหัศจรรย์อันดามัน กับบทเพลงแจ๊สของพ่อ”

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และ Steve Cannon มือทรัมเป็ตจากสหรัฐอเมริกา

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Koh Lipe: The Maldives of Thailand

Footloose

By Anand Singh

KOH LIPE is situated in the Andaman Sea, about 85 kilometers off the coast of Satun Province. The tiny island is part of the Adang-Rawi archipelago. In recent years Koh Lipe has grown to become a popular destination among backpackers and travellers looking for the raw and authentic island experience.

Unlike some of the more familiar islands in Phang Nga Bay, Koh Lipe is quite far from Phuket, which adds to its appeal since it is off the beaten trail and still untouched by mass tourism. The downside being that it's a bit of a trek to get there in the first place.

The easiest and most frequently picked travel itinerary to Koh Lipe would be to book a flight to Hat Yai Airport. There are frequent flights from Bangkok to Hat Yai daily. However there is only one major airline that serves the Phuket-Hat Yai route, which makes the flight from Phuket a bit pricey. The alternative



Despite recent developments, Koh Lipe still maintains its authentic charm. Photo: Koh Lipe Beach Resort

would be to catch a bus or a van from Phuket.

Once in Hat Yai, visitors can catch a bus or van to Pak Bara, a port in Satun. Speedboats leave Pak Bara on a regular basis headed for Koh Tarutao and Lipe. The journey can take up to an hour and a half but it is a splendid trip across one of the most pristine environments in the Andaman region. Lucky visitors may be able to catch a glimpse of migrating whales or

dolphins between Tarutao and Adang-Rawi.

Koh Lipe is one of the few islands within the archipelago of Adang-Rawi and Tarutao, which is not entirely part of the marine national park. Hence the island has a range of accommodations on offer, from huts and beach bungalows to hotel rooms. The beaches are stunning and the tiny town is vibrant with plenty of shops, restaurants and dessert cafes.

ATM machines are a bit harder to come by so it is worth taking a bit of spare cash with you.

At night visitors can find cool bars and hangout spots at almost all the beaches on the island.

One of the most popular activities on Koh Lipe is snorkeling and scuba diving, and for good reason. The waters around Koh Lipe boast some of the region's healthiest and most vibrant reefs. The coral reefs surrounding Koh Lipe are mostly part of the pro-

tected marine national park. Some operators offer nighttime snorkeling tours to watch luminescent plankton.

The islands surrounding Koh Lipe are also very interesting to visit. Adang and Rawi are both part of the marine national park. Both are fairly larger than Koh Lipe and are covered with dense tropical jungles and lined with white sandy beaches.

It is easy for visitors from Koh Lipe to visit some of these magnificent islands. Koh Tarutao is a bit further away, but definitely worth a stopover if time permits. There are also regular ferry services from Koh Lipe to Langkawi Island in Malaysia.

The best time to visit Koh Lipe is from November till April. During this period the Andaman Sea is calm, making boat journeys a bit more pleasant. Visitors are also less likely to encounter bad weather and rain.

Although development is quickly catching up with the tourism boom, Koh Lipe still maintains its authentic charm and natural beauty. It is a long journey to make, but definitely worth it.



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'Jazz for King' to be held in HM's honor

By Sukawin Tanthavanich

JAZZ lovers are in for a treat when the 'Jazz for King 2: Andaman Jazz by the Sea' concert kicks off in Phuket on May 20, featuring the music of the late King, His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX).

The event will be held at Loma Park in Patong from 7-10pm and hosted by Andaman Natural Resources Conservation Foundation.

"It is a great honor for the foundation to host this event. We always work to support good manners and instill cultural values in children, youth and the general public. We also intend to return good things to society in order to improve our beloved country," Foundation Chief Yossanan Raicharoen told the *Gazette*.

"The festival is crucial to all Thais as it provides an opportunity to honor King Rama IX for his musical talent as well as to celebrate the era of



His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej started composing jazz music at the age of 18. Photo: Gazette file

King Rama X."

HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej started to compose jazz at the age of 18. His first song was called "Sang Tien" (candlelight blues). Overall, he composed more than 48 songs and became globally recognized as a talented composer and musical genius.

The festival will feature jazz professionals from all over Thailand led by Denny Euprasert, currently the Dean of Rangsit University (RSU) Conservatory of Music and the Director of RSU jazz orchestra.

Mr Euprasert earned a Doctorate of Arts in music theory and composition with a second-

ary emphasis in jazz pedagogy from the University of Northern Colorado; a Master of Music in jazz studies from the University of North Texas; and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in jazz piano performance from the Cornish College of the Arts, USA.

His masterpiece 'Asanee-

Wason' received the Kom Chad Luek Award for 'Best Instrumental Album' in 2008. He also received an award from the Ministry of Culture for his contribution to fine arts and culture.

Additionally, Mr Euprasert has composed numerous pieces, including piano solos, orchestra music, chamber group, jazz ensemble and jazz orchestra, in collaboration with other musicians such as Rawewan Jinda, Jirasak Panpum and American trumpet player Steven Cannon.

The concert provides a great opportunity for both music novices and experts to learn about different styles of music, including 'Dixieland Swing Jazz', HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's favorite. It will also help boost tourism in Southern Thailand.

Entry to the concert is free.

The *Phuket Gazette* and *The Nation Multimedia* are proud media sponsors of this prestigious event.

New share accommodation mobile apps on the rise

SHARE accommodation is a trend that's growing rapidly around the globe, as it offers choices for tourists to experience a new way of living at each destination they go to. More service providers are entering the fray in many countries, including Thailand, opening up more opportunities for travellers.

Favstay is an up and coming Thai start-up that merges with the concept of share accommodation in Thailand.

This month, US\$2.88 million funding was raised for this new app, with Dusit International as the lead strategic investor among three others, both Thai and international investors, included 500 Startups family.

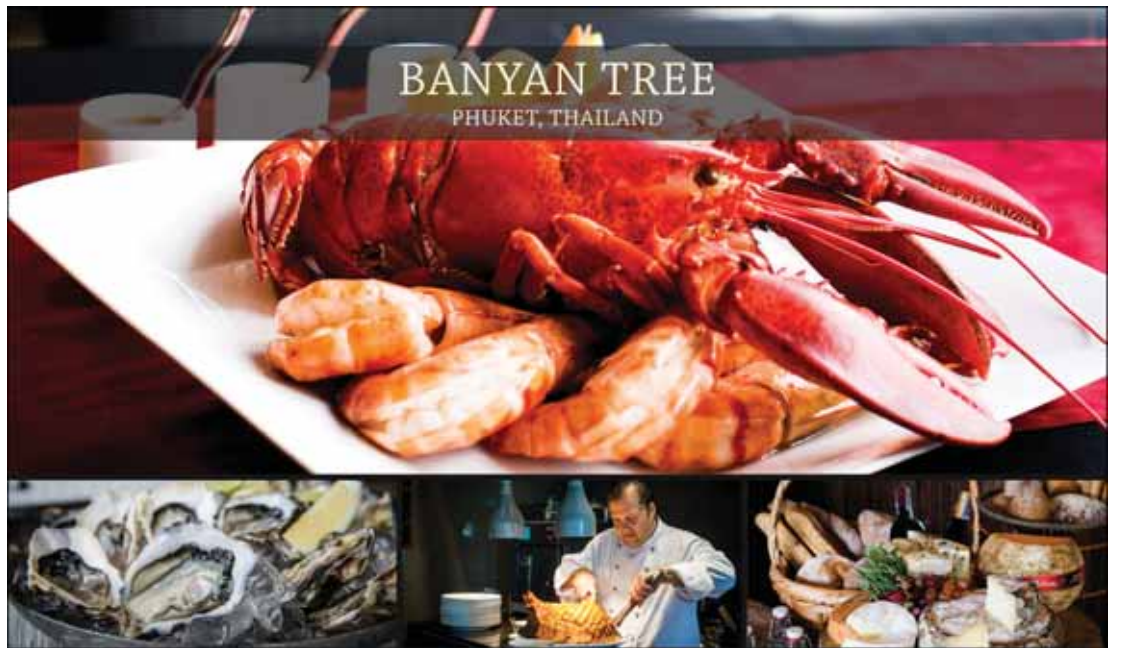
The company is based on the same concept of sharing accommodation service, but it differs in the details, said Suchada Taechotirote, co-founder and chief executive officer of Favstay.

It aims to focus on service to enable guests have a comprehensively comfortable experience.

"Service means we take care of the guests for their hosts including local transportation between the airport and the place of accommodation. Now we have a call center – both in Chinese and English – for the convenience of our guests," said Ms Suchada.

She admitted that competition in the business was rapidly increasing but said that it was good for the industry as it would lift up the whole standard and tourists can enjoy a lot more choices.

– *The Nation*



— X —

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Above and beyond the call of duty

By Sahar Aftab Paliwala

KORATHAK Kissanasakul, better known as Kai, is a taxi driver and tourism business operator in Phuket. Originally from Satun, he moved to Phuket about 18 years ago, where he met his wife who is a Phuket native.

His first job was as a guest service officer at Katathani Phuket Beach Resort about 15 years ago. He then moved to Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket (now Angsana Laguna Phuket), where he again worked in guest service relations. Altogether, he has about five years of experience in the hospitality industry.

“I studied at Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani campus, where I majored in tourism and hotel management. I enjoyed studying about and working in the tourism industry as it was a satisfying and competitive field. However, after the 2004 tsunami, things went very quiet in tourism, at least for a while. Phuket had been badly impacted and we needed time to rebuild,” says Kai.

“That is when I heard about an opportunity working aboard

a cruise ship named ‘Grand Princess’ from a friend of mine. The company was American and operated 16 cruiseliners under the name ‘Princess Cruises’. I was hired for a 10-month-contract.”

Working aboard a cruise ship gave him the opportunity to travel to many countries, which is something he is still thankful for.

“We visited Turkey, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Portugal, and several other places. I met a lot of people I would never have met otherwise. My cabinmate was Mexican and I learnt to speak a little Spanish and Italian as well. This was a very unique opportunity – not many people get to travel this much. I always preferred to take the night shift, so I would have time to travel and explore new cities each time we ported at a new destination,” says Kai.

However, working aboard a cruise ship was not something to be taken lightly, as Kai soon discovered.

“It was extremely hard work. We had to be on duty 24/7. Every year, we got about two months off and then it was back to the ship. I worked for

two contracts but after that I decided to go back home to my family. It was especially hard because at that time there was no Facebook, video chat or any other means to keep in touch. It was very difficult to communicate with my wife because I was in different countries all the time. She had to wake up in the middle of the night just so we could talk on the phone,” he says.

After moving back to Phuket, Kai landed a job at Toyota in sales and service, which he held for five years.

However, to achieve a better work-life balance, he started driving his own taxi.

“Once I started out, I found that I was getting plenty of return guests – people recommended me to their friends and my client base grew. I have been doing this for about two years now and have also started a tour company by the name of ‘Phuket Attraction Trips’. I thought it would be better to provide more choices to my customers,” says Kai.

Kai then developed a website, obtained a tourism licence from the government and placed brochures in his car for customers

to see.

“I never act pushy or offer my services until people express an interest themselves. Some guests only come to rest and relax in their resorts and they don’t want people pushing services down their throat,” he says.

“Some - times I feel like I have changed too many jobs dur-

ing my career, but then I understand that experience in different industries has helped me hone my service skills and I am better equipped to deal with customers than say, someone who has never left the island in their entire life.”



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