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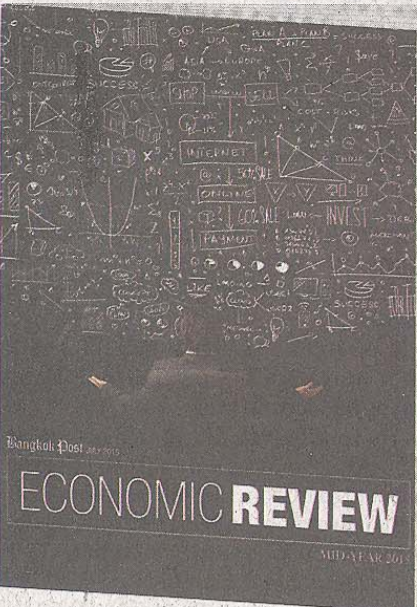
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MEETING THE CHALLENGES

It's been a rough ride over the past six months but Thai businesses did well in coping with new challenges. The 2015 Mid-Year Economic Review takes stock of the changes and looks at some movers and shakers. Free with every copy today.

Anxious night as Greece decides

ATHENS: Greeks lined up at polling stations and ATMs alike yesterday as the country voted on its financial future, choosing in a referendum whether to accept creditors' demands for more austerity in return for rescue loans or defiantly reject the deal. Early indications suggested a high turnout and opinion polls showed voters evenly split on the first referendum Greece has held in 41 years. AP

Full report: Page 7

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It had to split

A local road splits apart in Nong Khae district of Saraburi. A deep crack has forced the road closure. Fast receding water in the adjacent Khlong Rapipat battered by drought is blamed for causing the soil underneath the road to subside. THANARAK KHUNTON

Court tipped to free protester students

Panadda confident they had no hidden agenda

POST REPORTERS

Speculation is mounting the military court will release the 14 arrested students of the New Democracy Movement (NDM) when it decides their fate tomorrow.

The speculation started after positive comments from Prime Minister's Office Minister ML Panadda Diskul on Saturday regarding their arrest.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha also said he has made a suggestion to the "judicial side" on how to handle the issue.

The students were arrested on June 26 following their rally against the military regime.

The 12-day detention period is set to expire tomorrow and it was originally believed that authorities would ask the military court to detain the students for another 12 days.

The arrests have drawn mounting criticism from both local and international human rights defenders.

Krisadang Nutcharut, a lawyer for the detainees, said the government's latest comments, especially those from ML Panadda, are promising and indicate that authorities seem to have a better understanding about the students.

In a press interview on Saturday, ML Panadda claimed all relevant parties

including Gen Prayut, see the students as a source of purity and recognise their political rights.

The minister himself also expressed confidence the students had no hidden agenda.

Mr Krisadang said he is willing to deliver a message to the students if the government wants to find a resolution.

He is scheduled to attend the questioning of the detainees today at Bangkok Remand Prison.

"I'm asking the authorities to make it clear if they want to find a solution. I can take the message to the students who need to be assured the government will follow the roadmap and return power to the people. I think they will respond [if the government proposal is in accordance with their demand]," he said.

Mr Krisadang said he and other lawyers are gathering information to oppose further detention by the authorities.

One of the arguments is they are not a flight risk and the authorities have been monitoring their activities.

Speaking upon his return from Japan, Gen Prayut said the government has done nothing outside the law against the student activists, stressing the arrests were made because they had violated a National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) ban on political gatherings.

The prime minister also pointed out he has executive powers, not judicial powers, when asked about the case and calls for the students' release.

However, Gen Prayut said he had made

suggestions to the judicial side on how to handle the case.

When a legal case enters the justice system it should be handled in line with proper procedures, he said.

NCPO spokesman Winthai Suvaree yesterday declined to comment on reports Gen Prayut, also the NCPO chief, was preparing to release the students to ease the pressure on the government.

He also refused to respond to calls for the students to stand trial in a civilian court, instead of the military court.

Maj Gen Sansern Kaewkamnerd, deputy government spokesman, also declined to comment on the alleged release, but noted the prime minister has always emphasised the importance of enforcing the law.

Justice Minister Paiboon Koomchaya said the arrests were made because the students violated the Criminal Code and the NCPO's ban on political meetings.

Suriyasai Katsasila, a lecturer at Rangsit University's College of Social Innovation and the leader of the Green Politics group, yesterday called on the NCPO and the government to handle student protests with care, saying some protests are staged to oppose public policies.

He also urged the student activists who campaign for social and economic justice to be careful and not to be manipulated or exploited by groups with a political agenda.

Think Pragmatic: Page 11
Thai Pulse: Page 12

Illegal fishing gear 'must go'

INTERVIEW: Fisheries chief lays down law to rogue trawlers as EU ban threat lingers, write Apinya Wipatayotin and Manop Thiposod

The Department of Fisheries is one of the key agencies in dealing with illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The problems of IUU fishing were so rampant in the industry that the EU issued Thailand with a "yellow card" warning last April.

More than 3,000 trawlers remain docked to avoid tough new measures imposed by the authorities, as the government attempts to avoid a final "red card" verdict which could result in a ban on Thai seafood exports to Europe.

Joompol Sanguansin, the department director-general, talks about what is being done.



The operators put pressure on us to grant them licences, despite the fact they still violate the law.

JOOMPOL SANGUANSIN
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DESTRUCTIVE FISHING GEAR

The Department of Fisheries is responsible for granting licences for fishing equipment to trawlers.

Most illegal trawlers lack a licence for fishing equipment or their equipment does not match what is specified in the licence.

Under fishing law, four destructive types of fishing gear, consisting of the otter trawl, push net, day anchovy purse seine, and anchovy falling net, cannot be used without a licence.

The department stopped granting licences for otter trawl and push nets in 1981 and the other two forms of fishing gear in 2000.

Currently, 3,930 fishing boats with licences are equipped with illegal fishing gear, while 3,072 boats use banned gear but do not possess a licence.

From July 1, when the new rules took effect, the group without a licence can be fined if they are found still fishing.

The trawler operators put pressure on us to grant them licences, despite the fact they still violate the law.

We are still firm on our policy to control the use of destructive fishing gear. Operators of illegal trawlers will have to comply with the law.

Once they change their gear, they will be granted licences and can catch in the sea as usual.

TACKLING OVERFISHING

Thailand has faced overfishing since 1976 when as many as 12,000 vessels were found with destructive gear. Five years later, the department announced a ban on otter trawl and push nets.

Past governments granted amnesties for violators on five occasions, most recently in 1996.

Later in 2000, the department announced it would stop granting a licence for day anchovy purse seine, and anchovy falling net.

Currently there are 1,431 trawlers equipped with the anchovy catching gear and 558 of them operate without a licence.

We have found 36% of overfishing takes place in the Gulf of Thailand and 4% in the Andaman Sea, most by boats equipped with otter trawl and push nets.

IMPACT ON SEAFOOD BUSINESS

About 300,000 tonnes of catch would disappear from the market if the fishing boats stayed in dock for one year,

compared to the 3 million tonnes of total supply which enters the market.

However, in reality, it is impossible for thousands of boats to stay docked for that long, as the fishermen have to earn a living and they could not afford to pay their workers if they do not fish.

We believe most boat operators will finally try to change their fishing gear to comply with the law and apply for licence so they can go to sea again.

The impact will be limited and will not last long.

But in the long term, we expect a positive outcome. In the end we will have only legal trawlers in the sea and this will be in line with the EU's request.

RESPONSE TO 'YELLOW CARD'

The EU has asked Thailand to implement stronger punishment for wrongdoers. It also suggested we introduce a national action plan to combat IUU fishing, install a vessel monitoring system (VMS) to track trawlers with over 30 gross tonnage, and develop a system of traceability to verify where seafood products come from.

We have made more than 50% progress in complying with the EU's demand and the work will continue until our goals are met.

We hope the EU will give us more time to deal with the problem, as it has granted extensions to other countries facing the same situation. We need a little more time.

Regarding the VMS installation, more than 500 trawlers out of the 6,615 required have installed the system.

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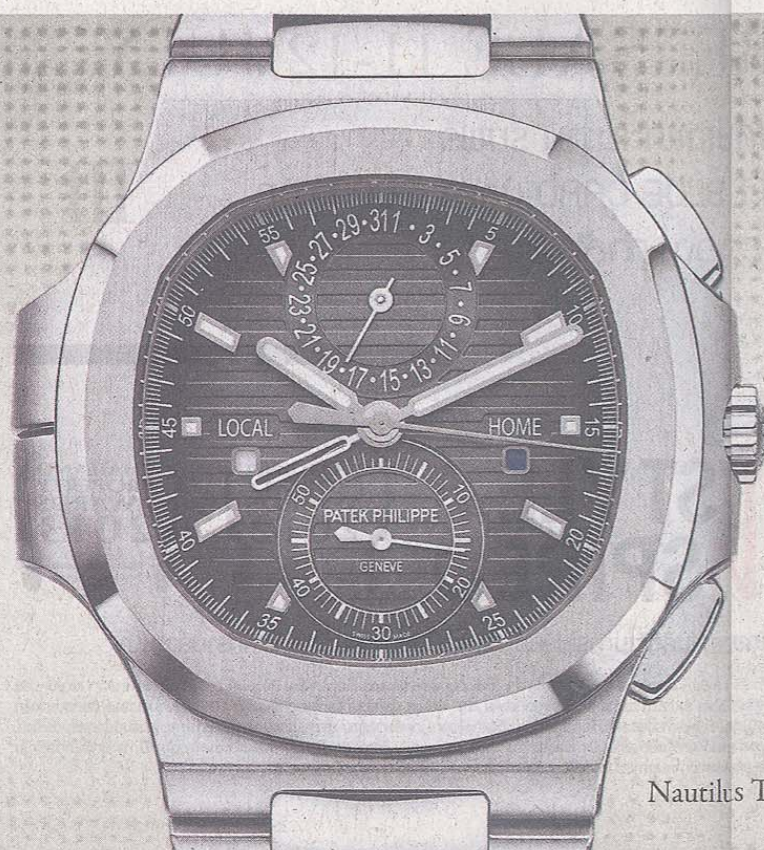
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Fish price hikes slight: Page 3

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Ex-army legal man kills self

A former officer of the Judge Advocate-General's Department fatally shot himself in Kanchanaburi's Tha Maka district early yesterday, police said.

The body of Lt Col Yandet Charoenrungruang, 59, was found dead on the second floor of a house in tambon Ulok Simuen in Tha Maka district shortly after midnight.

Police believe he had shot himself with a .38 pistol in the right temple and the bullet went through his head. He was sitting in a wing chair and the pistol was found lying in his lap.

A suicide note was found on a dining table nearby but police did not release its content.

Pornthep Suebwongdee, 54, the owner of the house who informed police of the suicide, said Yandet resigned as an officer attached to the Judge Advocate-General's office two years ago. Yandet's elder brother is Gen Jersak Charoenrungruang, a classmate of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

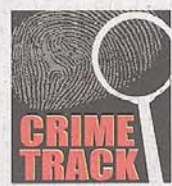
He knew only that Yandet, who was close to his family, had a family problem and had been staying in his house for the past nine months.



It wasn't me

Natthapol Kanthayom, a 24-year-old son of entertainment tycoon Somyos Suthangkura, attends a funeral rite for his father at Wat Thepleela in the Ramkhamhaeng area. He denies any connection to the murder of his father who was shot and killed in Suan Luang district last week. PATTARAPONG CHATPATTARASILL

26 held as cops bust online romance con



Female victims duped into wiring money to scammers claiming love, writes Wassayos Ngamkham

Police have busted a so-called romance scam which defrauded Thai women, who fell in love with the perpetrators, of millions of baht.

The operation to bust the network, code-named "Black Eagle", was launched by the Technology Crime Suppression Division (TCSD) and the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) last week.

The bust, which caught 25 Africans and one Thai, was set in motion by CIB chief Thitirat Nonghanpitak after Thai women complained of falling victim to the transnational crime gang.

Pol Lt Col Chakrit Seribut, an officer involved in the operation, said members of the crime ring used fake names to contact women via dating websites, claiming they were soldiers, doctors or pilots and using a Caucasian man's photo in their profiles to impress the potential victims. Their main targets were women aged between 40 and 60.

The scammers would claim they loved the victims and wanted to travel to Thailand to marry them and settle down. They would also say they wanted to send expensive gifts to their victims.

Thais who colluded with the gang, posing as bogus shipping agents, would contact the women, saying a shipment of gifts had arrived in Thailand but they must pay a fee to take the items out of customs. Some suspects claimed they had arrived in the country but had been detained by immigration police, and asked their victims to transfer them money for bail.

Victims made several cash transfers to the gang before finally realising they had been duped when the fake boyfriends and gifts never arrived. "Some suspects also used the victims' bank accounts for receiving money wired from other women they had previously duped," said Pol Lt Col Chakrit.

About 70% of the victims filed complaints, but most local police failed to track down suspects due to a lack of proficiency in cyber crime. Pol Lt Gen Thitirat instructed the CIB to work with the TCSD to crack down on the fraudsters.

"We started compiling information in May and found more than 10 scam-related cases

at police stations across the country. Several Thai women ended up penniless after they were conned out of large sums of money," the CIB chief said.

After a month of piecing together evidence, authorities simultaneously raided 40 target locations on June 25 in Bangkok's Bang Kapi district and Pratumam, Pathum Thani's Lam Luk Ka district, Ayutthaya's Muang district and Pattaya in Chon Buri.

Twenty Nigerians, three Cameroonians, one each from Liberia and Zambia and a Thai woman were caught during the crackdowns. Among the suspects were Nigerian nationals Desilets Toni Nicole, Onyekashukwu Elvis Smart Egbule, and Nnamoko Chibuzo Cornelius; a Zambian identified as Timothy Dzozi; and Mr Dzozi's Thai wife, Benja Teerachaiphaisan.

The Thanyaburi Provincial Court issued arrest warrants for the suspects on several charges. Authorities also impounded 151 mobile phones, 25 counterfeit passports, fake stamps of the Australian and Nigerian embassies, 78 passbooks and 10 computers.

Back in February, the TCSD also apprehended Ifeanyi George Okoronkwo, aka "OJ", a Nigerian man who was a key member of the so-called "Nigerian 419" gang, as he was attempting to leave the country via Suvarnabhumi airport.

According to investigators, Mr Okoronkwo swindled 10 million baht from more than 30 Thai women over five years. He was charged with embezzlement and ATM card fraud, as well as computer fraud.

Pol Lt Gen Thitirat said police want to stamp out the romance racket as many foreign criminals in the scam use Thailand as their base to commit these illegal activities.

The CIB chief warned Thai women not to be hasty or to trust strangers they meet online. If they are approached, they should take time to check the background of the person before wiring them money, he said, and they should see each other face to face before making any financial transactions.

Contact Crime Track: crimetrack@bangkokpost.co.th



Thitirat: Urges women to be cautious

Prasarn urges rapid amnesty

PM 'should invoke S44' to foster unity

MONGKOL BANGPRAPA

National Reform Council (NRC) member Prasarn Maruekitapitak suggested Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha should invoke his special power under Section 44 of the interim charter to proceed with a political amnesty.

Mr Prasarn, a member of the NRC's reconciliation panel, said a limited amnesty must be granted to those involved in political protests who did not commit serious criminal offences, or caused huge damage to the public.

Those who committed severe crimes such as burning properties and lese majeste must be prosecuted, he said.

He said invoking the special power

would speed up the process and benefit national reconciliation.

Mr Prasarn said he opposed the blanket amnesty proposed by Cherdchai Tantisirin, former Pheu Thai Party MP for Khon Kaen, for those who had taken part in political conflicts over the past decade.

Earlier, Anek Laothammatat, the reconciliation panel chairman, said the 28-member panel would submit a six-point recommendation that includes an amnesty to the NRC chairman Thienchay Kiranandana today.

If approved, the proposal will be sent to the cabinet, the National Council for Peace and Order, the National Legislative Assembly and justice-related agencies.

Two of the points are aimed at encouraging a collective understanding of past political conflicts as well as finding out the truth behind certain violent events.

The proposed amnesty is listed as the third point and is aimed at promoting justice, repentance and forgiveness.

The other three points involve rehabilitation and help for those affected, creating the right environment for Thais to live together, and measures to prevent the use of violence to resolve conflicts.

In another development, Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) deputy chairman Chuchai Supawong said chapters of the draft charter dealing with the monarchy and citizens' rights had been completed.

Mr Chuchai said the drafters have gone through 96 sections and the changes were an improvement over the first draft, particularly where citizens' rights were concerned.

He said the revised draft promises advanced rights and liberties for the people, strengthens community rights, better protects consumers, and ensures public oversight over state power.

He said the CDC has devoted one section to "the people's assembly".

The proposed body is intended

to be a channel for civil society to exchange opinions with the aim of shaping development.

Mr Chuchai insisted the members would not be paid for their work amid criticism the assembly could be abused by the candidates who fail in elections.

The people's assembly would play a crucial role in the decentralisation of power which is among the core contents of the draft constitution.

An independent consumer protection body also will be created and authorised to file class-action lawsuits against manufacturers or providers of substandard goods or services. Originally the body was limited to giving advice.

Under the revised draft, the state is obliged to promote a free and fair economic system, guard against monopolies, strengthen cooperatives and small-and-medium enterprises, revamp land-holdings and ensure fair land allocations.

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Programs: Tania Leon: Horizons
Mathew Rosenblum: Double Concerto for Baritone Saxophone Percussion and Orchestra
Narong Prangcharoen: Far from Home Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
Zhou Long: Postures Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

2 Bohemian – Moravian Music Night

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Conductor: Gudni A. Emilsson

Soloist: Tomas Strasil, Cello

Programs: James J. Ogburn: Escaping (World Premiere)
Bohuslav Martinu: Cello Concerto No.1 H 196
Gustav Mahler: Symphony No.4 in G Major

3 Mahler & Villa Lobos

Concerts: 24 July 2015 / 7.00 p.m. / PMH (Pre-Concert Talk 6.15 p.m.)
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