

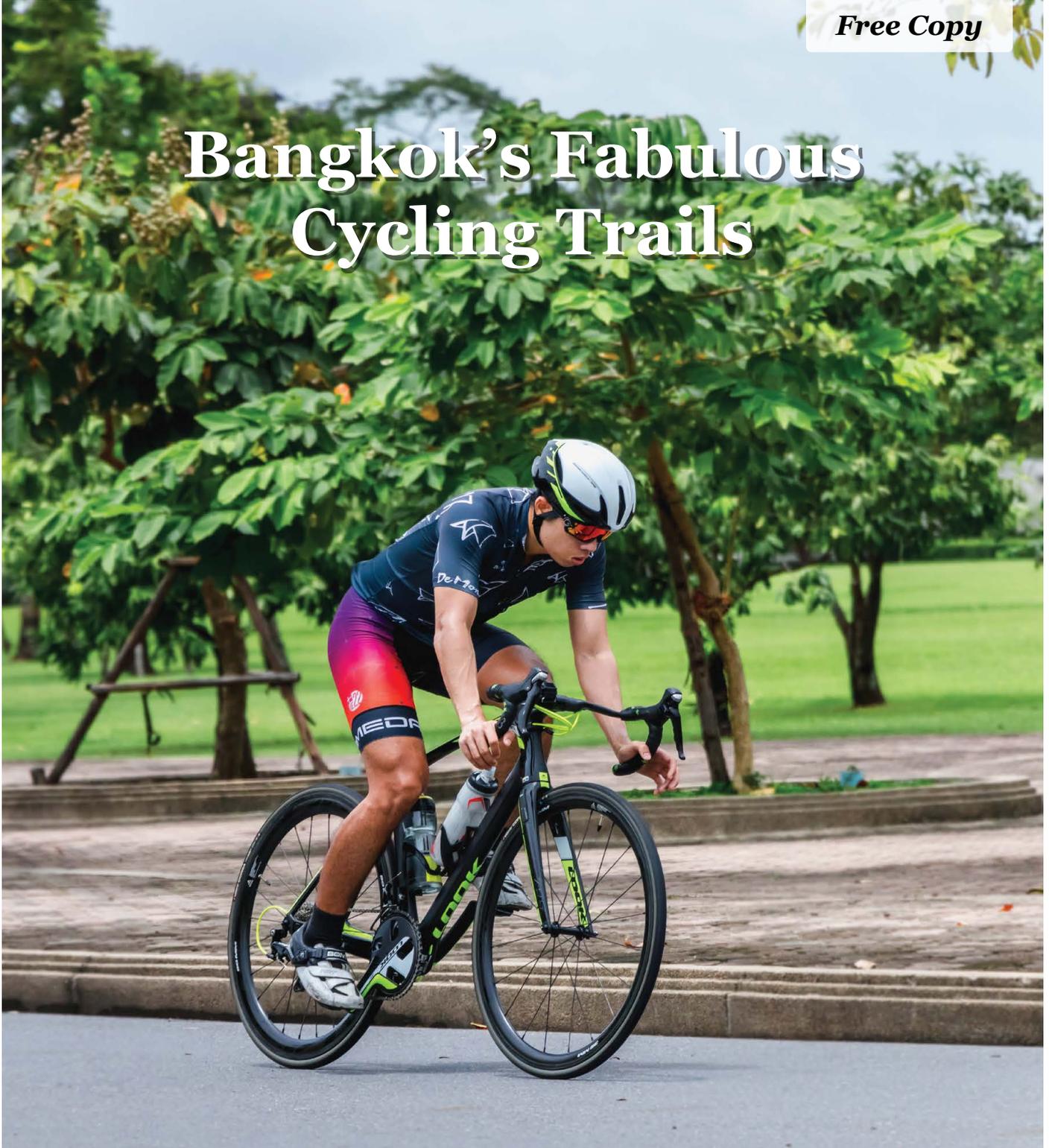
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NO.2 VOL.9 | SEPTEMBER 2018 ISSN 2586-9191 WWW.URBANAFFAIRSMAGAZINE.COM



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Editor's Letter

After a decade-long stint in the corporate world, I finally took the plunge to join the realm of entrepreneurship. I often get asked, "Which is better?" As in everything else in life, there are pros and cons for either choice. It all comes down to what really matters most to you and your life at this juncture, be it money, work, health, family, or something else.

People have their own priorities, objectives and dreams in life, so it's entirely up to you alone to decide for yourself what the purpose of your life is in order to work toward that goal. No one can answer that question for you.

Brian Dyson, the then president and CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises Inc., said during his commencement speech at Georgia Tech: "Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends, and spirit – and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends, and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life."

This must have sounded like gibberish to those new graduates who were eager to get out of school and start making money. But his advice is priceless for anyone at the crossroads of life – that balance is the "key" and never take for granted the most fragile things in life because once they're broken or gone, you can't get them back.

For this September edition, we have stories touching on this topic: J. Pakcheun draws on her experience as a freelancer to provide some insights into the world of freelancing. Pekky The Angel's report on a newly opened healthcare center shows that there's a niche market for preventive healthcare and that health is the most important thing for many people. Then Dave checks out some of the best places to go cycling and hit the dirt – an affordable way to exercise and maintain health.

Don't miss Christopher's tour of Bangkok's Klong Toey market; Ploylada's aesthetic point of view on Osha Restaurant; Naam's vivid recollections of her childhood and Bangkok's recent past when folk traditions, now lost, were part of a riverine way of life. Finally, Swisa fills us in on global trends in "transport poverty" and you won't be surprised to know that Bangkok doesn't fare well when it comes to commuting to just about anywhere in town.

Thank you and enjoy the read!

- VT

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Born and based in Bangkok, **Naam Sombatanantakorn** is one of the co-founders of Viajente, a travel agency that offers various natural and cultural travel programs. She is a lifelong learner and loves to travel.



English-born **Christopher Scott Dixon**, based in Bangkok, is an experienced writer and ex-BBC radio reporter/presenter. He has contributed many features to a variety of publications in Thailand and in the UK. He has also written 17 books across different genres and is a qualified teacher.



Swisa Ariyapruchya was born in Switzerland and spent her childhood growing up in Belgium, Poland, Thailand and the USA. She is multilingual and speaks four languages. Apart from her work as a central banker, she began her lifestyle blog *Having "Me" Time* in 2010 and has since continued to write in her spare time. She is also co-founder of Booster Education Co., Ltd. and Booster Analytics Co., Ltd.



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PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF OSHA THAI RESTAURANT & BAR

1

- 1 High-ceiling foyer with traditional Thai floral patterns
- 2 The restaurant wall is adorned with murals depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* epic

Thainess with a Twist

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG



2

As a former food critic, I was lucky enough to experience many great cuisines and five-star service from many fancy restaurants. When I visited Osha Thai Restaurant & Bar, it wasn't just about the pleasure of my palate alone, but the interior decoration that captured my heart, as well.

Osha Thai Restaurant & Bar is no stranger to San Franciscans. Founded in 1997 on the beautiful San Francisco Bay, Osha started off as a humble small noodle shop which soon stepped up its game and became one of the most renowned Thai fine dining establishments on the US West Coast. In 2014, Osha finally took the ethnic Thai taste back home by opening a branch here in Bangkok.

Located on the corner of Wireless Road, the venue greets its patrons upon arrival with its lavish vibe at first sight: tall glass doors decorated with Thai-style patterns. On the outside you can see that the door frames add an authentic Thai touch combining traditional Thai stilt house patterns using modern materials creating an obvious contrast between the elaborate authentic Thai decoration and modern art that go along quite well together.

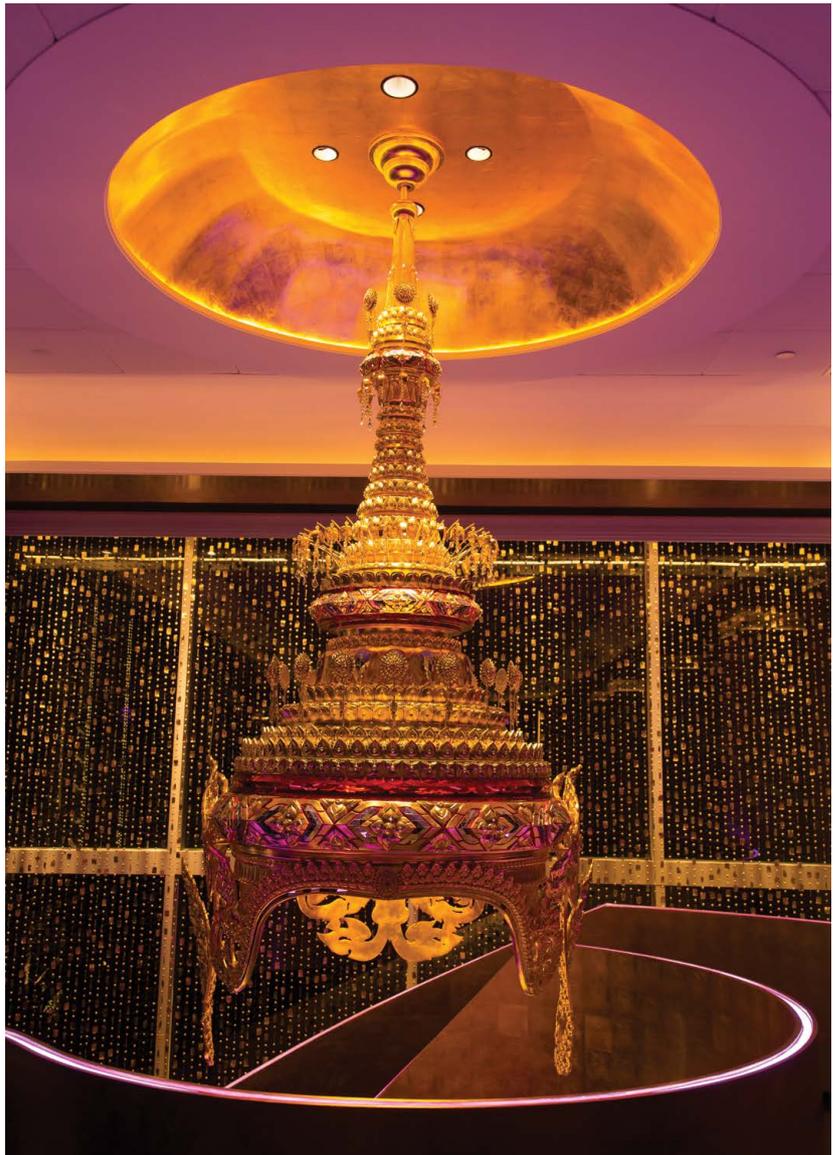
The interior's choice of color is astonishing. Black is not a commonly used color for restaurants, but here at Osha, black is dominant and a perfect match with gold that creates a luxurious atmosphere. What I like most about this place is the foyer and how it cleverly uses the high-ceiling as an advantage to show off Thai crafting skills through the matte gold alcoves with traditional floral patterns carved on both sides of the wall and on the ceiling. The foyer acting like a gateway to a sacred shrine allows guests to feel like they are walking into another world. Once entering the main dining hall, one finds a 3-D mapping projector exhibiting images of mythical characters from the *Ramayana* across the hall, giving the place a dreamlike ambience.

Adding a modern twist, the main dining hall is decorated with transparent glass walls with high curtains across two floors and mirrors portraying Thai stilt house patterns. The designers have also added a casual touch with a hint of American dining through the black circular booths which are scattered around the main dining hall. They pair well with floral-print cushions and unique leather-clad elements.

Above the bar, Osha uses the sky-high ceiling to show off the golden spiral staircase which leads up to the theater-like second floor. The wall is adorned with traditional murals depicting scenes from the *Ramayana*. The gigantic custom-made chandelier – modeled in the shape of a traditional “chada” headdress – is placed over the bar to give its sense of Thainess a boost.

Besides the exquisite interior design, the theatrical concept also permeates the restaurant’s food presentation as well. Every dish is delicately served with fine decorations which not only give diners the pleasure of taste, but also excite all the other senses: sight, sound, smell, and touch. Osha Thai Restaurant & Bar is the place you wouldn’t want to miss.

Osha Thai Restaurant & Bar
 99 Wireless Rd., Lumpini
 Tel. 02 256 6555
 www.oshabangkok.com



3



4



5

3 The ginormous chada chandelier
 4-5 Thai-themed food and drinks served amid chada-inspired props.



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A FAST CASUAL VEGAN RESTAURANT

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Masala Musings

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

While Thai food is hard to beat, one fabulous reason for living in Bangkok is the chance to be exposed to plenty of other great cuisines from around Asia as well. Indian food is well represented here, and while it might be difficult to get really top-notch *dosas* - southern Indian's famous fermented crepe-like pancakes, the rich flavorful feasts from the north are found in abundance.

You can explore Phahurat, the Indian neighborhood bordering the fringes of Chinatown and the Chao Phraya, where you'll find hole in the wall *dhabs* serving up vegetarian *thali* plates for a pittance. But to really treat yourself, head to some of these regal establishments to overwhelm your taste buds and splurge on some fine Indian dining that rivals any of the world's top cuisines.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF INDUS

Indus

Set in a 1960s wooden Art Deco home, Indus raises the bar when it comes to fine Indian dining. Rajasthani tapestries and sandstone bricks surround the regal dining rooms, and the menu selections prepared by master chef Anil Kumar are simply astounding. The spicy Rajasthani *laal maas* mutton curry will have you imagining you're in Jaipur, and the Kashmiri *rogan josh* is heavily simmered in black cardamom, ginger, *degi mirch*, and anise seed, truly waking up your taste buds to their fullest.

Vegetarians are also well catered for with succulent treats like broccoli marinated in yogurt and roasted in a tandoori oven to creamy perfection. Guests can also opt for the seven- or 10-course "culinary journey" tasting menus, which feature a sample of Indus' excellent wide range of cooking techniques and high-end ingredients. Indus is one of Bangkok's premier longstanding great Indian dining options, and is perfect be it for romantic date nights, celebrations, or just for the sake of gourmet eating.

Indus

71 Sukhumvit Soi 26
Tel. 02 258 4900
www.indusbangkok.com



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF CHARCOAL TANDOOR GRILL & MIXOLOGY



Charcoal Tandoor Grill & Mixology

If you are looking for a modern and fun Indian dining evening, make a beeline for Charcoal Tandoor Grill & Mixology. Owned by Soho Hospitality and located in the dapper Frasier Suites on party-happy Sukhumvit Soi 11, the mood lit interior and see-through large glass pane into the kitchen welcomes guests, and the emphasis is on fun as opposed to just fine dining (think playful touches like the restrooms playing Indian market sounds or cocktails served in duty free bags).

The menu stays away from the usual heavy northern curries and instead focuses on kebabs, cooked in traditional tandoor ovens and served piping hot and laden with aromatic spices. The menu even lists drink pairings with different dishes, and you'll want to sample the creative cocktails like the "Bollywood Passionfruit" made with vodka and passion fruit or the "Horn OK Please" (a common Indian truck sign) made with Bombay Sapphire gin, green mango chutney, and crushed betel leaves. The innovative cocktail menu was created by famed mixologist J. Boroski, plus some new cocktails by Soho Hospitality's group mixologist Davide Sambo.

Charcoal Tandoor Grill & Mixology

Frasier Suites, 5th Fl., Sukhumvit Soi 11
Tel. 02 038 5112
www.charcoalbkk.com



Rang Mahal

Set up on the rooftop of the Rembrandt Hotel Bangkok, Rang Mahal serves up sumptuous northern Indian fare fit for a *maharaja*. Its Sunday brunch buffets are a Bangkok institution, featuring a vast assortment of rich northern Indian curries and covering just about every menu item found in royal Mughal cuisine.

Signature dishes include *Raan-e-Khyber*, a succulent lamb leg that is marinated in rum and spices and cooked over charcoal; tandoori murg chicken that has been marinated in yogurt and cooked in a tandoori oven; and *rogan josh*, a Kashmiri mutton dish with a thick onion gravy roasted in a clay pot.

Chef Rajan Misra was head chef at the opulent Taj Palace in Delhi, and he oversees a kitchen full of aromatic spices and age-old Indian cooking techniques. Finishing off your meal with saffron ice cream and marveling at the view below, you'll be plotting a return visit to one of Bangkok's most sophisticated dining options.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF RANG MAHAL



Rang Mahal

Rembrandt Hotel, 19 Sukhumvit Soi 18

Tel. 02 261 7100

www.rembrandtbkk.com/restaurants/rang-mahal



Gaggan

Gaggan defies most normal conceptions of Indian cooking. Labeled as “progressive Indian” (which some want to term “molecular gastronomy”), the restaurant run by Indian master chef Gaggan Anand continues to pile up the awards. Named Asia’s Best Restaurant for the past four years running by the *Restaurant* magazine in their “World’s 50 Best Restaurants” guide (where Gaggan gets a #5 spot overall), and also awarded two Michelin stars with the arrival of the *Bangkok Michelin Guide* last year.

The “Gaggan Experience”, as the 25-course degustation tasting menu is called, takes guests through a magical journey that can feature things such as Indian sushi or sea urchin ice cream. Forget about even recognizing the Indian favorites you thought you knew so well, as they have all been vaporized into foams, emulsions, and other creations that will dazzle your taste buds. Gaggan sets out to elevate Indian cuisine to the fine dining status that French and Japanese are accorded, and he has succeeded by miles. Better make your reservation soon though, as Gaggan plans to close down the restaurant in 2020, as he will start a new creative venture in Japan with top chef Takeshi Fukuyama.



Gaggan
68/1 Soi Langsuan
Tel. 02 652 1700
www.eatatgaggan.com

Transportation and Escaping Poverty

BY SWISA ARIYAPRUCHYA

Last year while I followed my husband to a conference in Finland, I came across an article in the local newspaper discussing “transport poverty” in Finland. This concept was completely new to me and it has since piqued my interest. Working in the field of Financial Inclusion where we aim to improve people’s welfare by increasing their access and usage of finance, I found the linkage between transportation and poverty intriguing.

Upon further research, there is indeed a large literature on this. A 2015 study – conducted at Harvard University on upward mobility – found commuting time to be the single strongest factor in helping to escape poverty – higher than even the linkage between test scores and two-parent families. Although this study was based in the US, I think the results are definitely food for thought and can be applied to places like Thailand where commute time is often a topic of discussion, especially if you live in urban Bangkok.

Measuring transportation is important because travel offers the means with which one can reach opportunities such as employment, education, resources and networks. Lacking mobility is linked to social disadvantage and exclusion.

For example, if you lived in the suburbs but your employment opportunity is in the city center, to be able to pursue the opportunity you’d need to be able to reach the destination. Those lacking resources would find it harder to travel to places outside walking distance since travel would require money. Faster modes such as cars and trains are often more expensive than taking the bus. Reducing barriers to travel allow those with limited resources

to widen their range of opportunities for education and employment.

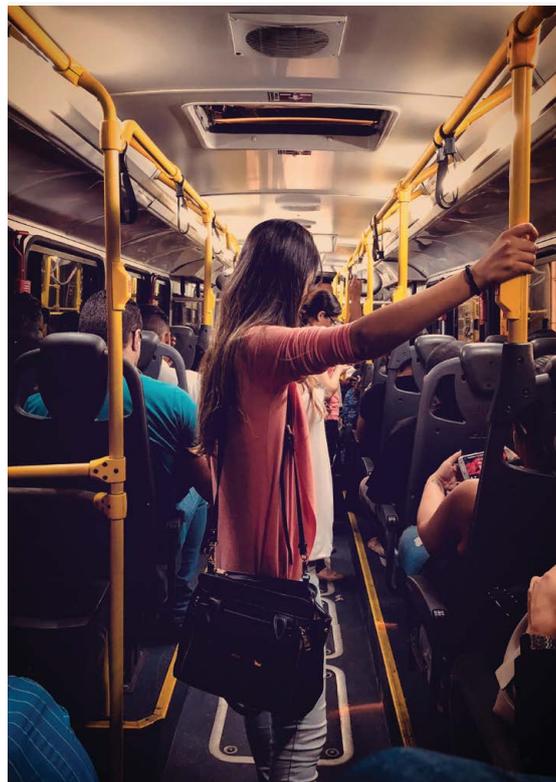
The lack of access to transportation not only has implications with regards to accessing a wider range of opportunities, but it also has social impacts due to social exclusion. For example, those in transport-deprived areas would not be able to fully participate with their community and society. This, in turn, results in decreased access to social networks and services amongst other

gauging transport poverty, although definitions vary from country to country. Measuring transport poverty would allow governments to implement more targeted schemes to improve people’s access to education and other opportunities.

The more we look into the issue, the more we see how transportation affects those around us. For example, many people living in Bangkok still use the local bus system – the cheapest and most accessible mode of transport in this city. Without the local bus system, they will not be able to travel to work in or across the city. Although the skytrain would reduce much travel time, it is still too expensive for many and they’d rather save the money for other necessities.

One of the indicators of transport poverty is the amount of money spent on transportation relative to one’s income. Even if you have your own personal car, it does not mean you are exempt from transport poverty. For example, if you spend more than 10 percent of your income on transport then you are considered having a high level of transport poverty. The money spent on transportation could have been spent on more productive factors that help raise your standard of living.

There are many aspects to transport poverty, but one key aspect is that poverty reduction requires the help of all parties involved. Barriers to upward mobility are complex and interlinked. I am excited about the new infrastructure projects in Thailand and look forward to the day when I can walk out of my house in the suburbs and take a seamless journey on public transportation to work. Wouldn’t that make Thailand more of a paradise than it already is?



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The Allure of Freelancing

BY J. PAKCHUEN

September is the last month of the year's third quarter, a good time to take stock of your career before the end of the year creeps by. For those looking for a new job, better get started before the hiring season begins after the year-end bonuses. But for those who are tired of typical 9-to-5 jobs, now is the best time to start thinking of transitioning into freelancing.

There's a host of freelancing opportunities out there: working as a translator, interpreter, writer, graphic designer, photographer, blogger, vlogger, tutor, you name it. However, if you're holding on to the thought, it's always wise to weigh up the pros and cons of freelancing for a living before taking the plunge.

Pros

Freelancers manage their own time, setting their own work schedule as long as they can meet the agreed deadlines. I used to be a freelance translator for a few years and can still remember getting long-night sleeps and starting work late in the morning. Never having to deal with the scourge of Bangkok's rush-hour traffic and I could sneak out to run errands anytime I wanted. I dealt with clients on the go through phone calls and took as many days off as I wanted, taking my work with me if I wanted to.

Being a freelancer is very much similar to being a business owner. The more you work, the more you earn, and you don't have to share the dough with anyone else. After researching the market, set a rate you're comfortable with. There may be some out-of-pocket expenses, such as software, hardware, electricity bills, cameras, etc., but after making deductions from these bills, the profit is all yours.

Being a freelancer is such an ideal career for introverts. No office drama, no jostling for a promotion or pay raise, and most of the time, you'll be working independently. Working from home, a library, coffeehouse, or a co-working space, can help freelancers steer clear office politics and other unfavorable circumstances. You can mostly deal with clients via email. There is no confrontation and the impact from any argument is substantially less.

One thing people may not realize is that freelancers could spare some time to learn new things, meet new people and give back to the society. While freelancing, you will have opportunities to take online and onsite classes, or even volunteer at local museums or nonprofit organizations.

Cons

The ultimate freedom can become a double-edged sword if you can't stick to the schedule. Working from home can be difficult for some, as there are so many distractions around the house – long breakfasts and lunches, news on TV, the dirty dishes that need to be washed, and the ever-tempting social media. Even disciplined freelancers can find themselves working around the clock, answering emails while watching TV dramas at night. If you're working from your home base, that'll always be your office 24/7, so it might be better to go out and use a public library or co-working spaces instead.

Unlike a salaried employee, a freelancer doesn't always get paid punctually by month's end. Most payment terms are set by the client, which vary from company to company. Some clients let freelancers wait 30 days while some others can stall payments until 45-60 days after the submission of an invoice. If it's a project-based assignment or a direct client, freelancers can sometimes get paid faster since they can set up their own payment terms. Nevertheless, they are still the ones bearing the risks, which in a worst-case scenario the customer won't pay and/or can't be contacted at all. So before accepting a job, get the contracts in place or insist on a deposit to mitigate the risk.

If you're not totally an introvert who enjoys working alone at all times, the lack of human connection can become a problem for you. Naturally, human beings are social beings. We can't deny the fact that some kind of occasional interactions are still necessary, so sparing some free time to socialize may not be a bad idea.

Finding clients and building connections are of paramount importance to keeping the cash coming in. Social media, such as LinkedIn, and other online job search websites are quite handy. You may want to take a marketing class to learn how to advertise your services. If not, jumping head-on into freelancing can be a pain.

All in all, if you're still not sure whether it is the right time to switch from a 9-to-5 life to an independent professional, you might want to start side-gigging, depending on your interest, talent and skills, to earn some extra money and calculate the likelihood of becoming fully self-employed. But if becoming a freelancer doesn't work out in the end, it's never too late to be employed again. The thing is you will never know if you will like being a freelancer or not until you try being one.

Market Buzz in Klong Toey

BY CHRISTOPHER SCOTT DIXON



In addition to many other positives, Bangkok is blessed with many and varied markets. These come in all shapes and sizes from regular, fixed, standing night and day markets, ad-hoc street versions, pop-up examples, traditional style, modern high-end, and sometimes just a few stalls set up almost spontaneously outside a shopping mall or along a footpath.

Talad Klong Toey (*talad* means market) is worth a visit. Regarded as the biggest fresh market in the city, the market is open 24 hours every day, with vendors taking turns with the spaces, but the best time to go would be from 6 am to about 2 am. This market is almost like a small town inside a city with its sprawling network of stalls selling virtually everything from fresh fruit, herbs, and vegetables, meat, and insects to live frogs, ducks, chickens, stationery, clothes, and countless other items in between.

Particularly recommended are the giant river prawns and crabs, one of the key factors is that the food is fresh, with delivery vans arriving at regular intervals unloading more stock throughout the day. Many of the items sold here can be half the price of similar products in more affluent areas such as Thong Lor.

This is an authentic fresh market shopping experience in the raw, and not for the faint hearted. This is a place where the locals go – it is always hot, noisy, wet, smelly, and crowded. Do not expect all neatly arranged displays and genteel surroundings with calorie content labels or gluten free advice. It is eclectic and hectic with jostling masses of vendors and customers. It is not all as chaotic as it might first appear, as different areas are categorized by the goods or the food sold. After a while, what initially may seem like a maze, takes on some familiarity.

Watch out for the trolleys and large wicker baskets pushed by the market staff as they won't stop for you. Make sure you wear proper footwear too, not flip flops, as the floors are very often slippery and dirty.

Also be careful for the hoses wielded by some of the staff in the seafood aisles, as you might receive an impromptu shower. Be prepared to see workers flailing at piles of meat and fish with their plastic bags on sticks in repeated attempts to keep the hosts of flies away. This gives new meaning to the “buzz” of a market.

The sellers are helpful and friendly, and if you can't speak Thai, using body language and indicating what you want usually gets the right results. Do not be afraid to try and haggle for a better price if you can. If the walk around is too tiring, then there are many ready-to-eat food stalls where you can sit down and enjoy some tasty green curry and other popular Thai dishes.

The market is very accessible, located on Rama IV Road and close to Klong Toey MRT station. From the station, walk east on Thang Rotfai Sai Kao/Rama IV Road for about 10 minutes until you reach the intersection of Rama IV and Narong Road. The market is on your right-hand side. Parking spaces are also available across the market, next to the Stock Exchange of Thailand, but if you come at night, you can easily park right in front.

Klong Toey market is the real deal for tourists and locals alike. If you want to immerse yourself in a sensory-filled, glamor-free, genuine, unpretentious example of a working Thai market, this is the place for you with plenty of photo opportunities, too. Once visited, never forgotten!



PHOTOGRAPHS: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUEA

Safeguarding Bangpratu

BY NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN

My father and my aunt always enjoy reminiscing about their childhood. Back then, whenever they were hungry they found things around the house to cook and eat – literally nothing from a grocery store or a restaurant, but all things found “around the house”. They fetched eggs from the pen and picked vegetables from the small backyard garden. The fun part was that whenever there was a heavy rain they would grab hand fishing nets and water buckets and waited at the pier in front of the house to scoop up the fish, prawns and eels swimming to the surface.

Small-scale Thai fishermen in the past called this phenomenon “fish shock”. It is caused by a sharp decrease in oxygen levels in the water making fish and other creatures unable to breathe properly and thus swimming to the surface.

My grandmother along with her in-laws would sit close to the bank scaling the fish, peeling the prawns, and salting them, a popular food preservation technique. The children had a lot of fun frolicking in the water or catching the fish. The supplies of salted fish and prawns would last for months, along the way dulling the kids’ appetite for fish for quite a long while.

The backdrop to my dad’s childhood tales was not some rural village in a remote province, but a community located right behind what is now Siam Square in the heart of Bangkok. Unbelievable, isn’t it?



Thailand's central plains that straddle Bangkok and many other provinces host fertile land. The region's network of rivers, their distributaries and irrigation canals carry sediment and rich nutrients from the north to the Chao Phraya river delta. The silt at the estuary is useful for fish and soil nutrition.

Set on the estuary, Bang Khun Thian district is home to several fruit orchards. Many inhabitants of communities in the area depend on the canals and the good earth for their livelihood. During summer, the water turns brackish, making the crops from fruit orchards richer in taste than those from orchards using freshwater.

On the banks of a canal of the same name, Bangpratum, a small community in the district, is blessed with the bounties of nature including several types of fruit and vegetables. Locals also produce exquisite wickerwork.

Villagers of the community used to practice an interesting tradition called "*mua kung*" (*mua* meaning unclear, and *kung* meaning prawns). According to the late Somjai Nimlek, a native of Bangpratum who was an associate professor of architecture at Silpakorn University, *mua kung* was a communal practice where villagers would help neighbors with tasks like "fish shocking" and harvesting canal creatures such as prawns and fish.

The shocking technique used in local fishing was not done with electricity, but with the locals' homegrown wisdom by stirring up the silt and mud at the bottom of the canal to muddy the water and create conditions that place fish under stress. Among other things, the muddy water caused oxygen levels to drop temporarily, "shocking" the fish and other aquatic creatures as a result.

On the day of *mua kung*, villagers would gather together on the banks or in the boats at low tide either during the day or at night, armed with fishing nets and hand scoops. In the lead-up to the day, they would spend time fixing their gear including boats, fishing nets and lanterns.

Back then, the Bangpratum canal was lined with tall trees on both sides, their branches meeting halfway over the canal forming an arch of dense green foliage or a dark green tunnel. At night-



time, the gleam of moonlight could not filter through the thick foliage, so lanterns helped light up the path ahead. When ready, the villagers would gather at a meeting spot to calculate the time and distance to shock the fish before the high tide. They would normally start at the upstream end of the canal where people who were in charge of stirring up the mud would dive into the water with a paddle in hand. The murky part of the canal would flow downstream at low tide. Once the water got murky, the prawns and fish would start to come up to the water surface gasping for air, and harvesting would begin in earnest.

Those stationed on the boats would scoop them up by the bucketful with scoop nets. Locals living on the canal would automatically pitch in upon spotting *mua kung* boats passing by their homes.

On each mission, around 200 boats equipped with lanterns engaged in the *mua kung*, heading slowly downstream under the tree tunnel like a glittering array of stars on a moonless night.

When the muddy waters became stagnant and cleared up, the villagers will realize that the tide was turning and the canal circus will ground to a halt.

With mission accomplished, They would head home to start work on preserving the day's catch. Without any refrigerators back then, the fish and prawns were grilled, smoked, braised, boiled, dried, salted, or sweetened – in much fancier ways than my grandmother's.

Sadly, this tradition has completely disappeared along with Bangkok's clean and clear waterways. The Bangpratum community itself is presently inaccessible by road as it is now surrounded by housing estates, big commercial buildings, and highways. Waste releases and raw sewage from factories and housing estates are dumped directly into the canal. The fish and residents are feeling the effects of water pollution.

Raising public awareness of the impact of toxic waste on the Bangpratum community is definitely the way to go, but that alone wouldn't be adequate in safeguarding the community and its colorful traditions against these threats. Unless we take action, these traditions and ways of life would soon disappear along with the previous generation who enjoyed them.



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE STAMBOULIS

Krungthep on Two Wheels

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

I spent most of my thirties bicycling around the world, 45,000 kilometers to be precise, and at that time, the bicycle lifestyle to me represented the ultimate in freedom, healthy living, and becoming non-dependent on oil.

Moving to Bangkok changed all of that though, as trying to hug the non-existent road shoulders amidst the heat, congestion, pollution, and legions of motorcycle taxis, tuk tuks, and other road chaos just wasn't worth the pedal. Less than a decade ago, you'd be hard pressed to find a bicycle community in Bangkok. There was one good bike shop over by Lumpini, and the only attention cycling got was when the rare lunatic crazy enough to freewheel around the capital got flattened by a truck.

Oh, how the times have changed. While we certainly aren't the Asian version of Amsterdam, the adventure-curious and health-conscious middle class here have embraced bicycle riding with a passion. Today, there are bicycle magazines, fancy hi-tech bike shops, even bike cafés and bars. The country itself has gone bicycle wild, with touring Bangkokians to be found pedaling along the Mekong, and even mass unity rides like the Bike for Dad event in 2015 celebrating His Majesty the late King Bhumibol's birthday, and the Bike for Mom birthday ride honoring Queen Sirikit during the same year.

While Bangkok is still traffic dense and a place where the automobile rules, and while it still lags far behind pedal-friendly stalwarts in Europe, some positive changes are afoot, and there are some excellent places in and around the capital where cyclists can go spin without panic. Here are some of the best spots:

Suvarnabhumi Sky Lane

While you might want to wear your headphones here to drown out the noise of jets coming and going, the appropriately named "Sky Lane" is truly car-free, and a great spot for a full pedal to the metal workout. The newly paved

cyclists track, accessed by a private gate, runs 23.5 kilometers around the airport, has bathrooms, 1,500 parking spots, food and drink provided rest areas, first aid stations, and features reflective lights for night riding. Helmets and proper footwear are required, and it's a fantastic spot for some fast, flat training with nary a vehicle around other than those flying above.

Old Bangkok and Chinatown

You'll either need a penchant for getting lost, a good map, or even better, going with a local bicycle tour company (see below), but wandering the alleyways and canal and river roads is a great way to see traditional Bangkok, checking out both its famed tourist sites like Wat Arun and Chinatown, as well as some of its hidden treasures like the canals of Thonburi and Bangkok Noi or the old Portuguese Santa Cruz church and community, with its nearby bakery serving Portuguese cake pastries made from recipes passed down by several generations. There are some major roads to cross, but a vast array of lanes and alleys keep you away from the cars, and the terrain is pancake flat.

Chanthaburi Coastal Bike Route

For those who love longer distance picture postcard touring, this has to be the best flat route in the country. The picturesque Chalerm Burapha Chonlathit road in Chanthaburi Province has been designated a scenic route, and features the kingdom's longest bike route to date, with marked red bike paths running 75 kilometers in either direction. The route runs from west of Chanthaburi province near Klaeng district, and heads east to the tiny fishing village of Laem Sing, passing old forts, mangrove swamps with elevated walkways, and some lovely beaches.

There are designated bicycle parking areas, and you can even rent bikes from the sleepy beach hamlet of Chao Lao, which also has inexpensive accommodation and a handful of seafood restaurants on the beach. You'll see families, bike clubs from the nearby Burapha University's

Chanthaburi Campus, older folks, and Bangkok escapists here. The area is crowded on weekends, but pretty much deserted during the week, and it is one of the few places left in Thailand that hasn't been discovered by foreign tourists, making it a great place to ride and check out some traditional slices of coastal life.

Bang Krachao

You'll be shaking your head in disbelief on this one, being just five minutes across the Chao Phraya River from central Bangkok, yet feeling like you are on an island way down south. Bang Krachao, known as the "green lung" of Bangkok, is the city's least developed and most open green space, an absolute escapist haven for city dwellers, and a great place to wander by bicycle.

The best cycling here takes place on narrow elevated walkways, built to protect the marshland area from flooding, and while a bit of balance is required here (there are no guardrails along the quaint waterside paths), you'll be transported to a magical green world, complete with coconut trees, old homes, and a total lack of factories, condominiums, and high rises, all of which are not allowed here. A boutique tree house hotel and a gourmet coffee shop with Wi-Fi access have emerged in the last year, making the tranquil spot all the more beckoning should you decide to stay overnight.

Travel Tips

There are some top-notch bicycle tour companies that arrange trips both in and around Bangkok, as well as further afield. Many feature support vehicles, all have well-trained guides, rental bikes, and come well recommended. Here are some of the top players:

Spice Roads

www.spiceroads.com

Grasshopper Adventures

www.grasshopperadventures.com

Follow Me Bangkok Bike Tours

www.followmebiketour.com

Tapping into Preventive Healthcare

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

Thailand's booming medical and healthcare sector continues to attract foreigners seeking relatively inexpensive and reliable medical treatment. While this trend is not going anywhere soon, more and more health-conscious Thais are underscoring the importance of investing in health by adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Some go to great lengths to lower their vulnerability to illness before it strikes by taking preventive measures. Well, if you have the means and time to do so, why not?

Preventive medicine is a niche market that healthcare companies like Verita Health MahaNakhon are tapping into. Since opening its doors in February 2017, Verita Health's Asia flagship center—located on the 3rd floor of MahaNakhon CUBE – has been offering several preventive and regenerative treatments. The latter is aimed at reversing long-term damage resulting from a range of chronic conditions and illnesses.

In both types of medical care, prior to treatment, clients undergo screening tests such as genetic typing and biological age tests carried out by Thai and international doctors and professional health consultants.

“Within the parameters of these screenings, health professionals would be able to detect and identify signs of not only potential cancers, but also heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and much more. The essence of preventive treatment is to monitor and control these signs and indicators early on before they develop into something more serious,” said Dhanawat Rewatbowornwong, General Manager of Verita Health MahaNakhon.

Based on the screening results, the best course of treatment for each client will be established and customized, combining conventional medical protocols and advanced therapeutic, integrated treatments representing a holistic approach.

Verita Health MahaNakhon has a wide variety of state-of-the-art non-invasive diagnostic and corrective medical equipment. Besides preventive medicine, the center also specializes in anti-aging treatments.

“If you take good care of yourself, with new technology and research findings, age would soon become just a number based on the year in which you were born; your body does not have to age accordingly. It's possible for someone aged 40 to have the state of health of a 30-year-old person.

“People think that you have to be old before they start looking after their health. That's why we actually want to reach out to youngsters, so they can take preventive measures to protect their health and try to minimize the risk of developing an illness or disease when they get older. We would like them to come to see us when they are still healthy, not when they are already sick,” Dhanawat noted.

Despite the bulk of its clients being foreigners, the center has been able to attract scores of health-conscious Thais who extol the virtues of preventive healthcare. “Many people think medical care is overpriced at private hospitals and healthcare centers, but here it's not really. The price itself is quite reasonable, compared to the service and attention that we give to each client, which is usually an hour per client to review the results of their screening tests. We give advice on treatments and answer any questions to make sure our clients

understand the process thoroughly, including the treatment costs,” said Dhanawat.

After the initial screening, the center's doctors will recommend a personalized treatment and a preventive regime that suits the client's healthcare needs, goals and lifestyle choice ensuring health and wellness. A regular regime includes the “Beautiful Life” treatment program that takes an aesthetic approach to rejuvenating, cleansing and detoxifying the body. “Targeted” treatment plans consist of specialized therapies such as Young Plasma Therapy, Oxygen Therapy and Colon Hydrotherapy to rebalance the body and renew the sense of wellbeing.

Verita Health picked Thailand for its first flagship healthcare center in Asia due to its strategic importance. “The Thai government has been trying to promote the country as Asia's medical hub for many years. Many organizations, such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand, are also promoting the country as a niche health and wellness destination because tourists seeking medical treatment spend more and stay longer than normal tourists. The quality of our medical expertise in Thailand is also amongst the best in the world. And lastly, we are well-known for our service quality and affordability,” he said.

Holding on to one's youth is to attempt the impossible, one might say. But thanks to the magic of medical technology, it's possible these days to stay youthful right into old age as people take steps to make the “golden years” healthier and more emotionally rewarding. When it comes to healthcare, prevention is always better than cure.

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1



2

1 Verita Health
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reception area
2 Dhanawat
Rewatbowornwong,
Verita Health
MahaNakhon's General
Manager
3 Vitamin boosting
session through IV drip
therapy



3

AI-powered HUAWEI nova 3 and 3i

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL



HUAWEI recently unveiled two new smartphones of the “nova” series for selfie lovers: “HUAWEI nova 3” and “HUAWEI nova 3i”.

The devices come equipped with four cameras each and powered by AI technology. The AI feature raises picture quality, especially when taking selfies, by easily creating lifelike visages against a blurry background complete with pops of lights, also called the “bokeh” effect. Both have a 6.3-inch fullview display for an immersive experience and 3-D glass on the rear coated with a stunning color gradient. Both target mobile gamers, too.

The nova 3i has 128-GB internal memory, 4-GB RAM, and uses a dual 24MP+2MP camera setup on the front with a dual 16+2MP camera on the back. For self-portraits, AI technology comes in handy by analyzing up to 200 points on one’s face and automatically removing wrinkles and brightening facial complexion.

It can further detect eight types of background to balance brightness, color, or shadow ensuring the perfect picture. Both come standard with 4G dual-SIM with VoLTE with a microSD card slot supporting up to 256 GB of microSD card.

The nova 3 comes with all the bells and whistles: 128-GB internal memory, 6-GB RAM, a dual 24MP+2MP front-facing camera and a dual 24+16MP

The nova 3 – in black, red and iris purple – is priced at THB 16,990. The nova 3i – available in black, pearl white and iris purple – costs THB 9,990.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF HUAWEI

SCB and The Mall launch ‘SCB M’ credit card

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

Siam Commercial Bank and The Mall Group have joined forces to launch “SCB M”, a co-branded credit card designed to provide shoppers with a seamless online and offline shopping experience under the concept of “Call it eMperience”. The credit card offers a host of special privileges attached to shopping at retail outlets of The Mall Group. These include reward points, special discounts, tech-infused services such as I-Reserved Parking and personalized customer care. Graced by an impressive lineup of Thailand’s A-list celebs, the launch ceremony, which was held recently, introduced Thai actress Davika “Mai” Hoorne who has been tapped as presenter of the new credit card for the ultimate shopping experience.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF SCB & THE MALL GROUP

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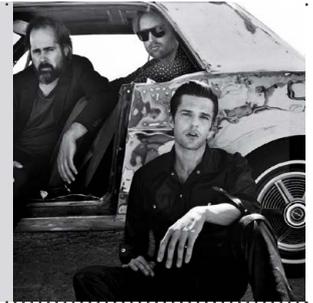


EDM fest with top DJs, water cannons

The fifth edition of Waterzonic Bangkok on the theme “The Ultimate Experience of Waterfestival” is scheduled to take place on **Sept 14 and 15** at Live Park Rama 9. Waterzonic – an EDM music fest with lots of water sprays as a way to tame the heat – features the world’s leading DJs flown in from around the world to create an exciting 2-day extravaganza of music and dance. The line-up includes Don’t Let Daddy Know, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Mike Williams, Sem Vox, and Dyro. Waterzonic is open to music lovers aged 20 and older. To book a ticket, visit www.Waterzonic.com.

‘The Killers’ set to rock Bangkok

The Killers are slated to perform at Thunder Dome, Muang Thong Thani on **Sept 17**. The US rock band from Las Vegas consists of singer/keyboardist Brandon Flowers, drummer Ronnie Vanucci, guitarist Dave Keuning and bassist Mark Stoermer. The band has amassed several accolades including multiple Grammy nominations, American Music Award nominations, MTV Video Music Awards and NME Awards. Their newest studio album “Wonderful Wonderful”, released in Sept 2017, reigned supreme at the number one spot on the Billboard Top 200 chart the week of its release while topping charts in the UK, Mexico and Australia. Tickets are available at www.ticketmelon.com/viji/thekillers.



Running without a fuss – and a fee

“Run Free Bangkok 2018” is a “no-frills” running event being held on **Sept 22** at Suan Luang Rama 9 Park. The organizers strive to change public perception of running events as activities with admission charges. Members of the public are invited to participate in this event at no cost. There are two race categories: 5-K and 10-K runs. While the event is free of charge, runners can keep this emerging running event going by purchasing “Run Free” merchandise. For further details, check out www.spacebib.com/events/view/run-free-bangkok-2018-331.



Top fitness influencers to gather at ‘FITFEST’

“FITFEST” – Thailand’s largest festival of “everything fitness” – is back! The event welcomes all men and women wishing to start, maintain, or further a healthy lifestyle. Set to be held from **Sept 22 to 23** at Siam Paragon, “FITFEST” will feature free workout classes, demos and competitions, and also showcase innovations in health and fitness targeting consumers and businesses with vendors offering the best deals and exclusive offers on products and services. Join top Thai celebrities and fitness influencers leading a workout in Thailand’s first fitness concert. Entry is free, but registration is required and can be done via www.zipeventapp.com/e/FIT-FEST-2018.



Runners to converge on Lumpini

“Run For Life 3”, a fund-raising charity run organized by Herbalife Nutrition, is being held in Bangkok on **Sept 29** at Lumpini Park. The registration fees are THB 490 for the 5-K Fun Run and THB 590 for the 10-K Mini Marathon. The proceeds of the runs will fund the construction of the ER Center of Maharat Nakhon Ratchasima Hospital in Nakhon Ratchasima province. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/runforlifeday or call 095 501 4916.



Helping our feline friends

“Frontline presents Kingdom of Tigers Run” is now in its 3rd year with the proceeds from the run earmarked for spending on animal welfare such as helping stray cats. The 4-K run will be held on **Sept 29** at Queen Sirikit Park in Chatuchak district. Those who love animals and running for a good cause should not miss this event. For more information, visit www.kingdomoftigersrun.com.



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