

Inaugural Thailand Yacht Show, forum win plaudits

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THE FIRST “Thailand Yacht Show” that ended last weekend earned rave reviews from a major player in the business of luxury marine craft.

"What a fantastic response to the country's inaugural Thailand Yacht Show in Phuket," Gordon Fernandes, co-owner of Asia Pacific Superyachts, said after the event held at the Ao Po Marina in Phuket from February 10-14.

APS Phuket & Myanmar exhibited at the show, and Fernandes was a panellist at the Thailand Yachting Forum on February 10 at the Indigo Pearl Hotel in Phuket.

The forum's afternoon session on "Leisure Marine Infrastructure in Thailand" featured a panel of experts addressing the following topics: new sites for marina developments; haul out/dry dock facilities; supporting industries (supply chains); and yacht management and agencies.

Other panel titles of the afternoon included "Thailand Marina Hub of Asean" and "Superyacht Charter Industry in Thailand".

A hot topic was the status of superyacht charter licences between government officials and members of the marine industry.

Though the rules and regulations with regards to the actual superyacht charter licence were hammered out last August 10, a number of related issues remain hurdles for superyacht owners, explained Somchai Sumanuskajonkul, deputy director-general of the Thai Marine Department.

"The two major remaining issues deal directly with immigration law and value-added tax," Somchai said. "The relevant government agencies are working to create one-year permission-to-stay approvals for superyacht crew members - linking their stays in the country with the ship's stay. Additionally, progress is being made to create a VAT exception for superyachts.

"The immigration issues are awaiting final approval by the Immigration Bureau commissioner, while the VAT exception needs to be enacted by royal decree."

Fernandes and his APS team work closely with arriving superyacht clients from throughout the world and have been instrumental in bringing more superyachts to Phuket's shores.

"Many of our clients base in Phuket and enjoy cruising throughout the Andaman waters, with some continuing on to Myanmar and the Mergui Archipelago.

"Superyacht captains and owners have a great deal of interest in these issues, as evidenced at the yacht show and the many questions [asked about] when the changing crew visa and VAT tax regulations will be finalised. Working closely with the government, we are able to keep our clients advised of the most up-to-date news so they can plan accordingly."

The inaugural Thailand Yacht Show gave every indication of a very successful event, with show management reporting: "Boats on the docks. Visitors on the pontoons. Cold beer and cider. Panama hats. Parasails. Charter brokers and dealers. Sunshine and shade (when you need it).

"Today at the Thailand Yacht Show it was very much 'business as usual', with dealers and brokers unanimously expressing satisfaction with the way the event is unfolding."

As the show was ending and the sun setting, Fernandes said people continued to crowd superyacht decks with lively parties throughout Ao Po Marina and all agreed it was an outstanding yachting event, setting a high bar for the future.

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